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Saluting our veterans and those who serve in the U.S. Military

NFL and USAA announce salute to Service Award nominees in 32 teams ... from sports page 5

serving our country comes from his father, Wayne. In recognition of his father's efforts, Johnson spends his time working with many military-based initiatives. Johnson has visited Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, on multiple occasions. During these trips, Johnson has not only conversed with soldiers and their families to help boost morale but on two occasions brought along teammates to host a Chiefs Play 60 clinic for the base's youth. Additionally, Johnson helped facilitate fundraising initiatives tied to the organization's annual Chiefs Red Friday efforts to benefit Ft. Riley's Wounded Warriors Transition Battalion (WTB). Johnson has also rallied together his fellow linebackers for a special visit to the local VA Medical Center, where they spend time with veterans, sign autographs, take photos, and hand out Chiefs gear as holiday gifts.

Los Angeles Chargers

DONNIE EDWARDS (Former Linebacker)

The Los Angeles Chargers are proud to nominate retired linebacker and Southern California-native Donnie Edwards for the 2017 Salute to Service Award. While he was heavily involved with bettering the community and actively supporting the military during his playing days, Edwards has taken full advantage of his connections off the field to support the world around him, especially our military veterans, in his post-football life. It was Edwards' long-standing family ties to the military which moved him to lend his support to our troops overseas, including participating in seven tours with the USO proudly working to help boost morale for members of our military. But now Edwards' passion has taken a very special direction as he has turned his attention and time to assisting The Greatest Generation Foundation. Edwards finds that being able to help those who answered the call of duty to serve our country is a reward unlike any other and it's truly become a passion.

Los Angeles Rams

DAVID VOBORA (Former Linebacker)

Vobora opened the Performance Vault, a for-profit gym for elite athletes such as NFL players, NFL Combine hopefuls and Olympians. In January 2014, Vobora befriended U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Travis Mills, one of five surviving quadruple amputees from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Vobora created a workout regimen for Mills that focused on weight transfer, core strength and stability as the two began to meet regularly. Eventually, Vobora was training nearly a dozen adaptive athletes. By September 2014, he had founded the Adaptive Training Foundation, a nonprofit that works with adaptive athletes such as amputees, paraplegics, quadriplegics and physically impaired. Vobora trains a group for nine weeks at no cost, and each athlete is assigned a volunteer trainer who helps design exercises specific to that athlete's body.

Miami Dolphins

MIKE WAHLE (Manager,

Skills Development)

With the armed forces very important to Wahle, he has visited numerous military bases and has tried to stay as active as he could throughout the military community during his days as an NFL player. It was important for him to speak to and connect with military families and bases in Wisconsin during his seven years as an offensive lineman for the Green Bay Packers. Wahle has recently put his words to action as he and his family have opened up their home to a Veteran that completed his service a few years ago.

Minnesota Vikings

MIKE PRIEFER (Special Teams Coordinator)

Serving as a pilot after graduating from the Naval Academy in 1989, Priefer doesn't intend to stop his dedication and support of the military. In addition to supporting families with tickets and field passes each year in games around the country, he is looking for ways to extend his reach to help veterans in need. He is particularly passionate about the veteran transition when returning home and is beginning to pursue how he can help in the epidemic of suicide amongst recent veterans. He loves inviting military members out to games and practices and he is consistently humbled by the reactions that come from those guests. Most recently, Priefer played an integral role in SETH SWANSON's re-enlistment ceremony for the United States Navy.

New England Patriots

JOE CARDONA (Long Snapper)

Cardona served as a junior commissioned officer in the United States Navy. He proudly wears his Naval uniform as the team boards the plane for away games and remains humble about his service to our country. Following a preseason joint practice with the Jacksonville Jaguars, Cardona hosted a special re-enlistment ceremony for two brave individuals. After practice, he changed into uniform, led the ceremony and recruited both teams to be a part of it. Joe has facilitated more than a dozen re-enlistment and retirement ceremonies at Gillette Stadium for his fellow military members. He also led a free football clinic for military families at Hanscom Air Force Base and Naval Station Newport this past April. Last fall, Joint Base Cape Cod experienced a fire that burned several of their storage buildings. Inside of one of those buildings were toys for military families to receive during the holidays. Joe quickly decided to visit the base and worked with the Patriots Foundation to collect toys that would help to replace the ones that were lost.

New Orleans Saints

A.J. KLEIN (Linebacker)

A.J. Klein comes from a military family – his grandfather served in the Air Force, two of his uncles were pilots and his great-grandfather served in World War II. His first opportunity to support military was when he was training for the NFL Draft in Pensacola, FL and at the same workout facility, several military veterans and active military

were rehabbing from injuries. He enjoyed the opportunity to spend time and support these military men and women. During his tenure in Carolina from 2013-16, he was active in team events that supported the military and is looking forward to continuing to do the same in New Orleans.

New York Giants

MIKE SULLIVAN (Offensive Coordinator)

Sullivan is a former West Point Cadet and US Army Ranger. His leadership and dedication to service and the organization are profound. His positive presence with the team has changed players, coaches and front office.

New York Jets

MIKE AND BETTY MACCAGNAN (General Manager & Wife)

The Maccagnans never take credit for the work they do, but instead highlight the family members who inspire their acts of kindness, Mike's older brother, VICTOR MACCAGNAN, who served in the military for 28 years, and his father who also served. Using his platform as General Manager, the Maccagnans have supported other military families during the holiday season for the past two years, creating an annual signature military appreciation event for families who have a spouse deployed during Christmas. The families are invited to the Jets training center for the day to watch practice and participate in holiday activities- gingerbread houses, cooking decorating, Jets Fest, massages, make-overs, pictures with Santa, and a Christmas dinner. Mike enjoys giving a facility tour to the guests, while Betty takes each spouse to "Santa's workshop," a defensive classroom she decorates, which is filled with personalized dream Christmas presents for each child. In addition to the annual event, the Maccagnans also host soldiers from Fort Drum at each game during the season.

Oakland Raiders

JON CONDO (Long Snapper)

Condo's passion for supporting the military stems from family ties as both of his grandfathers served in World War II and his brother-in-law, a retired Lieutenant Colonel, served in the Army. During his tenure with the team, Condo continually has shown support for the community and the Raiders' military partners. In 2015, the Raiders launched the Raiders Foundation with a mission to support our military and families of fallen heroes. In recognition of Memorial Day and on behalf of the Foundation's mission, Condo and his teammates welcomed 50 people from TAPs (Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors) to the Raiders Alameda Facility for a tour and a meet and greet. Condo continued to show support for the military during the offseason. He attended the NFL's Salute to Service Military Appreciation breakfast for service members and their families in San Francisco during Super Bowl 50 Week activities. Condo took to the stage to thank the military members and their families for their sacrifices to our country.

Jon also supported the gala for the Sentinels of Freedom, a non-profit organization that assists severely wounded and injured post 9/11 veterans in their efforts to become productive and self-sufficient members of their communities as they transition back into civilian life.

Philadelphia Eagles

DENISE KOZUL (Marketing and Executive Assistant)

Kozul is someone who carries that sense of respect and honor for the military deep within her heart. Over the past 20 years as an Eagles employee, Denise has dedicated countless hours to serving the military and their families. In partnership with the USO, Kozul invites more than 500 military members, including a group of veterans from the Brigantine Elks, to enjoy a reception and watch practice. Additionally, in 2015 Denise arranged for the Wounded Warrior Project to attend training camp. The participants were able to enjoy lunch and stretch with the team on the field after practice. Kozul continues to spearhead military appreciation efforts throughout the season during practices and games, making sure to take advantage of every opportunity to include military personnel into the Eagles game day entertainment. She organizes fly overs and parachute jumpers for practices and games and handles all military aspects for the Eagles Salute to Service game. Some other events Denise has helped organize include: Eagles players playing Madden with soldiers stationed overseas and Eagles players making meals for disabled veterans.

Pittsburgh Steelers

ARTHUR MOATS (Linebacker)

It should come as no surprise that one of Arthur Moats' mentors is his father, Arthur Moats Jr., a former pastor and United States Marine. He is the man who taught him about values, character, discipline, giving back and much more. Moats joined some of his teammates at a visit to the VA Hospital in Pittsburgh, spending time with them, and truly listening to their stories, what they have been through, and giving them a true sense of how much their service is appreciated. He was among a group of Steelers' players who visited injured Navy SEAL, BRANDON MEYERS at La Jolla VA Hospital. The players came bearing gifts, but the best part of the visit for Meyers was just spending time talking to them about football. Moats was the first to raise his hand to help when the Steelers surprised Staff Sgt. MICHELLE SATTERFIELD of the United States Army with a new home through the Tunnel to Towers Foundation. Moats went to the dedication celebration for the home, toured it with her, and spoke from the heart with his gratitude for her service to the country.

San Francisco 49ers

JOHN LYNCH (General Manager)

Since 1998, Lynch has frequented various Air Force bases and

military hospitals to personally thank those serving in the military, including MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, FL, Walter Reed Hospital in Bethesda, MD, and various visits to Fort Carson and Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado. In 2002, the John Lynch Foundation hosted the 'Salute the Stars & Stripes' fundraiser honoring then United States Army Commander of U.S. Central Command TOMMY FRANKS. During his last season playing in the NFL (2007), Lynch hosted troops from Buckley Air Force Base (Aurora, CO) during the Denver Broncos training camp at Dove Valley. He visited with and shared a meal with military personnel who had either recently returned from serving in Iraq or were preparing for overseas deployment. Lynch's military appreciation continues to this day. Every year since 2011, he has hosted military families at the annual Lynch Christmas Party in Colorado and during his inaugural training camp as 49ers general manager, Lynch hosted service men and women during the team's Military Appreciation Day.

Seattle Seahawks

PAUL ALLEN (Owner)

Last winter, Allen's production company, in partnership with NBC Learn, launched "Chronicles of Courage: Stories of Wartime and Innovation." The educational video series takes viewers on a journey through World War II history, as told firsthand by pilots and other aviation veterans from the U.S., U.K., Soviet Union, Germany, and Japan. Chronicles of Courage is one of the largest oral history video archives on war and aviation ever created. Spanning three continents, eight countries and seven wars - beginning with World War II - this revolutionary video archive captures the powerful first-person perspectives of over 300 men and women from opposing sides of conflicts. Allen has also assembled a multi-disciplined team of researchers, engineers, and explorers to locate historically significant wreckage and explore underwater ecosystems. On August 19, 2017, this team discovered the wreckage of the USS Indianapolis. The Indianapolis was found 5,500 meters below the surface, resting on the floor of the North Pacific Ocean.

Tampa Bay Buccaneers

CLINTON McDONALD (Defensive Tackle)

McDonald, a proud USAA member, was selected as a 2017 NFL spokesperson in the "USAA Member Voices" commercial campaign, as he believes the insurance company shares the same qualities he stands for: loyalty, honor, and respect. Being raised in a military household, the same core principles are instilled in his family. For the past two years, McDonald has served as an honorary guest speaker at the Buccaneers General H Norman Schwarzkopf Military Family of the Year Awards at One Buccaneer Place. The event hon-

ors the families of active duty military members from each branch of service and recognizes their integrity, courage, commitment, and service before self. On Veterans' Day in 2016, McDonald helped organize a clothing donation drive and purchased meals for homeless veterans as part of Operation Reveille. In 2016, the City of Orlando hosted the Invictus Games – an international sporting event for active duty and veteran servicemen and servicewomen who have been injured or wounded. Prior to the kickoff of the Games, McDonald spent time visiting with Team USA, thanking each member for their sacrifices and sharing that their resilience and dedication inspire him.

Tennessee Titans

MIKE MULARKEY (Head Coach)

Mularkey often invites military personnel to speak to the team during training camp or before a game. MARCUS LUTTRELL, the U.S. Navy SEAL known for being portrayed as "The Lone Survivor," was among the training camp speakers. On another night, Major General ANDREW P. POPPAS, Commanding General of the 101st Airborne Division at nearby Fort Campbell, spoke to the team. JOHN W. ROSA, a retired United States Air Force Lieutenant General, addressed the players as well. During the pre-season, Mularkey donated 500 tickets to the 101st Airborne Division. Mularkey is also a believer in first-hand exposure. Last season, the Titans held a walkthrough at the Marines training facility in San Diego while on the road to play the Chargers. In April, under Mularkey's direction, the Titans welcomed members of the 1st Brigade Combat Team "Bastogne" 101st Airborne Division to Saint Thomas Sports Park, where strength and conditioning Coach STEVE WATERTON put company commanders through a strenuous workout.

Washington Redskins

VERNON DAVIS (Tight End)

Davis sought out service members during events signing countless autographs during a walkthrough at Andrews Air Force Base and during military-exclusive events. During USAA's Salute to Service month last November, Davis got a "taste" of military life when he ate a MRE, better known as a Meal, Ready to Eat. Davis helps support Redskins Charitable Foundation events as well. He came full circle during the Foundation's annual "4th and Life Football Forum" in November 2016 as a speaker at the event, 14 years after first participating as a student-athlete at Dunbar High School. Davis also was active in the promotion of the Redskins FITT, a program dedicated to youth health and wellness. During the pilot year of Redskins FITT, more than 2,400 District of Columbia Public School seventh graders participated.

NAACP congratulates Astros' Springer ... from sports page 5

of its affiliate, the Washington Teacher's Union. He took control of the Washington Teacher's Union after it experienced a period of scandal, and helped the organization regain financial stability and membership. He and his wife, Gerri Brown-

Springer, were known for their activism in the African American civil rights community, and Mrs. Brown-Springer was elected to NAACP New Britain's Executive Board in 2016. The NAACP is proud of the

Springer families many victories on and off the field, and wishes them much success in the future.

Email sports news and photos to
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An Editorial Comment from The Mid-South Tribune:

Veterans and those who serve in the U.S. Military deserve our respect. Stand proudly during the National Anthem. Take your protest off the NFL playing field and put your energy in investing your time and skills in the African American community in a 21st Century America to better relations between Black citizens and police officers. Be positive. Bridge the gap!

Arelya J. Mitchell, Publisher/Editor-in-Chief