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CONTACT:
Michele Stork
703-855-4108
MicheleStork@ThanksUSA.org

ThanksUSA Launches \$100 Million Strong Campaign for Military Families

Announces Kevin Schmiegel, Founder and Former Executive Director of Hiring Our Heroes, as President

McLean, Virginia (May 26, 2016) – ThanksUSA, a national non-profit organization dedicated to providing educational opportunities for America's military families, today launched **\$100 Million Strong**, a campaign to grant more than 25,000 scholarships to military spouses and children in need over the next 10 years. To lead the campaign, ThanksUSA announced that the former executive director and founder of Hiring Our Heroes, retired Marine Lieutenant Colonel Kevin Schmiegel, will assume the role of president, effective June 1, 2016.

“After reaching a scholarship milestone of ‘\$10 Million Strong’ in our first decade, we realized that we had to grow significantly as an organization to meet what remains an unfilled need for thousands of military families each year,” said ThanksUSA Chairman and CEO Bob Okun. “Kevin Schmiegel’s experience as the founder of one of our nation’s largest veteran and military family non-profits will help us deliver results on a bold, new vision for ThanksUSA.”

“The need to close the financial gap for military families seeking higher education is clear and compelling, and the \$100 Million Strong campaign will help to do just that,” said Schmiegel. “While the post-9/11 G.I. Bill has supported many, it simply isn’t enough for the hundreds of thousands of families serving on active duty with multiple children and only one source of income.”

According to the 2014 Demographics Report published by Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, the ratio of active-duty members to family members is 1 to 1.4 with more than 560,000 service members claiming 1.1 million children as dependents.

“With 700,000 spouses and more than 100,000 children aged 17 to 22 in active-duty households across the country, college affordability has become one of the greatest burdens on military families,” added Schmiegel. “Yet, it is an issue that goes largely unnoticed by corporations, organizations, and individuals who are looking for meaningful ways to support men and women serving in the armed forces.”

To achieve “\$100 Million Strong” over the next 10 years, the charity will work together with 25 to 30 companies through its newly formed ThanksUSA Corporate Council with a commitment to 1) granting scholarships in locations where the companies have a large presence and in academic disciplines that match specific needs or skills gaps in the industries they represent; 2) engaging their employee resource groups to provide tutoring, mentoring, and networking events for scholarship recipients; 3) providing internship and work-study programs that allow scholars to apply what they are learning at school; 4) offering, where practical, full-time employment for scholars who graduate and have proven themselves as valued employees during internships and work-study opportunities; and 5) sharing best practices to help other members of the Corporate Council achieve excellence.

Launched in 2006, ThanksUSA has provided scholarships for university, college and post-secondary vocational education to nearly 3,700 recipients in all 50 states and the District of Columbia with a total value of \$11.1 million. In 2015, ThanksUSA awarded 257 scholarships, reaching roughly 11 percent of the 2,400 military spouses and children who applied.

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About ThanksUSA:

ThanksUSA is a non-partisan, charitable effort to mobilize Americans of all ages to “thank” the men and women of the United States Armed Forces. The organization provides college, technical and vocational school scholarships to the children and spouses of military personnel. For more information, visit www.ThanksUSA.org.