



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: JANUARY 4, 2017

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ThanksUSA Honors Orlando's Military Families with the Gift of Education

It's an untold story: College affordability has become one of the greatest burdens on our military families. Nationally, 700,000 spouses and more than 100,000 children aged 17-22 in active-duty households rely primarily on a single income — putting college out of reach. ThanksUSA, the top provider of scholarships to military spouses and children, is changing that by providing the gift of education through need-based, post-secondary school scholarships.

On January 13, 2017, ThanksUSA will salute military families in the Orlando area by bringing awareness of these challenges and raising funds for the ThanksUSA military family scholarship program at Isleworth Golf and Country Club, 6100 Payne Stewart Drive, Windermere, FL 34786 (www.ThanksUSA.org/Isleworth).

This tribute to our troops and their families provides opportunities for unique stories and interviews:

- Wounded veterans will be introduced to tennis as a positive outlet for improved physical, mental and social health at an “adaptive clinic”. It will be led by internationally renowned wheelchair tennis player Brenda Gilmore. Ms. Gilmore is a former nationally-ranked wheelchair tennis player; 2015 Professional Tennis Registry (PTR) Maryland Member of the Year; and PTR Adaptive Tennis Certified. Ms. Gilmore's first ThanksUSA Veterans Adaptive Tennis Clinic in the nation's capital can be seen here on [ABC7](#) and [WUSA9](#). She will be joined by Len Simard, Isleworth Director of Tennis and USPTA Master Professional.
- America's first female four-star General, Ann E. Dunwoody (Ret), will talk about her path to success and the qualities of leadership. A ThanksUSA board member, Gen. Dunwoody will also sign copies of her book, *A Higher Standard*. In 2012 Gen. Dunwoody retired from the Army after 38 years, leaving behind a profound legacy. Chief of Staff of the Army General Ray Odierno said then, “Ann is a leader who lived our Army values, who always led from the front... Her true legacy and reward will be the thousands of soldiers and civilians whose lives she has touched.”
- Orlando's own Shae Corey, a Navy dependent and Sergeant Matthew Thomas/ThanksUSA scholarship recipient will be in attendance. A student at Samford University in Alabama, Corey is studying History and Education. The scholarship honors Iraq veteran Army Sergeant Matthew Thomas of Florida who died accidentally after treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Sgt. Thomas's mother, Sonya Hightower LaBosco, will also be in attendance in honor of her son.
- Local tennis players and sponsors will participate in several fundraising events to support military families, including a Pro-Am tournament.



All events are open to the media. On-site, in-studio, or other interviews with the day's unique line-up of individuals, as well as ThanksUSA Chairman Bob Okun, are available.

Please contact ThanksUSA Executive Director **Michele Stork** at 703-855-4108 or MicheleStork@ThanksUSA.org.

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The clinic, competitions, and book signing are part of ThanksUSA's [Tennis Thanks the Troops](#) campaign in conjunction with the United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA). The effort encourages USPTA members and tennis enthusiasts nationwide to support military families through fundraising events and donations. The USPTA Foundation, along with the USTA Foundation awarded grants to support ThanksUSA's Veterans Adaptive Tennis Clinic Program.

ThanksUSA recently launched its \$100 Million Strong campaign to grant more than 25,000 scholarships to the children and spouses of our service men and women in need over the next ten years. There are more than 240,000 dependents of fallen and wounded military service men and women from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts alone. Some 87 percent do not qualify for federal educational assistance. Additionally, unemployment of military spouses, recently estimated at 25 percent, is costing the U.S. economy up to \$1 billion a year. ThanksUSA scholarships also offer opportunities to pursue meaningful careers.

Since ThanksUSA was launched in 2005 by two young sisters, the national non-profit organization has distributed nearly 4,000 need-based, post-secondary school scholarships valued at \$12 million to families in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Scholarship recipients represent all branches of the military, including the Reserves and National Guard. For more information, visit www.ThanksUSA.org.