ThanksUSA Announces Event Dates for 2016

Friends and supporters, we at ThanksUSA are enthusiastic about 2016 and are announcing dates for several of our annual events. You can get involved by registering to play in a tournament, donating auction items, or sponsoring an event.

The 2016 Treasure Our Troops Gala on September 28 will feature honorees General Richard B. Myers, USAF (Ret), 15th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Mrs. Mary Jo Myers, founding member of ThanksUSA’s Advisory Council. The emcee for the evening will be Tommy McFly, host of The Tommy Show on 94.7 Fresh FM.

For more information, please contact us or visit our website at www.ThanksUSA.org/events.

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Q&A with Mrs. Mary Jo Myers

Mary Jo Myers is a founding member of ThanksUSA’s Advisory Council. She is an educator with an extensive background in public service as a champion for military, education, and humanitarian causes. She has been a military spouse for more than 40 years, married to General Richard B. Myers, USAF (Ret).

Q: How best can Americans say “thank you” to our service men and women, their spouses, and their children?

Americans can best show their thanks by helping to integrate service families into their communities by offering jobs to spouses and veterans, showing appreciation for their service, and being inclusive in community organizations. And, of course, help with scholarships for education is a life changing way of saying “thanks”! Yes, sacrifices are made by all family members when one serves in the military, but they don’t want anyone to feel sorry for them. They’re proud of volunteering to serve their country, and there’s no better way to thank them and honor that service than with a welcoming hand.

Q: You’ve been a ThanksUSA Advisory Council member almost since the launch of the charity more than 10 years ago. What attracted you to ThanksUSA?

I first met the Okun family when they were exploring what they might do to support military families after getting to know the Ward family in their neighborhood. Rachel and Kelsi Okun, only 8 and 10 at the time, were interested in education and wanted that to be their focus.

I was impressed and attracted by the genuine commitment and compassion of this family who had no direct connection to the military. I appreciated that their parents helped facilitate this effort, but followed the girls’ initiative. Their success and tenacity have gone beyond what any of us might have hoped for 10 years ago!

Q: You’ve spent more than four decades helping military families. What are their biggest challenges?

The world situation today, with our nation at war for longer than any other time in our history, brings different challenges and stresses to our military and their families than those incurred during WWII.

I’m certainly not saying that the WWII deployments that lasted until surrender were easier than today, but the disruptions to family life caused by the “churn” of multiple deployments bring issues of readjustments to family dynamics and perhaps reassignments to new locales. It is especially difficult for children to adjust to these ongoing changes in their lives and the uncertainty they experience when a parent is deployed.

Q: What inspired you to focus on the educational paths of the children and spouses of our military?

My background was in education, and I’ve taught English in secondary schools as well as to non-English
With the help of this generous award, I am able to fulfill my goals of becoming an international airline pilot. I truly appreciate what ThanksUSA does for military families and am forever thankful for this opportunity.”

Air Force Dependent Leonia Hunt

VIDEO ALERT | ThanksUSA on CBS Evening News: www.ThanksUSA.org/news-stories-videos

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JESSICA WILKINS
Current Scholar

Jessica Wilkins is a proud Marine Corps spouse and mother of two who is determined to complete her undergraduate studies. Through five military relocations, Jessica has taken college courses at three different institutions over the past eight years. Jessica is pursuing a Letters, Arts, and Sciences major at Penn State University World Campus with the assistance of a $3,000 John (NMN) Coffey/ThanksUSA scholarship. Completing her degree through Penn State’s online program allows Jessica to remain involved with her local community at Camp Lejeune. She volunteers with her children’s schools, local church, and the Officer Spouses Club. She serves on the OSC Charitable Distributions board and various committees.

“I would like to thank everyone who helps make the ThanksUSA scholarship possible. The John (NMN) Coffey/ThanksUSA scholarship has allowed me to continue college while having a family of four. As a Marine wife and mother of two, I am determined to finish my degree without student loans, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

With family members usually far away, other military spouses become your support system. Those wearing the uniform count on each other in life and death situations, and those bonds carry over to family members.

Q: Your husband became Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff one month after the World Trade Center attacks of 9/11, helping to shape the War on Terror. How would you describe those years?

The past decade has given me some distance from the intensity of those years, but I remember the responsibility and the incredible honor we felt we had to represent the men and women in uniform and their families. We were awed by their dedication, resolve, bravery, and commitment to their country. It was a stressful and uncertain time, but being united in the same cause helped us to keep each other strong. There are not many jobs where husband and wife work with the same people and travel together for business. We each had our own agenda, but we were focused on the same things: ensuring support for our military families during war time and representing our military abroad to the best of our ability.

To read more, visit www.ThanksUSA.org.
Tennis Thanks the Troops

Attention tennis enthusiasts! There are many ways for you and your club to get involved in 2016 by hosting a fundraiser for Tennis Thanks the Troops (TTTT), a joint effort between ThanksUSA and the United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA). Below are some of the most successful efforts from 2015.

Berkeley Hills Country Club in Duluth, Georgia, raised funds for ThanksUSA by hosting themed tennis mixers. They have also included a silent auction which helped boost their efforts. To date, six ThanksUSA scholarships have been awarded to military family members in their name.

Balboa Tennis Club, San Diego District Tennis Association, and San Diego USPTA have worked together to provide funds for six ThanksUSA scholarships. They did so by adding TTTT as the beneficiary to their Annual Tennis Fest, which included a donation option on the online application and a silent auction.

Junior Tennis Champions Center in College Park, Maryland, was host to the annual All-American Family Day Bash, a Memorial Day weekend tournament with TTTT as the beneficiary. This event involved community sponsors, a welcome reception, and a raffle to raise funds for ThanksUSA’s scholarship program.

To learn more, visit www.ThanksUSA.org/Tennis-Thanks-the-Troops.

National Spokesperson Stephen Curry

ThanksUSA National Spokesperson and Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry recently played as a starter on the NBA Western Conference All-Star team for the third consecutive year.

To end 2015, Stephen was named the Associated Press Male Athlete of Year. After helping Golden State capture the title last season, he led the Warriors to a 24-0 overall start to the 2015-16 season, the most consecutive wins to begin a season in NBA history. He has also earned Western Conference Player of the Week and Player of the Month honors. We wish Stephen and the Warriors the best in 2016!

ThanksUSA Alumni & Friends

ThanksUSA has officially launched its Alumni & Friends website and directory. Alumni & Friends was developed to support and connect the growing number of ThanksUSA scholars as they pursue careers after graduation. Benefits of the group will include exclusive networking events, a private discussion forum, and access to the alumni directory. Stay tuned!
2016 LEADERSHIP

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ThanksUSA Scholarship Program
Applications Open: April 1, 2016
Applications Close: May 15, 2016
www.ThanksUSA.org

• 2,400 applications received in 2015
• Since 2006, our scholars have earned more than $11 million in scholarships