



**Sticks For Soldiers IX**  
**Thanksgiving Charity Lacrosse Tournament**  
**FAIRFIELD LUDLOWE**  
**HIGH SCHOOL LACROSSE**  
Jim Tommins  
Tournament Chairman  
*Sticks For Soldiers, Inc.*  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Two Wounded Servicemen Named Honorees for the 9th Annual *STICKS FOR SOLDIERS* Thanksgiving Charity Lacrosse Tournament on November 29<sup>th</sup>, Fairfield, CT.**

**Fairfield, Conn., October 27, 2014-** United States Army Sergeant First Class Mark Holbert and United States Marine Corps Sergeant Aaron Alonso have been named the honorees and beneficiaries for this year's 9<sup>th</sup> annual *Sticks For Soldiers* Thanksgiving Charity Lacrosse Tournament, hosted by the Fairfield Ludlowe High School boy's lacrosse program on Saturday, November 29<sup>th</sup>. SFC Holbert and Sergeant Alonso both sustained life-changing injuries from separate incidents abroad in August 2010 and February 2014 respectively.

*Sticks for Soldiers* is a non-profit charity with its mission to raise money to support future needs of severely-wounded soldiers, and promote youth awareness of military service through this state-wide event. In eight years, the tournament, which is held every year on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, has raised over \$330,000 through team entry fees, silent auction, merchandise, and corporate and private donations. This year, over 900 high school athletes from 64 boys and girls teams are expected to participate and they will play more than 125 games during the one-day event starting at 9am. Game officials from around the state of Connecticut, will donate their time as will many volunteers from Fairfield Ludlowe High School.

**United States ARMY Sergeant First Class Mark Holbert**

SFC Holbert, retired, 36, of Rockville, MD, is a former 82nd Airborne and Special Forces Intelligence Operator, with 16 1/2 years of service. He is married to his wife Tiffany, who also served, and proud father of a seven-year-old daughter Isabel. SFC Holbert is the son of a career Air Force veteran and grandson of a WWII Army soldier. On his fourth deployment to Afghanistan, he was wounded in August 2010 from an IED explosion and lost both legs above the knee, several fingers and thumb while sustaining arm tissue damage. Mark continues to push the boundaries of his physical disabilities. He has completed three 200 mile relay races, a Marine Corp Marathon, three Army 10-milers, two West Point Sprint Triathlons, and two Nations Olympic Triathlons. Mark's ultimate goal is to complete an Ironman.

**United States Marine Corps Sergeant Aaron Alonso**

Born in Jefferson Township, New Jersey, Sergeant Alonso, 26, is recovering and conducting his rehabilitation at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, MD. A squad leader in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, he was injured just this past February 2014 from an IED explosion, where he lost both his legs above his knee. Aaron is married to his wife Jessica and they have a year-old daughter Riley - born just weeks before his deployment. He has endured over 100 surgical procedures in his recovery, yet in only six months of rehab, he has already wheeled himself in a 5K and made an inspiring climb up the 88 steps of the Lincoln Memorial in August.

**-more-**

### ***Sticks For Soldiers* Leadership**

Jim Tommins, tournament chairman and Chris Parisi, Ludlowe Head Coach agree, "Holding this tournament is a moving experience that has grown well beyond the Fairfield community. The timing of Thanksgiving weekend couldn't be any more fitting as we say thank you in our own way to brave soldiers like Sergeant First Class Holbert and Sergeant Alonso. Both have sacrificed so much for defending our freedom, and face significant challenges that we could never imagine. We can't thank our soldiers and their families enough for their sacrifices."

"This is our small way of bringing our lacrosse community together and opportunity for our student-athletes to "give thanks" to servicemen and women," said Coach Chris Parisi. Tommins added, "This charity tournament continues to grow every year, as the word of its special mission spreads through the Tri-state area and beyond. High schools are entering two and three teams, and undertaking their own fundraising to help these soldiers. There is still more that we can do. In the first eight years, we have directly helped eight severely - injured soldiers to enhance their lives. We are blessed to have the opportunity to do so."

### **Tournament Details**

The tournament is at maximum capacity. Team sign-in begins at 8:00 am with first games at 9:00. There will be a mid-day ceremony complete with a military honor guard to introduce and recognize the honorees. The competition will be excellent and includes high schools from host Fairfield Ludlowe, Fairfield Warde, Fairfield Prep, Darien, Ridgefield, Staples, Hopkins, St. Josephs, Notre Dame- Fairfield, Barlow, Amity, Hamden, Cheshire, Newtown, Guilford, Stamford, Southington, Brien McMahon, Weston, Xavier and others. The tournament "champion" will be the honorees themselves.

All are welcome to attend, and admission is free. Donations will be accepted. Commemorative T-shirts will be on sale. Corporate and private donations are welcome, and may be sent to "***Sticks for Soldiers, Inc.***", PO Box 475, Fairfield, Conn. 06824. For more information, honoree profiles, tournament schedules, location and history, please see [www.sticksforsoldiers.org](http://www.sticksforsoldiers.org).

### **About *Sticks for Soldiers***

***Sticks For Soldiers, Inc.*** is a non-profit high school charity which hosts a lacrosse tournament held in Fairfield, Connecticut to raise money for severely- wounded military personnel. Held on Thanksgiving Saturday, it is sponsored by the Fairfield Ludlowe High School lacrosse team. The mission of the tournament is to provide support and give thanks to the service men and women who put their lives on the line and sacrificed for our country, while raising awareness among high school athletes to the sacrifices being made by people just a few years older than they are. Through their play and fund-raising participation, the athletes demonstrate their tangible thanks and support. Originating in 2006, the idea came from long-time lacrosse advocate Mike Voucas along with support from current Fairfield Ludlowe Head Coach Chris Parisi and a number of dedicated volunteers. The tournament and related fund-raising efforts has now raised over \$330,000 in eight years.

Sticks For Soldiers, Inc. is recognized by the IRS as a 501c3 non-profit charity. FEIN 46-0962202.

For more information go to [www.sticksforsoldiers.org](http://www.sticksforsoldiers.org)