

STICKS FOR SOLDIERS XII
THANKSGIVING CHARITY
LACROSSE TOURNAMENT

FAIRFIELD LUDLOWE
HIGH SCHOOL LACROSSE

STICKSFORSOLDIERS.ORG



STICKSFORSOLDIERS

CONTACT:
JEFF CASUCCI
TOURNAMENT CHAIRMAN
T: 203-292-7511
JMCASUCCI@YAHOO.COM
STICKS FOR SOLDIERS, INC.
PO BOX 475
FAIRFIELD, CT 06824

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

9:00 AM, NOVEMBER 9, 2017

Two Wounded Servicemen Named Honorees for the 12th Annual Sticks for Soldiers Thanksgiving Charity Lacrosse Tournament on November 25th, Fairfield, CT.

Fairfield, Conn., November 6, 2017 – United States Army Staff Sergeant (Ret) **William Kleinedler** and United States Army Specialist (Ret) **Calvin Todd** have been named the honorees and beneficiaries for this year's 12th annual **Sticks for Soldiers Thanksgiving Charity Lacrosse Tournament**, hosted by the Fairfield Ludlowe High School boy's lacrosse program on Saturday, November 25th. SSG Kleinedler and SPC Todd both sustained life-changing injuries from combat in October 2006 and March 2012 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 11 years, the tournament, which is held every year on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, has raised over \$675,000 through team entry fees, silent auction, merchandise, and corporate and private donations. This year, more than 900 boys and girls from 60 Connecticut high school teams are expected to participate and play 100 games during the one-day event. Game officials from around the state of Connecticut will donate their time as well as many volunteers from Fairfield Ludlowe High School and the surrounding communities. This is the players' opportunity to give thanks, provide support and raise awareness of our service members. The goal this year is to raise \$120,000, which will directly benefit these, and other, severely wounded honorees.

2017 12th Annual Honorees

United States Army Staff Sergeant William Kleinedler

Staff Sergeant (SSG) William Kleinedler was born and raised in Michigan. He holds a degree in architecture and maintains a life-long passion for art. SSG Kleinedler served in the U.S. Army for 15 years before being medically retired in 2009 due to injuries he sustained after an improvised exploding device (IED) was detonated under the vehicle he was driving in Iraq.

On October 17, 2006, SSG Kleinedler was with his unit in the town of Tarmijha, Iraq with the mission to provide medical attention to the local Iraqi people. Once the mission was completed, SSG Kleinedler and his unit loaded their trucks and moved out of town. While driving, SSG Kleinedler saw a fresh spot of asphalt in the road as it passed underneath his vehicle. While he immediately knew this spot likely contained an IED, he had no time to react. In an instant, the IED detonated raising the entire vehicle off the ground. The blast punched a hole in the bottom of the truck, blowing fuel inside and igniting it. Immediately flames filled the cabin and engulfed SSG Kleinedler and the four other soldiers he was driving. He instinctively held his breath to avoid inhaling the flames. After struggling with the latch, the door finally popped open and SSG Kleinedler rolled out of the truck and across the road to put out his flames. His team leader was thrown from the vehicle with minor injuries. The gunner and two interpreters were killed. Within three days William was at Brooke Army Medical Center on Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

It would be a long journey back to physical and psychological health for SSG Kleinedler. After sustaining mostly second- and third-degree burns to a substantial portion of his face on upper body, SSG Kleinedler underwent several surgeries over the course of numerous years. Through the work of a wonderful medical staff and plenty of determination from SSG Kleinedler, he regained the use of his hands. Due to the severity of the burns to his face, William will undergo further treatment and surgeries for the foreseeable future. SSG Kleinedler received the Bronze Star and Purple Heart, among many other decorations, for his service.

SSG Kleinedler now resides with his wife Jenny and three daughters in New Braintree, Massachusetts. He recently opened a new studio where he continues his study of art and sculpture.

(over)

(continued)

United States Army Specialist Calvin Todd

Calvin Todd is originally from Deerfield, NH. He started playing lacrosse at 12 years old. To him, “it (lacrosse) seemed like the world’s greatest invention.” He loved to play and decided to become a goalie because he knew that it would provide him with the most opportunities to play.

After graduation from high school, Calvin attended the College of Wooster, where he played lacrosse during his freshman and sophomore years. Unfortunately, after his sophomore year, Calvin was dealt a blow when he suffered a career ending injury to his hand and wrist. The loss of lacrosse was difficult for Calvin to deal with but, like so many other challenges he faced in life, Calvin would not be kept down. He attained his certification to officiate; a certification that transitioned to coaching.

In the spring of 2010, just a few months before his college graduation, Calvin heard the call to service and enlisted in the United States Army putting his love for lacrosse on hold once again. Calvin trained to become an Army medic so that he could render aid and support to soldiers in need. Upon completion of his training, Calvin was assigned to 1-64 AR, 2HBCT, 3rd Infantry Division at Fort Stewart, GA. In March of 2012, Calvin and his unit were deployed to Afghanistan on a nine month deployment.

On October 4, 2012, SPC Todd was part of a four-day mission in Afghanistan to clear improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and push the Taliban out of the nearby villages. His unit was about 200 meters from its final checkpoint when Taliban fighters opened fire. While moving up front to assist three other soldiers that had been wounded by an IED, Calvin stepped on a secondary device . As a result, Calvin lost his lower left leg. He was transported to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, MD to begin the recovery process.

During his recovery, Calvin had to learn to walk again. He also worked to learn to run in a modified form. He had to deal with the phantom limb pain and the constant swelling and shrinking of his residual limb. For a while he was lost and confused when thinking of the course for the rest of his life. He questioned whether he would ever be able to follow his passion for lacrosse again.

One day during his recovery, SPC Todd received an email from his former club coach, Jeff Coulson, inviting Calvin to play in an annual winter tournament. Coach Coulson was not aware of Calvin’s injuries. Calvin saw this contact as an opportunity to set a goal for himself: to play again. Calvin knew that he had fought through adversity and injury before and was confident he could do it again. Four months after starting rehabilitation, he began to run again and just a few months after that in March of 2013, he volunteered to coach a local lacrosse program in Washington, DC.

Calvin credits lacrosse for laying the foundations of the man he is today, values further enhanced by his time in service. Lacrosse has motivated him to return to the most normal, active life he can have. Calvin has since studied furniture building and is currently trying to establish himself with his own business. Calvin currently lives with his wife and young son. While he no longer plays, he continues to help Jeff coach the Catamounts when he can.

Sticks For Soldiers Leadership

Jeff Casucci, President of Sticks for Soldiers and tournament chairman said of this year’s event, “We are proud to have such heroes as William and Calvin as our honorees this year. We cannot thank them enough for the sacrifices they have made on behalf of our community, our country and the freedoms we all enjoy. They serve as shining examples of the selfless dedication our service men and women exhibit every day across the world. We are honored by their presence at the Sticks for Soldiers event and hope to raise awareness of the sacrifices they have made. There is no better time than Thanksgiving weekend to thank our military personnel for their service.”

Additional honoree/beneficiaries may be named at a later time.

(over)

(continued)

Tournament Details

Team sign-in begins at 8:00am with first games at 9:00am. At Ludlowe's Taft Stadium, there will be a mid-day ceremony complete with a military honor guard to introduce and recognize the honorees. Participating high schools include: Fairfield Ludlowe, Fairfield Warde, Staples, Darien, Greenwich, Ridgefield, Glastonbury, Joel Barlow, Hopkins, Fairfield Prep, and many more. Games will be played at Fairfield Ludlowe High School, Roger Ludlowe Middle School, Tomlinson Middle School, and Sturges Park fields.

All are welcome to attend and admission is free. Corporate and private donations are greatly appreciated. Donations will be accepted on site at the event and can also be made through the Click&Pledge section of our homepage (found at www.sticksforsoldiers.org) or mailed to "**Sticks for Soldiers, Inc.**," PO Box 475, Fairfield, Conn. 06824. Additionally, there will also be various great items will be available for Silent Auction, and commemorative T-shirts will be on sale. For more information, honoree profiles, tournament schedules, location and history, please see www.sticksforsoldiers.org.

About Sticks for Soldiers

Sticks for Soldiers 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 \$675,000 in 11 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