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Honoring America's Veterans  
Veterans Day Parade, Phoenix

## 2025

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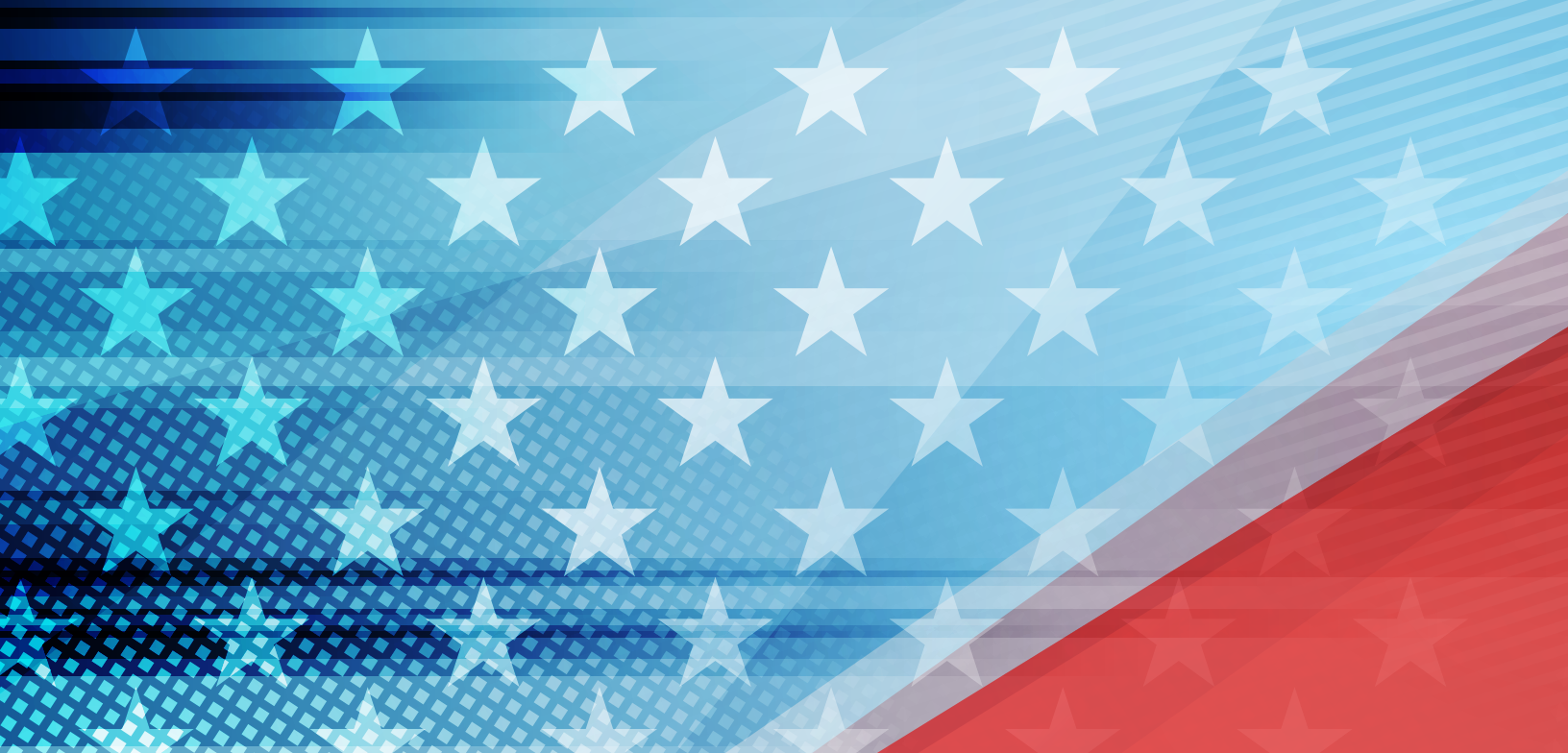
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# Origins of Veterans Day

**W**orld War I, also known as “The Great War,” was fought from 1914 to 1918. During this conflict, Great Britain, France, Russia, Belgium, Italy, Japan, the United States and other countries, which formed the “Allies,” defeated the so-called “Central Powers,” which included Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria. On the “eleventh hour, of the eleventh day, of the eleventh month” of 1918, German leaders signed an armistice, or a temporary ending to hostilities, with the Allied powers. On that date, November 11, celebrations were held in New York City, Paris, London and in other cities around the globe. The following year, President Woodrow Wilson declared November 11 as “Armistice Day,” a day to observe the ending of World War I.

On June 4, 1926, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution asking President Calvin Coolidge to call upon officials to “display the flag of the United States on all government buildings on November 11 and inviting the people of the United States to observe the day in schools and churches, or other suitable places, with appropriate ceremonies of friendly relations with all other peoples.” Twelve years later, on May 13, 1938, Congress passed an Act making the 11th of November Armistice Day, a federal holiday.

Initially, Armistice Day was to be a day to honor veterans of World War I. But following the tremendous calls to arms and human sacrifice during World War II and the Korean conflict, veterans groups urged Congress to consider a day to celebrate U.S. veterans of all wars. On June 1, 1954, President Dwight Eisenhower signed a bill changing Armistice Day to Veterans Day.

## **Difference between Veterans Day and Memorial Day**

Veterans Day in the United States is a day to honor all Americans who have served in the U.S. military, both during wartime and in peacetime. Memorial Day is a day for remembering and honoring Americans who have died serving the nation, especially those who died in battle or from wounds received during armed conflicts. On Veterans Day, Americans thank the living veterans for their service to the country and recognize that all who have served the country, not just those who have died, have made sacrifices and done their duty.

# Celebrity Grand Marshal

## Randy Couture

World Champion, Actor, Businessman, and Brand Ambassador, U.S. Army Veteran

A high school wrestling state champion, U.S. Army soldier, three-time NCAA All-American, international Greco-Roman competitor, and six-time UFC World Champion and Hall of Famer, Randy Couture is a true icon in the sport of Mixed Martial Arts and the UFC. In addition to his stellar standing in combat sports, Couture is also a successful businessman, actor, and best-selling author.



with the Stars", "Impractical Jokers", and multiple episodes of "Hawaii Five O".

Randy Couture served six years in the U.S. Army (1982-1988), attaining the rank of Sergeant in the 101st Airborne. In 2009, he founded the Xtreme Couture GI Foundation (XCGIF). The GI Foundation is dedicated to helping injured veterans of America's Armed Forces.

Randy wrestled at the World Championships in Greco-Roman in 1991, 1993, 1995, and 1997 and became a three-time Olympic team alternate (1988, 1992, and 1996), a semifinalist at the 2000 Olympic Trials, a three-time NCAA Division I All-American, and a two-time NCAA Division I runner-up (1991 and 1992) at Oklahoma State University.

By December of 1997, at the age of 33, Couture made his debut in the world of professional fighting, claiming victory in the Heavyweight division of his first appearance in the UFC and soon earning the moniker of "Randy 'The Natural' Couture." He has fought in 16 title fights and has six UFC title reigns in the Lightweight and Heavyweight divisions. He also became the 4th pro fighter to be inducted into the UFC Hall of Fame.

Couture's growing career in acting includes the hit films "The Expendables" and "The Expendables 2," opposite Sylvester Stallone and Bruce Willis. He reprised his role as Toll Road in "The Expendables 3." Randy also played a recurring character on CBS's "The Unit," in a role written specifically for him. Randy has appeared in Spike's "Lip Sync Battle", HBO's "Ballers", "Whose Line is it Anyway", "Dancing

Couture has also teamed with Jay Glazer of Fox Sports and Green Beret and NFL player Nate Boyer to create Merging Vets and Players (MVP), a program designed to address the challenges that many combat veterans and professional athletes face when transitioning their service/professional life toward a new mission in civilian life.

Most recently, he has become a brand ambassador for the uniquely veteran-founded Four Branches Bourbon. Four Branches is the only spirits company founded by veterans from all four major U.S. military branches, Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines, and its signature bourbon is built on a rare four-grain mash bill (65% corn, 15% rye, 10% malted barley, 10% wheat) that delivers complexity, smoothness, and a "Kentucky kiss" finish. ■





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# Save the Date

## Honoring America’s Veterans

### Pearl Harbor Day Commemoration and Celebration

### Saturday, December 6 10:55 AM

Wesley Bolin Plaza, 1700 W. Washington  
Phoenix, Arizona Amphitheater

# World War II Veteran Grand Marshal

## Charlie Johnson

U.S. Army Veteran

Charlie Johnson was a man whose life journey, from the battlefields of World War II to the streets of Cleveland and the hospitals of Arizona, was defined by an extraordinary commitment to service. Born on June 28, 1921, in Clarksburg, West Virginia, Johnson's lifelong ethos of duty was forged early in his military career.

Drafted on August 1, 1942, shortly after Pearl Harbor, he resolved "to be the best soldier the Army had." His potential quickly propelled him from an infantry rifle platoon to learning Morse code and, eventually, training men for the Transportation Corps. He proudly served in the South Pacific from 1942 to 1945, including assignments in New Guinea, Hollandia, and the Philippines, where he loaded cargo onto a single, unescorted ship destined for action.

After the war, Johnson and his wife settled in Cleveland, Ohio, where he supported their five children by driving a streetcar and bus, opening a barbershop next to his wife's beauty salon, and working at the Post Office to secure their family home.



However, the next chapter of his life became his enduring legacy. In a powerful conversion to Catholicism, Johnson's innate calling to serve the community came to the forefront. In 1952, he opened a small storefront mission that evolved into the St. Martin De Porres Center, where he provided food for the hungry, clothing for the needy, and educational opportunities for local youth and seniors. Under his leadership as Executive Director, and with support from the Bishop and local businesses, the center expanded into a significant community resource.

He then transitioned his service into the church, becoming a Permanent Deacon in 1972, one of the first in the Diocese, a role from which he retired in 1994. From 1990, he also served as a Board Certified Chaplain in multiple hospitals, retiring from Banner Hospital in 2015 at the remarkable age of 94.

To this day, Charlie Johnson maintains an active life, enjoying golf, painting, and especially archery. He was a multi-medal recipient in archery, highlighted by a feature at the Las Vegas Shootout when he was 101. He resides in Phoenix, Arizona, with his wife, Bonnie, a fellow Chaplain. ■





# Business Community Grand Marshal

## Freddy Alvarez

U.S. Navy Submarine Service

Born and raised in Brownsville, Texas, Freddy Alvarez was shaped by a strong family and deep roots in South Texas. After honorably serving aboard nuclear submarines in the U.S. Navy, he pursued higher education, earning a degree in Economics and an MBA from Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi. His leadership journey has spanned the globe, with executive roles across North America, Latin America, and Africa, always guided by a data-driven approach and a heart for service.



Alvarez's leadership style blends strategic discipline with entrepreneurial courage. Drawing from his military precision and global business experience, he has built a reputation for identifying opportunities, empowering teams, and driving sustainable growth. His ability to turn challenges into measurable results has made him a respected figure in both the private and veteran business communities.

Today, he calls Arizona home, where he and his wife, Laura, are raising four amazing sons. Together, they've built a family and a business legacy grounded in service, grit, and opportunity.

As the owner of five companies, he leads with a mission-first mindset. His ventures include Alpha Zulu

Transportation, an Amazon Delivery Logistics partner recognized for operational excellence, and two Veteran Service Brands, Paint Corps and G-FORCE of Phoenix, which provide high-quality residential and commercial services throughout the metro area. These veteran-owned franchises not only deliver exceptional results but also create meaningful employment for those transitioning from military to civilian life.

Alvarez's passion extends beyond profit. He is deeply involved in mentoring emerging entrepreneurs and supporting initiatives that equip veterans and underrepresented groups with business skills, leadership training, and access to opportunity. His philosophy is simple: "Success is best measured by how many others you help rise."

A believer in the American Dream and the transformative power of free enterprise, Freddy Alvarez approaches every venture with integrity, faith, and a long-term vision for community impact. He continues to use his platform to advocate for veteran entrepreneurship, leadership development, and economic empowerment across Arizona.

"I am honored to serve again — this time through business, leadership, and community," says Alvarez."





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# Korean War Veteran Grand Marshal

**Jerry Santy**

U.S. Air Force Master Sergeant (Ret.)

Following in the footsteps of his three brothers, who all served in World War II, Santy joined the military in 1952 upon graduating from high school. Rather than being drafted into the Korean War, he joined the Air Force. As his oldest brother was actually at Pearl Harbor, joining the military was one of the few options available to him in those days, since his parents couldn't afford his college education.

After completing basic training in Texas and radar training in Colorado, his first assignment was to Yuma, Arizona, not South Korea, as the conflict had ended by 1953. As an airborne avionics technician, he serviced the training aircraft there. His military career has spanned 17 assignments in 14 states over 20 years, including two full years at Hughes Aircraft Company, where he studied the newest radar systems.

He served in two wars, Korea and Vietnam, and remembers being on alert status during the Cuban Missile Crisis when he was stationed at Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida. While stationed there, he helped his squadron win the worldwide William Tell Flight Competition in the 1960s. He spent a year in Vietnam with the Spectre Program (technically in Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand, but that was all top secret in those days). As head of aircraft maintenance of the C-130 gunships, they flew night missions against enemy logistics on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Upon his return to the United States, he was promoted to



Senior Master Sgt. However, he was informed that he would be promptly returning to Vietnam for an additional tour. After serving one tour in Vietnam, he declined the promotion and instead said he would retire at 20 years as a Master Sergeant.

After retiring, Santy opened his very successful insurance agency. Continuing his military advocacy, he organized the Montana Military Retirees Association and successfully defeated several anti-military bills in the Montana Legislature. One bill would have closed the VA Hospital in Helena, MT.

Additionally, before Tricare replaced Champus, he initiated two separate federal Congressional investigations of the program, as Champus was inadequately paying military medical bills.

"In my community, I served on the Board of Directors of a multi-state federal credit union for over 30 years, served on the Board of Child and Family Services, served as Board president of a local mall, and even volunteered for a six-month AKC Collie rescue. I dedicated many years to youth sports and scouting," said Santy. "I am proud that my military legacy has been carried on by ten of my children and grandchildren who have served or are currently serving in the military," he added.

He is honored to serve as this year's Korean War Veteran Grand Marshal in the Parade. ■





# In Honor of World War II Veteran

Mike C. Gomez 1/9/1925–9/24/2025

U.S. Army Veteran

Mike C. Gomez was born in Phoenix at the house his Dad built on January 9, 1925. He was a fourth generation Arizonan and a native Phoenician and grew up in the Grant Park area of Phoenix, attending Grant and Lowell Schools. During high school at Phoenix Union, he joined the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, worked for the Civilian Conservation Corps and met his future wife who he married in 1943.

Mike Gomez loved to say, "the U.S. Army offered me a job" in May of 1943 as World War II had begun. He landed at Omaha Beach during the D-Day invasion, served under General Patton in the Third Army, fought in many battles including the Battle of the Bulge. One of his best memories of that time was marching with the Free French in the liberation of Paris. He also saw much suffering including the liberation of a concentration camp.



After the war, Gomez served in the Arizona National Guard, worked as a Right of Way Agent for the County, then went to work for the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation also as a Right of Way Agent. He negotiated and purchased land for the construction of the Central Arizona Project.

Gomez was a founding member (1945) of the Tony F. Sosa-Ray Martinez American Legion Post 41, Phoenix, AZ. Mike Gomez was an active member and leader, serving and assisting Veterans. He was also the longest living member (80 years) of Post 41 until his passing.

Gomez was selected as a Veteran Grand Marshal, but due to his untimely death, was unable to fulfill the honor. ■

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# Vietnam War Veteran Grand Marshal

## Roger Sandeen

U.S. Army

Roger Sandeen was born on November 14, 1945, in Fremont, Nebraska. He and his three younger sisters were raised in an impoverished family by a World War II veteran and his wife. He graduated from Midland Lutheran College with a BSBA degree in June 1968, thanks to student loans and scholarships. The Selective Service System then changed his classification to 1A – Available for unrestricted military service. Rather than start a new job and wait to be drafted, Sandeen enlisted in the Army for two years of active duty. Although the war had become increasingly unpopular, he wanted to serve his country. “After all,” he said, “America provided student loans for my college education through the National Defense Education Act of 1958.”

Sandeen was sent to Fort Lewis for basic training and graduated in late August 1968. He was then given orders for advanced infantry training also at Fort Lewis, graduating in October 1968. He was then issued orders to report to Fort Lewis for deployment to South Vietnam in January 1969.

He served with the 9th Infantry Division in the Mekong Delta area. He was assigned to Delta Company, 3rd Battalion, 47th Regiment operating out of a company



base camp in Kien Hoa province. He served as an individual fire crewman, performing various combat roles, including platoon point man. Sandeen and his platoon sergeant, Donnie Lee Miller, were wounded in action by a booby-trapped grenade on March 17, 1969. After surgery and physical therapy, he returned to his combat unit in mid-April.

During his service in Vietnam, Roger Sandeen was awarded 11 medals, including the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and Air and Army Commendation medals. He was diagnosed with PTSD because of his Vietnam service by the VA a few years ago. Roger completed the PTSD treatment program at the Phoenix VA medical center. Although the traumatic memories of Vietnam never go away, he says he now has better skills to cope with PTSD.

Upon completion of his active duty obligation, he returned to civilian life and became a CPA. He worked in public accounting and corporate America for over 45 years, spanning Omaha, Kansas City, Minneapolis, and ultimately Phoenix. In addition to his professional life, Sandeen has volunteered for several non-profit organizations that serve those in need, particularly veterans. His only son, Chris, is a teacher based in San Diego. ■



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— Catholic Charities President & CEO Paul Mulligan, U.S. Navy Veteran

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The background of the entire page is a high-resolution image of the United States flag, showing the stars and stripes in a waving motion. A large blue diamond shape is superimposed over the upper half of the flag.

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# Cold War Veteran Grand Marshal

## Carl Bryon Forkner

U.S. Navy Commander (Ret.)

Born in Chicago, IL, in 1958, Carl Forkner served 28 years as a Naval Flight Officer and Surface Warfare Officer. He began his Navy career as a Naval Flight Officer in the P-3C Orion aircraft, based in Jacksonville, FL, and participated in deployed operations against Libya in 1986. He then spent two years as a joint Advanced Navigation Instructor at Mather Air Force Base (AFB), CA, before rejoining the Navy on the staff of Carrier Group ONE in North Island, CA, where he flew the S-3A/B aircraft carrier-based aircraft. His Department Head tour took him to Ventura, CA, from where he deployed four times to Antarctica in support of the National Science Foundation. He was selected for a Fellowship at the Pentagon, from which he was promoted to Deputy Director for Naval Matters at the Center for Naval Analyses.

Following his tour in Washington, DC, he reported to the USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70) in Bremerton, WA, as Combat Direction Center Officer, Assistant Operations Officer, and Integrated Training Team Leader. On September 11, 2001, the ship was off the west coast of India, en route to the Persian Gulf, but it took station in the North Arabian Sea. It was here that the battle group and air wing launched the first strikes into Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. He returned home in 2002, becoming the Senior Naval Officer at NORAD's Western Air Defense Sector HQ at McChord AFB, WA, where he was responsible for directing airborne



operations for Operation Noble Eagle, protecting National Special Security Events, and providing Presidential support with the Secret Service when the President was west of the Mississippi. He finished his career as an Assistant Professor at the Air War College at Maxwell AFB, AL in 2011.

After retiring from the Navy, he completed the first of two Ph.D. degrees and then worked as the Chief Operations Officer for a Tempe training company. He left the business world in 2018 to volunteer full-time for the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) in Mesa, AZ, where he served as a Veteran Service Officer, Chapter Adjutant, and Chapter Commander, before being elected Junior Vice Commander for the state DAV organization. In June 2025, he became Department Adjutant and CEO for DAV in Arizona.

His civic accomplishments include serving as a Boy Scout leader, a Dementia Friends Champion, Secretary/Treasurer of the Board of Directors of Resurrection Street Ministry, which supports homeless and underserved veterans, and Chair of the Mesa Chamber Veterans Program.

Carl Forkner is an outstanding leader who exemplifies honor, courage, and a commitment to his community and its residents, as well as to veterans. ■





# Desert Storm Grand Marshal

## Kathy Lowrey Gallowitz

U.S. Air Force Lt. Colonel (Ret.)

Lt. Col. Kathy Gallowitz served 29 years in the U.S. Air Force on active duty, in the Reserve, and National Guard as a nurse and public affairs officer. Early in her career, she was a flight nurse and one of the initial leaders who developed and implemented the Armed Services' Sexual Assault Response Program.

In response to 9/11, she created and led an unprecedented statewide outreach initiative for the Ohio National Guard, pioneering civilian engagement supporting troops and their families. Under her leadership, the program advanced military hiring best practices, expanded military ministries, increased the number of TRICARE providers, and facilitated military-friendly initiatives in public schools and colleges. Many Civilian Veteran Champions she collaborated with are featured in her book "Beyond Thank You for Your Service: The Veteran Champion Handbook for Civilians."

As Founder and President of Vanguard Veteran, LLC, Gallowitz serves as a strategic advisor, helping employers build in-house Veteran hiring capabilities to attract and retain veterans, strengthen teams, and boost productivity. She also speaks widely on becoming a Veteran Champion,



best hiring practices, veteran inclusion, military culture, and her personal journey of military leadership.

Since moving to Arizona, Gallowitz has been a catalyst for veteran initiatives. She founded VetConnect, launched Women Who Lead and its annual summits, helped a Chamber of Commerce implement a military transition support program and Veteran Champion Award, played a role in mobilizing the legal community to host Arizona's first Veteran Treatment Court conference, served as chair of the Arizona Veterans Services Advisory Commission,

and was appointed to the state's inaugural Veteran Caucus Advisory Board. In recognition of her lifelong service, Kathy was inducted into the Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame, Class of 2025.

Gallowitz and her husband, Ed, a career Army combat veteran, enjoy traveling, and together they cherish seven children and nine grandchildren. ■

# Operation Iraqi Freedom Veteran Grand Marshal

## Rick Kreiberg

U.S. Army Command Sergeant Major (Ret.)

Rick Kreiberg was born on Fairchild Air Force Base (AFB) in Spokane, WA, and served in the United States Army for 35 years from 1983 until 2018. He served in multiple locations stateside and overseas, including a deployment to Iraq in 2004.

His career encompassed logistics, aviation, recruiting and retention, transportation, maintenance, training, operations, procurement, civil affairs, and installation management. He also led at every level from squad leader to brigade Command Sergeant Major. He earned numerous awards and decorations, most notably the Legion of Merit Medal, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with eight Oak Leaf Clusters, the Combat Action Badge, Parachutist Badge, Air Assault Badge, and the Gold Recruiter Badge with three sapphires.

Kreiberg's military education encompasses every level of Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Development, including the Sergeant's Major Academy (Class 59). He also completed the Joint Senior Leaders Course, the Pre-Command Course, the Garrison Leaders Course, Logistics Management Course, Battle Staff Course, US Army Airborne School, Air Assault Course, and US Army Recruiting School.

After retiring from the Army, Kreiberg discovered that pre 9/11 Veterans, especially Vietnam Veterans, were not



getting the same level of resources, care, and respect that post 9/11 Veterans receive. To address the needs of those who served before him, Rick founded the non-profit Veterans Affinity, which helps Veteran seniors (at no cost) with housing, healthcare, honors, and benefits.

Kreiberg says he and his team of volunteers are truly minimizing barriers to Veterans' care. "To date, Veterans Affinity has enrolled nearly 2,000 veterans into the VA healthcare system, coordinated long-term and hospice care for almost 1,000 veterans, escorted over 500 housebound Veterans to their medical appointments, and assisted over 600 Veterans with their VA pension and survivors' benefit claims."

Kreiberg also made it his personal mission to ensure every Veteran, regardless of status or service dates, is seen, heard, supported, and remembered. He and his volunteers make that happen every day by visiting isolated Veterans, comforting terminally ill Veterans bedside, building camaraderie through Veteran coffee hour socials across Arizona, and hosting Welcome Home Ceremonies for those who never received one.

Kreiberg's pride and joy are his two adult children, Chad (24) and Chloe (20). ■





# Operation Enduring Freedom Veteran Grand Marshal

## Wesley Brandon Reid

U.S. Army Master Sergeant (Ret.)

Wesley Brandon Reid is a distinguished Master Sergeant in the U.S. Army with over two decades of exemplary service in biomedical equipment maintenance and healthcare technology management. Reid has built an exceptional career combining technical expertise, leadership excellence, and educational innovation within the military healthcare system.

Reid's military journey began with specialized training as a Biomedical Equipment Maintenance Technician from 2000 to 2020. His commitment to professional development is evident through his extensive educational achievements, including two Associate of Applied Science degrees from the Community College of the Air Force in Biomedical Equipment Technology and Instructor of Technology & Military Science.

His operational experience spans multiple critical assignments, including a combat deployment to Afghanistan (2008-2009) as the Computed Tomography Crew Chief with the 583rd Medical Logistics Company during Operation Enduring Freedom. In this role, he managed maintenance support for over 3,000 pieces of medical equipment in a remote and austere environment, achieving 99% uptime for his most critical equipment. This achievement earned him the Combined Joint Task Force-82 Logistics Hero Award and the Combat Action Badge.



Reid's leadership capabilities truly flourished in his role as Healthcare Technology Manager at Tripler Army Medical Center, Hawaii (2014-2017), where he served as Senior Clinical Engineering Non-Commissioned Officer in charge for the largest overseas military treatment facility in the Pacific theater's area of responsibility. He managed a 65-member workforce, oversaw \$155 million in medical equipment, and supervised annual acquisitions exceeding \$30 million.

His last assignment was as the Army Service Lead for the Medical Education and Training Campus DoD Biomedical Equipment Technician training Program (2017-2020), MSG Reid supervised 42 instructors and oversaw training for over 400 tri-service and foreign students annually. His academic contributions include revamping the curriculum to incorporate networking and cybersecurity, as well as serving as an adjunct faculty member at the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences.

He now works at Banner Health Plans and Networks as Director of Technology Management. ■

# Happy Veterans Day



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- Sponsorship Outreach and Engagement

**Contact Paula via email at**  
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THANK YOU

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# Parade Entries

## Phoenix Veterans Day Parade

1. The Heroes Flag carried by Team Red, White, and Blue
2. U. S. Army National Guard Band
3. Spencers TV and Appliance -- Honoring Our Heroes
4. Celebrity Grand Marshal, US Army Sgt, 101st Airborne Division, Heavyweight Champion, Actor, Entrepreneur, and Brand Champion for Four Branches Bourbon
5. USAA is Proud to Serve our Veterans
6. Arizona Military Historical Society of World War II
7. Dignitaries of the Phoenix Veterans Day Parade, including Secretary of State and Marine Corps Veteran Adrian Fontes, Mayor of Phoenix Kate Gallego, and Councilwoman Laura Pastor
8. TriWest Healthcare Alliance-Proud to Serve Those Who Served
9. Maricopa County Attorney's Office
10. The HAV Veterans Grand Marshals for 2025 include World War II Veteran Charles Johnson, Korean War Veteran Jerry Santy, Vietnam War Veteran Roger Sandeen, Cold War Veteran Carl Forkner, Desert Storm Veteran Kathy Gallowitz, Operation Iraqi Freedom Veteran Rick Kreiberg, and Operation Enduring Freedom Veteran Wesley Brandon, ride in vintage vehicles provided by the Sun Country Model T Club
11. A. University of Phoenix Balloon; 11B. 11-11 Birthday Celebrants, including 75-year-old Gloria Kreuser
12. Maricopa County Sheriff's Office
13. HAV Business Community Grand Marshal, US Submarine Veteran, and Entrepreneur Freddy Alvarez
14. HAV presents the Eagle Balloon symbolizing our national animal, which is part of our nation's heritage
15. HAV 2025 Essay Winners 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Moriah Barber, 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Whitney Coombs, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Annaleise Tallman, and 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Ashlynn Klomp riding on a Hall of Flame Fire Truck surrounded by other antique vehicles from the Hall of Flame Firefighting Museum
16. Ironwood High School Marching Band
17. In honor of World War II Gliders and Chaplains
18. Arizona Twirling Athletes Show Corps and Royalty
19. Vietnam Veterans Association
20. U.S. Customs and Border Protection
21. American Legion Post #5, Laveen Batman & Cat Woman
22. Tender Little Hearts presents A Heartfelt Thank You
23. Arizona Public Service / Palo Verde Generating Station
24. Sun City Poms
25. PetSmart
26. United States Marshal Posse District of Arizona, Proudly Honoring All Our Veterans
27. Phoenix VA Health Care System
28. Phoenix Police Department
29. U-Haul
30. Arizona Rangers
31. The American Legion Pat Tillman Post 117
32. Mesquite High School Marching Band
33. Saving Paws Supports Our Veterans and Their Pets
34. Bank of America Salutes Our Veterans
35. Basha High School Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC)
36. Banner Plans and Network, Noble is the Sacrifice
37. Luke Greenway American Legion Post #1
38. Veterans Service Brands, G-Force is the Paint Force of Phoenix
39. HAV presents the Purple Heart Balloon, in honor of our 250th Anniversary as a country, commemorating the first medal commissioned by President George Washington
40. White Mountain High School Marching Band
41. 501st Legion Star Wars Costuming Group
42. Sierra H Broadcasting Salutes Our Veterans
43. Catholic Charities' Marines, Army, Navy, and Air Force (MANA) House







44. American Legion Post 65, Tribute to the Montford Point Marines
45. Cigna Healthcare Salutes Our Veterans
46. Danny Davis and the WOW Factor say hello and thank you to our veterans
47. CVS/Aetna BRAVE Colleagues Resource Group
48. Red Mountain High School Strolling Strings
49. The Arizona Military Vehicle Collectors Club
50. Naval Sea Cadet Corps
51. Warriors at Amazon
52. Lt. Frank Luke Jr. Memorial Museum vehicle display
53. Grand Canyon University, Army Reserve Officer Training Corps
54. Ames Construction Veterans Employee Resource Group
55. Trevor G Browne High School Marching Bruins
56. Humana: Honoring and Serving Veterans
57. Marine Corps League Ira Hayes Detachment based at American Legion Post 41, Phoenix, Arizona
58. American Legion Post 41, Tony F. Soza - Ray Martinez - Phoenix, Arizona, American Legion Unit 41, Women's Auxiliary - Phoenix, Arizona, Escorted by the American Legion Riders Thunderbird Chapter 41
59. Waymo's autonomous vehicles and its "mission driven" Veteran Employee Resource Group
60. HAV presents the Uncle Sam Balloon, highlighting community engagement to our country
61. POW/MIA/KIA Honor Guard, led by Commander Valentine Costa Sr., represents those with no face, no voice, no presence
62. JPMorgan Chase Salutes Our Nation's Veterans
63. Moon Valley High School Naval Junior Reserve Officer Training Center
64. Mountain Ridge Pride of the West High School Marching Band
65. Operation Restoring Veterans Hope
66. Behavioral Health Connections Arizona
67. Phoenix Classics & Finest Cars
68. The Arizona Military Vehicle Collectors Club
69. American Legion Thomas Tang Post #50 presented by the Chinese American Citizens Alliance Phoenix Lodge
70. Perch Base / US Submarine Veterans Inc.
71. Law Tigers, America's Motorcycle Lawyers
72. Sun Country Corvette Club
73. Civil Air Patrol Deer Valley Composite Squadron 302
- 74A. Cortez High School ROTC
- 74B. Cortez High School Marching Band
75. Jewish War Veterans of the USA, Department of the Southwest
76. The U.S. Navy marches with pride.
77. StarCorp Giving Back to Our Heroes
78. Thunderbird High School Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps
79. American Automobile Association (AAA) Mountain West Group
80. Autozone Veterans Employee Resource Group
81. Puma Regiment High School Marching Band, Perry High School, Chandler
82. Elks Care and Elks Share
83. GoDaddy Veterans
84. Renegade Outpost 15, Society of the 3rd Infantry Division, US Army
85. U.S. Vets Serving Those Who Served
86. Third Division Marines of Arizona
87. US Coast Guard Auxiliary, Metro Phoenix Flotilla 10-07
88. Legendary Bombs Club hyped up vehicles
89. Southwest Veterans Chamber of Commerce
90. National Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution
91. Santa Claus thanks all our veterans and says we recognize you for your service to our country!





# Essay Winner

**Moriah Barber**

9th Grade | Homeschooled

Teacher: Lyndsay Barber

When I think about the freedoms we have in this country, I know that it's because of the sacrifices of veterans. Veterans are the men and women who served in the military and worked very hard to protect our country! They gave up a lot so we can live freely and safely with loved ones. Honoring them is NOT just something we should do on Veterans Day; it's something we should do EVERY DAY because our lives wouldn't be the same without them.

People in the military have many different jobs. Some serve in combat, protecting the country on the front lines. Others work in support roles, like medics, mechanics, engineers, or pilots! Each role is important because the military can NOT function without teamwork. Even though their jobs might look different, they all share the same mission: to defend our nation and keep people safe.

Veterans sacrifice way more than most people realize. They leave behind their families, friends, and the comfort of home to serve in tough and sometimes VERY dangerous places.

For me, this topic is perfect because both my mom and dad were in the military! Specifically, the Air Force! My dad JUST retired this year, which is so cool! I've seen and heard about how hard they both worked and how much they gave of themselves. When I thank them, it's not just for being great parents, but also for taking care of our country!

Knowing that they served makes me feel proud and encourages me to work hard and not take the freedoms I have for granted. Sometimes I can be so ungrateful because I don't get the things that I want, and I completely forget to have gratitude towards the people who are spending their lives taking care of me.

Honoring veterans is about remembering the cost of freedom and appreciating the people who made it possible. I thank God for giving us people who are willing to give their all to help us live in peace. I am proud to say my parents are veterans, and I thank them, along with every veteran, for their service and sacrifice. ■







# Essay Winner

## Whitney Coombs

10th Grade | Arizona College Preparatory

Teacher: Dr. Nicholas

When I hear the phrase “America, Our Guiding Light,” I think about my grandfather back in southern Utah. He’s a proud veteran who fought in World War II, and I think his story really shows what patriotism and freedom mean. Even though I’m only in ninth grade, his memories have helped me see our country in a deeper way.

Grandpa grew up working on his family’s farm, learning the value of hard work. He never expected to leave Utah, but when America needed him, he joined the Air Force and traveled halfway around the world.

He was scared but determined to protect his country and the people he loved. When he shares his experiences now, I see how his bravery was part of something bigger—he and millions of other veterans stood up for freedom, even when it was hard to know what the future might hold.

To my grandpa, patriotism isn’t just pride in the flag or a parade. It’s about sacrifice, respect, and showing up for others. When he tells me about helping his fellow soldiers and hoping he’d see his family again, I realize freedom isn’t automatic. It’s something people had to fight for, and we shouldn’t forget that. Grandpa says the real guiding light of America is the belief that everyone deserves justice and the chance to live free.

When we raise the flag every Veteran’s Day morning, I think about our veterans as everyday heroes. Their actions lit a path that we still follow today. I know life isn’t perfect in America, but listening to my grandpa reminds me that we always keep moving forward, learning from the past, and trying to make the future better.

To me, America’s guiding light is hope. It’s the stories of ordinary people who stood up for what is right and kept going even when things were tough. My grandfather’s legacy inspires me to appreciate freedom, honor veterans, and believe that our country’s light shines brightest when we remember the sacrifices that built it. ■



# Essay Winner

Annalise Tallman

11th Grade | Homeschooled

Teacher: Brandon Arnold

*“Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that;  
hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that”*

— Martin Luther King Jr.

Freedom is never free. It costs more than anyone can imagine. It takes strength, grit, courage, sacrifice, and determination. When I think about America, I think about light. Not the kind that comes from the sun, but the kind that finds you in the dark. My story started in the darkness before I ever understood what freedom meant. I knew what it felt like to be scared and not belong anywhere. I was in foster care for part of my life, and in those years, I learned that hope is something you have to borrow until you can make your own.

America has been described as the land of opportunity, but to me, it's also a land of second chances. I was given opportunities when it felt impossible, and I've had people in and out of my life who taught me so many valuable lessons along the way. They showed me what it means to keep showing up for someone even when it's hard. Through them, I see what our country stands for: courage, compassion, and commitment to something bigger than ourselves.

My mom is a veteran, and her story is about second chances. The military allowed her to rebuild her life after she failed out of college. She found strength in service and has become someone who strives to do the same for others. I think that's what love does, too. When I came to live with my adoptive family, I didn't know how to trust that kind of love. But over time, I saw that love was steady like a lighthouse. It didn't move even when I did. My mom's light came from her own journey of learning, a resolve to keep going, and an unwavering belief that redemption is possible. That same light helped guide me.

In many ways, that is what America is to me. It is a guiding light that helps you find a way back to who you were always meant to be. We are not perfect. We have storms and shadows, but there is always a light that reminds us who we are and what we can become. I have seen it in the kindness of teachers who believed in me, in the patience of my mom who fought for me, and in the quiet strength of people who never gave up.

America's story, like mine, is one of resilience and redemption. We stumble, we struggle and sometimes lose sight of the light, but we always find our way back. That's the power of second chances. They remind us in our darkest moments that we can begin again. Because when we choose to rise, to serve, and to love another, we become that guiding light. Together, we carry it forward, proving that the true strength of America is not never to fall, but in always finding the courage to stand up, reach out, and shine again. ■







# Essay Winner

Ashlynn Klomp

12th Grade | American Leadership Academy

Teacher: Ms. Alicia

America has long been the guiding light in the world. Our veterans have been the torchbearers of that light since the founding of our country. My dad served for over 20 years in the Air Force, carrying that torch. When he was assigned to live and work in China, there were almost no other US service members present. It was up to him to be that guiding light and example of American leadership, dignity, and morality to our Chinese adversaries. Although he was not allowed to wear his uniform while in China, he made sure all of his colleagues knew who he was and what he stood for. While there, he built bridges, forged friendships, and solidified relationships that lasted for decades.

He was later assigned as the Air Force Attaché to Taiwan, which is the formal liaison between the US and the Taiwanese Air Force. As the senior-ranking Air Force officer and one of only ten service members in Taiwan, he was again responsible for bearing the torch and being America's guiding light in a foreign country. His work there not only strengthened the relationship between countries, it also helped reaffirm America's leadership in defusing tense situations in the region. Our family got to move with him to both China and Taiwan, and we saw firsthand how important his work was there, and how well respected America is and was because of his actions and behavior among both colleagues and adversaries. Both respected him and America because of the light he carried.

He was also assigned to the Pentagon and worked in the Air Force's International Affairs Office. He was again tasked with sharing America's guiding light with our foreign partners to ensure peace and stability throughout the Pacific region. His work reiterated America's commitment to human dignity and inalienable rights.

While my dad did some amazing things representing America overseas, he is not the only one. Thousands of our service members live, travel, and work with international partners every day. They, too, bear America's torch and project her guiding light to every corner of the globe. Each of these service men and women is a hero for portraying America's guiding light to the world. I am proud to be an American and proud that my dad and other veterans are able and willing to project America's guiding light to the world. ■

# Thank You to our Team!

To the board of Honoring America's Veterans, including President Dale Villani, Vice President Freddy Alvarez, Secretary Chris Mahon, Treasurer Carter Dowdy, and board directors Nick Bielinski, Tom Callinan, Jeff Devore, Ed Logan, Brian Parks, and Bill Pedene.

To the Veterans Advisory Council members, including Ricardo Carlo, Terri Ouellette, Patrick Fitzhugh, and Nick Capaz, we value your guidance.

To our probono legal counsel, Tom Salerno, Stinson Law LLP, we appreciate your counsel.

A special thanks to April Raines; her administrative support keeps us humming!

To the Phoenix Veterans Day Parade Team:

- Bands: Marshall Pratt and Ellen Lewis
- De-Staging: Stuart and Trista Burns
- Emcees Ilene Thompson, KTAR Radio
- Essays: Tom Callinan, Maureen Callinan, Ellen Lewis, Jennifer Cabinatan
- Logistics: Terra Toc and Dan Toc
- Parade Improvement: Carter Dowdy
- Photography: Bill Pedene, Christine Farmer
- Public Relations and Marketing: Ken Reinstein

- Staging: Gail Chapman, Hamilton Murray, Desiree Simmons, and Veronica Cavallero
- VIP Area: Ben Hartley, Ellen Lewis, Kat Consador
- Volunteers: Pamela Castro
- Veterans Grand Marshals: Weena Buricelli and Crystal Reidy

Our team volunteers year-round to put on this spectacular event. Our purpose is to commemorate, educate, and demonstrate to our community the vital role of America's veterans in safeguarding this nation and honoring and recognizing those serving our country through military service.

## And we'd like to give a shout-out to:

- Our wonderful sponsors who support us
- The parade entries that make the parade come to life.

We thank you for building a patriotic spirit in our community.

Happy Veterans Day!

Paula Pedene  
Executive Director/Parade Coordinator  
Honoring America's Veterans

## Commemorating Pearl Harbor Day

Join us Saturday, December 6, 2025

Join us as we host the Commemorating Pearl Harbor Day Ceremony with a World War II biplane flyover, wreath layings and more!

Time: 10:55 a.m. | Date: Saturday, December 6, 2025 | Place: Wesley Bolin Plaza Stadium, 1700 West Washington, Phoenix







*To all who served,*

*Your courage and selflessness are an inspiration, and we recognize the profound impact your service has had on our country and our lives. You have given so much to our nation, and your unwavering commitment to something larger than yourself is an example for us all. On this Veterans Day, we honor your sacrifice not only with words of thanks, but with action.*

*Veterans embody a powerful sense of community, built on shared experiences and a deep dedication to serving others. That same spirit of service is also at the heart of USAA.*

*USAA is committing \$500 million over the next five years to strengthen the military community — helping veterans find meaningful careers, build financial security and find the care they need for their well-being. When you are navigating what is next, real and enduring support can make all the difference.*

*Since our founding more than a century ago, we have been grounded in the same principles that unite our members, and they continue to guide us today. We stand beside those who stood for our nation, because that is what our members do for one another.*

*Thank you for your service. It is our privilege to serve you.*

A stylized signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Andrade".

Juan C. Andrade  
President & CEO, USAA

Learn more at [usaa.com/veteransday](https://usaa.com/veteransday)



**SALUTING OUR HEROES**

# More than gratitude

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University of Phoenix proudly recognizes the sacrifices of our nation's veterans and their families. We honor their dedication by providing commitment and support those who have bravely served.

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[phoenix.edu/military](https://phoenix.edu/military)



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