



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 30, 2014

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2014 USO Gala to Honor Toby Keith and Six Service Heroes, and Feature Kellie Pickler, Aisha Tyler and U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel

Event to also award USO Volunteers of the Year LeAnn Thornton of San Francisco, California and Sergeant Geraldin "Thibaut" Lenkoue of Landstuhl, Germany

WHAT: 2014 USO Gala: Honoring Those Who Serve

WHEN: Friday, October 17, 2014
6:30 p.m. Welcome Reception/Red Carpet/VIP Reception
7:30 p.m. Dinner & Evening Program

WHERE: Washington Hilton
1919 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20009

WHO: *Spirit of the USO Award*

- **Toby Keith**, country music singer/songwriter, actor and long-time USO tour veteran
**Media Note: Toby Keith was presented the Spirit of the USO Award during the Academy of Country Music's "Salute to the Troops" show, which taped on April 7, 2014. He will not be in attendance at this year's USO Gala.

Mistress of Ceremonies

- **Aisha Tyler**, actress, comedian, author and podcaster

Featured Entertainment

- **Kellie Pickler**, country music artist and USO tour veteran

Keynote Speakers

- **The Honorable Chuck Hagel**, U.S. Secretary of Defense
- **General Martin E. Dempsey**, U.S. Army, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
- **Dr. J.D. Crouch II**, President and CEO of the USO

USO Service Members of the Year Awards

- **USO Soldier of the Year: Sergeant Andrew J. Mahoney**, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division (Fort Carson, CO)
- **USO Marine of the Year: Sergeant Matthew E. Belleci**, Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 365, Marine Corps Air Station New River (Jacksonville, NC)
- **USO Sailor of the Year: Petty Officer 1st Class Troy A. Cromer**, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 12, Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek- Fort Story (Virginia Beach, VA)

- **USO Airman of the Year: Senior Airman John C. Hamilton**, 23rd Special Tactics Squadron, 720th Special Tactics Group, 24th Special Operations Wing (Hurlburt Field, FL)
- **USO Coast Guardsman of the Year: Petty Officer 3rd Class Brett R. Bates**, Coast Guard Air Station Houston (Houston, TX)
- **USO National Guardsman of the Year: Sergeant Andrew J. Mehlretter**, 1163rd Area Support Medical Company, Kentucky Army National Guard (Shelbyville, KY)

USO Volunteers of the Year Awards

- **Sergeant Geraldin “Thibaut” Lenkoue**, USO Warrior Center, Landstuhl Regional Medical Center
- **LeAnn Thornton**, USO Bay Area Francisco

WHY:

Continuing a time-honored tradition of recognizing the bravery, resilience and heroism of an enlisted service hero from each branch of the military, the USO will present its annual *USO Service Members of the Year Awards* at the moment-filled 2014 USO Gala in Washington, DC on Friday, October 17, 2014. The USO will also present its *USO Volunteer of the Year Awards* as well as highlight *Spirit of the USO Award* recipient Toby Keith.

With a program and theme highlighting the journey of America’s troops and their families as they serve our country, the USO will host 1,000 guests at the Washington Hilton and pay special tribute to our men and women in uniform. The USO Gala will welcome such attendees as senior military leaders, Washington dignitaries, celebrities, members of Congress, USO corporate sponsors and members of the USO Board of Governors.

The USO is a private, nonprofit organization that creates 30,000 special moments every single day with the help from dedicated USO staff and volunteers based around the world. Whether providing a touch of home through its more than 160 USO locations at airports and military bases in the U.S. and abroad, or its ongoing delivery of top quality entertainment and innovative services, the USO provides critical support to those who need us most – forward-deployed troops, military families, wounded warriors and their families, families of the fallen and troops in transition. Each moment, USO program and service are made possible by the American people, support from our corporate partners and the dedication of our volunteers and staff.

LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIR: Wes Bush, Northrop Grumman Corporation

STEERING COMMITTEE CHAIR: Judi Kletz, Procter & Gamble

HOST COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS: Barbara Levin, Deanie Dempsey, Mary Jo Myers and Kristin Crouch

SPONSORS: <u>Chairman</u> Northrup Grumman Corporation	<u>Vice Chairman</u> Military.com Procter & Gamble
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NOTE: For more information about the USO Gala visit [USO.org/Gala](https://www.uso.org/Gala) or contact gala@USO.org. To obtain table sponsorship information, contact Dinisha Robinson at (703) 908-6447 or DiRobinson@USO.org.

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