



Metropolitan Washington-Baltimore

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**USO of Metropolitan Washington-Baltimore's 33rd Annual Awards Dinner
Salutes Medal of Honor Recipients and Celebrities during Star-Studded Evening**

*Writer-producer Sebastian Junger, singer-songwriter Stevie Nicks, quarterback Peyton Manning
recognized for their support of troops and their families*

WASHINGTON (March 24, 2015) -Senior military leaders, celebrities and corporate partners flocked to Arlington, VA and were all in attendance at USO-Metro's 33rd Annual Awards Dinner on Tuesday, March 24, 2015, as part of their Special Salute to Medal of Honor Recipients. Partnering with the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation, USO-Metro recognized 27 Medal of Honor recipients for their courage, sacrifice, selflessness, and patriotism. USO-Metro also presented awards to singer-songwriter **Stevie Nicks**, Denver Broncos quarterback **Peyton Manning**, best-selling author/Oscar-nominated filmmaker **Sebastian Junger** and poet/art therapist **Seema Reza**.

Together, with more than 620 attendees, USO Metro devoted the evening to honoring the service and sacrifice of Armed Forces both today and throughout history. Among the many Medal of Honor recipients honored, three were from Afghanistan. These individuals included **Salvatore A. Giunta**, **Clinton L. Romesha** and **William D. Swenson**.

As part of the star-studded affair, Nicks was awarded the *2015 USO-Metro Achievement Award* by Corporal Vincent Mannion-Brodeur - who was severely wounded in Iraq after being hit by an IED and who Nicks has kept in touch with over the years. The singer holds the record for the most hours spent over a five-year period visiting combat-wounded service members as part of USO-Metro's celebrity handshake hospital visits. Nicks has also donated hundreds of iPods filled with music to those recovering at the then Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Bethesda National Naval Medical Center. The singer was so moved by her visits with troops that she wrote the song "Soldier's Angel," which was released in 2011 and appears on her "In Your Dreams" album.

Bestowed the *2015 USO-Metro Merit Award* for his support of wounded warriors and deployed troops, Manning has also visited wounded, ill and injured service members at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center at Bethesda as part of USO-Metro's celebrity handshake hospital visits. In 2013 he even participated in his first USO entertainment tour, where he visited with thousands of troops stationed in Afghanistan, Djibouti, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Arab Emirates, as well as the USS Stennis.

The *2015 USO-Metro Legacy of Hope Award* was presented to Sebastian Junger. One of America's most acclaimed writers, Junger was honored for his heart-wrenching storytelling of the challenges military members endure during combat and upon returning home as depicted in his film "*Restrepo, Korengal and The Last Patrol*."

Presenting the award was Colonel Ostlund, the former commander of the battalion that hosted Junger and the late Tim Heatherington, as they documented the actions of Battle Company in the Korengal Valley, Afghanistan.

The evening capped off with the *2015 USO-Metro Colonel John Gioia Patriot Award*, which was presented to Seema Reza, who has spent years working with wounded, ill and injured service members at military hospitals and the USO Warrior and Family Centers at Fort Belvoir and Bethesda. Reza regularly conducts workshops to help service members recovering from visible and invisible wounds express themselves through art, writing, film and music.

The USO of Metropolitan Washington-Baltimore raised a record \$725,000, which will help operate its 10 USO Centers, including two of the largest USO Centers in the world - the USO Warrior and Family Centers at Fort Belvoir and Bethesda. The USO Warrior and Family Centers provide programs and services to the nation's wounded, ill and injured service members and their caregivers. Funding from the dinner also helped USO-Metro provide critical programs and services to the 300,000 military members and their families living throughout the Washington-Baltimore region and the 150,000 who travel through our local USO Airport Lounges.

Other special guests in attendance included **Chef Robert Irvine**, Miss America 2015 **Kira Kazantsev** and World Wrestling Entertainment's **Mark Henry** and **Jim Hart**. The Boeing Company was the presenting sponsor and DynCorp International served as the Gold Sponsor.

QUOTES:

Attributed to Elaine Rogers, CEO and President of the USO of Metropolitan Washington-Baltimore:

"What an honor it was to partner the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation to recognize our country's Medal of Honor recipients and express our support for our nation's military members, their families, the wounded, ill and injured and their caregivers. To be in the same room with so many of our Medal of Honor recipients, each of whom represents the service and sacrifice of all those who have served our great nation was awe-inspiring. I know that they were truly moved by the overwhelming love and support felt inside the room, and all of us at USO-Metro are so honored to have helped bring together this incredible gathering of courageous Americans."

“Being able to showcase the amazing support of people like Stevie Nicks, Peyton Manning, Sebastian Junger and Seema Reza, all of whom truly understand the magnitude of the service and sacrifice of our nation’s troops and their families, symbolizes the support of the American people for members of our Armed Forces and that just makes us all feel so proud.”

Attributed to Stevie Nicks:

“I have been in the ICU and talked to people who were maybe 17 hours off the battle field. It’s a different world and it is a world that I have to say, as proud as I am of my work with Fleetwood Mac and my singing, I am most proud of this. I am most proud of being a part of you. I am most proud to work with the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Marines and the Coast Guard.”

Attributed to Peyton Manning:

“I am truly humbled to be here tonight. The men and women of our armed forces inspire me on a regular basis and they and you are the reason I’m standing here tonight. When I need inspiration to dig deeper, to be stronger, to be more resilient and focused on my mission ahead, all I have to do it tape into my memories of some of the bravest and most dedicated people that I have ever met.”

Attributed to Sebastian Junger:

“I want to thank USO Metro for their incredible works. I have tried to understand this in my work, but coming home from war is in some ways more complicated and more dangerous than war itself. I feel that the USO really knows this. We all now have the task as a nation to bring our vets home safely where they can resume their lives. It’s a difficult task, but I know we are up to it.”

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About USO of Metropolitan Washington-Baltimore

USO-Metro is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization chartered by Congress, and dedicated to “serving those who serve, and their families” in Washington-Baltimore region. It is through the generous financial support of individuals and organizations in the local community that USO-Metro is able to fulfill its mission to “Lift the spirits of America’s troops and their families”. With the help of thousands of devoted volunteers, USO-Metro provides programs and services for active duty troops, their families, wounded, ill and injured service members and their caregivers through its Mobile USO program, six USO Centers, which include two of the largest USO Centers in the world, the Warrior and Family Center at Fort Belvoir and Bethesda, and four USO airport lounges. For more information please visit <http://www.USOMetro.org> or “Like” us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter by searching USOMetroDC.