**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE                                                                                     December 1st, 2016**

**Veteran Service Organization Hosting National Character and Leadership Recognition Event in Philadelphia**

**PHILADELPHIA, PA —**The largest Veteran Service Organization in the Philadelphia region, the Travis Manion Foundation, will host two events this December which are garnering national attention. The 5th annual “If Not Me, Then Who…” Gala will be held at the historic Union League of Philadelphia on Thursday, December 8th, beginning at 6:00pm with a VIP Reception. This black tie event, which is a national recognition of character and leadership, will have attendees from across the country who are being honored for their dedication to selfless service within their local communities and beyond.

Some of the high profile and notable figures in attendance include:

* **Admiral Mike Mullen, USN (Ret.)** – The former Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff and top military advisor to President George W. Bush and Barack Obama, will be attending as the Guest of Honor.
* **J.R. Martinez** - Renowned actor, best-selling author, motivational speaker, and wounded U.S. Army Veteran. He played an injured combat veteran on the Emmy Award winning daytime drama,*All My Children*. Following its final season, he went on to surprise and inspire a nation on ABC’s *Dancing with the Stars.*Along with partner Karina Smirnoff, J.R. won the coveted mirror ball trophy, and they were named season 13 champions; J.R. will be emceeing the evening.
* **Neil Smit, President and CEO of Comcast Cable** – The former Navy SEAL and current President and CEO of Comcast will be accepting the 2016 Corporate Leadership award on behalf of Comcast NBCUniversal.
* **Leif Babin, Former Navy SEAL officer and Silver Star recipient** – The New York Times best-selling co-author and former Navy SEAL will be honored as the recipient of the 2016 “If Not Me, Then Who…” Award presented by Comcast NBCUniversal.
* **Brennin Hunt** – Country Music performer, with recent appearances on the television show *Nashville*, *Ellen*, and *The X-Factor.*

The evening will begin with a VIP reception and cocktail hour at 6pm, which will be open to the media, followed by the full program starting at 7:30pm. The event will also be broadcast live, and available to view through the Travis Manion Foundation website ([www.travismanion.org](http://www.travismanion.org)), as well as through TMF’s Facebook Live feed. For video footage from last year’s Gala, click [here](https://youtu.be/KhdNpjctYVY?list=PLUNWPwDqSkw1UtDMO4_htRCcW1YD-h-V2).

Top level sponsors for this inspirational evening include our Honor Level Sponsor: Comcast NBCUniversal, as well as Champion Level Sponsors: Astro-Dynamic, The Carlyle Group, Goldman, Sachs & Co., the Gorsky Family, Johnson & Johnson, J. Walter Thompson, John and Cindy McCain, Don and Lauren Morel, Penn Medicine, Poretta & Orr, Inc., SAP America Inc., and West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

**The following day, on Friday December 9th, the Travis Manion Foundation will host an exclusive veterans panel discussion, titled “Thrive: Strategies for Success in Post-Military Life.”**Our esteemed panel will share expert advice and strategies for veterans to leverage their strengths and passions to make an impact and *thrive*.

The research shows that to “thrive”—a term borrowed from the evidence-based field of Positive Psychology-- you need at least 3 things. And if you are missing one or more of these, you may find yourself feeling disconnected from others. First, you must have *Engagement*. Engagement is regularly leveraging personal strengths and passions to achieve something of value. Second, you must have positive *Relationships*. Positive relationships provide camaraderie and a strong network of support that connects you with others. And finally, you must have *Meaning*. Meaning is achieved by serving a purpose higher than oneself and provides a sense of belonging that allows us to tap into that sense of purpose.

55% of the veteran population reports feeling “disconnected” from civilian life. How can we promote and enhance their thriving? With less than 1% of the population having served, what can the corporate, non-profit, and education sectors do to reconnect veterans with their communities and establish strong engagement, relationships, and meaning? How does one identify personal strengths and passions and then map those to personal and professional goals in post-military life? Is it possible to feel a similar sense of meaning that you felt while defending your nation? Is it possible to build resilience in preparation for the setbacks and failures that inevitably occur along the road to success?

To address these questions, Travis Manion Foundation will host a panel discussion, consisting of veterans and experts that serve in the academic, corporate, government and non-profit sectors. Moderated by Ryan Manion, President of TMF, panelists will include:

* **BGen Carol Eggert** - V.P. Military and Veteran Affairs, Comcast
* **Jim Martin, Ph.D., Col., USA (Ret.)** - Professor of Social Work, Bryn Mawr College
* **Zach Ischol** - Executive Director of Headstrong Project
* **Maura Sullivan** - Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs
* **Lakin Booker, USMC** – Contestant in the 2016 Triumph Games

We hope you will join us for this exclusive event at the Union League of Philadelphia on Friday, December 9th. We will begin the morning with a networking opportunity at 10am, followed by our discussion promptly at 10:30am. The event will also be broadcast live, and available to view through the Travis Manion Foundation website ([www.travismanion.org](http://www.travismanion.org)), as well as through TMF’s Facebook Live feed.

**About Travis Manion Foundation**

Travis Manion Foundation (TMF) empowers veterans and families of fallen heroes to develop character in future generations. In 2007, 1stLt Travis Manion (USMC) was killed in Iraq while saving his wounded teammates. Today, Travis' legacy lives on in the words he spoke before leaving for his final deployment, "If Not Me, Then Who..."

Guided by this mantra, veterans continue their service, develop strong relationships with their communities, and thrive in their post-military lives. As a result, communities prosper and the character of our nation's heroes live on in the next generation.

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

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**\*\*\*Great Interview & Photo Opportunities Available\*\*\***

**WHAT**: The 5th Annual Travis Manion Foundation “If Not Me, Then Who…” Gala

**WHEN:**Thursday, December 8th, 2016, 6pm – 9pm

**WHERE:**The Union League of Philadelphia, 140 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102

**WHAT**: Veteran’s Panel Discussion - “Thrive: Strategies for Success in Post-Military Life”

**WHEN:**Friday, December 9th, 2016, 10:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.

**WHERE:**The Union League of Philadelphia, 140 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102

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