



2024 THRIVING AS LEADERS Award Selections

Alumni Outstanding Achievement - Professional Athlete Selectee:

LT Joseph Cardona '15, USNR

Long snapper for the New England Patriots, LT Joe Cardona '15 is the recipient of the 2023 Salute to Service Award presented by USAA, recognizing exceptional efforts by members of the NFL family to honor and support the military community. LT Cardona balances his service work in support of military and veterans' programs with professional football and Naval reserve duty as a department head of Maritime Security Squadron 8, headquartered in Newport, RI, serving the logistical needs of 500 sailors across the eastern seaboard. He served previously as a staff officer at the Naval Academy Preparatory School, and overseas in US Forces Korea.



LT Cardona recently joined the board of the Military Family Advisory Network, a nonprofit organization that provides vital support to military families facing hardships. Additionally, he has partnered with the New England Center and Home for Veterans, an organization that serves our nation's most at risk veterans, providing shelter, medical care, occupational services and more. In 2018, LT Cardona was honored with the Patriot's Ron Burton Community Service Award, an accolade given to honor his work in the community.



Alumni Outstanding Achievement - Amateur Athlete Selectee:

**Col Henry J. "Hank" Donigan '77,
USMC (Ret.)**

Col Henry J. "Hank" Donigan '77, USMC (Ret.) served for 30 years in uniform. Graduating from USNA in 1977, Col Donigan commanded an infantry unit in the Grenada operation, led peacekeeping operations in Lebanon, and humanitarian relief efforts in the former Yugoslavia. He served in the Gulf War and Operation Iraqi Freedom, earning four Bronze Stars, one with Combat "V", and two Legions of Merit. Upon retirement, he continued to support the Marine Corps as a defense contractor and educator, helping to shape future leaders through the Marine Corps Command and Staff College Blended Seminar Program.



A lifelong advocate for health and fitness, and despite having a 100% disability rating from the Veterans Administration, Col Donigan has completed 477 marathons and ultra-marathons, including running annually in the Marine Corps Marathon since 2014 to honor his fallen classmates. He completed the Hawaii Ironman World Triathlon Championship in February 1982. Col Donigan was the #1 individual fundraiser for the Semper Fi & America's Fund in 2023, raising \$92K, and has completed 50 marathons each year since 2020.



Alumni Outstanding Achievement – Professional (Non-Athletic) Selectee:

Matthew Wallace ‘84

Matthew Wallace is the Director for Planetary Sciences at JPL. He oversees formulation, development, and operations of NASA missions to the Outer Planets, Mars, Venus, asteroids, and the Moon. Prior to becoming director, Wallace held various project leadership roles, most recently managing the Psyche asteroid mission and as Deputy Project Manager and Project Manager for the Mars 2020 Perseverance Rover mission. He initiated the concept work for Perseverance in 2012 and led the development and implementation team for nearly a decade



through spacecraft launch and its successful landing at Jezero Crater on Mars in February 2021. Wallace worked on all five NASA Mars rovers, beginning as a power systems engineer on the Mars Pathfinder Sojourner vehicle. He led the assembly and test team for the twin Spirit and Opportunity missions which landed in 2004, and held the Flight System Manager on the 2012 Curiosity mission. He has worked on other planetary missions, and as a program manager for Earth-observing satellites in the aerospace industry.

Wallace graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1984 with a Bachelor of Science in Systems Engineering, and served in the fast attack submarine fleet. He holds a Masters degree in Electrical Engineering from Caltech.



Volunteer Leadership and Service Selectee:

Mawuli Mel Davis '91

For 32 years, Mawuli Davis '91 has volunteered with over 20 different non-profits while co-founding four. As a 22-year-old Ensign, Davis co-founded his first non-profit, the National African American Club, onboard the USS Forrestal (AVT-59). He was the Navy's recipient of the NAACP's Renown Service Award presented by the Secretary of the Navy and was awarded the Navy's Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal. After medical discharge as a Supply Corps officer, Davis developed youth empowerment programming, established a GED and



Adult Literacy site, volunteered in prisons, organized youth basketball programs, created an African American history book collection, led a gym shoe drive for children in Africa, mentored children whose parents are incarcerated, helped raise over \$800,000 to support educational opportunities for students, and volunteered thousands of hours as a lawyer in providing pro bono legal representation.

His service as an attorney and community organizer earned recognition from over 30 different organizations as a noteworthy humanitarian; these honors include the Georgia State University College of Law's highest award for Public Service and Honorary Doctorate in Human Letters from the Interdenominational Theological Center.



Alumni Outstanding Achievement – Professional (Non-Athletic) Honorable Mentions

Edward Cummins ‘69

Ed Cummins led the Westinghouse design and licensing of both the Advanced Passive 600 Megawatt Reactor (AP600) and the Advanced Passive 1000 Megawatt (AP1000) plants. This revolutionary new design features passive safety systems that rely on the forces of nature - gravity, convection, natural circulation, evaporation, and condensation to safeguard a commercial nuclear plant without operator intervention.

The AP600 and AP1000 plants were the first passive commercial nuclear power plants in the world licensed with passive safety systems by the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission. These plants are simpler, safer and more economical than any other licensed nuclear power plant. In open international bidding competition for four new commercial nuclear plants in China, the AP1000 was selected for all four units over competing bids from Russia and France. These four plants were successfully built and put into commercial service and have had record setting performances for safety, startup, operability and reliability. Two additional nuclear plants are now in operation in the United States and more AP1000 units are under construction in China and in Europe.

The nuclear accident at Fukushima slowed the sale of AP1000s and Ed was selected by Westinghouse to analyze how the AP1000 would have fared in a Fukushima type scenario. The results of this analysis showed that the AP1000 would have withstood a Fukushima-like event without any fuel damage or radiation exposure to the public because of these breakthrough passive safety systems. These results were independently confirmed by the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Ed received the Westinghouse Technology Lifetime Achievement Award for his work on the AP600 and AP1000.

Victor D’Andrea ‘84

On 4 June 2024 Victor B. D’Andrea and his company TechSource received the DOE Small Business of the Year award. Victor has taken TechSource from a small 5-man start up specializing in nuclear Physics and engineering to become one of the preeminent science and engineering consultancy for the National Nuclear Security Administration. TechSource has become a key consultant in the revitalization of our nation’s nuclear arsenal.’

It is both rare and difficult to take an idea in a high-tech field, build the framework from scratch and man it successfully to the point where it is recognized as outstanding by others. The geopolitical situation we are experiencing now is playing a critical role in today’s international politics. It is demanding a revitalization of our nation’s nuclear deterrent. Mr. D’Andrea’s vision 20 years ago is now playing a critical role in establishing the nuclear systems and facilities we need today.



Nelson Jones '72

Nelson Jones '72 is a trailblazer in the legal field in the area of the Laws of Sovereign Immunity and Terrorism. In 2022, he was recognized by the prestigious Georgetown University Law Center as 1 of 3 graduates who exhibited leadership to Georgetown and the legal profession for his long-term dedication.

On July 29, 2024, Jones won a judgement of \$1.96 billion, in the US District Court of the District of Columbia, for families of USS Cole which includes 58 immediate family members. He began representing victims of terrorism in 1992.

Jones started litigating terrorism cases when he filed action against Iraq on behalf of an individual who was kidnapped and tortured by the Iraqi military.

Jones has represented American military and civilian victims of terrorism and won judgements or settlements against international State-actors Iraq, Libya, and Sudan, (bombing of USS Cole in the Yemen port of Aden). To date, this and other awards in the pursuit of justice for American victims and their families total more than \$150 million and counting.

Jones' mantra is "One way to stop terrorism is to take the terrorists' money and give it to the victims." He continues to assist the USS Cole (CG-67) plaintiffs in their pursuit of justice versus Iran. He represented 17 families of the sailors who died in the bombing. Jones and his co-counsels lobbied 35 Congressional members as they strove to change the law to insure justice for victims of torture and terrorism. The change in the law is unprecedented.

Volunteer Leadership and Service Honorable Mentions

Stephen Leaman '69

Stephen Leaman began his naval career as a Surface Warfare Officer serving as the Operations Officer, Weapons Boss and Chief Engineer on three ships. He served in WestPac and earned the CAR on USS John King. He also won the Atlantic Fleet Shiphandler of the Year award. After the Navy and six years with Dupont, Leaman began his career in financial services. Initially he volunteered once per month then every Saturday with Habitat for Humanity. That led to recruiting others to do the same and then to making donations to build more homes with Habitat. The homeowners take on no-interest loans to buy their homes. Monthly payments are used to build the next home. Leaman helped build more than 70 homes since moving to Norfolk. He serves on the Habitat Board.

He is very active with his classmates' charitable Foundation. He leads the Alumni Mentoring Program team who envisioned, created and funded AMP, the 50th reunion gift to USNA. More than 6300 alumni are participating: "free" to them. Leaman is a trustee of the Naval Academy Foundation Athletic and Scholarship Programs, serves on the Norfolk Environmental Commission and on the boards of three private companies.



LtCol Nathan Schmidt '02, USMCR (Ret.)

LtCol Nathan Schmidt '02, USMCR (Ret.), is selected for the 2024 Thriving As Leaders Award in the Volunteer Leadership and Service category for his efforts to aid survivors of the Ukraine war via the Mountain Seed Foundation (MSF), which he founded in 2021. After graduating and commissioning in the Marine Corps, LtCol Schmidt served three tours in Iraq. Upon his return from these combat tours he was, to paraphrase his words, strong on the outside but broken on the inside. His personal journey through PTSD led him to discover that a combination of faith, and overcoming the natural challenges of the mountains, helped him heal.

After leaving active duty LtCol Schmidt continued to serve his country by joining the Foreign Service. During his assignment in Ukraine, he witnessed the trauma he too had experienced and recognized that his own path to recovery could be applied to others. Mountain Seed Foundation was established in 2021, with the goal of providing mental health support to help children and their families caught in the war-zones of Europe, particularly in Ukraine.

CDR William D. Squires '75, USNR (Ret.)

CDR William D. Squires '75, USNR (Ret.) qualified as a naval aviator and served on active duty and in the Naval Reserves for twenty-four years. As a civilian, CDR Squires served as an executive in several sports organizations, managing numerous sports venues such as Yankee Stadium and Giants Stadium. Since 2002, he has been self-employed as a sports and entertainment facilities and events management consultant. In 2002, CDR Squires' son Sean was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis, a life-threatening genetic disease. CDR Squires and his family joined the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation to raise awareness, and they are responsible for raising over \$4 million to find a cure. He and his family will continue to fundraise until a cure is found for everyone who suffers from this terrible disease. CDR Squires serves as the president of the New Jersey Chapter of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

CDR Squires' commitment to service is shown by his voluntary participation as a Blue and Gold Officer for the Naval Academy Admissions Office for 32 years. He was an Area Coordinator, Chair of the Area Coordinator Steering Committee, and the Board Chair of the Admissions Committee on the Naval Academy Alumni Association Board of Trustees.