

Washington Football Team Salute to Service



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Washington Football Team and Black Rifle Coffee host Veteran's Day Chalk Talk for over 75 veterans

By: Alec LaCorazza

On Wednesday, November 10th, the Washington Football Team hosted over 500 veterans and transitioning military members at FedExField for the annual Greater Washington, DC Veterans Job Fair presented by Recruit Military. The Chalk Talk was hosted by GeNienne Samuels featuring Washington Football Legends Tim Hightower and Gary Clark, as well as the Senior Vice President of RecruitMilitary, Chris Stevens. The Chalk Talk, presented by Black Rifle Coffee, featured a 40-minute discussion covering the parallels between transitioning military members

and football players nearing the end of their careers.

As nearly eighty veterans and transitioning military members filtered into FedExField's De-leon Lounge to enjoy the Chalk Talk kicking off the renowned

was excited to participate and begin their job search with a fun panel discussing relevant topics in a relaxed setting. Retired SFC Derrick Hastings of the United States Army was excited to participate in the panel discus-

while also sprinkling in advice on applicable transition resources was the perfect start to my day."

The Chalk Talk, which has traditionally kicked off the annual Job Fair since 2016, has been well received from attendees, participating recruiters, and RecruitMilitary executives alike. Executive Director of Alumni Relations and panelist, Tim Hightower, stated "It's a privilege to participate in a military event like this. Engaging with veterans the week of Veteran's Day alone is a privilege, but to be a panelist and a part of a discussion that could alleviate the nerves of so many preparing to put themselves out there...it's just a great feeling and we're proud to support."

The Chalk Talk, which has traditionally kicked off the annual Job Fair since 2016, has been well received from attendees, participating recruiters, and RecruitMilitary executives alike.

RecruitMilitary Job Fair, they were greeted with Black Rifle Coffee and product kickoff a day of valuable conversations and give them an appropriate boost to meet recruiters. The audience

sion "Hearing from the Senior Vice President of RecruitMilitary (Mr. Stevens) discuss transition, making connections with some of my hometown heroes from a professional football perspective,



Two cadets honored in ROTC Scholarship Surprise, presented by Easterns Automotive Group

By: Hannah Lichtenstein

The first Monday night after daylight saving came with a sense of quiet at FedExField. The hallways winding throughout were all but empty and the field sat resting, undisturbed by football cleats for over three weeks now. A hushed and still stadium, that is, except for one particular section. Owner's Club West was buzzing as dozens of uniformed cadets socialized, laughed, and relished the activities of a special gathering.

"We don't usually get time to relax like this," Cadet Imani Lipscomb said. "It's great how we all get to come together, but in a fun aspect and learn new things about each other."

Usually when Lipscomb and her fellow cadets are assembled, military drills or leadership training are in order. This night, though, was different. On Nov. 8, roughly 60 cadets from United States Air Force ROTC Detachment 130 were treated to live music, gift packages, a Mission BBQ dinner, and a private talk with Coach Rivera in an end-of-the-year cadet celebration as part of the Washington Football Team's Salute to Service month.

As its keynote event, the celebration featured the bestowing

of two \$10,000 scholarships, presented by Easterns Automotive Group, to two standout cadets. Hanging out, engaging in conversations about team building in the military and in sport while rallying around two hardworking cadets, the night underscored the importance of one of the ROTC's most esteemed values: comradery.

When Lt. Col. Redahlia Person dove into a speech about a certain environmental science major student with a 3.6 GPA who ranked in the top 15% of perhaps the most competitive field training encampment in recent history, Hana Bahlawan smiled a little bashfully. It was an honor to be complimented by her commander. When head coach Ron Rivera then revealed she would be receiving the Commander's Scholarship worth \$10,000, the American University senior sat stunned.

And while the announcement was a well-executed surprise, it didn't leave Cadet Ryan Williams completely shocked. Considering the type of cadet and person Ryan knew his friend to be, the fact that she would be given a scholarship just made sense.

"For the 2.5 years I've known Hana, it's been straight hard work," the Georgetown senior said. "Everything she does, she brings a lot of passion to, like

a very intense level of passion where you automatically know if she's involved in something because it's one of the better outcomes or the better teams or the better presentations. You just know when Hana's a part of it."

Cadet Lauren Bradley became very familiar with Hana's meticulous approach and industrious work ethic as her supervisor.

"She's just a really great person to have work for you, because she'll always go above and beyond. Like, you'll give her a benchmark and she moves it much further down the line," Bradley said. "She's never satisfied. Even if it's up to my standards, she's always doing more for her because she has such high standards."

Sidney Walters, friend of Lipscomb and also a member of the junior ROTC class, echoed that sentiment. The applause that broke out after Rivera uttered Lipscomb's name was so loud, so consistent, that it was hard to hear any words followed. There was arguably no one cheering more raucously in that moment than Walters.

"I was head over heels," Walters said. "I've been wanting this for her for so incredibly long."

After being singled out for their performances, Bahlawan and Lipscomb spent the rest of the night taking pictures, joking

around and just enjoying the company of this uniquely connected group. The relationships forged via the ROTC was a main reason Bahlawan had wanted to join as a sophomore.

"Just having brothers and sisters for life, going through hell together I think brings people really close together and I love that family aspect," she said.

Bahlawan admits that a \$10,000 scholarship is pretty incredible. But, while clutching her cardboard check, she can't help but look around the room, smiling at the flock of 18-to-22-year-olds in army green here with her tonight.

"It's really awesome just to have this community. People who are from different schools, people who are in different grades," Bahlawan said. "We have this bond that brings us together and will keep us together. Having these moments together while we're in college is just great."

Two cadets honored in ROTC Scholarship Surprise presented by Easterns Automotive Group. The Washington Football Team & United States Air Force ROTC Detachment 130 would like to thank Eastern's Automotive Group for contributing \$20,000 of scholarships for Cadets Lipscomb and Bahlawan.



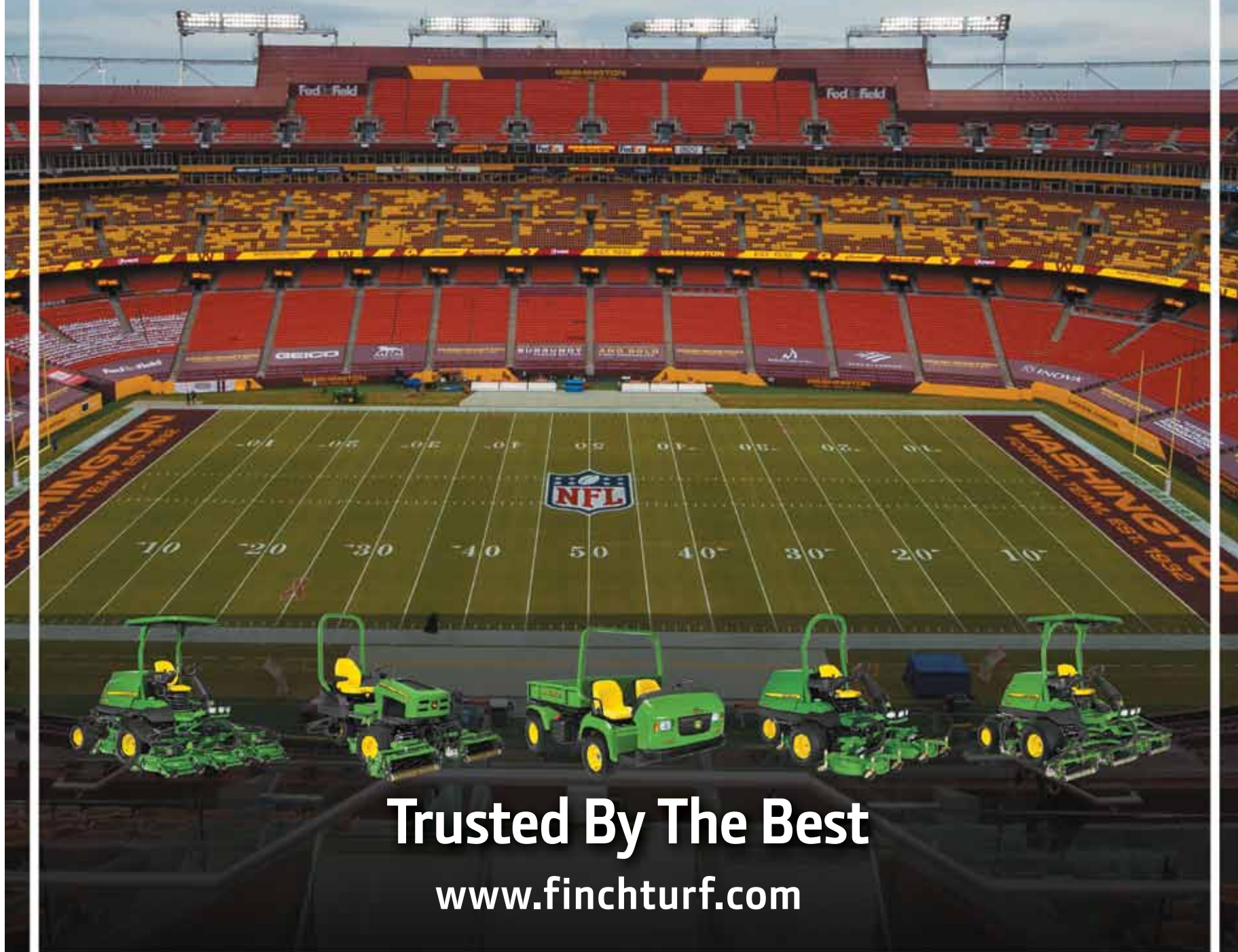


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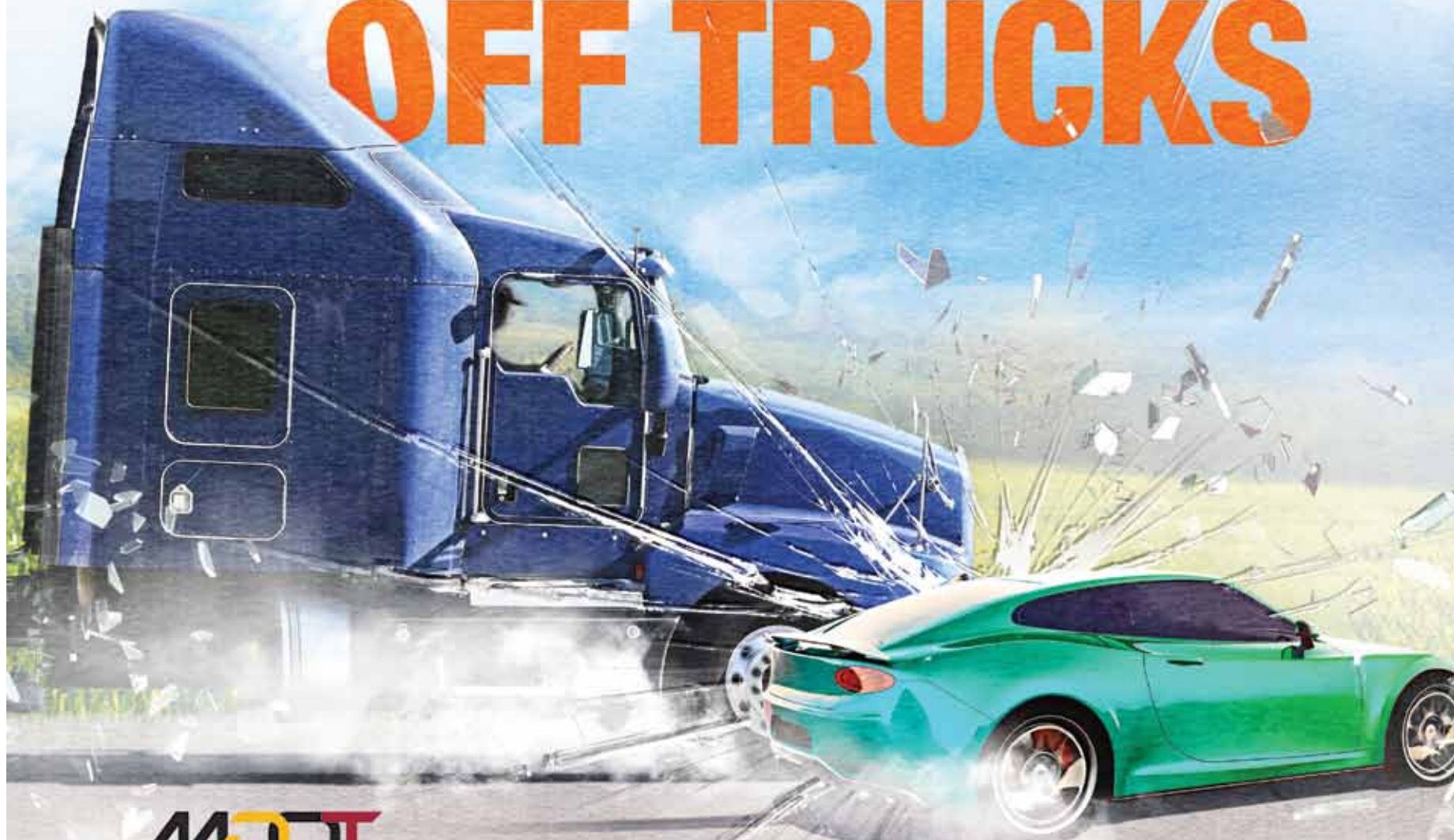
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Washington Football Team staff kick off salute to service week with Pack4Troops

By: Alec LaCorazza

On Monday, November 8th, the Washington Football Team partnered up with the USO of Metropolitan Washington-Baltimore to pack over 750 care packages for deploying military members this holiday season. To kick off Salute to Service Week and celebrate Veteran's Day on Thursday, over 100 staff members with the Washington Football dedicated their morning to learning more

about USO's mission, writing messages to deploying service members, interacting with active-duty volunteers, and stuffing care packages for deploying service members

The event kicked off with opening remarks from the Executive Director of the USO Chapter, Ms. Lisa Marie Riggins. The Director honed in on the long-standing partnership between the USO and Washington Football Team, the impact the USO mission has nearly half-million military members each year through programming

and 12 on-base & installation centers, and positive impact care packages have on those deploying this November and December. The group was then shown the cornerstone Pack4Troops video which can be watched by all fans (link: <https://metro.uso.org/support/pack-4-troops>).

Washington Football Team staff members arrived at 10:00 AM prepared to volunteer, pack the care packages, write their messages, and share their military connections. After opening remarks and receiving instruction from USO

Volunteers, the staff turned a two-hour event into a twenty-minute project. 750 care packages packed, 750 personalized care packages packed, and an unbelievable start to the Team's Salute to Service Week initiatives. Continue tuning in for updates throughout the week as the team strives to Honor, Empower, & Connect Military Members, Veterans, and their Families.

For more information on how you can support USO of Metropolitan Washington-Baltimore, please visit <https://metro.uso.org/support/donate>.



TAPS families surprised with initials of loved ones on Washington helmets

By: Hannah Lichtenstein

On Nov. 13, the Washington Football Team invited five TAPS families for a special practice viewing at Inova Sports and Performance Center in Ashburn, Virginia. After watching the Burgundy and Gold finalize its Week 10 preparations, the five families were told that Washington players would be wearing helmets with the initials of their loved ones in Sunday's game against Tampa Bay.

The surprise was one of three marquee events Washington hosted in collaboration with the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) as part of the team's Salute to Service month. For Washington personnel and TAPS, marking players' helmets with the initials of troops who

have passed is a sacred and personal gesture that embodies and furthers a commitment Washington has forged to recognize the sacrifice and service of these families.

The Burgundy & Gold has long held a special place in the heart of TAPS founder and current president Bonnie Carroll. In 2015, Washington became the first NFL team to partner with the organization. Since then, nurturing that relationship and spotlighting the important work TAPS spearheads has been a top priority for Washington. On Saturday, that attention to thoughtfulness was on full display as Carroll and the TAPS families were welcomed with, what she described as, a "really intimate experience" with Washington legend Doug

Williams, current players, and Coach Rivera.

Part of that intimacy involved opening up about the emotions of having loved ones in the military and the indelible impact those individuals have had on the lives of those around them. Many Washington staff and players share in that experience.

"We talked about what it means to really serve this country and sacrifice and these families are the living legacy of American service and sacrifice," Carroll added.

The Stoddards is one of those families. They are made up of the surviving loved ones of Commander Sergeant First Class James J. Stoddard who died in Afghanistan in September 2005. On Saturday, Cameron Cheeseman

announced that he and the rest of the Washington special team's unit would be wearing "JS" on their helmets. Putting on a helmet with those letters is something Washington's long snapper doesn't take lightly.

"It's truly an honor to be able to represent such a great individual that was a part of such a great family," Cheeseman said. "Being able to play not only for him, but for everybody else that knew him and being able to build and grow his legacy that he's left behind, I think that's something we can take into our hands every day."

Cheeseman's teammate Jamin Davis announced that Washington's defense would be wearing the initials "CO" as a tribute to

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TAPS

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First Lieutenant Charlie Owens, who lost his life in a US MC-130 Combat Talon II crash in Albania in 2005. Bobby Owens was just four years old when his dad died. Bobby, along with his mom Amanda and brother Adam, recently relocated to the DMV area from Texas. For Bobby, revealing of the initials encapsulated the

in-depth, arms-open approach Washington took towards the week paying tribute to families like his.

"I was shocked by how much they [Washington] put into it. The events we've got to see. The things we've got to see. The people we got to meet. It's been amazing," Owens said.

Getting to spend time with members of the team has been particularly memorable for Hannah Eure, the widow of Staff Sergeant Ronald Eure. The Eures,

high school sweethearts from Virginia, grew up Washington fans. Hannah knows that, somewhere, Ronald is giddy about the likes of Terry McLaurin and Chase Young wearing the initial "RE" on their helmets.

"It means everything," Eure said. "My late husband was a huge Washington fan, absolutely loved them from birth. I know he's watching us and he's smiling that they're honoring him in this way."

Bonnie Collins believes it too

– that on Sunday, as Washington faced off against Tampa Bay, five standout men, somewhere, watched. They saw their loved ones be recognized at FedExField. They cheered as Washington players, protected by helmets with a special two letters on the back, made big hits and dazzling plays.

"I know that this team has a 'deep bench' up in heaven who is rooting for them," Carroll said.



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Salute to Service Game Gallery



Salute to Service Game Gallery



Washington Football Team hosts Salute to Service game presented by USAA

By: Hannah Lichtenstein

In the lead-up to gameday kickoff, Allen Edwards doesn't get a whole lot of time to stop. As stadium manager, he's constantly surveying the stands, dishing out directions, and turning on his heel to hustle off to the next section that needs his attention. But, when the chuff-chuff of the helicopter rotors quickened before this Sunday's kickoff, Edwards paused to take in the moment.

"Being a veteran, you always enjoy the flyovers," Edwards, a former soldier, said.

Three helicopters from Joint Base Andrews 316th wing whooshed over his head and tens of thousands of others at FedExField just before 1 p.m. The flyover was one of several highlights of the Washington Football Team's Salute to Service pregame. Coming into the stadium, fans were greeted by displays that included Hum-Vees, Blackhawk Helicopters, rescue vehicles, and, of course, the "W" statue splashed with camo.

A feeling of patriotism and

pride punctuated the air that hung over the Washington Football Team Salute to Service game on Sunday, Nov. 14. With its hundreds of active troops, veterans, and military family members joined together just miles outside of the nation's capital, this game put forth a unique celebration of and homage to the country's armed forces. Bonnie Carroll, president, and founder of the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) became familiar with Washington's distinct focus and thoughtfulness towards Salute to Service Month in 2015. That year, Washington became the first NFL team to honor TAPS families on the field. On Sunday, five TAPS families were

recognized, the final event of three this week was hosted to commemorate the sacrifice and service of families that have lost loved ones who've served.

"The Washington Football Team absolutely has gone above and beyond to honor our nation's military," Carroll said. "From enlistment in the military to honoring those who have died while serving, they have honored the entire military experience and how this nation relies on our men and women in uniform to defend our freedom."

One aspect of that military experience, often stuffed down due to stigma, was given a critical platform at the game. Honored as

the Black Rifle Veteran of the Game during a first-quarter stoppage of play, Pasha Palanker appreciated that Washington wasn't afraid to shy away from conversations about mental health issues and PTSD in the military.

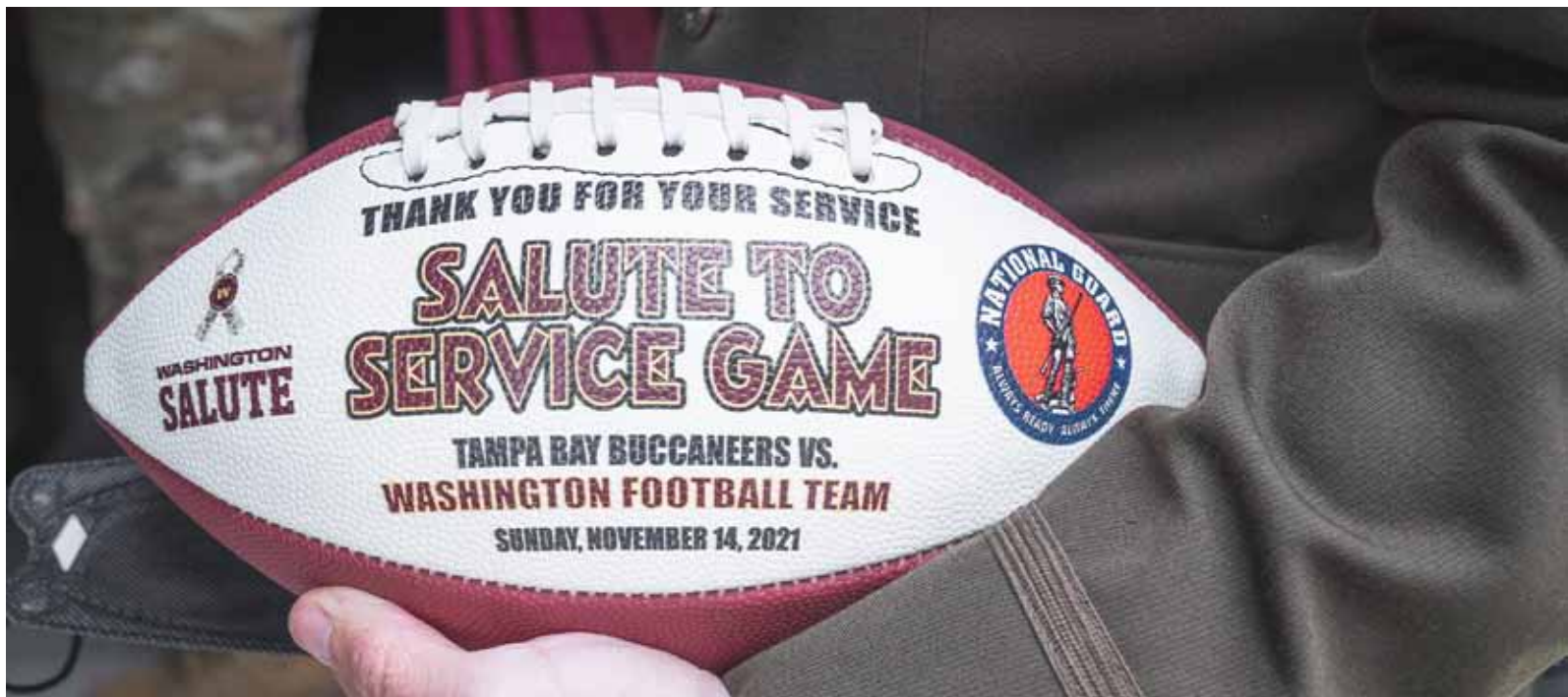
"I'm working to raise awareness and to get people to take care of their mental health before they read a breaking point like I did last year," Palanker, a special operations forces veteran explained. "It meant a lot to hear that talked about inside FedExField during a Salute to Service game."

Around the stadium, one of the most visually captivating elements of this year's game was the active service member presence. Roughly 400 individuals from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and more stood in uniform, filling an entire section of the stadium. They also shone in the on-field moment throughout Washington's eventual upset of the reigning Super Bowl champs. Just before kickoff, the U.S. Naval Academy Band Vocalists sang the national anthem. Midway through

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SERVICE

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the first quarter, a U.S. Air Force Oath of Enlistment was held, while halftime was highlighted by a performance from U.S. Naval Academy Band.

A member of the Marine Corps and the breathtaking armed forces outfit at FedExField, Corporal Straatmann was excited by the rare opportunity to spend

time with members of all the branches en masse on Sunday.

"It's like bringing family together," Straatmann said. "Whatever branch you're in, it doesn't matter, we're all military, so this is a great place to recognize us and relax and actually enjoy a good football game."

Allen Edwards, too, felt that sense of family reunion. In section 217, just a couple hundred feet away from Lance Corporal Straatmann and the other active service

members in attendance, sat a very special trio: Master Sergeant Matt Hensen, Chief Warrant Officer Roger Shuford and Captain Kathy Shuford.

"Mikah Lomax [Washington's Ticket Operations Coordinator] got me four tickets and I got to invite my veteran friends," Allen Edwards said. "Getting to do that really touched me."

Moving between greeting his old army friends and helping the active troops find their

seats, the stadium manager with a Washington staff ID dangling right next to the "Veteran" button stuck to his chest, captured the sentiment of the day.

"Having been in active-duty military, for the Washington Football Team to honor our troops like this means the world to me and my family," he said. "It's an honor for me to help and assist all our soldiers in any way I can."



Salute to Service Game Gallery



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