Washington Commanders Salute to Service





INSIDE THIS ISSUE: Commanders Kick Off Salute to Service Month Fan of the Year Chris Bryant Jeremy Reaves Learned Grit, Selflessness

A Special Advertising Supplement To The Washington Times



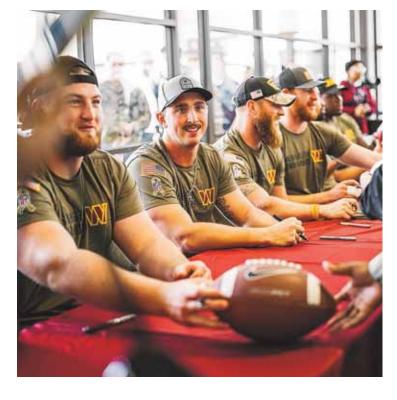
Commanders Kick Off Salute to Service Month with Visit to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center

By Hannah Lichtenstein

ake Simmons could not stop smiling once he wheeled into the Tranquility Hall at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. With each Washington Commanders player he moved to, he found himself in an interesting conversation or drawing up important memories.

"I grew up playing and just always loving sports," Simmons said. "It's still an outlet for me and being here today around these guys is just really cool. I couldn't even imagine this opportunity if I was eight years old. I'd be jumping out of my pants."

There he was face-to-face with Commanders player Joey Slye, the former kicker for his beloved Carolina Panthers. Then, defensive end Shaka Toney, the same position Simmons played in high school. He got to talking to the players about the tattoo on his forearm, the one with the skeleton holding up a four of hearts. It commemorates the



four times he had to be resuscitated after the day his life forever changed and the reason his left leg was amputated last week. From chatting about tattoos, football and hometowns to trading special mementos, connection was a big part of the afternoon at Walter Reed yesterday. Organized by the Commanders Charitable Foundation to kick off Salute to Service month, the hospital visit provided a chance for Commanders players to engage with staff and patients at one of the country's most esteemed military hospitals. Throughout the event, hospital personnel and patients got swag bags, autographs and time to engage with Commanders players as well as Team Dog Mando.

Tuesday's visit began with a stint in the hospital's Tranquility Hall. A dozen Commanders players greeted excited staff and patients, lined up outside the doors, who were given Salute apparel and items to have signed.

"Seeing them here just shows that they really care," said Clarice Kariuki, a hospital administration apprentice while holding a mini football signed by all the players.

"They came out here on their off day to be with us. I mean I like spending my off day in bed, so it means a lot."

The guys then split into two groups to visit amputees and



SALUTE From page C2

hospital staff at the Military Advance Training Center as well those in the in-patient ward. The players spent time in patient rooms and took pictures with nurses and doctors. HM3 Esteban Ríos was touched by his meeting with the players in which Shaka Toney gifted him a Commanders challenge coin. "They're super nice guys, and they gave me the challenge coin, which made my day," Rios said. "Me being in the Navy, those are a big deal to us. I absolutely loved that. I thought it was awesome that they were really humble guys, and they asked where I'm from and just seemed really engaged."

ad him a
coin.The interactions of the
day also left an impact on
the players. With Salute to
allengeguys,
y," RiosService month just beginning,
there is growing excitement
around the experiences ahead
that empower, connect and
honor the military community
y were
theys. IHat empower, connect and
honor the military community
across the D.C., Maryland and
Virginia area.
"What an opportunity to

"What an opportunity to just brighten somebody's day

and maybe make it just a little bit better -- the smiles, the hugs, just meeting people," said rookie offensive guard Chris Paul while boarding the bus back to Ashburn. "As soon as we walked in, there was sort of this warm embrace, and you could tell that they were just so excited...I definitely look forward to more opportunities like this."







A SPECIAL ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES | MONDAY • NOVEMBER 28 • 2022



Commanders Fan of the Year Chris Bryant Has Found Family, Started a Charity Through Love of Burgundy & Gold

By Hannah Lichtenstein

n the "piggest" stage during the Washington Commanders' Week 9 game against the Minnesota Vikings,

"Hogfarmer Chris" Bryant was surprised in an on-field moment as the first-ever Commanders Fan of the Year.

"My heart was pounding and didn't stop until after halftime," Chris said. "I was just thinking, 'Gosh, this is crazy.' I couldn't believe it."

Chris accepted his inscribed football and "Fan of the Year" custom jersey while sporting his iconic Hogfarmers outfit highlighted by a pig hardhat and bib. He is hard to miss on gameday, but the look is not the only standout feature of his fandom. Chris' love for his team has given him what he describes as a second family and allowed him to form a charity that helps hundreds.

Though it night be surprising considering where it stands now, Chris' Washington fandom started off rather typically. Chris' mom passed down her passion for The Burgundy & Gold.

"It was just me and my brother, and we would get up in the mornings, and she would scream, 'Gameday!'" Chris recalled. "We weren't a wealthy family, so we couldn't afford to go to games, but my mom always made it a point for all of us to sit down together and watch the game on TV."

For years, his fandom revolved around mostly supporting his team on a couch or at bars. It was in 2011 that a shift happened.

"When he first went to a

game, I saw a change in him," Chris' wife Carmela said.

Chris, then in the Marines, was stationed in D.C. and had an opportunity to go to the season opener at FedExField. He dished out a bunch of money for him and his mom to sit section one, row one.

"After I was like, 'I can't watch this on TV anymore.' There's so much that comes with gamedays in person -- the camaraderie, the atmosphere and sounds, the rituals," Chris said. "And just watching the guys live, they're like 50 times bigger in real life than they look on TV. That was really the turning point, and it just kind of grew from there."

Going to Washington games has since become an integral part of Chris' life. Each gameday morning since Chris became a season ticket member in 2016, he has gotten up at 4 a.m., dressed in the outfit he has laid out the night before and made the three-hour drive from Staunton, Virginia, to Landover, Maryland. From tailgates in the parking lots to inside the stadium, his gamedays are filled with hanging out with old friends, making new friends, cheering for his team and smiling -- a lot of smiling.

His positive, infectious personality and love of relationshipbuilding around Washington football was in part what sprung one of the most special parts of Chris' fandom. In 2016, Bryant's daughter Amayah was born with neurofibrosis, a condition that causes benign tumors to grow throughout the body.

Through her grueling treatment process, Chris was



BRYANT

connected with fellow Washington fans in similar situations and learned so much about the toll that pediatric cancer can take on families. From there, Chris and a few of his Washington fan friends embarked on starting an initiative of their own to help those in need. Soon, the Hogfarmers Charitable Foundation was born. From sending uplifting videos and care packages to gifting grants and organizing special experiences, the non-profit aims to elevate the mental, social and emotional wellbeing of children and their families affected by pediatric cancer.

"He's found a way to connect his passion of football to his passion of making a difference in other people's lives," said Hogfarmer Keith, who works alongside Chris within the Hogfarmers Charitable Foundation. "Chris is a great person and has helped a lot of people...He's an exceptional leader within the Hogfarmers, and we are proud to call him our brother."

The Hogfarmer outfit Chris wears every gameday is meaningful on two levels. For one, it pays homage to the franchise. The Hogettes, whose name was inspired by the team's legendary "Hogs" offensive line, were a group of Washington fans who were famous for their charity work. Additionally, the outfit is about entertaining kids.

"It catches your eye, and the kids like it. Every time we go up to kids, they're like 'Piggy!' and grab the nose and stuff like that," Chris said. "So, if we can make a kid laugh or smile, I mean, that's what it's all about."

Chris' tunnel-vision focus on providing joy to Hogfarmer families was a big reason he was thrown off the scent of the Fan of the Year surprise that was being planned for him for the Nov. 6 game. He was so busy working to get a dozen families to the game that he did not read much into why the Commanders would want him on the field specifically for an in-game moment.

The Week 9 game could not have been a more perfect scenario for the announcement. All of Chris' Hogfarmer colleagues and best friends were there. It was the first time all three of his daughters, his mom and his wife were at a game together. Additionally, approximately 120 people supported through the Hogfarmers Charitable Foundation stood in the stands.

"It was like divine intervention how everything came together," Chris said.

As part of his Fan of the Year nomination, Chris and one special guest of his choosing will receive a roundtrip ticket to Super Bowl LVII, as well as two passes to NFL Honors, the Super Bowl Experience, Super Bowl



LVII and more.

And while he is grateful for the prizes, spotlight and experiences that come with his selection, Chris will be the first to tell you those factors have never motivated him to be the fan he is. As long as he can cheer on his team and give back to others, he will always feel like he did in that moment on the field in the first quarter of last Sunday. No nomination -- or name change -- can influence his core love for the Burgundy & Gold.

"The things I do in life and in the stadium, I don't do them for an award like this, but to be recognized is just a complete honor," Chris said. "And to be the first Commanders Fan of the Year is really, really cool. My fandom for the team is so deep that the name change transition wasn't so hard because, to me, it's still the same team I've always loved."



Jeremy Reaves Learned Grit, **Selflessness as The Son of Two Veterans**

By Hannah Lichtenstein

s a kid, Jeremy being annoyed

Reaves remembers with all the routines and to-dos in his "very strict"

household. But as he got older, his mindset evolved. "I've realized, 'Man that stuff

shaped my life," Reaves said. "When I come into the building and what time I leave, my whole routine throughout the week ... It's kept me afloat when times haven't went my way. It's kept me stay the course."

The regimented nature of the Reaves house was largely a product of his parents' military backgrounds. His dad was in the Army and then served as a police officer for 25 years, and his mom was in the Air Force. The lessons instilled in Reaves during his upbringing have deeply impacted him on and off the field.

In watching his parents navigate life, Reeves learned resilience and how to keep moving forward in the face of challenges.

"They had their ups and downs, but they never wavered when things got hard...they looked at it dead in the face and they said, 'let's go,' and they attacked it," Reaves said. "And so, I've...applied that to my day to

day and to my journey." A "never give up" approach

has been a major theme of Reaves' story. He went undrafted out of college and made his first 53-man roster in 2022 after being cut the previous four seasons. On Thanksgiving of last year, Reaves lost his mom, Rose, who

he described "as his biggest fan." She always encouraged him to be good-natured and kind.

"One of the things that she wrote me in a letter before I left for college was, 'Treat all people with love and integrity, because you never know the effect you might have on somebody,"



Reaves said. "So, I've always kind of tried to model my life after that."

Reaves tries to carry on her legacy and make her proud every day by working his hardest and being a light wherever he steps.

"My mother was always trying to be positive with us," Reaves said. "And so, carrying that side of her with me, I've tried to apply that day-to-day life and just honor her and make her proud of that, because I know she's watching."

As a mother and as an Air Force veteran, the words come from a similar place. Her values -- and the values she passed on to Reaves -- had a lot to do with helping others and contributing to something bigger than yourself. The servant leadership and selflessness embodied by the members of our armed forced are not taken for granted for Reaves. This Sunday against the Vikings, he is honored to recognize and play for his mom, dad and the millions of others who make up the military community.

"At the end of the day, I have the utmost love and respect for them, because I am coming from a home that was military," Reaves said. "It's the most genuine love and respect and gratitude...because they make what we do possible."

SAFEWAY (S) HUDDLE UP (ND V/IN)



3X REWARDS

PARTICIPATING

TEM

HOW TO PLAY:

LOOK FOR THESE TAGS THROUGHOUT THE STORE

- Buy \$10 in participating products
- **2** Your receipt at checkout will contain a prize code*
- **3** Enter your code at safewayhuddleupandwin.com

IS BETTER AT SAFEWAY

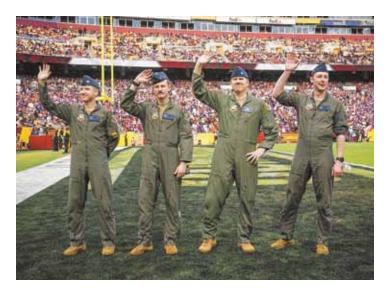
SCAN FOR DETAILS



























'Days like today are really powerful': Commanders Honor Military Community at Salute to Service Game

By Hannah Lichtenstein

heri Lipscomb, a member of the five TAPS (Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors) families honored by the Washington Commanders at their Salute to Service game, had tried to keep her emotions at bay. She was touched on Saturday when she learned Washington players would be wearing her late husband's initials on their helmets during Sunday's game. She was moved by the hospitality she experienced at the stadium and the chance to be around other TAPS families.

But when she had a chance to be on the field in-game on Sunday, she could not, as she put it, "hold it together" anymore.

"I heard his name, and it was like, 'Oh my god'. That's when it hit me," Lipscomb said. "I don't even know how to put it into words. It's a dream come true honestly. This is something that Ric wanted to do with little Ric especially, bring him to a game here in the D.C. area, and he never got to."

During the second quarter of the last Sunday's Salute to Service game, Lipscomb stood with her two sons on the field as the Commanders paid tribute to her late husband, Ricardo Lipscomb. A lifelong Washington fan who grew up in Virginia, Ricardo loved fishing and talking about football with his boys. In 2004, the Army sergeant passed away while running a PT test.

Eighteen years on, the Lipscomb family was able to make it to the home of Ricardo's favorite team and honor his memory among the Burgundy & Gold family. From the fallen and active-duty members to veterans and loved ones, the Commanders' Nov. 6 Salute to Service game was all about giving a special spotlight to those who served. A big focus of the day's

festivities was on providing a





one-of-a-kind experience for members of the military community to connect with one another. In the EA Sports Gaming Lounge at FedExField, the Wounded Warriors Gaming Tournament offered an ideal opportunity for veterans to socialize, have fun and play video games together.

"I feel like I'm back where I should be. It's so great to be around veterans again," Army and Navy veteran Jason Parker said on the sidelines of a Madden game.

Camaraderie was also fostered and on display at the USO Tent, the Commanders' designated military space every gameday, where hundreds of service members were able to relax, eat and hang out. Marine Corps 1st Sgt. Mayra Moreno was pleasantly surprised to run into now-vets that she had served with over a decade ago when she was a marine. Meanwhile, Lt. Junior Grade Laura Irish of the U.S. Coast Guard was struck by the wide array of military representation all around her.

"It's cool to get to be a part of this and be here with so many other people who at least have a couple things in common with you," Irish said. "I've recognized a lot of badges but there's so many more I don't. It's kind of fun.

Έ

From page C12

There's such a large range of who in the service is here in terms of branches, ranks, job, all of it."

The groups of men and women in uniform moving throughout the stadium was a sight to behold on gameday. Just as much as he appreciated the chance to connect with fellow service members, Sgt. Josue Patricio loved mingling with the civilian public in such a fun and energetic environment.

"My favorite part of today is being out here with the fans, being out here with the general public and getting to enjoy the game altogether as one," Patricio said. "I think the relationship between the military and the Commanders is very important in terms of exposure for both, and we're glad to be here to support the team."

That exposure is significant in that it can develop new understandings of the military community for the unfamiliar. "I think some parts of



America don't know a whole lot about the military just because they don't have any relatives or know anyone who has served, so days like today are really powerful," said Gen. David Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps.

Berger's good friend, colleague and fellow Washington fan Sgt. Maj. Blackman was filled with pride watching the military

and civilian public come together at FedExField.

"It's been really cool to see some of the kids, some of the people in the stands who want to shake hands and take photos with the service members," Blackman said. "It's a really great way to engage everyone."

Be it the words spoken by a fan to a service member or a thoughtfully set up event, the

message communicated across Salute to Service day was one of deep gratitude towards our country's heroes.

"It means a lot to see people reach out and say 'thank you.' It can be a really mixed bag when you're in the military in terms of what people actually think of you," Irish said. "It's just nice to be appreciated here today."



























WASHINGTON WASHINGTON SALUTE JOIN WASHINGTON SALUTE TODAY!

FREE MILITARY APPRECIATION CLUB FOR ACTIVE DUTY, VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES. EXCLUSIVE YEAR-ROUND EVENTS, BEHIND THE SCENES OPPORTUNITIES, AND MUCH MORE!

LEARN MORE AT COMMANDERS.COM/SALUTE