

Congressman Brian Mast Receives Lifetime Achievement Award from John P. Mayhugh Foundation



District of Columbia, Nov 16, 2018 (Issuewire.com) - U.S. Representative Brian J. Mast (FL-18) yesterday received the Hero's Journey Lifetime Achievement Award from the John P. Mayhugh Foundation (JPMF). The award recognizes the Congressman's outstanding service, leadership, and dedication to advancing and promoting efforts to build better pathways of recovery for military veterans and their families battling PTS, TBI, and addiction; and his embodiment of the JPMF mission.

JPMF Founder and President Mary Lowe Mayhugh said, "Our vision is to expand the national conversation by bringing together thought leaders in government, industry, academia, and healthcare to shape holistic strategies that address the root causes of brain health issues; and to improve recovery outcomes for our military veterans and families."

Mast knows the challenges faced by veterans and their families all too well. Prior to his election to

Congress, he lost both his legs while serving the Army in Afghanistan as a bomb disposal expert. Mast remained on active duty following the injuries and provided expertise to the National Nuclear Security Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms during his recovery process. After his retirement from the Army, he continued working in counter-terrorism and national defense as an Explosive Specialist with the Department of Homeland Security; and subsequently received a degree from the Harvard Extension School.

Speaking to the audience at the Arena Stage last night, Mast recalled a conversation with his father that would set the course for a life of continued public service. While lying in bed recovering at Walter Reed Medical Center, the Congressman's father told him that, despite all he had already given to his country, the best example he could set for his children was to persevere and find new ways to impact his community with the same values he carried on the battlefield.

Congressman Mast quickly emerged as a leader in Congress and immediately began to fight for his veteran brother and sisters. Earlier this year, Mast opened the first-ever Congressional office inside a VA hospital and introduced The Improving Veterans Access to Congressional Services Act, to pave the way to make that high level of service a reality for our veterans all across the country:

Mast was an obvious choice to receive the Hero's Journey Lifetime Achievement Award. "So often mental health is left out of the conversation when it comes to care for our veterans," said retired colonel and foundation founder Mary Lowe Mayhugh, "Congressman Mast works tirelessly for veterans and recognizes that not all wounds are physical. He is not afraid to bring these issues into the conversation and talk about it."

And Mary Lowe wants to talk about it. The Hero's Journey Gala marked the launch of its new campaign, *Let's Talk About It* a nationwide campaign focused on reducing stigma and making brain health part of total health. "It is more critical than ever to talk about the lack of effective strategies and the stigma associated with brain health issues. *Let's Talk About It* is designed to bring this discussion out in the open and engage community leaders in the government and private sector to change the way we think about brain health conditions," said Mayhugh.

Congressman Mast is unequivocal in his call to action: "Our nation's veterans have earned the very best care our country has to offer. In addition to physical health care, we must do more to help veterans with mental health care. More than 20 veterans take their own life every day--an unacceptable rate that far exceeds the average of the civilian population. Among the men and women that I served with, I've seen the impact that war can have on soldiers returning home. I am committed to doing all I can to increase mental health resources for veterans and to reduce veteran suicide rates."

Mast said what he remembered most about his injuries on the battlefield was how his comrades rushed in to help him, "they came charging in!", he said. "And that is what you are doing here tonight, you are charging in for your brothers and sisters, I am proud of this group."

After a prolonged standing ovation for the Congressman, Mistress of Ceremonies Kathleen Koch returned to the podium and paused before saying, "To say thank you for your service, it's just not enough. It's not enough."

The John P. Mayhugh Foundation is a 501 c (3) non-profit organization registered in the District of Columbia in 2017. The Foundation has embarked on a mission to address systemic barriers to recovery and improve outcomes for veterans and their families battling post-traumatic stress (PTS), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and addiction.

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