

Celebrating 20 Years of Advocacy for Disability and Military Communities



Silver Spring, Maryland May 6, 2024 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Easterseals DC MD VA marked a major milestone at Union Station on May 1, throwing a glamorous gala for a good cause: celebrating exemplary advocates for veterans and military families, children and adults with disabilities, and low-income families.

The 20th anniversary Advocacy Awards raised over \$950,000 for Easterseals' education, healthcare, and employment programs that served over 4,000 children and adults last year in Washington, DC, Maryland, and Northern Virginia.

At the awards ceremony, every recipient voiced their support of Easterseals' mission to enrich lives and expand opportunities for all children and adults in our communities, including people with disabilities and military backgrounds.

Among the honorees were Admiral Christopher Grady, 12th Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and his wife Christine Grady, who champion family readiness and resilience when a loved one is called to active-duty service.

"I want to thank and express my deepest gratitude for Easterseals for this recognition and, much more importantly, for your exceptional work in our communities. Your unwavering commitment to supporting military families through the toughest of times is nothing short of remarkable," said Admiral Grady, accepting the Military Family Advocate Award. "Indeed, the critical work of Easterseals makes our joint forces stronger, so that we can meet our nation's call, knowing that our families are well cared for."

Senator Susan Collins and Senator Mark Warner each received the Legislative Advocate Award for their support of people with disabilities, family caregivers, veterans and military families, and early childhood education.

"Easterseals remains a strong voice for individuals with disabilities," said Senator Collins. "I also greatly appreciate their effective advocacy for legislation I have co-authored to support caregivers, older adults, and individuals with Alzheimer's."

Senator Warner added, "While we've made good progress expanding opportunities for people with disabilities, and taken important steps forward to improve benefits and protections for our military and veteran families, I know the work isn't done."

On behalf of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Dr. Shereef Elnahal, Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Health, accepted the Partner Agency Advocate Award and shared the stories of two veterans whose service-connected disabilities did not stop them from careers after the military. Dr. Elnahal pointed to Easterseals as "an incredible partner of the VA, helping more and more stories like that emerge."

Candi Wolff was presented with the Judy Heumann Community Advocate Award, named for the late disability rights activist. "It is a tremendous honor to see my name next to hers," said Ms. Wolff, Executive Vice President of Global Government Affairs for Citi. Ms. Wolff was recognized for her contributions to diversity and inclusion programs at Citi and for supporting both adult care and military family services at Easterseals.

The gala featured a dinner created by Chef Robert Irvine, a member of the Easterseals Honorary Board.

Easterseals also recognized one of its own staff members. President & CEO Jon Horowitch presented the 2024 Robert S. Wilson Leadership Award to a driver who was celebrated for being a reliable friend, a source of comfort, and someone who brightens the day for everyone in the Adult Day Services program.

Special guests included former Washington NFL champion Charles Mann, Easterseals Honorary Board member; philanthropist David Rubenstein; and disability advocate Julliette Rizzo, Easterseals Emeritus Board member. The event's list of celebrity sightings was no exception to its two decades of welcoming renowned national and local leaders.

The 2024 Advocacy Awards was made possible by presenting sponsor HII, as well as numerous other sponsors and individuals.

Photos and video from the evening are available upon request.

Easterseals DC MD VA – Easterseals is leading the way to full equity, inclusion, and access through direct and life-changing disability and community services. Since 1945, Easterseals DC MD VA has worked tirelessly to enhance quality of life and expand access to healthcare, education, and

employment. And we won't rest until each one of us is valued, respected, and accepted. Join us: www.eseal.org. *Including Individuals. Empowering Families. Strengthening Communities.*SM



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