



Media Contact: James McManus  
jmcmanus@saluteheroes.org  
(914) 432-2287

## **COALITION TO SALUTE AMERICA'S HEROES ENABLES WOUNDED MARINE VETERAN TO RECEIVE DONATION OF PROFESSIONAL-QUALITY PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT**

*U.S. Veterans Arts Program to present award to Iowa resident during Chicago concert on May 6*

**WILTON, Connecticut – April 28, 2011** – As a result of sponsorship by the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes (CSAH), a former Marine from Iowa whose leg was amputated after he was injured in a 2006 explosion in Iraq will soon be better able to pursue his interest in photography with professional-quality equipment that is being donated to him by the United States Veterans Arts Program (USVAP).

Joel Klobnak, a 24-year-old Des Moines native who now lives in Greenfield, IA, is scheduled to receive the equipment, including a single-lens reflex camera, in Chicago on Friday, May 6, during a benefit concert for the USVAP that is taking place at Joe's Bar, 940 W. Weed Street. The concert will feature a performance by the Lt. Dan Band, led by actor Gary Sinise, star of the CBS television series "CSI: New York" and an Academy Award nominee for his role as Lt. Dan Taylor in the 1994 film "Forrest Gump."

Appearing with the band will be its lead guitarist and co-founder Kimo Williams, who created the USVAP to increase the representation of veterans in the arts community. As part of its mission, the USVAP provides "artistic tools" – such as musical instruments, painting kits, and computers – to service members wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan to showcase "the power of art and how it might bring cathartic inner solace for those Americans who have sacrificed in service to their country."

The CSAH, which had previously given financial assistance to Klobnak, selected him for sponsorship for a USVAP award based on his interest in photography that began shortly after his injury. An unexpected "benefit" of being hospitalized and in a wheelchair, he says, was discovering that "life does not scream past you. You stop and learn to appreciate it." Subsequently, Klobnak adds, he began taking pictures of weddings, parties and especially nature because "there is so much more to life than technology and people seem to forget that." In 2009, however, financial pressures forced him to sell most of his photographic equipment, leaving him currently with just "a very old Pentax camera" and only one lens.

Williams, who is a Vietnam veteran, says Klobnak's pursuit of photography represents exactly the kind of endeavor he hoped to support when he established the USVAP in 1998. That year, he returned to where he had been stationed with the U.S. Army 25<sup>th</sup> Combat Engineer Battalion in 1970 and recalls, "The first time I came to Vietnam, I brought my M-16. The next time I came, I brought my guitar. I liked the second trip much better than the first. The



Media Contact: James McManus  
jmcmanus@saluteheroes.org  
(914) 432-2287

USVAP exists in the hope that other veterans can also make that 'second journey,' and share their experience with the rest of us through art."

Klobnak, who is married and the father of two, is the fourth person the CSAH has sponsored in recent years for a USVAP award. One previous recipient was also issued a camera, and the other two were given electric guitars.

"We are delighted that the USVAP has again chosen to help a wounded service member based on our having made the organization aware of that person's needs," says Michael Meyer, CSAH vice president of programs, who will be accompanying Klobnak to the benefit concert. "The partnership between our two groups has enabled these deserving individuals to use their artistic talents to enrich not only their own lives, but also those of others."

For more information about the CSAH, visit [www.saluteheroes.org](http://www.saluteheroes.org).

###

#### **About the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes**

*The Coalition to Salute America's Heroes is a leading non-profit organization dedicated to helping severely wounded troops from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The mission of the organization is to enable these servicemen and women to transition from the battlefield to the home front and to provide them and their families with the assistance needed to get their lives back on track.*

*Since it was founded in 2004, the CSAH has partnered with corporate sponsors, individual contributors and volunteers to contribute millions of dollars worth of aid and support services in nearly 20,000 cases. One of the organization's principal initiatives is its annual all-expenses-paid Road to Recovery Conference & Tribute, at which those disabled in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as their families, can attend seminars and job fairs, receive career counseling and evaluations, and hear inspirational success stories.*

*For more information on how the CSAH can help you or to learn how you can help, please visit the organization's website at [www.saluteheroes.org](http://www.saluteheroes.org).*