



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Wounded Veterans to Parachute Onto Jacksonville Beach for Never Quit Warrior Challenge**

*Group representing Coalition to Salute America's Heroes to compete, jump June 6*

JACKSONVILLE, FL (June 2, 2015) – Participants and spectators at this weekend's [Never Quit Warrior Challenge](#) are in for a special thrill as six American heroes parachute onto Jacksonville Beach on Saturday afternoon, June 6.

The group, which includes six representatives of the [Coalition to Salute America's Heroes](#), will also be competing in various physical challenges throughout the day.

“Never Quit is an awesome event, and my fellow veterans and I can't wait to put ourselves to the test,” said Donny Daughenbaugh, vice president of field operations at the Coalition, a leading not-for-profit organization dedicated to rebuilding the lives of severely wounded veterans of the War on Terror. “We're also looking forward to meeting spectators and our fellow competitors, and sharing the important work we do at the Coalition.”

Daughenbaugh, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.), lives with a bullet lodged at the base of his skull near his brain, the result of being shot in the face while on night foot patrol near Baghdad in 2004. He'll be joined by Matthew Pennington, U.S. Army (Ret.), who lost his left leg and incurred severe damage to his right leg in April 2006 while serving in Iraq.

Rob Jones, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.) and fellow Coalition employee, will also be participating. During his 2010 deployment to Afghanistan, Jones was hit by an improvised explosive device (IED), resulting in double above-knee amputations of both his legs. He later went on to win a Bronze Medal at the 2012 Paralympic Games in London and completed an epic, 5,000-mile cross-country cycling trek in April 2014.

In addition, Gary Boggs, U.S. Army (Ret.) and Stephanie Ortiz-Phillips, U.S. Air Force (Ret.) will join the competitors. Boggs lost his left eye, ruptured both eardrums and suffered a traumatic brain injury and nerve damage to his left arm and hand when he was ambushed by a roadside bomb outside Tikrit, Iraq in 2003. Ortiz-Phillips suffers from a major depressive disorder, anxiety and panic attacks as a consequence of her overseas service.

On February 6, 1994, Dana Bowman gained worldwide attention when he and his Golden Knights teammate, Sgt. Jose Aguillon, collided in midair. Bowman and Aguillon were practicing a maneuver known as the Diamond Track, which calls for the jumpers to streak away from each other for about a mile and then turn 180 degrees and fly back toward each other crisscrossing in the sky. Rather than crisscrossing, the two skydivers slammed into

each other at a combined speed of 300 miles per hour. Aguilon died instantly. Bowman's legs were severed from his body, one above the knee and one below. Nine months later, Bowman turned this tragedy into a triumph when he became the first double amputee to re-enlist in the United States Army. He later became the U.S. Parachute Team's lead speaker and recruiting commander.

"It's a tremendous honor for us to host these incredibly brave men and women at this year's Never Quit Challenge," said Erik Petroni, the event's director. "Donny, Matthew, Rob, Gary, Stephanie and Dana represent the best of the best from our Armed Forces, and they exemplify what it means to 'never quit.' We all owe a debt to them that we can never repay, so I hope everyone will come out, watch them compete, watch them jump and take a moment to thank them for their extraordinary service and sacrifices."

The Coalition representatives will be participating in Never Quit's physical challenges beginning at 7 a.m. on Saturday, June 6. The group will also be featured on the "Blue Carpet," posing for photos with attendees.

**All six veterans will skydive onto Jacksonville Beach between 3 – 5 p.m. on Saturday, sponsored by Team Fastrax, America's Skydiving Team. Bowman – who will be jumping at 7:15 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and again at 3 p.m. – will be deploying a special parachute bearing the Coalition's logo, along with the American flag.**

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

Since its establishment in 2004, the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes has provided an immediate, invaluable lifeline to thousands of America's combat-wounded veterans. The Leesburg, VA-based organization is distinguished from other veteran-focused groups by its direct financial assistance to America's wounded heroes. Its Emergency Financial Aid program has stopped foreclosure proceedings on veterans' homes and kept their vehicles from being repossessed. The organization regularly provides gift checks to cover meals, medical and utility bills, clothing, car repairs and even baby diapers.

For more information on the Coalition, and to learn how you can support its mission, visit [saluteheroes.org](http://saluteheroes.org).

#### **About Never Quit**

NEVER QUIT was inspired by Captain Gerard Petroni, who overcame barriers most believed would be impossible to defeat after suffering a hemorrhagic stroke. With the help of his family, the medical community and strong faith in God, Petroni never quit. The organization encourages everyone to take on the same "never quit" attitude, and live life to its fullest. It also educates the community on how to avoid brain hemorrhages, stroke and heart disease through healthy life choices. For more information, visit [NeverQuitNever.com](http://NeverQuitNever.com).

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