

Military, Law Enforcement News, and More...

Finalists announced for 13th Annual NFL Salute to Service Award presented by USAA at NFL Honors

NEW YORK – Jan. 30, 2024 – The NFL and USAA, an official NFL Salute to Service partner, announced Green Bay Packers running back Aaron Jones, San Francisco 49ers tight end George Kittle, and New England Patriots long snapper Joe Cardona as finalists for the 13th annual Salute to Service Award presented by USAA.

The Salute to Service Award is part of USAA and the NFL's year-round commitment to honor, empower, and connect with the nation's service members, veterans, and their families. The 32 nominees from each NFL team were announced in November and consisted of active and retired players, coaches, and team executives and personnel who best demonstrated support for the military community.

The Salute to Service Award recipient will be recognized at NFL Honors, a primetime awards special to air nationally on the CBS Television Network and NFL Network, and stream on Paramount+ and NFL+ on Thursday, Feb. 8 at the Resorts World Theatre in Las Vegas.

"In looking at this season's finalists for the Salute to Service Award presented by USAA, we have two players whose families have served as well as a player who currently serves our country, and each of them has made it their personal mission to give back by supporting our military community during their time in the NFL," said Major General (Ret.) Bob Whittle, USAA Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff. "USAA salutes George, Aaron, and Joe for going the extra mile to honor our military, veterans and their families, and we encourage all Americans to follow their lead."

"Each nominee displays the qualities of sacrifice, service and integrity which serves as the cornerstone of this award", said Chad Hennings Air Force Academy graduate, three-time Super Bowl champion and Salute to Service Award panelist. "Aaron Jones, George Kittle and Joe Cardona should be proud of this accomplishment as they each exemplify what it means to serve their countries, their organiza-

tions and the community." USAA will contribute \$25,000 in the award recipient's honor to the official aid societies representing each of the military branches. The NFL Foundation will match that donation, which will go directly to the recipient's military charity of choice. The award recipient will also receive a specially designed military challenge coin which are presented to members of the military community to demonstrate membership, recognize excellence, or boost morale.

Fans were able to vote for their favorite nominees again this year, and the finalists were ultimately decided based on this consensus vote of fans, an NFL internal committee and USAA. Nominees were also evaluated on the positive impact of their efforts to support the military community, the type of service conducted, the thoroughness of their support and the level of commitment.

A panel of judges, consisting of representatives from the U.S. military community, the NFL and USAA, will determine the Salute to Service Award recipient, and includes Chad Hennings, Air Force Academy graduate and three-time Super Bowl champion; Jim Mora, Sr., Marine Corps veteran and former NFL head coach; Lenny Bandy, U.S. Marine Corps veteran and NFL Vice President of Security; Major General (Ret.) Robert Whittle, USAA Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff, and Ron Rivera, former NFL head coach and 2023 Salute to Service Award recipient.

Since 2011, USAA has used its sponsorship to honor and appreciate service members, veterans, and their families by creating unique opportunities that bring the military community and the NFL closer together.

Below is an overview of the three finalists. To learn more about the Salute to Service Award presented by USAA, please visit

NFL.com/Salute.

Aaron Jones, Green Bay Packers running back
Aaron Jones, who grew up with both of his parents serving in the U.S. Army, knows firsthand the sacrifices involved with serving, and he has made giving back to active-duty and veterans, a special focus of his community involvement. Jones is a big part of the Packers' Salute to Service efforts, serving as a spokesperson for the initiative and taking part in every opportunity to honor veterans. Last November, he spent time promoting Patriot K9s of Wisconsin, a nonprofit devoted to connecting veterans with trained service dogs. In the last several years, Jones has sent videos to veterans, spoken with youth at military academies and taken part in events like the team's Huddle for Heroes aimed at honoring veterans. He's visited service members in the hospital and visited military bases, including Fort Bliss in his native town of El Paso, Texas. Jones' A&A All the Way Foundation, which he founded with his twin brother, Alvin, also demonstrates his dedication to military members, helping those in need with a special focus on honoring and empowering military families. They provide special, joy-filled experiences to children who have parents serving in the military, honoring the sacrifice these families make. The Foundation's annual gala also raises money for military families, aimed at connecting them with the resources and care they need.

George Kittle, San Francisco 49ers tight end
George Kittle's appreciation for the military runs deep and is rooted in family with his Uncle Pat and Grandfather Carl among loved ones who have served. Kittle empowers service members by lending his platform and resources to raise awareness and encourage others to overcome adversity. Over five years, Kittle has donated over 200 tickets to service members and frontline heroes for nearly every home and away game. Kittle and his family founded the Hidden Pearls Podcast (HPP), amplifying com-

munity stories, including those of 45 veterans. Kittle has donated nearly \$150,000 to military nonprofits, including those selected by each veteran hosted on HPP. Since the inception of My Cause My Cleats, Kittle's honored military sacrifices, selecting the Pat Tillman Foundation, TAPS, MVP and Operation Freedom Paws. He connected the Salute to Service initiative to audiences worldwide, shaking the hands of every service member participating in the MNF anthem, garnering over 10 million views. Kittle also sustains these relationships. After gifting the family of fallen Army soldier SGT Martin LaMar Super Bowl LIV tickets, Kittle continues to host the LaMars at Training Camp and keeps SGT LaMar's purple heart in his locker. Last year, he hosted Ramon, a veteran experiencing PTSD and Huey, his service dog, at practice. Kittle stayed in touch, leveraging his platforms to raise awareness for vets with PTSD by sharing Ramon's story on HPP and social media. Inspired by such stories, Kittle and his family launched Mindful Meditation, offering free monthly mental health practices to MVP veterans.

Joe Cardona, New England Patriots long snapper
Joe's journey began at the United States Naval Academy as a four-year football player. During his rookie season, Joe displayed exceptional dedication by balancing a second full-time job as an Ensign in the Navy. In 2015, he juggled his NFL responsibilities with this demanding role, even working a 24-hour shift during the team's "day off." In 2017, he earned a promotion to lieutenant junior grade (LTJG). As a junior officer of Maritime Security Squadron 8, Joe currently oversees the logistical needs of 500 sailors. This offseason, he deployed with his unit to Djibouti, Africa. Joe recently joined the board of the Military Family Advisory Network, a nonprofit organization that provides vital support to military families facing hardships. Following a fire at Joint Base Cape Cod, Joe personally visited with affected mil-

itary families. He also led a toy collection drive to help replace items lost in the inferno. Additionally, he took the time to lead several free football clinics for military children at various bases across New England, including Hanscom Air Force Base and Naval Station Newport. Joe has personally delivered new bicycles to military families and helped complete a new home for a wounded veteran. Joe has actively participated in events like Brothers of Life at Gillette Stadium, an annual gathering hosted by the Kraft family that brings together wounded Israeli soldiers and American counterparts. As a service member, Joe has presided over more than a dozen re-enlistment and retirement ceremonies at Gillette Stadium.

Salute to Service
Salute to Service is the NFL's year-long initiative to honor, empower, and connect our nation's service members, veterans, and their families. Since 2011, this effort has raised more than \$66 million for military and veteran support organizations such as the Bob Woodruff Foundation (BWF), Pat Tillman Foundation (PTF), Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), United Service Organizations (USO) and Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP). For more information on Salute to Service, visit NFL.com/Salute.

About USAA
Founded in 1922 by a group of military officers, USAA is among the leading providers of insurance, banking, and investment and retirement solutions to more than 13 million members of the U.S. military, veterans who have honorably served and their families. Headquartered in San Antonio, USAA has offices in eight U.S. cities and three overseas locations and employs more than 37,000 people worldwide. Each year, the company contributes to national and local nonprofits in support of military families and communities where employees live and work. For more information about USAA, follow us on Facebook or Twitter (@USAA), or visit usaa.com.



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NFL Offers Free Admission to Military on February 7th
As a special thank you to the Military Community, the NFL will offer free admission to the Super Bowl Experience on Wednesday, February 7th for Military Appreciation Day. All active-duty United States Service Members, Veterans, and their Families tickets are 100% free on this day only, in partnership with Wounded Warrior Project, an NFL Salute to Service partner. Visit NFL.com for more information.

Department of Safety & Homeland Security offers free cable gun locks thru new Safe Store Tennessee program

NASHVILLE, Tenn---Through its new Safe Store Tennessee program, the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security, (TDOSHS), is offering free cable gun locks to any Tennessean available on request at Driver Services Centers and Tennessee Highway Patrol district headquarters.

"Safe firearm storage saves lives, and as a gun owner, the safe storage of your firearm is your responsibility," said Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security Commissioner Jeff Long.

"Safe firearm storage saves lives, and as a gun owner, the safe storage of your firearm is your responsibility," said Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security Commissioner Jeff Long. "Safe storage can prevent accidental shootings, suicide and theft. That's why I'm encouraging all Tennessee gun

owners to use our free gun lock to help store their firearm safely."

The 15-inch cable lock from the TDOSHS can secure most shotguns, rifles, pistols and revolvers. The cable lock works by running through the barrel or action of the firearm preventing it from being fired. The rubber coating on the cable helps to protect the firearm. The cable lock has a secure keyed deadbolt locking mechanism with a 4-pin

cylinder.

For added security, the TDOSHS recommends gun owners use the free cable gun lock in combination with other safe storage measures. A firearm with an engaged cable lock should be stored in a locked gun case, safe or lock box. Ammunition should be stored in a separate locked container. Keys to the cable lock should be stored separately from the firearm in a hard-to-access secure location.

Learn more about the Safe Store Tennessee program and where Tennesseans can request a free cable lock at SafeStoreTN.com.

The Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security's mission is to serve, secure, and protect the people of Tennessee.

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