

Military, Law, and more ...

Governor’s Faith-Based & Community Initiative and TDOC unite to mobilize volunteering inside TN prisons via Men of Valor Mentorship

NASHVILLE - Thirty years ago, Governor Bill Lee began volunteering inside Tennessee state prisons. Through the non-profit Men of Valor, he mentored men in TDOC custody – lending his time to coach, listen, and walk alongside them on their journey through incarceration. It was an experience that he said changed his life, altered his perspective, and profoundly shaped his view on rehabilitation and reentry.

“I walked into that prison and, beginning that night, I was a changed person,” Lee said. “It gave me a whole new appreciation for who is in our facilities and how they came to be there.”

After witnessing the challenges faced by the men and their desire for positive change, a passion was ignited within him for supporting successful reentry, and three decades later, it remains a cornerstone of his administration. At the Debra K. Johnson Rehabilitation Center, he joined TDOC Commissioner Frank Strada to welcome 40 new mentors to the Volunteer Mentorship Initiative (VMI) - a program aimed at supporting those returning to society from incarceration. The program operates under the umbrella of the Governors’ Faith-Based and Community Initiative (GFBCI), and connects external mentors with incarcerated mentees to provide guidance, support, and resource direction throughout the reentry process.

“When we talk about reentry, I always say it’s a three-pronged approach: the offender has to be motivated to change, the Department of Correction has to provide meaningful programming, and finally – the community has to be willing to accept them back,” Commissioner Frank Strada told the mentors. “Your role here and the responsibility you’re willing to take to be a mentor is very important. As Commissioner, I’m grateful you’re willing to come to our institutions and provide this service, because we can’t do it alone.”

To participate, inmates must be within two years of release and mentors must commit to at least one monthly contact during incarceration. Additionally, mentors must commit to maintaining contact for 12 months following their mentee’s release from prison.

Studies show that community volunteer programs in prisons, especially those that offer social support through mentoring and reentry resources, are linked to reduced recidivism. In Tennessee, the number of volunteer hours recorded in state facilities this year has reached a new record and can be attributed, in part, to programs like the VMI that mobilize community and faith-based organizations to support offenders, both before and after their release.

“The Volunteer Mentorship Initiative shows what happens when everyday Tennesseans join faith and community partners to walk alongside those returning from incarceration with hope, accountability, and belonging. Every volunteer mentor is proof that transformation happens person to person, and that Tennessee is at its best when we lead with both conviction and compassion,” Lance Villio, Executive Director of the Governor’s Faith-Based and Community Initiative, said.

In the coming weeks, the new mentors will be matched with an inmate at either the Debra K. Johnson Rehabilitation Center or the Lois M. DeBerry Special Needs Facility.

“These offenders - who you will come to know - you’ll change their life forever,” Lee said, in closing. “You are the link between where they are today and where they’re going to be.”

For more information about volunteer opportunities with the Tennessee Department of Correction, or to sign up to volunteer, visit tn.gov/correction.



Pictured left to right: Executive Director of the Governor’s Faith-Based and Community Initiative Lance Villio, TDOC Commissioner Frank Strada, Governor Bill Lee, and TDOC Assistant Commissioner Gail Fenkell. (Photo/Courtesy: TDOC)

“Never Forgotten, Never Alone—A Night for the Wounded Blue” set to benefit injured and disabled law enforcement officers on November 5

Vince Gill and Mandy Barnett join hosts Shawn Parr and Megan Alexander at the Nashville Palace; Also, featuring Jennifer Grant and CBS/Paramount “The Road” contestant Billie Jo Jones

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (October 27, 2025) — The Wounded Blue’s mid-week benefit concert, ‘Never Forgotten, Never Alone – A Night for The Wounded Blue,’ is adding star power with Vince Gill and Mandy Barnett now confirmed to perform. National media personalities Shawn Parr and Megan Alexander will co-host the evening, celebrating and supporting law enforcement officers injured or disabled in the line of duty.

Building on the previously announced lineup—Maggie Bauch, John Berry, Chad Brock, John Conlee, Buddy Jewell, Ronnie McDowell, Mark Wills, Darryl Worley and more, with openers Jennifer Grant and Billie Jo Jones (current contestant on CBS/Paramount+ series ‘The Road’)—the event pairs powerful performances with real-life stories from the front lines. All artists subject to availability.

Event Details
Date/Time: Wednesday, November 5, 2025 — Red Carpet/Doors 5:30 p.m. CT • Show 7:00 - 10p.m. CT
Venue: The Nashville Palace, 2611 McGavock Pk, Nashville, TN 37214
Tickets: \$40 GA (advance) / \$45 (day-of); VIP/sponsored options available
Info/Tickets: TheWoundedBlue.org and The Nashville Palace box office (615) 889-1541.
Silent Auction: Curated by Elite Events of Music City

-A Report from the Memphis Safe Task Force- Child murder suspect is now behind bars from sports-military page 2

the Memphis Safe Task Force conducted a coordinated effort and arrested Thomas in the 1000 block of S. Lauderdale Street. The Memphis Safe Task Force is an interagency coalition of federal, state, and local law enforcement partners, continues to demonstrate the power of collaboration in advancing public



Sponsor Spotlight
The Wounded Blue organization made the following statement: “We’re grateful to the event’s sponsors—including Blackbird Media, OUTFRONT Media, and Spark by Hilton—whose support helps underwrite production, expand awareness, and ensure more of every ticket directly benefits The Wounded Blue’s mission.”

The evening will also feature a silent auction curated by Elite Events of Music City, with proceeds benefiting The Wounded

Blue. Visit the silent auction <https://woundedblue25.givesmart.com/>. Auction items will be added daily leading up to the event. Interested donors can also text WoundedBlue25 to 76278 and follow the prompts for mobile-friendly bidding services up to and during the event.

(Previously announced pricing, schedule and program details remain in effect.)

A Call to 1,000 Heroes: \$9.11/Month
To extend the impact beyond one

night, The Wounded Blue invites supporters to join its \$9.11 per month giving tier, with a goal of recruiting 1,000+ monthly donors by year’s end—fueling trained peer-advocate support, emergency assistance and advocacy for officers coping with physical and psychological injuries.

As Founder & Chairman Lt. Randy Sutton (Ret.) notes,

“This night is about standing shoulder-to-shoulder with those who stood the watch for us... A \$9.11 monthly pledge lets every American say, ‘I’ve got your six,’ all year long.”

About The Wounded Blue
The Wounded Blue is America’s only national organization dedicated to supporting law enforcement officers injured or disabled

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in the line of duty—physically, mentally, or emotionally. Since its founding, The Wounded Blue has helped more than 16,000 officers nationwide through its peer-support program and provides education, assistance and advocacy—including its annual National Law Enforcement Survival Summit. Learn more or join the mission at TheWoundedBlue.org or call 1-833-TWB-TALK.

About Lt. Randy Sutton (Ret.) A 34-year law-enforcement veteran and one of LVMPD’s most highly decorated officers, Lt. Randy Sutton (Ret.) is Founder & Chairman of The Wounded Blue. He leads a national mission to ensure no injured or disabled officer is ever left behind—delivering peer support, emergency aid, training and advocacy.

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