

2021 Awards Ceremony



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Media Contact: Peter F Fertig
President, Bob Feller Act of Valor Award Foundation
pfertig@actofvaloraward.org

Fort Meade, MD - The Bob Feller Act of Valor Award Foundation proudly announces Joe Torre, special assistant to the Commissioner of Baseball, and Griffin Jax of the Minnesota Twins as this year's baseball honorees for the Bob Feller Act of Valor Awards. Mr. Torre and Mr. Jax will be joined by Navy and Marine Corps honorees during the annual Bob Feller Act of Valor Awards Ceremony on November 18th, 2021.

The awards honor the legacy of National Baseball Hall of Fame pitcher Bob Feller, who made the selfless decision to put his career in the major leagues on hold so he could serve our country. Award winners will be honored during a virtual live feed simulcast from the studios of the Defense Media Activity at Fort Meade MD on November 18th, 2021. The honorees selected possess the values, integrity, and dedication to serving our country that Bob Feller himself displayed.

This year's program recognizes recipients from the military and Major League Baseball in six categories. In addition, the ceremony will recognize an accomplished student Intern with the Bob Feller Act of Valor Fellowship Award.

2021 Award Recipients:

1. **National Baseball Hall of Fame Award:** Joe Torre, Major League Baseball
2. **Major League Baseball Award:** Griffin Jax, Minnesota Twins
3. **United States Navy Chief Petty Officer Award:** ACC (AW/SW/IW) Joshua A. Sawyer, Naval Air Station Fallon, NV
4. **United States Marine Corps, Jerry Coleman Award:** First Sergeant, Daniel P. Best, Support Company, III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) Support Battalion, III Marine Information Group
5. **Peer-to-Peer, Sea Command Award:** USS GERMANTOWN (LSD 42) Junior Enlisted Association, Sasebo Japan.
6. **Peer-to-Peer, Ashore Installation Award:** Training Support Center, Great Lakes, IL Chapter of the Coalition of Sailors Against Destructive Decisions (CSADD)
7. **Bob Feller Fellowship Award:** Galen Odell, Emerson College

Joe Torre, 2021 National Baseball Hall of Fame Award Honoree

Joe Torre followed success on the diamond with an even better career in the dugout. As a catcher-turned-infielder, he was a nine-time All-Star, the 1971 National League Most Valuable Player and totaled 2,342 hits over 18 big league seasons. As two-time manager of the year and nine-time all-star player, Torre was the only major leaguer to combine 2,000 hits as a player with 2,000 wins as a manager. But Joe Torre was much more than just a baseball player and like many of the Bob Feller Act of Valor Award recipients before him, he also proudly served his country as part of the Air National Guard during the Cuban Crisis in 1962. Joe continues to give back, establishing the Safe At Home Foundation in 2002 that provides healing services to youth who have been traumatized by exposure to violence in order to empower them to live healthy lives free of violence.

Upon being notified of his award, Mr. Torre said; "I'm very proud to accept the Bob Feller Act of Valor Award. Bob was a great pitcher who enjoyed many accomplishments on the diamond. But what made Bob Feller the proudest was defending his country as a member of the U. S. Navy. Bob's selfless act of putting his Hall of Fame career on hold to enlist in the Navy is to be admired and I am honored to receive this award that bears the name of Bob Feller."

Griffin Jax, Named 2021 MLB recipient of the Bob Feller Act of Valor Award

"The Bob Feller Act of Valor Award Foundation is proud to honor Minnesota Twins pitcher Griffin Jax," Bob Feller Act of Valor Foundation Founder and President Peter J. Fertig said. "Griffin has served his country honorably, becoming the first professional athlete in Major League Baseball to come from the United States Air Force Academy. His service to our country, like Bob Feller's, serves as a reminder that service above self is still as important today as it was in years past."



Jax embodies the duality of love for baseball and service to the United States that was so crucial to the character of the late Hall-of-Famer Bob Feller. Jax was drafted by the Twins in the third round of the 2016 MLB First-Year Player Draft and, when he made his major league debut on June 8, became the first Air Force Academy graduate to play in the majors. He completed his two-year active-duty commitment in 2019 and maintains the rank of Captain in the Air Force Reserves.

Joshua A. Sawyer to receive the U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Award

This year's U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer honoree is **Air Traffic Controller Chief (AW/SW/SW) Joshua A. Sawyer**, who joined the Navy in August 2003 out of San Bernardino, California and has served with distinction ever since. His tours of duty include USS KITTY HAWK (CV 63); Naval Air Station Lemoore, California; Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington; TACRON ELEVEN, Coronado, California; USS AMERICA (LHA-6); and USS ESSEX (LHD-2). He currently serves at Naval Air Station Fallon, Nevada as the Air Traffic Control Training Chief and Senior Watch Officer.

A committed supporter of his local community, Chief Sawyer's volunteer efforts extend from his own community, to those overseas, from civilians, to retired veterans. Chief Sawyer looks for those in need and works to find a solution. Chief Sawyer promoted community outreach through the local elementary school, volunteering for seasonal and holiday events, as well as a special program that celebrated the children of military personnel. He worked to improve his community by organizing a command wide cleanup of the beaches outside of the naval bases in San Diego. While on deployment, Chief Sawyer sought out community outreach programs when his unit made port calls. This led to events in both Malaysia and Bahrain that not only helped improve the local area, but also helped raise money for the local school's supplies, toys, and sporting equipment. Chief Sawyer's volunteer outreach continued to grow when he worked with his Chief's Mess to raise money in support of the Special Olympics project. Maybe more than just his own investment in communities, Chief Sawyer's desire to show others how to give may be his largest impact. Chief Sawyer mentored a junior sailor program, helping them establish a regular volunteer opportunity with the Ronald McDonald house. He led SAILOR 360 programs to show future leaders how to get involved, leading his team to donate over a hundred hours to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) food drives. Chief Sawyer embodies the ideal of servant leadership and is the example we want to highlight for sailors and civilians alike.

Chief Sawyer's heartfelt reflection on the award, Bob Feller himself, and his shipmates are a testament to the leadership this sailor brings to the Navy, "Being selected as the 2021 Bob Feller Act of Valor Award winner is truly humbling. I was told I went up against 40 or so other well deserving Brothers and Sisters from the [Chief's] mess and being the one selection chosen by MCPON, Fleet, and Force Master Chiefs is a true honor. I plan every day to try and emulate Bob Feller's nine core principles he lived by that got him through a Hall of Fame Baseball career as well as a highly decorated and successful tour during World War II. It really is hard to put into words what this means to me, and I just thank my Sailors and leadership for giving me an opportunity to lead and learn every day!"

Jerry Coleman Award

First Sergeant Best entered the Marine Corps from Liberty, Texas in August 2004, and has excelled throughout his career. As a Supply Administration and Operations Clerk, he served with Marine Aircraft Group 12, Iwakuni, Japan; II Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), 2nd Supply Battalion, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina; as an Inspector Instructor in San Jose, California; Combat Logistics Regiment 15, Camp Pendleton, California; Marine Corps Embassy Security Group, where he was an Instructor Advisor and conducted two detachments to Kigali, Rwanda, and Bogota, Columbia; and 3rd Intelligence Battalion, Okinawa, Japan. He currently serves as the Company First Sergeant for Support Company, III MEF Support Battalion, III Marine Information Group, Okinawa, Japan.

In addition to leading and mentoring Marines, First Sergeant Best has repeatedly established himself as a mainstay in every community in which he and his family have resided. First Sergeant Best inspires friends, family, and his fellow Marines to join with him, and volunteer their time to their community. His efforts have been a driving force for improvements within his community, providing thousands of hours of volunteer services for over a hundred events. Just a few of the organizations that have been able to benefit from First Sergeant Best's efforts include the Marine Corps League, 1st Marine Division Association, The Boys and Girls Club, Operation: Care and Comfort, the MindLeaps curriculum, local homeless shelters, as well as the Overseas Community Liaison Officers and the Unit Family Readiness Officers. First Sergeant Best's leadership and desire to continuously improve his community has been highlighted in his 113 Letters of Appreciation, three Military Outstanding Volunteer Service medals, and the prestigious 2019 Presidential Community Leadership Award.

Upon being notified of being awarded the Jerry Coleman Award, First Sergeant Best remarked, "To be associated with the legacy of Jerry Coleman is especially meaningful to me because my greatest joy as a leader is seeing the



development of others, an attribute that LtCol Coleman was known for. This award is not about me but rather the leadership I have sparked in others. Though I was not very good at baseball, I have tried to emulate LtCol Coleman by devoting my life towards serving others. I am grateful to accept this award.”

Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Awards

Two unique awards honor groups of junior Sailors that have excelled in encouraging other Sailors to embody the Navy's core values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment, and have worked together to promote peer-to-peer mentorship and reduce destructive personal decision-making and behaviors.

This year's recipients in the Afloat and Ashore categories are the **USS GERMANTOWN (LSD 42) Junior Enlisted Association (JEA)** and the **Training Support Center Great Lakes Chapter of the Coalition of Sailors Against Destructive Decisions (CSADD)**, respectively.

Peer to Peer Award (Afloat Category)

Upon learning that the USS GERMANTOWN (LSD 42) Junior Enlisted Association would be awarded the Peer-to-Peer Mentoring (Afloat) Award, Information Systems Technician 2nd Class Thomas Stevens said: “This award shows that all of our efforts as Germantown's Junior Enlisted Association have been for the betterment of the crew. It's nice to be recognized but to me it's more important to take care of the crew we serve with that works so incredibly hard daily to keep our ship running at the intense 7th Fleet operations tempo.”

Seaman Alexa Agurto added: “To me, this award means molding leaders for the future. One day, we will be First Classes, Chief, or in some form of leadership position. In the Junior Enlisted Association we learn the first steps of becoming leaders, working together and creating a better environment for the junior Sailors.”

2021 Award Recipients:

- Religious Program Specialist 2nd Class Oluwadamilola Adeyemi
- Cryptological Technician Technical 2nd Class Jaquan Roberts
- Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Aaron Docuyanan
- Information Systems Technician 3rd Class Ryan Snyder,
- Information Systems Technician 3rd Class Xavier Horris,
- Information Systems Technician 2nd Class Thomas Stevens
- Seaman Alexa Agurto

Peer to Peer Mentoring Awards (Ashore Category)

After learning that the Training Support Center Great Lakes Chapter of the CSADD would receive the Bob Feller Act of Valor Award, the CSADD President, Electronics Technician Seaman Ethan Carney said, "Winning the Bob Feller Award is exciting for us. The CSADD has become more important for morale during COVID-19 than we would have ever believed. This award shows that we are still spreading our message and informing our shipmates to make good decisions, being influential in their careers and our own.”

2021 CSADD Leadership Team Award Recipients:

- Fire Controlman Seaman Tinoco
- Fire Controlman 3rd Class Carpio
- Fire Controlman 3rd Class Blanchard
- Fire Controlman Seaman DeLaPuente
- Fire Controlman Seaman Munoz
- Fire Controlman Seaman Adams
- Fire Controlman Seaman Baeza
- Fire Controlman Seaman Sullivan
- Fire Controlman 3rd Class Wooley



Building Future Leaders

This year's ceremony will again recognize The Bob Feller Act of Valor Scholarship Program created to provide tuition assistance to qualified students of military families, veterans and service personnel seeking post-secondary education.

In alignment with the foundation's ongoing mission to acknowledge and support the sacrifices made by active service members, veterans and their families, the foundation will award 6 unique scholarships totaling \$12,000. Winning applicants were selected based on academic excellence, community service, leadership, and mentoring qualities through their participation in extra-curricular activities in school and within their community.

About the Program

Repeating the success of 2020, the 2021 program will again feature a virtual simulcast broadcast to thousands of active and retired military personnel around the globe in addition to an online audience of Act of Valor followers and supporters throughout the country. Online registrations will be accepted starting in late October. The award program moderated by Master of Ceremonies, Bob DiBasio, Senior Vice President of Public Affairs for the Cleveland Indians, will be encapsulated into a virtual meeting experience, complete with rare baseball videos, a silent auction of one of a kind memorabilia, and a live chat room for Q&A.

Previous baseball award winners include National Baseball Hall of Fame recipients Yogi Berra, Tommy Lasorda, George Brett, Rod Carew, Tom Seaver, Johnny Bench, Randy Johnson, and Brooks Robinson.

MLB player recipients include Justin Verlander, Nick Swisher, Jonathan Lucroy, Brad Ziegler, Darren O'Day, Sean Doolittle, Ian Kennedy, and Craig Stammen.

Previous Navy Chief Petty Officer recipients include Senior Chief Petty Officer Garth Sinclair, Senior Chief Petty Officer Carl Thompson, Chief Petty Officer Genell Cody, Senior Chief Petty Officer Christopher Beeding, Chief Petty Officer Edmundo Brantes, Chief Petty Officer Shawn M. Wingle, Senior Chief Petty Officer Jairo N. Guity, and Chief Petty Officer Lacresha L. Dowdell,

Previous Peer to Peer recipients include The USS CARL VINSON (CVN70), HOPPER Information Services Center, USS CONSTITUTION, Unmanned Patrol Squadron ONE NINE (VUP-19), U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion FIVE (NMCB 5), USS AMERICA (LHA6), and Training Support Center Great Lakes Chapter of the CSADD

Previous Marine Corps honorees include Staff Sergeant Rene Segura, First Sergeant Marshall Cleveland, Staff Sergeant Adam Plambeck, Gunnery Sergeant Johnathan S. Rose, Gunnery Sergeant Joshua A. MacMillan, and Master Sergeant Herman A. Kruppa

About the Foundation

Peter Fertig founded The Bob Feller Act of Valor Award with the support of the United States Navy, United States Marine Corps, Major League Baseball, the Cleveland Indians, the National Baseball Hall of Fame and the gracious consent of Mrs. Anne Feller, the San Diego Padres, and the family of Jerry Coleman.

Please visit our website actofvaloraward.org to learn more about our foundation.

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