



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
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Bay Area Team Wins National Award for Innovative Way to Help Injured Veterans

A team of Silicon Valley volunteers who created an innovative new way for injured military service members to get assistance as they recover is the winner of the 2009 Newman's Own Award. The organization, USA Together, which started two years ago in conjunction with VA Palo Alto, was presented the award at the Pentagon, Sept. 10, by Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Tom Indoe, President of Newman's Own-the foods company started by actor Paul Newman.

USA Together is a web site (www.usatogether.org) where injured service members and their families can post requests for basic unmet needs including goods, such as a washer or baby crib, services, like legal assistance or construction help and modest financial assistance. Then individuals and community groups and businesses that subscribe to USA Together get notified via email of the needs and can reach out to offer help.

"It's like a special form of Craig's List focused on helping our recovering service members," said Dave Mahler, CEO of USA Together. "We knew that many Americans wanted to help, but just didn't know how. This web site lets them read the stories of those injured and find someone they can connect with to help -- either right in their own community or across the nation."

USA Together was started when the founders approached Kerri Childress, communications officer, at the Palo Alto VA Health Care System and asked about the challenges families face as they recover from service connected injuries. The team is made up of bay area high tech professionals who mostly have no prior military background. USA Together also assists the immediate families of those service members who died as a result of their service.

100% of any money donated towards meeting service member requests goes to meet those needs. USA Together is a registered 501c3 non-profit corporation. Newman's Own, Fisher House Foundation, and Military Times Media Group sponsored the competition, which seeks to reward ingenuity and innovation for programs that benefit service men and women and their families.

A total of 112 entries were submitted for the award and 11 organizations were recognized with USA Together winning the top award. The Fisher House Foundation, coordinates the competition hosted the awards ceremony along with Military Times Media Group and Newman's Own.

USA Together can be reached at info@usatogether.org by calling 650-224-4402.

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