

# Military, Law Enforcement News, and More...

## Charles W. Herbster and Lee Greenwood receive the rare Helping a Hero Defense of Freedom Award from Combat Wounded Heroes; Award only given three times

BRANSON, Mo. – On Saturday, February 3, 2024, Charles W. Herbster, President and Owner of the Conklin Company, and country music legend Lee Greenwood were awarded the Helping a Hero Defense of Freedom Award. This award recognizes great Americans who have gone the extra mile to defend freedom.

The Defense of Freedom Award is a very rare award that has only been presented three other times, with all recipients chosen by the combat-wounded heroes of Helping A Hero. Previous recipients include actor Chuck Norris, Marcus Luttrell, the Navy Seal better known as the Lone Survivor, and Joanne King Herring, who was the real-life inspiration

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behind the movie Charlie Wilson's War. Charles W. Herbster was recognized by Helping A Hero for being a consistent leader supporting our military, veterans, and first responders. He is known for his selfless dedication to those who defend our freedom and keep us safe. When Charles heard a wounded warrior in his home state of Nebraska was in need, he stepped up to the plate.

On July 31, 2006, while deployed with the Nebraska National Guard in Iraq, Army Sergeant Ben Marksmeier of Wisner, Nebraska, was gravely wounded when terrorists det-



The Defense of Freedom Award has only been given out three times which makes the award extremely special to recipients country music legend Lee Greenwood and businessman Charles W. Herbster. Shown here are from left: Lee Greenwood, SSgt Daniel Gilyeat, Charles W. Herbster, and SPC JP Lane. (Photo/Courtesy: Helping A Hero)

onated a roadside bomb hitting his convoy. Ben was officially declared dead, and one of his dog tags was removed before an Army Specialist noticed a slight twitch from his body. Despite doubt about the report, doctors and nurses decided to try to revive him one more time, and it worked.

The Army awarded SGT Ben Marksmeier the Bronze Star for saving his fellow soldier's life while at personal risk. Ben, who lost his leg in the explosion, thought of his fellow soldier first and threw him from the burning vehicle to safety while he was still trapped in the vehicle and critically injured.

In that attack, Ben lost his right leg and suffered extreme injuries to his left leg. Ben has undergone dozens of surgeries as doctors are still working to save his left leg, including one surgery during a month-long stay at Walter Reed in 2023.

Due to his catastrophic injuries and the ongoing battle to save his remaining leg, Ben needs an adapted home. Ben is a single dad raising his two youngest sons, Ryker, 7, and Mason, 9. He is also the proud father of 17-year-old Caiden. In addition to being an active parent, Ben started his own woodworking business. Major General Roger Lemke, the former Adjutant General of the Nebraska National Guard, and Colonel Kevin Neumann nominated Ben for an adapted home from Helping a Hero. Music legend Lee Greenwood surprised SGT Marks-

meier and his three sons on national television and told them that Ben would receive an adapted home as part of the Johnny Morris 100 Homes Challenge. Having been chosen to receive a home, one piece was missing: the land where the home would be built. After hearing of Ben's incredible story and his need for a home in Nebraska, Charles W. Herbster agreed to donate all the funding needed to purchase the perfect piece of land for Ben near Springfield, Nebraska. "All the pain I go through every day, there is no regret. I signed



up when I was seventeen because I wanted to give back to my country what my country gave me: freedom. I am grateful beyond what my words can express to Charles W. Herbster and Johnny Morris for caring about my service," said Marksmeier.

"When I got the news about the home, it was breathtaking. Then, Mr. Herbster wanted to give us some beautiful land, and now I can instill in my sons the work ethic of farming on this land. This has filled my heart with a little more motivation, which is hard," Marksmeier said.

Meredith Iler, Founder of the Helping a Hero Home Program, said the home and land given by Johnny Morris and Charles W. Herbster will transform the life of Ben and his sons. "Ben wants to be an example of strength for his sons, and Johnny Morris and Charles W. Herbster are giving

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## Gov. Bill Lee presents 20 Tennessee Homeland Security special agents with graduation badges

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – On Friday, Feb. 16, Governor Bill Lee, Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security Commissioner Jeff Long, and Tennessee Office of Homeland Security Deputy Commissioner Greg Mays presented badges to 20 new Tennessee Office of Homeland Security Special Agents in a graduation ceremony at the Tennessee Law Enforcement Training Academy in Nashville.

"Governor Bill Lee and the Tennessee General Assembly

continue to invest and support public safety," said Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security Commissioner Jeff Long. "Thanks to their commitment, we have recruited some of the finest law enforcement professionals in the nation. I commend each Special Agent for their desire and willingness to serve, secure, and protect Tennesseans."

With today's graduating class, the Tennessee Office of Homeland Security has added 57 Spe-

*"Special Agents received specialized training to identify and monitor threats and help coordinate information among local law enforcement, schools, and mental health providers to keep our schools and communities safe," said Tennessee Office of Homeland Security Deputy Commissioner Greg Mays. "Together, we can keep our communities and nation safe. Remember, if you see something, say something."*

cial Agents since July 1, 2023, when funding became available. This marks significant progress towards Governor Lee's goal of having an Office of Homeland Security Special Agent assigned to all 95 counties in Tennessee.

"Special Agents received specialized training to identify and monitor threats and help coordinate information among local law enforcement, schools, and mental health providers to keep our schools and communities safe," said Tennessee Office of

Homeland Security Deputy Commissioner Greg Mays. "Together, we can keep our communities and nation safe. Remember, if you see something, say something."

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

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See The Mid-South Tribune's 2022 Juneteenth Edition on Black Information Highway.com



See The Mid-South Tribune's 28th Annual Black History Month Special Edition on the Black Information Highway.com on the Black History Lane

The Mid-South Tribune's 29th Annual Black History Special Edition's 2024 theme is "Education, Economics and Entrepreneurship."

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