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The Mission Continues Significantly Expanding Programs in Response to Growing Veteran Population and Demand for Better Solutions

Four-year-old national nonprofit to expand Fellowship Program to all post-9/11 veterans in 2012

Announcement to be made at annual gala in St Louis, keynoted by Tom Brokaw

St. Louis, MO—November 5, 2011—The Mission Continues, the only national nonprofit dedicated to helping post-9/11 veterans rebuild a sense of purpose in the communities they return home to, announced today that it will open its Fellowship program in 2012 to all post-9/11 veterans who served at least two years and who honorably transitioned out of the military. The growth of the Fellowship program is part of an organization-wide expansion, driven by the growing veteran population and demand for better solutions to the challenges faced by veterans. Since 2007, The Mission Continues has awarded nearly 200 fellowships. In 2012 alone, it expects to award 500.

“All veterans should have the opportunity to serve their nation again on the home front, as a means of rebuilding purpose in their own lives,” said Eric Greitens, Navy SEAL and CEO of The Mission Continues. “The growth of The Mission Continues is fueled by a committed base of volunteers and funders who share in the belief that this generation of veterans is poised to be the next greatest generation. In 2012, we are proud to dramatically expand our programs, welcoming 500 new Fellows to The Mission Continues family.”

Greitens is scheduled to announce the Fellowship program expansion to a roomful of veterans and supporters at The Mission Continues’ annual gala on Saturday evening, November 5, less than a week before Veterans Day. Preceding the announcement will be keynote speaker Tom Brokaw, whose new book, *The Time of our Lives*, explores the emerging veteran service movement and the work of The Mission Continues.

A Mission Continues Fellow is a post-9/11 veteran who has accepted the challenge to continue their service at home by volunteering in their community. Fellowships are 26 weeks in length and require 520 hours of service (an average of 20 hours a week), during which the Fellow works at a nonprofit organization in their community. Fellows work on issues ranging from education to the environment, disaster preparedness, and homelessness. At the start of the program, Fellows are required to present their “exit-strategy,” a plan for how they will build from the experience as they transition into work, school or an ongoing role of service. Fellowships also include a stipend to cover living expenses.

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A key aspect of the 2012 expansion is that veterans will no longer require a VA disability rating to apply for a fellowship, making them available to the vast majority of post-9/11 veterans. This change reflects the fact that many of the veterans who struggle to find their way at home – who have lost their sense of purpose – are not limited to those who have traditionally defined wounds and injuries.

"Veterans who are dealing with the physical or emotional scars of their service often most acutely struggle with the loss of purpose," said Spencer Kympton, Chief Operating Officer of The Mission Continues. "But all veterans, regardless of disabilities, may struggle. This fact, combined with the dramatic impact we are seeing with our current and past Fellows, compels us to open the program to all post-9/11 veterans."

After their military service, many veterans struggle to find purpose without the structure, mission and camaraderie of a military unit. This loss of purpose frequently leads to unemployment, relationship problems, substance abuse, and, in an alarming number of cases, suicide. This is the storyline with which most Americans are familiar. But [studies](#) and anecdotal evidence are showing that through helping others, veterans can quickly rebuild purpose and make the successful transition to civilian life.

"Since I retired in September 2009, I've had seven friends – seven – who served with me in Iraq, who have committed suicide and that's something I never want to happen to someone else," said Andrew Berry, Army veteran and Mission Continues Fellow. "I know my role now in helping other guys. I am trying to make a difference in the lives of other soldiers... to help them realize there is something more out there for them."

According to Greitens: "Veterans seek opportunities to serve and an organization that will stand beside them and acknowledge the skills and ethic of service they bring home to their communities. This expansion will not only impact the 500 Fellows who serve in 2012, but the thousands of lives and hundreds of communities that will be touched by their work."

About The Mission Continues

The Mission Continues is a national nonprofit organization that has committed to transform the lives of post-9/11 veterans by challenging them to serve again as civilians. Founded in 2007 when Navy SEAL Eric Greitens returned from Iraq, the organization offers paid service fellowships to veterans, awarding nearly 200 fellowships in 30 states to date. The Mission Continues is reshaping the way this country welcomes home our veterans by showing that these men and women are tremendous assets whose leadership and skills can be vital to their community's improvement. For more information, please visit www.missioncontinues.org.

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