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USO Staff, Board Member Receive Top Patriot Award Local Military Order of the World Wars recognizes volunteer service

SEATTLE – The USO McChord Center manager, Tracye Kakely, her son Antony Kakely, and USO Puget Sound Area board member, Joan Shalikashvili, have received the Patrick Henry Award for patriotic service from the Puget Sound chapter of the Military Order of the World Wars (MOWW). This is the highest award given locally by the MOWW and the first time a mother and son have received the award together.

Retired naval officer Alan Peschek, Regional Commander of the MOWW, said that the Silver Patrick Henry Award is given to those individuals who express patriotism through service to their communities. "It simply means that you love your country enough to give something back," Peschek said.

Kakely, who has headed the McChord USO Center for the past 10 months said, "I am blessed to be able to work in a position that allows me to make a positive difference and to be an example to my son. As a parent, we wonder whether we are planting good seeds in our children. This award means a lot to me because it is a confirmation from the community that I am doing something right both with the USO and with the values my son is learning."

Peschek added that Kakely and her son, and Mrs. Shalikashvili have demonstrated this kind of patriotism through their dedicated service to the military, military families, and through their volunteer efforts in their communities. Peschek also praised Kakely's son Antony, age 9, who received the Bronze Patrick Henry Medallion given to children under the age of 18. "This kid has it," said Peschek, "he's a leader and could easily be the next Colin Powell," referring to the former Secretary of State and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

The Patrick Henry Award can only be received once in person's lifetime.

Tom Hinman, president and executive director of the USO Puget Sound Area, said that Kakely's efforts have had a huge impact on how the USO has served the troops, especially during a time of added and extended deployments. "Tracye devotes an incredible amount of energy to serving our troops and their families," said Hinman. "Whether it's serving 4,000 deploying troops in one week, building our organizational partnerships that provide food and supplies or growing the number of volunteers at our McChord USO center, Tracye always goes beyond the call of duty."

Hinman praised USO board member, Joan Shalikashvili, as a tireless advocate for the troops and their families. "She could spend her days in full retirement after serving with her husband, Gen.

John Shalikashvili, the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, but she spends countless hours volunteering at the USO center, helping with our collections for troop care packages, and working with other community organizations. She reflects the heart and soul of this organization.”

“When you accept an award like this,” said Shalikashvili, “it is really on behalf of all the people who do so much for our service members.”

This is the second major award the USO McChord Center has received in the past month. In May, the Association of U.S. Army (AUSA) recognized the USO Puget Sound for their exemplary volunteer service to over 29,000 military members and their families during 2006.

“As an organization composed of retired commissioned officers of the military, this award is a great honor,” said Hinman. “The men and women of the MOWW recognize a life that is truly dedicated to serving country and community.”

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Nationally recognized, the USO Puget Sound has served over 3 million of America’s men and women in uniform and their families for over 40 years. The mission of USO Puget Sound is to provide a “home away from home,” family support, and recreation opportunities to the U.S. Armed forces personnel and their families, and to connect individuals, civic groups and businesses in service to the region’s military community.