

For Immediate Release

September 24, 2009

Homeless Veterans Organization Prepares To Honor Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman

Admiral Mike Mullen will receive the Soldier On Award at Oct. 29 event

NORTHAMPTON, Mass. — Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the United States Armed Services, has been tapped to receive the Soldier On Award for 2009. The award, which recognizes individuals who have made a significant contribution to the cause of ending veteran homelessness, is presented by Soldier On, a non-profit organization based in Northampton. Admiral Mullen, the highest ranking officer in the U.S. military, will be on hand to receive the 2009 award at a tribute dinner to be held October 29 at the Log Cabin in Holyoke.

Soldier On has been working to get homeless veterans off the street since 1994. The organization, which operates a shelter in Leeds, Massachusetts, and a transitional living facility in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, provides veterans with housing, counseling, job training, education and access to medical and psychological health services. Soldier On is currently preparing to begin construction on a historic, first-of-its-kind limited equity housing project for formerly homeless veterans.

In a January 2008 meeting with Soldier On President & CEO Jack Downing, Admiral Mullen made a commitment to support Soldier On in its ongoing efforts to create a permanent solution to veteran homelessness. He also pledged to begin implementing strategies that will help military personnel and their families readjust following a return from conflict. In June 2008 Admiral Mullen, at Downing's request, made a public policy statement at the National Coalition of Homeless Veterans conference in Washington, D.C., announcing his formal commitment to solving the problem of homelessness among veterans.

Earlier on the day of the tribute dinner, Admiral Mullen will be part of a groundbreaking ceremony in Pittsfield for Soldier On's first 39-unit limited equity housing project. Intended to serve as a national model, the project is an effort to change the end of the story for formerly homeless veterans. Veterans who have successfully moved through Soldier On's shelter and transitional housing facilities will have the opportunity to complete the transition from homelessness to home ownership by purchasing an equity share in one of the project's apartments. A second limited equity housing project is currently planned for Leeds, Massachusetts.

Admiral Mullen's participation in the groundbreaking underscores the commitment to Soldier On's mission that led to the decision to present him with the Soldier On Award. At the dinner event, Admiral Mullen will receive an original bronze sculpture created by internationally acclaimed artist Andrew DeVries specifically for Soldier On Award recipients.

Admiral Mullen is the 17th and current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He is the highest ranking officer in the United States Armed Forces. Admiral Mullen previously served as the Navy's 28th Chief of Naval Operations. His other four-star assignments include Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe; Commander, Allied Joint Force Command Naples; and 32nd Vice Chief of Naval Operations.

Soldier On's tribute dinner for Admiral Mullen will be attended by Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Tim Murray, and Stephen Coyle, CEO of the AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust, Gordon Mansfield, former Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, and Bob Woodruff, war correspondent for ABC TV and founder of reMIND, a non profit created to assist veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

For more information, visit wesoldieron.org.

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