



MISSOURI SENATE

Charlie Shields
Senate President Pro Tem

Lt. Governor Peter Kinder
Senate President

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — October 23, 2009 — Contact Number: 573.751.3824

Missouri-based Originator and Artist of Prestigious Department of Defense Award

Unveil 2008 Spirit of Hope Awards

Lt. Governor Peter Kinder and Sen. Eric Schmitt

Recognize Missourians for their Contributions to this National Award

CHESTERFIELD, Mo. – Lt. Governor Peter Kinder and Sen. Eric Schmitt, joined by others, today recognized the significant contributions of Missourians Michael Fagin and Don Wiegand in regards to The Spirit of Hope Award. For the first time in the award's 14-year history, the awards were previewed to Missourians before being presented to recipients at the Pentagon. Fagin, the award's originator, and Wiegand, the award's sculptor, invited Kinder to unveil the six medals at a ceremony that took place Friday (10/23) morning at the not-for-profit museum of The Wiegand Foundation, Inc., in Chesterfield, Missouri.

“Mr. Fagin and Mr. Wiegand, with the blessing of the Bob and Dolores Hope family, have gone above and beyond to create and continue this great national award that has an international impact,” said Lt. Governor Kinder. “We appreciate their willingness to share the excitement and meaning of this award that embodies patriotism and selfless devotion to bettering the lives of military men and women with all Missourians.”

The award is named for Bob Hope and was created with his blessing. The late entertainer was known for his decades of devotion to entertaining troops both on the front lines and during peace time — from World War II through Operation Desert Storm in the early 1990s.

“This award is for Mr. Hope to continue to have the ability to thank the men and women in uniform and their families who sacrifice so much for our nation, even after he has passed,” Fagin said. “It is his legacy recognizing military men and women, leaders, volunteers and organizations for their patriotism.”

The Wiegand Foundation sponsors the Spirit of Hope Award, which is presented to those epitomizing honor, integrity and selfless dedication to ensure similar values continue to be recognized.

“I grew up loving Bob Hope’s movies, all his tours through the USO honoring our men and women serving our country,” said Wiegand, the award’s sculptor. “It has been a great honor to have sculpted the bas-relief that has become so instrumental in honoring the country.”

Six awards are presented each year, one to each military branch of the Department of Defense, to include the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Each branch nominates a recipient from within their own branch. During the ceremony, each sponsoring branch presents the award to their chosen recipient.

The award presentation for 2008 recipients will take place on the morning of Tuesday, October 27, in the Hall of Heroes in the Pentagon. The Hall of Heroes is where every Medal of Honor recipient is memorialized, beginning with the first medal awarded in 1862 during the American Civil War to present.

Mr. and Mrs. Bob and Dolores Hope’s daughter, Ms. Linda Hope, the family’s representative, will be present during the award ceremony at the Hall of Heroes. She will be joined by military leaders, Department of Defense officials, Senators and Congressmen and women. Past recipients include a U.S. president, U.S. Senators, Congressmen, military men and women, and civilian volunteers.

“It is quite extraordinary to learn that this prestigious award was conceived right here in Missouri,” said Schmitt. “Their contribution to those who work so hard to support our troops should encourage all of us to consider ways that we each can do our part to support our troops, whether it’s including them in our prayers, sending care packages or helping their families here at home.”

To learn more about the Hope award, its list of recipients, and the sponsoring foundation, visit www.wiegandfoundation.org.

Pictures and video from today’s event will be available online Monday, October 26.

###