Introducing Our Veterans Day Guest Speaker: Petty Officer First Class Christian Cogar

We're honored to welcome Petty Officer First Class Christian Cogar as our Veterans Day guest speaker. Hailing from Wellsville, Ohio, Petty Officer Cogar has proudly served in the US Navy for the past 12 years, achieving the rank of E-6. His dedication and expertise in survival equipment have been pivotal in ensuring the safety and readiness of his fellow service members.

Throughout his distinguished career, Petty Officer Cogar has been deployed to the Persian Gulf, South Pacific and the Red Sea, where he played a crucial role in various missions. His real-world experiences and commitment to duty offer a unique perspective that is sure to inspire and resonate with our high school community. Beyond his military achievements, he is a familiar face to many students, often spending lunch engaging in meaningful conversations. He also participates in community initiatives, shopping with Howland students for Salvation Army "Angel" gifts. Join us in welcoming Petty Officer Cogar as he shares his journey and insights with us.

John Elias: A Legacy of Service

John Elias, a proud father to Amanda Dewberry and grandfather to Juliana and Alivia Dewberry, hails from Struthers, Ohio. With a deep sense of duty, he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, serving diligently for six years. Achieving the rank of Corporal, Elias specialized as a Non-Commissioned Officer in the Special Force Technical Infantry. His deployments took him to Vietnam, where he not only served his country but also built lasting bonds with foreign military special forces.

Elias fondly recalls the camaraderie among his fellow Marines and the unique experiences of meeting military teams from around the world. These cherished memories highlight the strength and unity found in the heart of service. For today’s youth considering their future, Elias offers valuable advice: the military provides excellent opportunities, from education and trade school funding to VA loans for home ownership. For those seeking a solid foundation for their future, a career in the military can be a remarkable starting point.

Danielle Wiesen: A Journey of Service and Integrity

Danielle Wiesen, a dedicated Technical Sergeant in the United States Air Force, hails from Warren, Ohio. As the proud mother of Madison Conrad, a senior at Howland High School, Danielle's journey in the military is a testament to resilience and dedication. With six years of service, she specialized in Aircraft Maintenance, Aerospace Maintenance Craftsman, Integrated Defense Leadership, and Evasion and Conduct after Capture. Her deployment to Djibouti, Africa, stands as a significant chapter in her career, filled with unity, shared hardships, and the triumph of mission success.

Danielle's cherished memories include watching her aircraft take off, knowing her hands made it happen, and the camaraderie of late nights on the flight line, filled with laughter and stories.

Danielle's accolades include graduating Basic Military Training with Honors and being recognized as the top of her class in Tech School. Her leadership acknowledged her hard work and excellence, and she cherishes the experiences of visiting countries she never imagined seeing and meeting people from around the world. Danielle believes in the power of integrity, hard work, and humility, advising today's youth to do the right thing even when no one is watching. She emphasizes the importance of resilience, attitude, and surrounding oneself with people who inspire growth. For Danielle, success is about showing up, giving your best, and doing it with respect, purpose, and heart.

Biography of Master Sergeant Matthew Nunemaker

Matthew Nunemaker, a proud father of Howland High School student Rilee Nunemaker, has dedicated 19 years of distinguished service to the United States Air Force. Hailing from Hanover, PA, Matthew rose to the rank of Master Sergeant, a testament to his commitment and leadership. His expertise as a firearms instructor was honed through rigorous training, enabling him to impart crucial skills to fellow service members.

Throughout his career, Master Sergeant Nunemaker was deployed twice, experiences that enriched his understanding of the world and fortified his resolve. He passionately advises today's youth to embrace new experiences and venture beyond their comfort zones, urging them, "Go experience the world. Don't stay in one place for your entire life." His journey and wisdom continue to inspire those around him, leaving a lasting impact on both his family and the community.

Biography of Mark Thomson Sr.

Mark Thomson Sr., a distinguished Navy veteran, hails from the small town of Hubbard, Ohio. As the father of Mrs. Stevens, a member of the Howland High School community, his story is one of courage and dedication. Enlisting in the Navy in 1966, Mark served four active years and two inactive years, reaching the rank of Petty Officer 3rd Class. His expertise in the day-to-day operations of running a ship and conducting special operations, including landing with assault craft and troops, marked his service with excellence.

During his three-year deployment on the USS Vancouver LPD2 in Vietnam, and his time at the Naval Support Activity and Deep Water Piers in Danang, Vietnam, Mark gained invaluable experiences. One of his most cherished memories was being one of the first American Hatch Team Captains tasked with training and supervising an all-Vietnamese Hatch Team. This role not only highlighted his leadership skills but also his ability to bridge cultural divides.

Mark's advice to today's youth is to consider the military as a viable career path, offering a wide range of opportunities. He emphasizes the importance of being adaptable and ready to seize different opportunities as they arise. His legacy is a testament to the values of service, adaptability, and leadership, inspiring future generations to follow in his footsteps.

Biography of Andrew Mathews

Andrew Mathews, a dedicated father to Howland High School sophomore Mason Mathews, served in the US Air Force from 1997 to 2019. Hailing from Port Huron, Michigan, Andrew rose to the rank of Master Sergeant, specializing in Military Police. His career included deployments to Kuwait, Afghanistan, Qatar, and Iraq, where he formed deep friendships and experienced the unique camaraderie that only comes from facing challenges together in service.

Throughout his 22 years of service, Andrew's experiences shaped his outlook on life. He believes in the power of perseverance and hard work, advising today's youth: "Don’t think you can’t do it. If you’re willing to work for what you want, you can go anywhere and do anything." His gratitude extends to the community for their unwavering support, a sentiment he cherishes as much as his cherished military memories.

Jennifer Mathews: A Legacy of Service

Jennifer Mathews, the proud mother of sophomore Mason Mathews, is a remarkable figure with a story that inspires the students at Howland High School. Hailing from Cortland, Ohio, Jennifer dedicated two decades of her life to serving in the U.S. Air Force. Her journey began in 2000, and over the years, she rose to the rank of Master Sergeant (MSgt), a testament to her dedication and leadership.

Throughout her 20-year military career, Jennifer specialized in Security Forces, showcasing her expertise in maintaining safety and order. Her service took her across the globe, with deployments to the United Arab Emirates and Oman, where she played a pivotal role in international operations. Jennifer's commitment to her duty and her country has left an indelible mark, not only on those she served with but also on her family and community. Her story is a powerful reminder of the strength and resilience required to protect and serve.

Anthony Keppol: A Story of Dedication and Pride

Anthony Keppol, father of Howland High School sophomore Marlena Keppol, has dedicated 17 years to serving in the Army National Guard. Hailing from Tower City, PA, Anthony's military journey began in 2008 and has seen him rise to the rank of Staff Sergeant. With diverse training in HVAC, truck driving, supply and logistics, and field artillery, Anthony has also spent nine years in the Honor

Guard. His deployment to Kuwait in 2012-2013 stands as a testament to his commitment and resilience.

For Anthony, the most cherished part of his military career is the pride his children feel in his service. He believes in working hard and doing your best, embracing failure as a learning opportunity. His advice to today's youth is to seek God in all aspects of life and never shy away from redemption. Above all, Anthony treasures his daughter Marlena, expressing immense pride in the young woman she is becoming.

Anthony's story is one of dedication, sacrifice, and love, inspiring students at Howland High to pursue their goals with determination and integrity.

Biography: Aaron Pounds

Aaron Pounds is our Head Girl's Varsity Basketball coach at Howland High School and a member of our maintenance department. He brings a wealth of experience and wisdom from his time in the United States Marine Corps. Originally from Niles, Ohio, Aaron served his country with distinction from 1996 to 2004, achieving the rank of E3 Lance Corporal. His specialty as an 0311 infantryman equipped him with the discipline that he carries into his work today.

Aaron's military service was marked by memorable experiences, including the serene yet invigorating morning runs as the sun rose, a time he cherished for reflection and focus. His journey in the Marines taught him the importance of accountability and decisiveness, lessons he passionately shares with the youth. "Make a decision. Be accountable. Don't blame anyone else for your results," he advises, encapsulating a mindset of responsibility and self-reliance that he hopes to inspire in students at Howland High School.

William Eggens: A Legacy of Service

William Eggens, the grandfather of Howland High School freshman John Whitacre, has a remarkable story of bravery and dedication. Serving in the Marines from 1964 to 1968, William reached the rank of Sergeant, a testament to his leadership and commitment. His specialty training in Infantry and Weapons equipped him with the skills needed for challenging deployments across the globe, including Okinawa, Europe, and Cuba. These experiences honed his abilities and shaped his perspective, making him a respected figure among his peers.

As a Marine, William's journey was filled with adventure and responsibility. His deployments to diverse locations presented unique challenges and opportunities to serve his country with distinction. His role required resilience and adaptability, qualities that continue to inspire his grandson and the community around them. William Eggens' story is not just a tale of military service; it is a legacy of courage and dedication that resonates with students at Howland High School.

David Pivovar: A Legacy of Service and Adventure

David Pivovar, the great uncle of Howland High School junior Audrey Rickard, has an inspiring legacy as a dedicated member of the United States Army. Hailing from Howland, Ohio, Pivovar's remarkable military career spanned over three decades, from 1994 to 2025. Rising to the rank of Master Sergeant E-7, his journey is filled with stories of courage and commitment.

Pivovar's expertise in the Army was multifaceted. He trained as an Infantry Paratrooper and a C-130 Aircraft Mechanic, showcasing his versatility and skill. His role as an Education and Training Specialist further demonstrated his dedication to sharing knowledge and empowering others. Throughout his service, Pivovar was deployed in Operation Enduring Freedom from 2003 to 2004 and participated in numerous hurricane relief missions, providing aid and hope in times of crisis. His life and career serve as a testament to the spirit of service and adventure, inspiring future generations.

Paul Boothe: A Legacy of Service

Paul Boothe, father of Ava and Ethan Boothe at Howland High School, dedicated 27 years to serving in the United States Air Force. Hailing from Jackson, Ohio, Paul rose to the esteemed rank of Senior Master Sergeant. His career was marked by specialty training as part of the Inspector General-Readiness Division, reflecting his commitment to excellence and preparedness.

Throughout his service, Paul was deployed in numerous significant operations, including Operation Southern Watch, Operation Northern Watch, Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. He also played a vital role in the Global War On Terrorism. One of his most cherished experiences was flying the iconic F16 Fighting Falcon, a testament to his skills and bravery.

Paul's advice to today's youth reflects his deep understanding of military life: "The military is not a job; it is a profession of arms." He emphasizes the importance of integrity, sharing the wisdom that "doing the right thing isn't always easy, but it is always right. Do what is right even when no one is looking." His story serves as an inspiring example of dedication and moral strength for students at Howland High School.

Biography of Nelson Irizarry:

Nelson Irizarry, a dedicated father to Nathaniel and Isabella Irizarry, has a remarkable story that spans 26 years in the U.S. Air Force. Hailing from Camden, NJ, Nelson rose to the rank of E8 Master Sergeant, specializing in Aircraft Electrical and Environmental Systems. His commitment to service took him across the globe, including a significant deployment to Southwest Asia in 2008.

Throughout his career, Nelson cherished his role as a First Sergeant, where he took pride in caring for his fellow Airmen. His experiences taught him the importance of resilience and growth. He often shares this wisdom with today's youth, encouraging them not to fear mistakes. Instead, he advises, learn from them and strive for self-improvement. Nelson's journey is a testament to dedication, leadership, and continuous personal growth.