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## WARD BURTON AND NASCAR STARS SALUTE U.S. ARMED SERVICES WITH THE AMERICAN HEROES MEMORIAL DAY TRIBUTE

### Armed Forces Unite for Largest Military Tribute in History by NASCAR Drivers; Program to Raise Funds for U.S. Military Families

**Ashland City, Tenn.** (May 8, 2007) – State Water Heaters announced today that Ward Burton, driver of the #4 Chevy, is among nine Nextel Cup drivers who will lead all NASCAR fans in the American Heroes Memorial Day salute on Sunday, May 27. Held at Lowe's Motor Speedway in Charlotte, N.C., the salute to the Armed Forces kicks off a nationwide effort to raise funds for military families in need.

In addition to Ward Burton, participating drivers include Greg Biffle, Dale Earnhardt Jr., Jeff Gordon, Denny Hamlin, Shane Huffman, Jimmie Johnson, Mark Martin, Casey Mears and Jon Wood. The cars—each bearing a new look supporting a particular branch of the Armed Forces—were unveiled recently at Lowe's Motor Speedway. Distinguished members of the military kicked off the American Heroes tribute with a military color guard presentation as well as showcasing the cars that will run in the Coca-Cola 600 Memorial Day weekend.

"I am honored to participate in this salute to America's troops," said Ward Burton. "The men and women of the Armed Forces will be recognized as true American heroes, and the NASCAR community will honor their efforts and their families at this special tribute." Burton was selected along with a group of eight other high-profile drivers, based on the exposure that they will bring to each branch of the military.

The NASCAR team owners and sponsors donated the space on their cars to collectively thank the Armed Forces at the Coca-Cola 600.

The American Heroes Memorial Day Tribute is being supported by Sprint Nextel, which will conduct a national fundraising campaign to encourage Sprint Nextel customers to support the troops with their donations to the USO. By texting **67783** on their Sprint Nextel phones, customers can sign up to contribute to the campaign and receive donation forms via e-mail.

Die-cast models and officially licensed merchandise of the participating drivers will be available for sale through Motorsports Authentics, with proceeds going toward the fundraising campaign.



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The American Heroes program hopes to raise significant funds for American military families in need through these efforts.

“The USO is proud to be the beneficiary of the American Heroes campaign,” said Edward A. Powee, USO president and chief executive officer. “We thank Speedway Motorsports, Nextel, the NASCAR community and its fans for their support of our men and women in uniform and the USO. It is with great pleasure that the USO joins you in conveying our gratitude for their service and sacrifice.”

Participating American Heroes drivers, teams, cars and sponsors include:

Service	Driver	Car/Sponsor	Team
America Supports You	Jeff Gordon	No. 24 DuPont Chevy	Hendrick Motorsports
American Heroes	Dale Earnhardt Jr.	No. 8 Budweiser Chevy	Dale Earnhardt Inc.
Power of Pride/USO	Jimmie Johnson	No. 48 Lowe's Chevy	Hendrick Motorsports
Army	Mark Martin	No. 01 U.S. Army Chevy	Ginn Racing
Air Force 60 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary	Ward Burton	No. 4 State Water Heaters Chevy	Morgan-McClure Motorsports
Marines	Denny Hamlin	No. 11 FedEx Chevy	Joe Gibbs Racing
National Guard	Casey Mears	No. 25 GMAC Chevy	Hendrick Motorsports
Coast Guard	Greg Biffle	No. 16 3M Ford Fusion	Roush Racing
Air Force	Jon Wood	No. 21 Air Force/Ore-Ida Ford	Wood Brothers/JTG Racing
Navy	Shane Huffman	No. 88 Navy Accelerate Chevy	JR Motorsports

Lowe's Motor Speedway, Sprint Nextel, Motorsports Authentics, Victory Management Group, and the NASCAR teams and their respective sponsors developed the program. JHE Productions and Lowe's Motor Speedway will collaborate to create a pre-race tribute presentation.

Four major organizations will work together to promote the American Heroes Memorial Day Tribute and support the event fundraising efforts.

### The USO

For more than 66 years, the USO has been providing morale-boosting programs and services to enhance the quality of life for military personnel and their families around the world.

The USO was conceived in 1941 in response to a mandate from President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The President challenged six private organizations—the YMCA, YWCA, National Catholic Community Service, the National Jewish Welfare Board, the Traveler's Aid Association and the Salvation Army—to handle the on-leave morale needs for members of the Armed Forces.

While the USO has diversified and changed over time, the mission remains unchanged: to bring a touch of home to our men and women in uniform, *until every one comes home*.

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### **America Supports You**

America Supports You is an ongoing, nationwide program organized by the Department of Defense to showcase Americans' support for the men and women of the Armed Forces and their families. Since its launch in November 2004, the America Supports You program has welcomed more than 250 home-front organizations and more than 35 corporations to the team. Many *America Supports You* participants aid the troops through letter writing, care packages, helping the wounded when they return home, assisting military families, and sending an e-mail or kind gesture. To learn more about how you can support military personnel, visit [www.AmericaSupportsYou.mil](http://www.AmericaSupportsYou.mil).

The *America Supports You* dog tag, emblazoned with the *America Supports You* logo, is the official emblem of the program. It serves as a visible force multiplier in projecting the message that America supports our military men and women.

### **Special Operations Hero Fund**

The Hero Fund was started to raise awareness for the Special Operations Warrior Foundation (SOWF), which provides scholarships and educational grants for the children of special operations personnel killed in training or real-world combat. SOWF is committed to sending these children to college, providing them with educational opportunities their fathers would have wanted them to have.

### **About State Water Heaters**

For more than 60 years, State Water Heaters has built dependable, long-lasting water heaters for commercial and residential applications. State remains focused on manufacturing durable products that last longer. For more information, visit [www.statewaterheaters.com](http://www.statewaterheaters.com).

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