



## **Thank you to All Who Served!**

Ten years ago, my friend Randy and I set forth on a project to create a race that would salute and honor our veterans. The original idea started at a school bus stop discussion between my neighbor who is an Army veteran, and I. Once I told Randy about this idea, we scribbled out the plans for our first race while driving up to Toronto for a Tough Mudder.

Since then, the Race has given back over \$30,000 to Veterans services and groups including Soldiers Angels, Team RWB, African American Memorial. The last few years I have had the honor of co-hosting with Buffalo Naval & Military Park and Veterans One-Stop Center of WNY.

Always have a Plan B. We have had our share of challenges pulling off this race. One thing is consistent; the course has changed every year for ten straight years. One year, just two days before the race, we found out that a bridge on Ohio Street was removed. There was the time when Janet Jackson's bus pulled into the course behind the arena, a storm washed out the turn around at the Marina Observatory and of course, 2020 which was held during a pandemic. We've hosted the post race at the Naval Park, Ironworks, Templeton Landing and this year at Southern Tier Brewing Company.

One thing that has not changed is the amount of support that our veterans received. Actually, it is changing but for the better. This year we had over 12 businesses support us financially or in-kind and many of them are coming back next year. Geico has been our primary sponsor all ten years, and for that we are thankful.

It's Our Turn to Serve. Not only are sponsors increasing but our volunteer groups have increased. Without the support of our volunteers it would be hard to operate a safe event. We can always use more volunteers and volunteer groups; such as our Navy Sea Cadets who have been at the race for a majority of the decade.

I'd like to thank the City of Buffalo, Buffalo Police Department, Buffalo Fire Department and the Office of Special Events for approving our event. To my family, thank you for supporting me through the years. Thank you to the running community; this event is made for you. It exists so that you can express your thanks to our servicewomen and men. It's made for Buffalo (and beyond) and it would not exist without your trust in the Race. Your trust is precious and valuable, not to be taken for granted.

Finally, to our Veterans and Active Duty. To the countless ones I have met through the years, it is my honor to host this little race in hopes that you feel our gratitude and thanks. What you have done yesterday is the only reason why we can do this today. Let's always work to Protect-Preserve-Honor All Who Served.

Alfredo Longo

(Veterans Race, Director and owner of Destination Races LLC)