

The
Air and Space Forces
Charity Gala

at Washington Nationals Ballpark

MARCH 15, 2024

Evening Program

Presentation of the Colors and National Anthem

Invocation

Chaplain, Major General Randall E. Kitchens
Chief of Chaplains

Welcome by Master of Ceremonies

Lieutenant General Burton M. Field, USAF, Ret.

Opening Remarks

The Honorable Frank Kendall
Secretary of the Air Force

General B. Chance Saltzman

Chief of Space Operations, United States Space Force

General David W. Allvin

Chief of Staff, United States Air Force

Remarks by

Major General Edward W. Thomas, Jr., USAF, Ret.
CEO, Air Force Aid Society

Air Force Aid Society Impact Video

Recognition of Sponsors and Award Winners

Testimonial Video - Air Force Aid Society Recipient

Break

Opportunity Drawing

Closing Remarks by Lieutenant General Burton M. Field, USAF, Ret.

Music by the United States Air Force Band Singing Sergeants
and The United States Air Force Band Max Impact



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

FEB 21 2024

Greetings,

It is both an honor and privilege to join you for this year's Department of the Air Force Charity Gala, a crucial platform in mobilizing financial support for the Air Force Aid Society—the official charity of the United States Air Force and United States Space Force. Since 2004, this gala has raised over \$14 million, with a notable \$744,239 in charitable contributions generated in 2023 alone.

The Air Force Aid Society, serving Airmen and Guardians since 1942, extends assistance through emergency funding, interest-free loans, educational grants, relocation support, childcare grants, and worldwide community programs. In the previous year, \$12.5 million dollars directly benefited 11,000 Airmen, Guardians, and their families. Of this, \$1.5M was directed to 2,597 families impacted by the tornado in Little Rock, Arkansas and Typhoon Mawar in Guam.

In line with General "Hap" and Mrs. Bee Arnold's original vision, emphasizing the concept of a larger familial support system, the spirit of "Airmen helping Airmen" persists today, just as it did 80 years ago. The Air Force Aid Society's sole focus is to aid our people and their families in their most critical times of need. **Every donation** contributes entirely to providing financial assistance for our Airmen, Guardians, and their families.

Our heartfelt gratitude goes out for your unwavering support, and we sincerely thank you for being part of the ongoing legacy of helping Airmen and Guardians when they need us most. Congratulations on another successful year, and we extend best wishes for many more to come!

Frank Kendall
Secretary of the Air Force

Kristyn E. Jones
Performing the Duties of Under Secretary of
the Air Force

B. Chance Saltzman
General, USSF
Chief of Space Operations

David W. Allvin
General, USAF
Chief of Staff of the Air Force

John F. Bentivegna
Chief Master Sergeant of the Space Force

JoAnne S. Bass
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force



THE HONORABLE FRANK KENDALL
Secretary of the Air Force



GENERAL B. CHANCE SALTZMAN
Chief of Space Operations, United States Space Force



GENERAL DAVID W. ALLVIN
Chief of Staff, United States Air Force



Independence for a 12-Year-Old Warrior

When TSgt Nick DiiBon and his wife, Jordan, of San Angelo, Texas began fostering their son Damien in 2016, it was clear that he was struggling developmentally. A visit to a neurologist in 2017 at age six confirmed a diagnosis of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD), a neuromuscular disease that causes progressive muscle degeneration.

“It was a relief to know why Damien was struggling, but at the same time, we no longer had the hope that it was something less severe,” says Jordan about receiving the formal diagnosis.



They officially adopted Damien in 2018. By 2022, Damien had outgrown his manual wheelchair and was no longer able to stand unassisted. TRICARE agreed to cover the cost of a Power Chair so Damien could maneuver himself around on his own.

The new chair was a hit, giving Damien a little bit of the independence that all tween kids crave, but it weighed 300 lbs. Nick and Jordan investigated converting their van to accommodate Damien and his new chair and were quoted \$17,000. Insurance would not contribute to the cost.

“These van modifications were a necessity, not a luxury, but they had a luxury price tag on them,” says Jordan.



Two years later, Damien was almost as tall as Jordan. Lifting him in and out of the van was physically challenging, and the family could not put off the van conversion any longer.

Nick heard about AFAS's Emergency Financial Assistance program through coworkers and reached out. Within a few weeks they heard the good news—they had been approved for a grant!

“It was very nice to know that this help was available, because we were really wondering how people manage to do this without assistance,” says Jordan.

Damien is now 12. His favorite video game is Minecraft, and he loves LEGOs and animals. He enjoys taking his Power Chair in the family's adapted van to the library and to the local accessible playground where he can play with his three younger brothers.

Inspired by their own challenges, Jordan founded a nonprofit called AccessAbility First Foundation to improve the quality of life for other families.



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Sincere thanks to all of our dedicated volunteers who continue to give of their hearts and time to make every Charity Gala a fabulous success for our amazing Airmen, Guardians and their families!



Air Force Aid Society

The Air Force Aid Society (AFAS) is the official charity of the United States Air Force (USAF) and the United States Space Force (USSF). Incorporated in 1942, AFAS meets the unique needs of the Airmen and Guardians by working to support and enhance the USAF and USSF missions.

Benefiting Airmen, Guardians and their families
through the Air Force Aid Society