

Patriots present Difference Maker of the Week Award to Kathleen Granfield



New England Patriots
STAFF



FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (Nov. 1, 2019) – Nine years ago, the Kraft family and the New England Patriots Foundation introduced a season-long theme called Celebrate Volunteerism. The main focus of the initiative was to recognize community volunteers and to promote the importance of volunteering.

Since its inception, New England Patriots players, coaches and alumni have donated tens of thousands of hours to giving back to their New England communities. During their weekly off day, Patriots players volunteer throughout New England to support children and families in need. Patriots season ticket members have also teamed with Patriots players to better their communities.



by teaming with nonprofit organizations to educate fans about the need for volunteering, highlighting deserving volunteers from across the region and seeking to inspire Patriots fans to become lifelong volunteers. The foundation will present a weekly "Patriots Difference Maker of the Week" award, which recognizes deserving volunteers who go above and beyond to support their New England communities.

"Volunteerism is at the heart of giving back and bettering our communities," said Patriots Chairman and CEO Robert Kraft. "We will continue to honor and thank the many deserving volunteers in our region that are often not recognized for their valuable contributions. Through this Celebrate Volunteerism initiative, we hope to inspire Patriots fans to make a difference and become lifelong volunteers."

Kathleen Granfield from West Haven, Conn. was selected as a 2019 Patriots Difference Maker of the Week for her commitment to VA Charters, Inc.

Many returning servicemen and servicewomen have a difficult time transitioning back into civilian life, especially those with severe and life-changing injuries. Kathleen decided to use her passion for fishing as a way to help veterans.

In 2009, she founded Veteran Angler Charters, an all-volunteer Connecticut-based nonprofit that provides free chartered fishing trips to injured veterans. A United States Coast Guard (USCG) licensed captain, she started the program using the family boat. The program has since expanded to five boats serving veterans all over New England. Last year, the program ran more than 60 trips and served more than 250 veterans.

Every chartered trip is available free of charge to all veterans and is designed to be a personalized experience. All trips are run by USCG licensed captains, with health care providers or peer support counselors aboard when appropriate. The boats offer an atmosphere that is entirely different from a hospital or clinic setting. The veterans are at ease and have an opportunity to open up and share their experiences. The small group environments provide a safe and private place for veterans to reconnect with others.

"When I started the program, I honestly didn't know if it would really make any difference at all in the lives of our veterans," said Kathleen. "My dad, on the other hand, was convinced that fishing was the solution to most of life's problems. All I really knew was that even in my most difficult times, I could find solace on the water. I started this program with nothing more than the hope I could offer our injured and recovering veterans the same experience."

Kathleen supervises every aspect of the program while continuing to conduct the CT fishing



the fundraising efforts, all while managing a full-time job as a middle school science teacher. This past year, Kathleen was recognized as the VFW Teacher of the Year for the state of Connecticut.

Veterans often refer to this experience as a floating hospital. Recently, Kathleen received a letter from a veteran that had enjoyed a VA Charters trip. Within the letter, the veteran explained that he planned on taking his own life the following day, but the boat trip resulted in a change of heart and ultimately saved his life.

"Our beginnings were certainly humble," said Kathleen. "There are still days where I can't believe how much it has grown and the number of lives we have impacted. I am so honored by the Patriots Foundation's recognition of our work. It has been, and continues to be, a great honor to serve those who serve us."

Fifteen individuals will be named Patriots Difference Makers throughout the season. The outstanding volunteers will be recognized on the Patriots website and will be honored during a special ceremony at the Patriots final regular season home game against the Miami Dolphins on Sunday, December 29.

Fans are encouraged to nominate a local volunteer for the Patriots Difference Maker of the Week award by visiting www.patriots.com/community.

