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News Release

"USU: The West Point for Military Medicine": Documentary film about the nation's military medical university premieres at Air and Space Museum

BETHESDA, MD. – The “Friends of USU,” a non-profit organization, hosted the premiere of a new documentary film “Fighting for Life” at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum about the men and women injured in combat and those who care for them. The film focuses on the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) and its role in educating leaders in military medicine.

The film tells a story of the courageous battle of some of our wounded troops, their struggles, and also the stories of a large number of USU alumni and faculty who work to save their lives. In this way, the film is also a story about USU and its mission to educate leaders in military medicine.

USU is a traditional academic health center with a unique set of programs all dedicated to preparing health care practitioners to take care of those in harms way, whether they are troops in battle abroad or those hurt in disasters at home. Students are educated in a broad range of military relevant topics, including advanced trauma life support, preventive medicine, patient care in flight and medical considerations following biological attack and combat stress control. The School of Medicine has a year-round, four-year curriculum, which is nearly 700 hours longer than other U.S. medical schools. USU grants the degrees of M.D., Ph.D., Dr.P.H., M.P.H., M.S., and M.S.N. Many of its graduates are supporting operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, offering their leadership and expertise. Approximately one-fourth of all active-duty military medical officers are USU graduates.

“I started out to make a film about the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, ‘the best medical school no one’s ever heard of,’ as its students called it. It was to be an in-depth portrait of this very special institution, the ‘West Point’ of military medicine, which has trained more than 25% of current active duty military physicians,” said Terry Sanders, two-time Academy Award Winner and producer of the film. He said “The film was to explore why, in spite of the school’s great value, excellence and reputation, Congress and the Department of Defense kept trying to close it. But the Iraq War intervened, and the film grew until it became an odyssey through the world of military medicine in a time of war.”

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences would like to thank the “Friends of USU,” particularly Mrs. Tammy Alvarez for her dedication to the university and its students, staff and faculty, and for her great vision and perseverance in bringing this film to fruition.

A special screening of the film will be held at USU Thursday, May 17 at 5:30 p.m.

Media interested in attending the special showing should call the Office of External Affairs at (301) 295-1219.