

# This mission has always been a labor of love.

So many of you wrote such thoughtful messages in response to my episode of the Gary Sinise Foundation Podcast. As we have relaunched the podcast named in honor of our son Mac, I felt the podcast gave me the opportunity to share more openly with you about Mac's legacy, his work at GSF, our family's challenge as we fought along side him in his battle with cancer, and my personal journey of service and healing.



**You have been with me every step of the way, and I cannot thank you enough.** This mission has always been a labor of love. It has given me joy, inspiration, and, most of all, purpose.

For our veterans, for our first responders, for their families, for those who have lost their hero, we stand in strength alongside them. We will continue to lift them up in their times of need. Below are just a few stories I wanted to share with you, stories of the lives we have touched and impacted together.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Your pal,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary".



SEVERELY WOUNDED FIREFIGHTER REGAINS HIS INDEPENDENCE

## **The Doctors Weren't Certain He Would Wake Up**

On Christmas Eve 2022, Kyle was responding to a house fire in Kunkletown, PA when the hose he was manning bucked and slammed him to the ground. The impact led to multiple pelvic fractures. At the start of what would be a long recovery, Kyle suddenly developed a blood clot in his heart, causing him to go into cardiac arrest. Though resuscitated by his fellow firefighters, Kyle had to be placed on life-support.

Doctors weren't certain he would wake up. But Kyle defied the odds, and spent the next 11 months in rehab before moving back in with his family.

Because of your generous support, we were able to modify Kyle's bathroom to be wheelchair accessible. And on top of that, we provided him a brand new specially adapted vehicle to reopen his world and ease the strain on his family and caregivers.

His sister wrote this message of thanks to you:

*When they called to tell us the grant was approved, I remember getting the shakes. I remember the GSF representative telling me, "I will take it from here. It is my job to take stress off of the family and deal with the monies and contractors now."*

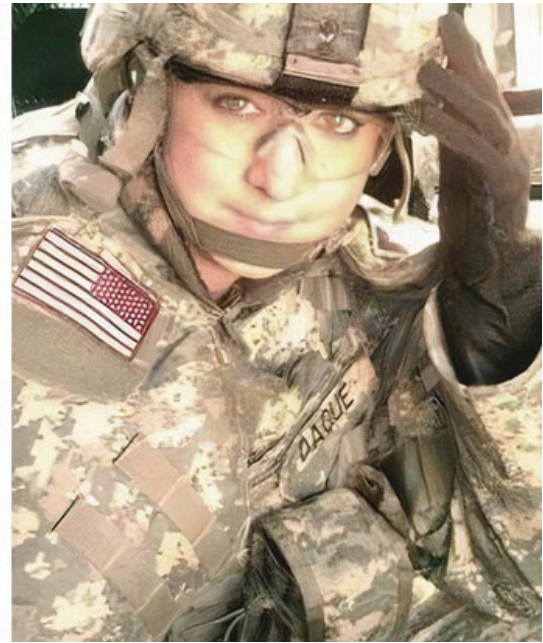
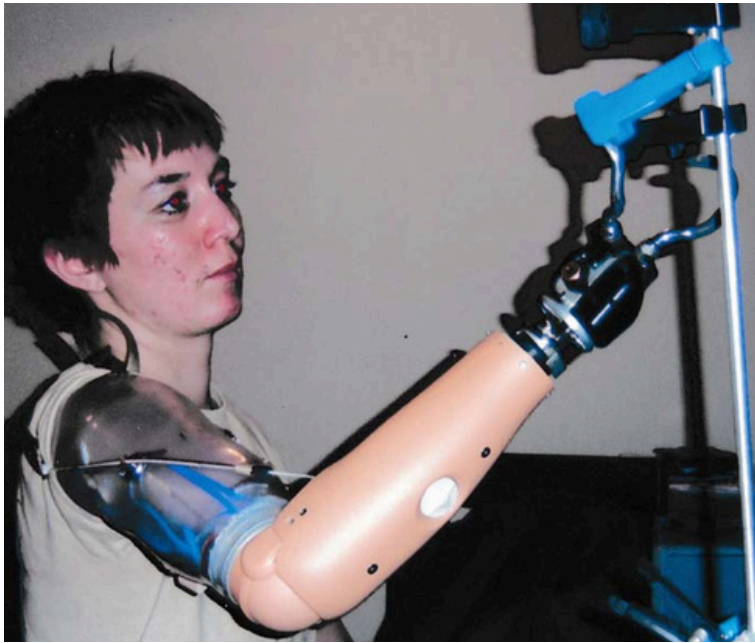
*I also remember the many, many interactions where it was clearly expressed that it was their privilege to help a hero like Kyle. Because the Gary Sinise Foundation performs miracles every day, they knew exactly how difficult this injury was on him. They had the right words, empathy, and were super-efficient in making the project happen quickly. I have witnessed many great charities through my volunteer passion, but the Gary Sinise Foundation is something special.*

*Kyle can now take a shower with ease and wheel himself to a sink to brush his teeth! This is no small change. My sisters can give you stories on the crazy process of getting Kyle into a standard shower and the back-breaking labor required.*

*And when the van showed up, I could still barely believe my eyes! It's been a game changer for Kyle's activity level and mental status. When I say it almost feels too good to be true, it really does.*

*The Gary Sinise Foundation provides something so large in terrible situations, it is hard to define. But in a small phrase, to me, "they provide hope, compassion, and dignity". These words of gratitude will never be enough to show our appreciation for how they changed Kyle's life!*





MEET THE NEWEST HERO IN THE GSF FAMILY

## She Lost Her Arms, Never Her Fighting Spirit

Like all of us, Mary Dague remembers 9/11 like it was yesterday.

"I was only a junior in high school, but I'll never forget that day. I heard the reports on the radio as I drove to school. My classmates and I watched as the second tower fell. I wanted to help, but couldn't at the time. It was a life changing experience for our whole country."

Of the hundreds of ways Mary could have served, she chose one of the most dangerous—as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Tech in the Army. An EOD Tech is trained to uncover and diffuse live explosives.

November 4, 2007 started just like any other day, when the team was called to handle an IED discovered between a school and apartment buildings. Mary and her teammate, Bruce, removed the IED in pieces, and when she set one of the disposal bag down, it began to rock back and forth. Instinctively, she hugged it to herself—and the explosive detonated. The blast threw Mary into the Humvee behind her and catastrophically amputated both arms, left shrapnel in her face, and blew out her ear drums. Within 15 minutes, Mary was in the Medevac helicopter.

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*"I battled my way through recovery, surgeries, depression, body dysmorphia, and fought to get off the myriad of drugs I was on for over a year. And I did it with a smile. Because maybe seeing me smile would help the other troops recovering at Brooke Army Medical Center; maybe it would help my family accept what happened to me; maybe it would assuage my brother's survivors guilt. I hope it did."*

Mary and her husband, James, also an Army EOD Tech, are in the process of preparing for James's retirement from the military. Through the generosity of you, our incredible supporters, we are thrilled to announce that we have welcomed Mary into our custom homebuilding program.

We can't wait to support them as they start the next chapter of their lives.





REMINDING OUR WWII VETERANS THAT WE NEVER FORGET

## Teaching Younger Generations The Cost Of Freedom

Fewer than 1% of the 16.4 million Americans who served in World War II are still with us today. These brave Americans are living libraries and we are doing all we can to preserve their stories. Through your generosity, we brought 16 WWII heroes and 20 high school JROTC students, to The National WWII Museum in New Orleans to ensure our nation's history is preserved and passed on to the next generation. For these young Americans, textbooks were brought to life through the memories of our nation's heroes.

*"I went into the Marines when I was 16 years old," said WWII Veteran Louis Bora, "And I look at [the students] and think 'what a lesson I can give them!' I could see how bright and interested they really are and I was thrilled that they listened to me."*

In addition to the students, each veteran shared this unforgettable experience with an accompanying family member who will carry on their stories with a new appreciation for the sacrifices they made.

“Hearing Grandpa's stories as we went through the exhibits was surreal,” an attendee told us.

We were honored to partner with The National World War II Museum to provide the trip of a lifetime for these veterans along with loved ones and students, to share and preserve their important stories. It's thanks to Grateful Americans like you that their legacy lives on.



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JUST RELEASED!

## Episode 4: Gary's Daughters, Sophie & Ella

Join Cristin as she sits down with none other than Gary's daughters, Sophie & Ella. They share about growing up in Hollywood, their family's passion for service, the growth of Gary Sinise Foundation and what this mission means to them, the loss of their brother, Mac, and many behind-the-scenes stories you won't want to miss.

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