Medal of Honor recipient to speak at veterans’ fundraiser

BY STEVEN J. SMITH
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Col. Jack Jacobs will be the featured speaker at a benefit for the Purple Heart Veterans of Florida, which will take place from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 21, at The Colony Hotel in Palm Beach.

The event is principally sponsored by San Diego-based health technology company LifeWave, which plans to donate all of the night’s proceeds to the Purple Heart Veterans of Florida, a nonprofit fundraising arm of the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

Thomas Burke, a longtime LifeWave member, first developed his company’s relationship with the MOPH and said LifeWave has recently announced it will provide a long-term donation to the MOPH of more than $2.1 million in health technologies designed to deliver veterans drug-free pain relief.

“The first hour of the event will be a cocktail tail hour by the pool,” Mr. Burke said. At 6 p.m., we’ll proceed to a free-standing building at The Colony known as the pavilion. I will then introduce Richard Hunt, who is the state commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart in Florida. After he speaks, I’ll introduce David Schneidt, who is the chairman and CEO of LifeWave.”

Mr. Burke added Col. Jacobs will then speak for about 45 minutes.

“The Purple Heart Veterans is a 100 percent volunteer organization,” he said. “Nobody gets paid, not even the national commander. And 100 percent of the proceeds go to all veterans and their families, not just Purple Heart veterans. These funds go to such purposes as finding shelter for them, providing funds to the economically challenged, providing food, furniture, a car, wheelchairs, service dogs or even filling services for combat wounded veterans needing assistance from the Veterans Administration.”

Col. Jacobs, 69, was in Vietnam twice, both times as an advisor to Vietnamese infantry battalions. He earned three Bronze Stars, two Silver Stars and the Medal of Honor, the nation’s highest combat decoration. Col. Jacobs said he plans to talk about national security affairs and about issues facing veterans today, such as the distance between those who served and those who are being served.

He believes the best way to bridge that gap is through better understanding and appreciation of what veterans do.

“We have 320 million people in this country and less than one half of one percent are serving,” he said. “I’m somebody who believes in universal service. I think that anyone who’s lucky enough to live in a free country owes it something in the form of service and sacrifice. And it doesn’t have to be for long. Even if everyone just went through basic training, we’d all have something in common. Right now veterans and the general public don’t have anything in common.”

Col. Jacobs added he wants to see more veterans employed in the private sector and not just because it is corporate America’s charitable duty to do so.

“These are young people who have had a lot of authority and responsibility at a very early age and are probably more qualified to do the job than the guy hiring them,” he said. “When a company hires a veteran, it shouldn’t be because that company thinks it owes the veteran something. It should be because the veteran is absolutely positively the best person you can find anywhere.”

Col. Jacobs said he is pleased to take part in this event, which is helping veterans on the local level.

“I think events like this are extremely important to cement understanding and goodwill in communities,” he said.

Tickets to the event are $50 each and include two drink tickets and appetizers. A guitarist and vocalist will perform pre-event at The Colony Hotel, located at 155 Hammon Ave. in Palm Beach.

For more information or to RSVP, call 833-6000. To learn more about the Military Order of the Purple Heart, see purpleheart.org and for more information about LifeWave, see lifewave.com.