By Christine Clark   Nov 15, 2011

Navy Vet, Business Officer Honored as Veteran of Year

UC San Diego's proud tradition of supporting veterans was embraced Thursday at the twelfth annual Veterans Association Recognition Ceremony.

At the event, Chuck Massey, a business officer at RIMAC Arena who formally served in the U.S. Navy, was honored with the Veteran of the Year award for his strong commitment to community service.

Massey with his wife and son.

"I am humbly honored to receive this award," Massey said. "As a veteran, I am a firm believer that you continue to serve your country after you complete your military service. I found my niche through volunteerism. If you volunteer, you're making a better world for us all."

The Veteran of the Year award is given each year from the UC San Diego Veteran Association to a veteran staff member or student who has gone above and beyond his or her campus career duties to impact their surroundings or community. The ceremony was hosted by Billiekai Boughton, chair of the UC San Diego's Veteran Association.

Boughton welled up with emotion while she was announcing Massey's accomplishments. "His heart is big and his shoulder's are broad," she said.

For more than 20 years, Massey has been a volunteer as a youth sports coach in the San Diego community. Most recently, his volunteer efforts included shipping meals to victims of the Japanese earthquake.

Massey was nominated for the Veteran of the Year award with five letters of recommendation. "Every service member deserves to be recognized for their contributions," Massey said.

Massey gave a heartwarming acknowledgement to his wife and son, who were sitting in the audience. He also thanked student veterans for their service.

This year's theme for UC San Diego's celebration of Veterans Day was 'Honoring our Veteran Students' in recognition of the growing number of student veterans at UC San Diego, Boughton said.

h chair of UC San Diego's Veteran Association Billiekai eft) and former chair of the Veteran Association, John

The theme was echoed by the Veteran of the Year keynote speaker, Sandra Brown, UC San Diego's vice chancellor for research,.

"Veterans are always welcome at UC San Diego and there are never enough of them on our campus," Brown said. "We hope veteran students find their way into our classrooms and labs."

Brown thanked UC San Diego's president of the Student Veteran Organization (SVO), Richard Gilbert, for his service. Gilbert, a veteran sniper in the U.S. Marine Corps, was deployed twice to the Middle East; on his second deployment, he was wounded and placed in the Wounded Warrior Battalion at the Balboa Naval Hospital.

"After being medically retired, he took classes at Mesa Community College, and after three years there, and serving as the Student Veterans Union president, he transferred to UC San Diego," Brown said "He was invited to be the Student Veterans Organization's president, and he's been running the club since last May and refocusing the group towards their slogan, 'Veterans helping veterans.'"

For Gilbert, the awards ceremony was especially meaningful because it coincided with the 236th birthday of the Marine Corps.

"It's an honor to have the dedication and contributions of veteran students acknowledged," Gilbert said after the ceremony. "The SVO is planning to be much more involved in the lives of the veterans on campus and more involved with the campus in general. Our team of student veterans is highly dedicated and motivated to serving our country and community."

The UC San Diego Veterans Association—is open to faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members to raise awareness and promote respect and appreciation for the sacrifices and contributions made by U.S. Armed Forces.

The Student Veteran Organization is open to all students who are dedicated improving the lives of student veterans and serving the UC San Diego community. For more information, go to: studentvets.ucsd.edu.

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