

Salute

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RUNNING THE GOOD RACE

NASCAR's

Jeffrey Earnhardt

partners with veteran-owned
Nine Line Apparel to aid
wounded warriors

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coverstory

RUNNING THE GOOD



Jeffrey Earnhardt's racecar featured the names of 617 fallen heroes on the hood during the Coca Cola 600 at the Charlotte Motor Speedway over Memorial Day weekend.

NASCAR's **Jeffrey Earnhardt** partners with veteran-owned Nine Line Apparel to aid wounded warriors

By DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ

RACE

Many people like to sport patriotic clothing, with flags and slogans emblazoned prominently across their chests. Fourth generation NASCAR driver Jeffrey Earnhardt is taking that patriotism one step further. He proudly inscribed the names of 617 fallen heroes on the hood of his racecar, raising more than \$15,000 for veteran's causes during one of NASCAR's premier events, the Coca Cola 600 at the Charlotte Motor Speedway during Memorial Day weekend.

The names of fallen heroes were submitted as part of a unique fundraising partnership between Earnhardt and Savannah, Georgia-based patriotic lifestyle brand Nine Line Apparel, which developed and sold special "Remember the Fallen" T-shirts prior to the event. With every T-shirt sold, donors were given the opportunity to submit the name of a fallen hero; more than a thousand shirts were sold. Proceeds from the campaign were donated to Angels of America's Fallen, a nonprofit organization supporting the children of those lost due to military service—whether in combat as a result of injuries or due to PTSD-related suicide.

"We originally reached out to Nine Line to see if there were any opportunities to help raise awareness through my social platforms and

NASCAR," explains Earnhardt. "One thing led to another, and we were able to partner together to help honor those that paid the ultimate sacrifice and support a great organization like Angels of America's Fallen.

"I am a big supporter of the military. I don't think there is ever a point where you could show enough respect for the men and women who served our country," Earnhardt continued. "I am honored to be able to display more than 600 names of men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice. These men and women allow me to do what I love to do every weekend, which is race cars. Ultimately, I hope we can honor the families of those who have lost a loved one and show how much respect we have for everyone in uniform."

According to Earnhardt, the partnership with Nine Line Apparel will be an ongoing effort to help troops and their families address the many challenges they face. "I feel like this initiative will help to let everyone who has served and continues to serve know that there are people out there that can help and want to help. They aren't alone," Earnhardt says, adding that many military veterans and families "don't get the acknowledgement and respect they deserve for the sacrifices they've made." A second benefit in conjunction



Jeffrey Earnhardt signs his name for a military cause.

with the Nine Line Foundation was held at the Coke Zero Sugar 400 at Daytona International Speedway in July.

Nine Line Apparel, founded in 2012 by two Army captains, has donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to various nonprofit initiatives, including first responder charities, disaster relief efforts, and local nonprofit campaigns. The company also created the Nine Line Foundation, a nonprofit charitable organization that builds handicap-accessible homes and provides other types of assistance for the nation's most severely wounded veterans. All members



The NASCAR driver says the partnership with Nine Line Apparel will be an ongoing effort to help the troops.

of the Foundation's board are volunteers, and all overhead costs are covered by Nine Line Apparel, so that all of the donations to the Foundation go directly to help wounded veterans.

"In combat, a 'nine line' is an emergency medevac request, and is often the difference

PHOTOS: Miguel Nighthysocdn18pt



Earnhardt surprised Stephanie Manis, a Gold Star mom and her two children, George (Gino) and Kayden, with her husband's name proudly inscribed on the driver's side door.

between life and death for the most severely wounded soldiers," explains Captain Tyler Merritt (ret.), co-founder of Nine Line Apparel. "Nine Line Foundation aims to serve in a similar manner, offering a lifeline once wounded veterans return stateside. The goal is to rebuild, strengthen, and enrich the quality of life of wounded veterans."

Nine Line Apparel was initially conceived of as a promotional products company printing T-shirts for Army units, and has since expanded into a brand to unify and represent the grit and patriotism of the military, first responders, and those who support them. The Nine Line Foundation has a two-fold mission: to raise awareness of the harsh circumstances that severely injured service members and their families face once their life-threatening injuries are stabilized, and to greatly improve the quality of life of wounded heroes, focusing on each individual candidate's needs.

Since being founded in 2013, the Nine Line Foundation has contributed to the construction of five handicap-accessible homes across the country for amputee veterans and their families. In addition, the Foundation has purchased a service dog for a wounded veteran through America's Vet Dogs (for more on this organization, see page 22), and purchased two self-sustaining aquaponics growth systems for two wounded veterans.

Both Nine Line Apparel and the Nine Line Foundation are continuing to raise funds and donate to help wounded veterans. According to Merritt, the Nine Line Foundation is able to do more with less by primarily focusing efforts on one individual at a time. He points out, "Our goal is to rebuild, strengthen and enrich the quality of life of wounded veterans. Simply put, we answer the Nine Line." 