

AmeriRogues leader named to Operation Ward 57 board

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Nelson Stewart, leader of the Celtic rock group, the American Rogues, has assumed new, non-musical duties, as the latest member of the board of directors for Operation Ward 57, which helps recovering and wounded U.S. veterans.

Operation Ward 57 is a grass roots, volunteer non-profit organization dedicated to helping the courageous men and women who have served the U.S. military and have been wounded during their service.

The name is taken for the orthopedic Ward 57 at The Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) in Washington, D.C., which was the first stop for many of America's returning wounded service members from Iraq and Afghanistan. Known as "the amputee ward," Ward 57 housed some of the most-severely injured patients for weeks, even months, during the most difficult of times.

The painful sacrifice of losing one or more limbs continues to be the latest battle these service members and their families now fight daily. Operation Ward 57 is a direct way for individuals and companies to show support and raise funds for these male and female warriors.

The direct support for Operation Ward 57 comes through donations and the sale of special T-shirts, and the funds collected directly goes for items for the Ward, patients, family members and staff.

"I've long been passionate in my support of Armed Forces veterans," Stewart said. "Many of my close friends and family members have served in the American and Canadian military and some are still in harm's way.



Nelson Stewart, of the American Rogues, plays in conjunction with the U.S. Air Force Symphony.

"Several years ago, my wife, Jeania, and I decided we would make Operation Ward 57 one of the main charities we'd support, and to that end, I've tried to raise funds and awareness for them through audience interaction."

Stewart graduated from McMaster University in his hometown of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, on the Dean's Honor List with a double major in English and History. He also received a Bachelor of Education from the University of Western Ontario (in London, Ont.), again making the Dean's Honor List.

When he is not engaged in his music performances, he teaches in Canada, conducting a stage band, a funk band and a concert band, while also coaching soccer and football.

Dubbed "Bon Scotsman" by the band's loyal fans, Nelson has been involved in music for 35 years as a singer-songwriter-producer, who plays several instruments, including piano, guitar, accordion, bass, mandolin, saxophone, harmonica, bodhran and various other drums. His musical interests cover such diverse musical genres as rock, Celtic, funk, punk, blues, folk, jazz, pop and classical.

When he is not performing with the American Rogues or teaching, Stewart also appears with other groups.

The American Rogues members have continuously shown their support of the military, and the band members' families include former members of the Army, Marines, Air Force, Navy and the Military Police. They have raised thousands of dollars for individual veterans, the U.S. Air Force Aid Society and have been a close partner with Operation Ward 57 since 2009.

Nelson and his wife, Jeania, have been involved in fundraisers for military veterans since 2007.

The group has performed for troops in Guantanamo Bay, Japan, Spain, Italy and Guam and regularly volunteers to perform for World War II veterans at Honor Flights in the Washington, D.C. area.

"I know his service to our mission will provide tremendous benefits to the board and organization as a whole," said Brittney Hamilton, Executive Director of Operation Ward 57. "We are confident Nelson's perspective, and his experiences from his work in philanthropy, will enhance our efforts to serve the wounded service members and their families."

How Operation Ward 57 began

In December 2006, Sgt. Scott Cameron, an LPN was transferred from Fort Lewis, in Washington State, to Ward 57 at Walter Reed. He and Deborah Semer made the cross-country journey and immediately visited WRAMC.

Within 10 minutes of arriving, Semer was in tears, seeing all



Photos courtesy of Operation Ward 57 website

Ex-Seattle Seahawk running back Kerry Carter (above photo) presents a Seahawks gift bag to a recovering soldier at the old Ward 57.



The Ward 57 T-shirt on sale to benefit injured soldiers.

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the young amputees, and the full impact of the cost of America's war on terror. She picked up a copy of the *Stars and Stripes* military newspaper, seeing a front page picture of then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and a soldier holding a black and yellow Ward 57 T-shirt. She immediately bought one to support the ward where her good friend would be working.

That first batch of football-themed shirts was funded by "The Angels of Mercy," created by Lts. Kevin Jones and Scuba Steve to match the team spirit of the soldiers on the ward and their new "home."

Semer returned to Seattle to her commitments and traveled back-and-forth for the next four years to support Cameron and Ward 57.

After a few months of working on Ward 57, it was quite evident additional help and funding was needed to provide wanted and needed items for patient healing and care. In March, 2007, Cameron asked Semer, a member of the Seattle Arts Commission, to get some Seattle Seahawks memorabilia to boost the spirits of a depressed amputee patient, who hailed from Seattle and was battling to save his remaining foot.

She contacted fellow Arts Commissioner, Laura "Piece" Kelly, the Executive Director of the "Think Big" Foundation, begun by running back Kerry Carter. Both of them immediately raced to help, getting the Seahawks to gather a gift package, including an NFL football autographed by then-quarterback Matt Hasselbeck.

Semer, Carter and his former Stanford quarterback, Chris Lewis, personally delivered the items to that patient and the visit made a tremendous impact on everyone, with lasting beneficial effects for the patient's spirit.

When the outpatient housing scandal hit Walter Reed in



Members of the American Rogues, a Celtic rock band who often perform for U.S. military veterans, visit the Iwo Jima Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Photo by Mike Nolen

February, 2007, and hospital morale dropped to an all-time low, Semer, Carter and Kelly created a partnership to start a new program – Operation Ward 57 – through Carter's foundation to recreate the Ward 57 football T-shirts to boost the patients' morale and raise funds for items needed on Ward 57.

Operation Ward 57 became a direct way for individuals and companies to support and raise funds through the Kerry Carter-Think Big Foundation. Operation Ward 57 raised thousands of dollars and greatly enhanced the improvement of Ward 57 (orthopedic) and Ward 58 (neurology).

On Aug. 27, 2011, as part of a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) the Department of Defense replaced Walter Reed Army Medical Center with a new Walter

Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC), housed on the grounds of the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, seven miles from Walter Reed's original D.C. location. The medical campus is a joint facility, which includes Army, Navy, and Air Force medical personnel.

The historic Ward 57 (orthopedic ward) was moved (now 4E) to the new facility and continues to house the nation's most severely wounded service members.

Based on the request of former patients, staff and families, Operation Ward 57 decided to keep retain its name to pay respects to the countless servicemen and women (regardless of which branch) who received or provided care on the ward.

"Being chosen to join the Board of Directors of Operation Ward 57 is one of the greatest honors of my life and I will do my best not to let the veterans down," Stewart added.

To learn more about Operation Ward 57, go to www.operationward57.org.

SCMA board of trustees election on Sept. 27

The Southwest Celtic Music Association will conduct its annual trustee election process over the next few months, culminating in the annual SCMA election meeting, on Saturday, Sept. 27, when the results for be announced.

That meeting will take place at the SCMA corporate offices (2528 Elm Street, Suite B, in Dallas) at 10 a.m. and is open to any SCMA member to attend.

Nominating period is from July 15-August 15 for four slots on its board of di-

rectors and any SCMA member in current standing prior to the election is eligible for office. Interested parties can nominate themselves or be nominated by another SCMA member. They must submit a brief bio, their reasons to run for a trustee position and contact information.

Send nominations material to Lybo Buchanan at lybolynn@sbcglobal.net, or mail to SCMA, 7324 Gaston Avenue, #124-382, Dallas TX 75213.

Ballots will be mailed to the general

membership around Sept. 1 and results then tabulated.

The SCMA board meets monthly (on the first Wednesday of each month). Meeting dates for the remainder of the 2013-14 business year are: July 2, August 6, September 3 and September 27.

Any SCMA member can attend its monthly sessions, although times, dates and location are all subject to change. Please contact the SCMA office if planning to attend.