

\$200K RAISED FOR THE COMBAT CONTROL FOUNDATION AT THE SECOND ANNUAL GUNS, GOLF & GILLS CHARITY EVENT

MADISON, FL, UNITED STATES, May 5, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Significant Fundraising Milestone Provides Critical Support for Combat Controllers and Their Families Following Highly Successful Charity Event

The second annual Guns, Golf & Gills (GGG) charity event and competition, hosted at Second Bend Labs, raised

\$200K for the Combat Control Foundation (CCF), marking a significant single-event fundraising total for the Foundation. All proceeds directly fund the CCF's First There programs, providing immediate crisis response, long-term wellness initiatives, and essential resiliency resources for U.S. Air Force Combat Controllers, their families, and the AFSPECWAR community. The charity event brought together U.S. Armed Forces service members, colleagues, community members, law enforcement, and sponsors from across the country for three days of shooting, golf, and fishing competitions, surpassing last year's landmark milestone. The back-to-back results establish GGG as one of the most impactful annual fundraising events for the Combat Control Foundation.

"Combat Controllers are the tip of the spear and the most elite special tactics operators in the world," said Sam Kellett Jr., Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Second Bend Labs and Force Multiplier partner of CCF. "These warriors are simultaneously directing air strikes, coordinating ground operations, and managing the airspace in combat, executing what can only be described as four-dimensional chess under fire, often the first ones in and the last ones out. They carried the weight of a twenty-year global war on terrorism and too many of them are living with operator syndrome, PTSD, tinnitus, anxiety, and a suicide crisis that the VA is simply not equipped to handle alone. That is exactly why this Foundation exists and exactly why I am honored to stand behind it. I am proud to announce that we rallied together and raised \$200K, one of the largest single-event fundraising totals in the Foundation's history."

GGG featured an extraordinary lineup of guest speakers who have served at the highest levels of U.S. Air Force Special Operations. Michael Lamonica, retired Chief Master Sergeant, USAF



Combat Controller and Vice President of the Combat Control Foundation, opened the event alongside Sam Kellett Jr. to share the CCF mission and the critical importance of community support. CMSgt Rob Gutierrez (Ret), an Air Force Cross recipient and USAF Combat Controller who served with elite Air Force Special Tactics units, was the featured speaker for the signature Whiskey and War Stories session, an intimate evening of firsthand accounts from warriors who have served at the highest levels of special operations that left no one in the room unchanged.

"The success of the 2nd Annual Guns, Golf & Gills 2026 event is a testament to the unwavering support of our community and partners," said Andrea Dellinger, Executive Director of the Combat Control Foundation. "Raising \$200K is more than just a milestone; it is a vital force multiplier that fuels our 'First There' programs. These funds ensure we can continue providing essential health and wellness support, educational support, and emergency assistance to our elite Combat Controllers and their families. When the mission calls, U.S. Air Force Combat Controllers are First There, and because of the generosity at GGG, Combat Control Foundation is First There for them."

"I spent my career alongside these men, and I know firsthand what they are capable of and what the cost of that service looks like up close," said Michael Lamonica, Vice President of the Combat Control Foundation and retired Chief Master Sergeant, USAF Combat Controller. "Events like Guns, Golf & Gills are not just fundraisers. They are a statement that the combat controller community has allies who show up when it matters, year after year, and refuse to let these warriors fight their hardest battle alone. What Sam and Second Bend Labs have built around this event is something genuinely special, and the result speaks for itself."

The generosity and involvement of GGG's patriot sponsors made the second annual event possible and helped drive its record-breaking fundraising total. Major sponsors included Second Bend Labs, Aware Defense, Jennifer and Samuel B. Kellett Jr., Stephanie and Blake Selig, Jamie Gilbert, 1861 Distillery, Post Loyal, Accel Innovation Corporation, Anheuser-Busch, P2, Huestis Law, SEI Building Solutions, Tall Timbers, and Torque Wheels. Their investment goes beyond brand partnership, reflecting a shared belief that corporate purpose and community mission are strongest when they stand together in support of the warriors and families who have given everything in service to this nation.

"The Combat Control Foundation fills a gap that no government program can fully address, and what we raised here proves that the civilian community understands that," said Stu Booker, Chief Operating Officer of Aware Defense, retired Air Force Lt Col and Combat Controller. "\$200K is not just a number. It is resiliency retreats, emergency assistance, scholarships, and care for families who gave everything alongside their warriors. That is the mission behind this event and that is why we will keep growing it."

Protecting the warfighter is at the heart of everything we do at Aware Defense and at Second Bend Labs. Both organizations serve as Force Multiplier partners of the Combat Control Foundation, committed to extending the Foundation's reach and building a growing network of

civilian allies dedicated to the long-term well-being of the combat controller community and their families.

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Combat Control Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, serves all generations of U.S. Air Force Combat Controllers, their families, and the broader special operations community. Through its "First There" programs, the foundation focuses on four key pillars: Resilience, Wellness, Education, and Heritage. These initiatives provide crucial support and care to those who've served in some of the military's most demanding roles. CombatControlFoundation.org. Media: John Hill, 210.204.6863 | john@combatcontrolfoundation.org

Second Bend Labs is an elite multi-domain training, testing, and warfighter technology innovation facility on 8,000 acres located on the Georgia-Florida border. The purpose-built facility offers access for COA-approved air operations, a dynamic DoW-specification range complex, airstrip access, and integrated UAS and counter-UAS capabilities, delivering full-spectrum training across seamlessly integrated land, air, and water environments. Secondbendlabs.com.

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