



Burn Pits 360 Announces 2026 Gala theme 'Where Heritage Meets Heroism,' a Celebration of Service, Latino Heritage

Air Force Veterans Chaunté N. Hall, Ph.D., and Jimmy Anderson to co-emcee; 9/11 responder advocate John Feal joins as special guest

SAN ANTONIO, TX, UNITED STATES, August 21, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Burn Pits 360 today opened ticket and sponsorship sales for the 2026 [Gala of Valor](#), the organization's signature annual benefit, to be held Saturday, Oct. 17, at the JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa.

Proceeds support the nonprofit's advocacy, research and direct-service work on behalf of veterans, service members, first responders and families harmed by toxic exposure.

Themed "Where Heritage Meets Heroism," in honor of items being accepted by the Smithsonian Museum of the American Latino earlier this year, the evening opens with a cocktail reception and Sip and Shop marketplace, followed by dinner, a live and silent auction, and an awards program recognizing the advocates, clinicians, researchers, journalists and volunteers who have advanced care and accountability for the toxic-exposed community. Attire is Texas formal, Spanish chic.

"Every seat at this table pays for something real — an oxygen concentrator, a claim filed, a lung scanned, a PACT Act claim, restored hope for veterans," said Rosie Torres, executive director and co-founder of Burn Pits 360. "The Gala of Valor is how we sustain the work between the headlines. When someone buys a ticket or signs a sponsorship, they are underwriting the fight for veterans who came home sick and were told to wait."

Tickets and Sponsorships

Individual tickets and tables are on sale now at [galaofvalor.org](#). Sponsorship packages remain available across four tiers — Heritage Champion, Tradition of Honor, Legacy of Heroism and Heart of Valor — along with a limited number of featured experience sponsorships tied to specific elements of the evening. Sponsor benefits include on-site and program recognition, event access, and inclusion in Burn Pits 360 recognition materials.

Special Guest and Program

John Feal, the 9/11 responder and advocate whose campaign helped secure permanent health

benefits for World Trade Center responders, will appear as the evening's special guest. Every guest will receive a copy of his memoir, "I Will Follow You Anywhere," co-written with Charles Daly. Feal's work is widely credited with building the coalition model that Burn Pits 360 later used in the fight for the Honoring Our PACT Act of 2022.

Chaunté N. Hall, Ph.D., and Jimmy Anderson will serve as co-emcees. Both are Air Force veterans whose careers have centered on veteran transition, workforce development and family support.

Hall, an Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom veteran, author and educator, is chief of community engagement at Port San Antonio and co-founder of Centurion Military Alliance, where she builds cross-sector partnerships supporting workforce development and veteran transition.

Anderson, a Fulbright Scholar who deployed to Afghanistan, has served 17 years in uniform and continues to serve in the Air Force Reserve. He previously held federal appointments at the White House and the Department of Veterans Affairs focused on expanding support for veterans, families and the military community.

2026 Honorees

Burn Pits 360 will present the following awards:

- Governor Mikie Sherrill of New Jersey — SFC Heath Robinson Legacy Award (appearing virtually)
- Brian Lawler, Pilot Law Corp — CPT Le Roy Torres Justice Defender Award
- Andreas Fouras — PACT Act Veterans Champion Award
- Rick Kell — PACT Act Defenders of Valor Award
- Anthony Szema, M.D. — Amie Muller Research Award
- David Prezant, M.D., Fire Department of the City of New York — Ground Zero Warfighter Legacy Award (appearing virtually)
- Kerry Baker — PACT Act Pioneer Award
- Jake Tapper, CNN — PACT Act Trailblazer in Truth Journalism Award (appearing virtually)
- Col. David Sutherland, U.S. Army (Ret.) — Advocate of the Year Award
- The Lamantia Family — Burn Pits 360 Corporate Legacy Award
- Carlos and Sylvia Avila — Volunteer of the Year Award
- John Pizana — Volunteer of the Year Award

Additional honorees have been invited and will be confirmed in the weeks ahead, including U.S. Rep. Mark Takano and U.S. Rep. Morgan Luttrell, both invited to receive the SFC Heath Robinson Legacy Award, and former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough, invited to receive the PACT Act Vanguard Award. The recipient of the Oscar Wyatt Legacy of Valor Award will be announced separately.

"These are the people who refused to look away," Torres said. "Doctors who documented what

the government would not. Journalists who kept asking. Volunteers who showed up on the hardest days. Honoring them is how we tell the next generation of advocates that the work matters.”

Why It Matters

The Honoring Our PACT Act of 2022, which Burn Pits 360 helped drive into law, expanded health care for more than \$2 million veterans, and benefits access for millions of veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic hazards. Advocates say significant gaps remain in diagnosis, treatment, and the understanding of family and intergenerational health outcomes — gaps the organization works to close through its independent toxic exposure registry, its Spanish-language and English toxic exposure guides, and case management delivered through the Captain Le Roy Torres Warrior Support Center in Robstown.

Tickets, table reservations and sponsorship information are available at galaofvalor.org. For more information about Burn Pits 360, visit www.burnpits360.org.

About Burn Pits 360

Burn Pits 360 is a Texas-based national nonprofit organization dedicated to honoring and empowering veterans, first responders and their families affected by toxic exposures. Founded by Capt. Le Roy Torres and Rosie Torres, the organization works through education, advocacy, community support and policy engagement to drive long-overdue care, recognition and accountability for exposure-related illnesses. For more information, visit www.burnpits360.org.

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