

# Camo Camaro raises \$366,000 for wounded warriors

- SUPPORT TROOPS
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Winning bidder and several wounded warriors will ride in the Camaro in the upcoming New York Veterans Day Parade.

Credits:

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On October 12, UCLA Health System announced that a 2011 Chevrolet Camaro convertible donated by General Motors and custom designed by famous vehicle builder Ryan Friedlinghaus and his [West Coast Customs](#) team raised \$366,000 at auction to benefit U.S. soldiers severely wounded during their service overseas. The car was sold during lively bidding at the Mecum Auto Auction in Dallas on October 7. It will also serve as a grand marshal car in New York City's Veterans Day Parade on November 11. The one-of-a-kind vehicle, customized in a full camouflage motif representing all branches of the U.S. military, was donated to benefit [Operation Mend](#), a partnership between Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, and the Veterans Affairs–Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System that provides specialized medical care to U.S. military personnel who have been wounded and severely disfigured in Iraq and

Afghanistan. The car was auctioned live on the Discovery Channel's Velocity network. Several wounded warriors who have been helped by Operation Mend were on hand to promote the bidding for the matchless muscle car. The winning bid of \$333,000 was made by Ben Mecum, who said he was pleased to purchase the Operation Mend Camaro on behalf of the Mecum family and the entire Mecum organization.

However, the sale of the camouflaged Camaro did not end the evening for Operation Mend. Inspired by the appearance of the wounded veterans and Operation Mend's senior surgeon, Dr. Timothy Miller, a Vietnam veteran and a recipient of the Bronze Star for combat heroism, auction participants Tom Abrams of Reliable Carriers, and Ray Claridge of Cinema Vehicle Services each added a \$10,000 donation, and an additional \$13,000 was collected from hundreds of buyers, sellers and spectators in the crowd, bringing the total donation to \$366,000.

All proceeds will benefit Operation Mend's comprehensive program, which provides veterans with plastic and reconstructive surgery, mental health support, and other healthcare services. The program, which is funded completely through philanthropic donations by Americans across the country, was founded by Ronald A. Katz, a well-known inventor and philanthropist who serves on the board of Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center. Katz also attended the auction.

Riding in the Camaro with the winning bidder at New York's Veterans Day Parade will be several war heroes currently undergoing reconstructive surgeries at UCLA through Operation Mend to repair their faces, which were damaged by explosions. Dana Mecum, president of the Mecum Auction Company, and Friedlinghaus, founder and CEO of West Coast Customs, a luxury automobile restyling company, joined forces to offer the custom convertible to raise funds for Operation Mend.