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Nov. 7, 2011

UCLA Operation Mend founder named special grand marshal for NYC Veterans Day parade

Operation Mend's customized camouflage Camaro will also be featured in parade

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(Editors: This press release contains information about a member of your community.)

Ronald A. Katz, (Beverly Hills), the founder of UCLA's [Operation Mend](#), an organization that provides reconstructive surgery and medical services to military service members wounded the Iraq and Afghanistan, will serve as a special grand marshal for the New York City Veterans Day Parade on Nov. 11.

The parade's organizers, the [United War Veterans Council Board](#), unanimously selected Katz for the honor based on his leadership in founding and leading Operation Mend.

Katz, an inventor and philanthropist who serves on the board of Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, helped launch the project, recognizing that providing excellent care to injured soldiers need not be limited to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Armed Services.

The goal of Operation Mend, a collaboration among UCLA, the Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, and the and the Veterans Affairs Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, is to bridge the gap between the best medical care that the military can offer with the best care that the private sector can offer through private partnerships with world-class institutions such as UCLA.

The Katz Family Foundation provided the lead gift to [establish Operation Mend](#) in 2007 and continues to be a leading supporter and champion of the program.

"I appreciate the honor of participating in the 2011 Veterans Day Parade, honoring the men and women who have so courageously served their country," Katz said.

Operation Mend Camaro to serve as grand marshal car

Parade watchers should also look for a one-of-a-kind 2011 Chevrolet Camaro convertible designed in a full camouflage motif representing all branches of the U.S. military.

The Camaro, donated by General Motors and customized by famous vehicle builder Ryan Friedlinghaus and his West Coast Customs team, [was auctioned](#) at the Mecum Auto Auction in Dallas on Oct. 7, with all proceeds benefiting Operation Mend. The car sold for \$333,000, and additional donations, collected when a cowboy hat was passed at the auction, bumped the total funds raised up to \$366,000.

The vehicle's new owner, Ben Mecum of the Mecum Auction family, will drive the grand marshal car in the parade and will be joined by Frank Mecum, auctions consignment director for the Mecum Auction Company, and several war heroes currently undergoing reconstructive surgeries at UCLA through Operation Mend to repair their faces and hands, which were damaged by explosions.

The principals involved in the project to build and auction the car were brought together by Constellations Group, a strategic relationship and business development firm, with the mission of benefiting those who have given so much in defense of our country.

The annual New York Veterans Day parade is the oldest and largest of its kind in the nation. Other notable participants will include New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer, Gen. David Petraeus and a wide range of political, military and civilian leaders.

Parade festivities begin at 10 a.m. with a memorial ceremony featuring Mayor Bloomberg and other dignitaries in Madison Square Park (23rd Street and Fifth Avenue). The parade kicks off at 11:11 a.m. and will proceed north on Fifth Avenue to 56th Street.

More than 20,000 people, including 27 active military units from all branches, veterans groups and high school bands from around the nation will march in the parade.

New York's FOX 5 TV will provide live parade coverage from noon to 3 p.m., and the parade will be broadcast on Armed Forces Television to military installations around the world.

Operation Mend is funded by generous donors across the country. To learn more or to donate, visit www.operationmend.ucla.edu.

For more information on the New York City Veterans Day Parade, visit www.nycveteransdaycelebrations.com.

The Mecum Auction Company has been specializing in the sale of collector cars for 24 years and is the world leader in collector car, motorcycle, boat and memorabilia sales. Click [here](#) to watch the Operation Mend car being auctioned in Dallas.

West Coast Customs has grown into one of the most powerful and recognized brand names in the custom automotive industry, with franchises and other ventures stretching across the world and various media platforms. "Inside West Coast Customs" airs Sundays at 8 p.m. on Discovery's Velocity network. A special segment featuring the Operation Mend car will air Jan. 8, 2012.

Constellations Group is a strategic relationship and business development firm that advises corporations, foundations and high-net worth individuals on their business challenges and philanthropic endeavors. The firm strives to find ways across their client base to show their support for the brave men and women of our armed forces and first-responder communities and their families.

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