



Giving Back to Those Who Served

PRESS RELEASE FOR JUNEAU & OUTLYING AREAS

Sea2Sea 2014 Final Ceremony at Beltz Committee Room, Room 105 in the Tom Stewart Legislative Office Building, 2 pm, Thursday 3 July, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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US Army veteran bicycling from Florida to Alaska for veterans and their families will have a Final Ceremony at Beltz Committee Room, Room 105 in the Tom Stewart Legislative Office Building accessible from the State Capitol, Juneau, at 2 pm, Thursday 3 July 2014.

Tom von Kaenel, a retired American soldier living in Six Mile, South Carolina will arrive at Beltz Committee Room, Room 105 in the Tom Stewart Legislative Office Building accessible from the State Capitol at 2 PM, as the final event, culminating a 5800 mile, self-supporting bicycle journey across the US, from its southernmost tip (Key West, Florida), to the northernmost state (Juneau, Alaska), crossing 14 States & Canada & conducting a Memorial Ceremony in each State.

MEMORIAL CEREMONY HONORING THE FALLEN TO BE HELD AT 2:00 PM, Beltz Committee Room, Room 105 in the Tom Stewart Legislative Office Building accessible from the State Capitol - An integral part of this journey is to remember those killed in Iraq & Afghanistan. This ceremony will honor and remember all those who have died, and read the names of those fallen Alaskan service members. This is a public ceremony. All are invited to attend.

BACKGROUND: The Sea2Sea Foundation, INC is a US military 501(c)3 charity, whose headquarters is in Suwanee, Georgia (EIN – 45-4956381). Its mission is to 'Give Back to Those Who Served'. John Sprowl (the co-founder) is CEO, Tricia Murdock is the Secretary, and Tom is the Chairman.

This is the second bi-annual Sea2Sea Challenge. The first occurred in the spring of 2012 when Tom and a small team cycled from Ocean Shores, Washington and finished at Arlington National Cemetery on Jul 4th, covering 4200 miles in 74 days.

This year's challenge is different in two ways:

1. Tom is cycling alone, relying on knowledge and assistance from local communities and cycling clubs and those that wish or are able to cycle any part of the distance.
2. There is no dedicated vehicle for support or overnight accommodation – this is a self-supporting journey.

The Sea2Sea 2014 Challenge has two goals:

- 1) To remember those who are no longer with us. It is our vision to establish a long range program to establish an Iraq/Afghanistan War Memorial in each US State listing the names of those who gave their lives for us in these conflicts, with the eventual goal of a national Iraq/Afghanistan War Memorial

in Washington, DC.

We feel that it is that it is important to list the names at a memorial in each US State so that we have an enduring memorial of their sacrifice. We are starting this program in each state that we are cycling through during this trip and will continue with trips through all the States until completed.

In short the goal is simple – **Never forget.**

- 2) To continue to help those that they left behind. Partnering with selected 501(c)3 organizations across the country (for example, LcplLutzLiveToTell, Purple Heart Homes, Wounded Warrior Project, Upstate Warrior Solution, Augusta Warrior Project, JD-3), we will continue to highlight the challenges that service members, veterans, and their families face and how all of us can help.

At 2 PM, the public is invited to attend a Final Memorial Ceremony held at **Beltz Committee Room, Room 105 in the Tom Stewart Legislative Office Building accessible from the State Capitol** during which the names of local military service members who were killed in Iraq and Afghanistan will be read. The Juneau ceremony will not only remember all who have died, but also highlight the issue of veteran suicides, and the thousands wounded.

Additionally, local community and veteran organizations and military 501(c)3 charities are invited to participate by providing brief remarks to the local community on the challenges that veterans and their families face and specifically how the local community can reach out to local veterans in ways that will best benefit the veteran, their family, and the community.

The public is encouraged to participate in any of the events of the day to demonstrate their ongoing support for US veterans and their families.

www.sea2sea.org and on facebook – [www.fb.com/sea2sea1](https://www.facebook.com/sea2sea1)

About Tom

Tom von Kaenel, 58 years old, is a retired US soldier who lives and works as a business consultant in Six Mile, South Carolina. He retired from the US Army in 1997 after serving 20 years.

On Sep 16th 2009 Tom suffered a life threatening bicycling accident in the Pyrenees Mountains in southern France which came close to destroying his health and ending his life. He was medically evacuated to US Landstuhl Regional Military Hospital in Germany and admitted into the trauma ward with wounded and injured US military service personnel evacuated from Iraq and Afghanistan.

He says, *"The 2 1/2 weeks that I spent there changed my life. I witnessed for the first time in my life, the depth of sacrifice, devotion, and selflessness exhibited by the staff and the patients, all focused on trying to preserve the lifeblood of those men and women who were wounded or injured defending our countries and our way of life, and tragically those that paid the ultimate price."*

Tom was in intensive care and isolation for many weeks, suffering several complications including two failed operations, a life threatening blood clot, and contracting the infection known as MRSA more than once.

Having returned home and having learned to walk again, initially with crutches and then a cane, he suffered a second bout of MRSA resulting in two subsequent operations, and a further period in isolation, learning to walk again for the third time.

He has since made a complete recovery.

However, he states *"This is not the case for thousands of those who gave their lives for us, the hundreds of thousands whose lives are forever changed, as well as their families and friends. In short, they need our help, and more importantly, we owe them a debt that we can help to repay for the sacrifices that they have made."*