

DIGNITY ★ HONOR ★ RESPECT ★ TRUST

LEONS HEROES INC. 501(C)(3)

413 Madison Street • Hobart, IN 46342

[www.leonstriathlon.com](http://www.leonstriathlon.com)

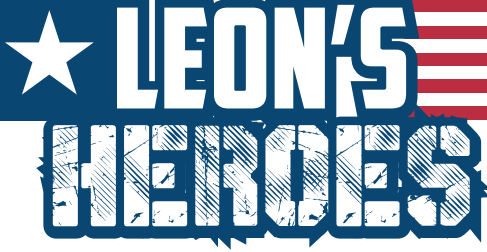
## U.S. Navy presents Leon Wolek with Certificate of Appreciation

Leon Wolek is a community member dedicated to the preservation and remembrance of heroic sacrifices. With humble respect and a commitment to patriotism, Leon created a premier paratriathlon and military tribute race which brings together athletes of all abilities. His nonprofit's mission is to provide meaningful support to help service members feel grounded.

At the core of Leon's efforts is a charitable framework, supported by a committee of 100% local veterans aimed at celebrating the American spirit. While not a service member himself, Leon wanted to say thank you for the sacrifice of others. His father was a WWII Navy sailor and an active member of the American Legion group in New Chicago, Indiana. Leon recalled how his dad established roots there, where fellow veterans supported one another and preserved a sense of camaraderie, even during times when certain wars lacked public acceptance. Inspired by that sense of emotion, Leon broadened the focus. He set aside the divisions tied to particular wars to honor the shared sacrifice of all who serve by creating a venue that recognizes courage beyond conflict. Since 1983, Leon's Heroes has promoted the unsung narratives of U.S. Armed Forces members, as well as fallen local police, fire, and EMS personnel. From first-time competitors to able-bodied veterans, to service dogs, and elite para-Olympians, all are given a chance to compete and remain engaged with a sense of purpose.

Building on this foundation, Leon's work reflects a strong example of purpose-driven leadership rooted in service, vision, and community engagement. One of the most significant aspects of Wolek's leadership is his ability to create a shared vision that extends beyond sport. The race is intentionally designed to connect diverse groups, including generational veterans, families, nonprofits, and local communities. Veterans, school-aged volunteers, and national sponsors such as BP and Home Depot help transform the race course into a living tribute, lined with American flags honoring those who served, while Gold star families and spectators engage in a reflective experience that fosters appreciation and history. His organization of the race layout demonstrates a leadership approach that prioritizes meaning and emotional connection, aligning closely with the concept of inspiring community. From the Battle of Normandy to the threats within the Persian Gulf, fallen comrades are commemorated along the raceway telling their personal stories.

Perhaps most importantly, Wolek's leadership embodies the principles of servant leadership. He doesn't show up on site unwilling to get his hands dirty. Most commonly seen in a gray hoodie, a wide brimmed hat, and work gloves, Leon does not present himself as the face of the organization. His preference is to identify a special volunteer such as a safety coordinator or a groundskeeper on the race's social media. His focus is on honoring others, supporting the community, and creating meaningful experiences. This behavior highlights a commitment to serving a greater purpose rather than personal recognition. His use of a "veteran's council," whose average age is beyond 70, and inclusion of special ceremonies to raise an American flag at all venues ensures respect and celebrates a love he has for his country. The triathlon functions as a platform for gratitude, connection, and inspiration, reinforcing the idea that effective leadership is grounded in humility and service.



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Additionally, Wolek's leadership reflects a strong commitment to collaboration and empowerment. The event has evolved into a large-scale platform that integrates partnerships, such as the U.S. Navy, the Indiana National Guard, the National Park service, the American Red Cross, and local trade unions. He allows each group to demonstrate their special skills and natural capabilities. The integration highlights how the triathlon serves as a stage for outreach and community engagement, leveraging existing infrastructure and partnerships to create impactful experiences. This ability to bring together stakeholders and enable participation demonstrates the principle of fostering collaboration and enabling others to act.

While neither excusing or condoning current events, Leon threads the needle towards modesty in providing an inclusive environment for participants and viewers. The race isn't about any one particular branch or a particular war. It is about seeing people and remembering those who do a tough job. The everyday person can relate to the athletes' struggles throughout the competition. Through grit, resilience, and determination, a person's true heart will get them across the finish line. Nothing is impossible.

Wolek exemplifies long-term strategic leadership through the sustained growth and relevance of the triathlon. Over the decades, the event has expanded in scope, incorporating national championships and community-based activities. Over time, his racecourse grew to feature over 1,000 flags. As Leon puts it, "If one is good, a thousand is striking." These enhancements show a willingness to continuously adapt the event to remain patriotic and engaging for a broader audience. Always open to new ideas, Leon is commonly heard asking a visitor, "What do you think?"

In summary, Leon Wolek's efforts demonstrate that leadership is not defined by authority, but by the ability to inspire, connect, and create lasting value for others. Through vision and collaboration, Leon is a powerful example of a leader impacting communities over time.