



**West Point Association of Graduates
ANNOUNCEMENT**

June 11, 2015

**ACTOR AND HUMANITARIAN GARY SINISE TO RECEIVE
2015 WEST POINT SYLVANUS THAYER AWARD**

Medal Award Ceremony Includes Parade by Corps of Cadets at U.S. Military Academy

West Point, NY: The West Point Association of Graduates is pleased to announce that actor and humanitarian Gary Sinise will be presented with the Sylvanus Thayer Award for 2015. The award will be presented on October 22 during ceremonies hosted by Lt. Gen. Robert L. Caslen, Class of 1975, Superintendent of the United States Military Academy at West Point.

West Point Association of Graduates Board Chairman Lt. Gen. (USA, Ret) Larry R. Jordan, Class of 1968, said “The West Point Association of Graduates is proud that Gary Sinise will be forever associated with West Point through the Thayer Award. As an actor, his moving portrayals of members of the armed forces and veterans have helped tell the patriotic story of military service to audiences across the U.S. and worldwide. In addition, his outreach work via the Gary Sinise Foundation serves veterans and active service members alike through Resiliency and Empowerment programs. Gary’s impressive achievements in serving our nation and in building the morale of our service members and veterans are an inspiration, and truly exemplify the West Point values of ‘Duty, Honor, Country.’”

“I am humbled to receive the Sylvanus Thayer Award from The West Point Association of Graduates, and want to thank them from the bottom of my heart for recognizing my support of veterans and active duty military,” said Sinise. “To be recognized with such a distinguished honor is truly a privilege and I hope that this recognition only helps to further shine a light on the continuing mission of supporting those who serve and defend our great country.”

During his distinguished career as a film and theater actor and director, Sinise has won many accolades, including an Emmy, an Obie, and a Golden Globe Award, and he has been nominated for both an Academy Award and a Palme d’Or. Sinise co-founded the Tony award-winning Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago in 1974, and his first major critical success as an actor was in 1982 when he directed and starred in Steppenwolf’s production of *True West*, for which he earned an Obie Award. He later appeared with John Malkovich in the PBS *American Playhouse* production of the play. Sinise has starred with fellow actor Tom Hanks in three critically-acclaimed films: *Forrest Gump*, *Apollo 13* and *The Green Mile*. Beginning in 2004, he starred as Detective Mac Taylor in his first regular television series, the crime drama *CSI: New York*.

It was Sinise’s portrayal of Lieutenant Dan Taylor in the 1994 Academy Award-winning film *Forrest Gump* that created an enduring connection with U.S. servicemen and women throughout the military community. After participating in several USO tours, Sinise formed the “Lt. Dan Band” in 2004 and began entertaining troops serving at home and abroad. The band now performs almost 50 shows a year for military bases, charities and fundraisers supporting wounded warriors, Gold Star families, veterans and troops around the world.

Sinise has frequently used his artistic abilities to enhance recruiting and educational programs that support the military services. He narrated Army and Army Reserve ‘Army Strong’ recruitment ads in 2008 and was the executive producer—along with David Scantling—of the Iraq War documentary *Brothers at War*. The film features an American military family and the experiences of three brothers: Jake Rademacher, Isaac Rademacher, Class of 2000, and Joseph Rademacher. He has also loaned his voice talent as narrator to several military history documentaries, including the acclaimed *World War II in HD* on the History Channel and *Missions That Changed The War* on the Military Channel.

In addition to using his acting skills to help tell the story of America’s servicemen and women, Sinise has also served as their passionate advocate off screen for over 30 years. His activism began in the early 80’s with his support of Vietnam Veterans and the creation of Vets Night, a program offering free dinners and performances

to veterans at the Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago. His commitment continued into the 1990's, when he began working on behalf of the Disabled American Veterans organization, which he continues to actively support.

Since the attacks of September 11th, 2001, Sinise's dedication to our nation's active duty military, veterans and first responders has intensified into a personal campaign of support, service and gratitude to all those who serve our country. In 2011, Sinise established the Gary Sinise Foundation to honor those who serve the nation and their families by creating and supporting unique programs designed to entertain, educate, inspire, strengthen and build communities. These include its R.I.S.E program (*Restoring Independence and Supporting Empowerment*), whose flagship initiative is a specially adapted custom Smart Home building project for severely wounded veterans.

Sinise has received numerous honors for his service to the military and veteran communities, including the Presidential Citizens Medal in 2008, the second-highest civilian honor awarded to citizens for exemplary deeds performed in service of the nation, as well as the Outstanding Civilian Service Award, which he received from the current Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Raymond "Ray" Odierno, class of 1976.

About the Sylvanus Thayer Award

The Thayer Award, presented annually since 1958, is the highest honor currently bestowed upon a non-graduate by the West Point Association of Graduates. The selected recipient must be an outstanding citizen of the United States whose service and accomplishments in the national interest exemplify personal devotion to the ideals expressed in the legendary West Point motto: "Duty, Honor, Country." The Award is named for Sylvanus Thayer (Class of 1808), Superintendent of the United States Military Academy at West Point from 1817-1833. Thayer is venerated as the "Father of the Military Academy" for improving West Point's academic standards, instilling military discipline and emphasizing honorable conduct. Thayer's statue stands today in a place of honor on the historic Plain at West Point, along with statues commemorating Washington, Eisenhower (Class of 1915), MacArthur (1903) and Patton (1909). Past recipients of the Thayer Award include Bob Hope, Condoleezza Rice, General Colin Powell, Henry Kissinger, Madeleine Albright, Tom Brokaw, Neil Armstrong, Presidents Ronald Reagan, George Bush and Dwight Eisenhower, Walter Cronkite and Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. For a full list of previous Thayer Award recipients, visit www.westpointaog.org/ThayerAwardrecipients. By tradition, the Thayer Award recipient is honored with a full dress parade by the Corps of Cadets at West Point. Afterwards, the recipient is presented with the Thayer medal, and gives a formal address to the Corps. The honoree also has the opportunity to meet with cadets in the classroom and has his or her legacy of Duty, Honor, Country permanently preserved for future cadets in the Thayer Award Room in Taylor Hall at West Point.

About the West Point Association of Graduates

The West Point Association of Graduates (WPAOG), is among America's oldest educational alumni associations. Founded in 1869, the Association was established "to cherish the memories of [its] Alma Mater, and to promote the social intercourse and fraternal fellowship of its graduates," many of whom had recently fought against each other in the Civil War. WPAOG has evolved into a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to furthering the ideals and promoting the welfare of West Point, and to serving and supporting the more than 50,000 living West Point graduates. Its philanthropic pursuits maintain a Margin of Excellence for cadets attending the United States Military Academy. For more information see www.westpointaog.org/

About West Point

The United States Military Academy at West Point is a four-year, co-educational, federal, liberal arts college located 50 miles north of New York City. It was founded in 1802 as America's first college of engineering and continues today as one of our nation's premier leader-development institutions, consistently ranked among top colleges in the country. Its mission remains constant—to educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor, Country and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the nation as an officer in the U. S. Army. For more information, go to www.westpoint.edu.