

SONS AND DAUGHTERS IN TOUCH

"They Were Our Fathers..."

For immediate release

**SONS AND DAUGHTERS IN TOUCH:
AMERICA'S GOLD STAR CHILDREN FROM VIETNAM WAR INVITE
ALL GOLD STAR FAMILIES FOR FATHER'S DAY CELEBRATION AT VIETNAM WALL**
SDIT's 20th Anniversary Activities Set for June 18 to 20 in Washington, D.C.; Army Chief of Staff & SDIT Member Gen. George W. Casey Jr. to Keynote Father's Day Ceremony

WASHINGTON, D.C. (March 29, 2010)—Sons and Daughters In Touch (SDIT), the 3,000-member national organization of now-grown children whose fathers were killed during or are missing as a result of their military service in the Vietnam War, is inviting all Gold Star families to participate in its 20th anniversary celebration Father's Day weekend, announced SDIT Chairman Tony Cordero.

Nearly 1,000 SDIT members and their family members as well as military comrades of fallen Vietnam service members are expected to participate in a series of remembrances, seminars and special events in the Washington, D.C. area from June 18 to June 20. The highlight of the weekend will be a moving and emotional Father's Day ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that will conclude with SDIT members and other Gold Star children laying 2,000 red, yellow and white roses in honor of their fathers at the base of The Wall.

Founded in 1990, SDIT works to locate, unite and support those sons and daughters whose fathers made the ultimate sacrifice during the Vietnam War. The organization continually seeks to expand its membership of these Gold Star sons and daughters. Although accurate records are not available, it is estimated that 20,000 American children lost their fathers in our nation's longest and most controversial war, Cordero said.

"SDIT is calling on all Vietnam veterans, veterans service organizations and the entire veterans community to help us locate all the sons and daughters of the heroic service members whose names are inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial," said Cordero, who is one of five children of Maj. William Cordero, USAF, who was lost on June 22, 1965 (Father's Day) after not returning from a bombing mission over North Vietnam.

In addition to the Gold Star children of the Vietnam War era, SDIT is encouraging all Gold Star sons and daughters—those who lost their fathers in a U.S. military conflict—to participate in the June 20 Father's Day Ceremony at The Wall.

The Gold Star, which traces its roots to World War I, is presented to families of U.S. Armed Forces members who lost their lives in combat during a U.S. military conflict. For generations, widows, parents, siblings and sons and daughters have displayed the Gold Star proudly as a unifying designation as American Gold Star family members.

"Our nation's current military actions have created new generations of children who have lost their fathers and even their mothers in war," Cordero said. "SDIT encourages all Gold Star children and families to join us at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to celebrate Father's Day and to honor the lives of all fathers who were lost in service to our country. We know their struggles, live with the pain they are experiencing now and stand ready to assist them in their time of need.

(more)

**SDIT To Celebrate 20th Anniversary Over
Father's Day Weekend in Washington, D.C.
Page—2**

"The 20th anniversary of SDIT's founding, along with the emergence of new generations of Gold Star children, means there is a renewed sense of urgency for all Gold Star sons and daughters as well as Gold Star Mothers, Gold Star Wives, fathers and siblings to join us for this historic tribute," added Cordero, a Palos Verdes, Calif. father of four. "The SDIT Father's Day Reunion will commemorate our fathers' memories, honor their service to our country and celebrate their heroic lives."

SDIT sponsored similar poignant reunions in 1992, 1993, 1997, 2000 and 2005.

A Father's Day Wall of Roses & Other Special Events

The Father's Day tribute will take place June 20 at 10 a.m. at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The keynote speaker will be Army Chief of Staff and SDIT member Gen. George W. Casey Jr., who has served our country proudly during his 40-year military career. Gen. Casey previously served as the commanding general of the Multi-National Force in Iraq from June 2004 to February 2007. He became the 36th Army chief of staff April 10, 2007.

His father, George W. Casey Sr., was a West Point graduate who served in the Korean and Vietnam wars and rose to the rank of major general. Maj. Gen. Casey commanded the 1st Cavalry Division in Vietnam and was killed July 7, 1970 when his command helicopter crashed in South Vietnam while en route to a hospital where Casey was to visit wounded U.S. soldiers.

Other highlights of the SDIT Father's Day Reunion Weekend include:

- All-day sharing circles June 18 and 19—moderated by peer mentors—will provide SDIT members the opportunity to share stories about their lives and the emotional challenges of growing up without a father;
- SDIT members and their families will wash The Wall at sunrise June 19; and
- A banquet celebrating the resilience of Gold Star families will take place June 19 at 6 p.m. U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Robert M. Worley II will be the keynote speaker. His father—Maj. Gen. Robert F. Worley—was killed July 23, 1969 when his plane was shot down over South Vietnam.

Compelling Father's Day Stories

In 1990 Tony Cordero, at the age of 28, began to realize that he would soon outlive his father, Maj. William Cordero, who was 29 years old when plane disappeared over the Vietnam-Laos border. Furthermore, he did not know any other families that had lost their fathers in the Vietnam War. Those realizations led him to Washington, D.C. where he connected with Wanda Ruffin, who had lost her husband in Vietnam. She arranged a conversation between her daughter, Wende, and Cordero during which the two Gold Star children, by then young adults, spoke of common experiences and enjoyed instant camaraderie.

(more)

**SDIT To Celebrate 20th Anniversary Over
Father's Day Weekend in Washington, D.C.
Page—3**

This bond began their healing and shortly thereafter a 1990 Memorial Day article in *Parade* magazine prompted responses from hundreds of sons and daughters across the country who wanted to meet and to share their experiences with others who would understand them. The first SDIT gathering in Washington, D.C. on Father's Day 1992 experienced an overwhelming response with nearly 400 Gold Star children and families and Vietnam veterans participating.

Much like Cordero, SDIT helped Melanie Danna of Vineland, N.J. better understand that she and her younger sister, Josette, were not the only children whose father did not return from Vietnam. Danna's father was killed Dec. 16, 1970 in a helicopter crash in Quang Ngai Province, Vietnam.

At the first SDIT Father's Day at The Wall in 1992 Danna met one SDIT brother in particular with whom she shared a special bond. Albert Williams of Washington, D.C. had lost his father, Army Warrant Officer Fred A. Williams, in the same helicopter crash that had killed her father.

"Meeting members of other families whose lives closely resembled ours was life-changing, but the opportunity to share stories with the son of one of the men who was involved in the helicopter crash that killed our father was overwhelming," said Danna. "We shared the same emotions—anger, pain and even a little bit of guilt. Knowing that there are other sons and daughters who have similar life-experiences has helped me greatly in the healing process and to better understand that my father's death was not in vain."

Today, as an SDIT Board member Danna is active in the veterans community. She helped her mother and two-time Gold Star Wives of America National President Joanne Danna author an article for *Chicken Soup for Military Wives*, a 2005 compilation of original stories by and about military wives.

About Sons and Daughters In Touch

For 20 years Sons and Daughters In Touch (www.sdit.org) has worked to locate, unite and provide support to the now-grown children of American service members who made the ultimate sacrifice in the Vietnam War. In that time, its more than 3,000 members have contacted veterans who served with their fathers, visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and shared their life-experiences with others. More than 70 SDIT members have traveled to Vietnam to meet the people their fathers fought to protect, to walk the ground their fathers tread and to visit the locations where their fathers died. Today, SDIT members take considerable pride in knowing that the loss of their fathers was not in vain.

###

For media inquiries:

Alan Greilsamer / Communications Resources, LLC
(703) 760-7007 / info@communications-resources.com