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The Patriot: Deleot, Smith Visit Adm. Mullen at Pentagon

BY HOWARD WARD: GOLF WRITER

It's still more than seven months before The Patriot Golf Foundation holds its next tournament at National Golf Club, but the preparation never ends for the event's organizers.

The charity tournament is scheduled for Oct. 24-26. This includes a two-day pro-am, which helps raise money, plus a 54-hole Sunbelt Senior Tour event that brings in some of the country's top golfers over the age of 47.

The Patriot Foundation donated \$100,000 to its two charities that benefit children of 82nd Airborne paratroopers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, and children of current, retired and former U.S. Army Special Operations soldiers.

The amount donated has increased each year, doubling in size from 2007.

One of the driving forces behind The Patriot Foundation is Chuck Deleot, a retired Naval Reserve captain who is entering his third year as chairman. Another is Spike Smith, a Pinehurst resident who was one of the founders of the organization. Their work is never-ending and it shows in the success each October.

There was a capacity crowd on hand at National for the dinner following the tournament last October, but there was one glaring absence. Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was supposed to be the featured speaker, but was unable to attend because of a last-minute call from then-President Bush.

Mullen sent his regrets but wanted to make sure The Patriot organizers understood that he truly appreciated their efforts and the cause they were championing. In that vein, he invited a group to meet with him for a luncheon in the Pentagon on Jan. 5.

Included were Deleot and his wife, Laurie, Spike and Debbie Smith and retired Gen. Buck Kernan.

" Adm. Mullen invited us to lunch with him and his wife at his office," Deleot said. "We presented him with the Patriot Honoree plaque, which had been signed by most of the 175 people who had attended our dinner in October. Adm. Mullen and Lt. Gen. McChrystal thanked us for our work in raising scholarship money for soldiers' children.

" Taking care of military families is a high priority for Adm. Mullen, and he praised The Patriot Foundation's efforts to honor the troops and support the families left behind.

" It was a great trip for us. I had been to the Pentagon before on numerous occasions, but had not been back since I had retired in 2001.

" We visited the 9/11 Memorial that had been constructed in the Pentagon to honor those many service men and women and civilian employees who lost their lives when the hijacked airliner plowed into the building.

" My wife and I were able to make a comment in the visitors' book to remember Commander Patrick Dunn, USN.

At the time of the attack, his older brother John was working for me at Commander-in-Chief U.S. Pacific Fleet in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and I clearly remember the impact of that loss."

Anyone who would like to make a contribution to The Patriot Foundation can send it by mail to: Patriot Foundation, P.O. Box 5069, Pinehurst, N.C. 28374.

More information is available at the Web site www.patriotscholarships.com. The Patriot is a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization.

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