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**Department of Military
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By Director Verdie Bowen
State Office of Veterans Affairs

Governor's Veterans Advocacy Award goes to Gulf War Era Veteran

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — A Gulf War-era veteran and Wasilla resident has been named the 2020 Governor's Veterans Advocacy Award winner.

James Hastings will be recognized for the award in the virtual Veterans Day ceremony on Nov. 11 at veterans.alaska.gov. Verdie Bowen, director of the State Office of Veterans Affairs, will present the award to Hastings on behalf of Governor Mike Dunleavy.

"James Hastings is a humble advocate for all veterans, but is best known for his long-term devotion to wounded warriors and their families," Bowen said. "You will find James all around our state reaching beyond clinical rehabilitations offered to those in need by providing hope for our warriors in attaining active and productive lives through his Healing Hearts program."

Hastings is a retired U.S. Army veteran whose career spans over 22 years and four continents. He served as an airborne infantryman, combat engineer, U.S. Air Force ground liaison officer, and finally as a recruiter. Once retired in 2005, he hit the ground as a full-time volunteer.

Hastings is known well in the veteran community and he is relentless in his efforts to serve Alaska's veterans and their families. He constantly strives to help improve their lives through assistance with finding jobs, housing, education and career employment counseling.

Hastings is also one of the co-founders for Alaska's Healing Hearts, where he oversees rehabilitation activities including fishing, hunting, rodeo, dog sledding tours and various other outdoor pursuits. James is well-versed with equestrian therapy and made several trips on horseback to assist veterans during their rehabilitation.

"Since 2005 James has offered his services as an unpaid volunteer. His commitment to veterans and their families, veteran service organizations, and many other groups makes him an exemplary recipient for this award," Bowen said.

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