MERITORIOUS® FOUNDATION

CAST & CONNECT
A Youth Leadership and Veteran Mentorship Program

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Cast & Connect is a youth-led leadership and community engagement program that supports Meritorious Foundation's existing outdoor fishing mentorship programming. High school students work with parents, local business leaders, fishing captains, and community partners to help coordinate fishing charters operated by Meritorious Foundation.

The Meritorious Foundation connects military veterans nationwide with industry leaders, employers, customers, and investors through networking events and mentorship opportunities at no cost to participants. Launched in June 2026, the Foundation's fishing program offers charters across Florida that connect transitioning veterans and wounded warriors with military-connected business leaders for professional mentorship, peer camaraderie, and meaningful conversation in an outdoor setting.

The Cast & Connect student club supports the local coordination and community partnerships needed to make these charters possible.

WHO PARTICIPATES

>> Mentees and Mentors

Each charter includes six participants:

- Mentees: Three veterans (active-duty service members, transitioning veterans, wounded warriors)
- Mentors: Three local executives or business owners who previously served in the military

>> Volunteer Captains and Crew

Each charter requires:

- One volunteer boat Captain
- One First Mate (experienced angler)
- One boat 26' or larger capable of safely accommodating participants

>> Students

Students participate in the planning, coordination, and community engagement required to support local charters. Students do not replace the Captain, First Mate, mentors, or Meritorious Foundation program leadership.

VALUE TO STUDENTS

Cast & Connect provides students with practical experience in:

- Leadership
- Project management
- Program coordination
- Community engagement
- Professional communication
- Partnership development
- Logistics coordination
- Event and program planning
- Networking
- Volunteer management

Students can apply these experiences to college applications, internships, scholarships, workforce development opportunities, and future leadership roles.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Cast & Connect students help coordinate and support the local charter program by:

- Identifying and contacting local nonprofit and military organizations that can help identify veteran participants
- Supporting outreach to recruit executive mentors
- Identifying potential volunteer boat captains and fishing resources
- Coordinating communication and logistics with approved charter participants
- Supporting charter scheduling and participant coordination
- Building relationships with local businesses and community partners
- Supporting local sponsorship and fundraising efforts, when appropriate
- Assisting with event and program communications
- Developing leadership, project management, communications, and community engagement experience

All veteran and mentor participant matching and final program oversight remain under the direction of the Meritorious Foundation.

PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Parents and community members may support Cast & Connect by:

- Providing access to privately owned boats
- Volunteering as qualified boat captains
- Sponsoring the cost of individual charters
- Providing fishing equipment or other approved resources
- Connecting the program with local businesses and community partners
- Assisting with transportation and approved logistical support

MERITORIOUS FOUNDATION PROGRAM SUPPORT AND COORDINATION

The goal is to provide schools with a structured, turnkey model while allowing students, parents, and local partners to play an active role in building relationships and supporting charters within their own community. Meritorious Foundation provides the central program infrastructure, coordination, and support needed to operate Cast & Connect charters. Schools and student chapters are not expected to independently manage the program.

Meritorious Foundation will:

- Create and maintain a dedicated webpage for each Cast & Connect chapter
- Develop participant and volunteer registration forms and CRM tool
- Receive and funnel mentee, mentor, captain, and volunteer applications through Meritorious Foundation HQ
- Establish regular syncs with chapter leadership, designated parent, and school liaisons
- Provide program oversight and final approval of charter participants
- Support mentor and mentee matching
- Manage required waivers, insurance documentation, and compliance requirements
- Confirm all participants have the required fishing license prior to each charter
- Assess chapter resources and coordinate fishing equipment, donated supplies, onboard gear, and approved reimbursements before each charter, as applicable
- Aid in coordinating with local donors and sponsors who may choose to provide boats, fuel, fishing equipment, supplies, or other charter needs directly
- Help offset or reimburse approved charter expenses, including fuel costs, as applicable
- Conduct pre- and post-charter surveys

OUTCOMES PER CHARTER

Each completed charter directly provides:

- Three veterans or transitioning service members with access to executive mentorship
- Three local executives with an opportunity to directly mentor and support the military community
- Professional connections aligned with the goals and experience of participating veterans
- Veteran-to-veteran camaraderie in an outdoor environment that supports connection, well-being, and personal renewal
- Each charter provides participating students with direct experience coordinating a real-world community program involving multiple stakeholders.
- Pre- and post-charter surveys to measure participant experience, mentorship outcomes, and program impact

SUPPORTING THE 2026 CHARTER GOAL

The Meritorious Foundation is working to complete 20 Veterans fishing mentorship charters in 2026. Cast & Connect provides a scalable model for expanding the program into additional Florida communities while supporting the Foundation's existing charter goal.

Schools and local communities can support charters by helping identify:

- Veterans and transitioning service members
- Executive mentors
- Volunteer boat captains
- Local fishing resources
- Community partners
- Charter sponsors

EXPANSION MODEL

Cast & Connect is designed to be replicated by high schools and youth organizations throughout Florida. Initial expansion opportunities include:

- St. Petersburg / Tampa Bay
- Pensacola
- Jacksonville
- Key West
- Melbourne
- Palm Beach / Miami

Each participating school can establish a local Cast & Connect club while working within the Meritorious Foundation's established fishing mentorship model and program standards. The goal is to create a statewide network of youth leaders, parents, community partners, boat captains, executive mentors, and veterans working together to expand access to mentorship and professional opportunity across Florida's military community.

WHY SPONSOR

Cast & Connect offers sponsors an opportunity to invest in youth leadership, support local veterans, and strengthen community connections through hands-on learning and veteran mentorship.

- **Student Leadership Development**: Support hands-on learning in leadership, project management, communication, and community engagement.
- **Direct Veteran Impact**: Help connect transitioning service members, active-duty personnel, and wounded warriors with experienced executive mentors.
- **Community Partnerships**: Strengthen connections among schools, families, local businesses, fishing captains, and veteran-serving organizations.

- **Fishing Trip Sponsorship**: Help cover the costs of fishing trips, including fuel, equipment, and other approved program expenses.
- **Local Community Visibility**: Receive appropriate recognition through Meritorious Foundation's website, program materials, and community communications.
- **Digital Recognition**: Benefit from acknowledgment through Meritorious Foundation's established veteran and military-connected networks and digital channels.
- **Meaningful Employee Engagement**: Provide opportunities for company representatives to volunteer as mentors and contribute professional expertise.
- **Scalable Community Impact**: Help establish a sustainable model that high schools can replicate to support local veterans while giving students practical leadership experience.
- **Tax-Deductible Giving**: Contributions support programming through Meritorious Foundation, a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

PROGRAM CONTACT

Meritorious Foundation
Katherine Kostreva, Co-Founder
Katherine@Meritorious.us
727-492-6421