

# Coke Zero® and WVU Partner to Bring Servicewoman Home for Homecoming

October 4, 2014

MORGANTOWN, W. Va.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Oct. 4, 2014-- This football season, Coke Zero® has been helping fans 'Countdown to Zero' with their favorite collegiate teams; but on Saturday, October 4, they partnered with West Virginia University for a different kind of countdown - the surprise homecoming countdown of former WVU student, Taylor Sutphin, who currently serves in the United States' Air Force.

After the first quarter of the WVU vs. KU Homecoming game, military families were recognized on the field. It was then that Taylor's unsuspecting family was surprised with the greatest homecoming of all – their daughter's.

Sutphin, 21, grew up in Marmet, WV and attended WVU for a year before joining the United States' Air Force. On her decision to enter the military, she says, "I am passionate about my country and wanted to try something different. I knew I needed help with getting school paid for, so it was the right decision for me."

Taylor has been in the Air Force for a year. She has been stationed in Guam since January, before that she was at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi and she completed her basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. Since she has been stationed in Guam, she has been training for the Casualty Assistance Program, learning to assist the families of ill, injured or deceased service members. Sutphin says the hardest part of being in Guam is the 14-hour time difference. Keeping up with her family is challenging - which is why this homecoming surprise means so much to her.

"I haven't talked to my mom since last weekend. I told her I was going to be in field training. I am super close with my family and they are huge Mountaineer fans so to get to do something like this is awesome."

Taylor had been saving up her leave days and planning to come home for some time, and knew that she wanted to do something special. She reached out to WVU, who then partnered with Coke Zero® to make her dream a reality by bringing her family to the game and helping her make travel arrangements.

When Taylor was asked about the surprise she said, "I'd like to give a HUGE thank you to WVU and Coke Zero® for organizing this, thank you for everything you're doing. My stepdad called me and said 'Oh-my-gosh I wish you could be here because they're recognizing military families on the field.' When he told me about it I was so happy – because he had no idea!"

"It's been a privilege to partner with Coke Zero in reuniting a former WVU student with her family at a Mountaineer football game on Homecoming," says Nathaniel Zinn, Assistant Athletic Director for Marketing. "What a special moment for Taylor and her family and we are happy to be a part of it."

Taylor will be home for eighteen days, and then she will return to Guam. She signed a six-year contract to serve in the United States' Air Force, and plans to volunteer for several deployments after that. Last month, she was coined by the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Robert O. Work, for her participation in a high-level discussion.

Taylor is currently working on her bachelor's degree, and plans to pursue a PhD in Psychology. Her dream is to work at St. Jude Children's Hospital, working with children as they undergo treatment.

Sutphin's advice to young women thinking about entering the military? "A lot of people don't understand, you *can* do it. Once you get through training, you adapt. A lot of girls don't think they can do it, but I promise, you can. There are a lot of people around that can help you, there's always someone there for you. The people that I've met in the military are like a second family."

Coca-Cola is a proud partner of West Virginia University and is honored to be a part of this service member's homecoming. WVU, IMG Learfield Ticket Solutions and Coke Zero® have also teamed up with the National Guard to take care of those that serve and protect us with the new Seats4Soldiers program. For just \$20 per ticket, you can provide a memorable experience for service members and their families by sending them to the WVU vs. TCU game on November 1. Coke Zero® will match the first 500 tickets purchased for the Seats4Soldiers program. So team up with your Mountaineers and make this a special day!

To participate, enter Promo Code: S4SCOKE at [www.WVUGAME.com](http://www.WVUGAME.com).

Keep up with this story and tag your posts with: #Home4Homecoming #WVU #CountdownToZero.

## About The Coca-Cola Company

The Coca-Cola Company (NYSE: KO) is the world's largest beverage company, refreshing consumers with more than 500 sparkling and still brands. Led by Coca-Cola, one of the world's most valuable and recognizable brands, our Company's portfolio features 16 billion-dollar brands including Diet Coke, Fanta, Sprite, Coca-Cola Zero, vitaminwater, POWERADE, Minute Maid, Simply, Georgia and Del Valle. Globally, we are the No. 1 provider of sparkling beverages, ready-to-drink coffees, and juices and juice drinks. Through the world's largest beverage distribution system, consumers in more than 200 countries enjoy our beverages at a rate of 1.9 billion servings a day. With an enduring commitment to building sustainable communities, our Company is focused on initiatives that reduce our environmental footprint, support active, healthy living, create a safe, inclusive work environment for our associates, and enhance the economic development of the communities where we operate. Together with our bottling partners, we rank among the world's top 10 private employers with more than 700,000 system associates. For more information, visit Coca-Cola Journey at [www.coca-colacompany.com](http://www.coca-colacompany.com), follow us on Twitter at [twitter.com/CocaColaCo](https://twitter.com/CocaColaCo), visit our blog, Coca-Cola Unbottled, at [www.coca-colablog.com](http://www.coca-colablog.com) or find us on LinkedIn at [www.linkedin.com/company/the-coca-cola-company](http://www.linkedin.com/company/the-coca-cola-company).

## About Coca-Cola Bottling Co. Consolidated (CCBCC)

Coca-Cola Bottling Co. Consolidated (CCBCC) (NASDAQ: COKE) is the nation's largest independent Coca-Cola bottler. Headquartered in Charlotte, NC, the company's nearly 7,000 employees make, sell and deliver Coca-Cola products in franchise sales territories across the Southeast. For more information, visit [www.CokeConsolidated.com](http://www.CokeConsolidated.com).

## **About West Virginia University Department of Intercollegiate Athletics**

The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics at West Virginia University sponsors 18 varsity sports with more than 500 student-athletes competing in baseball, men's and women's basketball, women's cross country, football, women's gymnastics, women's indoor and outdoor track, rifle, men's and women's soccer, men's and women's swimming and diving, women's tennis, women's volleyball, women's rowing and wrestling.

West Virginia University competes in the Big 12 conference in all sports except men's soccer (Mid-American Conference), and rifle (Great American Rifle Conference) and strives in its athletics program for national excellence and prominence. Accordingly, the recruitment of student-athletes and emphasis on and support of athletics are national in scope.

The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics subscribes to high standards of academic quality as well as breadth of academic opportunities. More than 4,000 student-athletes have earned a place on the Garrett Ford Academic Honor Roll by attaining at least a 3.0 grade point average since its inception in 1989.

The University is committed to financing the athletics program from revenues generated by the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics and it shall conduct its program consistent with the letter and spirit of the NCAA and the mission of West Virginia University.

Additional information regarding the University's intercollegiate athletic program may be obtained at [www.WVUsports.com](http://www.WVUsports.com)

Additional general information about the university may be obtained at <http://www.wvu.edu>.



Photos/Multimedia Gallery Available: <http://www.businesswire.com/multimedia/home/20141004005010/en/>

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