

1st Annual Aaron Gifford Pickleball Benefit Tournament



Las Cruces, NM 2018



All Proceeds Will be Donated to Mission 22

Who: *75 Teams - ages 15 or older*

What: *A round robin, double elimination tournament for a worthy cause, Mission 22*

Where: *Apodaca Park Pickleball Courts
801 E. Madrid Ave Las Cruces, NM*

When: *April 7 & 8, 2018 - Tournament play begins at 8 am
Start times will be posted on pickleballtournaments.com*

Entry Fees: *\$30 - 1st Event & \$15 - 2nd Event*

Registration: *Sign up now! Late registration fee is \$10 after March 21. No refunds.*

Divisions: *Women's Doubles and Men's Doubles on Saturday
Mixed Doubles on Sunday*

Skill Levels: *2.5, 3.0, 3.5, 4.0 (Levels may be combined based on registration numbers)*

Tournament Director: *Jana Vargas (575) 640-7417*

Web Site: *pickleballtournaments.com*



22 veterans take their lives due to PTSD every day. Our mission: end it.

Mission 22 has three major programs: Funding veterans to receive treatment for Post Traumatic Stress, Traumatic Brain Injury, and other issues they may be facing. Through **Mission 22** programs and partner organizations, large-scale, public art honoring veterans has been installed and awareness of the difficulties veterans experience has been raised in communities around the country.

#MI22ION

On January 8, 2018 we lost Aaron Gifford, a friend, brother, son, Pickleball player, and hero. We want to honor the sacrifice he made for our country and bring attention to the plight of wounded veterans around the United States. All proceeds from this tournament will be donated to the **Mission 22** cause. Please read on to learn more about Aaron and the goals of the **Mission 22** organization.

February 19, 2018

Dear NM Pickleball Ambassadors,

My name is CeCe Hunter and I lost my precious son, Aaron Gifford on Jan. 8th, 2018. Aaron served in the 3rd Infantry with the US Army and was in the first invasion to Iraq. Aaron came back from war with PTSD that progressively got worse and on Jan 8th it claimed his life.

My husband, Ken and I introduced PB to Aaron and his twin sister, Kiley, approximately 2 years ago. Aaron grew to love playing PB and playing in tournaments throughout the state of New Mexico where he won many medals. PB became a passion for Aaron and he built a wonderful community and made many friends. We enjoyed playing as a family and felt like Aaron had found an outlet for his PTSD.

A committee has been formed here in Las Cruces by myself, his sister Kiley, and six of his PB friends to plan the **Aaron Gifford Pickleball Benefit** on April 7th & 8th of this year. This will be a 2-day tournament with categories of doubles and mixed doubles. We are in the process of planning this benefit to support **Mission 22**. **Mission 22** creates mass awareness that today over 22 veterans will be lost to suicide. That makes the war at home more dangerous than all of our combat missions around the world. **Mission 22** provides ground support for our veterans through medical, physiological and therapeutic programs.

According to the mission22.com website, "Each day in America, 22 vets commit suicide. That's two starting football squads a day. A commercial airliner every three weeks. A 9/11 every four-and-a-half months. To put this into scale, 14 years of conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan have resulted in approximately 6,000 US combat deaths.

In that same period of time, the next 14 years, an estimated 112,000 military men and women will die by suicide. Which means that, in some twisted way, coming home from war is more dangerous than leaving. **Mission 22** has three major programs. Funding veterans to receive treatment for Post Traumatic Stress, Traumatic Brain Injury and other issues they may be facing."

We would greatly appreciate your support by helping us spread the news about this important benefit and we are also accepting any donations for raffles. Please know that 100% of the proceeds will go to **Mission 22**.

Please feel free to contact me at 575-640-8725, email: cecehunter@gmail.com or the tournament director, Jana Vargas at 575-640-7417.

With warm regards,

CeCe Hunter