

Operation Rising Star Finals

All Star Cast of Celebrity Judges Join Operation Rising Star Finals

When your twelve Operation Rising Star finalists take to the stage for the first time on Saturday, November 14th, at Wallace Theater, their performances will be critiqued by a star-studded panel of celebrity judges.

This year's panel includes our own retired 12th Sergeant Major of the Army Jack Tilley—who is appearing as a judge for his 5th season. According to Tilley, "I have been fortunate enough to judge this competition for four years, and every year it gets better and better. With the deployment and stress on the military, I think it's important to get family members involved in the contest and showcase their talents. I'm always amazed at the quality of the performances we see."

Since retirement, Jack has continued his advocacy for all servicemembers. He is co-chairman of the American Freedom Foundation, a 501(c)3 public benefit corporation organized to honor veterans of America's armed forces and raise money and awareness for various veterans' organizations with special emphasis directed to welfare and educational issues facing those wounded in action, those disabled and families and children of veterans killed in action during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. He has worked tirelessly with the organization managing the annual successful fund-raising benefit concerts with top named entertainment.

Rounding out the judging panel for the 2009 competition are Debra Byrd, vocal coach and arranger for American Idol, and country music star Michael Peterson, both back for their third season with Operation Rising Star.

Byrd has worked with everyone from Lyle Lovett to Barry Manilow; has been in five Broadway shows; was tapped to be the vocal coach for the 2006 tour of *High School Musical—The Concert*; and has developed music products such as vocal coaching DVDs, pitch pipes, and seminars. Byrd has taken her love of music to the next level with products designed for

singers and musicians. Her highly-acclaimed instructional DVD, *Welcome to STAR SCHOOL*© focuses on vocal performance and audition training.

Peterson is loved around the world for million-selling country music chart toppers, and is co-producing a CD for the Military Child Education Coalition to be released in February. His new CD

featuring "You Could Hear a Pin Drop" benefits the American Legion Legacy Scholarship. Peterson received the Bob Hope "Spirit of Hope" award from the USO and the U.S. Army for his outstanding service to the nation.

In addition to this stellar panel of judges, there will be a guest judge at the final night of the competition (taped November 16th/aired on the Pentagon Channel November 17th). Singer, actress, and television personality Kimberly Caldwell will take a seat at the judges table Wednesday night. Caldwell gained national recognition during her time on the second season of the television phenomenon, "American Idol," and is also known for her work as an entertainment correspondent and host for the TV Guide Network. She will soon be seen as the host of the new MTV series, "P. Diddy's StarMaker," produced by Mark Burnett and Sean "P.Diddy" Combs, which is set to premiere in 2009.

The judges scores will count for 50%, with audience members able to view the performances on the Pentagon Channel (November 15th, 17th, 19th and 21st) and cast their votes by logging on to www.OpRisingStar.com. If you don't like the judges verdict...log on and vote to keep your favorite performer in the competition and help them move on to the next round. Voting windows will be open for two hours following each broadcast.

If you live in the Fort Belvoir, VA commuting area and would like to meet our judges and be part of the live studio audience for the taping of the three Operation Rising Star final rounds and the reveal show, admission is free. Shows will be taped on November 14, 16, 18 and 20th at 8 p.m. at the Wallace Theater.

This year's Operation Rising Star competition is sponsored by General Motors Military Discount program. Please visit their website to learn how you can save on your next GM vehicle - www.gmmilitarydiscount.com.

For additional information about Operation Rising Star, how to vote, the 12 finalists and attending the live show finals, please log on to www.OpRisingStar.com.