Name: Colonel Hank Vanderborght
Organization: United States Marine Corps

Colonel Henry “V-12” Vanderborght is most deserving of being named the 2017 Patriot of the Year.  Beyond his amazing career serving our country for over 25 years, Col Vanderborght additionally volunteers much of his time to support the local community.  V-12, as he is known, is a combat veteran who has completed multiple deployments, including Iraq.  As a CH-53E pilot, he conducted missions to insert and extract large waves of Marines into combat action, and additionally provided support with resupply of water, food, and ammunition.  He departed the Fleet as a senior instructor and flight lead, and left his mark by mentoring the future leaders of the squadron.  His next endeavor was to become a developmental Test Pilot where he shepherded all the new technologies into the fleet, so that future pilots and aircrews could support the Marines on the ground with greater efficiency.  Since completing his test tour, he has worked in Acquisitions, specifically in Program Management.  As the Program Manager for the CH-53 program, he is responsible for procuring all the new capabilities for multiple different types of aircraft to ensure they are safe and have the newest systems to support the Marines on the ground.  With all that said, V-12 still makes time to support his community by volunteering to support Toys for Tots, acting as a Boy Scout Troop Leader, and running food drives during Thanksgiving and Christmas.  As a Toys for Tots volunteer, V-12 coordinates with fellow Marines to stand in front of different establishments in a formal uniform and accept toy donations for needy children.  Not only does he accept the donations, he also volunteers to go to the warehouse in order to ensure all toys are packaged in time for delivery before Christmas.  As a Boy Scout Troop Leader, V-12 mentors young men as they work through their merit badges to obtain the rank of Eagle Scout.  In addition, V-12 organizes a week-long trip for the troop, where events such as camping, hiking, and scuba diving translate into life skills that they can use throughout their lives.  V-12’s passion for the troops is exemplified by his actions in support of one individual who could not afford the latest trip.  V-12 took it upon himself to start a “Go Fund Me” and was able to ensure this young man made the trip.  And finally, as the Program Manager in a very large Program Office, he organizes food drives during both the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday seasons.  His efforts ensure that many families in the community have nice meals during their celebration of the holidays.  Individually, these acts of patriotism and kindness are worthy of many thanks from the nation and our community.  However, all of them combined are truly representative of a true American Hero.  Col Vanderborght, V-12, represents the best our nation has to offer and is truly deserving of the 2017 Patriot of the Year Award.