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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MetLife and Cisco Join Forces with Bridge II Sports  
to Host Valor Games Southeast 2019 for Veterans with Disabilities**

*Corporations step up as Co-Event Sponsors of this 3-day adapted sports competition coordinated by  
North Carolina non-profit, Bridge II Sports.*

**DURHAM, N.C. —May 20, 2019 —**

Bridge II Sports is honored to host the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual [Valor Games Southeast](#) with co-event sponsors MetLife and Cisco May 20-23, 2019. Taking place the week between Armed Forces Day and Memorial Day, Valor Games Southeast is dedicated to creating opportunities through adapted sport for Veterans and members of the U.S. Armed Forces with disabilities.

“When you live with a disability, you are constantly told that you can’t do certain things,” says Ashley Thomas, Founder and CEO of Bridge II Sports and Developer of Valor Games SE. “The vision of Valor Games Southeast has always been to challenge that perception and redefine disability through the power of sport, competition and camaraderie. We are honored that Valor Games Southeast has become a symbol of empowerment, honor and hope for our military with disabilities.”

2019 marks the largest Valor Games SE to date with 135 athletes from 14 different states traveling to the Triangle area of North Carolina for 3 days to compete at some of the most iconic sports venues in the country. Entry level and intermediate competitions in a range of adapted sports—including cycling, power-lifting, archery, boccia, indoor rowing, sitting volleyball, air rifle, table tennis, shot-put, wheelchair basketball and kayaking—will take place at the Dean Smith Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Cameron Indoor Stadium and K-Ville at Duke University and Lake Crabtree County Park.

“It is incredible to see our athletes compete on the most hallowed sports ground in North Carolina, if not the country,” adds Ms. Thomas. “You can see a change in their self-confidence as they step or wheel onto these courts. These venues, the spirit of competition and the connection to the North Carolina community make a real difference for these military men and women after injury.”

This life changing event is made possible through a grant from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and support from several community and corporate partners. For the second year running, MetLife and Cisco have teamed up to serve as the co-event sponsors of Valor Games SE. Beyond providing generous financial support both organizations have engaged a combined 250 employee volunteers from their Cary and RTP campuses respectively to assist with planning this large-scale event and support the athletes throughout the games.



“MetLife is delighted to sponsor the 2019 Valor Games Southeast for the fifth consecutive year, and we are honored to host the closing ceremony at our Global Technology campus in Cary, North Carolina,” said John McCallion, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer. “MetLife proudly hires veterans across our businesses, and we provide targeted training to help them advance over the long term. Our dedicated veterans’ employee network, which is open to all employees, is helping to build a culture that truly values veterans and their contributions. We also take pride in our work with the broader veterans’ community. We work with a number of organizations in the caring of veterans who have been injured mentally or physically from conflict, and contribute to programs that support service member’s families.”

A strong core team of employees, predominantly veterans, from both MetLife and Cisco have risen in leadership roles to serve as ‘Lead Volunteers’. In military fashion, these lead volunteers will act in the chain of command between volunteers and Bridge II Sports staff and coaches to ensure a successful Valor Games SE. Veteran employees on both campuses have expressed pride in supporting fellow veterans and hold Valor Games SE near to their hearts. This year the Cisco Vets ERO at the RTP campus made an additional contribution to the games and are sponsoring the Athlete Dinner and Medal Ceremony on May 21.

"At Cisco, we are proud supporters of the U.S. military and veterans. Our public sector motto is 'enabling those who protect, serve & educate.' Cisco's Valor Games Southeast sponsorship and volunteer efforts are one way we can give back to the veterans' community." stated Cisco U.S. Public Sector Senior Vice President Larry Payne. “Cisco's veteran programs take a lifecycle approach to serving our men and women in uniform from technology training and development while they’re in service to programs that help them successfully transition out of the military. We help veterans identify their skills and then match them with job opportunities at Cisco or with one of our business partners. Cisco also has an incredibly employee resource organization, so once they are a member of the Cisco family they have a forum to connect with other veterans, give back, and support one another."

Valor Games SE events are free and open to the public. For more information on Valor Games Southeast 2019, visit [www.bridge2sports.org/valorgamesse](http://www.bridge2sports.org/valorgamesse)

Follow Valor Games Southeast on Facebook and Twitter @ValorGamesSE

#### **About Bridge II Sports**

Bridge II Sports is a North Carolina non-profit organization and Gold Medal Paralympic Sport Club dedicated to developing and implementing opportunities for children and adults with physical disabilities to realize their potential through sports participation. Through sports programming, special events, awareness initiatives and team development, Bridge II Sports aims to empower persons with physical disabilities to “Find the Player Within” and challenge perceptions of disability. For more information about Bridge II Sports visit [www.bridge2sports.org](http://www.bridge2sports.org)

#### **About MetLife**

MetLife, Inc. (NYSE: MET), through its subsidiaries and affiliates ("MetLife"), is one of the world's leading financial services companies, providing insurance, annuities, employee benefits and asset management to help its individual and institutional customers navigate their changing world. Founded in 1868, MetLife has operations in more than 40 countries and holds leading market positions in the United States, Japan, Latin America, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. For more information, visit [www.metlife.com](http://www.metlife.com)



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