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## PRESS RELEASE

**FOR RELEASE**  
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### **Peconic Landing Announces 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Veterans Day Wedding Giveback Winners**

GREENPORT, N.Y. — After a rush of applications in February, Peconic Landing is excited to introduce the winners of the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Veterans Day Wedding Giveback – Lieutenants Damen Weeks, 31, and Katherine Bertschi, 27, of Southold. These active-duty Naval officers were selected out of almost a dozen applicants for the annual contest, which provides a free wedding at Brecknock Hall to current or former military personnel in recognition of their service. The couple was notified during a surprise Zoom call on April 14, with family members, Peconic Landing members, and Peconic Landing team members present.

Damen is on his fifth tour of duty after enlisting in 2012 and serves as an Operations Officer on the USS MASON (DDG 87) where he is responsible for the management of almost 100 sailors. He has earned the Earned Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (NAM) and Navy and Marine Corps Commendation (COM) Medal, among others.

Katherine is on her third tour after enlisting in 2016 and is Basic Division Officer Instructor and Department Head at the Mariner Skills Training Center Pacific where she is responsible for training thousands of Junior Surface Warfare Officers to enter the fleet and drive ships. She, too, has earned the Earned Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (NAM) and Navy and Marine Corps Commendation (COM) Medal.

The couple met onboard the USS PREBLE in 2016 and have been in a long-distance relationship ever since. They travel thousands of miles to see each other on weekends and holidays, between Hawaii, San Diego, Denver, Memphis, Monterey, Newport, Norfolk, Alabama, and Southold, Katherine's home town. The couple also spends time volunteering in the communities where they are stationed, including working at food shelters, building with Habitat for Humanity and organizing ship tours for children.

On New Year's Eve 2021, Katherine's mother and sister accompanied her to Alabama and while they were at Damen's family cabin, they got engaged.

Katherine explained why she entered the contest. "My parents raised my siblings and I in Greenport and Southold. The North Fork represents a safe-harbor and home to me. I started in NJROTC at Southold High School because I thought it would make my father proud; he is a Vietnam veteran. Little did I know that the decision to join NJROTC would direct the trajectory of my life up to current day," she said. "It would mean the world to me to get married where I grew up and started my military service. Brecknock Hall is such a storied and special venue; I know the wedding would be beautiful."

This year's winning couple will be provided with a complete wedding on Sunday, November 13, 2022 in celebration of Veterans Day. Sponsored by Peconic Landing, the giveaway is made possible through contributions from local businesses and organizations who donate an estimated \$60,000 worth of time, talents, and services to create a fairy tale wedding.

"Damen and Katherine's love story is an inspiration to us all. That they found each other while serving our great country is amazing," Peconic Landing President and CEO Robert Syron said. "We wish them a future of happiness and success. And a special thank you to all of the sponsors who make this giveaway possible."

Damen and Katherine were chosen by a panel of Peconic Landing members with military ties, who judge the contest based on the number of years served, special military honors, and each couple's personal love story.

The Veterans Day Wedding Giveback began in 2011 as an opportunity to thank Long Island's military personnel and recognize them for their service to our country. The annual contest is open to both current and veteran service members; at least one partner must have served or be serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Sponsors of the 2022 Veterans Day Wedding Giveback include: Arni Paperie, Bali Bay Boat Charters, Beautiful by Katy & Dina, Beauty By Devon, Blooms by Design, Boho Bay Stay (Greenport), Brugger and Co. Balloon Décor, By Hand Catering, East End Events Catering, Fire Monkey Hair Design, Fresh Face Photo Booth, Garret & Tamara, Greenport Harbor Brewing Co., Leanne's Specialty Cakes, Lieb Cellars, Long Island Nights Entertainment, Luxury Picnics NY, Macari Wines, Magnif-A-Tent, Make Some Noise DJ's, Massage Me by Sara Leonard LMT, Mattituck Environmental Services, Naliah's Rentals, Nay's Cookie Jar, North Fork NJROTC, North Fork Bridal Shoppe, North Fork Picture Cars, Riverhead Flower Shop, Santa Cruz Photography, Saporita Sweets, Times Media Group, The Greenporter Hotel and True Elizabeth Flowers.

Times/Review Media Group has signed on as the media sponsor of the event.

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*Peconic Landing* is a nationally recognized, equity-based Continuing Care Retirement Community overlooking the breathtaking Long Island Sound. Located on the North Fork of a half-mile of private Sound Beach, the organization works on a mission of being the retirement community of choice for individuals age 62 and better by encouraging our members to enjoy a vibrant lifestyle and presenting ample opportunity for members to pursue their interests and passions to the fullest. For more information on Peconic Landing, please visit [www.peconiclanding.org](http://www.peconiclanding.org).



*(Photo Caption: The 2019 winners, Kyle and Kaitlin Holmes, pictured at Brecknock Hall. Credit: Ken Hild Photography)*