

## Singing High Praises for Perseverance Hall of Fame Honorees

### *Project Perseverance Celebrates 12<sup>th</sup> Hall of Fame Induction*

On May 27, the audience that filled Kansas City's Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts listened in awe as the voice of opera singer [Charity Tillemann-Dick](#)-- a lung transplant recipient--resonated throughout the concert hall.

The ceremony recognized the resilience of Tillemann-Dick, as well as breast cancer survivor and mother of an autistic son with cancer, [Deliece Hofen](#) and Purple Heart recipient [J.R. Martinez](#) for persevering in the face of critical injuries or illnesses while inspiring others on their journeys toward making a comeback. The honorees shared their stories of hope with more than 600 attendees from the Kansas City area who were on hand to recognize their courage during the 12<sup>th</sup> Project Perseverance Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, sponsored by Assurant Employee Benefits.



Opera singer Charity Tillemann-Dick performs at Assurant Employee Benefits' 12<sup>th</sup> Perseverance Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

"My mom believed in me when I still couldn't talk or move or breathe," said Tillemann-Dick. "She'd tell me, 'Charity, you need to breathe. You need to sit up. You need to exercise, because then you can sing.' It was a long road, but she was there with me. Without that confidence from my mom, I don't think I would have ever sung in the way that I am singing now."

Hofen recounted her journey with her autistic son, [Braden](#), beginning when he was first diagnosed at age three with stage 4 neuroblastoma and given a 30 percent chance to live. Less than three years later, Hofen herself was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer.

Not only did Hofen beat cancer and help her son do the same, but she also established [Braden's Hope for Childhood Cancer](#). The non-profit organization is dedicated to raising funds and awareness for pediatric cancer. As her son presented her with the award, Hofen spoke of her determination to help Braden always live every day to its fullest.

"What we decided early on was we want him to be able to do the things he wants to do," she said. "We want him to be happy. We want him to have a beautiful, wonderful, loving life. That's really what the goal is."

"Every day I'm overcoming," Martinez added. "Every day I'm making a choice, and that choice is simple: to get up, to look at myself in the mirror and to walk out of that house with a smile on my face."



Right to left: Alan Colberg, Deliece Hofen, Charity Tillemann-Dick, J.R. Martinez and Joe Sevcik of Assurant Employee Benefits.

A U.S. Army veteran of the Iraq War, Martinez was consumed by flames when a roadside bomb struck his Humvee. As the 2008 Celebrity Hall of Fame inductee, Martinez was on hand to salute Hofen and Tilleman-Dick and also was recognized as an honoree for his efforts to inspire others to persevere.

Assurant Employee Benefits started the Perseverance Hall of Fame in 2003 as a way to recognize those who have overcome significant disability to return to work. Previously known as the Shining Star of Perseverance, the project changed its name and broadened its recognition in 2015 to include anyone who has overcome a serious injury or illness and inspire others to find strength on their road to recovery.

Assurant President and CEO Alan Colberg commended the work of Assurant Employee Benefits, noting the commitment of its employees.

“At Assurant, our purpose is to help people protect what matters most to them,” said Colberg. “Every day, the women and men of Assurant Employee Benefits bring that commitment to life. We are so proud of what they do - not only here in Kansas City - but throughout the U.S. as they help people get the support and receive the resources they need that allow many to return to work and improve their quality of life.”

Supporting Project Perseverance, the [Assurant Foundation](#) - the philanthropic organization of Assurant - contributed \$15,000 in grants on behalf of each honoree to a charity of their choice.

For more information on Project Perseverance and the stories of the Hall of Fame honorees, visit [www.projectperseverance.com](http://www.projectperseverance.com).