

## **Noank, CT – About WVFV**

*In June of 2007, John Niekrash, a Mystic CT lobsterman, attended a memorial golf tournament (The Mal) honoring the late Malcolm Brown of Groton CT. At the event dinner, Malcolm's son Mike had invited Purple Heart recipient Master Sergeant Justin Clough to tell about his struggles to re-enter society back here in the US. Clough's leg was severely injured by a road-side bomb explosion in Iraq.*

*Clough's remarks so touched Niekrash, that he decided to donate his working lobster fishing vessel to a Vet returning from the Middle East with a passion for lobstering for a living. John's boat, the "Krasher III", has recently been lifted from the water at the Noank Shipyard in Noank to make room for a newer vessel, to be named the "Krasher IV".*

*Niekrash started his quest to find a recipient by writing a letter to the The Commercial Fisherman's News inviting them to assist in the search for a returning Vet. This letter led to a story in Soundings Magazine's January issue and generated a lot of interest across the U.S. in the fishing industry.*

*Rhode Island's Richard Giguere, a U.S. Marine Reservist who recently returned from his second tour of duty in Iraq, was the first Vet to respond to the story and contacted Niekrash. After an emotional meeting with Giguere, John awarded him the "Krasher III".*

*A tremendous partner in this effort has been the Noank Shipyard. They have maintained the "Krasher III" for 17 years and set about donating their time, effort and skills to make the sure the Krasher III was ready to launch on April 4, 2008, when ownership transfers to Giguere.*

*"Why not make this an annual initiative?" John asked the many mechanics, canvas companies, boat builders and fellow fishermen (from all around the U.S.) that flocked to Niekrash with their support. Partnering with Noank Shipyard, Zachary Schmidt of 6K Design, the WVFV Charity and "workvesselsforveterans.org" were created.*

*Following the April 4<sup>th</sup> ceremony, Niekrash and the Noank Shipyard will begin looking for a vessel donor and a qualified U.S. Middle East Veteran recipient for next year's award.*