



OHF INTEL

2nd Quarter 2022

A Quarterly Report from Operation Healing Forces

Expect To Get Back So Much More Than You Give

Dear Friends and Supporters of Operation Healing Forces,

Like many of you, as a successful entrepreneur who loves our country, I am constantly approached to support many great and worthy causes. And of course, when I give my support as I often do, someone says “thank you.”

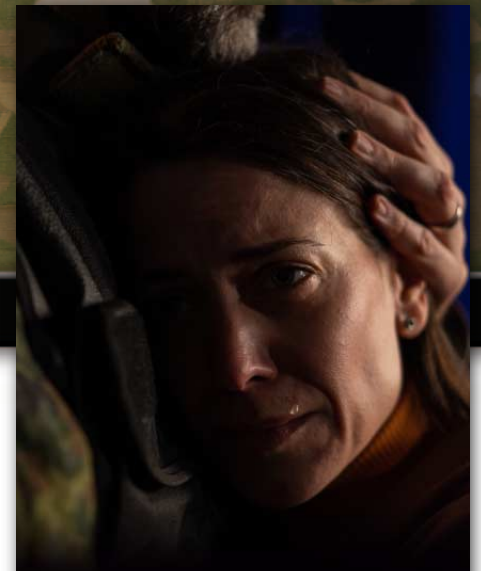
From the day I first learned about Operation Healing Forces and its powerful mission, I have been the one saying “thank you.”

I am thankful that this nation has such brave warriors who are willing to sacrifice so much to protect our freedom. I am thankful that those warriors have families and caregivers who love them and selflessly give them the support they need. I am thankful to live in a country with patriots like Gary and Tony Markel who saw a need to help our Special Operators and said, “what can I do to help?” And I am thankful to be able to be on the Board of Directors of such a special organization.

The stories you will read about in this newsletter are so powerful. I challenge you or anyone you know to read these stories, meet these brave men and women, and do even more to support OHF.

Thank you to all the members of the OHF family for giving my family the opportunity to be a small part of supporting our Special Operators and their families. I promise that what you will get back in your soul from supporting OHF is so much greater than whatever you give.

*With gratitude,
Robert McBride
Member of the Board
Operation Healing Forces*



SUPPORT FOR MILITARY CAREGIVERS

An estimated 5.5 million military caregivers assist our nation's heroes every day. Caregiving is demanding and can lead to physical, emotional and mental exhaustion. OHF Caregiver Retreats provide a healing space to recharge and connect with other caregivers.

[Click here to learn how you can support military caregivers.](#)

Struggling with burnout?
Contact the VA Caregiver
Support Line:
1 (855) 260-3274

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REMOVING OBSTACLES

Five years ago SSG Andrew May, of Salisbury, NC, was unloading equipment off of pallets when a forklift brake malfunctioned, severely injuring his right leg. "It was definitely a freak accident. I had my back turned to it," Andrew says, who was on deployment working in support personnel for Special Operations at the time.

Although surgery saved his leg, Andrew's unrelenting pain made life miserable. Nine surgeries later with no relief in sight, the frustrated father of two

medically retired from active duty in November 2021, deciding it was time to have his leg amputated. Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, TX, specializes in amputation and prosthetics for veterans, but the problem for Andrew was getting there.

Operation Healing Forces' Immediate Needs Program jumped into action planning the logistics and covering Andrew and his family's travel expenses. After Andrew's surgery in February, he resided at the nonprofit Fisher House for veterans and began rehabilitation at Brooke Army Medical's Center for the Intrepid. Andrew's wife Lauren returned home and began teaching the couple's youngsters to keep stairways and other areas in the home free from obstacles that could trip Andrew like toys and shoes.

Andrew, who returned home in May, says the surgery restored his quality of life. He looks forward to playing outside with his kids and taking his family camping again.



During their spring break, Lauren, Easton, 7, and Adley, 5, reunited with Andrew during his rehabilitation.

"I feel so good. I'm able to have the energy to get up and pretty much spend the entire day with my family, which is great. My wife even said, 'I can tell you're happier. You're not in pain.' I honestly forget sometimes that I don't have a leg. It feels so normal."

MUCH-NEEDED RELIEF

When Paul O'Farrell, 44, went to the emergency room in February for symptoms related to gastrointestinal bleeding, he never imagined he'd walk out with a cancer diagnosis. An active-duty Army helicopter pilot, who ran and worked out daily and pulled regular 12-hour shifts with his soldiers, Paul looked like the picture of health—even his bloodwork came back normal. But a CT scan revealed an entirely different story.

"I was littered with tumors on my lungs, my liver, my peritoneal wall [the tissue lining the abdomen], and my colon. I'd probably had colon cancer for a while, and it spread everywhere," he says.

Undergoing an aggressive treatment plan for stage IV colon cancer, Paul has had four surgeries and is enduring 12 rounds of chemotherapy. The diagnosis has also meant that he and his wife have had to spend multiple days

and sometimes weeks in and out of the hospital in Nashville, TN, which is 65 miles from their home in Clarksville.

While raising three children, ages 12, 15, and 19, and with food and gas prices soaring, the couple was growing increasingly stressed. Paul reached out to Operation Healing Forces' Immediate Needs Program for assistance.



Fifty-eight days before his diagnosis, Paul celebrates Christmas with family and friends.

"You know when you're in the open ocean just treading water and you just need to get another breath and calm down?" Paul asks. "That's what the Immediate Needs help brought me. It gave me a chance to release some tension and anxiety and take a deep breath."

STRONG FAMILY, STRONG OPERATOR

Heading to West Palm Beach, FL, for an Operation Healing Forces Couples Retreat last summer was the getaway Shane and Amanda Jelsma of Holden, MO, desperately needed. The couple, who have been friends for over 20 years, tied the knot in the middle of COVID in April 2020, just before Shane retired from the military. Since then, they've been sorting out the demands of work and home while parenting their blended family of four active sons, ages 17 to 4.

"Our first couple of years were pretty difficult," Shane says. The retreat gave the couple some much-needed time together and provided Amanda with insights into the realities of military life. "When you haven't lived it or gone through it, it can be hard to understand," he says.



Shane & Amanda relax in West Palm Beach.

Diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury after surviving an IED blast and multiple rocket explosions while on deployment in Afghanistan in 2013, Shane, a Marine Corps special operations explosive ordnance disposal specialist, suffers from frequent migraines and memory issues. He was placed on temporary disabled retirement in 2014.

"When my oldest was three, I'd only been around for five months of his life," Shane says of his career in SOF. "The amount of time that you spend with your wife is important. When things are good mentally with your family, and you aren't worried about the connection you have with your wife, you're going to be a better operator no matter what role you have on that team."

AMBASSADOR FOR LIFE



Joe Sterrett, a 30-year Navy SEAL veteran and his wife Megan of 18 years know a thing or two about the challenges of deployments on marriage and family life. So, the couple was more than happy to share pearls of wisdom they gleaned along the way with some of the other SOF couples at the Operation Healing Forces Couples Retreat at The Greenbrier in WV, last March.

"We've been through so many of the same things other SOF couples have gone through. Transitioning back from deployments into normal life was never easy on the family. We've been on the verge of divorce. Somehow, somehow we've survived," Joe says, who has been deployed 11 times,

most of those combat tours. He and Megan have a blended family of five children, now ages 28 to 16, and a grandchild.

With Joe just home from another overseas deployment, the retreat offered the perfect re-set for the Moyock, NC, couple. Everything from a "super gracious staff who treated us like we were the only people they had to take care of" to the "amazing food" and wide range of activities, Megan says the retreat was like a dream.

"I'll be an ambassador for life for the OHF programs," Joe says. "It's an absolutely great resource just to reconnect with each other and with other couples. And, we gathered even more resources and information that support individuals like us that have spent the majority of our adulthood in war zones and need to destress and refocus where there are no expectations but to have fun and reconnect."

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Joe & Megan enjoy getting muddy on a West Virginia Side-by-Side adventure.



Jamie Thomas
Campaigns & Events Manager

Welcome **Jamie Thomas** **to the OHF Team!**

Please join us in welcoming Jamie Thomas, our new Campaigns & Events Manager, to the Operation Healing Forces team! Jamie is a results-driven professional with 10+ years of marketing and sales experience. She is adept at market analysis, strategy development and marketing optimization.

For the last three years, Jamie worked for a nonprofit located in Sasebo, Japan where she played an instrumental role in program development that provided annual support to over 12,000 active duty. She consistently exceeded her goals and was valued for her ability to take complex situations and provide unique solutions. In 2021, she received

the “USOvation” Award which recognizes employees who have made “above and beyond” contributions to the organization.

“As a military spouse and as someone who has worked with the military community, I know firsthand the impact and importance of organizations like OHF,” Jamie says. “From Kerry’s ‘Want more than a job?’ job post to the panel interview, my interaction with the OHF team was nothing short of awe-inspiring. I felt the team’s passion and dedication and knew this was the organization I wanted to be a part of! I was looking for more than just pay, but PURPOSE, and that’s what being part of the OHF family means. Our purpose is to create bonds that cure!”

Dynamic, energetic and highly motivated, Jamie strives for excellence and dedicates her success to her professional relationships as well as operating with the mindset of “giving more than you receive.”

Joining Ranks: OHF's National Advisory Council Grows!

We are pleased to welcome the addition of several exceptionally high-caliber leaders to our National Advisory Council (NAC). The NAC includes members with multi-disciplinary professional expertise who provide high-level support to the Operation Healing Forces Board of Directors and senior management, helping us enhance our capacity to serve the Special Operations Forces community.

General (Retired) Raymond A. Tony Thomas III 11th Commander, United States Special Operations Command

GEN (Ret.) Raymond A. "Tony" Thomas, III was a 4-star Commanding General of the more than 85,000 men and women who comprise U.S. Special Operations Command. During his storied 40-year career, GEN Thomas was involved in nearly every significant U.S. military operation, including combat in both Grenada and Panama.

As a member of the elite 75th Ranger Regiment:

- He served in Desert Storm with the Joint Task Force responsible for defeating Iraqi SCUD missile attacks on Israel.
- He assisted the Colombian National Police in killing the notorious narco-terrorist Pablo Escobar.
- He conducted operations to capture Serbian war criminals.

He is the only officer to have commanded a squadron of the Delta Force and a battalion of the 75th Ranger Regiment.

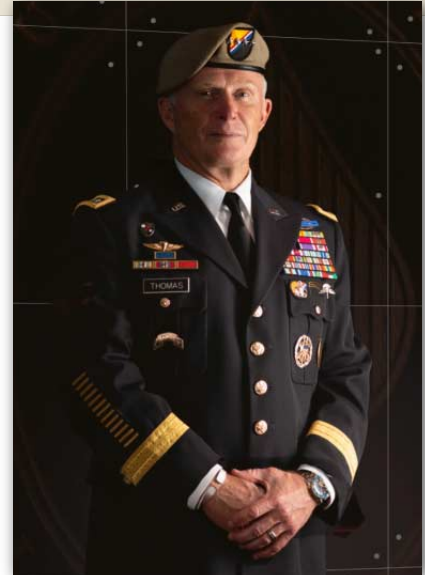
GEN Thomas deployed numerous times to combat arenas, including Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. Serving overseas for portions of every single year of his military career since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, he was the second-in-command for the mission that killed the terrorist Usama Bin Laden.

Before his promotion as the commander of USSOCOM and taking the reins of one of the United States' most elite combatant commands, GEN Thomas commanded the Joint Special Operations Command, served as the Director of Military Operations at the Central Intelligence Agency, and created and commanded the first Special Operations Joint Task Force in Afghanistan.

Always seeking solutions to future battles, GEN Thomas drove USSOCOM's adaption of applied Artificial Intelligence and Unmanned Capabilities — a passion he has carried over to his post-service career working within the defense industry to ensure today's soldiers can fight and win tomorrow's wars.

GEN Thomas currently serves as the Chairman of the Special Operations Warrior Foundation, a national nonprofit organization that provides full-cost education scholarships to the children of our nation's Fallen Special Operations heroes.

GEN Thomas and his wife have two sons and five grandchildren. Both sons graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and served in combat on multiple occasions.



Joining Ranks: OHF's National Advisory Council Grows!



Sebastian Junger Award-winning War Correspondent, Documentary Filmmaker & Bestselling Author

Sebastian Junger is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of *War*, *Tribe*, *Freedom*, and *The Perfect Storm*. As an award-winning journalist, a contributing editor to *Vanity Fair* and a special correspondent at ABC News, he has covered major international news stories around the world and has received both a National Magazine Award and a Peabody Award. He is the co-director and

videographer of the Oscar-nominated documentary, “Restrepo.”

“Restrepo” chronicled the deployment of a platoon of U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan’s Korengal Valley and is widely considered to have broken new ground in war reporting. Junger has since produced and directed three additional documentaries about war and its aftermath. “Which Way Is the Front Line From Here?” premiered on HBO and chronicles the life and career of his friend and colleague, photojournalist Tim Hetherington, who was killed while covering the civil war in Libya in 2011. “Korengal” returns to the subject of combat and tries to answer the eternal question of why young men miss war. “The Last Patrol,” which also premiered on HBO examines the complexities of returning from war by following Junger and three friends — all of whom had experienced combat, either as soldiers or reporters—as they travel up the East Coast railroad lines on foot as high-speed vagrants.

Junger is the founder of Vets Town Hall and Reporters Instructed in Saving Colleagues. He has also written for magazines including *Harper’s*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *National Geographic Adventure*, *Outside* and *Men’s Journal*.

Junger’s reporting on Afghanistan in 2000, profiling Northern Alliance leader Ahmed Shah Massoud, who was assassinated just days before 9/11, became the subject of the National Geographic documentary “Into the Forbidden Zone” and introduced America to the Afghan resistance fighting the Taliban. He lives with his family in New York City.

Joining Ranks: OHF's National Advisory Council Grows!

Taya Kyle **Widow of U.S. Navy SEAL** **Chris Kyle, Veteran's Family** **Activist and Author.**

Taya Kyle is a mother of two young adults who inspire and amaze her. She is a woman after God's heart and endeavors to carry on the legacy of her late husband Chris Kyle, while also creating a legacy of her own. Many people know Chris as the American Sniper from his internationally best-selling book American Sniper and Academy Award nominated movie by the same name.



Chris was killed by someone he was trying to help in 2013. After his death, Taya became a NY Times best-selling author with American Wife. In an effort to help buoy the spirit of others who face hardships, Taya co-wrote American Spirit – a collection of true stories of other Americans who have done great things with some of the worst parts of life. She has been a contributor and activist for various efforts and through a variety of other outlets.

Taya serves as the Executive Director of Taya and Chris Kyle Foundation - Service Family Strong (TACK-F), formerly known as the Chris Kyle Frog Foundation, where the mission is to serve God, country and service families. When service families are not just surviving, but thriving, suicide rates decrease, effective PTS treatment increases and force retention and readiness go up.

Taya and her business partner, Angela Blair, have created two jewelry lines. Warrior Collections is sold in partnership with Montana Silversmith retailers, and also offers a higher end exclusive online collection to draw out the warrior spirit. The others inspirational jewelry collection is created and sold with world renowned jewelry experts, Jewelry Television. The collection, Koadon, means "Koa" warrior "don" to put on. Koadon is sold on JTV televised broadcast and online at JTV.com.

Taya and her business partner Dave Drever, are launching a new company called, YKC (Your Kingdom Come). Through media, entertainment, innovation and technology, YKC will help show the spiritual gold in others allowing their stories to be told and lived out in a way that uses their gifts without asking them to compromise their values.

Joining Ranks: OHF's National Advisory Council Grows!



Mary Paige Kurilla Senior Spouse, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), MacDill AFB

Mary Paige Kurilla is the daughter and spouse of U.S. Army soldiers and knows well the challenges and triumphs of military family life.

Mary Paige and her husband, Erik have been married for 27 years and have two amazing daughters, Michelle, a 2022

graduate of Harvard University, and Sophie, a rising junior attending Tufts University.

Her commitment to helping military community members thrive through holistic wellness practices is the driving force behind Mary Paige becoming a 500-hr Registered Yoga Instructor and a certified Master Resilience Trainer. She is trained in trauma-sensitive, therapeutic, and adaptive yoga, utilizing specialized skills to help improve the mental and physical well-being of our nation's military heroes.

Over the years, Mary Paige has served in a variety of leadership positions for numerous nonprofit and volunteer organizations. As a full-time volunteer dedicated to serving military families for nearly three decades, Mary Paige has been recognized with numerous awards and decorations, including the Infantry Shield of Sparta, the Outstanding Civilian Award, and the Dr. Mary E. Walker Award.

Mary Paige earned a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education from Auburn University and has a Master of Science in Elementary Education. She was an elementary school teacher for a number of years before choosing to prioritize raising her children and volunteering to serve within the many military communities that the Kurillas have called home. Mary Paige's greatest joy is spending time with her family and friends and advocating on behalf of military service members and their families.

Joining Ranks: OHF's National Advisory Council Grows!

Dani Cooper **Chief of Operations for the Nonproliferation** **and Disarmament Fund at the** **U.S. Department of State**

Dani Helfet Cooper is the Chief of Operations (COO) for the Nonproliferation and Disarmament Fund (NDF) at the U.S. Department of State. NDF is a U.S. Government contingency fund responsible for rapidly responding to unanticipated or unusually challenging, urgent, and complex nonproliferation, counterproliferation, weapons destruction, and/or disarmament priorities when and/or where no other USG entities can. This includes threats posed by WMDs, other CBRNE, and advanced or destabilizing conventional weapons, materials, technology, and delivery systems. Dani previously served as the Deputy Director of NDF before fully shifting into the COO role in which, among other things, she shapes and leads NDF's crisis and contingency response. It is the greatest privilege and honor of her civilian career to serve and lead the extraordinary teams that comprise the NDF.

Prior to joining NDF, Dani served as the Deputy Team Chief for Foreign Consequence Management (FCM) in the Office of WMD Terrorism wherein she led FCM's support to over 900 missions in 2 years. Far more importantly, during her tenure retention on the team increased dramatically with zero personnel departing despite the unprecedented operational tempo. While with FCM, she was also the Department's lead action officer for post-detonation forensics and attribution, and U.S. nuclear weapons incident and accident response overseas. Prior to FCM, she worked in several capacities throughout the International Security and Nonproliferation Bureau, including various policy and strategy portfolios and two tours in the ISN Front Office as Acting Chief of Staff and Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary. She remains tied to a number of operational units as a DOS liaison.

Dani is also a former Marine Officer who was privileged to serve as the Operations Officer for a forward-staged active duty infantry unit, as the Headquarters Platoon Commander and Logistics Officer for two reserve artillery units, and with the Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization (JIDO) working predominantly on activities in Iraq and Syria. Upon concluding her time with the infantry unit she returned to civil service with no further service in the Marine Corps Reserves until very recently; she is now a reserve attachment to II Marine Expeditionary Force, G-5. Serving Marines and their families remains the greatest privilege of her life. She routinely credits the incredible military spouses of her Marines as being the single most important factor contributing to individual Marine readiness.

She holds a B.A. and M.A. but quickly realized that nobody (including her) cares. At a point in time, she spoke entirely unimpressive Arabic and decent Hebrew - though both have atrophied so much that she only currently claims decent command of the English language.

Dani's friends and family - to include her DoD and interagency brothers and sisters - know her as a deeply passionate, motivated, and service-oriented individual who will always answer the call. That extends to anyone, in any circumstance, who needs help - regardless of the hour or how daunting (or menial) the task.

She's received a number of military and civilian awards - none of which mean as much as her Marines saving her favorite chow when there was no time to eat or hearing that something jointly learned or experienced by her teammates/Marines changed the course of their lives.

Above all else, Dani is most proud of and fulfilled by her family: She is married to the best husband ever (Andy) with whom she has three children - Charlie (5), Wes (3), and Grace (1).



CONNECT WITH OHF

Help expand OHF's impact — Please share this newsletter.

Help spread the word about Operation Healing Forces and the battles faced by our nation's Special Operations Forces. Forward this newsletter to a friend, relative, or colleague today. You may end up connecting OHF with its next donor, supporter, or recipient family.

"I read an article online about Operation Healing Forces a couple of years ago and as a U.S. Marine Corps veteran myself, I felt compelled to get involved."

— OHF Supporter David T. Maccagnone, CEO Multi-Bank Securities Inc.

Helping SOF SOAR

Now more than ever, SOF couples need your support. OHF continues to expand its support for immediate needs, crisis needs, career transitions, employment, caregivers and spouses, and financial planning. To contribute or learn more about these programs, please contact SOAR Program Manager **Tiers Arnts** at Tiers.Arnts@ophf.org or (253) 241-7271.

SOAR (Special Operations Additional Resources) Program

OHF's SOAR Offers:

- OHF Employment Services
- Alumni Support
- Financial Planning
- SOF Caregiver & Spouse Retreats
- Ambassador Dinners
- Legal Assistance Program

A Home for Healing:

The phenomenal growth in our retreat numbers means more couples can participate. This growth also means that Operation Healing Forces needs homes to house our heroes and their spouses.

Providing a home for an OHF retreat is an unforgettable gift and an extremely rewarding way to support SOF couples.



OUR NEED:

5-bedroom, 5-bathroom homes at destination locales throughout North America.

TIMING: Retreats take place over 5 days. We have immediate needs for retreat locations in 2022 and beyond.

LEARN MORE: Contact **Kerry Irvin** at kerry.irvin@ophf.org to learn more about opening your home to our nation's Special Operators and their spouses.



Mutually Beneficial

Aside from helping support a worthy cause, stock donations can maximize the value of a gift to both the charitable recipient and the donor. Compared with selling appreciated securities and donating the after-tax net proceeds, a direct gift of stock has the potential to increase the net proceeds to the charity and maximize a donor's tax deduction.

When donating appreciated securities (e.g., stocks, bonds, mutual funds, etc.) with long-term holding periods of one year or more, the amount of the donor's tax deduction is equal to the average value of the high and low price of the securities on the date of the gift. You may generally deduct up to 30% of your Adjusted Gross Income for contributions of appreciated securities held more than one year.

Donating stock to charity is as easy as calling your financial advisor and providing transfer instructions. To learn how to make a stock donation for Operation Healing Forces, visit **<https://OperationHealingForces.org/Donate>** or contact **Kerry Irvin** at **kerry.irvin@ophf.org**.

Giving to Operation Healing Forces is Easier Than Ever!

Simply scan or click on the
OHF QR Code to make a
contribution right away!



More Ways You Can Help!



1 Cash Contributions

(100% to program costs thanks to our board of directors covering all overhead expenses.)



2 Donate a 5 bedroom/5 bath home for a week



3 Host an in-home reception

introducing OHF's mission to your friends and neighbors.



4 Donate your Airline Miles

It's easy. Call or email Desiree Holley to find out how, (813) 480-6078 desiree.holley@ophf.org.



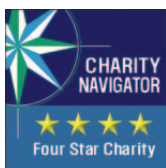
5 Donate through Amazon Smile

Search for Operation Healing Forces at smile.amazon.com, and Amazon will donate a portion of sales to OHF.

A major reason OHF retreats, Immediate Needs, and other programs OHF offers to support the Special Operations community mean so much and are so healing is because they are offered at no cost to the participants. This provides deserving elite warriors and their families much needed respite to fully relax, focus on one another, alleviate financial stress and burden, and greatly aids in their healing process.

Offering these restorative, life-changing programs requires a partnership with dedicated donors like you. As you consider making a tax-deductible donation to OHF to aid the special operations community, do so with the confidence of knowing that **100% of your donation** will go to supporting our programs. This unique assurance is possible because of the committed support of our founders, Gary and Tony Markel, who personally cover every penny of OHF's overhead expenses. *Every dollar you give will go directly toward supporting Special Operators and their families.*

Thank you for your support!



OHF has achieved Charity Navigator's top ranking of Four Stars. Described as "Exceptional" - Exceeds industry standards and outperforms most charities in its cause.



OHF has achieved the GuideStar Platinum Seal of Transparency Rating, the top 0.1% of the nation's non-profit organizations in terms of transparency.



OHF received the "Top Rated" rating by Great Nonprofits. Rated highly by people who experience their work first hand - clients served, volunteers and donors.

Thank you for your support of Operation Healing Forces

Comments? Questions?

Please tell us what you think about our quarterly newsletter. Direct questions, comments, or to unsubscribe, e-mail us at: info@ophf.org or by mail to:

Operation Healing Forces

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Creating bonds that cure.

www.operationhealingforces.org

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