



# OHF INTEL

3rd Quarter 2019

A Quarterly Report from Operation Healing Forces.

## The Danger Remains

*Dear Friends and Supporters of OHF,*

For civilians, summer often means vacations, barbeques, and family gatherings. For military personnel deployed in countries like Afghanistan, the summer months are often a season of increased combat activity, with the majority of casualties striking Special Operations Forces (SOF). According to a new report from Military Times, seventy percent of the U.S. deaths in Afghanistan this year were SOF troops.

This year is on pace to be one of the deadliest yet for SOF in Afghanistan, where one of the Special Operators featured in this newsletter was injured. At just over halfway through 2019, combat casualties for SOF in Afghanistan have nearly matched the total for all of 2018. And, please keep in mind it's not just SOF non-kinetic and kinetic operations in Afghanistan, but also in over 80+ countries world wide.

Our nation's most elite warriors and their families continue to face unimaginable risk and make unthinkable sacrifices. Operation Healing Forces continues to offer them rest, rejuvenation, and healing at a retreat experience unlike any other. With your support, we are on pace to touch more lives in 2019 than ever before. As we continue this work, please accept my sincerest gratitude for your support of our nation's dedicated SOF and their families.

*Very Respectfully,*

**Jeff Hudson**

**Lieutenant Colonel (R), U.S. Army**

**OHF Executive Director**



**Please Consider Supporting OHF on  
Giving Tuesday, December 3, 2019**



## Words from A Warrior's Son

*One of the biggest things that gets overlooked is the effect that being in Special Forces does to the kids of those people that have to suffer tremendously due to their jobs.*

*I'm entirely grateful to my parents, and the people that have surrounded me my entire life. This "job" has given me extreme anxiety and depression and I never even actually had the "job." On top of that, I think that I turned out a lot better than most kids with Special Forces parents, which sadly isn't something I like to be able to say.*

*It's unbelievable how a job, a paid position of regular employment, can cause so much stress on the person doing the job, but also their family and everyone surrounding them.*

*Excerpt from The Pride and Heartache of a Special Forces Son, written by the 15-year-son of an active duty Green Beret, published in The Gazette, July 6 2019*

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# ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE

## Ian and Carrie Prescott Marco Island, Florida

Army Special Forces Intelligence Sergeant Ian Prescott and his wife Carrie know how to navigate life's challenges. Over Ian's 13-year military career and 10 deployments, they've managed to raise four children through multiple relocations and job transitions.

But in December of 2018, the couple experienced a new challenge when a stray bullet entered Ian's chest during a combat patrol in Afghanistan. The bullet "entered under my left arm, ricocheted around in my body and crashed through my spinal column," says Ian. The resulting damage left him paralyzed from the waist down.

After spending a month and a half in a hospital bed and another month and a half in rehab, Ian returned to the couple's home in Crestview, Florida, and immediately resumed work. "Thankfully, my company and my battalion welcomed me with open arms, and they openly support me," he says. "As soon as I got home, it was back to business as usual. We're running kids to soccer and going to track meets."

But the immediate return to daily life gave the couple little time to adjust to their new circumstances. The next few months were a blur of rehabilitation, adjustment, and learning to live life in a new way. The opportunity to attend OHF's Marco Island retreat in July came at just the right time, says Carrie, a preschool teacher. "We really needed that rest after six months of constant work and change."

Approaching the retreat's activities together, with the support of OHF Program Director Billy DeLong and the other attendees, built the couple's communication skills, says Ian. "Everything is a new experience now, and a new set of problems—like figuring out where I can sit in the van and how I can do things like parasailing, jet skiing, or a boat tour."

Navigating the retreat in a wheelchair necessitated more communication and built stronger connections, said Ian. "We were able to figure things out with our new friends, without the time limits we have back home. It allowed us to grow stronger in our relationship and our ability to handle everything that comes our way. The whole week was troubleshooting and knowing that you can accomplish nearly anything with the right support."

"The retreat helped us to see that with a little communication, anything we could do before is still possible," adds Carrie. "I don't think we can ever say thank you enough for just allowing us to spend that time together."



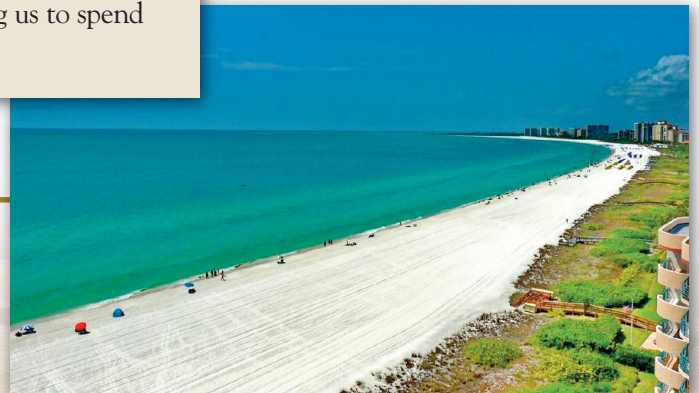
Ian and Carrie Prescott

**"This was a stunning resort oasis in paradise. We want everyone involved with OHF to know that they're contributing to a life-changing experience."**

**– Ian Prescott,  
Army Special Forces  
Intelligence Sergeant**

## Marco Island: A Piece of Paradise

A barrier island in the Gulf of Mexico off Southwest Florida, Marco Island has just over 12 square miles of land. The subtropical island is famous for luxurious resorts, pristine white beaches, miles of inland waterways, and abundant wildlife, including manatees, dolphins, sea turtles, shorebirds and burrowing owls.







*John and Tracy Fischetti*

## A SENSE OF PEACE

### John and Tracy Fischetti Marco Island, Florida

traumatic impacts over nine deployments. Between deployments, John and Tracy took part in marriage retreats, relationship classes, and couples' workshops and figured this trip would be more of the same. "We've been to so many other marriage retreats, we could probably teach one ourselves," says Tracy.

Some of the retreats available to military couples include therapy and professional counseling, which can put off potential attendees, says John. "[Military personnel] don't want to talk to professional counselors or therapists for fear that it could affect our jobs or career choices," he says. When he learned that OHF retreats were different—connecting SOF couples in therapeutic locales, without requiring them to meet with therapists or counselors—John became more receptive to the idea of attending a retreat.

The carefully planned itinerary of adventure, sightseeing, and downtime allowed couples to bond over shared experiences in a low-pressure environment, forming lasting connections. Connecting with other SOF couples and with one another was more therapeutic than any other retreat or marriage class they'd taken, says Tracy. "Thank you" isn't enough. This opportunity helped bring me a sense of peace knowing that I'm not alone. There isn't one other thing that could have given that back to me. There isn't a 'Five Love Languages' class that could accomplish what this trip accomplished."

For John and Tracy Fischetti of Navarre, Florida, July's Operation Healing Forces retreat on Marco Island was more than a luxurious break. It was a chance to connect as a couple before embarking on a new phase of life filled with uncertainty and change.

A few weeks after the couple arrived home from Marco Island, John moved to Fort Bragg, North Carolina to begin his first stint as a geobachelor. Tracy, an English teacher, remained in Navarre with their three children. John will also begin cardiac rehabilitation for atrial fibrillation (also called AFib), an erratic heartbeat that can lead to stroke, heart failure, and other cardiovascular problems, and start the process of medical retirement.

"All of it is up in the air; we really don't know how long he'll be gone or what comes next," says Tracy.

An Army Sergeant Major with 23 years of military experience and over 16 years with Special Operations, John sustained multiple

**"Through all my deployments and injuries—being shot, being blown up, getting concussions—I've never felt rewarded or felt that people really saw the sacrifices we've both made. To feel that people appreciate what we've done enough to give us this experience was really refreshing."**

**— John Fischetti, Army Sergeant Major**





# SOAR Program Update: Increasing Support for OHF Alumni

**"OHF's immediate needs program is a 'game changer' for the care and rehabilitation of SOF wounded, ill, and injured."**

**– U.S. Special Operations Command, Chief of Community Outreach**

Earlier this year, Operation Healing Forces welcomed Stephanie DeZern, SOAR Program Manager, to manage growing OHF alumni outreach. A longtime military spouse and a registered yoga teacher, Stephanie has a passion for connecting military families to therapeutic resources and increasing support for SOF at all stages of life.

The SOAR Program includes initiatives designed to expand support for transitioning SOF: The Markel Veterans Program, Ambassadors Dinners, the Immediate Needs Program, and social media outreach.

The Markel Veterans Program (MVP) recently accepted three new candidates: Michael Ogden, OHF Alumni, Army Special Forces; Bernie McGroarty, Army Special Forces; and Wes Weber, Marine Corps Special Operations. The MVP offers transitioning SOF mentorship, paid training, and career development at Markel Venture Companies, based in Richmond, Virginia. The program also advocates for transitioning SOF and the needs of this underserved population.

At hosted Ambassadors Dinners around the country, SOF can hear more about OHF retreat opportunities, meet, or reconnect with other alumni couples. In just a few months' time, these dinners have become an extremely popular way for OHF alumni to spread the word to other couples, says Stephanie.



May 2019 Fort Bragg Ambassador Dinner

The Immediate Needs Program was created to provide immediate support for SOF experiencing needs related to transition, respite care, airfare, and hotel accommodations. Last quarter, the program provided over \$29,000 in immediate need relief for 84 individuals, with an average benefit per family of \$680.

*"The momentum and reach of the Immediate Needs Program has been very exciting," says Stephanie. "We began this program in February, and by July we had reached over 84 individuals in the SOF community with the potential to reach at least another 250 individuals by the end of the year. From flying family members to the bedside of those recovering from surgery, to providing respite childcare, to assisting with fees related to a veteran's service dog, we're proud to provide this much-needed support."*

Social media is an important tool for engaging and serving SOF alumni and their families. This year, Stephanie has increased outreach on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, resulting in over 10,000 interactions. Through a private Facebook page for OHF alumni, individuals and couples can remain engaged with the OHF community, learn about transition resources and job opportunities for SOF, and gain support from like-minded individuals.

This August, Stephanie will lead a unique retreat for SOF spouses in Arrington, Virginia. Caregivers and spouses will engage in therapeutic yoga, horseback riding, and other activities designed to promote rest, relaxation, and healing.

**To learn more about supporting the SOAR Program, contact Stephanie at [stephanie.dezern@ophf.org](mailto:stephanie.dezern@ophf.org).**





## Connect with Operation Healing Forces

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.

**Please Consider Supporting OHF on Giving Tuesday, December 3, 2019**

### A Home for Healing:

Operation Healing Forces staff plan, implement and personally oversee incredible, once-in-a-lifetime retreats for our couples. Every detail, every meal, and every activity are planned to maximize our participants' relaxation, healing, and personal and relational growth. But our retreats can't take place without the homes provided by generous donors.

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.



#### OUR NEED:

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

#### TIMING:

Retreats take place over 5 days. We have immediate needs for retreat locations in 2020 and beyond.

#### LEARN MORE:

Contact Jim Zuba at [jim.zuba@ophf.org](mailto:jim.zuba@ophf.org) to learn more about opening your home or how else you can aid our nation's Special Operators and their spouses.

## Four Ways You Can Help!



**1**

**Cash Contributions**  
(100% to program costs)



**3**

**Donate your Airline Miles**  
It's easy. Call or email Desiree Holley to find out how. 813-480-6078  
[desiree.holley@ophf.org](mailto:desiree.holley@ophf.org)



**2**

**Donate a 5 bedroom/  
5 bath Home for a Week**



**4**

**Donate through Amazon Smile**  
Search for Operation Healing Forces at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), and Amazon will donate a portion of sales to OHF.

## 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](mailto:info@ophf.org) or by mail to:

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**Creating bonds that cure.**

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