



OHF INTEL

3rd Quarter 2020

A Quarterly Report: Donor Spotlight Edition

2020 Has Been A Year Marked By Disruption

Dear Friends and Supporters of Operation Healing Forces,

For many Americans, 2020 has been a year marked by disruption. For our nation's Special Operators and their families; however, the outlook remains unchanged.

At a recent live-streaming Special Operations Forces Industry Conference meeting, Army General Richard D. Clarke, Commander of the United States Special Operations Command, reported that countering violent extremists will continue to be the number one priority for U.S. Special Operators.

As the Department of Defense continues to depend on Special Operations Forces to fight against oppression overseas, Special Operators will continue to bear the burden of an aggressive deployment tempo. They'll continue carrying out dangerous missions to counter extremist and terrorist groups, some of which are increasing attacks in countries weakened by COVID-19.

This year, and every year, Operation Healing Forces is proud to contribute to the healing, well-being, and resilience of those who serve our country. OHF has continued working to meet the expanding needs of Special Operators and their families throughout 2020, and we look forward to continuing this vital work.

We remain dedicated to our mission and are grateful that so many donors and supporters stand alongside us. Thanks to the unwavering support of our generous donors, OHF is on pace for another year of record-breaking fundraising success.

The inspiring support of OHF donors inspired this newsletter spotlighting the contributions of some of our dedicated supporters. Inside, you can learn more about a few of the generous people who pour time, talent, and treasure into OHF. With their help, and yours, we'll continue creating bonds that cure this year, next year, and beyond.

Very Respectfully,

Jeff Hudson

Lieutenant Colonel (R), U.S. Army

Operation Healing Forces, Executive Director



**If your actions
inspire others to
dream more, learn
more, do more and
become more, you
are a leader.**

— John Quincy Adams

**November 11 is
OHF "Giving Day"**

**Help OHF achieve
our giving day goal
of \$25,000**

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HEALING SUPPORT

Joe Geiger, Pennsylvania President and CEO, First Nonprofit Foundation

As President and CEO of First Nonprofit Foundation and a former citizen ambassador for the U.S. Army War College, Joe Geiger has a deep affinity for public service and military life. When he learned about Operation Healing Forces and its work to support the Special Operations community, he knew he wanted to be involved.

First Nonprofit Foundation's support of OHF includes funding travel costs for retreat participants, meals, and therapeutic activities at OHF retreats. When Geiger met retreat participants in person at a 2019 dinner in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, he felt the impact of those contributions, he says.

Meeting the couples at the dinner delivered a rare personal perspective on the challenges facing Special Operators and their spouses, says Geiger. "It was motivating, it was humbling, it was deepening, it reinforced everything that I thought I felt about the special people who serve our country in this capacity."

With a background that includes more than four decades of experience in education, human resources, and nonprofit management, Geiger is selective about the organizations he supports. "Gary Markel had a great vision when he started this program; it represents the best of what nonprofits do," he says.

Most Americans don't think about the intense risk, uncertainty, and sacrifice experienced by Special Operators and their families, Geiger notes. Through his involvement with OHF, he wants to continue to spread the word. "I wish that people in this country had a better understanding of what these people do for us. I think most families understand that if something happens to one member of the family, it happens to everyone in the family. But it's harder for people to understand just what it's like for a spouse of a Special Operator, not knowing what dangers they're facing every day, not knowing if you'll see them again."

Meeting Special Operations Forces couples through OHF has been life-changing, he says. "It's hard to put into words the sense of pride I



Joe Geiger

have when I see what these Special Operators are doing. Having met a few of the couples, there's no way I couldn't step up and do something special for an organization like OHF that's helping both the warrior and the special people in that warrior's life. Special Operators represent everything good about our country, and I can't thank them enough for their service."

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SERVE AND PROTECT

Wendy Houser, Texas Executive Territory Officer, Markel Corporation



Wendy Houser

"The foundation of the family is that bond between spouses; that's what keeps a family happy and healthy. Operation Healing Forces works to strengthen this foundation to bring well-being to the entire family."

Everyone connected to Operation Healing Forces feels a strong sense of purpose around the organization's mission: Helping Special Operations Forces Veterans transition to fulfilling post-military lives. For longtime OHF supporter Wendy Houser, the connection is personal.

Houser joined the U.S. Navy at 17, several years before Operation Desert Storm began. "I was at Camp Pendleton outside of San Diego for training when we heard about Iraq invading Kuwait in 1990," she recalls. "All of the sudden we knew we'd be doing this for real." A college junior, Houser was deployed to Bahrain as a hospital corpsman.

The abrupt overseas deployment was disruptive to her college education and her life, says Houser. "But it's so minor compared to what this elite group of individuals and their families go through. The high concentration of deployments puts a tremendous amount of stress on Special Operators and their families."

Houser learned about Operation Healing Forces in its early days through her career with Markel Corporation. Now an Executive Territory Officer for Markel, Houser regularly contributes to OHF's fundraising efforts and serves as an executive sponsor for the Markel Veterans Program, an initiative created to support career transitions for Special Operations Forces veterans. "I have a great interest in giving back to these individuals who have given so much of their lives to protect our country," she says.

The program's focus on the family unit, instead of the individual operator, makes OHF's program stand out from other organizations, Houser says. "The foundation of the family is that bond between spouses; that's what keeps a family happy and healthy. Operation Healing Forces works to strengthen this foundation to bring well-being to the entire family. I don't think there are other organizations out there helping veterans and their families in this unique way."



Philip Connell

FAMILY BONDS

Philip C. Connell South Carolina Oppenheimer & Company Inc.

Philip C. Connell of South Carolina knows firsthand the stress, fear, and uncertainty experienced by the loved ones of deployed service members. When Connell's stepson deployed to Afghanistan with the U.S. Marine Corps, he didn't go a day without worry, he says.

"I was extremely proud of his service, but when he deployed, my whole perspective shifted," Connell says. "You never sleep through the night, because you're expecting a phone call; you know they're in harm's way."

When his stepson returned safely from deployment, Connell's gratitude and relief inspired him to help support the nation's other veterans. "I felt I needed to start doing something to give back, just to repay some of what our soldiers are doing for us," he says.

Connell learned about Operation Healing Forces through a close family member and felt drawn to the organization's focus on mental and emotional well-being for veterans. Today, he serves on the organiza-

tion's board of directors and supports fundraising efforts nationwide.

"At OHF, we have a laser focus on the mental health of the operator and his family. We try to address the invisible, non-physical needs to help with the tremendous emotional stress and turmoil experienced by the family," he says. "We give them a chance to connect with other Special Operators in a safe environment, and we give the spouses a chance to connect with a network of support, as well, which is an enormous relief and source of support."

Supporting OHF gives donors the opportunity to directly impact the lives of Special Operations Forces families because 100 percent of donor contributions go directly to cover retreat expenses and immediate needs for program participants, something that makes the organization unique, Connell notes. "I think it's just huge that Gary and Tony fund the operation's expenses out of their own pockets. If you give OHF a dollar, it's going to directly benefit Special Operators."

It's not the size of a donor's checkbook that matters most, he notes. "As a society, we're judged by how well we treat our veterans, and we can all do a little bit more. No matter who we are and what resources we have, we can all do a little more to help those who are helping us."

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GENERATIONAL GRATITUDE

Charles and Lisa Luck, Virginia Luck Companies

For Charles and Lisa Luck, supporting Operation Healing Forces is part of a longstanding family tradition of honoring military service. The family's strong ties to the military span decades: Four generations of Luck family members have attended Virginia Military Institute (VMI) in Lexington City, Virginia.

"My father served in the Air Force and many of my VMI classmates went on to military careers," says Charles. "Attending a four-year military college gave me a huge respect for military history and service. The price they pay is enormous."

When Lisa met Tony Markel through her own charitable work, she learned about Operation Healing Forces and shared the discovery with Charles. The values and mission of OHF aligned well with the Luck Company's model of values-based leadership, and Charles and Lisa decided to get involved.

"Luck Companies is a family business with a very strong values-based leadership program," says Charles. "The idea that OHF focuses on supporting couples really lined up well with our values as a family. To me, it's much richer than just providing stand alone support for the operator."

Donating the use of their home in the Bahamas for OHF retreats has been especially rewarding, says Lisa. "We got to FaceTime with the couples at each retreat and that made it real for us. We got to see what it really meant for them to be able to spend a week working on themselves and their relationship. It was very meaningful for us, and we feel so blessed to have been able to share in that."



Charles and Lisa Luck

Helping those who are fighting against oppression worldwide makes supporting OHF uniquely meaningful, says Charles. "I think 99 percent of people in the world don't really understand what these Special Operators do. They're not only providing freedom for us in the U.S., they're providing freedom for people who are oppressed or under attack throughout the world. The resiliency, rigor, and grit that they embody is so rare."

Contributing to OHF is an ongoing expression of the family's gratitude, says Lisa. "I want to thank them for the sacrifices made on my behalf, my family's behalf, and the nation's behalf."

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GIVING BACK

Cyndi Massad, Virginia Senior Vice President and Private Wealth Advisor, SunTrust/Truist



Cyndi Massad

**"I want to say
thank you to the
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Cyndi Massad remembers learning about the importance of giving back through volunteering with her father, a military veteran. "My father was a wartime veteran and lifelong Navy Chaplain. He exemplified honor, strength, compassion, and love of our country. When he worked with the young military men and women, he combined the knowledge he had with his huge heart, to help them through some of the most difficult times in their young lives," she says.

Helping others became a family tradition that Massad carries on through her support of Operation Healing Forces. "I remember as a young girl, helping him deliver turkeys at Thanksgiving to young military families who were in need," she says. "My father did what he could, and I follow his example to this day."

Now a senior vice president and client advisor with SunTrust, Massad learned about Operation Healing Forces through founder Gary Markel. "Gary and Tony Markel shared their passion and respect for our veterans and how they were helping them acclimate with their families and life at home after dealing with immense wartime stress," she recalls. "Their enthusiasm was off the charts!"

Their dedication to Special Operations Forces veterans was inspiring, says Massad. Today, the organization's mission is even more critical. "We are all in a highly stressful time right now and our veterans are feeling it even more intensely," she notes. "People are questioning the direction of our country and those in authority. Those who protect us are being challenged. Our veterans need our support, especially in these times."

More than ever, she's grateful to our nation's Special Operators and their families for the sacrifices they continue to make. "I want to say thank you to the Special Operations Forces community. You do what most of us cannot: go to war to serve our country and protect our freedom. We are with you and will continue to honor and support you. You are truly our heroes!"

CONNECT WITH OHF

Please Consider Supporting 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. The notion alone we've heard from so many SOF families, "I didn't think anyone cared," and then to hear them say, "I am overwhelmed that someone who doesn't even know me took the time to make a positive difference in our lives, there are good Americans still out there who do care."

Offering these restorative, life-changing programs takes the support of dedicated donors like you. Please consider making a tax deductible donation to OHF to support the special operations community. Please note, all donations go 100% to program costs to support our special operators and their families as Gary & Tony Markel personally cover 100% of OHF's overhead expenses. *Every dollar you give will go directly towards benefiting Special Operators and their families.*

Wednesday, November 11 is OHF "Giving Day"
Please help OHF achieve our giving day goal of \$25,000
International Diamond Center, our generous Giving Day sponsor,
will match all donations collected dollar for dollar!



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.

Helping SOF SOAR

Now more than ever, SOF families need your support. In 2020, OHF is expanding its support for immediate and crisis needs, career transitions, employment, caregivers and spouses, and financial planning. To contribute or learn more about these programs, please contact Resources Director, Desiree Holley, at desiree.holley@ophf.org or 813.480.6078.

SOAR (Special Operations Additional Resources) Programs

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

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.

Providing a home for an OHF retreat is an unforgettable gift and an extremely rewarding way to support SOF couples; just ask Charles and Lisa Luck, who shared their experience on page 5 of this newsletter.



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 to learn more about opening your home or how else you can aid our nation's Special Operators and their families.

Four Ways You Can Help!



1

Cash Contributions
(100% to program costs)



2

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



3

Donate your Airline Miles
It's easy. Call or email Desiree Holley to find out how. 813-480-6078
desiree.holley@ophf.org



4

Donate through Amazon Smile
Search for Operation Healing Forces at 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 or by mail to:

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Creating bonds that cure.

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