



OHF INTEL

3rd Quarter 2024

A Quarterly Report from Operation Healing Forces

*Dear Gary and Denise Markel, Tony and Betsy Markel,
and all OHF Donors and Staff,*

This week you provided us with a once in a lifetime experience that would not have been possible without your generosity. It takes a big heart to give to those you do not know and an even bigger heart to give without the expectation of receiving anything in return.

It's no secret that the lives of Special Operations military families is unique. We are challenged in ways most families can't wrap their heads around. We push through those challenges relentlessly and try to maintain a sense of normalcy while doing so. Our marriages are pushed to the brink of failure and we have to fight through reintegration time and time again. The kids are so used to "goodbyes" that they don't even bat an eye at the thought of it anymore. Luxury was getting him on the phone in time to see his babies being delivered all from a world away. So, while our service members are absolutely drained from the demands of their job, each family member is exhausted in their own way.

The best remedy for this type of stress? Some would say a vacation. And while that seems like such a simple answer, it's more complicated for us. Since the Army isn't exceptionally generous with its pay, and some would argue less generous giving time off, a trip like this was never in the books for us. When I say that you provided us with a once in a lifetime opportunity, I mean it. Your involvement with this organization gave us the chance to step away from reality. It gave us time to meet other families who live through the same challenges that we do. You brought together a group of people who appreciate and understand each other so deeply. It's so healing to be surrounded by people who just understand your life without needing any explanation. Your donations gave four couples a chance to forget the stress of home and work and to focus on each other. This trip was a chance to heal and grow our relationships and fall in love a little more. Your donations brought me a new lifelong friend who I talk to every day now. Thanks to you, we got to celebrate our anniversary together for the first time in 11 years.

Please never underestimate the impact you are having on others through your donations. It's not lost on us how much you give to make these retreats happen. Thank you for the new friends we have made, the time I had with my husband before he heads back overseas soon, the amazing home you shared, the delicious food, the beautiful views, the amazing memories. Thank you, thank you, thank you, from the bottom of our hearts.

*Love,
The Bentley Family*



Building Brighter Futures

September was National Suicide Prevention Month, a time to raise awareness and highlight the importance of support and connection in preventing the tragic loss of our nation's heroes.

Operation Healing Forces is dedicated to enhancing protective factors that contribute to veterans' mental well-being while reducing the risk factors that lead to their struggles. OHF's programs are specifically designed to provide the care, connection, and community that Special Operations Forces service members and their families need to navigate the unique challenges and build brighter futures.

IN THIS ISSUE

- p2** The Gift of Time
- p3** A Journey of Hope
- p4** Together We Grow
- p5** Teeing Off and Turning In
- p6** Welcome to the Team



THE GIFT OF TIME

Command Sergeant Major Chris Miller has dedicated 24 years of service, driven by his commitment to others. Enlisting at the age of 18 in the year 2000, he initially planned to serve just three years. However, after the events of September 11th, his purpose shifted. “Giving back to the nation is what kept me here,” he shared, highlighting the deep sense of duty that fuels his continued service.

With so many years dedicated to serving our nation, Chris missed out on important family moments like birthdays, anniversaries, and the small, everyday experiences that create treasured memories. “Time is a precious commodity that you can’t get back,” Chris noted, however over the years he has learned how to find balance, making his relationships a priority while continuing to thrive in his career. “When it’s all said and done, you want to look to the left and to the right when you’re holding that retirement flag, and your family is still there intact,” explains Chris.

For Chris and his wife, Sherita, their Operation Healing Forces couples retreat provided a wonderful chance to focus on nurturing their relationship. Having been a long-time supporter of OHF, Chris often encouraged younger service members to take advantage of the retreats. But after stepping into a demanding new role, he realized he too needed a break. With Chris Stowe as their retreat guide, the Millers embraced new experiences, many of which

pushed them outside their comfort zone. “We are both terrified of heights,” Chris shared about their hot air balloon adventure, “but we got up there, and it was so peaceful, it was quiet.”

Not only did Chris and Sherita strengthen their own connection, but they also formed meaningful bonds with the other couples. Chris noted how quickly the wives bonded, while the Operators took a bit longer to open up. “I think it’s in our SOF culture—we like to see who’s in the room first,” Chris explained. “But by the end, we were bro-hugging, exchanging emails, and connecting on LinkedIn. We got into deeper conversations once that barrier was broken.” Having an entire week together, rather than just a few hours or days, made all the difference—time built trust, and trust created the space for genuine connections to grow.

“All of the couples that were there, we all experienced the same stressors, but we all agreed that we are overcomers. When you go back home and talk to your family or friends, if they are not in this community they don’t understand it. It’s a different lifestyle. (The retreat) was confirmation that all the couples are experiencing it, we are not in this alone. OHF provided that opportunity to help tackle it along with others who experience it too.”

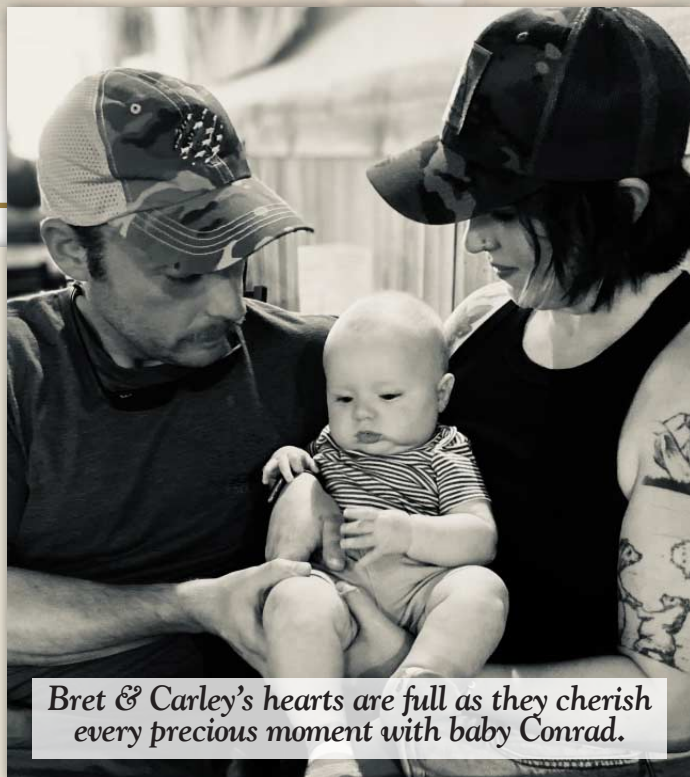


A JOURNEY OF HOPE

Infertility is often a silent struggle, particularly for those in the Special Operations community. Exposure to environmental toxins, including endocrine disruptors and heavy metals, combined with the stress of combat, can significantly impact fertility. Physical injuries such as spinal cord injuries and traumatic brain injuries (TBI) further complicate the ability to conceive. Given that Special Operators often face extended deployments to combat zones, the risk of infertility increases, yet, support from insurance is disappointingly lacking.

For 12-year Green Beret Bret Morrow and his wife, Carley, the dream of expanding their family turned into a lengthy and emotional struggle. They initially sought guidance from military doctors and tried natural methods such as diet and lifestyle adjustments. But after five years of exhausting every avenue without success, IVF became their only path forward. Unfortunately, with limited assistance from military insurance, the Morrows were left feeling financially drained and emotionally discouraged.

Their journey took a hopeful turn when they met Glen Mason, a retired Green Beret and OHF retreat program manager, who encouraged them to attend an Operation Healing Forces therapeutic couples retreat. There, they learned about the tremendous support OHF offers to SOF families through its Immediate Needs



Bret & Carley's hearts are full as they cherish every precious moment with baby Conrad.

Program. This connection was pivotal for Bret and Carley, as it led to OHF funding their IVF treatments and enabling them to continue pursuing their dream of becoming parents.

In April, after a successful pregnancy resulting from IVF therapy, Bret and Carley welcomed their son, Conrad.

"We are exceptionally grateful," they stated. "We would not have a kiddo right now if it had not been for organizations like yours." The Morrows are eager to share their story with others, hoping to inspire SOF couples facing similar challenges. "I'm a big advocate," Bret says, "and want to spread the word about the wonderful things OHF is doing for our community."

TOGETHER WE GROW

Operation Healing Forces is proud to announce our partnership with SLNT, a leading innovator in privacy, security, and health-protective products.

In today's digitally saturated environment, SLNT stands as a beacon of security and peace of mind. Specializing in advanced signal-blocking

Faraday bags and accessories, SLNT shields devices from unwanted access and tracking. Amid rising cyber threats and invasive surveillance, SLNT ensures that digital footprints remain under individual control. Their innovative products, rooted in simplicity, effectiveness, and style, block all wireless signals, including GPS, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and cellular networks.

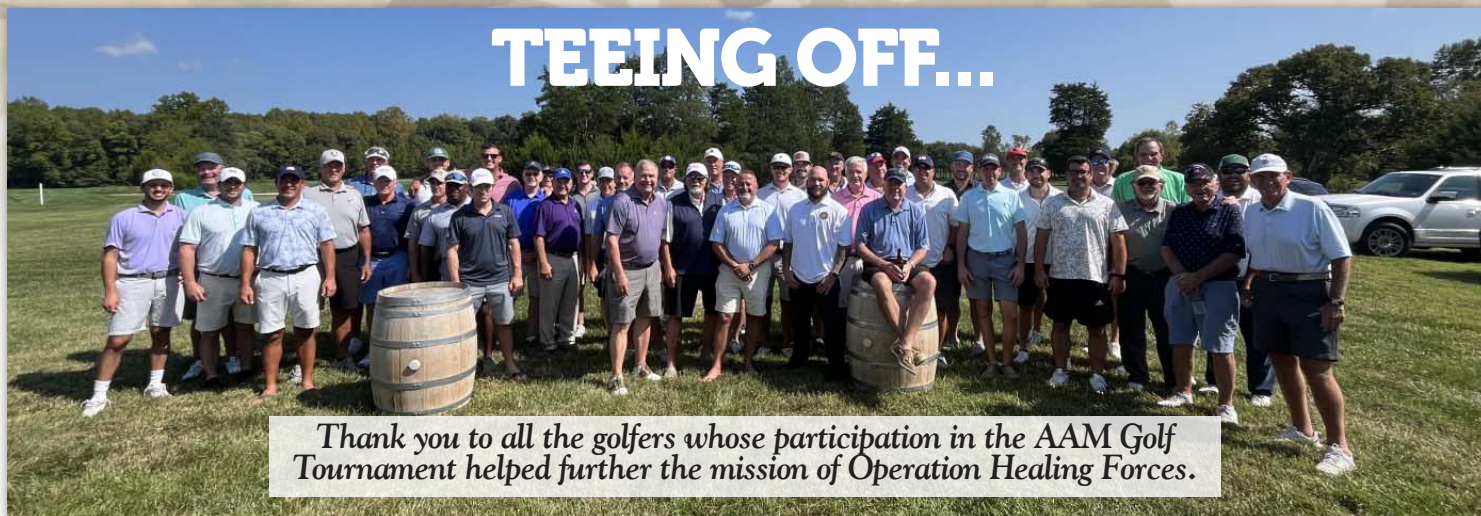
Holding six military contracts, SLNT is dedicated to supporting the brave men and women who serve our country both on and off the battlefield. This commitment extends beyond product innovation to active community engagement. Partnering with nonprofits like Operation Healing Forces, SLNT works to raise awareness and give back to those who have sacrificed so much. Their efforts highlight a mission that intertwines digital privacy with heartfelt support for military families, making a meaningful impact on and off the battlefield.

Earlier this quarter, SLNT generously ran a promotion, donating a portion of all sales to OHF for a limited time. In addition, SLNT provided a significant discount, allowing OHF to equip staff members with Faraday bags designed to safeguard their privacy and protect the confidentiality of those they serve. There is great excitement surrounding the ongoing partnership with SLNT and the positive effects it will have on the organization.



**Discover the power of silence with
SLNT and take control of digital
privacy today at www.SLNT.com**

TEERING OFF...



Thank you to all the golfers whose participation in the AAM Golf Tournament helped further the mission of Operation Healing Forces.

In September, Operation Healing Forces hosted the 2024 Anne Arundell Mannor Golf Tournament, with every dollar raised from this two-day tournament and dinner program directly benefitting OHF's mission. With a total of 16 teams and beautiful weather, the event fostered an incredible experience of golf and camaraderie. Many attendees have been long-time supporters of Operation Healing Forces, while new participants joined as a result of recent partnerships.

A special note of appreciation is given to the military dignitaries who returned again this year. Their willingness to play, share insights, and demonstrate support for Operation Healing Forces exemplifies the commitment that drives progress forward. The bonds formed during this event are invaluable, highlighting the unity and shared dedication to creating a lasting, meaningful impact in the Special Operations Forces community.

...AND TUNING IN

In August, team members Kerry Irvin, Desiree Holley, Phillip Fong, and Rachael Marshlack had the privilege of attending the 2024 Songwriters 4 Vets event, an evening that celebrated inspiring music and the heartfelt stories behind each song. This remarkable event highlighted the deep connection between music and the experiences of our nation's heroes.

Songwriters 4 Vets has shown unwavering commitment to supporting Operation Healing Forces by selecting the organization as a beneficiary of this impactful annual gathering. OHF is profoundly grateful for this partnership, which plays a vital role in advancing the mission to help Special Operations Forces and their families thrive.

OHF team members shared a memorable evening of great music and valuable connections.



SONGWRITERS 4 VETS

August 24, 2024

WELCOME TO THE TEAM RACHAEL MARSHLACK



Earlier this summer, OHF welcomed Rachael Marshlack to the Operation Healing Forces team as Corporate and Foundations Relationship Manager. A proud daughter of a retired Green Beret, Rachael brings a deep personal connection to America's Special Operations Forces. She understands the triumphs and challenges faced by those who serve and is committed to enhancing OHF's mission through her extensive network in the Tampa Bay area and beyond.

In addition to her role at OHF, Rachael is an NFL Cheerleader for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, a position she has held for five seasons. Her experiences with the league, including international military tours, allow her to combine her passion for dance with her dedication to supporting the military. Rachael is dedicated to raising awareness and promoting long-term well-being within the SOF community, striving to build a stronger, more resilient network for our nation's heroes and their families.

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, the SOF community need your support. OHF continues to expand its programs to provide for immediate needs, SOF spouses and caregivers, and assistance with career transitions, employment, 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
- Access to Financial Planning Experts
- Transition Assistance
- Alumni Support

A Home for Healing:

The phenomenal growth in our retreat numbers has resulted in more couples having the opportunity to participate in our life-changing retreat program. This growth, however, also means that Operation Healing Forces is in need of homes to house these SOF couples and SOF caregivers, and serve as settings for the connections that help create bonds that cure.

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 needs for retreat locations in 2024 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!



Cash contributions.*

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



Donate a Home.*

5-bedroom/5-bath home for a week.



Host an in-home reception* introducing OHF's mission to your friends and neighbors



Donate your airline miles.

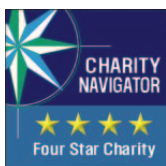
Email Desiree at desiree.holley@ophf.org to find out how

***Contact Kerry Irvin, kerry.irvin@ophf.org to learn more.**

OHF's Retreat Program and Immediate Needs are especially meaningful and healing to the Special Operations Forces community because these opportunities are offered at no cost to the participants. By alleviating the burden of financial stress, deserving elite warriors and their families can access much-needed respite and focus on restoring and strengthening each other's bonds which makes a significant difference in the healing process.

OHF's transformative programs are only possible thanks to our 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 that **100% of your donation** will go toward supporting our programs. **This unique assurance is possible because of the committed support of our board of directors, who personally cover every penny of OHF's overhead expenses. *That means every dollar you give will go directly toward 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 firsthand - clients served, volunteers and donors.

FOLLOW US on Social Media



Thank you for supporting 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

www.operationhealingforces.org

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