



OHF INTEL

1st Quarter 2023

A Quarterly Report from Operation Healing Forces

Answer That Little Angel

Dear Friends and Supporters of Operation Healing Forces,

Several years ago, a friend of mine introduced me to OHF on the “off chance” that the mission of this organization would inspire me to get involved. After visiting Fort Bragg to observe and participate in several excursions, I was overwhelmed with enthusiasm. Not only with the excitement of the activities (loved tandem jumping) but with the incredible warriors I met. I became acquainted with several couples who participated in the OHF Couples Retreats and our other outreach programs. It was moving to see and hear firsthand how these programs have helped them repair and enhance their relationships, as well as, assist these brave warriors in their various struggles to adjust and reintegrate into civilian life.

My husband, recently deceased, was an Army Ranger with the 82nd Airborne. Although a man of great accomplishments on so many levels, he was proudest of being a Ranger. I feel a true personal satisfaction to honor him with my support and involvement in OHF. What a joy to witness the truly great work and support that OHF, the incredible staff, volunteers and donors provide to help these brave individuals.

In this newsletter, you will read about the wonderful assistance OHF provides to so many of our veterans in need. It's certainly no secret that the Veteran's Administration is challenged and, often, incapable of providing for the special needs of these amazing warriors. That's where OHF comes in to “vet” these special needs and provide assistance where possible. So many of their requests for assistance may, at times, be unusual and fall outside the purview of the V.A. – so it's up to US at OHF. So, if in your quiet hours, you feel a little angel tapping on your shoulder about someone who served our country and may be in distress, however nameless to you, please consider OHF as that conduit to answer that little angel.

*With gratitude,
Robin Howell
Member of the Board
Operation Healing Forces*



HELPING FAMILIES IN CRISIS

Thanks to your support, Operation Healing Forces continues to make a significant difference in the lives of special operators and their families:

\$3.2 million
toward supporting
SOF families in crisis.

2,100 SOF
and their families
served each year.

50 SOF couples
retreats & 8 caregiver
retreats planned
in 2023.

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CLEANING UP CANCER

Cancer wasn't on 49-year-old Kevin Deary's radar when he went in for his routine doctor's appointment at the VA last spring. An active outdoorsman and father of three, the retired Army Ranger was working full-time and had just started an online master's degree program.

After a take-home cancer screening and a subsequent colonoscopy discovered abnormalities, Kevin was referred to an oncologist at Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, FL, where he was diagnosed with stage 3B colon cancer. The baseball-sized tumor had spread from his colon into the muscle wall and had impacted several lymph nodes.

Maintaining a clean environment is essential to immunocompromised cancer patients. To help, Operation Healing Forces funded and coordinated six months of weekly deep cleanings for the Dearys' home.

"My wife Katryna has been instrumental in my treatment and recovery, working overtime to help me and do her normal job. And the kids have taken on a lot of the chores in and around the house to help me out, but there are some aspects they can't handle," Kevin says, who has battled severe fatigue, dehydration, stomach cramping and nausea during the course of the aggressive treatment protocol. "The cleaning has been a godsend. It's been extremely helpful not just for me, but the entire family."

With the tumor in retreat, Kevin looks forward to life returning to normal and expects to complete the last phase of his treatment—surgery—this spring.



Kevin with his strongest allies, wife Katryna and their daughters Delaney, Ava, and Brynn.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

In the early hours of a dark January morning, Tommy Bender, who is stationed at Hurlburt Field Air Force Base, FL, got a call that his 21-year-old son Hunter, of Odessa, MO, had been seriously injured and was in emergency surgery. Tommy wasted no time jumping into the car to make the 14-1/2 hour trip to be by his son's side.

"My son had a handgun out and asked his roommate to put it up in his room. When the roommate went to make sure the gun was not loaded, it somehow malfunctioned and went off. Four bullets went off at one time and three of the bullets hit my son—in the groin, the stomach, and right in the neck," Tommy says.

With Hunter in ICU for two weeks, Tommy needed extended lodging. Referred by his first sergeant, Tommy applied for financial assistance through Operation Healing Forces Immediate Needs Program. Operation Healing Forces covered the cost of a hotel located just minutes from the hospital.

Hunter is now on the road to recovery.



Tommy's son Hunter recovering from his injuries.



"Operation Healing Forces asked me what I needed, and they made it happen," Tommy says. "It definitely made my time up there a lot less stressful."

FINDING PEACE



Bill and Cheryl Edmonds of Cambria, CA, are used to caring for others. Not only are they the parents of two daughters, ages 13 and 11, but they also provide therapeutic care at a local holistic inpatient substance addiction treatment center for active duty service members and veterans. At the Operation Healing Forces Couples Retreat in Kauai, HI in January, it was their turn for some much-needed TLC.

"The whole thing was amazing—beautiful meals like tacos on the beach and fresh seafood, bonding with the other couples. We just had fun. It was that carefree feeling of being a kid," Cheryl says. "We spent three full days surfing—that was definitely a highlight."

Bill agrees. "I loved the surfing and appreciated interacting with the instructors



Bill and Cheryl catch a wave together.

about how they used surfing as part of their healing journey." Operation Surf, which provided the instructors for the retreat, helps veterans experience healing from emotional wounds through the power of surfing.

"Surfing can be seen as a metaphor for life," Bill says, who is a Purple Heart and Bronze Star with Valor Device recipient, and the critically acclaimed author of the memoir *God is Not Here*. "Some days can be flat water and some days crashing waves. You have to learn to surf and not fight what is, go with the flow, respect the ocean, and not resist it and fight back. Surfing is a metaphor for healing as well. It's an opportunity to discover inner peace on the waves."

BACK IN THE WORLD AGAIN

There was a time when Patrick and Chris Flatley of Falcon, CO, barely left their home. Patrick, a retired Green Beret, suffers from PTSD and traumatic brain injuries due to a conglomeration of life-altering events and injuries while deployed to war zones across the Middle East, including the tragic loss of his teammates when two of their helicopters were shot down in Bosnia.

The PTSD triggered debilitating nightmares, anger, depression, and crushing nervousness in crowds and traffic. "I was reluctant to leave the house and go do recreational stuff without Pat because I worried something would happen, and I'd need to drop whatever I was doing to come home and keep the peace," Chris says.

After trying an array of treatments including antidepressants and counseling, Patrick was close to giving up. He finally found relief from his symptoms after



Chris and Pat Flatley

receiving a grant from Veterans Exploring Treatment Options (VETS) to participate in a Stanford University study examining the effects of psychedelics to heal PTSD.

The treatment which includes ongoing video call support has given Patrick and Chris their lives back, enabling them to attend an Operation Healing Forces Couples Retreat in Vail, CO last summer. The couple enjoyed horseback riding, zip-lining, mountain biking, and white water rafting together.

"This was our first chance to get back out into the world, and it was motivating for both of us," Chris says. "The retreat was peaceful. I was able to relax because I was able to see Pat relax. It was also nice to be like mentors to the other couples. Even through the trials of PTSD, we're 30 years in and still going strong."



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.

"My father was a Navy Chaplain for 30 years and served overseas away from family for a significant amount of that time. I remember the tears when he left and the excitement and great relief when he returned. It is widely known that military service members and their families give much of themselves for our country's freedom, but often unknown are the sacrifices associated with their service—mental anguish, physical ailments, family separations, and a high rate of suicide and divorce. Helping and supporting the special operations community through OHF is a great honor."

— OHF Supporter Cyndi Massad, Senior Vice President, Banking Industry

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
- Immediate Needs Crisis Assistance

• SOF Caregiver & Spouse Retreats

- Ambassador Dinner
- Counseling Assistance Program
- Tax Preparation

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 7 days. We have immediate needs for retreat locations in 2023 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.

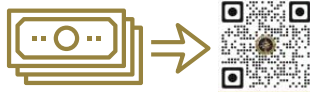
Donating stock to charity is as easy as calling your financial advisor and providing transfer instructions. To learn how to make a stock donation for Operation Healing Forces, visit **<https://OperationHealingForces.org/Donate>** or contact **Kerry Irvin** at **kerry.irvin@ophf.org**.

Giving to Operation Healing Forces is Easier Than Ever!

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



Four Ways You Can Help!



Cash contributions.*

1

100% goes 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.*

Introduce 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.

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

OHF's Retreats, Immediate Needs, and other programs 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.

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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