



OHF INTEL

3rd Quarter 2022

A Quarterly Report from Operation Healing Forces

Meaningful Support that Makes a Difference

Dear Friends and Supporters of Operation Healing Forces,

First and foremost, I would like to thank Gary and Tony Markel for the opportunity to serve OHF alongside such dedicated board and team members.

To be honest, when I was first approached, I did not have the proper knowledge or understanding of the special operations forces (SOF) community. It has been nothing short of eye-opening and a privilege to be able to meet, learn and spend time with such brave, loyal, and heroic individuals. Now, not a day passes where I do not recognize and give thanks for the safety and opportunity this great country has afforded not only for myself and my family but for all citizens. This feeling has been made possible by the devotion and courage of our special operations forces who have sacrificed so much for us.

As you continue to read this newsletter, you will see that firsthand. The stories of our service members and their families continue to compel me to do my small part and give back to those who protect the country, keep us safe, and guard the freedoms we hold dear while demanding nothing in return.

We all know that the first line of support for our troops is their families, so it has been our mission to ensure that upon returning home these relationships are fostered, maintained, and celebrated. Our goal is to continue to create meaningful opportunities to reconnect with loved ones. Please consider making a donation to Operation Healing Forces today. Your donation will focus all resources on special operation families who serve in all branches of the military.

*With gratitude,
Joshua Onyschuk
Member of the Board
Operation Healing Forces*



CONNECTION HEALS

The suicide rate among special operations forces is 30% higher than the general U.S. military population.

Head injuries, chronic stress, toxins, poor sleep and emotional trauma are factors that can alter brain chemistry leading to depression, anxiety and PTSD. Studies find that a healthy marriage can help prevent suicide.

[Click here to learn how you can help support OHF Couples Retreats.](#)

Need help? Call the
National Suicide Prevention
Lifeline: 988

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ONE LESS WORRY

The daughter of a fallen Green Beret, Naz Montrond, 22, Wesley Chapel, FL, isn't a typical college student. Not only is she in school full-time and working at Junior Achievement in Tampa, but she's also the sole guardian of her siblings, ages 18, 14, and 11.

Naz was just six years old when her father Sgt. Alberto Montrond, 7th Special Forces Group, was killed in Afghanistan. The Gold Star family was dealt yet another devastating blow when Naz's mother Christl died in March 2021 after a lengthy illness.

Among Naz's most pressing problems following her mom's death was figuring out who could take care of her youngest brother Bentley, then 9, before school each morning. The local elementary schools don't start until 9:15 a.m., but the rest of the family must be out the door earlier.



Naz surrounded by Arabella, Kevyn, and Bentley

"Our mom had just passed. I was so lost. I had no idea where the funds were going to come into play for me having Bentley in 'before school care,' which is expensive," Naz says. "The mortgage broker where I worked at the time was very strict and told me 'you have to be here on time or you will not have this job.' Operation Healing Forces saved me!"

Thanks to OHF's Immediate Needs Program, Naz was able to cover the cost of enrolling her brother in the "before school care" program and could continue to work and attend school without worrying about her brother being home alone. She looks forward to graduating with a degree in Health Sciences from the University of South Florida in 2023.

"At OHF, we care about all of our special operations forces and their families — especially if the service member is fallen. Even after death, we want them to know

we have their back," says Jeff Hudson, executive director of Operation Healing Forces. "We believe there is no greater act than to take care of our wounded, ill, injured, and the families of our fallen special operators, who gave all of their tomorrows so that we could have our todays. The least we can do is provide the critical support Gold Star families like the Montrond family need so they know they aren't alone as they build toward a brighter future."

SUPPORTING A WOUNDED WARRIOR

Special Forces Master Sergeant (Ret) George E. Vera, Land O'Lakes, FL, was on his fifth combat deployment to Afghanistan when his base came under attack by insurgents using a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device. Under heavy enemy fire, George and his unit worked to secure the perimeter, but two insurgents slipped through. Sustaining multiple gunshot wounds, he suffered a shattered spine, a traumatic brain injury, and the loss of vital organs.

After a long road back from his injuries, George now competes in wheelchair basketball, swimming, hand cycling, shot put, and discus at competitions designed for wounded, ill, and injured service personnel, including the Department of Defense Warrior Games and the international Invictus Games.

But one problem continues to plague him. "My legs are always swollen," he says. Despite following an active, healthy lifestyle and elevating his legs at night, the severe swelling makes his legs feel like they are asleep and "like fire ants are on you," George says. His legs become so heavy that it's difficult for him or his wife to lift him in and out of his vehicle or in and out of bed.

While competing at the Invictus Games in the Netherlands, the medical staff loaned him a pair of specialized compression boots. He couldn't believe how quickly the boots relieved his swelling. But, "they were pretty pricey," George says. A friend suggested he reach out to Operation Healing Forces Immediate Needs Program, which he did.



George competes in the Warrior Games



George with his wife Angela M. and daughter, Angela I., 15.

"Within a week, I got the compression boots. It was fast—I was super surprised," George says. "The boots got my legs down to where they are manageable for me to handle by myself. It helped out tremendously."

NEW POSSIBILITIES



*Jerry and Jennifer
explore Vail*

By the time Jerry and Jennifer Vanek, Camp Lejeune, NC, attended an Operation Healing Forces Couples Retreat this past summer in Vail, CO, they'd endured a tumultuous eight years of marriage, including lengthy deployments, pregnancy loss, and a tragic plane crash.

In 2017, Jerry, who is with Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC), was due to fly out for a training mission when Jennifer had a miscarriage. Sending

his baggage ahead, Jerry stayed behind with Jennifer, planning to depart the next day instead. But that evening, they got the horrific news that one of the KC-130s carrying members of Jerry's team had crashed in Mississippi, killing all aboard. The news sent them into a five-month tailspin, comforting the devastated widows and families, attending funerals, and helping bereaved families with logistics and memorial services.

Before they had the chance to process any of the traumatic events, Jerry left for his next deployment and Jennifer was expecting again. "After missing the birth of our daughter, Jerry came home and then went right back into the next workup for another deployment. We never were able to work on us. It almost cost us our marriage," Jennifer says. Fortunately, the couple reconciled and welcomed a baby boy in 2021.

Experiencing adventures together as a couple, like driving ATVs up the mountains, rock climbing, white-water rafting, and horseback riding, got them dreaming about future possibilities.

**"We remembered what it
was like to have fun together
again just the two of us,"
Jennifer says.**

DELICATE BALANCE

After 17 years of marriage and two children, Patrick and Ashley Toohey, Fort Bragg, NC, understand that quality time is a carefully managed resource when it comes to successfully navigating marriage through a special operations forces lifestyle. Nothing quite tested that delicate balance until December 2020 when their daughter, Maddie, now 15, experienced a baffling and frightening health crisis.

“We saw every specialist at Chapel Hill. Nobody could help us,” Ashley says. Maddie suffered from hiccups every second, even when she slept. “She would have these attacks, hiccups stacked on hiccups, so she would have a hard time breathing. I can’t tell you how many times we rushed her to the emergency room.”

Meanwhile, Patrick was starting his role as Commander of the 4th Battalion, 1st Special Warfare Training Group at Fort Bragg. “So we were shuffling back and forth between doctors appointments, trying to work, command, trying to be home for Carson (11)—just trying to juggle it all,” Patrick says.



*Patrick and Ashley kayaking
in Palm Beach*



The Toohey family

Six agonizing months later, the Tooheys finally got an answer — a misaligned jaw that “caused Maddie’s phrenic nerve to misfire and cause hiccups.” The specialist fitted her with an orthodontic device and the hiccups immediately stopped.

With Maddie healthy again, Patrick and Ashley happily accepted Operation Healing Forces’ invitation to attend a Couples Retreat in Palm Beach, FL, last June.

They enjoyed glass blowing, snorkeling, walks on the beach, and “not having to decide what we’re going to eat!” Ashley says. Best of all, “we got to soak in time together and just be the best friends that we are.”

“When all you have to do is show up and enjoy your time with your spouse, that puts money back in that bank when it comes to quality time,” Patrick says. “You can’t put a price tag on that.”

Top Honors

Congratulations to Glen Mason, an inaugural recipient of a prestigious recognition by the 3rd Special Forces Group!



Glen Mason standing under his award

As an Operation Healing Forces program liaison at Fort Bragg, NC, Glen works tirelessly to connect 3rd Special Forces personnel and their families with OHF Couples and Caregiver Retreats and with the Immediate Needs program.

Glen joins seven other distinguished men and women nominated by 3rd

Special Forces Group members who have made a significant contribution and inspired their communities beyond their military service. Their photos and bios are on display in the 3rd Special Forces Patriot Hall. As a 1st Special Forces Group veteran, Glen is the only recipient who is not a 3rd Special Forces Group member or spouse.

By working directly out of Fort Bragg, which includes up to 30,000 servicemen and women who are affiliated with Special Operations Command, Glen has built trusted relationships within the units to understand exactly what SOF personnel need help with and how OHF can deliver.

"This special recognition speaks volumes when it comes to how much Glen has helped Operation Healing Forces further its mission to serve SOF active duty, veterans, and their families in a rapid, efficient, and effective fashion," says Jeff Hudson, executive director of Operation Healing Forces.



OHF Partners with TB12 Foundation

Operation Healing Forces is proud to announce it has partnered with the TB12 Foundation in an alliance to support wounded, ill, and injured special operations forces (SOF) warriors as they keep going - despite the odds.

The nonprofit TB12 Foundation, started by seven-time Super Bowl Champion quarterback Tom Brady, has teamed up with OHF to provide SOF operators access to innovative health, wellness, and fitness resources that support tactical recovery.

SOF service members participating in select OHF therapeutic retreats will have the opportunity to experience TB12 elite physical and mental training methodologies either on-site during a retreat or at one of the TB12 Performance and Recovery Centers located in Foxboro, Boston, or Tampa.

The program kicked off this July with a TB12 body coach onsite at one of the Naples, FL therapeutic retreats to share information with SOF couples about a holistic approach to mental and physical wellness based upon the TB12 Method developed by Tom Brady and his longtime personal trainer, Alex Guerrero. The TB12 body coach provided therapeutic massages to the couples and offered instruction on how to incorporate the different major components of the TB12 Method into their everyday lifestyles.

This exclusive partnership also provides for eligible wounded SOF operators who are members of the OHF Alumni network to receive scholarships, affording them the opportunity to take part in multiple therapeutic fitness, training, and recovery sessions at an on-site TB12 Center.

The inaugural recipient of the OHF and TB12 Scholarship program had his first session at the Tampa TB12 Center in July. SSG (Ret) Travis Dunn, was seriously injured when shot during combat operations while serving with Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. Not one to allow obstacles to prevent him from enjoying life with his wife and daughter, Travis has continued to place physical and mental wellness as a priority in his life. He is a member of a wheelchair basketball team and aspires to complete an adaptive triathlon. His sessions with the TB12 body coaches will provide him with training, tools, and insights designed to assist him as he incorporates the TB12 Method's principles of pliability, fitness conditioning, hydration, nutrition, supplementation, and cognitive exercises into his daily life to help him achieve his goals.

For more details on how OHF Alumni can qualify for the OHF and TB12 Scholarship Program, contact info@operationhealingforces.org.



Inaugural OHF-TB12 Scholarship recipient SSG (Ret) Travis Dunn and his family

Welcome to the Team!

Elizabeth Christiana

We are pleased to welcome Elizabeth (Liz) Christiana to the Operation Healing Forces team as our Corporate and Foundations Relationship Manager!

Liz has an extensive background in serving the military community for over 15 years. She is a licensed attorney and practiced for almost a decade in Cumberland County, NC, which encompasses Fort Bragg, the largest military installation in the country and the home of the Airborne and Special Operation Forces. As a prosecutor, public defender, and private practice attorney, she worked daily with service members and their families to seek justice. She is keenly aware of the unique hardships and struggles facing military families, especially with her experience in practice areas such as family law and domestic violence matters.

Liz also has volunteered in the Judge Advocate General's office at Pope Army Airfield and served in various other positions, including defense counsel and member of the Cumberland County Veterans Treatment Court where she provided resources to veterans in crisis and legal representation to veterans in the court system.

Liz has been a military spouse for over 12 years and is the mother of three children. A self-professed foodie, she is an adventurous spirit who loves history, traveling, and learning new languages. Liz believes strongly in the American dream and feels privileged to live in the best country in the world. She is a first-generation American whose parents came to the U.S. from Portugal in the 1970s, became U.S. citizens, and put two daughters through law school.

President Harry Truman once said, "Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in service to our country can never be repaid." As part of the OHF team, Liz is excited to serve the Special Operations Forces community and help chip away at that immeasurable debt in any way she can.



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% 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

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.

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 founders, Gary and Tony Markel, 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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