



OHF INTEL

3rd Quarter 2023

A Quarterly Report from Operation Healing Forces

Milestones and Momentum

Dear Friends and Supporters of Operation Healing Forces,

Operation Healing Forces is proud to stand alongside you in support of America's Special Operations Forces (SOF) community. Your support has allowed us to expand our capacity and enhance our ability to provide creative solutions that positively impact the mental, physical, emotional, and fiscal well-being of those who have sacrificed much in service to our nation.

As we near the close of our 12th year, we remain resolute in our determination to pay tribute to the wounded, ill, injured, and fallen SOF community through a suite of programs specifically designed to strengthen human bonds and empower healing. We honor our commitment to SOF by providing our tailored and proven programs to this very deserving community. The growth and success of our Therapeutic Retreat and Resource Programs is due to a strong base of committed donors and a dedicated staff who strive to perform with the same level of commitment and professionalism that America's Special Operators exude.

Our success is indelibly linked to the support of various vital partnerships that make these life-changing programs possible. Throughout the year, OHF continued to work closely with United States Special Operations Command's (USSOCOM) Warrior Care Program to provide transformative Therapeutic Retreats for SOF Couples and SOF Caregivers.

By year's end, OHF will have hosted 51 Therapeutic Retreats, offering hundreds of SOF warriors, their significant others, and their caregivers the opportunity to respite away from their daily challenges, while enhancing their resilience and creating bonds with others who can understand and relate to the unique challenges associated with a life lived at the Tip of the Spear.

OHF has had a banner year, providing critical financial assistance when it was needed the most. We received an influx of requests for benevolent assistance from USSOCOM, SOF military units, and other Chains of Concern. Due to the generosity of our patriotic supporters, OHF has proudly fulfilled more than 99% of the requests received – aiding nearly 2,000 SOF operators, veterans, and their family members through financial grants – the greatest number assisted by OHF in a single year since our inception.

OHF is also proud of the new relationships we forged with other organizations that share our passion for serving the needs of SOF heroes and their families. These partnerships have increased OHF's presence on a national level, provided awareness and access to our programs, and bolstered our capacity and reputation as a premier non-profit organization in the Special Operations Forces ecosystem.

OHF is steadfast in our commitment to America's wounded, ill, injured, and Fallen Special Operations Forces service members, veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. We are grateful to all who stand alongside us as we pay tribute to the service and sacrifice of a very deserving population of our nation's active-duty and veteran community. We trust you share our appreciation for these brave men and women and their families, and as President John F. Kennedy said, "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that highest appreciation is not to utter words but to live by them."

Thank you for living by your words and for your continued support of Operation Healing Forces - as together we **Create Bonds That Cure.**

With warm regards,
Gary Markel, Founder and Chairman
Kerry Irvin, Executive Director



Goode Ascent for a Great Cause

In July, our good friend and OHF advocate, Dave Taylor, climbed to the summit of Goode Mountain in honor of U.S. Special Operations Forces service members and their families. Operation Healing Forces was honored to be the beneficiary of Dave's Facebook Fundraising campaign, where he shared preparation details and his experience during the rigorous climb. Dave raised over \$2,000 for OHF; a generous donation that will go directly to supporting the needs of our nation's heroes.

When you host a Facebook Fundraiser, you're not only collecting funds to help impact the lives of those who sacrificed so much, but you are also spreading awareness of OHF's vital mission. If you're celebrating a birthday, competing in a race or other athletic competition, or taking part in any other special event and want to learn more about hosting a Facebook Fundraiser, email Kelsey at socialmediamanager@ophf.org

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Rick Devericks at full draw with his bow provided by OHF.

In the demanding world of Special Operations Forces, archery has emerged as an unexpected yet powerful tool for enhancing mental wellness. The focus, disciplined practice, and meditative aspects of archery offer a unique method of healing that compliment SOF service members' dedication to precision.

For medically retired Special Operations Weapon Sergeant, Rick Devericks, archery has a profound impact on his life. In 2017, Rick participated as a member of TEAM SOCOM in the Warrior Games and discovered the therapeutic properties of the sport. “(Archery) takes your mind away from where your mind might normally be at that time. It’s helped a lot with my mental stability. When I’m with my bow, I’m in my happy place for that moment,” explains Rick.

In 2019, Rick accepted the position as coach of TEAM SOCOM and has been guiding athletes to new heights ever since. In the 2023 Warrior Games, held in San Diego, CA, Rick and his team performed exceptionally, sweeping all three medals in the compound event, and taking Bronze in both individual and team in the recurve

“Archery helps guys mentally... just takes your mind off the outside world for a minute. You strictly focus on you and the bow, and concentrating on the target,” explains Rick.

TARGETED TRANQUILITY

events. Rick proudly explained, “It was the most medals TEAM SOCOM has ever taken... best we’ve ever done.”

Rick attributes much of the team’s extraordinary success to the support of their families and organizations like Operation Healing Forces. This year alone, OHF’s Special Operations Additional Resource Program (SOAR) provided TEAM SOCOM with over \$92,800 in financial assistance in areas such as lodging and travel expenses, equipment, and other costs associated with attending the prerequisite selection, training camps, and the Warrior Games Challenge in San Diego. Tom Brady’s, TB12 Foundation, a trusted and valuable OHF partner, also played a pivotal role by providing TEAM SOCOM with essential resources such as preparation and recovery gear which included mini spheres, bands, and hydration packets.

Participating in the Warrior Games not only requires months of dedicated training, but access to athletic and adaptive equipment and the means to travel to various training sites which is often difficult for Veteran athletes to fund themselves. “I speak on behalf of the guys, we are thankful for the financial support,” says Rick.



Rick and the SOCOM Archery Team at the 2023 Warrior Games.

REFOCUSED AND RECALIBRATED

Sean Shirely, active-duty Green Beret of Fort Liberty, NC, always had his sights on what's next for the last 27 years. Since beginning his military career in 1996, Sean had been fixated on getting to the next achievement, next school, the next assessment, and the next assignment. For Sean, the realization that he was not fully living in the present struck when he and his wife, Amanda, took part in an OHF retreat. It was then he realized he needed to pause and be proud of where he is now, and enjoy and appreciate his accomplishments.

Sean and Amanda's marriage has withstood four deployments to Afghanistan, two to Iraq, two to Syria, two Joint Combined Exchanges of Training (JCET) to Jordan, and one deployment to Turkey. "Over the years I've become less patient, jumpy, and many other negative impacts that come with nine combat deployments. I needed some sort of reset, nothing else was working. This opportunity was truly the perfect gift at the perfect time," said Sean.



Sean and Amanda watching the GoPro Dog competition.



Amidst Vail's stunning landscape, Sean and Amanda found a renewed connection through adventure. From white-water rafting to zip-lining and mountain biking, the Shirely's had their share of thrilling experiences together. Their favorite? Watching the GoPro dog competition, where Sean said they could have spent the whole day.

Many of our nation's SOF have a hard time accepting appreciation for their service and sacrifices. Sean admitted, "We really struggled with guilt... why do we deserve this experience? And we had to tell ourselves, we do deserve this, and it's okay."

They will forever remember enjoying coffee together on their balcony, absorbing nature's peace and the breathtaking river and mountain view. "I really feel like a changed man, refocused and recalibrated on what really matters in life."

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COURAGE AMIDST CANCER

In the Spring of 2023, Natasha Bridges, devoted wife of Special Operations Forces tech of 28 years, Anthony Bridges, faced a challenge that would test her strength and the strength of her family. With just three weeks remaining in her nursing school year, Natasha was given the devastating news of a cancer diagnosis.

Although a 10-hour commute from their home in New Albany, MS, the couple was determined to give Natasha the best care possible and decided to seek treatment at MD Anderson Cancer Center near Houston, TX. There she received the news that the non-Hodgkin's lymphoma found in her pancreas would need three continuous weeks of intense radiation to combat its growth. The journey to recovery was paved with uncertainty, and the financial burden was overwhelming.

After receiving the request for benevolent support from the Warrior Care Coalition to support Natasha,

OHF stepped in to provide essential financial assistance, covering the cost associated with hospital hotel lodging and meals during Natasha's treatment. This lifeline allowed Natasha to focus on enduring her challenging radiation sessions and focus on her recovery.

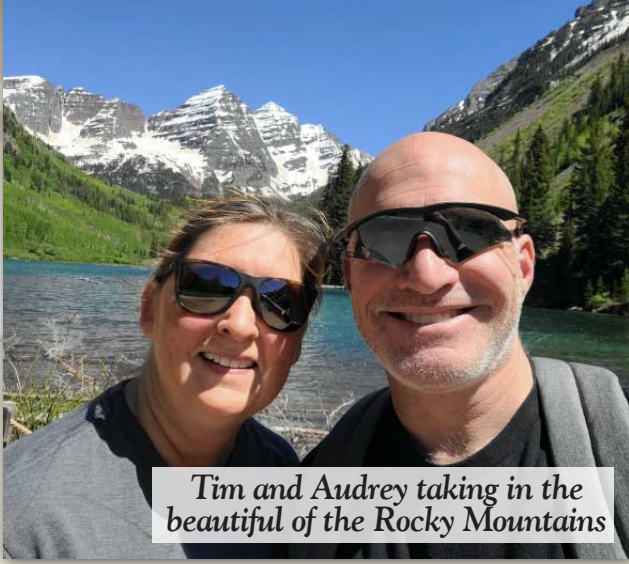
With Anthony driving back and forth to care for their four children, Natasha relied on her courage, "I would feel so sick after the treatment, I couldn't drive anywhere, the hotel right there was so convenient."

Looking ahead, Natasha understands that regular scans will be a part of her journey, but with her indomitable spirit, and the support from her loving husband and family, she faces the future with hope. Even through their own challenges, the Bridges are looking for ways to impact other's lives. "Someone helped us in our time of need and it made us realize how important it is to give back whenever we can," said Natasha.

You know when someone gives that it came from someone, somewhere. And we are just so thankful for the help."



*Anthony and Natasha Bridges
of New Albany, MS*



Tim and Audrey taking in the beautiful of the Rocky Mountains

In the United States Army, preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS), is a term that refers to the practice of inspecting all types of military equipment and performing checks, services, and maintenance before, during, and after any use. The purpose is to preserve the equipment, and enable training and mission success. After 28 years of marriage, and 16 deployments, Tim and Audrey Morgan of Fort Campbell, KY, were in great need of a “mandatory PMCS.”

Tim Morgan says he is often referred to at work as “the enigma” due to his several roles in the military while on active-duty, his military retirement and service as a local pastor, and subsequent recall back to active-duty. Tim currently serves the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) as Senior Instructor Pilot and Maintainer Examiner.

Over his 31 years of service, Tim has stepped up and faced several challenges, but the past couple of years have put extra strain on his heart and mind.

In May of 2022, Tim was tasked with investigating the crash of a Special Operations helicopter that resulted in a fatality. Just shortly after serving as Casualty Assistance Officer for the Gold Star family, his unit suffered a suicide, followed by the loss of a

MANDATORY PCMS

soldier in a motorcycle accident. Not long after these tragedies, Tim learned that two Blackhawk Helicopters had crashed 5 miles from his home.

“I arrived on scene within minutes while the flames were still burning...I spent the coming weeks ministering to the soldiers as well as the leadership of that unit, 6-101 Combat Aviation Battalion.” While Tim is grateful to have brought comfort to so many in their time of grief, he knew in his heart he needed to step away and do something for himself.

Tim and his supportive wife, Audrey, stepped away from their daily responsibilities and stressors and attended OHF’s Aspen, CO retreat in June. They were able to rest, reconnect, and “try new things that are either not available near our home, or not in our repertoire,” Tim said.

The weeklong retreat has given the Morgans, “time to PMCS ourselves, so we can be better equipped to serve our mission fields.”



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Signatures for Soldiers



Signatures for Soldiers founder, Tim Virgilio, at his home office in St. Petersburg, FL.

Operation Healing Forces is grateful to partner with Tim Virgilio and his unique nonprofit, Signatures for Soldiers, to bridge the gap between funds in our Immediate Needs Program.

As a lifelong baseball fan and autograph collector with a deep respect and appreciation for our nation's veterans, Tim decided to turn his passion into something great. In 2014, Tim founded, Signatures for Soldiers, which collects autographed memorabilia from athletes and sells them with 100% of proceeds distributed to organizations that financially support wounded, ill, and homeless veterans. Since inception, Signatures for Soldiers has donated over \$290,000 to help veterans in need.

OHF is honored to be a grant recipient of SFS, which has provided three veterans with recovery equipment through our Immediate Needs Program by either partially or fully funding the cost.

Tim says he reached out to OHF to offer assistance after speaking with OHF retreat lead, Chris Stowe. He explained that the mission of OHF is what caught his attention, and "the dedication to taking care of these men and women that have encountered situations and need the added support."

Learn more about Signatures for Soldiers and browse the autographed items for sale at www.signatures4soldiers.com

"There's so much more we can do together that we can't do separately."

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 service members and SOF families need your assistance. OHF continues to expand its support for crisis needs and the long-term fiscal stability of SOF families in areas such as career transition, employment, caregiver and spouse support, 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:

- Immediate Needs and Crisis Support
- Military to Civilian Transition Assistance
- Professional Referral and Resource Network
- Robust Alumni Support Network
- Financial Planning Assistance
- Tax Preparation Assistance

A Home for Healing:

The phenomenal response to OHF's Therapeutic Retreat Program allows more members of the special operations community to access our life-changing therapeutic retreat program. This growth also means that Operation Healing Forces is in need of homes to house our retreat couples and our caregivers.

Please consider providing access to a home for an OHF therapeutic retreat. It is a truly meaningful gift and an extremely rewarding way to support SOF families.

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.



Host an in-home reception.*

Introduce OHF's mission to your friends and neighbors.



Donate your airline miles.

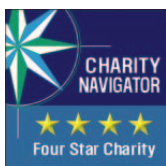
It's easy. Call or email Desiree Holley to find out how, (813) 480-6078 desiree.holley@ophf.org.

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

OHF's Therapeutic Retreat Program and Resource Program are especially meaningful and healing to the Special Operations Forces community because this support is offered at no cost to participants. By alleviating the burden of financial stress, America's elite warriors and their families can access much-needed vital resources and tools and focus on restoring and strengthening relationships and Creating Bonds that Cure.

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

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