



OHF INTEL

2nd Quarter 2024

A Quarterly Report from Operation Healing Forces

Dear Operation Healing Forces Community:

I am sitting here on the Fourth of July in reflection and noting that, of all the charitable endeavors that I have been engaged in across the years, Operation Healing Forces is one of - if not THE, most gratifying. You don't have to have served in the military to understand that the sacrifices that these men and women make on our behalf of all of us enables us to live the lives that we enjoy here in The Land of the Free and The Home of the Brave.

I vividly remember the genesis of this organization back in 2011 when my brother, Gary, moved by a military-related documentary he had seen on TV, called General Doug Brown, then the head of United States Special Operations Command to see how he could get involved in helping those who've sacrificed so much. The rest, as they say, is history.

Some evolution has occurred since the nonprofit's inception as Operation Cruise, offering a few therapeutic retreats aboard private yachts to Special Operations Forces (SOF) Couples annually, to where firmly stand today as Operation Healing Forces, offering healing therapeutic retreats to SOF Couples and to SOF Caregivers. Additionally, Operation Healing Forces has grown to include a vital pillar encompassing additional critical resources, to include the Immediate Needs Program, which will provide approximately \$1 Million in vital assistance to members of the SOF Community experiencing hardship or crisis. Without a doubt, these past 13 years have been an unbelievably rewarding and immensely impactful journey.

Probably, the most unexpected, but rewarding, return for me has been the introduction to strong friendships that we have developed with so many members of the SOF community. What an incredible group of individuals (too many to name) whose friendship I will cherish for the rest of my life.

But the personal reward to me, doesn't end there. The staff at OHF, all of whom have a personal connection to the SOF Community, is led by Kerry Irvin, our phenomenal Chief Executive Officer. Together, this team brings a passion, dedication, and commitment to the cause - unlike any other team that I have ever been involved with, and they consistently inspire me.

Our Board of Directors is comprised of a select group of dedicated patriots and have been a real pleasure to work with and given the diversity of experience and age, give me tremendous confidence that OHF has been "built to last", long after Gary and I depart. My brother Gary and I are proud to serve alongside each of these phenomenal individuals and are grateful for their tireless support to the cause of serving our Nation's heroes and their families.

We are grateful to those individuals that lend their personal commitment and professional expertise to help guide and safeguard the health of the organization through their service on our National Advisory Council. While these members all come from different walks of life, they are united in their patriotic commitment to OHF's cause.

And, most certainly, we are ever grateful to our donors and partners. Many of you are longtime friends of Gary or mine, or both. Knowing us, I think you know how much friendships mean to us and we could not be more grateful for your support. Add to that, the tremendous number of NEW friends that we've been introduced to through OHF and you can understand the fulfillment that our involvement brings. A special "shout out" in that regard to the individuals that allow us, literally, into your house, through the donation of your homes as retreat site, and to those that contribute in a myriad of other ways to help ensure the sustainability of this noble endeavor to support those who help ensure we remain the Land of the Free.

As I close this note, I just got my usual chill from listening to Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA".

Happy 4th of July to you all and God Bless.

Tony Markel,
OHF Vice-Chairman



Driven to Support

The crowd-favorite Operation Healing Forces car hit the track again this past April for the NHRA Four Wide Nationals in Las Vegas! Once again driven by NHRA Funny Car World Champ, Matt Hagan, fans cheered as the OHF logo sped to victory. OHF's CEO, Kerry Irvin, was onsite to personally thank Matt and the entire Tony Stewart Racing team for their incredible support and effort to share OHF's mission across new audiences.

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REDISCOVERING "REAL AGAIN"

During his 20-year military career, retired Army Special Forces Chief Warrant Officer Chris Linnel served on multiple combat and operational deployments, including four combat deployments to Afghanistan and six to the U.S. Southern Command Area of Responsibilities. His commitment to duty often kept him away from his family, causing him to miss significant milestones and impacting the relationships with his wife, Sophia, and their three children.

When the opportunity arose to attend an Operation Healing Forces therapeutic couples retreat, Chris and Sophia recognized the potential benefit of taking a break from their everyday routine to reconnect. "We needed to get away from the daily rigor to be able to enjoy ourselves and rekindle that relationship," Sophia reflected.

Under Chris Stowe's leadership, the retreat in Aspen perfectly balanced confidence-boosting adrenaline activities with ample downtime for reconnection and respite. "One of the beauties was that we didn't have to think, we just participated," said Sophia. Colorado's snow-covered mountains offered a refreshing contrast to their sunny home in Crestview, Florida, and they appreciated the opportunity to enhance their skiing skills side by side. "It helped to remind us that we do work really well together," Sophia said as she described how they helped each other up after falling and continuously encouraged one another.



The Linnels also cherished spending time with the other SOF couples who have "been there and done that." Chris noted, "We all had the understanding that we've all been through something in the past, so opening up to each other wasn't a problem." Free from the distractions of home responsibilities, their children's needs and schedules, or work demands, Chris and Sophia could also engage in more personal conversations. Conversations that are critical to continue to have in a healthy, strong marriage.

"OHF provided the opportunity for me to recognize my wife again, and ignite that spark that was there at the beginning of our relationship. It made what we had forgotten, real again," explains Chris.



*Carving memories together
on Aspen's slopes.*

UNITY IN UNDERSTANDING



As the spouse of a Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC) operator, life for Victoria Richwine of Saints Ferry, NC, has been full of uncertainties. But when the couple's two-year-old son, Weston, was diagnosed with Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva (FOP), the unknowns seemed overwhelming. FOP is an extremely rare musculoskeletal condition, where after birth and through life, muscles and tendons gradually transform into bone. Due to the rarity of FOP, which occurs in an estimated 1 out of 2 million, Victoria found it difficult to find anyone knowledgeable about the condition, let alone anyone to provide guidance and support.

When the Richwines received an invite to the IFOPA Family Gathering held in Dallas last November, they knew it would be incredibly valuable for their family to attend. However, they were unsure how they would come up with the funds. Operation Healing Forces recognized the significance of this specialized event not only for Weston's quality of care, but also for the family to find connection within a very small community. OHF stepped in to cover flights, hotel, registration fees, and a rental car, ensuring the entire Richwine family could benefit from the experience.

While attending the IFOPA Family Gathering, the Richwines had the chance to meet other parents of FOP children, "we shared

our stories, where we're at, and how we're managing," said Victoria. Through allotted one-on-one sessions, they had the opportunity to sit down with doctors and dentists who specialize in FOP and receive the answers to their long-awaited questions. "They even gave us a tool that if his arms lock up, this tool will help him to brush his teeth and still be independent," Victoria added. The sibling breakout sessions offered a wonderful opportunity for Weston's siblings to meet others sharing in the caretaking role for their loved ones with FOP, and creating bonds through their similar experiences.

"I'm so glad we were able to go," said Victoria with tears, "because it's so lonely when there might be one other family in all of North Carolina that may be experiencing FOP in their household."

"Words cannot express the gratitude for Operation Healing Forces and their donors. It has been a really hard year and half, doing this alone and facing the unknowns," said Victoria. Operation Healing Forces believes in the power of compassionate connections to heal those enduring hardship. Dedicated to creating bonds that cure, OHF helps to empower and support the members of America's SOF community.



Weston and his family gaining valuable insights at the IFOPA Family Gathering.

A LIFELINE OF HOPE

Since joining the Army in 1987, Henry Seen has held several positions and faced immense challenges, including deployments to Bosnia for the Implementation Force (IFOR) in 1992 and Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2005. The constant demands while assigned to the 1st Special Forces Group led to issues with his well-being, explaining, "I thought my career was over. I was diagnosed with PTSD, depression, sleep disorder, and other medical conditions."

Henry's recovery began when he met his wife, Abigail. "I credit her for saving me from a dark and ugly road that was getting deeper in," said Henry. With Abigail's support, Henry was able to continue his mission with the 1st Special Forces Group in Okinawa, Japan. They grew their family with two sons, and Henry retired from the military and completed his undergraduate degree.

In 2018, the Seen family faced more devastating news when Henry was diagnosed with Salivary Gland Cancer. After five months of treatment, he was declared in remission. However, in 2023, the cancer returned and advanced to stage 4 metastatic spine cancer, spreading to Henry's neck, spine, pelvis, and femur. "The news of the diagnosis took a toll as we were at a loss and emotionally drained," explained Henry, "working through this challenge, our



relationship was not in the forefront."

"The past year has been full of stress, uncertainty, and sadness. We needed a lifeline," recounted Henry.

The opportunity for Henry and Abigail to escape to Bali for Operation Healing Forces' week-long therapeutic retreat was a breath of fresh air. Their experience was seamless from start to finish, and Henry was pleasantly surprised by the adjustments their retreat lead, Jason Forouhar, made to support their needs. "Jason held our hands through the whole process and made sure my specific needs were met, which made me feel very special," Henry said. Together, they participated in a Balinese cooking class, enjoyed a spa day, tested their courage on the giant swing, and learned about Indonesian gourmet coffee made from the animals of the land. Exploring the history and technique of Batik art was also a highlight for Henry.

"I cannot thank OHF enough, that week I was able to focus on my relationship, this was big for us as we were on the edge," expressed Henry.

The Seens left with a renewed outlook, heading back home to South Korea to face the diagnosis together, with courage and strength.



A moment of peace and connection as Henry and Abigail discover the beauty of Balinese traditions.

WHEN THE MUSIC STOPS

What began as a routine trip to Fort Campbell's Navy Federal Credit Union for a car loan turned into a life-changing event for the Nicols family. Chris, Jenni, and their oldest son were caught in heavy rain on their way home, causing their vehicle to hydroplane and collide with a tree in the center divider. While Jenni and their son walked away with minor injuries, Chris, a recently retired Marine Raider with 8.5 years of service, bore the brunt of the impact. He suffered a broken foot, eight broken ribs, a broken hand, and facial injuries. The situation worsened shortly after during his foot surgery when Chris aspirated due to chest damage from the accident. "Aspirating led to a slew of other problems; he was in the ICU for a month, it was very scary," said Jenni.

When Chris' MARSOC teammates received the devastating news, a close friend and OHF alum recommended reaching out to Operation Healing Forces for support. The Nicols were quickly connected with SOAR Program Manager, Tiers Arnts, who facilitated their setup with a recovery care coordinator through the Warrior Care Program. Thanks to this connection, they received immediate



assistance, including arranging flights for Chris' family from Scotland. "We weren't sure if Chris would make it," Jenni recalled, "I slept every single night at the hospital with him; I wouldn't have been able to do that if we didn't have family there."

Reflecting on that difficult time, Chris admits he felt very isolated and wishes he had leaned more on the supportive community around him. "My entire military career was like a death metal song. Nonstop. Let's go all the time. Even when I got out, the music didn't stop. I was trying to navigate transition. And then the accident, and the music stopped," said Chris. He explained that he faced challenges after the accident, not only physically, but also mentally. "If I could go back, I would tell myself to be open to help and that there's a community of people who care. I wish I realized that sooner, the support really makes a difference."

The human aspect behind OHF's support really left a lasting impact on the Nicols family. "They genuinely care and want to be helpful," Jenni said, "I still have the texts from Tiers checking in on me." During their trip to Tampa for SOF week, Chris and Jenni were thrilled to get the opportunity to meet Tiers and express their gratitude in person, stating, "it was emotional, we had been through so much together, we just felt like we've known her."



Tiers and Chris connect in person for the first time at SOF Week.

"When you're going through something so traumatic, it's hard to figure out what you need. Instead of asking how OHF could help, Tiers just knew and was so proactive to meet our needs," Jenni expressed



In honor of Military Appreciation Month, Operation Healing Forces had the privilege of participating in Guaranteed Rate's Break the Bank fundraiser. This challenge, starting with a goal of \$500,000 was reached so quickly, it was increased to \$1Million. OHF, along with eight other military nonprofits, were beneficiaries of the funds raised. During the week-long period, Guaranteed Rate matched all donations 2:1, presenting a generous opportunity for OHF and its fellow participants.

Under the diligent leadership of CEO Kerry Irvin and the development team, OHF generated an impressive \$569,659.50 in donations during this period! This achievement contributed 57% of the collective \$1Million goal. The entire team extends a heartfelt thank you to all donors who generously supported this initiative. Your contributions are crucial to OHF's mission to meet the needs of Special Operations Forces and their families.

"Your valuable dollars went three time as far for our mission!"

DEDICATION BEHIND THE MISSION



Earlier this quarter, Operation Healing Forces hosted their annual staff workshop. Team members, including remote staff, gathered in Tampa for a transformative three-day event. The workshop featured dynamic team-building exercises, organization branding discussions, and department briefs. Additionally, attendees participated in a collaborative meeting with the Wounded Warrior Project, critical suicide prevention training led by The Fire Watch, received essential HIPAA training, and concluded with an inspiring presentation from CEO Kerry Irvin on navigating challenging times and embracing uncertainty. Team members were able to leave the workshop with a better understanding of each department's role in carrying out OHF's vital mission, and with renewed enthusiasm for their collective efforts.

Operation Healing Forces is profoundly grateful to have a team so dedicated to making a significant impact in the lives of Special Operations Forces and their families. Each member of the team has close ties to the SOF community, bringing a personal commitment and deep understanding of the unique challenges faced by our heroes. The unwavering dedication and passion of each staff member is what propels OHF's mission forward, ensuring vital support and resources to those who have given so much.

OHF welcomed two new team members this quarter, Mike Stone and Jim Duer. Their dedication and unique backgrounds will undoubtedly strengthen OHF's efforts and enrich the support provided to the SOF community.



Mike Stone
Assistant Director
of Development



Jim Duer
Retreat Project
Manager

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.

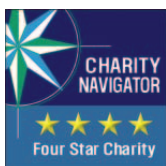
Email Desiree at desiree.holley@ophf.org to find out how

***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.

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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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