



OHF INTEL

Fall 2025

A Quarterly Report from Operation Healing Forces

A Mission Built on "Yes"

Dear Operation Healing Forces and Donors,

The old saying goes that it only takes one person to change everything—to make a difference, or all the difference. Just one person having a vision of what could be, who chooses to say “yes” when called to act, despite uncertainty or the enormity of the dream. That simple “yes” has changed the trajectory of countless lives, those who have given so much in defense of our freedom.

I proudly serve alongside that one person with a vision, our Chairman and Founder Gary Markle, and the ten Board members who also chose to say “yes,” ensuring the completion of this dream: caring for these special warriors and recognizing the many sacrifices they and their families make in order to keep ours safe.

When we, as volunteers, have the chance to visit some of our attendees during a retreat or meet them at a special event we host, the thing most often said to me personally is, “Why do you do this for us? You don’t even know who we are.” Well, same.

I do not personally know the soldier who patrolled the mountains of Afghanistan in pursuit of a known terrorist identified as a violent threat against innocents. I was never on a one-to-one basis with the Navy SEAL who rescued a hostage under the veil of night. I had never exchanged pleasantries with the Night Stalkers who may have provided air support at the time my Green Beret son most needed it in Iraq. But I am eternally grateful to each and every one of them for both the things known and unknown that saved one of their brothers’ lives. Their courage and selfless actions are my why.

The couples we host on our retreats may not think I know them, but they would be incorrect. I know and see each and every one of them. And I am humbled to be a (very) small part of expressing our enormous gratitude on behalf of a grateful nation.

There are many other great organizations that are also in the fight to give overdue recognition and assistance to our Armed Forces, but we hold a unique position on this list, as we specifically identify with and specialize in the cause of our Special Operators. Without false humility, I know OHF stands out as being the best at what we do. I attribute our success entirely to the people who stand behind the mission, both in leadership and staff positions, and the volunteers who consistently show up with their time and resources to support. The people who all said “yes.”

Sincerely,

Christine B Caughran

Member of the Board, Operation Healing Forces



SOF: The Forefront of Our Nation's Defense

“We have made significant strides in modernizing our capabilities, embracing new technologies, and refining our strategies to meet the challenges of tomorrow. This transformation is not just about change for the sake of change, it is about ensuring that USSOCOM remains at the forefront of our Nation’s defense... The future of USSOCOM is bright because of our people, our commitment to winning, and our relentless drive to transform.”

— Gen. Bryan P. Fenton,
13th Commander
of USSOCOM

*Excerpt from his farewell
message, 2025*

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DRIVEN BY A LEGACY

For Tabitha Farmer and her children, a “big blue truck” has become one of the most meaningful reminders of a husband and father who gave everything in service to his country.

On January 16, 2019, CW2 Jonathan Farmer, a Green Beret with the 5th Special Forces Group, was killed in action during a mission in Syria. He was a devoted husband and proud father of four, and his love for family showed in every detail, even the truck he once said would someday be the kids’.

Following Jon’s passing, Tabitha chose to hold on to the truck he had always envisioned their children driving one day. Keeping it just as he left it became a way to feel close to him. “We haven’t changed anything about it really. We wanted to keep it the same and keep the things he had in there,” she said. Tabitha shared how they continue to find things Jon kept, like sight-words from when the kids were young, and the love letters Tabitha would leave in the truck for him to find. “It’s definitely healing, even just to sit in it.”

When it came time for their two oldest children to get their driver’s licenses, Tabitha wanted to prepare the truck to be roadworthy.



The Farmer Family.

She took it in for a tune-up, hoping it would only need a few small fixes, but the estimate that came back was far more than she expected. The repairs were necessary to make it safe, but financially it felt out of reach.

That’s when she reached to Operation Healing Forces for assistance. Through the Immediate Needs Program, OHF provided the funding to cover the cost of the repairs, allowing the truck to return to the road and to the family who cherished it.

“It means so much to our family,” Tabitha said, explaining what the truck symbolizes to them. “We feel him all the time. But especially in his truck because we can picture him still driving it. And those memories of driving it with him.”

Today, the Farmer children have more than a safe vehicle to drive to school each day. They have a daily reminder of their father’s love and a way to keep his memory close. Operation Healing Forces is committed to standing with families like the Farmers, continuing to honor their sacrifices and provide compassionate support whenever it’s needed most.



Betsy and Devin Farmer, proud to carry on their father’s legacy.



Uriah and Shintell Popp

For Command Sergeant Major (Ret.) Uriah Popp and his wife, Shintell, life in Special Operations was a steady rhythm of service and sacrifice. For 24 years Uriah served in the U.S. Army, spending well over a decade of those years away from home while operationally deployed, training, or in training support. “From 2004-2013 I deployed pretty much every year.” Uriah said. He shared that he missed the majority of his three sons’ childhood, who are now grown and also have served or are currently serving in the Armed Forces.

“It’s a thankless sacrifice for the spouse and children, I think, more than the service member,” Uriah shared, “because folks in SOF are in SOF because they want to be. We are doing what we want to be doing, the family is adapting their lifestyle to you and to support you.” With the constant changes and relocations, it’s often difficult for military spouses to build careers or form lasting friendships. Military children also learn resilience early on, as Uriah shared, “My two older sons attended a different school every year throughout high school.”

Although the service members are doing that they love, they often don’t realize the toll that lifestyle is taking on them. “It’s a lifetime of running and gunning, as we say, it’s deploying

THE GIFT OF TIME AND SPACE

and doing what they need you to do, but you’re enjoying it,” explained Uriah, “and I think the service member doesn’t realize until it’s too late that their marriage is failing, or that they’ve lost connection with their children.”

That’s where Operation Healing Forces steps in. For the Pops, attending an OHF Therapeutic Couples Retreat in Palm Beach, Florida, offered something they didn’t even realize they needed—time and space.

“OHF gives that time to reflect and reconnect,” Uriah shared, “We’ve attended marriage retreats sponsored by the military, but they’re busy with activities, counseling, and note-taking. They don’t focus on allowing you the time to organically connect through just time and space. That was the critical piece that makes OHF unique.”

For many Special Operations couples, that time and space over the week become a moment of renewal. It allows a natural bond to grow again as they rediscover themselves, their love for one another, and the ability to heal through that shared experience.



The Pops create fun memories together during their OHF retreat in beautiful Palm Beach, FL

STRENGTHENING THE MISSION FROM WITHIN

Each year, the Operation Healing Forces team takes a step back from the day-to-day to reconnect with the mission that unites us. This August, that step back took the form of a three-day retreat focused on reflection, growth, and the shared purpose that continues to drive OHF forward.

Through open conversation and shared insight, the team was encouraged to think about the future of OHF and how intentional connection drives growth. As discussions deepened, it became clear that the pillars of OHF's mission—reintegration, rehabilitation, and resiliency—touch every part of the organization. Each department supports these pillars in distinct ways, yet none can stand alone. The success of one relies on the strength of another, creating an interwoven system where collaboration and communication are essential. Together, these connections form the foundation that keeps OHF's mission moving forward.

Guest leadership coach Ellen Nastir joined on the first day to guide exercises that encouraged self-awareness and strengthened collaboration. Board Member Chris Caughran also participated in these sessions, offering valuable perspective as the team explored new ways to grow together. Partners from the Wounded Warrior Project joined on the second day, sharing updates on their programs and offering insight into how OHF can continue to align resources and efforts to better support military families.

The retreat ended on the calm waters of Weeki Wachee, where the team took time to recharge and reflect on the shared vision ahead. It served as a meaningful reminder that when trust and collaboration lead the way, the mission grows stronger and the impact reaches even further.



Members of the Operation Healing Forces team gather together in Tampa for a Staff Retreat

Redirecting Taxes to Support SOF Families

Operation Healing Forces is honored to have been selected as one of only 18 nonprofits statewide to participate in the Florida Strong Families Tax Program - a powerful way for Florida businesses to create meaningful impact within their communities without expending any additional funds. Under the program, corporate taxpayers can make private monetary contributions to a designated charitable organization and receive a dollar-for-dollar credit against the following Florida taxes:

- **Corporate income tax**
- **Insurance premium tax**
- **Certain excise taxes**
- **Gas and oil production severance tax**
- **Use tax due under a direct pay permit**

OHF's selection reflects its proven, mission-driven work in strengthening the health, resilience, and long-term well-being of military families—particularly those in the Special Operations Forces (SOF) Community. Participation in the program opens a new, impactful funding channel that will help OHF expand its reach and deepen its support for SOF warriors, veterans, caregivers, and their loved ones across Florida.

Corporations can begin applying for the Strong Families Tax Credit at 9 a.m. on January 2, 2026, with funds allocated on a first come, first served basis. Historically, the state's full allocation is claimed within the first two weeks, as businesses commit all or part of their estimated annual tax liability.

Florida businesses interested in making contributions through the Strong Families Tax Credit Program can visit the Get Involved tab on our website or email desiree.holley@ophf.org.



"Participation in the Strong Families Tax Credit Program is more than an honor— it's a powerful opportunity to expand our reach and deepen the impact we make on the lives of Special Operations Forces families across Florida," said Kerry Irvin, Chief Executive Officer of Operation Healing Forces. "This program allows Florida businesses to stand alongside OHF in our vision of healing and restoring the lives of those who have served in some of our military's most demanding roles. Together, we can turn tax dollars into transformative change for the warriors and families who have sacrificed so much in service to our nation."

WELCOME TO THE TEAM COURTNEY BILYEU



Courtney Bilyeu
Mission Advancement Officer

Operation Healing Forces is pleased to welcome Courtney Bilyeu as Mission Advancement Officer. With deep ties to the Special Operations Forces community and extensive nonprofit leadership experience, Courtney steps into this role ready to strengthen relationships, expand strategic partnerships, and elevate the impact of OHF's mission.

Courtney brings a unique perspective shaped by both her professional background and personal connection to service. Married to retired Special Forces Lieutenant Colonel Allan Bilyeu, she understands the challenges and resilience within SOF families. Her long-standing work in the nonprofit sector—including leadership roles with the Green Beret Foundation, the Girl Scouts of West Central Florida, The Junior League of Tampa, and the MacDill Spouses' Club—has honed her expertise in fundraising, community building, and mission-driven engagement.

In her role, Courtney will lead mission advancement initiatives designed to grow awareness, strengthen donor relationships, and ensure the continued success of OHF's programs. She will direct signature fundraising events that unite donors, partners, and advocates in sustaining programs that serve SOF families nationwide.

Courtney's vision and experience will help Operation Healing Forces continue building powerful partnerships and expanding opportunities to serve Special Operations Forces families nationwide.

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:

- Immediate Needs Assistance
- Access to Financial Planning Experts
- Access to Tax Preparation Experts
- Alumni Support
- Virtual Wellness Coaching
- Transition Assistance

A Home for Healing:

Operation Healing Forces offers transformative therapeutic retreats for SOF couples and caregivers, where meaningful connections are made in homes that provide the perfect setting for creating bonds that cure. A powerful way to give back to those who have sacrificed so much is by donating your home or offering your space to support these life-changing experiences.



OUR NEED:

5-bedroom, 5-bathroom homes at destination locales throughout North America and Worldwide.

TIMING: Retreats take place over 5 days. We have needs for retreat locations in 2026 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.

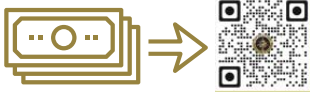
Donating stock to charity is as easy as calling your financial advisor and providing transfer instructions. To learn how to make a stock donation for Operation Healing Forces, visit <https://OperationHealingForces.org/Donate> or contact **Kerry Irvin** at kerry.irvin@ophf.org.

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 Director of Philanthropy Mike Kaufman, at mike.kaufman@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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