

NEWS & INTEL

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Volume 1, Issue 1 – Spring, 2014

Welcome...

...to the first issue of the Operation Never Forgotten (ONF) Quarterly Newsletter.

ONF was founded by President Linda Kelly and became a 501(C3) non-profit in 2007. Our dedicated, **all-volunteer** work is focused on Post-911 warriors, their families, the wounded and the fallen.

As you'll see in this and future newsletters, we conduct major outdoor events and PTS retreats for injured warriors and create related visual messages for digital billboards, airport dioramas, grocery stores, etc.

For some of you, this issue is being sent "snail mail" in the hope that you will email me your address so you can receive future digital issues. (Email me at johnalva@aol.com.) Or, you will soon be able to read future issues on our website, **www.operationneverforgotten.org**.

We want to keep you informed of our work and plans for Post-911 warriors.

John Kinzinger, Vice President



Portland PTS Program

Our first ONF weekend retreat of 2014, in Portland, Ore., on March 7-9, was a wonderful success. By its end I could see a difference in all 10 of the Post-911 warriors, their spouses and caregivers.

It was our first attempt to address a big need, Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) education.

We brought health care providers, Veteran-resource people, a nutritionist and counselors to provide presentations and hints for local returning Iraq and Afghanistan warriors/couples hoping to better understand and cope with PTS.

(The VA does little for spouses of PTS warriors because they are not Veterans. For that reason, we provided childcare so couples could focus on the presentations.)

Our ONF PTS Program Director, Mike Mills, and his wife Suki did a wonderful job leading the event. A severely burned Iraq warrior, Mike

really connected with our warrior guests – while Suki was connecting with their caregivers.

By Sunday, the most interactive day of the event, the warriors had become very open and networked with each other. Importantly, the wives understood PTS issues – which has often placed major strains on their marriages – much better. To remind them of the event, Mike and Suki gave warriors patriotic handmade quilts and ONF rip-chord bracelets.

ONF has the potential to help save warriors and marriages with a program like this. We feel that if we can possibly save one warrior or one marriage, our efforts are worth it. Based on this first event and funding support, I believe we can duplicate this at other locations around the U.S.

One warrior's testimonial:

"The first day of the event, I hit the

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*The
Billboard
Program
– See page 3*

Missouri HS raises \$5K

It was an incredible experience!

It all started when Jesse Sellars attended our Operation Never Forgotten SAS (Sports, Afield and Steam) event in Big Sky, Mont. (www.SASproject.org) in July of 2012.

Jesse had served two tours as an Army combat line officer and once led 350 troopers into one battle in Iraq without losing a man. In addition to being a great leader, he is a great motivational speaker and had offered his services for SAS.

We flew Jesse from his home in Colorado Springs, Colo., to speak to our large group of other recovering warriors. It was an outstanding speech with a “keep moving forward” message for the injured.

Now fast forward to Nov. 13, 2013, when I received a call from Angelia Moore, an amazing teacher in St. Louis, Mo.

Angelia had 17 years teaching experience and had recently been recognized as the Missouri history teacher of the year. She has developed a special “Leadership” program for junior and senior high school college prep students.

She previously enlisted Jesse, who often gave motivational talks in the St. Louis area, to speak to her class about leadership.

During our call, Angelia and I talked about ONF. Her students were doing a community fundraising project to support the work of ONF. They chose it because it was Jesse’s choice for helping post-9/11 warriors. I was totally amazed because no student group had ever done anything like that for ONF.

For six weeks, the class recruited others and held many area fundraisers including raking leaves, selling pretzels, standing in front of stores with donation cans, etc.

I didn’t know how much had been raised, but I thought it was important to drive to St. Louis to meet and personally thank these students – and also to surprise Jesse.

Totally Surprised!

Jesse talked to 60-70 students in the Oakville High library. I knew he was an observant and intelligent officer, so I sat in back with a hand partially covering my face to hide from him.

At the end of the speech, Angelia announced that a special friend was in the audience. I stood up and Jesse came busting down the aisle to give me a big bear hug. He was totally surprised – and it was a very special reunion.

After Jesse and I moved to the front

of the class, Angelia introduced me and discussed our ONF connection.

Then two students came from behind a book shelf with a large facsimile check made out to ONF. Angelia had earlier told me they would have a nice donation for ONF.

It was for more than \$5,000! I was just blown away speechless with the amount and had tears in my eyes. The students had done all this for Jesse, a recovering injured warrior.

The funds will be put to use in developing our PTS program. If we can save just one trooper from taking his/her life or a marriage, all our work will be well worth it.

Thank you, Angelia. You are a special teacher and your students are very special for helping us. Oakville High School in St. Louis will hold a special place in my heart forever.

John Kinzinger, Vice President



John (yellow tag) and Jesse (blue shirt), along with members of the Oakville High School Leadership Program.



The ONF Billboard Program

The ONF Billboard Program helps America to remember our fallen heroes – and offers their families and friends a way to share memories through personalized outdoor digital billboards.

The above image is one of many billboards produced by ONF. Future newsletters will provide stories behind the billboards. You can also check the ONF website (www.operationneverforgotten.org) to see all of the billboards created for our heroes and their families.

Fallen Heroes

Lives have been sacrificed while defending our country and preserving our freedoms. ONF reserves the title “Hero” for only our nation’s men and women in uniform who have paid the ultimate sacrifice, whether killed in action (KIA) or by other means while serving.

The fallen are not faceless statistics – they are someone’s loved one. “Gold Star” family members – mom or dad, wife or husband, fiancé, grandparent, sibling, cousin, aunt or uncle or niece or nephew – are those who have lost a loved one in war.

To Submit

An ONF Gold Star Billboard dis-

plays an image of a fallen hero posing with a family member (parent, spouse, child, sibling, grandparent, battle-buddy, cousin, niece, nephew, friend or even pet). Headlines read, “My Son (daughter, husband, dad, etc.)... Your Fallen Hero.”

Gold Star family billboards help keep memories alive and remind Americans that freedom isn’t free! May our heroes and their families always be honored and never forgotten!

ONF invites Gold Star families to submit photos and stories. ONF offers free billboard design, production and PSA submissions to billboard companies of digital ca-

pability within the area where Gold Star families reside.

Because outdoor billboards are seen at a drive-by glance during digital rotation, images must be sharp, clear and “not too busy.” To submit a photo for a billboard consideration (posted upon availability), please contact Linda Kelly, ONF President, at www.lin@westoneimages.com.

“Death leaves a heartache no one can heal... love leaves a memory no one can steal.”



Letter

Just wanted to let you know that SSG Don Allen’s father was able to make it down to Billings this weekend to see his son’s billboard – our fallen hero – and was honored that you would put his son’s picture up.

SSG Allen’s wife asked him to take pictures for her. She lives in Mesa and we weren’t able to get it there for his son and wife, so we have a co-worker that is going to try to take a video. I did forward the files as well, but I think just seeing it live means a lot to them.

A lot of his co-workers here in Billings have gone out several times to see them. It means a lot to these families who have lost loved ones in the war.

Thank you for all your hard work and dedication to our fallen and wounded heroes. God bless you!

Linda Deavila
Volunteer, Billings, Mont.



To Donate To ONF

Freedom is not free! We welcome all product, professional service or monetary gift donations any time of year. EVERY cash donation, regardless of size, helps! ONF is a 100% volunteer organization with no paid administration or staff, so your entire gift goes to help our warriors!

Choose the Pay Pal button on the **operationneverforgotten.org** website, or mail a check or money order payable to "Operation Never Forgotten" to:

ONF
P.O. Box 132
Saline, MI 48176

ONF is a 501(c) 3 organization, EIN# 45-0579363. Please include your email and street address to receive a non-profit contribution receipt for your tax records. (With your email address we can send you future ONF Newsletters.)

Please email johnalva@aol.com with any questions regarding the non-profit status and contribution receipts.

Thank you in advance for joining our efforts!



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pillow without any anxiety. I slept through the night like a baby in an unfamiliar place and I held my wife the entire time, which I haven't done in nearly six years. I felt hope for the future and an opportunity to make things better.

"During the second day, I got to know other veterans and actually socialized with a group of people in a bar without my back to the wall. I think I might have made connections that will last a lifetime.

"During the final day, I heard from a veteran speaker at the event who has healed and is living a normal life. I could hear the happiness in his voice and I saw proof that I can win this battle. Thank you ONF."

John Kinzinger, Vice President



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