

*“Serving those who preserve our freedom”*



# SEMPER FI **15** FUND *Inspiring Years*

15 YEARS OF SERVING THOSE WHO PRESERVE OUR FREEDOM



One of Our Heroes 3-4 | Hope, Compassion, Community 5-6 | Words to Live by 9-10

# FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

THE THEME OF THIS NEWSLETTER is **Hope, Compassion and Community**, three words that go to the very essence of the Semper Fi Fund. The Fund has undying compassion for Service Members and their families, a mission to return to them as much hope as they have inspired in us, and a dedication to stand by each and every one as a community of love.

**Hope.** This May, we commemorate fifteen years of our providing Service Members and their families with hope — hope for getting through life-altering injuries and illnesses, hope for embarking on fulfilling new futures and hope for real post-traumatic growth. We stand without wavering as they strive for each milestone in their recovery over the many months and years that are so often required.

**Compassion.** I am always humbled by the level of compassion with which the Fund's staff and volunteers carry out our mission. Most are either the spouse of a Service Member or have served themselves. Their first-hand experience with the sacrifices required of our military families provides the bedrock for the empathy that permeates all the Fund does.

**Community.** Leaving active duty too often deprives our Service Members of their being involved in something bigger than themselves and of belonging to a community of shared experiences. The Fund strives to reestablish some of those ever-important connections and to equip the former Service Members with the life-skills needed to grab onto their new lives with a sense of purpose and a sense of community.

I want to thank you for supporting us for all of these years. Your dedication to those who so honorably serve our nation enables us to carry out this vital mission. May you and yours be blessed this summer.



Bob Bowlin

Chairman of the Board Semper Fi Fund



2004

Semper Fi Fund is born and President Bush nationally recognizes the Fund

2005

Caregiver Program launched. Office opened in Quantico — Thank You Marine Corps Association & Foundation!

2006

Office opened on Camp Pendleton

2008

"Cover Me" is introduced — resource video addressing post traumatic stress

2010

A+ Charity Watch/4-Star Charity Navigator recognitions awarded. Team Semper Fi competes in first Warrior Games

2012

The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation 1st match campaign. Jinx McCain Horsemanship and Tim & Sandy Day Canine Companions launched. Semper Fi Fund begins assisting all Service Branches through America's Fund



2013

Veteran to Veteran (V2V) Program launched (connecting Veterans to other Veterans)



2014

Unit Reunions Program launched

2015

Major Milestone: \$100 Million in grants issued

2017

NeuroFitness added to Integrative Wellness Program

2018

LCpl Bob Parsons Welcome Home Fund launched to assist Vietnam Veterans

2019

Major Milestone: \$200 Million in grants issued  
Visiting Nurses program launched

#### Board of Directors

- Robert M. Bowlin, Chairman
- Annette Conway, Vice Chairman
- Kim Foley, Treasurer
- Wendy Lethin, Secretary
- Karen Guenther, President, CEO, Founder
- John Campbell
- SgtMaj Carlton Kent, USMC (Ret.), 16th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps
- Laura Mitchell
- Gen John M. "Jay" Paxton, USMC (Ret.)
- LtGen John Sattler, USMC (Ret.)
- COL Jim Weiskopf, USA (Ret.)
- Dr. James Wright

#### Chairman Emeritus

- Gen Alfred M. Gray, USMC (Ret.), 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps

#### Honorary Board

- Gen James T. Conway, USMC (Ret.), 34th Commandant of the Marine Corps
- LtGen Chip Gregson, Jr. USMC (Ret.)
- RADM Richard R. Jeffries, USN, (Ret.)
- Dr. Robert Koffman, CAPT, USN (Ret.)
- David McIntyre
- Gen Peter Pace, USMC, (Ret.)
- Lynne Pace
- Suzi Schwartz
- Barbara Woodbury

#### Advisory Council

- Seamus Ahern, Deloitte
- BG Donald Bolduc, USA (Ret.)
- RADM Christopher Cole, USN (Ret.)
- Tony Crescenzo, IntelliDyne
- Col Patrick "Paddy" Gough, USMC (Ret.)
- LtCol Sam Jackson, USMC (Ret.), JD, LL.M
- Brian Kaveney, Armstrong Teasdale
- Fr. Bjorn Lundberg
- CAPT Chris Merris, USN (Ret.)
- Jeffrey Plummer, CPT, USN (Ret.)
- Col Ben Saylor, USMC (Ret.)
- 1LT Melissa Stockwell, USA (Ret.)
- Richard Wells, Insight Venture Partners
- LtCol Gary Zegley, USMC (Ret.)

#### We Did It!

With the 2018 Double Down for Veterans campaign, **The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation** matched donations dollar-for-dollar to raise \$20 Million for our military families.

THANK YOU!



# One of Our Heroes...

IN 2010 LCpl Jason Hallett was conducting operations in Afghanistan when he was injured by an IED blast. Jason's injuries do not define him; he is now a motivational speaker and has two beautiful twins, one boy and one girl! His current objective is to walk again!



As Jason says, “The SFF has helped me reach multiple dreams of mine and the current one I am working on is walking full time.”



# Our future is HOPE, Our cause is COMPASSION, Our culture is COMMUNITY

**A**N ANCIENT CHINESE TALE TELLS of three friends discussing the meaning of life. After a time, the three friends stop, look at each other, then burst out laughing. They have no explanations. And they are better friends than before.

The friends who began SFF fifteen years ago could be those same friends, with no explanation how it has come to be what it is today. It is more than donations! Lives are touched, the caring and compassion for the wounded, sick and injured and their families defies explanation. What's more, the stories that are told both of success and sorrow have made us all better friends than before. This is our secret weapon, which is no secret really.

Friendship is the single most potent medicine in achieving Post-Traumatic Growth. Friendship makes physical and mental pain bearable. It overcomes the insidious isolation, and defeatist "stinking thinkin'." It breeds hope and imagines new possibilities.

Friendship, also beyond explanation, comes in many forms. Sometimes it takes the form of a casual companion with whom we hang out. Other times, it takes the form of the hard-edged doctor, nurse or mentor who tells us difficult news. The parent, spouse or even child who simply speaks truth to us is our friend. We have new friends, old friends, awkward friends, friends of a different species — like dogs, and best friends. Mohandas Gandhi said even his enemies have so much to teach him. That too is a type of friendship.

Friendship sometimes has a season. Military members universally can recall a deployment, a training exercise, some event in which one or

another buddy made the difference and helped them get over the rough spots. A talk, a walk, a game of Spades are famous for this, as are gyms and the circle of camp chairs where friends gather at the end of the day or at a Steel Beach Picnic. Friendship can happen anywhere and anytime. We just have to let it happen. And should the season end, we memorialize them in some way, recognizing we are better for having had them as friends, the angels among us.

The most important friendship is that which we have with ourselves. Rabbi Harold Kushner says it is more important to be happy than righteous. How bitter is the man or woman whose self-talk, the dialogue we have at night before we sleep or sit alone in a car, clings to hurts and failures, thus filling themselves with a fake sense of power at having been wronged. The rabbi suggests that the essence of love may simply be the willingness to forgive, in marriage, in friendship and with oneself.

Jack Benny and George Burns were two famous comedians on radio and television. They were also best friends. In fact they lived next door to each other in Beverly Hills for a time. One day, Jack backing out of his driveway, accidentally ran over George's mailbox. The next day, George ran over Jack's mailbox. He said, "Jack, I didn't want you to feel bad."

That's what **friends are for.**

May we all be blessed with the friendship this Fund has come to know in the **last 15 years,**

**Fr. Christopher Merris,  
CAPT, CHC, USN (Ret.)**





**I**N 2004, CORPSMAN JOE DAN 'Doc' Worley lost his left leg to an RPG and took 5 gunshots to his right leg during a firefight while providing medical support for his Marines in Iraq. Combat Service Members have a special bond with their Corpsmen (Navy) or Medics (Army). They rely on and build such close relationships during extremely intense deployments. The Corpsmen and Medics are critical components of any combat unit.

Joe Dan's mission at hand quickly reversed from what was a mission to help a fellow Marine to saving his own life by remaining calm and tying his own tourniquet so as not to bleed out on the battlefield. Worley says it was the process of knowing what to do and where to apply pressure that kept him calm while waiting for the medevac.

The Semper Fi Fund met Joe Dan and his wife and daughter right after his injury at Walter Reed and began assisting them with whatever was needed to support their long hospitalization. The Worley's family has grown with another daughter, Izzy, and a son, Luther. Their furry family has grown as well with now-retired service dog, Benjie, who helped him with initially walking and mobility, and current service dog, Galaxie.



Throughout the years post-injury Joe Dan has remained deeply in touch with his faith. He has been an integral part of his church ministry — singing and mentoring others. He is currently writing and recording some of his own music — hoping to inspire others and relate to other Service Members who have been through similar situations, "It is my story, but it's not just mine alone."

Joe Dan's Semper Fi Fund case manager over these **last 15 years** has said that he is one of those Service Members that makes your day when you talk to him. The Fund has assisted Joe Dan over the years, and he still stays in close contact with the Fund. Joe Dan told her that when he lies awake at night worried, his knowledge that the Semper Fi Fund is always there for his family helps him to relax. The Fund has been there since the beginning of his injury. "It wasn't the money they spent on us," Joe Dan stated, "it was the love they showed us. I will NEVER forget that."



**A**NDY, A MARINE STAFF SERGEANT who served with the 1st Intelligence Battalion based out of Camp Pendleton near San Diego, California, was changed by combat in some of the most profound ways imaginable. He was on patrol in al-Anbar Province in Iraq on June 20, 2006, when insurgents detonated an improvised explosive device beneath his truck.

Andy suffered head trauma, leg wounds, and paralysis from the chest down. "When you join the military," Andy says, "the thought of sacrificing your life for your country, for your brothers in arms, crosses most Service Members' minds. What many don't think of — or don't think of as often — is the possibility of sustaining lasting significant injuries."



The Semper Fi Fund first met Andy and his wife while he was in the hospital undergoing dozens of surgeries for his injuries. SFF aided in the purchase of his first adaptive vehicle and contributed to his adaptive home.

Andy and his wife Sara have twins, Collin and Leah. The purchase of an Action Trackchair allows Andy to go to the beach with his children with independence. "I took my son on my lap and we went and chased seagulls while my wife and daughter got to play in the

sand. This may seem simple, but consider going to the beach and only being able to watch your family enjoy themselves instead of participating in the memories. The Semper Fi Fund made that experience along with so many others a possibility."

"To me, the Semper Fi Fund means that there is a **network of caring people** who understand the difficult sacrifices that I and my fellow Service Members have made in support of our country. It's not just a fund that helps offset financial complications that are a result of these sacrifices. The case managers, leadership, contributors, and fellow recipient veterans understand that recovery is a lifelong pursuit and is as much mental, psychological, and emotional as it is physical. The Semper Fi Fund has met all aspects of that need time and time again throughout my years of recovery as well as in the lives of countless other veterans and their families."



# WORDS TO LIVE BY



**David's Story:** "When you go from being in the midst of a mission while deployed to barely surviving and being medically evacuated back state side, your life changes dramatically and quickly. You are so disoriented and are working on surviving while you're in ICU. From that moment on, Semper Fi Fund was a positive force in my life.

They helped fund travel and hotel stay for my family. My family being present and having their support was critical to moving beyond intensive care and starting the long and difficult journey of rebuilding my life.

Through every step of it all they were there, covering cost of travel and lost wages for those that stayed with me longer term to help in my recovery.

Eventually I regained my independence in no small part to their tremendous financial, but more importantly emotional support. Their case managers and volunteers became like family and almost as critical a part in providing comfort and moral support.

When I was looking to move into my home and live independently, Semper Fi Fund stepped in and funded critical adaptations to make my home accessible, which are critical as a wheelchair bound veteran. A key part of my independence was a safe, dependable vehicle that could accommodate my adaptive sports equipment. They helped fund a large part of a new vehicle that would grant me independence and maximize my quality of life."



—CWO2 David Ortiz, USA



"The Semper Fi Fund has been my surrogate family for this whole journey in recovery since losing both my legs in Iraq in 2004. I would not have survived without your help. Thank you for having faith that I would fight the good fight. Your support has made all the difference in the world in my life and the lives of those who care about me." —Sgt. Chris Fesmire, USMC

"For 15 years SFF has been helping out veterans like myself and our families."

—Cpl Christopher VanEtten, USMC, accompanied by Samantha & Milo



# FISCAL YEAR 2018



**SPECIALIZED ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT \$1,321,000**

500 GRANTS



**TRANSPORTATION \$1,416,000**

1,100 GRANTS



**PTSD/TBI \$1,433,000**

4,000 GRANTS



**RECOVERY THROUGH SPORT \$2,133,000**

2,900 GRANTS



**TRANSITION, CAREER & EDUCATION \$3,470,000**

3,100 GRANTS



**HOUSING \$5,766,000**

2,300 GRANTS



**FAMILY SUPPORT \$7,379,000**

12,300 GRANTS



**TOTAL \$22,918,000**



“They reopened doors that my injury had initially completely closed on me.”

—Sgt Chris Griswold, USMC

“It’s great knowing there are people out there that are willing to help and I don’t even know them.”

—Cpl Liam Spencer, USMC





**10% Annualized Growth in Assistance Over the Past 5 Fiscal Years**



**SERVICE MEMBER & FAMILY SUPPORT**

**Assisting the family unit from injury through recovery**

- Bedside Financial Support
- Caregiver Support & Retreats
- Housing Assistance
- Kids Camp
- Transportation Assistance
- Tim and Sandy Day Canine Companions Program
- Specialized & Adaptive Equipment
- Horsemanship Program

**INTEGRATIVE WELLNESS**

**Providing wellness tools to improve body, mind, and spirit**

- PTSD & TBI Support
- NeuroFitness
- High-Tech Medical Devices
- Post-Traumatic Growth Video Resources
- Doc's Corner
- Holistic Health Solutions
- Counseling
- Sports Program

**TRANSITION**

**Integrating Service Members back into their communities**

- Education & Career Assistance
- Veteran & Unit Reunions
- Veteran 2 Veteran Support (V2V)
- Semper Fi Fund Odyssey Retreat
- Apprenticeship Program



**IN CLOSING**

**S**ERVING THOSE WHO PRESERVE OUR FREEDOM — 15 years ago these words were thought about long and hard before becoming the maxim that embodies our mission here at the Semper Fi Fund. Service. Saint Mother Teresa always said love is service. That is what we wanted to exemplify — love. Love for our Service Members, love for the work we wake up to do every day, and love for everyone involved in this family. Our servant's heart is always at the center of what we do and how we do it!

Preserving our freedom — the mission that our Service Members carry out daily — a mission that should not be taken lightly. They protect a nation of over 300 million people who they do not know personally. We honor their commitment with the assistance we provide to those wounded and their families. Spring and Summer are the seasons for rebirth, growth, and promise. We want to emphasize all of these with all of our programming. What we have learned from our Service Members and their families is that post traumatic growth is real. It is powerful. And, it is something that we strive for each and every day.

Facing a major milestone, our 15-year anniversary, we have an exciting year ahead! From being told in the very beginning in 2003 we could not do this, to watching all we have accomplished over these years is humbling. I do believe our most important work is to come. Our strength is redefining ourselves to fit the terrain and keeping **our passion alive** and strong for those we serve.

What we have been blessed to accomplish could not have been done without the amazing family that backs us. Every one of our staff members puts their heart and soul into their vital work every day. Their families, in turn, have welcomed the Semper Fi Fund into their lives. Our generous donors have allowed us to give \$200 million dollars to date. Every cent of your money has changed a life in some way. We have come so far from the small kitchen table on Camp Pendleton with \$500, and I cannot wait to see what **another 15 years can bring us.**

With my deepest gratitude,

*Karen Guenther*  
Karen Guenther  
President/CEO/Founder  
Semper Fi Fund





**Semper Fi Fund**  
825 College Boulevard  
Suite 102, PMB 609  
Oceanside, CA 92057



Donations may be made online:  
[SemperFiFund.org](http://SemperFiFund.org)

Please send check donations to:  
Semper Fi Fund  
825 College Boulevard  
Suite 102, PMB 609  
Oceanside, CA 92057

For any additional  
information, please email:  
[info@semperfifund.org](mailto:info@semperfifund.org)



Platinum Seal of Transparency  
from GuideStar



4-Star Rating from Charity Navigator

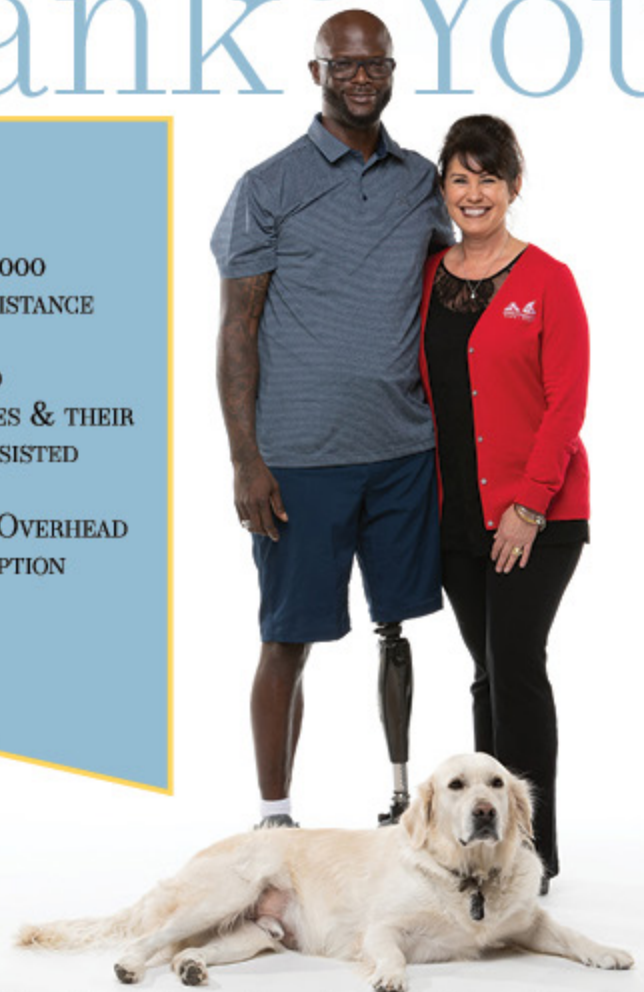
**A+ RATING**  
from CharityWatch

# Thank You

\$200,000,000  
GIVEN IN ASSISTANCE

23,000  
WOUNDED HEROES & THEIR  
FAMILIES ASSISTED

AVERAGE OF 7% OVERHEAD  
SINCE INCEPTION



FOR SERVING THOSE WHO PRESERVE OUR FREEDOM