



MISSION

Warrior Reunion Foundation supports combat veterans in overcoming the challenges of post-military transition by reconnecting those who served together overseas. We challenge stigma through shared experience, rebuilding essential peer support networks that enable our veterans to live with meaning, purpose and positive impact in their communities.

WHY PEER SUPPORT?

Studies commissioned by the Department of Veterans Affairs, The RAND corporation, the Kaiser Family Foundation and others all say the same thing – Peer Support programs are one of the most effective methods to assist our nation's veterans in overcoming transition challenges and PTSD. Unfortunately, despite the documented effectiveness of Peer Support, many of our nation's veterans do not have access to this type of care, or are hesitant to engage with groups of "peers" who are in fact strangers. Our organization has a different approach. Warrior Reunion Foundation connects combat veterans with the peers that experienced their most formative years together – the "battle buddies" they served next to in combat! Our model is unique. No one else does what we do, and we do it with the effectiveness of a team founded and led by combat veterans who innately understand the needs of the community we serve. Moreover, we deliver our reunions at no-cost to those we serve. Success in our mission depends on the support of sponsors who generously give to allow us to reunite our nation's veterans.

OUR IMPACT

At the close of our third reunion season we will have reunited **over 650 combat veterans and Gold Star family members** across **14 reunions**, provided **at no cost** to each unit we've served. Our 2020 reunion season will include 10 reunions serving up to 1000 combat veterans.

Measurable Outcomes – According to our post-reunion surveys:

- *Before attending their reunion, only 30% of participants were "likely" to reach out to their veteran peers for support. After attending a WRF reunion, over 70% reported they were "highly likely" to reach out for support when needed.*
- This confirms that attending a WRF reunion has more than doubled peer support engagement by our veteran attendees.**
- *Over 70% of post-reunion survey respondents had not seen members of their unit in over 5 years.*
 - *Over 97% of post-reunion survey respondents said that attending their reunion "strengthened their social connections with their military family."*
 - *100% of survey respondents would recommend attending a reunion sponsored by Warrior Reunion Foundation to their veteran peers.*



RECONNECTING AMERICA'S WARRIORS



How Are We Different?

Capacity Building: We don't do "handouts." Our reunions are a partnership between our team and the units we support. We build capacity within each unit, giving them the tools and experience they need to plan future gatherings to ensure their connection remains strong. This is accomplished through good old-fashioned sweat equity: each unit is required to establish a "unit planning committee" of 3-5 members that works alongside our team through a guided 6 month reunion planning process. The unit planning committee makes the decisions for their reunion, coordinates amongst all unit members, and is responsible for ensuring mission success...**Watch** →



Proactive Connections to Actionable Resources: During our planning process we work with each unit to identify the areas of support that best address the prevailing issues facing their members. Based on that assessment of needs we invite representatives from partner organizations to brief at the reunion, putting best-in-breed Veteran Support Organizations (VSOs) directly in front of our reunion attendees. Surrounded by those with whom they served, our attendees are able to talk openly about their challenges. This stigma-free environment, coupled with personal connections to pre-screened resources that match their identified areas of need results in increased engagement with follow-on care.

Enduring Peer Support: Our reunions serve to rekindle the special bond shared by those in attendance, resulting in an enduring connection between the members of the unit. Through private Facebook groups created during their reunion planning process, unit members have a forum to reach out for support when needed. Our program ensures that no veteran is without a connection to brothers and sisters in arms as they strive to pursue life's next mission. The evidence of this powerful connection is seen below:



"We're just over a month removed from the reunion your organization hosted for 2nd Platoon 3/11. As combat veterans, you all know that time is merely a relative measurement that pales in relation to the foremost measurement: Quality Of Life (QOL). You, gentleman, have captured QOL in a bottle. The results of your efforts awaken our souls, restore memories long since lost or buried, and revive the lifeblood of we warriors who can, again, charge into the battle of life with strength in our muscles and hunger in our wills. What other measurement could there ever be? We are renewed. We are reunited with the best version of ourselves. We remember who we were and hold on to that memory as we determine who we will be. We are together. And together we are strong. Hope: the cornerstone. Laughter: the tie that binds. Commitment to the mission; to each other: how boys become Men. You breathe life into us. You must continue your work. We are eternally grateful."





REUNION SNAPSHOT:

WRF Reunion Mission 10 – Lima Company 3d Battalion 1st Marine Regiment Reunion – 5 April 2019



Who: The Marines of 3/1 Lima Company deployed to Iraq in 2004. The unit was at the leading edge of the battle to liberate the city of Fallujah, and was involved in the heaviest urban combat since Hue City, Vietnam. Though they suffered many casualties during the battle, the unit's efforts were instrumental to the accomplishment of their vital mission.

What: WRF provided a unit reunion to reconnect all Marines and Sailors who served with the unit during this deployment, as well as the Gold Star Family members of those members Killed in Action. This reunion marked the 15-year anniversary of their deployment, and was the first time many members had seen each other in over a decade.

Where: Our reunions are held aboard farms, ranches and private retreat properties. This gives each unit the opportunity to focus on reconnection without distraction, away from the sterile and isolating environment of cities and hotels. Lima Company's retreat was held aboard a privately owned 3,000 acre ranch in the town of Valley Mills, TX. This amazing location enabled all unit members to spend the weekend together, disconnected from the distractions of the outside world and focused on reconnection with each other while participating in camaraderie, wellness and service focused activities throughout the course of their reunion weekend.





What Was Accomplished? No two WRF reunions are alike. Our experienced team guides each unit through a detailed planning process that typically takes 3-6 months in order to plan and execute a successful reunion mission. Our sole purpose is to support each unit in realizing their reunion vision. While many organizations focus on hand-outs, we focus on mutual support and capacity development, with the goal of ensuring that each unit's reunion is planned by their members, for their members. This increases ownership, engagement and commitment; leading to positive outcomes that endure long after the reunion mission is complete.

Each reunion's sequence of events is built around our pillars of Service, Wellness and Camaraderie. In the case of Lima Company, this was accomplished through the incorporation of the following activities during the course of their reunion:



SERVICE: The Marines of Lima Company participated in a service project partnered with a local youth home, clearing out and rehabilitating three buildings on the campus of the Waco Center for Youth. This project enabled the community to expand their ability to house at-risk youth from across the state of Texas, increasing bed space and providing additional administrative offices for their expanding programs. Lima Company left a lasting and meaningful impression on the community, while reaffirming the commitment of all service members to put others before self and improve lives in their local communities.



WELLNESS: The unit spent a morning receiving a wellness briefing from the Executive Director of the Boulder Crest Institute for Post-Traumatic Growth and retired Marine Major Michael McNamara, whose presentation on "Post-Traumatic Winning" has been delivered aboard major military installations across the country. These presentations equipped the Marines and Gold Star families with actionable tools, skills and other resources to understand and overcome the challenges of their personal trauma, while also leaving them better prepared to act as peer-support resources for their brothers in arms. Each member received access to briefing and resource materials for follow-on education and engagement.





CAMARADERIE: Throughout the weekend, the members of Lima Company participated in activities focused upon rebuilding their personal connection to each other and enabling healing through group experience. Activities included group hikes, lawn game competitions, a land navigation competition aboard the ranch, and a skeet-shooting excursion supported by members of the local community. In addition, the weekend included a Memorial Service to honor their fallen, supported by the VFW and a local Marine reserve unit which provided a color guard and rifle detail.

The Memorial Service is a time-honored tradition at all WRF reunions, and marks a unique opportunity for members of the unit to honor their fallen alongside the loved ones they left behind. The healing and closure this experience promotes is best captured by this quote from a Gold Star Father who attended Lima's reunion:

"As Gold Star Parents, our first reaction was to not attend this reunion. After much thought, we changed our minds and decided to attend and it was so much more than we expected. The Directors of this Foundation were so personable and welcoming of everyone to this reunion. They were always making sure everyone was comfortable and feeling at home in this group. We were grateful to have met so many people our son knew and felt such happiness in seeing that everyone seemed to be doing good, enjoying reconnecting with each other after so many years, and having a good time. We left this reunion feeling that our son would have been like that too. There were tears but also a lot of laughter. The memorial service was beautiful and emotional but heartwarming knowing our son has not been forgotten. We are so happy we made the decision to attend and would encourage all Gold Star Families to attend a reunion. We felt everyone who attended were glad they did. Thank you James and Drew for giving us this opportunity and also for all the good and hard work you do! You were perfect hosts and everything was just great! God Bless."





TESTIMONIALS FROM LIMA COMPANY:

Warrior Reunion Foundation has grown based solely on the feedback, recommendations and referrals from those we have served. We believe the importance of our mission is best captured by the words of those impacted by our program:

"This weekend I attended a reunion for the Marine Infantry Company I served two tours in Iraq with. The weekend long event was geared towards remembering our fallen, dealing with the past, coping with the present, and finding ways to positively move forward. We held a Memorial, did a community service project together, and even found ourselves walking in step (old habits die hard). Spending time with the men you served with was an emotionally draining and spiritually uplifting event, but the single most influential thing we did over the weekend was have a presentation on Post Traumatic Wining. I'd highly encourage everyone to look into it, as it deals with all trauma, not just war related trauma. It gives you some tools and guidelines that I had been lacking/not paying attention to, and has given me a new outlook to move forward with. Spending time with the parents, brothers and sisters, and even sons and daughters of men I lost was a very healing experience, and has given me new ways to move forward and deal with the survivor's guilt I experience from time to time."

"It was like we were right back in the same place 15 years ago. Sharing stories. Talking about our current situations. Time didn't interfere with our bond and we definitely needed this reunion to embrace one another again. Looking forward to future reunions and reconnecting with those that were unable to attend. It put life's purpose back into those who were lost and gave direction to those who struggle on a daily basis. Extremely honored to have participated in this event. WRF did an awesome job and I would not change anything."

"I reconnected with my first Section Leader in the unit. I hadn't spoken with him in almost 15 years. This man had a lot to do with the type of Marine/person I had become. Once reconnected, we discovered that we live within 30 minutes of each other. For 15 years, we hadn't spoken and probably passed each other on the highway a hundred times. In the early days of my transition, I could have used his leadership and guidance on how to navigate the civilian world but never bridged the effort to connect with Marines like him, thus creating a personal divide not even overcome by simple geography. Because of the work done by Warrior Reunion Foundation, I now have plans to reconnect on a monthly basis. My future will surely benefit from having my Marine Corps leadership in my life. I am eternally grateful."

Prior to their reunion, only 17% of Lima Company's members self-identified as "highly likely" to reach out to a fellow unit member in times of personal struggle. After their reunion weekend, over 70% of the same members said they were "highly likely" to reach out for support from a member of the unit. This dramatic increase in their willingness to engage in peer-support and to ask for help when struggling is the purpose behind all aspects of our reunion program.



RECONNECTING AMERICA'S WARRIORS



What does success look like in 2020?

Warrior Reunion Foundation acts as the peer enabled entry point to a targeted network of vetted resources that support veterans across the hierarchy of needs. After attending their unit reunion, veterans are equipped with peer support training and tools to support each other, while also gaining access to a network of “resource navigators” who facilitate connections to actionable support from partner organizations. Reunion attendance increases propensity to engage with proactive personal and professional development and wellness resources, creating a network effect that utilizes the unparalleled bond formed between “battle buddies” to improve long-term outcomes for veterans and military families.



Operational Goals

- 10-15 platoon/company level (up to ~100 participants) reunions provided annually.
- Direct referral network to best-in-breed VSOs with active case management and peer-enabled support leveraging the reactivated “chain of command” relationship between unit members.
- Enduring Peer Support Engagement enabling units to “take care of our own,” while building capacity for future self-directed reunion events to maintain an enduring connection.

Measures of Effectiveness:

Network Effect	Utilizing a stigma-free entry point (the reunion) WRF will create a network support effect that leverages the special connection of warriors who served together.
Increased Propensity for Proactive Engagement	By measuring the rate of engagement with our partner organizations, WRF will demonstrate increased utilization of support resources. In addition, through targeted, personal resource connections we ensure veterans are able to find the support best suited to meet their needs when attempting to navigate the “sea of goodwill” that exists to serve veterans.
Improved Outcomes	Through periodic, longitudinal outcomes measurement, we will identify the prevailing needs of the veterans in our network and match resources accordingly.

What’s Needed Now?

Our 2020 fundraising goal is to support an annual operating budget of \$400,000, which would fully fund 10-12 reunions, along with the ability to employ an Executive Director to manage operational execution and our growing network of volunteers who support each reunion at the ground level.



RECONNECTING AMERICA'S WARRIORS



HELP US ACCOMPLISH OUR 2020 MISSION: 10 REUNIONS + 1,000 RECONNECTIONS

Due to our tremendous success thus far and thanks to the recommendations of those who have experienced our reunion program, WRF now has in excess of 20 requests for reunion support for the 2020 reunion season. In order to enable our organization to meet this demand from the veteran community, we are seeking sponsors that will be directly linked to each unit that enters our planning pipeline.

Supporting a WRF reunion provides an unparalleled opportunity to put action behind the words "Thank you for your service." By partnering with our team your family, club, organization, company or community can help sponsor a reunion to reconnect a unit that has fought for our nation. We connect you directly with a unit planning their reunion, mobilizing grass-roots support to help them realize their reconnection vision. Through shared experience we build lasting relationships between our veterans and communities across America.

Our reunions are content rich opportunities to capture the countless powerful moments that are enabled by the support of our sponsors, and this powerful content can be used to demonstrate an unparalleled commitment to serving veterans and Gold Star Families. Sponsors may also promote their involvement on their own websites, social media pages, press releases and marketing. Depending on sponsorship level, recognition opportunities include: logo on t-shirt, attending the event, collaborative volunteer projects, listed as sponsor on the website, peer to peer fundraising, print collateral and signage and joint media-engagement opportunities.

REUNION COST BREAKDOWN

Lodging and Facility Costs	Three nights lodging for all reunion attendees (60-75 guests), including exclusive use of all host-location areas for group activities and meals	\$15,000
Travel Support Costs		
Gold Star Family Member Travel	All travel and accommodations to support Gold Star Family attendance of the reunion	\$5,000
Veteran Travel	All travel support for veteran attendees (individual, case-by-case basis)	\$5,000
Meal Costs	All meals, snacks and beverages throughout the 3-day reunion experience	\$10,000
Entertainment/Activity Costs	All entertainment and activities throughout 3-day reunion experience, including off-site	\$10,000
Commemorative Gift/Collateral Items	Reunion T-Shirts, Unit Coins, Commemorative Gifts and other associated collateral items	\$5,000

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

SPONSOR LEVELS	Details	Amount
Reunion Exclusive Sponsor	Sole exclusive sponsor of reunion; includes all content capture opportunities, joint-media opportunities with unit story highlights, on-site volunteer engagement opportunities, logo and signage.	\$50,000
Title Sponsor	Title sponsorship covering lodging and activity costs; includes content capture opportunities, joint-media opportunities, logo and signage.	\$25,000
Gold Star Sponsor	Sponsor all costs associated with Gold Star Family member attendance of the reunion.	\$5,000
Veteran Sponsor	Sponsor all costs for one veteran attendee for the duration of the reunion weekend.	\$1,000

