

# Operation First Response 2015 Annual Report



Over a Decade of  
Serving Disabled Veterans and Their Families with Emergency Financial Aid  
[www.OperationFirstResponse.org](http://www.OperationFirstResponse.org)



## Letter from our Executive Director

*On behalf of the Board of Directors, Senior Advisors and Staff of Operation First Response, we thank you for your support.*

*Together we have served over 14,000 families with emergency financial aid. Along this 11 year journey there has been such a mixture of emotions. In the early years of OFR our team sat with family members of our wounded in many hospital settings while awaiting the news of whether their loved one would conquer the severity of their injuries. We held them when the news was not good and we rejoiced with them when hope shined through. We watched as they grew stronger and moved forward and entered into what was now to become their new normal. We saw unwavering strength and courage shown by our Heroes as they recovered and by their family members as they stood strong at their sides.*

*We traveled with them from the gates of Walter Reed Army Medical Center and many other major medical facilities across the nation into their communities with the same commitment to continue to be a support as their journey unfolded. Unfortunately for many as they entered into the backlogged VA system a whole new set of problems surfaced. These once proud Warriors were now finding it difficult to provide for the basic needs of their families. Thanks to advances in protective technologies and battlefield medicine more of our men and women are surviving combat. However, once home many are struggling with the wounds of battle, both visible and invisible – which can contribute to the risk of suicide.*

*The suicide rate among our Warriors has reached unprecedented numbers. In 2013 statistics show that US Military suicides exceeded combat deaths from Iraq and Afghanistan, which is a daunting fact. We need to work side-by-side with Veteran initiatives to ensure the successful transition of our nation's Warriors. We need to make sure our Warriors understand that seeking help is a sign of strength, not a sign of weakness. It takes courage to ask for help. The heartbreaking reality of suicide is that it is a permanent solution to a temporary issue and only leaves a trail of broken hearts. As the recipients of their sacrifices we all need to become a Quick Reaction Force Team because the ripple effect from the loss of our Warriors will weigh heavy on our hearts forever and span generations.*

*We can count on them to protect and preserve the freedoms we hold dear and we can send them to foreign soils to keep the battle from the homeland. So if they should come home and find themselves facing a battle within themselves or a broken system shouldn't we become a united force multiplier and fight alongside of them to make things right.*

*For 14 years, we have been a nation at war with repeated deployments and sustained exposure to combat. The tragedies of war have brought stresses and strains on our Troops and on their families back home. Our Warriors are tough, smart and courageous. They make huge sacrifices to keep our families safe, and we owe them all a debt of gratitude for their service.*

*However gratitude isn't enough. We must do more to protect our Men and Women in Uniform who devote their lives to the service of our country. Thank you for being part of the team that puts words into actions and makes a difference in their lives.*

*God bless America and God bless our Heroes past and present!*

*Peggy Baker  
Executive Director*



## Our Mission



Operation First Response serves our nation's wounded, injured and critically ill active duty Service Members/Disabled Veterans and their families with personal and financial needs.

Services are provided from the onset of injury, throughout their recovery period and along their journey from military life into the civilian world. Financial aid varies as each case is based on individual needs ranging from rent, utilities, vehicle payments, groceries, clothing, and travel expenses.



## Our Core Values

### Assisting our Military Families

- We are determined to make a difference in the quality of life for injured or critically ill military service members and their families. We relentlessly seek resources, both inside the military and outside, to help fill the gap caused by injury or severe illness during service to our country.

### Respecting Privacy and Dignity

- We value, respect and protect the privacy and dignity of the families we serve.

### Personal Accountability and Respect for Others

- We accept that we are part of a larger team dedicated to the same goals and objectives. We understand that as a team member we are accountable for our actions and the reflection of those actions upon the organization. We work with others in a way that demonstrates that we value them and their contributions and have high expectations of what they will contribute. We value the perspectives and experiences that others bring to the team.

### Integrity

- We are honest and trustworthy and do what is right when no one is watching. We understand the pain that violating the public trust will cause to our organization, our team mates and ultimately to the families we serve.

### Goal Oriented

We have two main goals:

- To honor the service and sacrifice of every military family.
- To build a network of support and funding with a sense of urgency that supports our mission and meets our high ethical standards.



## Our Programs

### Operation First Response Military Family Assistance Program

OFR provides financial aid to wounded, injured and critically-ill Active Duty Service Members/Disabled Veterans and their families during the recovery period of the service member. We also provide financial aid to those who are making the transition of military life to civilian life after being medically retired. There is a significant lapse of time, from six months to one year, between the retirement and the onset of VA benefits causing many families to lose homes and not be able to provide for the basic needs of their families.

### The Last Mission Project

OFR provides financial aid to combat Veterans suffering with PTSD that attend in- house counseling and therapy treatment to gain the skills needed to cope with the symptoms they experience. Many Veterans must make the decision between their family finances and receiving this needed therapy.

### Operation First Response Backpack Program

OFR sends backpacks to wounded Service Members located at combat support hospitals in theatre. These backpacks are filled with a set of clothing, hygiene products, a handmade blanket, and a phone card and sent to a POC to be given to our wounded upon arrival. These items enable our wounded to have some personal items considering many have their uniforms cut off in the battlefield and it may take weeks for personal items to be returned.

### Operation First Response Travel Program

OFR provides air transportation for family members of wounded, injured and critically- ill Service Members.

OFR provides train transportation for family members of wounded, injured and critically- ill Service Members.

OFR provides car service transportation to and from DC area airports to major military medical facilities for family members of wounded, injured and critically-ill Service Members.

### Operation First Response Project Tutor Program

OFR has partnered with Professional Tutors of America to offer tutor services to our wounded, injured and critically ill Active Duty Service Members/Disabled Veterans and their families.

### Operation First Response Project Specialized Training Program

OFR has partnered with Veterans Institute of Training & Tech to offer specialized training courses for our Active Duty Wounded Warriors while they are within the Warrior's Transitional Units.





## Comments from our Heroes

*I want to start by saying that Operation First Response as a team is amazing. This team operates and functions at a high level and contributes resources and time to each Veteran they serve. As an OIF Veteran myself and a VA employee who serves OEF/OIF/OND Veterans as part of the Returning Combat Vet Team they go above and beyond for the Veterans that I refer. I get Vets with all kinds of different financial issues and usually they have tried everything in their power to resolve their own issues but when their back is against the wall and they have nowhere else to turn OFR has come through to lift huge weights off these Vets backs so that they can push on with their mission. You provide more than just financial support, you provide hope that tomorrow will be a little bit easier. When Vets think that society has given up on them you show them that there are people out there that really care for their well being. More organizations should model themselves according to how Operation First Response handles their affairs. You do your job with care and enthusiasm and Vets are able to tell that you are the real deal. Keep up the great work OFR! SSG P*

*This is the second time in my tenure as the Commander that Operation First Response has not only come through, but done so amazingly fast. I can't thank you enough for your responsiveness and willingness to support. Your organization is a force-multiplier and on behalf of the entire Battalion, we are very grateful. LTCol K*



## Walk for the Wounded 2015 Events

**SAT, MAY 2nd**  
 Pennsylvania's 8th Annual  
**WALK FOR THE WOUNDED & Warriors 5K Run**  
 Rose Tree Park - Media, PA  
 10am - 3pm

With Famous Radio and TV Talk Show Host **Dom Giordano** and Longtime Phillies Announcer **Chris Wheeler**

Plus Military & Celebrity Speakers, Laser Tag, Maze, Zip-Lining Across the Park, Military Vehicles, Helicopters, Music & Food!

**MEDAL OF HONOR SPONSOR: PECO/Exelon**

YOUNGEST SPONSORS: Volvo Cars, Lego, General Benelli Q. Butler Development LLC. YOUNGEST SPONSORS: The Housing Company, LHM 800, Kaiti-Sarason Foundation (KSF), Qyei Tire & Automotive. SILVER STAR SPONSORS: Debbie Piel Angel Foundation, CMA Local 1300, Giant Food Markets, Hester Family Ocean City Home Bank. SPONSOR STARS SPONSORS: American Legion Post #138, American Legion Post #807, Hearts Who Care, Piel Family, Springfield Country Club, Shadybrook-Sales/Service, Mite, Vantage, National Women's Family, Mite Post 100. PURPLE LEAGUE SPONSORS: Accretion Center of Fiberscience, Bloodstock Kahoia, American Legion Murray Stuart Post 596, AQUA America, Bowling Helicopter Credit Union, Crozer Chester Medical Center, Harrah's Philadelphia Casino and Race Track, Higgs & Higgs, Horizon Services, Media WPA Post #248, J&J Bank, PA Historical Car Club, Liberty CA, Pacific Electric Innovations LLC, PFC, 2000th Ohio National Guard, Nelson New York State, Thornbury Township General Fund, Blue. IN 10000 J&J Development, Brandywine Conference & Visitors Bureau, Bryn Mawr Running Co., Canine Canopy, Casey Optical, Delaware County Chamber of Commerce, Delco County Parks & Recreation, DU Puyolles, Paper Crane Press. PATRIOT SPONSORS: American Legion Post #808, American Legion Post #807, Coastal Optical PC, CO288 Insurance Brokers, Marine Memorial Post #805, NCL Upper Merion Post #805, Michael FX, Gile & Associates, Dr. Curt Miller, Butler-Rodgers, Watson-Morgan Academy.

Sign up to walk, run or make donations at  
[www.WalkForTheWounded.org](http://www.WalkForTheWounded.org)



**WALK FOR THE WOUNDED**  
 Presented by Ocean City Home Bank  
**Saturday, September 26**  
 Music Pier, Ocean City, NJ

Live performance by **The Tidal Wave Band**  
 Raise \$50 & receive a **FREE** long-sleeve tee  
 Any child who raises \$10 or more will receive a wristband to **Gillian's Wonderland Pier** for 1pm - 5pm!

Registration 8:30am | Ceremony 9:30am | Walk 10:00am

[walkforthewounded.org](http://walkforthewounded.org)

**OCEAN CITY HOME BANK** SINCE 1887

**INNOVATIVE** **LifeLink 24/7** **Ocean City** **Tauhi** **The American Legion** **Post #138** **Post #807** **VFW**

**SHORE MEDICAL CENTER** **Hudson Valley Hospital** **Delaware County** **Delaware County** **Delaware County**

## Major Contributors







## Board of Directors

Board Chairman – Phil Irizarry  
President/Treasurer – Peggy Baker  
Secretary – Lauri Hauser  
Director of Special Projects – Bob O'Donoghue  
Board Member – CPL Ronny Porta (RET)  
Board Member – Justin Barker

### Senior Advisors

Nick Constantino  
Carl Monk

### Executive Staff

Founder/President – Peggy Baker  
Executive Office Manager & Case Manager – Sarah Baker  
Executive Office Assistant & Case Manager – Crystal Howard





## 2015 Financials

### INCOME

Contributions - \$814,651.00

In-Kind Contributions - \$191,133.00

Total Income - \$1,005,784.00

Net Assets - \$346,584.00

### EXPENSES

Services Provided Directly to Veterans - \$1,149,548.00

General Operating Costs - \$24,846

Fundraising Costs - \$14,268

General Operating Costs for 2015 were 2.4%

Fundraising Costs for 2015 were 1.4%

Over 95% of our funds went directly to serve our Heroes and their families with emergency financial aid.





## 2015 Accomplishments and Impact

### 2015 Statistics

2,230 Wounded Heroes and their Families received assistance with:

- Mortgage and Rent
- Utilities
- Vehicle Payments
- Groceries
- Air Transportation
- Ground Transportation
- Lodging
- 507 OFR Backpacks were sent to combat support hospitals in theatre.

### To Date Statistics (2004-2015)

14,887 Wounded Heroes and their Families received assistance with:

- Mortgage and Rent
- Utilities
- Vehicle Payments
- Groceries
- Air Transportation
- Ground Transportation
- Lodging

10,098 OFR Backpacks were sent to combat support hospitals in theatre.



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