

Operation First Response 2017 Annual Report



Over a Decade of
Serving Disabled Veterans and Their Families with Emergency Financial Aid
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 18,000 families with emergency financial aid. Along this 13 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 16 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

Fantastic organization that actually provides timely help. As a Disabled Vet I was told that I would get lots of help from the big well-known nationwide organizations while waiting for my disability payments to kick in. What a joke took months to finally "qualify" and then find out there aren't any benefits.

Operation First Response turned my request around in a couple of days and provided real relief on day 3. Yes, no one is getting rich here, but isn't that the point? These guys are amazing. Thank you and well done.

Monson Family

As the Veterans Ombudsman for the Missouri Veterans Commission, I cannot thank Operation First Response enough for their support of Missouri's Veterans. I am so grateful for the support OFR has shown the Veterans of Missouri who have found themselves facing unexpected hardships. Truly, one of the biggest hearted organizations you are going to find out there in the Veterans community. A million thank-yous are not enough to express my gratitude for helping the Veterans I have sent your way.

MS. Talken



Walk for the Wounded 2017 Events

SAT, MAY 20th
 Pennsylvania's 10th Annual
WALK FOR THE WOUNDED
 & Warriors 5K Run
 Rose Tree Park in Media, PA
 10am to 3pm

MEDAL OF HONOR SPONSOR:
PECO/Exelon

MEET MILITARY HEROES!
 Kid's Games, Zip-Lining,
 Wall Climbing, Free Falling
 Military Vehicles & More!
 Music by Bucket List and
 DJ Partytime
 See the Kevin Harvick Race Car
 Food by Nitty Nitty's

Special Guest
 Military Speakers
 and Ceremony for Fallen
 hero Michael J. Strange

5K RUN
 Sign up for the run
 at RunSignUp.com

Plus an
All-Veteran
PARACHUTE
JUMP

Sign up to walk or make donations at
www.OperationFirstResponse.org



OPERATION FIRST RESPONSE
WALK for the WOUNDED
 PRESENTED BY OCEANFIRST BANK

Saturday, September 30th
 Music Pier | Ocean City, NJ
 Registration: 8:30am | Ceremony: 9:30am | Walk: 10:00am

Raise \$50 and receive a **FREE** long-sleeve tee

Any child who raises \$10 or more will receive a
 wristband to **Gillian's Wonderland Pier** for 1pm to 5pm!

operationfirstresponse.org

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THE NATIONAL GUARD
 NORMAN, OK 1942-1943
 OCEAN CITY, NJ

**Over 95% of donations to Operation First Response directly benefit the
 emergency needs of our Wounded Heroes and Disabled Veterans.**

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)

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





2017 Financials

INCOME

Contributions - \$885,533.00

In-Kind Contributions - \$212,275.00

Total Income - \$1,097,808.00

Net Assets - \$572,741.00

EXPENSES

Services Provided Directly to Veterans - \$897,340.00

General Operating Costs - \$21,387.00

Fundraising Costs - \$12,073.00

General Operating Costs for 2017 were 1.9%

Fundraising Costs for 2017 were 1%

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





2017 Accomplishments and Impact

2017 Statistics

1,366 Wounded Heroes and their Families received assistance with:

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

To Date Statistics (2004-2017)

17,774 Wounded Heroes and their Families received assistance with:

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

10,749 OFR Backpacks were sent to combat support hospitals in theatre.



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