



IMPACT A HERO

Impact A Life

2023

A YEAR IN REVIEW



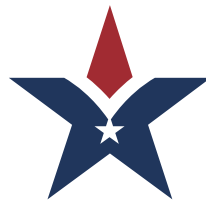
OUR MISSION

To make a positive impact in the lives of Military Veterans, Active Service Members, and their Families through advancing leadership and personal development, strengthening community and encouraging esprit de corps.

"Somebody said that it couldn't be done but he with a chuckle replied, That maybe it couldn't but he would be one who wouldn't say so till he tried. So, he buckled right in with the trace of a grin on his face; if he worried he hid it, And started to sing as he tackled the thing that couldn't be done and he did it!"

— EDGAR ALBERT GUEST





IMPACT A HERO

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Dear Impact A Hero Family,

It has been a great privilege to serve on the Board of this wonderful organization since 2019 and as the Board Chairman over the past year. Impact A Hero has a talented and dedicated staff and an active Board of Directors leading the organization forward to provide necessary and transformational programs to our Veterans and their family members.

Impact A Hero was founded in 2004 to support severely wounded troops returning home. Today, our organization continues to connect with those heroes, while broadening our focus to provide educational programs for veterans, including those with PTSD. We are excited to continue growing our services, including leadership development, emotional intelligence, and personal growth workshops to meet and support veterans wherever they are in their transition journey. I have personally witnessed our participants develop their capabilities and gain the confidence to enhance their families and community as impactful leaders.

Please take time to review this "2023 In Review" brochure, visit our website, and inform the veterans in your community how Impact A Hero can be of assistance. In addition, please feel free to visit us at our office located in the Combined Arms headquarters building where you will discover a tremendous resource through the Impact A Hero Cpl. Casey Owens Memorial Library.

Thank you to our generous community donors for continuing to support veterans and their families through the Impact A Hero mission.

Sincerely ,

MICHAEL ACUFF
Chairman, Impact A Hero
Board of Directors



2023 IMPACT A HERO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MICHAEL ACUFF, Chairman
US Army Veteran
Loftwood Holdings, LLC

JACK GOODROE, Vice Chairman
USMC (Ret.)
AllStyle Coil Company

VIK BAKSHI, Secretary
US Army Veteran
Quanta Services

BRENT SMITH, Treasurer
Private Investor

SCOTT LIVINGSTON, Past Chairman
USAF Veteran
NOV Inc.

RICK MILLER
US Navy Veteran
Trevanion Group, LLC

DEAN HRBACEK
Hrbacek Law Firm, P.C.

BRENDAN GILBERT
US Army Veteran
Solaris Oilfield Infrastructure

NICK PATTERSON
US Army Veteran
Aris Water Solutions

2023 IMPACT A HERO STAFF

CHRISTINA L. RESENDEZ
Manager of Programs
Executive Assistant
Mother of US Army Veteran

CONSTANCE WHITE
Executive Director
Daughter of US Army Veteran



*Chairman Michael Acuff with staff members
Christina Resendez and Constance White*



IMPACT A HERO

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Impact A Hero Friends,

As I reflect on the past year, it confirms that Impact A Hero is doing its small part in meeting veterans where they are in their life journey. The consistency of our personal growth and leadership development workshops continues to provide opportunities to veterans who are searching to learn, grow, and live life using their core values. As our veteran, active service, and family members increase their personal well-being they become impactful leaders in the workplace and community, as well as healthier partners and parents within their family unit.

Throughout this booklet, you'll see familiar faces and names, each having been in some way part of the greater Impact A Hero family, reflecting one of my favorite quotes "The man in the arena" spoken by President Theodore Roosevelt, (located on the back cover.) It's about courage, honor, and vulnerability in helping – helping others, helping yourself. Our experiences are shared yet different, and with the help of organizations like Impact A Hero, there is reason to 'get in the arena', and to move forward with a fresh outlook. Impact A Hero doesn't exist to "fix" trauma and anxiety, to provide all the solutions to 'get back on track' or to 'make the pain go away'. We actively provide encouragement and support – without judgment. We provide learned skillsets for a positive path forward.

As a passionate patriot, I can't say enough how my life has changed by serving this organization. The military individuals I've met, dialogued with, learned from, and now honored to call my friends, are an inspiration. Our board members are hard-working and dedicated, our lean staff works hard to meet the needs of those we serve, and our volunteers are with purpose and appreciated.

Within our network, Impact A Hero continues to be a positive outlet for personal growth. For some, the first step is 'daring greatly' within the arena. Our vision and mission focus is on impacting a hero, one life at a time – wherever you are in your life transition.

With respect and sincerity,

Executive Director
Impact A Hero



IMPACT A HERO LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Through our Leadership and Personal Growth Programs, Impact A Hero provides opportunities to enhance the well-being of veterans and active service members in their respective transitions.

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

This is an 8-week bachelor's degree course focusing on leadership development. This course presented by TravanionGroup, (Rick Miller, Captain USN (Ret.)), is designed for individuals who want to improve individual performance and team collaboration within organizational dynamics. Participants receive the MBTI personality assessment, enhance conflict resolution skills, understand leadership versus management, and skillsets to lead change in personal or professional environments. Graduation requires each participant to draft and present a Leader Development Action Plan.



*“A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.
The greatest leadership is by example.
You must do, act, say, and be the person you want your team to be.”*

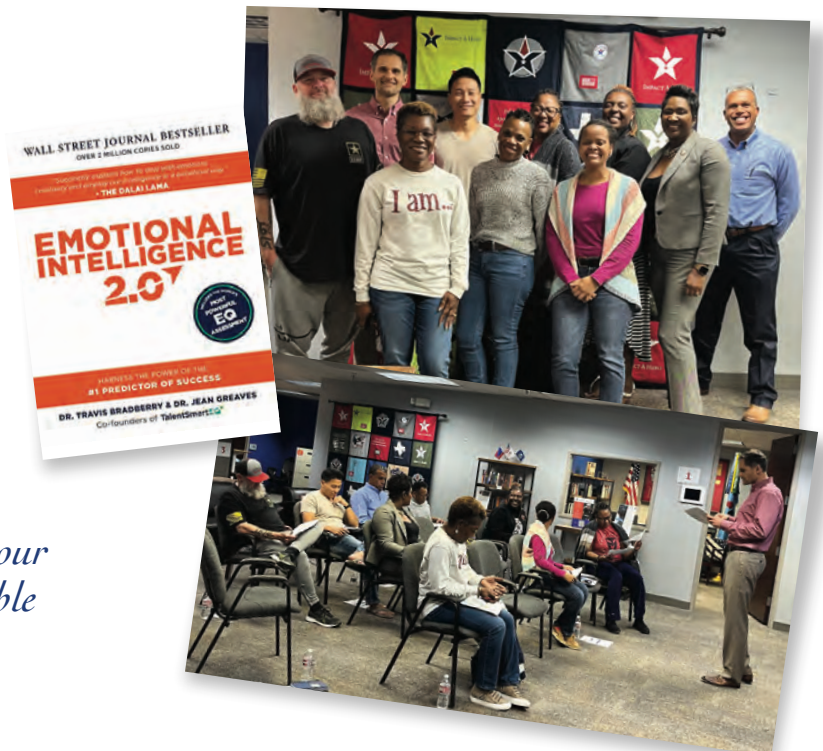
— JOHN C. MAXWELL

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

This is a two-part interactive workshop designed for participants to enhance their ability to effectively recognize, understand, and manage their emotions and the emotions of others. The workshop will focus on skills to avoid common communication traps, use emotions as a source of information, as well as to ask and give empowering feedback. This course, with an EQ Assessment included, is instructed by the CEO of Mindset, LLC, Marek Rudak, USA veteran.

“Self-management is your ability to use your awareness of your emotions to stay flexible and direct your behavior positively.”

— TRAVIS BRADBERRY,
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 2.0



HEROIC SELF-CARE

This retreat was established in 2023 in collaboration with the Institute for Spirituality and Health and The Greater Houston Healing Collaborative. This day of self-care introduces Mind-Body Skills to assist in stress reduction and trauma relief. These evidence-based skills, drawn from the program model of the world-renowned Center for Mind-Body Medicine, have been implemented for communities around the world to help heal from the impacts of war, natural disasters, or other trauma. The skills may include breathing, movement, guided imagery, and biofeedback to help regulate the nervous system and generate relaxation, valuable to integrate into life and work, and for those you serve and love.

“Perhaps strength doesn’t reside in having never been broken but in the courage required to grow strong in the broken places.”

— ANONYMOUS

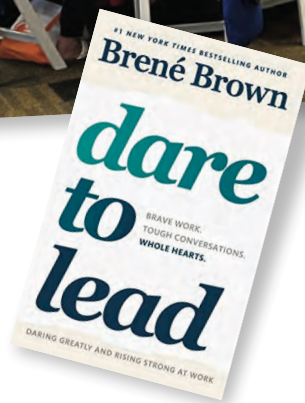


DARE TO LEAD

This is a personal and professional 4-part workshop developed by researcher Brené Brown, PHD, LMSW, and based on courage, shame, vulnerability, and empathy. This research-driven, courage-building curriculum teaches skills to lead with confidence during times of uncertainty. Participants take away tangible tools that are teachable, measurable, and observable that will change the way they work and live forever. This course is facilitated by Joni D. Goodman, LLC. Joni is a passionate patriot from a military family background.

“In the end, the cure for numbing is developing tools and practices that allow you to lean into discomfort and renew your spirit.”

— BRENÉ BROWN, *DARE TO LEAD: BRAVE WORK*



CPL. CASEY OWENS, USMC (RET.) 1981-2014

Casey Alan Owens was a Houston, Texas native. After the 9/11 attack, he felt called to fulfill his duty to God and his country. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in August of 2002 and planned to serve in the armed forces until retirement. Corporal Owens served in two deployments to Iraq. During his first tour, he witnessed the fall of Saddam Hussein's statue, reinstatement of basic utilities to the people of Iraq, and the re-establishment of schools for children. His second tour was in the province of Al Anbar where he saw much action and suffered extensive injuries.

On September 20, 2004, Corporal Owens was tasked to retrieve a friendly sniper who had been injured. While enroute to rescue his comrade, Corporal Owens's convoy was ambushed, and the driver of his convoy struck a double stacked IED. The impact threw Corporal Owens from the vehicle, and he sustained life-threatening injuries. As a result, Corporal Owens suffered from severe post-traumatic stress disorder following his traumatic brain injury and double leg amputation. In February 2006, Corporal Owens was medically retired and honorably discharged from the Marine Corps.

Shortly thereafter, Corporal Owens joined Challenge Aspen, the US Paralympics Ski Team. He said mono skiing was the one place he felt at peace and whole again — and he excelled at it! Corporal Owens completed three Marine Corps marathons, in the hand-cranked wheelchair division. He also became a well-known advocate for disabled veterans. Namely, in March 2008 he addressed Congress, United States Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, regarding the treatment of veterans returning from war and issues surrounding bureaucratic delays within the Department of Veterans Affairs' health care system. He was an active member of the Semper Fi Fund and Impact A Hero.

His efforts resulted in his induction into the Impact a Hero Hall of Fame in 2009. After the passing of Corporal Owens in 2014, the Impact A Hero Library became home to his Marine Corps uniform and shadowbox containing various sentimental items highlighting his life's accomplishments. The Cpl. Casey Owens Memorial Library serves as a personal growth resource for all veterans. Casey was interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

We will never forget him.



THE IMPACT A HERO CPL. CASEY OWENS MEMORIAL LIBRARY ITS PURPOSE AND IMPACT

The CPL Casey Owens Memorial Library is much more than a collection of books. In fact, it is the very heart of Impact A Hero. This is where our heroes enjoy a shared community lounge area, book borrowing, and free internet access. From the moment of its inception, our library has served as the organization's community center, connecting veterans to information, much-needed resources, and to other veterans. Furthermore, our library has a history of bridging the military transitional gap by providing heroes with an accessible way to explore critical literary skills, leadership development, emotional intelligence, and business entrepreneurship. Whether you are a veteran, service member, spouse, or military child, the books found within the four walls of our library will enhance your understanding of yourself and others. Substantiated by the programs our organization provides, the Casey Owens Memorial Library offers a full range of titles designed to inform and engage the entire military family, both past and present.



IAH executive director Constance White installs Casey Owens Memorial Library "Godspeed Annex" with First Mate, Marc Vital, USMC, Skeleton Crew Adventures

TOP LEFT: Constance White, IAH, accepts a generous donation from Ascend representative Tony Martin, USMC, in support of our Library. Tony and Casey were friends.

TOP RIGHT: Leadership and Personal Growth books are the heart of Casey Owens Memorial Library.

MIDDLE LEFT: Always a good day when the Marines visit the Casey Owens Memorial Library!

MIDDLE RIGHT: Ukrainian military veteran representatives, hosted by Combined Arms, visited the Library during an educational visit to Houston.

BOTTOM LEFT: Grateful to the Travis Manion Foundation Spartans for donating a leadership book collection.

Impact A Hero – Impact Your Child CAMP IMPACT

In partnership with Combined Arms and Travis Manion Foundation, Impact A Hero hosted the 2nd annual CAMP IMPACT a 4-night, 5-day summer youth leadership and character development experience at Camp For All, Burton, Texas. This meaningful experience is designed for teenagers of active-duty military or of military veterans, including Gold Star families. This may have been the first camp experience for some attendees, our “Impacters”.

This age group (13-16 years old) is oftentimes dealing with common challenges ranging from identity, confidence, body issues, fitting in, testing boundaries, and other teen issues. Camp Impact creates an environment where military-connected children thrive. The Travis Manion Foundation CHARACTER DOES MATTER program is integrated with each camp activity. The Camp Impact mentors demonstrate what it means to live the Travis Manion “If Not Me, Then Who...” ethos while challenging the Impacters to do the same through a combination of informal discussions and activity-based learning.

This curriculum explores 24 character strengths and during the 2023 Camp Impact, the mentors focused on Love of Learning, Teamwork, Perseverance, Bravery, and Social Intelligence. Each area was learned through sharing personal stories, exploring nature, participating in challenging activities, and the act of teamwork in completing a service project. We had three returning “Impacters” this year, with an additional 12 attending.



“I came here in honor of my Uncle Charlie, Navy veteran. I like Camp Impact and have learned a lot about leadership and persistence. I made friends quickly and I want to come back next year!” – SAVANNAH, age 14

Called to Service:

SPECIAL PROGRAMS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Over the past year, Impact A Hero has collaborated, and enjoyed networking with other veteran support organizations and generous donors, as well as sharing in the celebration of special memories and anniversaries. Highlighted in the next three pages include areas where we have focused our involvement, in addition to our leadership development and personal growth programs. It takes all of us, as partners, to provide positive outcomes for veterans who need encouragement and who desire life-long learning.

COMBINED ARMS

*Vet Connect Day & Vet Fest
Operation Santa
SIV Food Drive*

PTSD USA FOUNDATION

CAMP HOPE

*Emotional Intelligence
Casey Owens Memorial
Library Annex*

LIKE-MINDED/WARRIOR MINDED

OPERATION PAPERBACK

HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW & RODEO

Armed Forces Day

TRAVIS MANION FOUNDATION

*Camp Impact & Leadership
Book Donation*

HOUSTON REGIONAL VETERANS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Round Table & Veteran Expo

INSTITUTE FOR SPIRITUALITY AND HEALTH

Heroic Self-Care Retreat

WESTERN ENERGY ALLIANCE

CAREER GEAR



IMPACT A HERO



Gold Star Mothers attended the dedication of the Gold Star Memorial, located in Veterans Memorial Park, Sugar Land, Tx. IAH made a donation to this special project.



IAH volunteers participate in Wreaths Across America.



Veteran families enjoyed visiting the IAH table at the Combined Arms Vet Fest!



IAH donation to My Service Dog is a blessing to Matt Rios, US Army veteran, and his companion Padgett. Easter Seals trained the duo for certification!



Impact A Hero received a generous donation from 100 Men Who Give A Damn!

Called to Service, continued

MY SERVICE DOG

VETTES 4 VETS

CITY OF HOUSTON MAYOR'S
OFFICE OF VETERAN AND
MILITARY AFFAIRS

*Vanessa Guillen Day
Texas Women Veterans Day
Ceremony*

EASTER SEALS

Heroic Self-Care Retreat

GRACE AFTER FIRE

CAMP SHIELD

Women Veterans Empowerment Expo

NOV CLAY SHOOTING EVENT

TEXANS VETERANS COMMISSION

VIRTUOSI YOUTH CHAMBER

ENSEMBLE

Legacy of Freedom Gala

US ARMY RECRUITING BATTALION

US NAVY TALENT ACQUISITION
GROUP



IMPACT A HERO



IAH is appreciative of the support from Warrior Benefit, founded by combat-wounded veterans to give



Operation Paperback continues to donate books to military service members globally, as well as in the IAH Casey Owens Memorial Library



Skeleton Crew Adventures assists veterans with their PTS through adventure therapy. The IAH Casey Owens Memorial Library "Godspeed Annex" was added to the boat in 2023



This beautiful 100-year-old United States Coast Guard veteran attended the Houston Mayor's Texas Women Veterans Day with other amazing female veterans. Constance White enjoyed the opportunity to visit with them



Impact A Hero is a proud supporter of the Houston Regional Veterans Chamber of Commerce!



AH assists veteran families with specific needs. "Harold" was Casey Owen's best friend and cared for by Casey's mother. IAH supports his veteran visits as he grows older. He's a special pup!



Travis Manion Foundation Spartans have supported IAH through Camp Impact and through their leadership book donations



Cadets from the United States Naval Academy visited the IAH Library, with the opportunity to meet Earl Lundy, USA veteran



IAH Manager of Programs Christina Resendez was on hand for the Houston Police Veteran Resource Fair with HPD Officer Vargas and other VSO colleagues.

- Called to Service*, continued
- WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA
 - SKELETON CREW ADVENTURES
 - Ocean Globe Race*
 - Casey Owens Memorial Library Annex*
 - GOLD STAR FAMILY MONUMENT
 - HOUSTON POLICE DEPT VETERAN RESOURCE FAIR
 - HOUSTON STAND DOWN
 - 100 MEN WHO GIVE A DAMN
 - KODIAK CARES FOUNDATION
 - WARRIOR BENEFIT
 - ASCEND CARES FOUNDATION
 - VERA BRADLEY
 - KENDRA SCOTT
 - THE GREATER HOUSTON HEALING COLLABORATIVE
 - Heroic Self-Care Retreat*
 - REPUBLIC HARLEY DAVIDSON HERO RIDE
 - VETERAN FAMILIES SUPPORT



IMPACT A HERO



This program is supported by a grant from the Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance. The Fund for Veterans' Assistance provides grants to organizations serving veterans and their families. For more information, visit TVC.Texas.gov.

IMPACT A HERO PARTNER OF THE YEAR 2023

The Impact A Hero Partner of the Year Award focuses on an individual or organization that has made a difference in the lives of veterans through providing support to the mission of Impact A Hero through the generous donation of time, treasure and/or talent. This recognition is presented at the annual IAH Legacy of Freedom Gala.



- 2022 – Kodiak Cares Foundation
- 2021 – Fred and Mable R Parks Foundation
- 2020 – Event not held due to pandemic
- 2019 – KBR
- 2018 – Warrior Benefit
- 2017 – Deep Down, Inc.
- 2016 – NOV
- 2015 – Savage Brands
- 2014 – Gregory E Ladeveze, (US Army, ret)
- 2013 – Schlumberger
- 2012 – Tesanovich Family
- 2011 – The City of Sugar Land
- 2010 – ENSCO
- 2009 – Bear Creek United Methodist Church
- 2008 – Universal Weather & Aviation
- 2007 – Marathon Oil Corporation
- 2006 – Betty Terry Johnson

2023 PARTNER OF THE YEAR



“Faith and Meaning Impact Health and Healing”

The Institute For Spirituality and Health (ISH) is an independent interfaith nonprofit organization that recognizes that humans are spiritual beings and that connection is central to well-being. To illuminate the connection between spirituality and health, it must be considered again the backdrop of diverse cultures and belief systems. With a rich history of tending to the spiritual and religious dimension of healthcare in the Texas Medical Center and beyond, the ISH programs and conferences are rooted in plurality, equity, and compassion.

In 2023, through a strong relational networking opportunity, ISH and Impact A Hero partnered to bring healing and wellness to the veteran community. The HEROIC SELF-CARE Retreat was formed in collaboration with The Greater Houston Healing Collaborative (GHHC) to introduce Mind-Body Skills to veterans, veteran caregivers, and veteran service organization representatives to assist in stress reduction and trauma relief. The participants experienced valuable techniques to enrich their lives while enjoying a time of relaxation and healing. These same evidence-based skills have been implemented for communities around the world to help heal from the impacts of war, natural disasters, or other trauma. The Mind-Body Skills repeatedly demonstrate an 80-90% reduction in those persons qualifying as having PTSD, and they can be transformative for anyone seeking tools to manage stress, improve relationships, and cultivate mental and physical well-being.



Stuart Nelson, ISH, welcomes Heroic Self-Care guests



The Heroic Self-Care Team, (the organizers and facilitators from ISH, IAH, GHHC.)

The generosity of ISH to open its facility, underwrite the program, and provide its staff to administer and coordinate with GCHH in recommending and recruiting the facilitators, is appreciated and a testimony to its support to the veteran community. The two full-day retreats held in 2023 reached more than 80 veterans and caregivers, and all walked away with appreciation and gratitude for being in a safe space, a healing place, with new tools to move forward.

Representing The Institute For Spirituality and Health to accept the Partner of the Year Award during the 2023 Freedom Gala was Mr. Stuart C. Nelson Jr., Acting President.

THE IMPACT A HERO HALL OF FAME

The Impact A Hero Hall of Fame honors our veterans who strive for all-encompassing excellence in their life and of serving others before self. Our Hall of Fame also honors our fallen men and women, and their families, who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. These are extraordinary individuals who have displayed the exceptional power of the human spirit, and the world is a better place because of their actions and their character.

2023 IMPACT A HERO HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2023

Pfc. Leroy Sandoval, USMC, KIA, 2004
Cpl. Paul Gardner, USMC (Ret.)
Cpl. Spencer Walker, USMC, OIF
Col. Robin R. Ritchie, US Army (Ret.)
LTC. Sam Robins, US Army Special Forces (Ret.)

CLASS OF 2022

Sgt James Casey Joyce,
US Army Ranger, KIA 1993
Sgt. Earl Lundy III, US Army (Ret.)
Sgt Sergio Trejo, US Army (Ret.)
Taylor Grieger, US Navy

CLASS OF 2021

Congressman Dan Crenshaw,
USN (Ret)

CLASS OF 2020

Vacant due to pandemic

CLASS OF 2019

Airman Luz Cervantes, USN
SGT, Combat Medic,
Timothy Stroud, USA

CLASS OF 2018

SSG Samuel Askins, USA
SGT Arlie Ray Horn, USA
TSgt Chante Meyers, USAF
Sgt Jay Shaw, USMC

CLASS OF 2017

Cpl Jack Goodroe, USMC (Ret.)
LCpl Steven May, USMC (Ret.)
Sgt William Rollins, USMC
Sgt Maggie Peterson, USAF
CW02 Aaron Weaver, USA (KIA)

CLASS OF 2016

Sgt 1st Class Dana Bowman, USA (Ret.)
Tsgt Dallas Bozman, USAF
Cpl Jason Dunham, USMC (KIA),
Medal of Honor
SSG Shilo Harris, USA (Ret.)
Maj William Lyles III, USA

CLASS OF 2015

CWO3 Romulo "Romy" Camargo, USA
HM2 Anthony "Doc" Thompson, USN
Sgt Timothy O'Sullivan, USAF
Sgt Eric Morante, USMC

CLASS OF 2014

GySgt Sam Deeds, USMC
Sgt Matt Rios, USA
LCpl Philip C. George, USMC (KIA)
SFC Leroy Petry, USA,
Medal of Honor

CLASS OF 2013

Sgt Ken Kalish, USMC
CWO3 S. Allen Hartley
LtCol. Chris Meyers, USA
Sgt Bryon Norwood, USMC
(KIA)
SSG John Daniel Shannon, USA

CLASS OF 2012

SSgt Jonathon S Rose, USMC
Martin Resource Management Corp.
SPC Kevin Kammerdiener, USA
SPC Brandon Abbott Meyer, USA
Sgt Joel Tavers, USA

CLASS OF 2011

SSG Jason A Pepper, USA (Ret.)
Ralph Vasami
LCpl Gamble, USMC (KIA)
Cpl Ronny Ports, USMC
SSG Matthew Lammers, USA
SGT Eric Edmundson, USA (Ret.)

CLASS OF 2010

Gifford Nielsen
CWO4 Matthew Burley, USA (Ret.)
Fort Bend County Judge Bob Hebert
LCpl Billy Spencer, USA (KIA)
Cpl Aaron Mankin, USMC (Ret.)
3rd Battalion, 25th Marines,
4th Marine Division Lima Company

CLASS OF 2009

Cpl Casey Owens, USMC
Lena and Atlene Rolsen
Brian Kilmeade
SSG Keith Matthew "Matt" Maupin, USA
(KIA)
Cpl Steven Schulz, USMC

CLASS OF 2008

Chris and Renee Ayres
Dan Pastorini/Daniel (USA) and
Sherri Ebarb
Mike and Lana Flory/
Rick Yarish (USMC)
1LT Justin Smith, USA (KIA)

CLASS OF 2007

Dillion Cannon/
1Lt Ryan T. Sanders, USA (KIA)
Joey and Jayme Bozik
James and Heather Johnson
Drayton McLane/Jim McMahan
Brent and Karin Jurgersen

CLASS OF 2006

SSG Paul Brondhaver, USA
Michael E. DeBakey, M.D./
Paul Marchand
Edd and Nina Hendee/
Christian Okoye
SSG Michele Mitchel, USA
Lcpl Taylor B. Prazynski, USMC
(KIA)
Sgt James "Eddie" Wright, USMC

CLASS OF 2005

President George Bush/Pat Tillman
Dom Capers/Roger Clemens/
Ben Crenshaw
Danielle Green/Bum Phillips/
David Robinson
Roger T. Staubach/Thomas and
Joannie Parr
SFC Michael J. McNaughton, NG



IMPACT A HERO

Hall of Fame, Class 2023
PFC LEROY SANDOVAL

2nd Battalion, 1st, Marines United States Marine Corps, KIA, 2004

First-Class Leroy Sandoval, Jr., age 21, joined the U.S. Marine Corps in May 2003, 2nd Battalion/1st Marines, assigned 0331 Machine Gunner. Less than a year after being stationed at Camp Pendleton and Twenty-Nine Palms with his battalion, Leroy was deployed to Kuwait. From there, he was sent to Fallujah, Iraq on March 20, 2004. Four days later, the Marine Corps 2/1 unit officially took over a stronghold of the Baath Party which had been the personal resort of Saddam Hussein, nicknamed "Dreamland".

On Wednesday, March 24, 2004, the day the Marines took over Camp Baharia, Al Anbar Province, Leroy called home on a satellite phone from out in the field and asked his mother to pray for him and his fellow Marines, and gave words of encouragement to his younger sister, Amy.

On March 26, 2004, Leroy found himself finishing patrols for the day as a machine gunner on the lead Humvee for his platoon: Palerider 3, positioned within visible range of their base parameter at Camp Baharia to cover for other Marine Platoons returning back to the base for the night. Thus, the beginning of the tragedy in Fallujah.

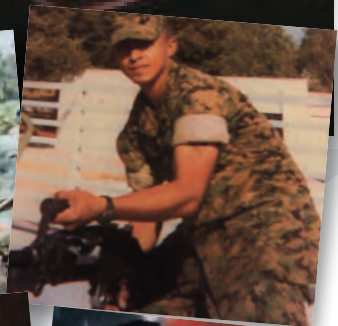
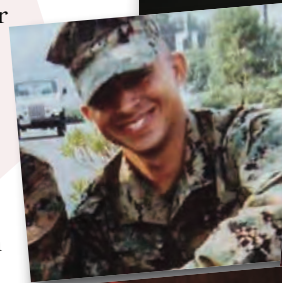
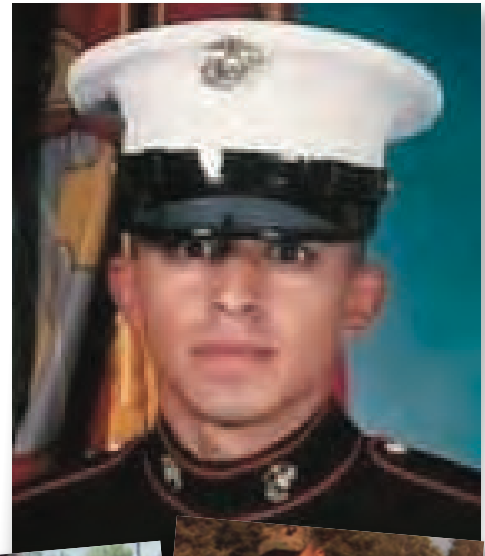
Leroy's platoon was set in blocking formation at a major intersection, when suddenly bullets and rocket-propelled grenades were coming in all around, and they engaged the enemy 17 to 30 meters from rooftops. Additionally, there was a vehicle circling the platoon, which was firing on them, a surprise ambush! Official papers from the Department of the Navy, as well as from the acting field commander reported that Leroy was the only one able to return fire successfully, suppressing cover fire that allowed the rest of the patrol to gain cover. It said that he had to clear a jam in his machine gun several times but continued to fire on the enemy. Sadly, Leroy was to be the first Marine killed in combat at Fallujah from Texas during Operation Iraqi Freedom, and he was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star Medal. A Navy Corpsman later told Leroy's family that he saved half the Platoon that day. Leroy was buried in the Sagemont Church section at the Forest Lawn Cemetery, Houston, Texas.

In the eleven and a half years since Leroy's death, his parents, Steve and Zaida Walters, have participated in many events from Houston and the surrounding area to our nation's capital in Washington, D.C. honoring their son.

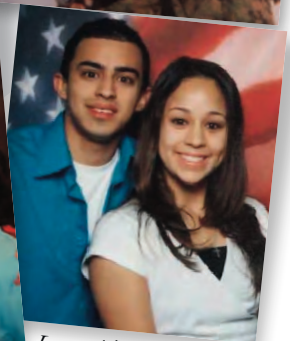
"This November 11, our nation stops to remember our military this Veterans Day, It is well known that the Marine motto is "Semper Fidelis", which means "Always Faithful" and as Christians we can relate to this motto and the selfless actions of Leroy, because that describes one aspect of Jesus' love for us... when Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for the entire world by making a way to be saved through taking on our sins and giving up his life on the cross..." stated Leroy's mother. His father added "Despite a good education and employment opportunities,

Leroy realized that he had a clear calling in his life, and he was determined that he would join the Marine Corps."

PFC Sandoval will always be remembered as a devoted son, brother, friend, and American hero.



Leroy with his mother, Zaida.



Leroy with his younger sister, Amy.



The memorial for Leroy in Iraq



IMPACT A HERO

Hall of Fame, Class 2023
CORPORAL SPENCER WALKER
United States Marine Corps, OIF

Spencer Walker grew up in Jackson, MS. and a longtime resident of Richmond, TX. His parents retired from the DeBakey VAMC. His father is a decorated USAF, Vietnam Veteran, buried at Houston National Cemetery. Spencer is a 4th generation combat veteran and the first U.S. Marine in the family. He served on active duty from 1999–2003 with 11th Marines, Counter Battery Radar. He deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom with Regimental Combat Team 5 (RCT-5) in Jan-03, crossed the LD (Line of Departure) on 19-March as an initial 100 Marines; first unit to arrive in Baghdad on 09-April. His commendations include the Combat Action Ribbon, Presidential Unit Citation, and Iraq Campaign Medal. Spencer met his beautiful bride Pilar while stationed at Camp Pendleton, CA. and married on Valentine’s Day, 2002. They are truly blessed with two amazing kiddos. Son Mitchell is hard-chargin’ U.S. Marine, Corporal, Infantryman (0352); en route from Camp Lejeune, N.C. to Camp Pendleton. Daughter Elliana is the absolute apple of her daddy’s eye. She is a freshman at Texas State University in San Marcos and majoring in Business-Finance.

Following 12 years of hard drinking, multiple arrests, family-to-job loss, twice homeless, and psych ward stints; Spencer graduated from Harris County Veterans Treatment Court in May-16. VTC affords the opportunity for Warriors to engage their combat trauma (PTSD), coupled with substance abuse, head-on. Recovery of mind, body, spirit hails mission. Spencer served as Mentor-Wellness Coordinator for both Harris and Fort Bend County VTC’s with 150+ Warriors from 2017–2020. He played a pivotal role in establishing Liberty County VTC in Aug-18. In turn, Spencer earned a Master of Science in Leadership from Belhaven University in Dec-20.

His capstone paper; *Leadership Development Plan: Servant Leader Paradigm – Veterans Treatment Court*, inspired a ministry endeavor to implement Mississippi programs. Spencer has traveled the Magnolia State extensively for 3+ years with an intense passion to instill Warrior hope. On 11-Sept-23, he helped commence the MS. 14th Circuit Regional VTC for Lincoln, Pike, Walthall Counties, Mississippi. Spencer is an Ordained Deacon and Men’s Sunday School teacher at Wilcrest Baptist Church in Alief, TX.

Impact A Hero is proud and honored to have Spencer join the Hall of Fame Class 2023.



The Spencer Walker Family



Spencer and Walker children visiting a dear family friend



A father-son Marine Corps bond



IMPACT A HERO

Hall of Fame, Class 2023
CORPORAL PAUL GARDNER
United States Marine Corps (Ret)

Paul enlisted in the US Marine Corps on Dec 17, 2001 and served as a Rifleman with 2nd Battalion 5th Marines during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. On April 12th, 2003, in the Baghdad suburb of Al Tarmiyah, Paul was separated from his squad after being ambushed by numerically superior fedayeen Saddam fighters. He and another Marine linked up with another squad to fight their way house-to-house to kill the enemy.

In the backyard of one such house, Paul and his fellow Marines had a half dozen enemy fighters pinned down in and around a small mud hut. He had already shot two of the fighters and had to reload his rifle, when one of them (whom Paul had already shot once) got back up and maneuvered in on him. When he looked up, Paul saw an enemy fighter 15-20 yards away pointing an AK47 assault rifle at him.

A muzzle flash was the last thing he saw, as the enemy fighter fired off a burst of bullets at him. One such bullet hit Paul under his left armpit. It blew his spleen apart, punctured his left lung, lacerated his stomach and left kidney, blew a portion of his vertebrae out of his lower middle back and completely severed his spinal cord, leaving him paralyzed from the waist down instantly and permanently.

Recovery was both physically and mentally challenging. However, Paul believes that a good mindset always trumps bad circumstances. Although he lost the use of his legs, he's always striven hard to make a conscious choice to focus on the positive aspects of his life, of which there are many, and constantly pushing forward.

Paul started attending firearms training courses in 2009 and found that sharing his story of being wounded in a gunfight, along with the lessons he learned from it, with his military, law enforcement and armed citizen peers was extremely beneficial to them and helped drive home the points that the firearms instructors were ingraining in them at training courses.

He has a passion for teaching others how to most effectively defend themselves in violent, lethal force encounters using all the knowledge he's gained over the years, both in combat and in well over 100 training classes from top-tier instructors in the industry. He wants others to know the tactics and techniques that he didn't at the time of his own gunfight, so that they win their fight and make it home unscathed to their loved ones.

Paul and numerous other combat-wounded veterans and a Gold Star father helped create Warrior Benefit in 2012, a 501(c)(3) organization raising funds for military charities assisting combat veterans. Impact A Hero was a recipient in 2023.

God blessed Paul and his lovely wife Taylor with a baby boy on October 22, 2022. Bear Daniel Gardner was born 3 months premature, and he is perfectly healthy! "Bear" is a fighter like his dad.



The Paul Gardner Family



IMPACT A HERO

Hall of Fame, Class 2023

COLONEL ROBIN P. RITCHIE

U.S. Army (Ret.)

Robin "Rob" Ritchie is the co-founder and Managing Partner for ProHealth Resources LLP, a healthcare staffing and perm placement firm. He has over twenty-five years of information technology and healthcare experience in sales, operations, project management, business development as well as mergers and acquisitions.

He is a distinguished military graduate of the Virginia Military Institute and earned a master's degree in government from TCU. Rob is a retired Colonel with twenty-seven years of service in both the active and reserve components of the U.S. Army. He held worldwide command and staff positions including multiple combat command and advisory tours of duty, as well as intelligence and university-level teaching assignments. He commanded the last US Infantry company on the Vietnam DMZ as well as commanded the 75th Maneuver Area Command's Opposing Forces (OPFOR Group) preparing Army National Guard units for deployment in Operation Desert Storm.

Rob is a past Board President of Fort Bend County Habitat for Humanity, and chapter president of the Military Officers Association of America. He is a former Vice Chairman of Impact a Hero serving more than 10 years as a distinguished director. He continues to be an advisor and mentor to its executive director, a volunteer, and a donor.

Rob resides in Sugar Land, TX with his spouse Jan, and they are the proud parents of two children and six grandchildren.

To add to Colonel Ritchie's military career, May 21, 1971, was a dark day during the Vietnam War. He wrote a personal account of the incident:

"At "zero dark thirty "on January 30th, 1971, units of the First Brigade, fifth Mechanized Infantry Division including the 1st Battalion (mech) 61st Infantry departed their firebases along the DMZ in support of the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos (Lamson 719). 1/61 returned to its fire bases Alpha 4 (Con Thien) and Charlie 2 in April and began patrolling and conducting interdiction operations along the western hills of the DMZ. A4 was located 1 mile south of the DMZ and C2, 4 miles south of the DMZ. Evening NVA rocket attacks were frequent.

On the evening of 21 May, my company Bravo 1/61 was operating out of Alpha 4. A4 and C2 began taking incoming rocket fire from NVA positions in the DMZ. One 122mm rocket with a time delay fuse struck and collapsed a large bunker at C2 resulting in 63 casualties including 30 KIA. When the situation stabilized at A4, I took a platoon down to C2 to assist in clearing the casualties. This was the deadliest day in three years and the largest number of soldiers killed by a single round during the entire Vietnam War. Ironically, the Brigade furled its colors and stood down August 8, 1971."

Thank you Colonel Ritchie for your service to our country.



Ritchie calling in an air assault, 1968



75th Division (Ritchie, rt)



Rob and Jan Ritchie



Rob Ritchie and son Robin



IMPACT A HERO

Hall of Fame, Class 2023

SAM ROBINS

LTC(R), United States Army Special Forces

Upon retiring from an extensive 24-year Army Special Forces Officer career in November 2020, Sam invested some time solely focused on being present in the lives of his bride and best friend of 27 years and their four children. As he learned from a very wise person, no one looks back on their life and wishes they'd worked more and spent less time with their family. The many cumulative years of being deployed overseas and on training missions away from home took an even greater toll on his family, and he wanted to fully inundate himself and not miss out on a minute in the daily lives of what is most important to him.

After graduating from The Honor Foundation (honor.org) in July 2021, an industry-leading special operations career to civilian life transition course, Sam landed well into the workforce at Surefox North America. He led multiple security contracts for high-tech clients in Silicon Valley, across the US, and internationally. Since April of this year, Sam decided to forego the corporate world and has since partnered with longtime friends to attempt his hand in the entrepreneurial space focused on security and other ventures.

Sam is a 1996 Accounting graduate of Gardner-Webb University located in Western North Carolina and, upon serving two years as an enlisted soldier, he earned his commission as a Second Lieutenant through the U.S. Army Officer Candidate School. Additionally, he holds a Master of Science in Defense Analysis degree from the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California.

He has served in a multitude of leadership positions and assignments within Special Operations in support of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF), IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), and INHERENT RESOLVE (OIR).

His awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Four Bronze Star Medals, Purple Heart, and the Defense Meritorious Service Medal. He also earned the Combat Infantryman Badge, Parachutist Badge, Military Free Fall Parachutist Badge, Special Operations Diver Badge, Air Assault Badge, U.S. Army Basic Recruiter Badge, Ranger Tab, and Special Forces Tab.

Sam is the guest speaker for the Legacy of Freedom Gala, and Impact A Hero is honored to induct him into the Hall of Fame, Class 2023, in recognition of his service to our country.



The Sam Robins Family

IMPACT VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

As Impact A Hero continues to grow our programs, events, and community outreach, the volunteer component is increasingly important and welcomed. Over the years, many individuals have donated their time generously to make our events a success. Impact Volunteer Recognition Awards announced during the 2023 Legacy of Freedom Gala include individuals who have selflessly contributed their time and talents to bring awareness to our Mission. We thank them for their service!

KELLIE GREEN *Passionate Patriot*

Kellie Green has volunteered with Impact A Hero for 20 years, always bringing willing volunteers with her, many of whom she recruited from her employer, Universal Weather and Aviation, a past IAH Partner of the Year. Both of her brothers, her dad, uncles, and husband are all veterans, so it was important for Kellie to do her part to give back. She has also mentored her daughter as a volunteer through Impact A Hero. Thank you, Kellie!

“Getting to know these brave heroes and their families has been a blessing in my life. Many have become close friends that I stay in touch with throughout the year.”



REBECCA ROBINSON *US Army Veteran*

Rebecca has been an IAH volunteer for more than two years always serving with enthusiasm and focus during each fundraising event, as well as a representative of IAH during community veteran events. Rebecca served our country for 11 years as an Army Reservist with the 348th Transportation Battalion (Houston, TX), as well as with the US Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operation Command (Fort Bragg, NC). She is currently a real estate agent with Keller Williams. Rebecca's consistency as a volunteer is appreciated!

“I am grateful to God to already have an intimate understanding of IAH's mission and "inside baseball" knowledge of ya'lls tireless efforts and tremendous growth!”

RANDY LEGRAND *US Navy Veteran*

Randy has donated his time to Impact A Hero for the past two years using his talents as a photographer. His generous attitude and his willingness to capture the magic of the Impact A Hero events through his lens are appreciated. Randy is often behind the scenes, yet his presence at our events always results in memories made to last a lifetime. Randy served our country for six years as a hospital corpsman at Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, NC. Today, Randy is employed by Memorial Hermann Hospital Southwest in the Materials Management Dept.

“I volunteer my time to Impact A Hero because it is impossible for me to salute every man and woman who served to make the United States the best country in the world to live in. This is my way of saying ‘thank you’.”



BETH ASLAKSEN *Passionate Patriot*

Impact A Hero met Beth through her Operation Paperback volunteer mission, resulting in the donation of paperback books available to our veterans visiting the Casey Owens Memorial Library. (Beth has mailed nearly 5,000 paperback books to domestic and internationally located active service members). This connection resulted in her generous offer to help Impact A Hero create a t-shirt quilt in 2022 for the Legacy of Freedom Gala. Her newly created IAH t-shirt quilts will be highlighted again in the 2023 Gala live auction. Beth and her husband, Jay, have a nephew serving in the Marine Corps. They are volunteers with the Greater Houston Soaring Association and generous donors of a glider flight for our auction. With this and the quilts, Beth's efforts have helped raise more than \$10,000 for Impact A Hero over the past year. Thank you, Beth!

(Beth sent the Edgar Albert Guest quote placed on the inside front cover)



THE MAN IN THE ARENA

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

— THEODORE ROOSEVELT

THANK YOU

Thank you to our friends, veterans, active service members, volunteers, and donors who support the Impact A Hero Mission.

IF YOU ARE A VETERAN IN CRISIS CONTACT:



IMPACT A HERO

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