

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

2023



GALLANTLY FORWARD



FROM OUR FOUNDER

DEAR FRIENDS,

THANK YOU FOR HELPING US END 2023 WITH A BANG! THIS TIME LAST YEAR, OPENING A VETERANS RETREAT WAS MERELY A DREAM. SO MUCH HAS HAPPENED INT HE LAST YEAR TO MAKE THAT DREAM A REALITY. MAYBE MENTION PART OF YOUR STORY AND **WHY** ITS A DREAM. MENTION THE LAND PURCHASE, WAITING, APPROVAL 10/31, SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH PARTY, AND NYE BONFIRE. LOOKING FORWARD TO NEXT YEAR AS WE LAUNCH PILOT PROGRAMS AROUND BOONDOCKING, BONFIRE NIGHTS. **W**ANT TO CONNECT WITH VETERANS IN THE COMMUNITY . **Y**OU PROVIDED ENOUGH IN 2023 FOR US TO BEGIN BUILDING A BATHHOUSE, WE ARE CURRENTLY WAITING FOR APPROPRIATE PERMITS. **SINCERELY,**

LUCAS LEWIS

PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER



MISSION

*"CULTIVATING PEACE AND PURPOSE.
A RURAL RETREAT WHERE VETERANS
CAN MOVE FORWARD TOGETHER."*



Project Gallantly Forward has a non-traditional approach to provide healing for the visible and invisible wounds of war by offering a peaceful, safe Veteran retreat in rural Tennessee. Participation in the program is free of charge to combat Veterans with their loved ones. Our vision is for Veterans to have access to the private working farm where they can have the time and space to begin healing while in the company of other Veterans who are on the same path.

Our goal is for the retreat to have six fully furnished cabins, available for five-day stays for Veterans and their families. This model has the capability to reach over 300 Veteran families each year. There will be up to five RV spaces created for short-term use for Veterans who would prefer those accommodations. Additionally, there will be staff cabins available for use for volunteer disabled veteran staff while working at the retreat, as well as a bunkhouse-style transitional facility for Veterans who need short term assistance, such as homeless respite or court diversion programs.

In 2023, huge steps toward this goal were taken. The home of PGF was purchased - It is located on 81 acres of land 45 minutes outside of Chattanooga. Volunteers came to help clear over a mile of fence line, helped rebuild fences where needed, and cleared a road through the woods. These land improvements were done in anticipation of our 501(c)(3) status approval, which was received in October, at which time fundraising to build facilities could begin.



EVENTS AND FUNDRAISERS



26 VOLUNTEERS

68 TICKETS SOLD

RAISED \$18,000+

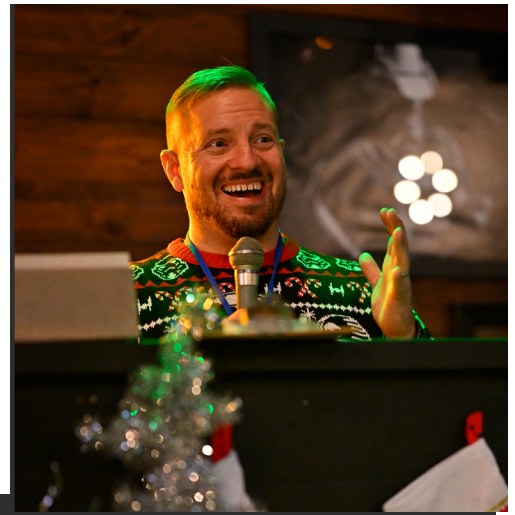
While much of 2023 was focused on building the infrastructure involved with starting a nonprofit, we were able to squeeze in two events after we received our 501(c)(3) approval: The Ugly Sweater Launch Party and the New Year's Eve Bonfire. You guys showed up in a huge way for both events. We raised enough at the Launch Party to begin construction efforts at the Veteran's Retreat. The New Year's Eve party was a night of connection and relaxing around the bonfire, which we personally are planning to do a lot more of in 2024!



MARK'S STORY

Dr. Mark Miller, Psychologist and PGF Board member, shared his moving story at the Ugly Sweater Launch Party. He spoke about the difficulties he faced with reintegration and how he believes in the mission of Project Gallantly Forward because connecting with other veterans and not remaining isolated was pivotal to his personal healing journey.

He has shared a part of that personal story below:



My name is Mark Miller, and I am a disabled veteran and on the board at Project Gallantly Forward. I joined the Army in 2001 and had multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan serving with the 1/23 Infantry and 2nd Ranger Battalion.

After my discharge from the Army, I experienced many of the emotional and physical consequences of combat-related trauma. I was diagnosed with PTSD, TBI, and multiple physical injuries and spent many years seeking treatment and help through the VA and other medical sources. Many of my physical concerns were addressed, but I found the VA system to be very limited in assisting me with the emotional and spiritual suffering I was experiencing.

Reintegration was quite the challenge, and many other veterans experience the same. My anger, fear, and distrust of others made maintaining employment difficult. The lack of structure and discipline was challenging in post-military employment. Each of my relationships suffered, since I felt alone, and I thought no one understood. I lacked purpose, and my marriage was suffering. The impact on my wife was horrible. She struggled with her husband coming home from combat different than he left.

We were able to gain support for our relationship through marriage events, growing in our faith and connecting with other veteran families. We were part of events allowing us to be active, in nature, and in support of other veteran families. Service gave us an opportunity to regain purpose. My identity was in being a soldier, and I lost myself when my military time ended.

Our communication improved, we understood each other better, and I learned coping skills. I was able to control my fear and anger, and our lives have improved for the better. Our marriage is amazing now, and our four kids will never see the struggle my wife and I endured. Finding my healing also allowed me to find a career that I love as a counselor and pastor. It has allowed me to give back and support veterans and others on their path to healing.

Many of my brothers and sisters from the military didn't have the chance to get hope, healing, or regain their purpose. Since leaving the battlefield, too many men and women have taken their lives.

So for these men and women who lost their battles at home, please, consider helping Project Gallantly Forward fund their mission to provide healing for the visible and invisible wounds of war by offering a peaceful, safe veteran retreat in rural Tennessee because so many veterans are still suffering.

“REINTEGRATION WAS QUITE THE CHALLENGE...
I LACKED PURPOSE..SERVICE GAVE US AN
OPPORTUNITY TO REGAIN PURPOSE”



BOONDOCKING

NO BULDINGS? NO PROBLEM.

Combat Veterans can already enjoy an R&R stay for FREE!

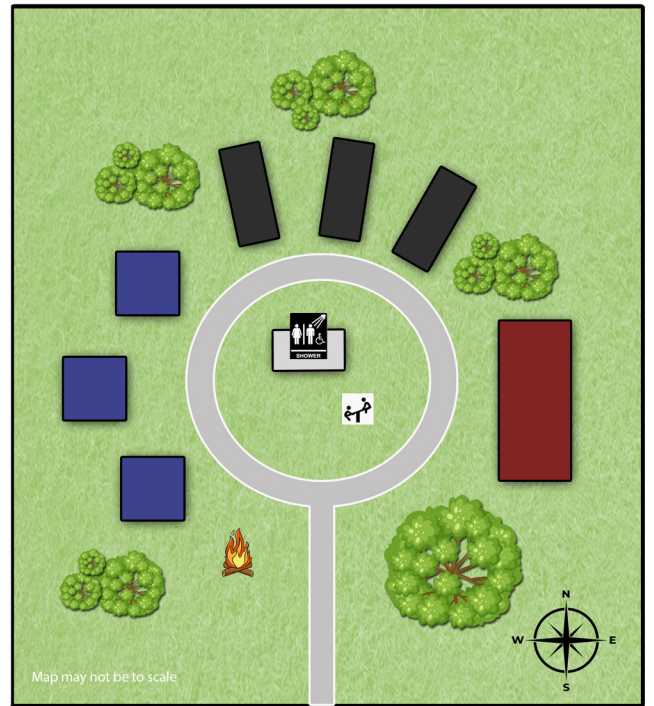
The wide open fields and clear skies of PGF are now open for boondocking to anyone who has a fully self-contained RV/Camper and is capable of setting up in a field without hook ups. Free for combat Veterans with their families, and available to the public for a donation. See www.projectgallantlyforward.org for more details.

BONFIRE NIGHTS

PGF was founded on the belief that the path to healing begins with Veteran-to-Veteran connection. We don't need buildings to connect, we would love to connect in a field around a bonfire. Be watching social media for more info, and if you'd like to join us around the campfire, please reach out so we can send you an invitation as events are scheduled.

BREAKING GROUND

Currently we are scheduled and waiting for permits to begin construction. The first phase will be to develop the field magnified in the inset to the right. This can be built as funds become available, starting with the bathhouse. The addition of the bathhouse will allow for RV hook ups and group tent camping opportunities. After that, we will start building the cabins and bunk house. The bunkhouse will allow PGF to expand our impact beyond R&R and serve multiple purposes for Veterans who struggle with reintegration and lack of purpose, such as homeless respite and court diversion.



Campus Map

- Guest Cabins
- Camper Spots
- Bunkhouse
- Community Pavilion
- Staff Cabin
- Tent Camping Area

THANK YOU

We want to say a huge thank to ALL of our generous donors. In 2023, many individuals and organizations made direct investments in helping Project Gallantly Forward launch the initiative to build the Veteran's Retreat.

2023 ALLIES OF PROJECT GALLANTLY FORWARD
(\$1000+)

- BACK ROAD BOYS BBQ
- CHATTANOOGA TREE SERVICE, INC
- OLIVE BRANCH WOODWORKING
- SODDY DAISY SMILES
- WESTBOUND BAR
- JAY AND LINDSAY BENSON
- RIC AND DEBBIE BEU
- VIRGINIA BEU
- ZACH AND ASHLEY LATHAM
- ANONYMOUS
- ANONYMOUS (2)
- ANONYMOUS (3)
- ANONYMOUS (4)

*Thank you,
Lucas & Christine
Lewis*



How CAN YOU HELP?

We are so honored that you have chosen to be involved. We want to do big things here at PGF, but this vision is bigger than us. We are here for the community and supported by the community.

SPREAD THE WORD

Telling people about what we are doing is one of the biggest ways you can help. We want to connect with the right people in the community who will champion the cause of our Veterans and make up the core of our volunteer force, staff, and service recipients. Those are your neighbors and friends!

VOLUNTEER

We will be doing a lot of construction in 2024. We will be posting real time updates about volunteer opportunities on our social media at [facebook.com/PRJGallantlyforward](https://www.facebook.com/PRJGallantlyforward).

MULTIPLY YOUR FINANCIAL IMPACT

PGF's MOVING FORWARD PROJECT

2023 ended with amazing momentum. In order to take steps toward turning that spark into financial stability that can build the retreat and provide much-needed support to our Veterans, we are launching Project Gallantly Forward's Moving Forward Project. In this program, we are looking for 100 people who will commit to an entry level donation amount of at least \$25 a month throughout 2024 - less than you would typically spend eating out.

If you know someone who has been impacted by the invisible wounds of war, and could benefit from the Veteran-to-Veteran support we are building at PGF, please consider committing to giving \$25/mo in 2024.

Monthly gifts can be set up on our website at www.projectgallantlyforward.org/donate. As a token of our thanks for joining the Moving Forward Project, we will send a small gift. After enrolled for 12 months, your name will be included on the donor page of our website (unless you indicate you'd like to stay anonymous).

CORPORATE MATCHING

Did you know? Often you can **DOUBLE** your donation with corporate matching programs. We've already seen positive results with generous matching through companies such as Pacific Life and Unum. Other area business also offer matching programs. If you aren't sure what your company offers, ask your HR dept or reach out to Christine at christine@projectgallantlyforward.org as she has the resources to look into your company and see what matching programs they might offer.

PROJECT



GALLANTLY FORWARD

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US ARMY VETERAN

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CO-FOUNDER

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US ARMY (RET.)

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