

Operation Mend: Mending the War Wounded

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Operation Mend is a groundbreaking effort at UCLA Medical Center to heal those injured in combat. It began with facial reconstruction and has grown. Host families play a role in making members of the military feel welcome.

Wounded at war, one retired soldier asked "where do I go now?" Joey Barr turned to a groundbreaking effort at UCLA. It's called Operation Mend.

Its theory, "it is an honor to serve those who served" our country.

Barr had only been in the military a year-and-a-half when his [truck](#) was blown up in Iraq. That left him with knee, back, shoulder, neck and eye injuries.

Two surgeries while in the military didn't take. Now retired, he came here to Tiverton [House](#). It's where he stays for surgeries while at UCLA Medical Center.

He lives in Iowa but stays here under a program called [Operation Mend](#).

Operation Mend got its start in 2007. UCLA is partnered with Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio which deals with severe burns. The program has helped about 75 members of the military. Their photos, many with disfigured faces, are on full display on the program's website. It all began with facial reconstruction and grew from there. While Barr's injuries are barely visible, Dr. Timothy Miller has worked on the severest of war wounded. His specialty is plastic surgery. Miller estimates fifteen-thousand Americans were injured by IED's in Iraq. He knows there are many more in need of Operation Mend.

Moshe and Debra Meppen are making life in L.A. a little easier for Barr and his wife Jennifer. The Meppens are an Operation Mend Buddy Family. The two families spend time together like going to Barr's favorite restaurant in town. Their children have become friends and when Joey needed a heating pad the Meppens ran and picked one up. Buddy families will meet the patient at the airport as a warm welcome to Los Angeles. Dr. Miller calls the Buddy Families a welcome sight, a welcome change, from when he returned from Vietnam.

Barr and his wife are high school sweethearts with two children. He lives with pain daily and has more surgeries in the works. Operation Mend is one of the bright spots says his wife. His goal is to raise his boys and maybe, one day, go for good run.

To donate, volunteer, become a Buddy Family or if you know someone from the military in need, [CLICK HERE](#).

Read more: <http://www.myfoxla.com/story/21528296/operation-mend-mending-the-war-wounded#ixzz2Mry9uQ7k>