



Operation Mend Helps Wounded Veterans And Their Families



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LOS ANGELES (CBSLA.com) — A special program called “Operation Mend” is helping wounded war veterans — and their families — get their lives back on track.

CBS2’s Amy Johnson met some of the veterans being helped by this effort.

A family trip to Travel Town in Griffith Park for Nick Matson and his wife and kids may seem like just a fun outing, but it is much more than that.

The trip is also a welcome distraction from Matson’s medical treatments.

“I had reconstructive ear surgery and tattooing of the eyes and eyebrows,” Matson recalls.

Nine years ago, he was serving the country as an Army Specialist in Afghanistan. His Humvee hit two IED’s.

“I ended up getting third degree burns on my hands and face, PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.] I had traumatic brain injuries, spinal cord issues,” says Matson.

In the midst of all his medical procedures and treatments, Nick and his family — who hail from Chicago — could come to LA and enjoy a little fun.

Operation Mend is part of UCLA’s Mend Buddy Program.

“Operation Mend is part of the United States Military and it was started in 2007 to rebuild lives,” says Melanie Gideon, Operation Men’s director.

For the wounded warriors who take part in the program, all medical care and travel costs are free.

“It’s the backbone of the whole foundation,” says Matson, “to have your family to be able to be with you during one of the low points is absolutely great. My wife and my kids are my foundation. So having them here will make the healing process a lot easier.”

Gideon says the expanded Buddy Program is “really a way to wrap our arms around our entire patient and family.”

Dan Dworkin and his family met the Matsons for the first time this past January, the first of three medical trips this year.

What they have done, reports Johnson, is help Matson on the road to recovery.

Matson’s wife, Jackie, knows how instrumental the buddy family is.

“With what he has to go through, it is hard to see. [But] he looks forward to seeing our buddy family. He looks forward to seeing the people at Operation Mend,” says Jackie.

Johnson reports the UCLA program is always in need of donations, volunteers and patients. For more information, [click here](#).