



TO OUR UCLA HEALTH OPERATION MEND FAMILY

During this time of physical distancing and anxiety, we are grateful that through our team's innovative efforts Operation Mend successfully adapted its Intensive Treatment Program to virtually treat veterans and caregivers suffering from PTSD and TBI in the comfort of their homes. Even as we look toward welcoming warriors and their family members back to UCLA for in-person treatment, we now know that we will be able to reach even more warriors who need us when life returns to what will be our new normal. Thank you for helping us stay strong and for joining us in our mission to heal the visible and invisible wounds of war. We are so blessed and humbled by the loving support of our community.

BATTLE BUDDIES HEAL TOGETHER



Former Marine Sergeant Walter Moore and his wife, former Marine Sergeant Rana Moore, who together participated in Operation Mend's Intensive Treatment Program for PTSD.

Walter Moore didn't think the Operation Mend Intensive Treatment Program (ITP) for veterans and their caregivers would be a good fit for him and his wife Rana, who was seeking treatment for PTSD from combat trauma. His primary objection was that the other five caregivers in the group of six couples would be female, and as a combat veteran himself, he wasn't sure he would be able to relate to the other caregivers.

Walter and Rana were battle buddies, deployed to Iraq in 2006, and were caught together in a fire fight on base with insurgents. They became lifetime buddies when they married in December 2007 and started their family in 2008. Walter then had two more deployments to Iraq and missed the birth of their first son. Before attending the three-week ITP at UCLA, Walter felt like everything was breaking down. Rana would be emotionally fine, then her emotions would suddenly erupt. When they were out together, he says "she went from 'I'm fine' to 'we've got to get out of here!'" Walter didn't know what to do or how to make sense of it, but he knew it was disrupting their lives and making going out impossible.

In the Operation Mend ITP, caregivers are 100 percent participants in all sessions alongside their veterans. Walter says that what he found was that he and the other caregivers "were having the same issues, same problems, didn't matter male or female. The commonality was more of a comforting thing. Everybody was just open. It was eye-opening that we are not alone." Both Walter and Rana were given the skills to manage the symptoms of PTSD: communication, emotion regulation, and how to engage in community and family events instead of isolating or avoiding interactions. The key was learning skills together.

Walter says after completing the program, they have been able to do a whole lot more as a family. "Rana has her cues that we've established. I know when she's feeling a bit anxious and I'm there as her in-between. She can work through it and she can calm down and we can continue what we're doing." Walter feels he and Rana are definitely more resilient after completing Operation Mend's program. Between their day-to-day life with their children and Walter's job as a first responder, their family is finally thriving.

A MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TROY SIMON



Dear Friends:

Wow, crazy times, right?! Everyone is trying to figure out how to handle this COVID-19 situation, with the accompanying social isolation, job insecurity, and reduced services. We know that the

veteran population is particularly susceptible to the social and emotional difficulties that accompany the pandemic. For veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injuries (TBI), or severe physical injuries, the need for treatment for them and their families is even greater now than prior to the onset of the pandemic.

Due to these circumstances, fulfilling our mission of healing the visible and invisible wounds of war is as crucial and urgent as it ever has been. Since the end of March, we haven't been able to bring patients into UCLA and Operation Mend. Our staff and doctors, Board of Advisors, UCLA Health leadership, and many of our Buddy Families, donors, veteran friends, and supporters have been engaged in finding creative ways to support the mission, build alternative plans to treat veterans and their caregivers virtually, and put together a plan for a safe re-start of our in-person programs, which we are slowly beginning again. This all-star team has contributed in various ways.

Here are some highlights of what we've been doing since March, when COVID-19 shut down most of the country:

- Modified our psychological assessments process from in-person only to also offer virtual assessments
- Adapted our Intensive Treatment Program (ITP) for PTSD and TBI to a virtual format, which we will maintain for our veterans and their caregivers once in-person visits begin again so that both options are available
- Piloted, with great results, a very successful virtual Intensive Treatment program (v-ITP) for veterans and for veterans and their caregivers
- To date, treated 17 participants in the new v-ITP
- Developed and executed a marketing and social media campaign featuring Los Angeles Dodgers All-Star Justin Turner and his wife Kourtney, as well as "Marvel" actor Clark Gregg, to increase awareness about the availability of our v-ITP
- Secured clinician licenses in states across the country, as there are stringent requirements in order for us to provide virtual services for veterans and patients residing in other states
- Built a comprehensive plan to re-start the in-person program in the coming weeks for our ITP and surgical programs through the support and expertise of our

Board of Advisors, the hard work of our entire staff, and engagement from within the UCLA Health leadership team

I offer a special thank you to our partner, Wounded Warrior Project, for its gracious and immense support in these challenging times, and my deepest appreciation to so many of our incredible individual donors, whose commitment has enabled our staff to keep working through the pandemic in order to build permanent virtual treatment options for our veterans and their families.

It's been an incredibly busy and productive time period, even though we had to temporarily suspend in-person treatment of our veterans and caregivers. I am proud of our entire team of staff, volunteers, donors, and the veterans themselves who stepped up during this time, all in support of our mission to treat those who need our life-changing programs. We are poised and ready, and in a great place with more options for our veterans, and beginning to ramp back up bigger and better than ever!

We are proud to serve those who have given so much of themselves for our country.

AN INNOVATIVE PIVOT TO A VIRTUAL INTENSIVE TREATMENT PROGRAM



When the COVID-19 pandemic shut down Operation Mend's clinical services this past March, the whole team hunkered down to quickly reimagine virtual treatment for its warriors and their caregivers, particularly those suffering from symptoms related to PTSD and TBI. Increased isolation for warriors already struggling is highly problematic, and Operation Mend's innovative team got to work to ensure warriors needing its high level of care didn't have to put their mental health on

hold. By May 11, Operation Mend's team was ready to launch a fully virtual adaptation of its highly effective three-week, in-person ITP for symptoms of PTSD and TBI.

The pilot was delivered to three veterans and their three caregivers from the comfort of home. The program included evidence-based trauma treatment for the veterans, psychotherapy groups for caregivers, and for both, cognitive skills training, skills-focused groups, mindful movement practice, art therapy, social support from the buddy programs, and referrals and connection to local care with post-treatment support. Operation Mend remains the only intensive treatment program in the country that includes caregivers as fully integrated participants.

In July, a group of four veterans participated in a veteran-only treatment group, and in September, the team will offer both a veteran-only group, and a group with veterans with their caregivers simultaneously. Operation Mend also found innovative ways to help veterans and caregivers connect with each other and with their buddy families. From Zoom magic shows to Netflix parties, the team continues to work toward opportunities for social engagement all around.

If there is a veteran you know who would be interested in participating in our virtual Intensive Treatment Program, please call: (310) 267-2110; email: operationmend@mednet.ucla.edu; or visit: <https://www.uclahealth.org/operationmend/itpathome>

UCLA HEALTH OPERATION MEND RECEIVES A CUSTOMIZED PATIENT SHUTTLE



When Gregory Penske, chairman and CEO of Penske Motor Group, met with the UCLA Health Operation Mend team in 2019, he was inspired by the Operation Mend story and program. When he discovered one of the program's urgent needs was a patient shuttle, Penske Motor Group gifted the program with a customized shuttle that was recently delivered.

The new patient shuttle will provide convenient and free transportation for Operation Mend patients, their caregivers and family members to UCLA facilities and other treatment locations, as well as recreational activities around Los Angeles. On February 27, 2020, Operation Mend and UCLA leadership joined Penske for a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new shuttle.

"Thanks to Greg for facilitating the customized shuttle from the Penske Motor Group," said Troy J. Simon, executive director of UCLA Health Operation Mend. "It truly is a gift that will remove barriers to treatment for our veterans and improve their well-being while in Westwood."

The new, specially modified shuttle bus is designed to accommodate the physical needs of patients, including a wheelchair lift and spacious seating. The bus is wrapped with photos of veterans who have been treated at Operation Mend for injuries suffered while serving in the post-9/11 era. Powered by compressed natural gas, the shuttle will produce approximately 30 percent less greenhouse gas emissions than a comparable gasoline-powered vehicle.

"It is our privilege to support the community in this meaningful way," Penske said. "As we considered Operation Mend's mission to provide comprehensive services to our veterans, we felt the best way we could support this as a transportation services company was to ensure our wounded warriors have a safe, accessible vehicle that gets to and from their scheduled care during their time in Los Angeles. We are grateful for their service to our country that gives us the freedoms we enjoy every day."

Founded in 2007, UCLA Health Operation Mend helps America's post-9/11 service members and veterans recover from their visible and invisible wounds of war.

UCLA clinicians perform highly complex surgeries, as well as address psychological concerns. Many veterans do not have insurance coverage that pays for the services provided by Operation Mend, and many do not know how to secure enough leave time from work, arrange child care or surmount the cost of medical care and personal service needs. All UCLA Health Operation Mend services are at no cost to the veterans, and the program's Gold Standard of Care helps patients cope with these logistical challenges, including coordinating all patient and caregiver transportation, picking up patients and their family members from the airport gate when they arrive, scheduling and escorting patients

to appointments, offering a Buddy Family for social support and engagement and providing lodging and group activities while in Los Angeles — making each family feel welcome and comfortable.

“Our veterans deserve the best care and attention,” said Johnese Spisso, president of UCLA Health, CEO of the UCLA Hospital System and associate vice chancellor of UCLA Health Sciences. “We are thankful that our Operation Mend program and wounded warriors are so thoughtfully supported by community leaders such as Penske Motor Group.”

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ELIZABETH DOLE FOUNDATION GRANT HELPS OPERATION MEND CREATE A NEW CAREGIVER MEASURE



The Elizabeth Dole Foundation is the preeminent organization empowering, supporting, and honoring the nation's 5.5 million military caregivers—spouses, parents, family members, and friends—who care for America's wounded, ill, or injured service members and veterans at home. In an ongoing commitment to support nonprofit organizations that serve military caregivers, the Elizabeth Dole Foundation established the Hidden Heroes Fund. This fund is dedicated to supporting innovative programs that make a direct impact on the lives of America's military and veteran caregivers.

In 2019, Operation Mend was selected as one of the grant recipients to help demonstrate the greatest potential for making measurable progress in the areas of military caregiver mental health. Operation Mend is the only program in the nation that includes caregivers as 100 percent participants alongside their warriors in the Intensive Treatment Program for moderate to severe post-traumatic stress disorder and mild traumatic brain injury. As a Hidden Heroes

Fund grant recipient, Operation Mend developed a self-report assessment for caregivers that measures the overall frequency with which they provide specific types of emotional support to their care recipients; their perceived satisfaction with providing emotional support; perceived self-efficacy related to providing emotional support; and degree of identification with the caregiving role. The program also will provide a nuanced examination of the role of emotional support on the mental health of both caregivers and veterans.

One area that has not been sufficiently examined is the degree to which caregivers provide emotional support to veterans, the toll this takes on caregivers, the extent to which they identify with the caregiving role, and the impact of emotional support behaviors on veteran mental and physical health.

This new measure will aid in treatment planning and ultimately improve mental health and well-being, reduce caregiver burden, and optimize the balance of resources to improve family functioning.

AUTO CLUB 400



On March 1, 2020, the Team Penske racing family gave one of Operation Mend's Navy veterans, Matt Bove, an unforgettable experience. In addition to the customized shuttle donated by the Penske Motor Group, Matt and other members of Operation Mend were invited to the Auto Club 400 NASCAR Cup Series

stock car race in Fontana, California. Matt had an incredible behind-the-scenes experience meeting Team Penske driver Brad Keselowski, taking a pre-race lap in the pace car, and being on the track and in the pit during the race. Matt was overjoyed with his experience as car racing is one of his greatest passions! Team Penske had a great day too. Penske driver Joey Logano finished 22nd, Ryan Blaney finished 12th, and Operation Mend's new friend Brad Keselowski finished 2nd! We'll get em' next year! The whole Operation Mend team had the time of their lives, but most important, veteran Matt Bove, who has sacrificed so much, had a weekend that he will cherish for the rest of his life. Operation Mend gives its deepest thanks to the whole Penske team for giving that gift to a wounded warrior.

LEAD OC GOLF TOURNAMENT



From left to right: Army SGT George Cloy (Ret.), Army SSG Casey Benson (Ret.), Nate Fikse, Army National Guard SSG Michael Missel (Ret.), Army SGT Jason March (Ret.), Operation Mend Executive Director Troy Simon.

LEAD OC is an organization that brings together some of Orange County, California's most prominent executives to share their time, skills, and resources for the benefit of children and military families. In 2016, three LEAD OC members, Ross Bourne, and UCLA alumni Nate Fikse and LTC Aaron Schilleci, structured a committee to create the first-ever LEAD OC Golf Tournament benefiting veterans and military families. School ties and an established relationship made Operation Mend the recipient of LEAD OC's support. Operation Mend and Lead OC have a natural connection, as both groups are dedicated to making a difference in the lives of those they come into contact with, one person at a time. Nate Fikse, a member of the LEAD OC board and previously successful kicker for the UCLA Football team (1999-2002), said, "Our folks have a real passion for giving back to veterans and military families. We decided in the beginning that

every year Operation Mend was willing to participate, they were going to be the beneficiary of our annual golf tournament."

So far so good! We can attest that everyone who plays has a great time and brings great warmth and spirit to our veterans and our program. LEAD OC doubled their financial support to Operation Mend in each of the first three years of the tournament. This last year, which was the fourth year, Lead OC has raised more than \$55,000 for Operation Mend! Operation Mend is grateful to Lead OC, as well as tournament sponsor and long-time program supporter the Kayne Anderson Capital Advisors Foundation, for their dedication to our military, veterans, and their families. Nate Fikse said, "We're going to double that this coming year!" Go Nate, Go Aaron, Go Ross, Go LEAD OC, Go Kayne Anderson Capital Advisors Foundation, and Go Bruins!

OPERATION MEND'S BOARD OF ADVISORS



On November 9, 2019, Operation Mend convened the first meeting of its new Board of Advisors in New York City. The founding board comprises 19 initial members and has an array of program supporters that include, from Operation Mend's earliest days, United States Army General Pete Chiarelli (Ret.) and Beth Chiarelli, U.S. Marine Corps General James (Ret.) and Bonnie Amos, and Christine and Willie Geist. Other board members include Operation Mend's very first patient, U.S. Marine Corps Corporal Aaron P. Mankin (Ret.). The board is co-chaired by program founder, Ron Katz, and his daughter-in-law, Operation Mend's Volunteer Director of Community Engagement and Buddy Programs, Dana Katz. The initial meeting was held and hosted by Venable, LLP in its New York offices.

While in New York, the board participated in the formal board meeting and also had the honor of marching in the New York City Veterans Day Parade alongside veterans and families who have been treated by Operation Mend, and with many of the committed doctors and staff members who provide and coordinate their care. The extended group also toured the 9/11 Memorial Museum and participated in other activities that brought friends of the program together, including a spectacular evening at Bryant Park Grill, hosted by Laura and Gary Jacobs, and Maria and Bob Doland from Jacobs Doland Beer.

The board is structured to meet in person twice a year, once in Los Angeles and once in New York, but in light of the changes required by the COVID-19 pandemic, the board has been engaged in virtual meetings to discuss and support Operation Mend's strategies to adapt and

move forward in new ways to ensure it can continue to provide world-class care in the current environment.

Operation Mend thanks the Board of Advisors for their continuous support:

Ronald A. Katz - *Co-Chair, Board of Advisors*

Dana P. Katz - *Co-Chair, Board of Advisors; and Volunteer Director of Community Engagement and Buddy Programs, Operation Mend*

Johnese M. Spisso, R.N., M.P.A. - *President, UCLA Health; CEO, UCLA Hospital System; and Associate Vice Chancellor, UCLA Health Sciences; member, Board of Advisors*

Richard Azar - *Chief Operating Officer, UCLA Health; member, Board of Advisors*

Troy J. Simon - *Executive Director, Operation Mend; and Military Medicine, Board of Advisors*

Board Members

Bonnie J. Amos

General James F. Amos,
USMC (Ret.)

Beth Chiarelli

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Stephen Davis

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Justin Turner

Kourtney E. Turner

● VETERAN SPOTLIGHT: THE WALKING MAN ●



Photo: Courtesy of UCLA Newsroom

Operation Mend is thrilled to celebrate Ric Ryan's 9,000th-mile walking for Operation Mend. What began as an effort for the Vietnam veteran to start a healthier lifestyle, has turned into a 12-year campaign fueled by the passion to raise funds for injured veterans.

Ryan started walking for Operation Mend in 2008. For each wave he gets from folks along the way, he takes 25 cents out of his own pocket to put in a fund set

aside for Operation Mend. He also receives support from people in the community who want to contribute to the cause.

"What kept me walking all this time is the fact that I did it for the great people of Operation Mend." Now 12 years and 9,000 miles later, Ryan has raised and donated more than \$100,000 to support the program.

Be on the lookout for information about how you can virtually walk with us on Veterans Day!

TO SUPPORT UCLA HEALTH OPERATION MEND, PLEASE VISIT:

giving.ucla.edu/OpMendNewsletter2020

or contact Nicholas Middlesworth, Director of Development, at (310) 206-2089 or NMiddlesworth@mednet.ucla.edu



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