

# WHY GOLF



FROM THE BEGINNINGS IN 2001, WE HAVE HAD THE VISION AND MISSION OF HELPING THE FAMILIES OF OUR WOUNDED AND FALLEN HEROES AND ENLIST AS MANY MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY AS POSSIBLE. IN ESSENCE, TO BE A VEHICLE FOR THEM TO SUPPORT AND RECOGNIZE THE SACRIFICES MADE BY OUR VETERANS.

-WHOA Founder & President

WOUNDED  
HEROES  
*Of America*



**Before anything else, I want to thank you and the many people who have made it possible for us to keep this foundation alive over the last 20 years, and for giving not just me but many friends and volunteers the ability and privilege to help our combat wounded and their families.**



## **Why Golf?**

**Without golf, there would be no Wounded Heroes of America. When we got started, golf was the best way we knew to bring our veteran and civilian communities together, which has always been our goal.**

**After 9/11, every American was devastated and heartbroken. I, like many, went into a deep depression, unlike anything I had felt before. Day after day I saw the horrific reporting from Ground Zero, death and destruction on a scale I had never seen or**

**felt before. I thought at the time—having come to America as a refugee from Cuba, and having experienced generosity from the American people and safety I hadn't known—*how can anyone do such a horrible thing to a country that has been so good to so many?***

I wanted to be involved, but I didn't know what I could do. Those first few weeks, Americans opened their hearts and their pocketbooks, and raised more than a billion dollars for the surviving families. The contribution flooded the Red Cross and United Way, and soon thereafter the controversies began. The mega charities were not passing the money quickly enough to the families, and much of the donations were not reaching the families at all. It was the only thing we, the people, could do: send love and financial assistance to these families whose lives had been shattered and, in many cases, had lost the family breadwinner.

I needed to do something, not just to help the families, but for cathartic reasons as well. I had a sister living in Manhattan at the time, and I asked her if she could locate a family in need that I could organize a fundraiser for, and then see how difficult it would be to put money in that family's hands. It was impossible to get a family's name, and more so a method of contacting anyone unless you were related. I called a few golfing friends and told them that we were planning a golf tournament where we would give the proceeds to a family who had lost a loved one on 9/11.



To my surprise, a friend made the first contribution of \$2,500. In October 2001, we set up a website called Event 9-11HelpAmerica, and on cold, rainy November 29, 2001, we made the tournament happen. We raised \$10,000, of which we gave \$7,500 to Cheryl, the mother of two young boys and the widow of Michael McDonnell, who had been killed that fateful day and \$2500.00 to Windows of Hope- A fund started to help the kitchen and maintenance workers.

We received a beautiful thank you letter from Cheryl, and while I can't describe how I felt upon reading it, it was a cathartic and life-changing moment. I realized that small groups with no talent or resources could make an impact, even if small, in the life of someone whose world had been shattered. We never intended to do anything besides the one gesture, just to see if it was possible, but because of her response, we thought we would try it again and see what else was possible

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On September 10, 2002, we held our second golf tournament, which raised \$6,500, but we had a problem: who could we give the proceeds to? By then, the families in New York were receiving financial help, so I enlisted the help of kids from Bud Carson Middle School in Hawthorne, CA, and we gave \$1,000 to Save the Children and \$1,000 to a local Girl Scout troop, but we still had \$4,500 left. Just by chance, a friend gave me a flyer about a young Navy SEAL and friends who were raising money for the surviving spouse of a fallen SEAL. I contacted them and offered them the \$4,500, and they were incredibly happy to receive the donation.

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Once they heard that we raised the money from a golf tournament, they asked if I would help organize a golf tournament for their group, soon-to-be the official 501 United Warrior Survivor Foundation UWSF. Suddenly we were involved with the Special Ops community, our most elite warriors fighting in Afghanistan. It was a turning point, and it gave us a new purpose and direction. We scheduled a golf tournament in Pasadena on May 13, 2003, to help raise funds for their program. We held three golf tournaments for UWSF and netted over \$60,000, and those were the most exciting tournaments we've done to date. The SEALs are a bit different from most folks; they bring things to events that you just don't see every day.



**Check-in for the SEALs had a bit more flair. The last group to check-in parachuted onto the course, landed on a dime, changed their clothes, and then teed off with the rest of us. It was very cool, to say the least.**

**Now we were helping the elite warriors of our country, amazing people doing the heart-wrenching work of looking after the families of their fallen brothers. We had the privilege to get to know some incredible men and women, and it was an honor to assist them with the work they were doing. It was something I never expected to experience, but I have great memories of the time we spent helping them, the best warfighters we have.**



## Our Vets



## 20 Years of Tournaments

**November 29, 2001 -September 10, 2002 - May 13, 2003 - May 11, 2004:**

**September 9, 2004 - March 10, 2005 - September 9, 2005 --September8, 2006**

**March 29, 2006--October 4, 2007 - April 30, 2008 - October 2, 2008**

**May 7, 2009--May 11, 2010 - June 10, 2011 - July 20, 2012 - May 9, 2013 - June 7, 2014**

**September 28, 2017- May 23, 2018- May 2, 2019**

**2020 & 2021 cancelled due to Covid**

**May 9, 2022**

By 2004 and 2005, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were raging. The casualties were mounting. Now we had more widows and wounded, but the wounded were conventional forces: young. Every time we met a family member was heartbreaking. Oftentimes, it was the wife of a young soldier or Marine who had enlisted right out of high school. We had not seen anything like it since Vietnam, and no one was prepared to deal with the high number of casualties. The VA was ill-equipped and took a long time to catch up with the benefits and the ratings for the wounded or surviving family members.

At first, the wounded were visually identifiable: they were the blind, the amputees, the paraplegics. But then we learned about what came to be called the “walking wounded.” They looked fine but suffered from equally devastating issues: Post-Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs). Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) didn’t discriminate between men and women, and female service members in particular were often a favorite target of our enemy.

Wanting to help but not knowing where to start, we began giving financial stipends every month to the young widows of those we lost. It was not much, but it was something. Soon after, we started to meet our combat wounded, and they were many. Our first few were paraplegics, blind, amputees, and many had severe TBIs from IEDs. Every time we met one of these combat wounded, we wanted to do even more to help them. I remember meeting a young widow of a fallen Marine, and when I presented her with a check, she broke into tears—tears of a person who had had her heart ripped out. I had never seen such grief, and it motivated us to learn even more about how we could better help these people. Money was not the only thing they needed; they needed to know that someone cared and appreciated the sacrifice they made for this country.





**It has been more than twenty years now. We have made relationships with some young warriors and surviving spouses that will last a lifetime. While we have cried together many times, we have also laughed and broken bread. We have seen their families grow. We have had weddings and baby showers.**

**And while many of our vets and families are doing quite well today, we have always made time for a little golf. Golf has been the one constant in our foundation, if for no other reason than to introduce our heroes to our community, and spend a day together and let them see why we have been at this for so many years.**

**From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for your support.**

**Mike Talleda  
President and Founder  
Wounded Heroes of America**

## **Special guests that stopped by to say Hello**



The Ladies from the L A Lakers with Alroy Billiman - one of our Navajo combat wounded Vets visiting from the Navajo Reservation.



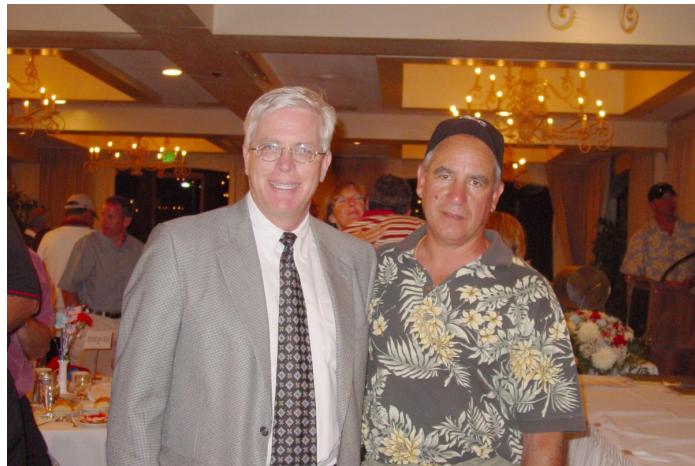
Jon Voight- Oscar winning actor and great friend of our service members & Nocy -one of our best friends, phenomenal guitarist who opens dinner ceremony with a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem.



Dodger great- Fernando Valenzuela with combat wounded Moises Escareno and Jose Hernandez



Gore Vidal - American author and novelist, with combat wounded Felipe Adams who was shot by sniper in Iraq- below Hugh Huwitt - conservative talk show host. Two very different political views that come together to honor our combat wounded.



### **Breaking Bread with our Vets- Come and Join us**



**Visit our website and Register**



*"Supporting our Wounded Warriors  
and their families"*

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