



BOB WOODRUFF FOUNDATION
Investing in the Next Chapter for Our Veterans

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bob Woodruff Foundation Announces Additional \$2 Million Investment in Programs Providing Urgent Support to Veterans Impacted by Coronavirus

NEW YORK, June 24, 2020 — Today, the Bob Woodruff Foundation (BWF) announced an investment of \$2.1 million awarded to best-in-class organizations that are providing much-needed programs and services to veterans, caregivers, and military families impacted by COVID-19. These expedited grants invest in programs that are addressing needs defined in BWF's research paper "[Veterans and COVID-19: Projecting the Economic, Social, and Mental Health Needs of America's Veterans.](#)"

This announcement comes on the heels of BWF's \$1.9 million investment in programs serving veterans through their Spring Grant Cycle, bringing their total 2020 investment to over \$4 million so far. The foundation will be providing another wave of COVID-19 emergency support grants in the coming weeks.

As part of a two-year \$6 million partnership with the [Qatar Harvey Fund](#) (QHF) to support vulnerable veterans living in Hurricane Harvey-impacted Texas, several of these grants represent a strategic approach to address veterans' ongoing needs as they are exacerbated by new challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic is having an outsized effect on the communities impacted by Hurricane Harvey, slowing the recovery for thousands of veterans living in the region. With Bob Woodruff Foundation-Qatar Harvey Fund funding, this portfolio of programs will help an already strained social services sector as they continue to support veterans back to their normal state before the storm, and weather a new kind of storm that has brought sickness, unemployment, uncertainty, and isolation.

For a full and detailed list of the Bob Woodruff Foundation's expedited grant recipients, including BWF-QHF grantees, [visit here](#).

About the Bob Woodruff Foundation:

The Bob Woodruff Foundation (BWF) was founded in 2006 after reporter Bob Woodruff was hit by a roadside bomb while covering the war in Iraq. Since then, the Bob Woodruff Foundation has led an enduring call to action for people to stand up for heroes and meet the emerging and long-term needs of today's veterans. To date, BWF has invested over \$70 million to Find, Fund and Shape™ programs that have empowered impacted veterans, service members, and their family members, across the nation. For more information, please visit bobwoodrufffoundation.org or follow us on Twitter at [@Stand4Heroes](https://twitter.com/Stand4Heroes).

The following programs were awarded grants as part of the Bob Woodruff Foundation's 2020 Expedited Grants Portfolio, addressing urgent needs related to COVID-19.

Grants made possible through our BWF- National Football League (NFL) Partnership:

Bastion Community of Resilience

Telehealth for Warriors and Families

Bastion is a New Orleans community for returning warriors and families, in which those with life-altering wounds and injuries live alongside retired military and civilian volunteers to enhance their mutual well-being, satisfaction, and resilience. The Bob Woodruff Foundation provided initial support to Bastion in 2012 to create a long-term innovative housing solution for transitioning warriors and families with life-long rehabilitative needs. Bastion's Adult Daycare and Vocational Rehabilitation Program has since received NFL-BWF Healthy Lifestyle and Creating Community (HLCC) funding. In response to COVID-19, Bastion will conduct a three-month targeted response to serve veterans and families from Houma, LA to Biloxi, MS through telehealth technology. This NFL-BWF HLCC grant will help Bastion prevent social isolation and loneliness by providing the core services of talk therapy, health coaching, and supportive mind-body skills groups.

Armed Services Arts Partnership (ASAP)

Sustaining & Scaling ASAP's Community Arts Programs through COVID-19 Pandemic

Armed Services Arts Partnership cultivates community and improves well-being for veterans, service members, military families, and caregivers through the arts. ASAP delivers art classes teaching comedy, creative writing, improvisation, acting, drawing, and storytelling. A 2018 evaluation funded by BWF found that veterans and military family members who participate in ASAP programming experience increased social support, sense of purpose, resilience, and self-esteem. However, physical distancing mandates implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic have put ASAP participants at a heightened risk for social isolation, loneliness, and adverse mental health outcomes.

This NFL-BWF Healthy Lifestyle and Creating Community (HLCC) grant will launch new virtual programs and community engagement initiatives to ensure that ASAP participants and alumni have sustained access to evidence-based community arts programming, increasing their social support and well-being through and after the COVID-19 crisis. Using virtual programming, ASAP will scale its impact to address national need during the pandemic, focusing outreach on the most at-risk communities. This grant will support the launch of ASAP's Comedy Crash Course and Comedy Boot Camp programs in at least one new location in 2021, and the development of a new curriculum for storytelling classes and workshops, ultimately creating a scalable Leadership Development Program. In addition, NFL-BWF funding will support new and revised surveys and increased analysis, culminating in a small-scale study on ASAP's program impact in a virtual setting.

National Ability Center

Virtual Recreation and Community Building for Veterans and their Families

The National Ability Center (NAC) empowers individuals of all abilities by building self-esteem, confidence, and lifetime skills through sport, recreation, and social & educational programming. NAC's vision is to inspire individual achievement, community inclusion, and global impact for persons of all abilities, including active duty service members, veterans and their families. The NAC is using virtual programming and social networking to combat feelings of isolation caused by COVID-19, and to provide a connection for our military participants, while guiding them in ways to remain active and healthy. This NFL-BWF Healthy Lifestyles and Creating Community (HLCC) grant will ensure that at least 200 veterans, service members, and their families have access to adaptive equipment so they can continue to engage in recreational sports, and will enable NAC to implement virtual programming to keep its community strong and connected until everyone can get back outdoors together.

Team Red, White & Blue (Team RWB)

Virtual Engagement Capacity Building

Team Red, White & Blue (Team RWB) supports veterans experiencing a challenging reintegration by providing them with personal and meaningful interaction. RWB also accomplishes this by connecting veterans with their communities through exercise and social activities. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced most veteran organizations to suspend in-person interaction and stretch already limited resources. This puts veterans and their caregivers at risk both mentally and physically by exacerbating pre-existing

illness and through experiencing increased loneliness. This NFL-BWF Healthy Lifestyles and Creating Community (HLCC) grant will support Team RWB's virtual engagement capabilities via the Team RWB mobile app to keep at least 3,000 members engaged as a community to prevent isolation and associated mental health challenges. The Bob Woodruff Foundation was an early partner with Team RWB, which has grown from 12 communities to over 200; this grant is part of Team RWB's ongoing efforts to expand the Chapter and Community Program (CCP) into an accessible and interactive virtual space utilizing the Team RWB Mobile App and Team RWB website.

Veterans Yoga Project

Mindful Resilience Yoga-Online Streaming

Veterans Yoga Project (VYP) is dedicated to supporting recovery and resilience among veterans, active duty military members, families, and communities. VYP logs 1,500 veteran visits each month at their Mindful Resilience yoga classes, in partnership with 18 VA hospitals, 17 Vet Centers, and more than a dozen community-based veteran service organizations across the United States. VYP began the Mindful Resilience Yoga-Online Streaming in March 2020, to stream daily content including yoga, breathing, and mindfulness sessions. These classes offer safety, predictability, and support for trauma recovery and utilize the tools of breathing, gratitude, mindful movement, meditation, and guided rest to address pain and distress. This NFL-BWF Healthy Lifestyle and Creating Community (HLCC) grant will fund Veterans Yoga Project yoga teachers to provide online programming for free to at least 3,200 veterans, active duty military members, families, and the communities across the United States.

Montrose Center

Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on LGBTQ Veterans

The Montrose Center is a resource and community center providing culturally competent and affordable care to LGBTQ veterans through their Veterans Assistance Program. In the face of the coronavirus, many LGBTQ veterans are finding their financial situations upended. Four of the top five "at-risk" jobs listed in the Bob Woodruff Foundation's report on the impact of COVID-19 on U.S. veterans (Mining, Oil, and Gas Extraction, Transportation and Warehousing, Employment Services, and Leisure and Hospitality) are key to Houston's economy, with predictions about local job loss already exceeding 150,000. For many LGBTQ veterans, serving in silence shaped habits such as self-isolating and declining to seek services. As these Asset-Limited, Income Restrained, Employed (ALICE) veterans face lost or reduced income and the depletion

of their limited savings, there is an urgent need for responsive, immediate relief as well as sustained, culturally competent assistance. This NFL-BWF COVID-19 grant will provide emergency financial assistance, shelf-stable food assistance, and case management services to 50 LGBTQ veterans impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring that they are able to sustain housing and food security and navigate recovery resources.

The Mission Continues

Platoon Leader Support During COVID Relief Efforts

The Mission Continues (TMC) empowers veterans, addressing their need to serve and demonstrating their talent and skills to the local community while also improving local communities and increasing military-civilian understanding and appreciation. TMC's Platoon Leaders are responsible for leading a team of service-minded veterans and community volunteers to make a lasting impact in their city. Many of The Mission Continues' volunteer service platoon leaders have been economically, socially, and psychologically affected by COVID-19. This NFL-BWF Healthy Lifestyle and Creating Community (HLCC) grant will provide stipends to 18 Platoon Leaders so that they can continue to serve and grow as community leaders, create connections and service opportunities for veterans in the TMC network, and maximize their skills to drive change efforts in their local communities.

Teach for America

Financial Support for Veteran Teachers

Teach For America (TFA) finds, develops, and supports exceptional and diverse leaders – individually and in teams – so they can transform education and expand opportunity with children, starting in the classroom. Since the launch of their Military Veterans Initiative in 2012, 450 military veterans have received teacher and leadership development training and secured employment as teachers in low-income communities. Beyond their two-year commitment to TFA, 85 percent of military veteran alumni continue to work in education or low-income communities, and 66 percent work in education as teachers and school leaders. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, TFA has shifted to a virtual teacher training for the summer and is unable to provide room and board for veteran teachers. This NFL-BWF Healthy Lifestyle and Creating Community (HLCC) grant will provide transitional grants to 10 NFL-BWF Fellows, giving them the

financial support they need to participate in virtual teacher training through the summer before they begin full-time employment as TFA teachers.

Bunker Labs

Virtual Programming & Platforms to Support Military-Connected Entrepreneurs

About 200,000 military service members transition out of the military every year and nearly 25 percent express a desire to start a business, yet currently only 4.5 percent of post-9/11 veterans do so. During the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous entrepreneurs in the Bunker Labs community have been forced to cease or dramatically change their operations based on public health guidelines, leading to a sudden decline in cash flow which has required many business owners to grapple with difficult decisions around their staffing, operations, and the future of their company. This NFL-BWF Salute to Service grant will enable Bunker Labs to expand their online community, convene program cohorts and events virtually, and develop resources specifically tailored to empower entrepreneurs to respond to and rebound from COVID-19's impact on their business. This collaborative work builds on the prior BWF-NFL investment in the Launch Lab Online platform and elevates that effort to the next level of supporting military-connected entrepreneurs at all stages of their journey.

Furniture Bank of Metro Atlanta (FBMA)

Veteran Employment Program - COVID-19 Response

Despite extensive training and responsibilities in the military, some veterans struggle to transition successfully to civilian life and employment, with some encountering, especially significant challenges. The Veteran Employment Program, operated by the Furniture Bank of Metro Atlanta (FBMA) a prior NFL-BWF partner, intervenes with these most-vulnerable veterans who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness, to provide on-the-job training, forklift or CDL-A licenses, and to facilitate full-time employment. Veterans exit the program with employment income sufficient to prevent their return to homelessness. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, FBMA was forced to temporarily suspend all operations, including its Veteran Employment Program, creating additional financial hardship for vulnerable veterans. This NFL-BWF Salute to Service grant will enable FBMA to offer current participants an 8-week extension of their training program and continue to pay them weekly stipends to sustain them through the closure. Specifically, this NFL-BWF grant will provide financial and transportation support to 6 current veteran interns, offer an accelerated internship program to 6 returning veterans

who have lost employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and provide 4 of those veterans with a CDL-A license. This grant will ensure that 12 veterans are able to secure full-time employment when normal business operations resume.

Grants made possible through BWF-Qatar Harvey Fund (QHF) Partnership:

The Council on Recovery

Clinical Therapy, Recovery Coaching, and Intensive Case Management for Veterans with Substance Use Disorders

Addiction is a disease of isolation. While communities promote social distancing and self-quarantine to slow the spread of the coronavirus, veterans who are already struggling with substance abuse and mental health issues require access to supportive services. The Council on Recovery is experiencing increased demand for family and couples counseling as the stress of recovery from Hurricane Harvey is compounded by the confinement of sheltering at home. The history of disaster and trauma in Harris County has demonstrated that people attend to their physical and safety needs first, but soon begin to experience psychological effects. People are now experiencing these needs simultaneously and this compounded trauma exceeds many people's ability to cope. This Qatar Harvey Fund (QHF)-BWF grant will support The Council on Recovery's coaching, intensive case management, and clinical therapy supporting at least 50 veterans and their families, originally impacted by Hurricane Harvey and currently struggling with substance use and co-occurring mental health conditions.

Tri-County Behavioral Healthcare

Veterans Services

Montgomery County, Texas, is one of the fastest-growing counties in the United States. This growth has strained the limited low-income housing in the area and expanded the housing authority's overfilled waiting list. For veterans affected by Hurricane Harvey, these lodging constraints threaten their ability to remain housed without a comprehensive intervention. The services provided by Tri-County Behavioral Healthcare are designed to keep veterans and their family members living in their homes by addressing mental health conditions that if left untreated, would threaten a veteran's ability to maintain housing. Tri-County Behavioral Healthcare's services address issues such as anger management, coping abilities, relationship building,

anxiety management, and substance abuse; as well as provide case management to access additional resources in the communities in which they live. This BWF-QHF grant will strengthen Tri-County Behavioral Healthcare's clinical and case management team and ensure 125 veteran households remain housed by addressing behavioral health issues and increasing access to supportive services.

Easter Seals of Greater Houston

Supporting Post-9/11 Veterans During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Well before stay-at-home orders were invoked, Easter Seals Houston was a leader serving veterans and veteran families needing mental health support due to disasters including Hurricane Harvey. Texas has been doubly impacted; the crash in the oil/energy sector combined with COVID-19 closures has resulted in over 1 million Texans filing unemployment claims in March that has exacerbated challenges still felt as Houstonians continue to recover from the storm. Easter Seals of Greater Houston immediately jumped into the arena, bolstering their veteran disaster case management staff and moving services to a virtual model. This BWF-QHF grant will strengthen Easter Seals of Greater Houston's mental health and disaster case management capabilities, to provide virtual peer social/support opportunities and to provide direct emergency financial relief to 150 veteran households whose recovery from Hurricane Harvey has slowed in the current situation brought about by COVID-19.

The Council on Alcohol & Drug Abuse - Coastal Bend

Project Link

Corpus Christi, Texas is home to over 27,000 veterans. The oil and gas, and the tourism and hospitality industries are among the most affected by COVID-19. The Nueces County communities of Southeast Texas still recovering from Hurricane Harvey are both anchored by the oil and gas industry and are dependent on the leisure and hospitality sector. When economic hardship is compounded with the social isolation mandated to protect the health of all citizens, circumstances create an unfortunate opportunity for unhealthy coping mechanisms such as alcohol and drug misuse. Recognizing this, The Council on Alcohol & Drug Abuse - Coastal Bend has developed Project Link to provide virtual and safe program delivery and maintain support necessary to encourage veterans to continue living healthy lifestyles. This BWF-QHF grant will support virtual peer-to-peer support groups, emergency economic relief, virtual financial education, and virtual anger management classes for 250 veterans living in communities impacted by Hurricane Harvey.

Combined Arms

COVID-19 Response & Rural Community Expansion

COVID-19 has dramatically impacted the Texas Gulf Coast communities already harmed by Hurricane Harvey. Lack of social services remains a barrier to accelerating the recovery of those hit by the hurricane. As the current condition has crushed local economies, the people-serving sector in the dense regions in and around Harris county have stepped up to fill the void with expanded teleservices. Building off the momentum of a previous BWF-QHF grant to support the Community Leaders program, which connects local veterans with resources to address their needs, Combined Arms has assisted all of their member organizations transitioning to virtual services and has actively built partnerships across the region to serve a larger area of the Harvey impacted Texas Gulf Coast. With a BWF-QHF grant, Combined Arms will increase their program by an additional 420 leaders across the Harvey-affected region of the Texas Gulf Coast, and scale their social service and community manager capacity to coordinate a total of 750 community leaders across the region to connect 10,000 veteran households to a social service network standing by to assist them in their recovery after Harvey and during this new period of hardship.

Houston Food Bank

Veterans COVID-19 Response

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt the daily lives of all Americans, vulnerable groups such as low-income families, minorities, single parent households, the disabled, and the elderly are most susceptible to negative effects. Veterans are among all of these groups, and in the Texas Gulf Coast, veterans are also still recovering from Hurricane Harvey. The Houston Food Bank and their partners quickly identified increased needs in the veteran community and the barriers veterans face due to lack of transportation and economic resources, as well as health and housing issues. Working with their partners at Combined Arms, Houston Food Bank built a plan to ensure they can meet the needs experienced by veteran households across the region. With this QHF-BWF grant, Houston Food Bank will build a pantry at the Combined Arms veteran center and also embed a coordinator aiding veterans applying for state-funded social and health services, including SNAP, Medicaid, Children's Medicaid, and women's health programs. This capability will provide greater access to food and serve at least 1,000 veteran households across the region.

Rutgers University Foundation

Vets4Warriors

As the country remains sheltered in place and veterans are isolated in their homes, Vets4Warriors remains fully operational, providing peer-support 24/7. Vets4Warriors' peer-support services are in high demand. Since January, the new caller rate has increased by 17.8 percent and can be attributed, in part, to prior QHF-BWF support for specific outreach in the Texas Gulf Coast and to partnerships created through BWF shaping. With this QHF-BWF grant, Vets4Warriors will grow their partnership with Combined Arms and enhance their ability to serve veterans by connecting incoming off-hours and weekend calls to Combined Arms directly to Vets4Warriors. This capability will connect 400 veteran households to Vets4Warriors peer-support specialists building resilience and improving quality of life and overall well-being for veterans, family members, and caregivers in the Texas Gulf Coast affected by Hurricane Harvey. Vets4Warriors will ensure those callers are integrated into the Combined Arms system, where they can access additional programs supported by the BWF-QHF partnership.

Lone Star Legal Aid

Military and Veterans Unit

Across the Texas Gulf Coast, low-income veterans living in communities impacted by Hurricane Harvey have seen their circumstances worsened significantly by the pandemic. These veterans and their family members face issues related to unemployment, food insecurity, public benefits eligibility, inability to pay rent and mortgages, rising domestic violence, nursing home discharges, and the risk of homelessness. These challenges are compounded by mounting debt and the possibility of bankruptcy if they are unable to secure effective legal representation. Collectively, these issues have created new and unanticipated legal problems for large numbers of low-income Texas veterans and their family members. Over the last 15 years, Lone Star Legal Aid (LSLA) has become an expert in disaster legal services, and that knowledge and skillset has transitioned extremely well to the current pandemic. With this grant from BWF and QHF, LSLA will connect with and help 140 veteran households navigate legal barriers to well-being across the Texas Gulf Coast.

Endeavors

Disaster Case Management Program in the Texas Gulf Coast

The communities along the Texas Gulf Coast recovering from Hurricane Harvey are now experiencing compounded hardship stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic including illness, isolation, unemployment, economic uncertainty, and mental health concerns. Many veterans across the region have lost their jobs in the restaurant and bar industries, retail, construction, and oil and gas sectors. Families are struggling to afford

utilities, car payments, lodging, insurance, and food; and they are making decisions that increase their debt. Endeavors' Disaster Case Management program provides client-focused services for short-term relief and long-term recovery for disaster victims continuing to recover from Hurricane Harvey in Texas. With the support of a QHF-BWF grant, Endeavors will provide emergency financial support for at least 150 veteran households recovering from Hurricane Harvey.

Corporate America Supports You

SkillsBuild

COVID-19 has drastically affected the job market with companies having to layoff, furlough, and stop or delay hiring. Harris County has been hit particularly hard with the crash in the oil/energy sector and the cascading effect across the supporting economy. For many, stable employment was the key to recovery after Hurricane Harvey, and with the current downturn in the economy, many veterans and their families risk losing that economic foundation for recovery from Hurricane Harvey. However, companies are finding their way forward through the economic downturn. Temporary positions are available in pharmacies, grocery stores, healthcare facilities, transportation companies, warehousing, and other essential markets. Corporate America Supports You rapidly developed the Essential and Professional Industry Skills Course platform, or SkillsBuild in early 2020 and hired a Community Coordinator in Texas to serve Harris County. With a BWF-QHF grant, CASY will provide 300 veterans and veteran spouses with essential and professional industry skills and certifications to be competitive in the changing economy. These skills will help veterans identify a career path and obtain certifications in technology, service, and administration sectors that are in high demand in Harris County. Each veteran or their spouse will be provided the QHF-BWF one-pager informing them of the partnership and additional resources to support their recovery from Hurricane Harvey.