

Bob Woodruff Foundation

The Qatar Harvey Fund established a partnership with the Bob Woodruff Foundation (BWF) in 2018 to support American veterans who continue to be impacted by Hurricane Harvey. Over the course of two years, BWF utilized a \$6 million grant from the Qatar Harvey Fund to identify and support organizations providing services to the more than 400,000 post-9/11 veterans and their families in the southeast Texas areas impacted by Hurricane Harvey. This partnership supported rebuilding and recovery initiatives as well as work in adjacent service areas that contribute to improved outcomes for this community. Grants were announced over the course of four cycles, details below, with final grants announced in June 2020.

Status: Funds were fully disbursed to the Bob Woodruff Foundation in December 2019.

"The Qatar Harvey Fund represents an investment in the Bob Woodruff Foundation to support veterans and military families to rebuild after Hurricane Harvey."

General Martin Dempsey, 18th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Bob Woodruff Foundation Board Member

2020 Expedited Grant Cycle Recipients

BWF established a special grant cycle in 2020 to address the significant impact of COVID-19 on veterans and military families. The pandemic has had an outsized effect on the communities impacted by Hurricane Harvey, slowing the recovery for thousands of veterans living in the region. With BWF-QHF funding, this portfolio of programs is helping an already strained social services sector as it continues to support veterans and help them weather a new kind of storm that has brought sickness, unemployment, uncertainty and isolation.

- **The Council on Recovery – provide clinical therapy, recovery coaching, and intensive case management for veterans and their families**

While communities promoted social distancing and self-quarantining to slow the spread of the coronavirus in 2020 and 2021, veterans who were already struggling with substance abuse and mental health issues required access to supportive services. The Council on Recovery experienced increased demand for family and couples counseling as the stress of recovery from Hurricane Harvey was compounded by the confinement of sheltering at home. This grant, which concluded in Q2 2021, supported coaching, intensive case management, and clinical therapy supporting 57 veterans and their families who were originally impacted by Hurricane Harvey and were struggling with substance use and mental health conditions.

- **Tri-County Behavioral Healthcare – strengthen clinical and case management capacity and ensure 125 veteran households remain housed**

The services provided by Tri-County Behavioral Healthcare were 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 grant, which concluded in Q2 2021, strengthened clinical and case management teams and ensured that 155 veteran households remained housed by addressing behavioral health issues and increased access to supportive services.

- **Easter Seals of Greater Houston – provide support and direct emergency financial relief to 150 veteran households**

The crash in the oil/energy sector, combined with COVID-19 closures, resulted in over one million Texans filing unemployment claims by March of 2020 that exacerbated

challenges still felt as Houstonians continued 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 grant strengthened 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 had slowed from COVID-19.

- **The Council on Alcohol & Drug Abuse, Coastal Bend – provide support and emergency economic relief for 250 veterans**

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 grant supported virtual peer-to-peer support groups, emergency economic relief, virtual financial education, and virtual anger management classes for 264 veterans living in communities impacted by Hurricane Harvey.

- **Combined Arms – support COVID-19 response and rural community expansion to connect 10,000 veteran households to social service networks**

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 assisted all of their member organizations transitioning to virtual services and actively built partnerships across the region to serve a larger area of the Harvey impacted Texas Gulf Coast. With this grant completed in Q2 2021, Combined Arms increased their program by training an additional 954 leaders across the Harvey-affected region of the Texas Gulf Coast, and connecting 10,166

veteran households to social services to assist them in their recovery after Harvey.

- **Houston Food Bank – establish a food pantry at the Combined Arms veteran center and serve at least 1,000 veteran households**

Due to COVID-19 disruptions and the need to switch food delivery approaches, the Houston Food Bank served 545 veterans by improving their access to food and other resources. While this number fell short of the goal, the investment in a new mobile food bank will continue to serve veterans throughout the service area.

- **University Foundation Vets4Warriors – connect 400 veteran households to Vets4Warriors peer support specialists.**

Vets4Warriors grew their partnership with Combined Arms. This capability helped connect 279 veteran households to Vets4Warriors peer-support specialists building resilience and improving quality of life. While falling short of the goal for serving veterans in the Harvey-impacted areas, Vets4Warriors served more than 11,000 individuals during the grant period, with the vast majority of callers coming from outside the Texas Gulf Coast.

- **Lone Star Legal Aid – assist 140 veterans in communities impacted by Hurricane Harvey with legal barriers to well-being**

Across the Texas Gulf Coast, low-income veterans living in communities impacted by Hurricane Harvey saw their circumstances worsened significantly by the pandemic. These veterans and their family members faced 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. Building on

the success of the Spring 2019 BWF/QHF grant to Lone Star Legal Aid, this grant served 174 veteran households.

- **Endeavors – provide emergency financial support for at least 150 veteran households recovering from Hurricane Harvey**

The communities along the Texas Gulf Coast recovering from Hurricane Harvey have had compounded hardships stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. Many veterans across the region have lost their jobs and families are struggling to afford utilities, car payments, lodging, insurance, and food. 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 this grant, Endeavors provided emergency financial support for 150 veteran households recovering from Hurricane Harvey.

- **Corporate America Supports You (CASYS) – provide 300 veterans and veteran spouses with essential and professional industry skills and certifications**

For many, stable employment was the key to recovery after Hurricane Harvey. But with the 2020 downturn in the economy, many veterans and their families risked losing that economic foundation. 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 the BWF-QHF grant, CASYS provided 1,059 veterans and veteran spouses with essential and professional industry skills and certifications to be competitive in the changing economy – far exceeding their goal.

Spring 2020 Grant Cycle Recipients

- **Family Houston: Returning Home – support at least 120 veterans with resources necessary to establish and maintain stable housing**

Veterans who had experienced homelessness preceding Hurricane Harvey have struggled to maintain their housing following the storm and the most recent impact of COVID-19. This grant to Family Houston expands operations to provide

veterans impacted by Hurricane Harvey with material and financial assistance to maintain housing and utilities. When this grant concluded in Q1 2021, Family Houston's Case Management team had served 123 veteran households.

- **Goodwill Industries of Houston: Veterans Employment Program – provide vocational training for up to 50 veterans**
Employment remained the highest unmet need for the veteran community following Hurricane Harvey. The current economic climate has exacerbated this need, as veterans are laid off or unable to pursue careers during COVID-19 conditions. Goodwill Houston serves veterans throughout the greater Houston area who are experiencing unemployment or earning too much to qualify for VA and other federal assistance programs, but too little to be economically self-sufficient. As of year-end 2020, this grant enabled Goodwill Houston to provide vocational training to 42 veterans impacted by Hurricane Harvey, preparing them for high-need, high-growth careers, which will lead to improved employment options and financial stability. This grant is scheduled for completion in Q3 2021.
- **South Texas Research Organizational Network Guiding Studies on Trauma and Resilience (STRONG STAR) – train 65 veteran-serving mental health providers in CBT-I&N, improving service delivery in the Texas Gulf Coast area**
Building on the Fall 2019 grants to STRONG STAR, an additional grant was made for Spring 2020 to the consortium, housed at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. This grant will provide training for 65 mental health care providers operating in the Texas Gulf Coast in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia and Nightmares (CBT-I&N). Sleep problems are very often present simultaneously with post traumatic stress disorder and can be a gateway to resolving PTSD symptoms. These trainings will expand and improve veteran treatment options in an area still recovering from Hurricane Harvey. This grant is scheduled for completion in November 2021.

Fall 2019 Grant Recipients

Two separate grants have been made to **South Texas Research Organizational Network Guiding Studies on Trauma and Resilience (STRONG STAR)** research consortium focused on PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) evaluation and treatment at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. These grants are complementary efforts to address the under-availability of quality, evidence-based mental healthcare for veterans in the Texas Gulf Coast.

- **Fund trainings for at least 90 clinicians in counties impacted by Hurricane Harvey and help those organizations create long-term plans for sustained use of evidence-based therapy.** The STRONG STAR team will subsequently provide expert consultation to these mental health care providers as they treat at least three veterans each (from or currently residing in the counties impacted by Hurricane Harvey) between February 2020 – November 2020. This grant, now complete, trained 98 clinicians and served 1,113 veterans with PTSD.
- **Provide immediate care for up to 40 veterans in the region impacted by Hurricane Harvey who are suffering most acutely from PTSD.** Some veterans in the Texas gulf coast region struggle with severe PTSD, exacerbated by the stresses of Hurricane Harvey, and cannot wait for the local mental health care capability to improve. This grant will identify up to 40 veterans in need of immediate expert clinical care and transport them to San Antonio for the best-in-class STRONG STAR 3-week program designed to address the most severely traumatized PTSD patients who have been impacted by Hurricane Harvey. By the end of Q2 2021, the program has pre-screened 71 veterans, with 21 completing treatment. This grant is scheduled to conclude in August 2021.

The remaining five grants provide important supplementary capabilities and outcomes to support Harvey-impacted veterans in the Gulf Coast region:

- **Easter Seals of Greater Houston, Inc. – provide mental health and financial counseling for 100 veterans or family member.** Easter Seals is a national non-profit provider of services for individuals with autism, developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, other special needs, and disabled veterans. Easter Seals of Greater Houston was one of the biggest providers helping families recover from the impact and aftermath of Hurricane Harvey and has since been working to address unmet mental health and financial literacy needs in the veteran community. Easter Seals is addressing the pressing need for mental health services and financial literacy by providing individual and group mental health counseling, peer to peer support, and financial coaching. This funding, which concluded in Q2 2021, enabled mental health counseling to decrease veterans' depression and anxiety and improve participants' quality of life. This grant also funded financial counseling to help veterans reduce their debt, increase their assets, and create and use a household budget. Easter Seals of Greater Houston exceeded its goal by serving 114 post-9/11 families impacted by Hurricane Harvey.
- **Vets4Warriors – provide peer support for 250 veterans, family members, and caregivers located in the Texas Gulf Coast.** Housed at the Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care National Call Center in New Jersey, Vets4Warriors is a national 24/7 peer support network that provides live one-on-one assistance to veteran and military communities. Every call, text, and email from a veteran is answered by Vets4Warriors peers who are all veterans, military family members and caregivers. With this grant, which concluded in Q2 2021, Vets4Warriors targeted their outreach to the Texas Gulf Coast region to reach veterans affected by Hurricane Harvey who needed upstream support and peer connection so that the challenges they faced are mitigated before reaching the point of crisis. Vets4Warriors focused on the more rural areas, where support was less available.

- **The Mission Continues – operate a week of veterans’ service projects in communities affected by Hurricane Harvey, involving 500 Houston and Gulf Coast veterans.** TMC conducts annual large-scale veteran empowerment and community improvement operations, empowering veterans and addressing their need to serve while supporting communities in need. In November 2020, TMC convened local veterans from the Houston and Gulf Coast region for five days of large-scale service projects in communities heavily impacted by Hurricane Harvey.
- **Combined Arms – identify, train, and equip 100 leaders across the Gulf Coast region to identify and connect with local Harvey-impacted veterans.** Combined Arms unites the community of service providers to improve and accelerate services to Houston veterans. To date, however, veterans in the Houston metropolitan area have had the easiest access to the 395 programs provided by 56 member organizations within the Combined Arms collaborative. This grant enabled direct access to Harvey-impacted veterans in the rural Texas Gulf Coast region where Combined Arms identified, trained, and equipped 109 leaders across the region. They, in turn, facilitated support referrals to support 1,317 veterans, far exceeding the goal of 500. This grant concluded in Q2 2021.

Spring 2019 Grant Recipients

- **Lone Star Legal Aid (LSLA) – provide legal support to 250 veteran clients with a total of 400 legal issues**
LSLA provides legal support to veterans and have supported veterans in 25 of the 41 federally declared Harvey disaster counties in Texas. This grant expanded LSLA’s outreach to veterans in underserved communities, particularly along the rural gulf coast, and concluded in Q2 2020 after assisting 184 applicants with 241 legal matters.
- **The St. Bernard Project (SBP) – ensure 10 veterans requiring home repair/rebuild services have access to resources and support**
SBP is a nationally-recognized disaster resilience and recovery organization that has been working in storm-impacted

communities since Hurricane Katrina. This grant concluded in Q1 2020 with 10 veteran homes repaired/rebuilt and funding for an additional five homes allocated.

"This new partnership allows us to support veterans and their families impacted by Hurricane Harvey via those best-in-class service providers who bring measurable outcomes and local activation."

Anne Marie Dougherty, Executive Director, Bob Woodruff Foundation