



FORT FREEDOM

ANNUAL REPORT

2023

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STATEMENT OF NEED

Over the last two decades, concerning trends in Veteran suicide rates have emerged. The 18 to 34 age group saw an increase of 7.1%, those aged 35 to 54 saw a 10.7% increase and the 55 to 74 demographic saw a rise of 7.4%. This clearly highlighted the need for targeted interventions across the age spectrum.

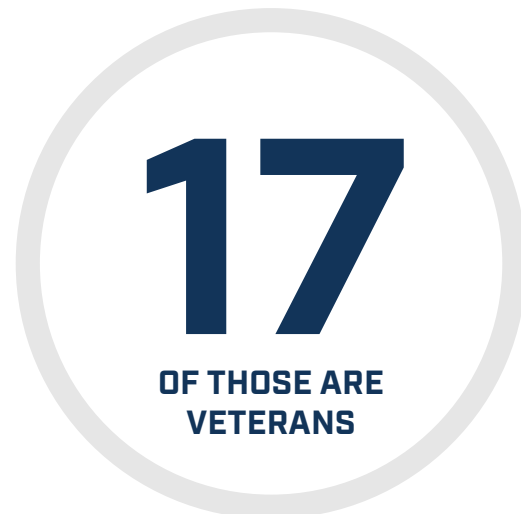
A landmark policy was introduced in January 2023, allowing eligible Veterans and certain former service members in acute suicidal crisis to seek emergency care at any VA or non-VA healthcare facility, free of charge. This policy significantly reduces financial burdens and potentially can save an impressive \$64 million in healthcare costs within its first year.

49,714 Veterans accessed this benefit in its first year alone. This proves the need for mental healthcare is at an all-time high. Programs like Fort Freedom meet this need. Advancements made by the VA toward improving Veteran mental health, along with a growing momentum in community integration, peer support, and awareness campaigns, reflect a comprehensive approach to support and well-being.

DAILY SUICIDE STATISTICS, 2022



That is a 65% increase in suicides in the past 20 years*



That's approximately 6,150 per year, which is up 2.5% in the past 20 years*

**Does not account for overdose deaths and service record errors.

* National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, 2022, www.mentalhealth.va.gov **Operation Deep Dive (OpDD)

OUR MISSION

Fort Freedom's mission is to minimize the Veteran suicide rate, free Veterans from the imprisonment of PTSD, and guide them to a newfound sense of purpose through an intensive 12-week life-restoring program developed by Veterans for Veterans. This program is offered in-person to Veterans and virtually to Veterans and their families. Fort Freedom also advocates at the state and federal level for Veteran care.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the face of escalating mental health challenges among Veterans, Fort Freedom has taken a leadership role in addressing these critical issues.

January 2023 marked a significant turning point with the introduction of a groundbreaking policy that revolutionized the approach to Veteran mental healthcare. This policy enables Veterans and certain former service members in acute suicidal crisis to access emergency care at any VA or non-VA healthcare facility, completely free of charge. The overwhelming positive response by Veterans underscores the policy's success and its critical role in providing immediate support to those in need.

Fort Freedom is at the forefront of fostering a supportive environment for our Veterans. These efforts are part of a broader, more holistic strategy aimed at not only addressing immediate crises but also building long-term resilience and well-being among our Veterans. As we move forward, Fort Freedom remains committed to the cause of Veteran mental health, ensuring that those who served our country receive the support and care they deserve.

“



We know that more than half of post 9/11 Combat Veterans are suffering from PTSD. They never stopped fighting for us, and we won't stop fighting for them.

- Jerry Haffey, Jr., Chairman

FORT FREEDOM WORKS

At the heart of our mission is a holistic and wellness-based approach that weaves the precision of science with the depth of spiritual care, ensuring a deeply personalized journey for each Veteran.



Trauma Therapy



Leadership Coaching



Nutritional Coach



Spirituality Counseling



Physical Fitness



Massage Therapy



**Vinyasa Yoga
& Meditation**



Equine Therapy



Posture Therapy

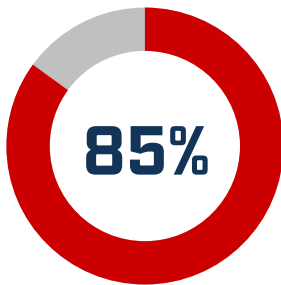


Horticulture

DATA & RESEARCH

Fort Freedom leverages its data-driven and research focused approach to remain effective. We incorporate in-depth surveys of our members to gather feedback and document their development along our program curriculum.

SENSE OF PURPOSE



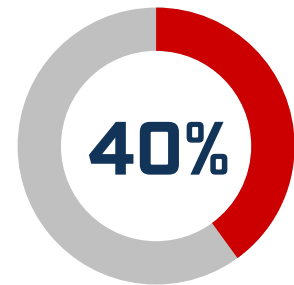
Have a new found sense of purpose in daily life since completion of Fort Freedom

PTSD MANAGEMENT

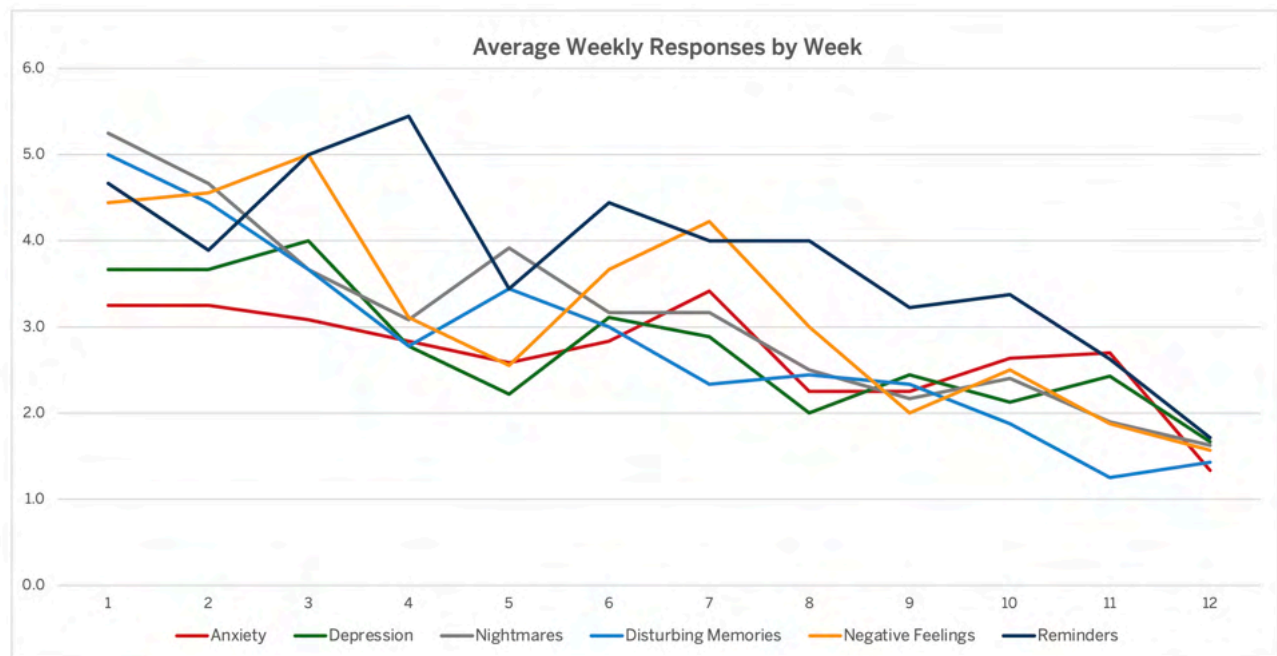


Have strengthened their ability to manage PTSD since completion of Fort Freedom

SLEEP



Increase in better sleep after completion of Fort Freedom



MILESTONE EVENTS

ACHIEVEMENT

CAMPBELL'S SET VETS FREE AND 11/11 VETERANS DAY FUNDRAISER

This past year, Fort Freedom proudly hosted our two pillar fundraising events, drawing together a diverse and passionate community of supporters. These gatherings fostered a sense of unity while raising significant funds to support our mission. This funding is vital as we continue to expand our service lines for Veterans and their family members.



ADVOCACY

STATE LEGISLATIVE MEETINGS

In our steadfast commitment to Veteran well-being, we engaged in pivotal discussions with the Florida state legislature, advocating for enhanced mental health services and support for Veterans. Our efforts are aimed at reinforcing the state's initiatives to address the challenges faced by our Veterans, ensuring their needs are both heard and met at the highest levels.

AWARENESS

PRO CAMPS NON-PROFIT PARTNER

Elevating the conversation on Veteran mental health, Fort Freedom took center stage this year at the Division I basketball pro camps of University of Kentucky, Kansas University, University of Miami, Indiana University, and University of North Carolina. Through these speaking engagements, we not only shed light on the critical issues of Veteran suicide and PTSD but also inspired a broader audience to join us in our mission, expanding our reach and impact.





FORT FREEDOM VETERAN

BENJAMIN RUSSELL

What was your favorite thing to do when you were a child?

Anything that got my blood pumping. I liked to ride ATVs, snowmobiles, and dirt bikes.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up splitting my time between a few places in Minnesota, and in Houston, TX.

When did you realize you wanted to join the military or why did you?

I remember knowing I would join the military as soon as I could. My father was in the Army, so I spent a fair amount of time in a military environment growing up. It always seemed very exciting.

What branch/rank/year did you join?

I joined in August of 2008 as a Private (E-1). I went through basic training, AIT, Airborne School, and the Ranger Indoctrination Program at Fort Benning before eventually being stationed there with 3/75. I was deployed to Afghanistan the summer of 2009.

What was the best and worst thing about your time in the military?

The best was the permanent change in my perception of the world, other people, and of myself. The worst was losing friends and being cold.

Was there something of significance that happened to you during your time in the military that still affects you today?

I chose not go on a second unit deployment, which resulted in my squad crashing in a CV-22. A friend had been moved over to fill my vacancy. He was killed that day.

What was it like when you returned to civilian life?

The transition was difficult and chaotic. It wasn't because I was the type who had become accustomed to being told what to do and having every detail of my life figured out for me constantly, but because my view of the world had changed so drastically I found it difficult to relate to others. It's like walking on egg shells desperately trying to pretend, inwardly and outwardly, that I still genuinely cared about or valued the same societal norms as those who hadn't shared a similar life experience.

What resources did the military give you once you returned to civilian life?

No resources were given. I was only told to follow up with my local VA hospital.

What drew you to Fort Freedom?

What ultimately drew me to Fort Freedom was the fact that it was a private, non-clinical program, entirely independent of the VA or government.

What was the best thing you took away from your time at Fort Freedom?

Honest connect with other Veterans, service providers and staff.

Was it difficult for you to first ask for help? If so, why?

Yes. The hardest part was knowing that the way I was living would have to change entirely. I was afraid of how that would be reflected materially. My unconscious belief was that change would mean loss.

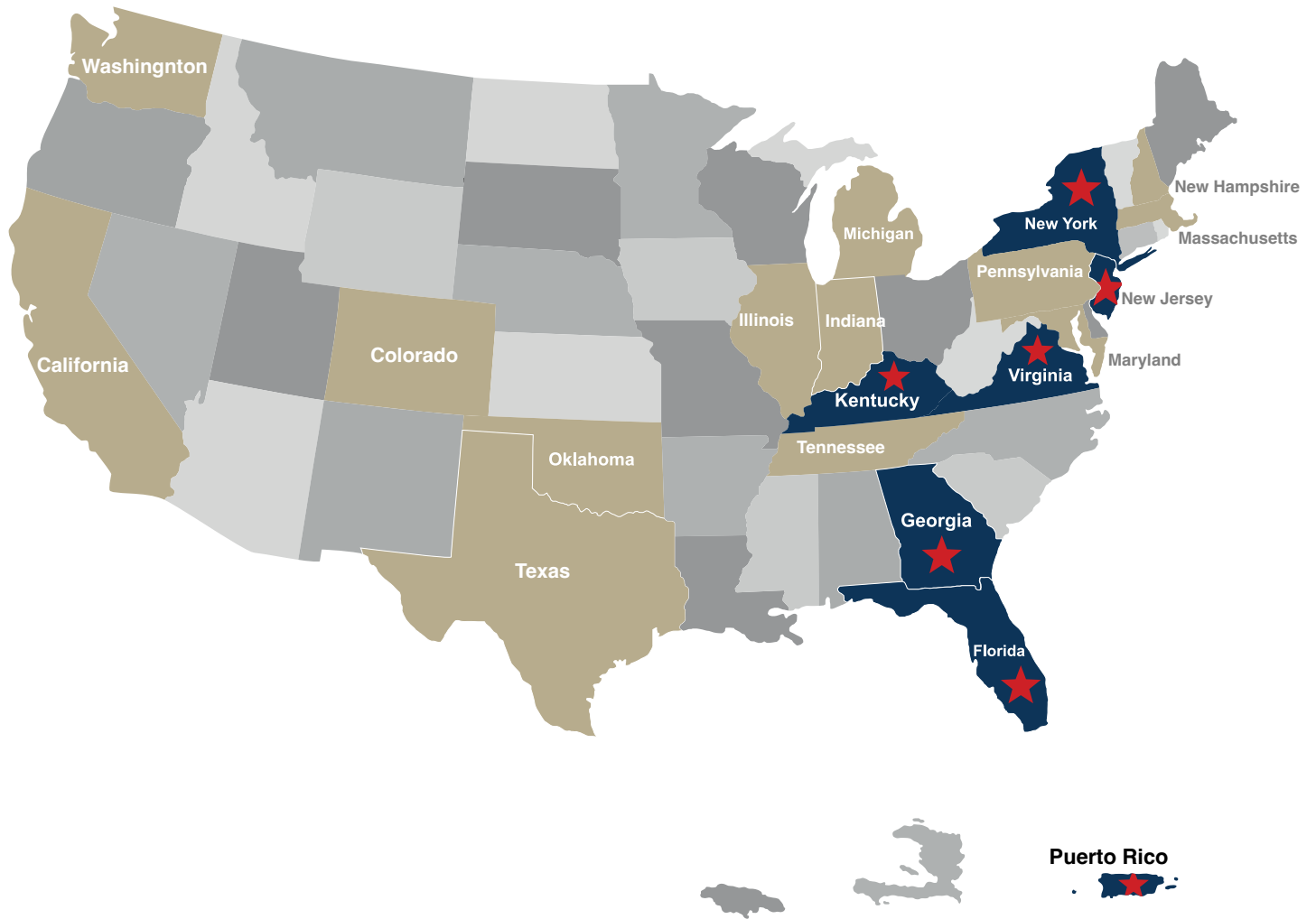
How did you successfully overcome those obstacles to get the help?

I was in a very dark place and at the time really only saw 2 options. I chose the first.

“

Fort Freedom is a big boy program that taught me to be in alignment with whatever my personal truth is.

WHERE OUR VETS CALL HOME



★ 13 Veterans in House, 2023
9 Army Vets, 1 Navy Vet, 3 Air Force Veterans

- Florida, 5
- Puerto Rico, 4
- Kentucky, 1
- New Jersey, 1
- Virginia, 1
- New York, 1

Seven family members received therapy virtually and/or in-person.

★ 33 Virtual Veterans, 2023
23 Army Vets, 3 Navy Vets, 6 Air Force Vets, 1 Marine Vet

- Florida, 16
- Puerto Rico, 7
- New Jersey, 3
- Kentucky, 2
- Virginia, 1
- New York, 1
- Oklahoma, 1

★ Veteran Alumni (2019 -2022)



STEVEN MARTINE

The Hero Helper: **JERRY HAFFEY**

Jerry Haffey is a war hero. As a specialist in the United States Army, he proudly served his country for four years. "I was blown up eight times," says Haffey, 39. "The fact that I'm alive is a miracle." Yet what he finds most heroic about his life is the work he does with Fort Freedom, the nonprofit he founded in 2019 to help veterans suffering from PTSD. The organization assists war vets with the transition from military service to civilian life. In 2007, Haffey was one of those veterans. Originally from Philadelphia, he joined the army in 2004 when he was 19. After basic training, he was sent to Fort Polk, Louisiana, then transferred to Fort Drum, New York, where he was assigned to a new unit combining reconnaissance and infantry. A first of its kind, the Tenth Mountain Division deployed to Iraq in 2005, where Haffey went on 150 joint patrols targeting insurgents and 35 "kill or capture" missions. He completed his service in 2007 and moved to Port St. Lucie, taking an entry-level job with a behavioral health provider. But civilian life proved difficult for Haffey, who now lives in Palm Beach Gardens. "I thought every car next to me was going to blow up," he says. Trained for battle in the military, he also started getting into a lot of fights. Recognizing he was suffering

[CLICK HERE](#) ► FOR THE ONLINE ARTICLE

from PTSD, Haffey sought help, and while on a spiritual retreat in 2015, he experienced a transformative moment. While walking a labyrinth, he arrived in the center and, as he recalls: "I looked down, and someone had left the crest from Fort Polk." Haffey returned home determined to find a way to help veterans and eventually founded Fort Freedom, where veterans undergo an intensive 12-week program that gives them the tools and techniques they need to work through challenges like depression and survivor's guilt. The program incorporates relaxation techniques including yoga and meditation, life and nutritional coaching, social experiences, weekly experiential therapy, and mentorship. Last year, 35 veterans went through the program; this year Haffey expects to help around 100 veterans. The organization also offers a program for family members. "It's extremely difficult to be the wife of someone suffering from PTSD," stresses Haffey. "I'm an optimist though. Awareness of mental health is at the highest level ever. Ultimately, what we are doing is raising consciousness." myfortfreedom.org

Shot on location at the Fort Freedom Campus in Palm Beach Gardens



HIGHLIGHTS OF 2023

Former NBA player Wayne Simien Jr., Kansas University Head Coach Bill Self, and Asst Athletic Director Greg Gurley speak to Veterans at Procamp.



Fort Freedom Veteran Jim kayaks during Pathfinder Experiential Therapy.



Guests bid on auction items during our 11/11 Veterans Day Event.



Armando Bascot, Jaelyn Withers, and Duwe Farris from the University of North Carolina Basketball Team with Veteran Jarret Daniels, Board Member Bradley Berger, and Chief Development Officer Chelsea Platas.



Founder Jerry Haffey Jr. shares the mission of Fort Freedom with the University of Indiana Men's Basketball Team.



Fort Freedom Veterans at Alumni Weekend.



Former NBA player Wayne Simien representing Fort Freedom with our custom OD Green long-sleeve T-shirt.



Veteran Alumni Jarret Daniels shares his story with guests at our 2nd Annual Set Vets Free Fundraiser hosted by Campbells Soup Co. in Camden, NJ.



Former Notre Dame Basketball Player and Sports broadcaster Jordan Cornette learns about the mission of Fort Freedom.



Fort Freedom Veterans and Staff members gather at Stage Kitchen & Bar for our 3rd Annual 11/11 Veterans Day Event.



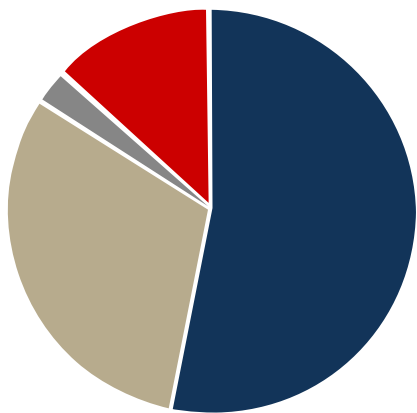
Fort Freedom Veteran Justin deep sea fishes during Pathfinder Experiential Therapy.



Kansas Basketball Guard Kevin McCullar Jr. and Fort Freedom Chief Development Officer Chelsea Platas say "cheese" during Bill Self Fantasy Camp in September.

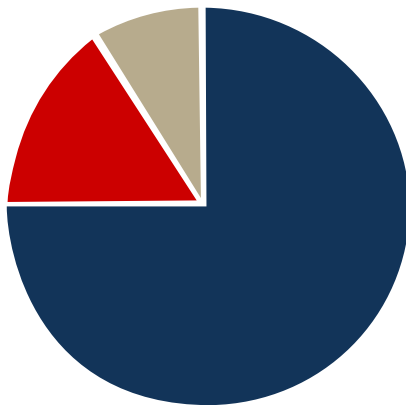
FINANCIALS

For the past three years, we've consistently set new benchmarks, doubling our fundraising year over year, demonstrating an extraordinary trajectory of growth and unwavering support from our community.



TOTAL FUNDING

- 56% Individuals
- 28% Foundations & Grants
- 15% Corporations
- 1% In-Kind Donations



REVENUE ALLOCATIONS

- 76% Programs
- 19% General & Administrative
- 5% Fundraising



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Freedom Sponsors



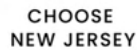
Service Sponsors



Pathfinder Sponsors




Elevate Sponsors



Strategic Partners



A tall, silver flagpole stands against a clear blue sky with scattered white clouds. An American flag is flying from the top of the pole, waving in the wind. The flag is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the image. In the foreground, the dark silhouettes of pine trees are visible against the sky.

**We thank you, now let's
continue to Set Vets Free.**

MYFORTFREEDOM.ORG