



## TO OUR UCLA HEALTH OPERATION MEND FAMILY

As we look back at 2017, we are grateful that so many Operation Mend supporters were able to celebrate our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with us. We celebrated the growth of the program with our warriors, their families, our staff team, Buddy Families, and supporters by our sides, and we were reminded of the importance of our mission. We felt everyone's passion and commitment to Operation Mend reignited. We know that the work we are doing, through the help of your generosity and with the innovative partnerships we have formed, will ensure that UCLA Operation Mend continues to improve the lives of our nation's heroes for decades to come. Thank you for joining us in our mission to heal the wounds of war.



### OPERATION MEND'S 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION RAISES MORE THAN \$1.1 MILLION FOR WOUNDED VETERANS

On September 24, 2017, nearly 600 guests, including 53 veterans who have been treated through the program, attended the "Red, White & Denim" celebration held in the backyard of Operation Mend founder and philanthropist Ronald Katz.

"Operation Mend's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration was an important marker of UCLA Health's commitment to healing our nation's wounded warriors," said Johnese Spisso, president of UCLA Health and CEO of the UCLA Hospital System. "Chancellor Gene Block, Dr. John Mazziotta, and all of us at UCLA are grateful to the Katz family for welcoming the entire Operation Mend team to their home, especially the patients and their families, who, along with our generous sponsors and donors, are deeply committed to this program."



## WARRIOR WELLNESS ALLIANCE



The Bush Institute launched the Warrior Wellness Alliance in 2017 to address the invisible wounds of war, and Operation Mend is proud to participate as a founding member. We are excited to work side-by-side with The Warrior Wellness Alliance to connect peer-to-peer networks with organizations such as Operation Mend and the Warrior Care Network, providing high quality care. We will help this generation's veterans more successfully transition to positive, productive civilian lives.

Nearly 15 percent, or approximately 378,000 post-9/11 warriors, meet symptom criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), according to the Rand Corporation's study, "Invisible Wounds of War." As many as two-million veterans struggle to reintegrate and thrive in their post-deployment lives. Veterans may feel alone and some become isolated, missionless, and reluctant to seek psychological healthcare because of the stigma, or because they believe it will be difficult to find, afford, and receive quality treatment and support services.

Goals of the Warrior Wellness Alliance include: increasing the numbers of warriors in care; improving the quality of care available, and the reach of that care; increasing investment in research that leads to better diagnostics and treatment approaches for the invisible wounds of war; and raising awareness and understanding of these injuries and treatment paths, including combating stigmas and stereotypes. Operation Mend will be attending regular meetings to work with the Warrior Wellness Alliance on meeting its goals.



## VETERANS DAY IN NEW YORK

For the seventh year in a row, Operation Mend honored veterans from across the country by marching in the annual New York City Veterans Day Parade. The Parade has been held since 1919 and is the largest Veterans Day event in the nation. More than 25,000 people from all branches of the military, along with active officers, veterans groups, ROTC members, and the families of veterans marched up Fifth Avenue from 23<sup>rd</sup> Street to 56<sup>th</sup> Street with a variety of floats and marching bands. Operation Mend's veteran heroes and their families, our staff team, and supporters—including *Today Show* host, Willie Geist—joined us for this year's festivities.



The week was also full of other exciting activities for Operation Mend veterans: attending the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America Heroes Gala, a tour of the 9/11 Memorial & Museum, a welcome event at Clyde Frazier's Wine & Dine, and our annual celebration of veterans at P.J. Clarke's Sidecar. Operation Mend extends sincere gratitude to the friends and organizations that supported us while in New York including the Wounded Warrior Project/Warrior Care Network, the Intrepid Relief Fund, Credit Suisse, Jacobs | Doland | Beer, The David Lynch Foundation, Brookfield Properties, B.S.E. Marketing, and the Robert Lorsch Foundation.

## SALUTE TO BUDDY FAMILIES



The Operation Mend Buddy Family program offers each Operation Mend participant the opportunity to be matched with a loving, caring family who live close to UCLA and can provide extra comfort, care, and fun for a wounded warrior and his or her family when they are visiting Los Angeles. For the Buddy Families, it is a hands-on opportunity to make a difference in the life of someone who has suffered great injury through service to our country, and it is a learning opportunity for parents and children alike, bringing the reality of war closer to home.

Here are some reflections from a long-time Operation Mend buddy, Beth Kleid, about her family's experience:

*Our family of four is bigger and better because of Operation Mend. Through Operation Mend our family has met many wonderful people from different parts of the country. These new "buddies" have vastly different challenges, backgrounds, and experiences from our own, but we have so much in common: loving our families, caring about our country, and wanting to give back.*

*We met our first Buddy Family, the Scotts, when our twins, Tyler and Emma, were in elementary school. We enjoyed great family dinners together and fun outings*

*in Los Angeles. The best part was the conversation, which got deeper with time.*

*Blaine Scott, who, as he put it, was "getting back to handsome" with the help of Operation Mend, was candid and open about sharing his experiences. He showed us pictures of himself while deployed and shared photos of the buddies he lost. We felt honored he was willing to involve us in his journey. Through Blaine, we learned about courage, resilience and what service really means. Operation Mend did get Blaine "back to handsome," and even though he still had limbs that were impaired, he was ready and willing to go back to Afghanistan to serve his country—and he did.*

*When our twins left home for college, my husband Rob and I were dealing with an empty nest. Being involved with Operation Mend helped us. Spending time with veterans and their loved ones filled a void and expanded our lives. Operation Mend has enriched our family and extended our community by helping us create something important to be a part of, connect to, and care about. That feeling of community was stronger than ever as Rob and I marched down Fifth Avenue in the New York City Veterans Day parade this year. Wearing our Op Mend caps behind the Operation Mend banner, arm-in-arm with UCLA Operation Mend volunteers, doctors, staff, veterans and their families, we cheered and waved and felt an excitement that warmed us on that cold November day and every day since.*

To learn more, contact:

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## FIRESTONE ENDOWMENT FOR CARE MANAGEMENT

In July, Operation Mend received a gift of \$1 million from The Mose J. and Sylvia Dilman Firestone Charitable Trust. The gift establishes the "Firestone Endowment for Care Management" to support social work and supportive care services for military service members and their families. Both Mose Firestone (1915-2011) and Sylvia Dilman Firestone (1915-2009) were recognized by the National Association of Social Workers as social work pioneers for their lifelong commitment to the well-being of children, families, veterans, the sick, and the advancement of the field of social work. In addition to their distinguished careers and legacy of California community leadership, each had ties to military service during and after World War II. This generous gift from the Firestone Trust comes at important time in Operation Mend's history, as demand for services continues to grow. While surgeons and specialty physicians may transform our patients' bodies, care managers have always shaped their experience and ensured we treat the whole family, not an isolated injury or illness. This endowment will provide a sustainable, reliable source of annual funding for care managers long into the future, and is a fitting legacy to a couple who spent their entire lives in service to others.

## ● STAFF SPOTLIGHT: MELANIE GIDEON, PROGRAM DIRECTOR ●



Melanie Gideon joined Operation Mend in 2008 as the program's first hire. Today, Melanie is an instrumental leader and team member responsible for working with UCLA Health and the Katz Center for Collaborative Military Medicine to oversee the program's growth internally and externally. Aside from leading Operation Mend's multidisciplinary team, she works with clinicians and faculty across UCLA Health to guarantee they have the resources needed to provide world-class medical and psychological care to our wounded warriors. Since the early days, Melanie and her team have dedicated their efforts to ensure that every Operation Mend warrior and family receives the highest level of concierge patient and family centered care available.

Melanie graduated from Indiana University, Bloomington in 2004. She obtained a bachelor's degree in Biology with Pre-Medical and Pre-Optometric concentrations as well as a double-minor in Psychology and Public Health. During her time at Indiana, she co-founded the Student Health OUTreach (SHOUT), led the Public Relations arm of the Student Global AIDS Campaign (SGAC), and was the Director of Public Health Initiatives in Honduras and Ecuador for the Timmy Foundation Club. In 2008, Melanie graduated from the University of Michigan with a master's degree in Health Services Administration and was the appointed student commencement speaker. She came to UCLA in 2007 as the first Administrative Intern for the Chief Operating Officer which inspired her to join UCLA Health full time and embark on this rewarding journey with Operation Mend.

### PLANNED GIVING

The generous alumni, friends, and parents who have chosen to remember Operation Mend in their estate plans are a special group. They are visionary, and uncommonly dedicated. Their philanthropy turns an individual passion for the well-being of veterans into action; these donors look ahead to the needs of future generations and fulfill countless opportunities that ensure excellence. We invite you to join the committed philanthropists who have included Operation Mend in their estate planning. To learn more, contact:

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### THANK YOU TO THE OPERATION MEND FAMILY OF SUPPORTERS AND VOLUNTEERS

Thank you to each and every individual involved with UCLA Health Operation Mend. Whether you volunteer in our office or in our Buddy Families programs; work in a clinic that helps care for our patients or at Tiverton House, our patients' home away from home; whether you purchased a ticket or made a gift to attend our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, we could not do it without you. Operation Mend added more than 100 new patients in 2017 and we continue to improve and expand the care we provide. With your ongoing help and that of new Operation Mend supporters, we can continue to fulfill our mission to heal the visible and invisible wounds of war. Have a Happy Holiday Season. We hope to see you in the New Year!

**TO SUPPORT OPERATION MEND, PLEASE VISIT:**

**[giveto.ucla.edu/fund/operation-mend](https://giveto.ucla.edu/fund/operation-mend)**

Or contact Nicholas Middlesworth, Director of Development at  
(310) 206-2089 or [nmiddlesworth@support.ucla.edu](mailto:nmiddlesworth@support.ucla.edu)



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