



In FOCUS

Newsletter

Issue 2
August 2013

Message from FMF Chairman



By
Walt Suhre

Thank you for your interest in, support of, or participation in, our organization and our FOCUS program. You are invaluable to our efforts. Please know how appreciated you are.

I shall endeavor to update you – briefly – on significant developments. First, note that our name is changed, from Midwest Marines Foundation to FOCUS Marines Foundation. “Midwest” in our former name led some to infer that our activities were regional while their interests were national. Since we began operations with our first class in March 2010, we have served wounded Marines and Navy Corpsmen from all corners of our nation. Of the 250+ participants who have attended FOCUS courses, less than 5% have come from Missouri and Illinois. We felt it appropriate to make the change to avoid further confusion.

We have extended our FOCUS course from Sunday thru Saturday, to Saturday thru Saturday. On Sunday our participants relax, adjust to the lay of the land and make acquaintances. We take advantage of



FOCUS June 2013

The second FOCUS Class of 2013 is completed, and was a tremendous success. Marines and Corpsmen from across the country had the opportunity to meet fellow warriors and work together to determine the next steps in their lives. With this last session, FMF has now completed 10 FOCUS sessions, and served over 250 of our Nation’s finest warriors. Even though the FOCUS camp is located in the heartland of the U.S., more than 95% of our warriors come from other parts of the country.

Participants settled in to their new surroundings on the first day with ATV rides, an introduction to therapeutic horsemanship, relaxing massages, and a variety of other activities. From there, a series of instructors led the class through programs and exercises to help them determine where they’ve been, where they are, and where they want to be. Motivational speakers including John O’Leary, and our perennial favorite, Gunny Nick Popaditch, inspired our warriors with their own stories of surviving overwhelming odds to achieve life goals.

Each FOCUS class is unique but some things are constant. Friendships are made, experiences are shared, goals are set, and lives are changed. The June 2013 participants are now “FOCUS Marines”. They will always find support within the FOCUS family. They will also be called upon to help their fellow warriors find their own strength, and encourage their brethren to attend a FOCUS course in the future.

FMF Welcome (cont)

the added day to dispose of certain administrative matters so that we can begin work in earnest on Monday morning. Adding Sunday to the program has been extremely worthwhile – participants not only have bonded earlier but they have responded more favorably and more quickly to the important first days of the course.

Our successes continue to mount. Upon completing FOCUS, more and more of our graduates assume responsibility for their futures. Many enter school. Others find employment – some temporary as they evaluate future opportunities. Still others enter not-for-profit work and assist others in need. Progress for many is not a straight line, but one of ups and downs. Our post-course mentoring is ever proving its value. The mantra remains –“fall down seven, get up eight.”

Thank you again for your participation in helping these deserving warriors take command of their futures.



Medical News

By NMCRS Combat Casualty Visiting Nurses



Bobbi, Susette, Kim, & Patty
NMCRS Combat Casualty Nurses
FOCUS June 2013

“ I’M NOT TALKING TO ANYBODY”

You’ve made it home – or at least friends and family think you did – but it doesn’t feel like you are “home”. Everybody is overjoyed that you’re back but you are miserable – and guilty – because you would rather be “there” than here. You have relationship, sexual, and financial problems and miss the structure that got you through every day.

Most of all, you miss your friends. They are the only ones who really get it. If you go into an insurgent’s house, you know there’s a change in plan just by reading your sergeant’s eyes. If you go into your house, your partner can talk for hours and you still don’t know what he or she wants! No wonder you call people at 0200 to reminisce.

There is increasing support by the DoD for veterans to receive psychotherapy with no negatives attached: A DoD Memorandum specifically states that under many circumstances including marriage and post-war counseling, the applicant for a security clearance can answer “No” to the mental health counseling question.

.....But why should I tell somebody about what happened to me? I don’t have PTSD.

OK, you don’t have to have PTSD to benefit from talking to somebody, but if you DO have things you did, saw, smelled, heard, or felt AND if that gets in your way of functioning every day, it might be helpful to talk with somebody who gets it.

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“ I’M NOT TALKING TO ANYBODY”

(Cont from Page 2)

When troops returned from WWII, they came home on ships and had eight to ten weeks to process, honor, grieve – their experiences. They also had one very long deployment – as did most Viet Nam vets, so the recovery process was different: You go to war, you come home, and you try to get on with life.

This time you might have gone back three, four or five times and now you wonder why you would ever want to fit in again. Who could possibly understand that . . .

- There is huge conflict not only between those who have been deployed and those who haven’t, but even about which unit you were in and when/where?
- It’s stressful for a 23-year old with three combat deployments trying to teach new people who “learned it by the book” that some of those same book techniques got your friends killed?
- You hate crowds or sitting with your back to a door because you can’t see what’s happening next, and you need to be prepared for the worst?
- You really don’t want to be THIS addicted to porn (really), but porn - and drinking - are the only two things that put aside some of those memories? And that still give you the edge. Oh, riding your bike gives you the edge, too, but all of these cause huge fights with your family.
- You don’t want people thanking you for your service because it is your job?
- You feel angry because the parents of a fallen friend call you every anniversary? On one hand you’re upset with them because the calls are constant reminders about his death and on the other hand, you’re thankful for the same calls because it keeps the experience alive and, in an odd way – him, too! (And then, it’s even worse, because they keep asking you if you’ve visited him at Arlington yet. No, but I’ve sure had a lot of drinks in his name!)
- Oh, and Mom and Dad, there is no God.

Finally, you don’t want people telling you to forget about it or suck it up. You’re right – the friends who didn’t come back or who are changed forever deserve more respect.

And so do you – from you - by putting those memories and experiences in a different place so that you can live well in this world, too. Laying your pack down for an hour with a clinician who gets it might make all the difference. Many of us realize that the transition from the military is so disruptive that most of you would rather go back to war than deal with civilian life.

You don’t have to have had a heart attack to be a good heart surgeon. You don’t have to have been combat-deployed to be a good clinician. There are people in both fields who should be there and who shouldn’t! Clinicians cross a wide range of training, titles and endorsements. The one common variable is that they must be licensed in order to provide mental health care. Some are generalists, like your family practice provider – and some specialists.

When you interview them, do they “get it”? Does their age matter? Gender? Do they look like the ex who broke up with you when you were a high school senior so even if they walked upside down, it wouldn’t be a “good fit”? Do they discuss your treatment plan with you? Are they willing to work with your other providers to provide good wrap-around care? Do they understand the brain changes that contribute to some of your behaviors? Do they keep their own political opinions completely out of the conversation? Do they ask you what questions YOU have? (You’re the boss. You have the right to ask a lot of questions – and to have them addressed).

Therapy is hard work. So is just getting through every day. If what you’re doing is not working for you now, try putting that plan on hold and just looking at another one – talk to a clinician.



Guest Speaker John O'Leary

No FOCUS session is complete without the inspirational and motivational talk by John O'Leary on the first full day of the program.

John delivers his message of “Rising Above” based upon his own tragic life experiences. When John was just 9 years-old, he was burned on over 98% of his body with third degree burns. Laying there in that hospital bed at 9 years of age, John was given little to no chance of survival, much less any prospect of a normal life.

However, John refused to give up fighting. With the inspiration and guidance of a loving family, caretakers like “Nurse Roy”, a little known hall-of-fame broadcaster named Jack Buck, and the Supreme Being, John O'Leary prevailed.

He rose above his injuries, and with dedication, hard work, and support, lives a full life today and has a beautiful family.

John's message resonates loudly with our wounded warriors at each FOCUS session. It sets the bar for the remainder of the week by challenging our participants to “rise above” their own personal injuries to regain a positive perspective on their lives going forward.

Anyone that has the opportunity to hear John speak should definitely take advantage of such an occasion. John O'Leary is a critical part of FOCUS program, and an inspiration to us all.

For more information on John and his speaking schedule please refer to his web-site

<http://www.risingabove.com>.



FOCUS Support

No FOCUS session would be possible without the overwhelming support resources that FMF is fortunate to have. At any given session we have more than 120 people from various organizations supporting our FOCUS participants. Below are highlights of just a few of these organizations.

Therapeutic Horsemanship

Therapeutic Horsemanship (TH) supports our FOCUS warriors with award-winning equestrian therapy at each session. The benefits of this therapy are well documented.

A soldier riding a horse into battle has become a symbol of war and physical courage - an icon of the brave person willing to ride into the "valley of death" to defend home and country. Now horses again are coming to aid the military - but this time, it's to help wounded warriors not in battle, but after they return home. Equestrian therapy, which involves using horses to cure psychological wounds, is helping our returning veterans suffering from PTSD.

Although some who take part in equine therapy actually ride horses, the emphasis of the therapy is to interact with the horse. Horses are especially effective at picking up cues from their environment, especially from other living things. If our FOCUS warrior is smiling but still exhibiting tense and nervous body language, a horse will become confused by the disconnected body language and respond immediately. In this way, a horse provides instant biofeedback that helps the participant learn to be authentic emotionally.

The freedom and independence experienced through Therapeutic Horsemanship's programs act as a bridge to accomplishments for our FOCUS warriors, and lead to success in other areas of their lives as well.



Marine Corps League

Napoleon is credited with saying that "... an army marches on its stomach." Our FOCUS Marines are no different. They need to eat, and eat they do!

During the 8 days of FOCUS we serve up more than 1200 meals! Setting up the food service for each meal is a daunting task, and could not be done without the volunteer services of our local MCL Detachments. Each day 6-8 Marines from other generations are manning the kitchen from 0600 until 1900.

As an added benefit, our participants have the privilege to interact with Marines from wars of other eras, including VietNam, Korea, and even WWII. This interaction fosters a spirit of brotherhood across generational boundaries.

Our heartiest "Thank You" to the MCL.



FOCUS
Marines never walk alone ...

Forum
FOCUS



The on-line FOCUS Forum site has been up and running for over a year.

The Forum is for our FOCUS alumni exclusively, and provides our FOCUS Marines with a site to stay in touch, exchange information, and access resources that the FMF provides on an ongoing basis. We post active job listings, Marine Corps history, topics of interest, and most recently a category to honor our fallen comrades. In addition, we continue to list resources for PTSD/TBI, Financial Aid, Housing assistance, etc.

Many of our alumni also post original articles of interest and insight on the blog, and we all follow topics of interest under the 'Discussions' heading'.

The Forum is by invitation only, but if you're a FOCUS Marine and have misplaced your invitation – or not received one - simply send an email request to the MMF Forum Admin at

focus.marines@yahoo.com

First Heartland Foundation FMF Fundraiser

The FOCUS Marines Foundation is fortunate to have many benefactors to help finance the FOCUS program for our brave men and women returning from military service. One of our most generous and dedicated benefactors is the First Heartland Foundation of Lake St. Louis, Missouri.

The First Heartland Foundation hosts an annual fund raising event in August of each year. Last year, FMF was designated by First Heartland as the charity of choice to receive the proceeds of that event, following which, FMF was presented with a check for \$35,000. This year FOCUS Marines Foundation is again fortunate to be the designated recipient of First Heartland's benevolence.

On August 5, 2013, First Heartland held two benefits: The 2013 Tournaments for Heroes consisting of a golf tournament at Bogey Hills Country Club in St. Charles County Missouri, and a skeet and trap shooting tournament for non-golfers. The results of these events will be reported in our next InFOCUS newsletter.

In addition to the benefit tournaments on August 5th, First Heartland is raffling off nine firearms! Proceeds from the gun raffle also will go to our FOCUS Marines Foundation. A single raffle ticket costs \$100 and qualifies the purchaser for entry in all nine drawings. A maximum of only 1000 tickets will be sold, greatly improving a participant's odds of winning compared to similar raffles where unlimited tickets are sold. Winners will be announced December 2nd.

For more details on raffle rules, firearms descriptions, and to buy raffle tickets, please visit

<https://www.firstheartland.com/fhc-gun-raffle>



This Able Veteran

A service dog can assist a veteran with PTSD and/or TBI by providing them with a best friend and companion as well as reducing anxiety, renewing social re-integration, and providing an improved sense of belonging and increased confidence. Service dogs can also be trained to perform specific tasks such as turning lights on/off, opening/closing doors, and other tasks difficult for some injured veterans to perform.

Four FOCUS Graduates have received service dogs from a program known as This Able Veteran. It is located in Carbondale, Illinois and specializes in training service dogs for injured veterans. Behesha Doan, a friend of FOCUS Marines Foundation, is the founder, chief trainer, and President of TAV.

It costs approximately \$25,000 to train a service dog. Each dog goes through eighteen months of training at the kennel. Prior to receiving a dog, the veteran and his/her dog go through two to three weeks of training to help each recognize signals and form a bond strong enough to carry the veteran through the challenges of recovery.

FOCUS Alumni who have received Service Dogs from this Able Vet include:

Eric Calley (FOCUS 0612) – (Liberty)
Howard Mattice (FOCUS 0612) - (Maverick)
David McArthur (FOCUS 0612) - (Delilah)
Jerome Smith (FOCUS 0912) - (Joey)

Veterans may apply to receive a service dog by calling This Able Vet's office at (618) 964-1162.

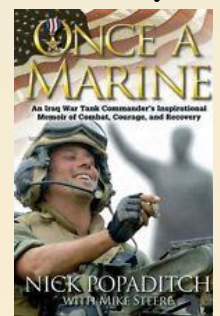


Smitty & Joey

Gunny Nick Popaditch

Gunny "Pop" was made famous in an AP photo on April 9, 2003 as "The Cigar Smoking Marine" while he sat in the turret of his tank in front of the Saddam Hussein statue as it was about to be pulled down by the people of Iraq with the assistance of his tank battalion. The picture went viral worldwide and became an icon of the Iraq war.

Just one year later, the Gunny's life took a dramatic turn when he suffered a head wound in the first battle for Fallujah which resulted in the loss of his right eye, and a 92% loss of vision in his left eye. The Gunny's heroic battle after returning home inspired his book "Once A Marine".



Gunny Pop has been a fixture at our FOCUS sessions almost since the beginning. He not only shares his inspirational story of recovery and achievement since he was wounded, but he also spends the entire week with our warriors in their bunkhouse and consults them on life's challenges. Gunny is now pursuing his Masters degree at San Diego State University, and will teach high school upon completion.



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FOCUS Group 6/13



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