



# In FOCUS

## Newsletter

Issue 6  
August, 2014



**FMF Chairman  
Walt Suhre**

Greetings Marines,

I'm pleased to report that we had another great class in June – 31 participants from 15 states, all of whom were receptive, responsive and charged. Follow-up has been highly favorable. They get it!

Returning home from FOCUS can be challenging. It's the same place you left. Adjustment is imperative. The place will not change -- therefore you must. At FOCUS, you were introduced to SMART Goals: **Specific - Measurable - Attainable - Risk - Time Frame. Assignments were given early in the program to develop three goals for 1) Relationships; 2) Self Improvement; 3) Volunteering - before you leave.**

Allow me to elaborate. Those goals are made for two purposes – to re-FOCUS (that word again) from that environment to which you return that will not change. You must create a different outlook. Secondly, to get you to look down the road, outside your Comfort Zone – to strive for a new life to begin **IM-MEDIATELY!**

(Cont. Page 2, "Walt's Welcome")



**FOCUS June 2014**

Well, the FOCUS weather curse seems to be broken. We weren't snowed in and no one had to ice skate into St. Louis. The Marines, Sailors, and Soldiers of the June 2014 FOCUS Course forced themselves to enjoy beautiful weather. The fish, however, didn't fare as well. The class (and the nurses) caught a record 346 fish with some potentially record-breaking crappie! We ate well that night.

Participants came in from all across the country to connect with their brothers. Class sessions covered topics ranging from personal development to interpersonal relationships to budgeting and career-building strategies. John O'Leary provided unbelievable inspiration to our warriors. What a fantastic way to kick-off this life-changing week! We were fortunate to have Justin Constantine, Board Member at Wounded Warrior Project, share his struggles and accomplishments.

Many in our class began the week feeling they were alone in their challenges. It didn't take long to realize that this is not the case. Life experiences were shared and connections were found in their struggles. By Tuesday, there wasn't a stranger in the room. Support and understanding surrounded our warriors. More importantly, they know that this support and understanding followed them home. They have countless new classmates, Team Leaders, and staff members that will go to amazing lengths if and when called upon. This sense of stability is priceless.

FOCUS Marines Foundation could not be more proud of our graduates. You are now part of our family. Welcome!

## Walt's Welcome (cont.)

I will elaborate on the first Goal – RELATIONSHIPS. (Over the next two issues of *InFOCUS* we will explore the other two SMART GOALS.) Relationships are an essential part of living – like breathing. Unless one chooses a hermit's life, which attendees at FOCUS have rejected by their very willingness to attend the course, relationships are an integral part of living. Whether with a fellow Marine, a spouse, children, an employer, co-workers, whatever - relationships form and must be dealt with. We all have them – in abundance.

When you are assigned your first SMART Goal – to address a relationship, whether a fractured one, one about to fail, or creation of a new one, you must undertake work on that assignment IMMEDIATELY. Not when you get home, not when you have nothing else to think about – BUT NOW!! So get with it. Define it, be sure it is realistic, set a date to achieve it and accept the fact that risk is involved. Record your progress and inform your Team Leader. A TRX awaits, but that is a distant second from the satisfaction you will receive from attaining that goal and realizing that you have accomplished the first step toward a new, rewarding future.

Semper Fi,  
Walt



NMCRS Combat Casualty Nurses  
Tammy, Dana, Kim, Yani, Christy

## Help for Veteran's Family and Friends

When someone you care about has PTSD, it affects you too. You are probably spending time and energy to help your loved one cope. Even if your partner, family member, or friend with PTSD is getting treatment and getting better, you may still feel drained, worried, or even frustrated. You need support at the same time you are giving support.

Learning about PTSD helps you to understand what your loved one is experiencing. But, you need to take care of yourself too. Your own support network - family, friends, and health providers - is a good place to start, but don't be afraid to reach out beyond that close circle. Here are some resources that can help.

You may feel helpless, but there are many things you can do. Nobody expects you to have all the answers. If you feel there is a crisis for you or your loved one, use one of these toll-free, confidential hotlines:

- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a 24-hour hotline for anyone in emotional distress: 1-800-273-TALK (8255).
- The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with VA responders through a 24/7 hotline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255), PRESS 1.
- The National Domestic Violence Hotline offers 24/7 anonymous access to shelters and domestic violence programs as well as legal advocacy, public education, and training: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY).
- The National Sexual Assault Hotline operated by RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) is a 24/7 resource to link victims to counseling and legal advice: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673).
- The National Child Abuse Hotline is a 24/7 resource you can contact if you suspect a child is being abused, if you fear you might hurt your child, or if you have been abused: 1-800-4-A-CHILD (422-4453).

Cont. Pg. 3 "Nurses Corner"

## “Nurses Corner”

(Cont. from Page 2)

Family members and close friends sometimes neglect their own needs when they commit themselves to caring for someone with PTSD. It is important for you to find support for yourself when you are helping someone else. Here are some resources that you may consider...

- Most US States have a National 211 referral line that connects people with important community services (employment, food pantries, housing, support groups, etc.). Dial 2-1-1.
- The SIDRAN Institute is a nonprofit organization that helps people understand, recover from, and treat traumatic stress and offers a referral list of therapists for PTSD. You can contact the Help Desk by leaving a confidential voicemail: 1-410-825-8888.
- The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) offers a Family-to-Family Education Program for caregivers of people with severe mental illness. You can call the Information Helpline: 1-800-950- 6264.

Children also respond to their parents' PTSD symptoms. A child may behave like the parent to try to connect with him or her. Some children take on an adult role to fill in for the parent with PTSD. If children do not get help with their feelings, it can lead to problems at school, in relationships, or with emotions.

- MilitaryKidsConnect (MKC) is an online community for military children (age 6-17) with resources for children to give support before, during, and after a parent's or caregiver's deployment.
- Sesame Street offers a Talk, Listen, Connect parent toolkit to help military families coping with deployment.
- It is important children know that a parent's PTSD symptoms are not their fault. An interactive workbook for teens may help: "Finding My Way: A Teen's Guide to Living with a Parent Who has Experienced Trauma".

Some of the resources listed above are specific to Veterans and Service Members. Additional resources are listed below:

- The VA Caregiver Support program provides services to support family members who are taking care of a Veteran: 1-855-260-3274
- VA's Coaching Into Care program helps family and friends of returning Veterans find the right words to help their loved one get into care. For free, confidential coaching email or call: 1-888-823-7458
- The Vet Center Combat Call Center is a 24/7 call center for combat Veterans and their families to talk about their military experience or issues about readjustment to civilian life: 1-877-WAR-VETS
- The Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE) 24/7 Outreach Center offers information and consultation in mental health and traumatic brain injury: 1-866-966-1020. DCoE also offers email and online chat support.
- The National Resource Directory links to over 10,000 services and resources that support recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration for wounded, ill, and injured Service Members, Veterans, their families, and those who support them.
- Give an Hour is a nonprofit organization offering free mental health services to US military personnel and their families affected by Iraq and Afghanistan.

If your family is having a lot of trouble talking things over, consider trying family therapy. Family therapy is a type of counseling that involves your whole family. It is important that each member of the family, including the children, have a chance to say what they need. A therapist helps you and your family communicate, maintain good relationships, and cope with tough emotions. Your health professional or a religious or social services organization can help you find a family therapist specializing in PTSD.

Remember, caregivers need care too. Whether you turn to your family, friends, health care providers, or the resources listed here, be sure to get the help you need. To help yourself, you need to take care of yourself and have other people help you.



## FOCUS Lessons Learned

### 3 R's

**R**esentment, **R**esistance, and **R**evenge - the 3 R's - are a self-limiting, and self-destructive thought process that has the potential to destroy one's life. The 3 R's exist in all of us naturally, and unless we make the conscious effort to control this destructive downward spiraling cycle, it will destroy who we are and who we could become.

This lesson is so important that it's addressed on day-one of each FOCUS session. Almost all of our participants come to the sessions with varying degrees of the 3 R's. Dan Dorr and his associates make a concerted effort to train FOCUS Marines on this destructive process, and provide insight on how to reverse the mind set and take responsibility for one's choices in life. In addition, John O'Leary reiterates the healing process from his perspective dealing with his life challenges. How does one get past the 3 R's?

- Acknowledge it.
- Own it. Take responsibility and stop the blame game.
- Feel it fully. Observe what it does to you emotionally and physically.
- Forgive. Perpetual dwelling on being wronged is destructive.
- Communicate. Talk to your counselor or your FOCUS support team about your issues and how to let go.
- Let it go. In the end, you must let go and move on.

If one dwells on the 3 R's, they quickly manifest each of life's challenges – large or small – into a crisis which perpetually creates resentment and anger. This will destroy friendships, relationships, your work environment, and happiness in life.

If you are a FOCUS graduate and find yourself stuck in the 3 R process, break out your FOCUS workbook and review Section 8. Talk to your FOCUS team leader and make the concerted effort to get past this destructive behavior.



## FOCUS Support

### Gateway Warrior Foundation St. Louis, Missouri

On October 6<sup>th</sup>, the Gateway Warrior Foundation will host their 5th Annual Golf Classic fund raising event. The event will once again be at The Country Club of St. Albans, rated among the top 10 courses in Missouri. This year's event will honor the founder and chairman of Gateway Warrior Foundation, Lennie Miller. Lennie, a Marine, and a decorated Vietnam veteran, lost his battle with cancer earlier this year. His mission in life was to make a difference in the lives of our Wounded Warriors and make sure they are never forgotten.

Certainly Lennie's mission is being fulfilled by GWF with their commitment to support veteran's organizations throughout the area. The Gateway Warrior Foundation has been raising funds to support organizations providing services for wounded men and women who live in Missouri for more than five years.

Last year GWF raised \$151,000 and supported Troops First, Wounded Warrior Project, The Fisher House, FOCUS Marines, and the St. Louis Honor Flight. Focus Marines Foundation is honored to be one of the organizations supported by the GWF Golf Classic again in 2014.

This year the event will feature LtCol. Justin Constantine (USMC-Ret) as the featured guest speaker. LtCol. Constantine's captivating message is sure to inspire. Through his journey of courage, injury, resilience and triumph, Justin demonstrates that we are all stronger than we think. Justin's topics include overcoming adversity, teamwork, leadership and the power within each of us. Audience members will leave inspired to confront challenges and will seek opportunities to excel both in the workplace and in their personal lives.

For information on sponsorship of the GWF Golf Classic, or to register for the event, go to their website at .....

<http://gatewaywarriorfoundation.org/>



Lennie Miller  
Gateway Warrior Foundation

### Wounded Warrior Project Grant

FOCUS Marines Foundation is honored to announce that we have been selected as a 2014 Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) grant recipient. This grant will enhance our ability to support post 9/11 wounded veterans and foster healthy readjustment to civilian life through programmatic activities aimed at renewing veterans' sense of commitment and camaraderie and empowering them with the personal and professional skills they need to succeed at home. For more information, and a list of WWP grant recipients, please visit

<http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/2014GrantRecipients>





## USMC Wounded Warrior Regiment Change of Command

On July 10, 2014 several members of FOCUS Marines Foundation and The Vietnam Veterans Round Table Group of St. Louis, attended the Change of Command ceremony for Col. Shane “Rhino” Tomko on his assuming command of the Wounded Warrior Regiment. The ceremony took place at the Museum of the Marine Corps in Quantico, VA.

During Col Tomko’s speech he mentioned his affiliation with, and the great work that is being done by FOCUS. Col. Tomko was the former Commanding Officer of 3rd. Battalion, 24th Marines in St. Louis and became intricately involved with both FOCUS and The Vietnam Veterans’ Round Table organization. The ceremony was attended by General Officers and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James Amos who expressed the importance of the Wounded Warrior Regiment and those groups that assist wounded Marines.

The following day, July 10th, Col Tomko arranged for the visiting group to attend the “Evening Parade” at Headquarters Marine Corp. with seats in the front row of the audience. For those that have never attended this ceremony it was at worst thrilling, and at best even more thrilling. The other members that have seen it previously were again awe inspired. The pride we all felt was astonishing. At the end of the ceremony we were introduced to the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, General John Paxton and his wife and an exchange of challenge coins was made.

The Wounded Warrior Regiment is a critical part of the FMF FOCUS program. The WWR district representatives are one of the primary sources for our FOCUS participants. FMF is excited to have “Rhino” in command, because true to his handle, he is a hard-charging Marine supporting the recovery of all our combat Marines. S/F!



In a previous issue of the *InFOCUS* newsletter we profiled one of our most outstanding speakers at each of our FOCUS Sessions, John O’Leary, of St. Louis, Missouri.

John inspires and motivates our Focus Marines beyond description. His story of adversity and rising above some of life’s overwhelming challenges is a story that resonates, and benefits one-and-all.

Now everyone can share in John’s motivational perspectives on life through his *Monday Morning Motivation* topics. For our FOCUS graduates, John has graciously given us permission to post his words of wisdom at the beginning of each week on our private Focus Forum. If you are a Focus Marine log onto the Forum and check out all of John’s articles going back to mid-May.

Anyone else can go to John’s blog and sign up for a weekly posting of the *Monday Morning Motivation* articles at...

[www.risingabove.com](http://www.risingabove.com)





**FOCUS Profile**  
**Yasmin Garay**  
**SSgt, USMC**

In March 2013, SSgt Yasmin Garay came to her first FOCUS session. She was a proud senior NCO in the Marine Corps and served two tours in Iraq helping support the war on terror. However, her dedication and commitment to her friends, family, and country had taken a toll on her. SSgt Garay, like so many of the Marines and other service members attending FOCUS, was suffering from the invisible wounds of PTSD.

Yasmin had withdrawn from society and lived in a small bedroom in her sister's house. She suffered anxiety, anger, survivor's guilt, hyper-vigilance, nightmares, and all of the classic symptoms of PTSD. In Yasmin's words, "Before FOCUS I honestly didn't think I had a reason for living anymore. I have carried around so much guilt inside of me and I didn't really want a reason not to. I wanted to feel that pain and guilt in order to punish myself for having lost friends and not being there when they needed me most."

During her first FOCUS session Yasmin blossomed like a rose. Within the first two days of the session, she came out of her personal shell. She opened up and not only participated in discussions, but led her fellow Marines during the soul searching that is so crucial to the FOCUS healing process.

Yasmin's life began a turn-around at that session. She returned to her Florida home – her sister's house - and began interaction with the family, and especially her niece and nephew. She opened up and began finding her old self again. She reached a threshold and applied to come back to FOCUS in September 2013 for a refresher. With a completely different perspective on her life moving forward, and on who she now was six months after her first FOCUS session, Yasmin took off like a rocket.

Three months later (December 2013) Yasmin was back at FOCUS again, this time not as a participant, but as a mentor to help her fellow Marines, both male and female. She's continued to be a support resource for her brethren. "I have realized through therapy, the help of my network from FOCUS, my family and God, that I not only have all of me to offer still but also all my friends have taught me. What better way to repay my gratitude to all my friends, I will pass along all I have learned from their lives and their deaths as well."

Yasmin now lives in her own house in Florida. "With the help of my nurse, my DISC, Marine Corps League, SemperFi Fund, my leaders, my family, and God, I went from being homeless for a while to now having a home I can call my own.... Thank you (FOCUS) for waking me up to the life that I still have yet to live and all that I have to give."

Yasmin is a welcomed addition to our FOCUS family that we are so proud of.

**Focus Marines Foundation Upcoming Events**

Sep 6 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>FOCUS</b>	Fall FOCUS Support Session	Augusta, MO
Sep 19 <sup>th</sup> -21 <sup>st</sup>	Fundraiser	Harvest Fest, Christian Embassy Ch.	Blackjack, MO
Sep 27 <sup>th</sup>	Fundraiser	K of C, Florissant, MO	Golf Club of Florissant
Oct 6 <sup>th</sup>	Fundraiser	Gateway Warrior Golf Benefit	The Country Club of St. Albans, MO
Dec 6 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>FOCUS</b>	Winter FOCUS Support Session	Augusta, MO
Dec 13 <sup>th</sup>	Fundraiser	Army/Navy Game Event	Rookies Bar & Grill, St Charles, MO

For detailed information on any of the FMF upcoming events, please contact our FMF VP of Development, Ted Kretschmar, at... [help@mmffocus.org](mailto:help@mmffocus.org).



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