



Midwest Marines Foundation
1880 Schlusersburg Road
Augusta, MO 63332

Email: help@mmffocus.org
Phone: 888-553-0078

Message from MMF Board



By
John Brauer

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the FOCUS newsletter. With each issue, we hope to share useful information, update readers on news and events, and provide inspiration from FOCUS graduates, MMF staff, and various members of the military community.

I'm filling in for our Director, Walt Suhre, this issue while he undergoes hip surgery. Once he's back to his usual self, he will be gracing the front cover of each issue with his very own column. As you can imagine, we're looking forward to what he'll come up with. Of course, we wish him the best and hope to have him back very soon.

The FOCUS program has been helping wounded warriors for two years now and we are extremely pleased with the changes made and improvements that have been implemented. Class sessions have lengthened from four to five days and we are now able to accommodate up to 36 participants per session.

Cont Pg 2 "MMF Welcome"

FOCUS

Newsletter

Issue 1
November, 2012



November 10th

by David McArthur, USMC

Before September of 2008 I only celebrated one birthday a year that really meant a lot to me. And that was my own. I went to boot camp from September through November. Even then, while eating the cheap steak dinner at MCRD San Diego; I had no idea what the big deal was on November 10th.

I didn't even give it a thought. November 10th, was the birth of the Marine Corps. I would soon fall in love with this job – being a Marine - the job that myself and so many others would give up so much of our lives for. I didn't know how much this day would come to mean to me and how much I would grow to respect the values and traditions of the Corps.

I was medically retired from the Marines on January 31st of 2012. So this will be the first birthday that I'll be celebrating since being on active duty. My last two celebrations have been in a hospital. Even while in the hospital I found a way to get my hair cut, my face trimmed, and my clothes pressed neatly. No matter where I will be on November 10th, I will always wish a happy birthday to myself and all those who have earned the title of U.S. Marine.

People who haven't been through boot camp or have never had to make the sacrifices that Marines do, will never understand why we hold this day so close to our hearts. I try not to dwell on the friends that I have lost, or how my life has been forever changed. But on the 10th of November, I not only give a toast to the corps but to everyone who has given their life, and to those who have deployed, because their lives will never be the same.

Cont Pg 2 "Moose Den"

MMF Welcome (cont)

Over 140 warriors have attended the FOCUS program and there are still countless others that would benefit.

We are counting on all of you to help get the word out about the program. Additionally, if you'd like to contribute to future newsletters, just say the word.

Semper Fi,
John Brauer
MMF Board

Moose Den (cont. from Pg 1)

I plan on attending birthday balls every year no matter where it may be. This year it will be with my Marine Corps League Detachment in St Louis. If you've never been to a detachment's ball and haven't looked into the eyes of all the vets there ranging from WWII to present, then you're missing out on how much the Corps means to vets, and how they're still true to the values and traditions.

Once a Marine Always A Marine;
Semper Fidelis; Espirit De Corps!
These are the mottos we live by now. Our appearance is not that of a Marine anymore but our heart and soul will forever be that of a Hard Charger. We are all Marines and November 10th is the one day of the year where we can put our uniforms and medals back on and show that pride that we all still hold true.

So on this November 10th, 2012, no matter where you are, do not forget those who have given so much before you, during your service, and those who are over in theatre right now doing what they do best. Be a Marine, show your spirit. Let your guard down and spend time with loved ones. Because Marines have two birthdays and no one in the world can ever take that away from us!

Semper Fi, be safe, and...

Happy Birthday Marines!!!!



September 2012 FOCUS Group 9/12

Our latest FOCUS Class ran from September 9th through September 14th. Twenty-one Marines and three Corpsmen successfully completed the week. As most of you well know, the transition from military to civilian life can be filled with many challenges. FOCUS is designed to give veterans the confidence and tools to overcome obstacles many face during this time in their lives.

Several topics were covered throughout the week, ranging from character development and interpersonal relationships to financial management and career-building strategies. As always, exceptional guest speakers provided inspiration and valuable lessons.

Class members enjoyed the scenic beauty and quiet atmosphere of the surroundings. They participated in several recreational activities during their stay, including fishing, team-building games, and, of course, the ever-popular potato cannon. A large bonfire greeted the group each night, taking the chill out of the night air and providing a relaxing environment to socialize and forge relationships.

The dynamics of each FOCUS group are amazing, and the class of 9/12 was no different. On the last day of the session, they honored MMF board member John Brauer with a special presentation. The skill and the precision of the formation given the short time to practice, and the presentation ceremony were superb. This event will leave a lasting memory for all of the MMF staff and volunteers.

The September FOCUS class forged life-long friendships. They continue to work with their Team Leaders and are keeping the lines of communication open. We look forward to hearing updates about how they are changing their lives, and, perhaps the lives of others.



Medical News

Living with PTSD



Visiting Nurses

The Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society has a Combat Casualty Assistance (CCA) Visiting Nurse Program which offers non-judgmental, face-to-face contact working specifically with combat Marines, Sailors, and their families. They assist our combat veterans with recovery from physical wounds, as well as the non-physical scars of combat – PTSD and TBI. The CCA Visiting Nurses have been a critical part of the FOCUS program since March, 2012.

No one comes back from a war zone the same person they were before they deployed. As Marines or Sailors, you know and understand that, but your family, friends, and loved ones may not.

The visiting nurses make home visits to meet with veterans, and/or family members, to assist in their recovery – physical or emotional - from combat deployment. The CCA nurses also provide a vast array of resources to help you adjust to the changes in your lives because of combat service.

If you would like to have a CCA Visiting Nurse call or visit you or your family, contact Ruthi Moore at 703-696-0032 or ruthi.more@nmcrs.org.

You have served your country honorably; the CCA Visiting Nurses consider it an honor to serve you now.

Many times, Marines and Sailors back from combat desperately wish they could talk to their significant others, but fear their loved ones reaction, or even their own reaction, to bringing up certain difficult topics. Our wives, husbands, friends, siblings, and parents often feel the same way: they desperately want to offer their support, but they see the changes in us and they often feel they don't know what to say. Significant others may fear upsetting you, driving you away, or bringing up bad memories that they are sure you have. They rarely intend to do these things. However, if they make the effort to initiate communication, often those fears come to pass. On the other hand, if they don't, service members often feel rejected or unsupported, and those fears come to pass anyway. The points below are suggestions to use when talking to significant others to help them to support you, the combat veteran.

1. Give me space - when I need to be alone - don't overwhelm me with questions. I will come and talk to you when ready.
2. If I'm agitated, let me be, don't try to fix it.
3. Be patient, especially when I'm irritable.
4. Don't personalize my behavior, especially when I'm quiet, or get agitated.
5. Learn and rehearse a time out process.
6. Don't patronize me or tell me what to do. Treat me with respect and include me in conversations and decision making.
7. Don't show pity.
8. Don't say "I understand" when there are things that you cannot possibly understand.
9. Realize that I have good days and bad days – it's unpredictable.
10. Anticipate my deployment anniversary dates - recognize that these could be tough times for me.
11. I would like to share traumatic experiences with you, but fear overwhelming you and losing you.
12. I want to be close to you and share my feelings, but am afraid to ... and sometimes don't know how to express emotions.
13. I also fear your judgment.
14. Know that I still love and care about you, even if I act like a jerk sometimes.
15. Don't ask me to go to crowded or noisy places because I'm uncomfortable in those settings.



FOCUS Profiles

Jamie Havig
FOCUS 3/12

There are plenty of influences that helped me make the decision to join the military. First, my father and grandfather both served in the military. Second, after high school I still couldn't find my place in life and had no idea what I wanted to become. I came from a broken family. I was raised by my mother and grandparents. It wasn't a bad childhood, but it lacked a lot of discipline and other features that I needed in my life. One day I met a recruiter while working for a car dealership. I decided to go in and talk to him to get some information about joining the military. As the conversation went on, I started to pick up on some of the values that he spoke of like honor, courage, commitment, accountability, challenge, and brotherhood. At that point, I didn't have these values in my life and I wanted them desperately.

I joined the United States Navy. I chose the Navy because it provided me the opportunity to see the world, and it also offered the Hospital Corpsman rate, the best and most versatile rate in the United States Military, hands-down. Choosing the Corpsman rating meant that I could chase my dream of becoming a Navy Seal. The other great selling point was that there were medical treatment facilities all over the world. That meant I could get duty stations anywhere allowing me to see the rest of the world.

After graduating, from boot camp and my Hospital Corpsman School in Great Lakes, I received my first duty orders to Oak Harbor, WA, Naval Air Station, Whidbey Island. I was not happy to say the least. I accepted the fact that I was stuck on an island and made the most of it. I really honed my medical skills while there. I also met a Navy Seal on base who took me under his wing and picked me up and trained me everyday for a solid year to prepare me for the Seal program. I had excelled above and beyond my peers and picked up a non commissioned officer rating in a year. I was also selected as "Sailor of the Quarter" and nominated 3 other times. With a handful of letters of recommendations from that duty station, I received my orders to attend BUDS Navy Seal Training shortly after.

One morning after getting thrashed in the pool I decided to go to the gym to loosen up my legs on a stationary bike. I was watching the TV when I saw the first Jet crash into the World Trade Center. I watched in awe and disbelief. Lots of things ran through my

mind as I prayed for the people and families involved in that horrific tragedy. I knew right then and there that this was going to change my life. The next morning everyone had the look of sorrow and fear in their eyes as we stood at attention in the morning muster report. They asked for volunteers to go to Camp Pendleton for orders with the 1st Marine Division. I was the first to stand tall, front and center. This decision would change the course of my life forever. I gave up my dream of becoming a Navy Seal to go and fight for my country. All of the sweat and hard work was traded in for the real deal. This memory will always be in my mind.

I deployed with the 1st Marines 4th Battalion Scout Sniper Platoon on my first deployment. We had been tasked out on numerous operations. It was a very tough deployment. My second deployment was with 1st Reconnaissance Battalion - the Swift, Silent, Deadly. Throughout my deployment I was involved in some very big fights - Fallujah, Kufa, Najaf, and Ramadi just to name a few. During the last deployment I sustained multiple bomb blast and injuries that still affect me to this day. I had gone on deployment married and came home single. That was a tough one. The deployments took a lot out of my family and friends. I left the military with an honorable discharge, but badly battered.

Out of all of my medals, awards, achievements, qualification badges and devices during my career, the one that is the most meaningful to me is my Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with Combat Valor. I believe this medal was understated due to the fact that a Marine Corp Lieutenant snubbed me. We often bumped heads because he was a boot. The award was earned during Operation Phantom Fury. My sniper team was in a position in Fallujah teamed up with a team of Army Rangers as a decoy to lure the enemy to our position so that the invading Marines and Army could attack from the rear. We came under heavy artillery and RPG fire that destroyed our position. We fought it out for hours with everything we had. That day all 6 Rangers were wounded. I rendered medical aid while under gunfire at the same time neutralizing enemy forces and protecting my men. Later that day I would end up leaving my position and saving 2 out of 3 innocent children while under heavy enemy fire.

Cont. Pg 5 "Doc Havig"

Doc Havig (Cont. from Pg 4)

I had lived a great professional selfless career in the military. I felt that I lived a glorious life at the time but the civilian chapters in my life would be much more difficult and painful. This would be the beginning of the most difficult war in my life.

When I got back from my last deployment I knew that I was not the same man. I was emotionless and numb. I had zero tolerance for others and pushed family and loved ones out of my life. It was very difficult for me to find my way in a country that I defended that had no concept of what we did over there. I went to school during my struggle and it just seemed to agitate me even more. I couldn't accept that I could be part of America's premiere fighting force, yet found it difficult to excel at simple things. I was battling nightmares, rapid memory loss, rage and loneliness. I bounced around to random meaningless jobs. The diagnosis of TBI/PTSD - the unseen demon - and other physical injuries was starting to sneak up on me, tearing me apart from the inside out.

TBI made normal every day tasks very difficult. I was being seen by the Veterans Administration and their 'C' squad of employees. I was desperate, and I was stuck in the system with treatment that made no sense to me, such as medicating someone that is already emotionless and making them more numb. I could go on, and on, about the lack of knowledgeable ideas the VA has for treatment but I would be preaching to the choir.

I knew that I had to reach out elsewhere for help and for me it started with the Semper Fi Fund. They began sending me to different TBI and PTSD clinics around the nation. That's when I started realizing that there are more guys like me. I thought I was the only one struggling, that nobody would ever understand. I thought I was fighting this fight alone. Boy was I wrong. I was humbled and my eyes were opened wide. The more I went to the different programs, the more I realized that I enjoyed them. I was meeting real world warrior heroes that had been broken by the same pressures and wounds that I had. I made some very strong bonds with the people I met at these places. The Semper Fi Fund asked if I would like to attend another program, the MMF FOCUS program, and I jumped at the chance to go.

Arriving at the FOCUS camp, I was excited but quiet. I always remain quiet and observant of my surroundings. As soon as we boarded our bus at the airport to take us to the facilities I met some of the other guys. I hit it off with a couple and just knew this was going to be great. For some, this was the best they had eaten since leaving the military. For others, this is the most they had talked

in years. During the week friendships really began to blossom and by the end of the week we didn't want to go home to face reality. Go home, to what? ...Judgments by others that have no clue of what we've been through? ...Not fitting in and having no belonging in life. ...To our country that has given up on us and not provided us with proper training and jobs? I was happy and content just to stay at FOCUS with my new brothers. As we all chatted and absorbed the content that was filled in our hearts and minds that week, I knew I was a stronger man.

FOCUS helped me form a game plan for my life back home. FOCUS took a different approach. They asked me to look inside myself for answers with some very unique methods. It really worked. FOCUS had a major impact on me.

The FOCUS program introduced me to The Mission Continues. The Mission Continues Fellowship program sets a veteran up with a monthly stipend for volunteer work in their community. I was thinking just 20 hours a week and they would give me a stipend to help me with my rent.

I attended The Mission Continues orientation and they gave me a new set of core values. I met more amazing people. They offered me a new challenge. Once I started with my host organization, Team Kids, I started working with a close-knit team again. I was assigned duties. I started feeling a sense of belonging. I started caring about my new team. I started breaking down the wall that I had built to keep others out for so long. I felt like I started to come back to life, having a feeling of self worth, something that I hadn't had in years. After being left by my wife, country, and family, it's easy to lose faith in humanity. I had found value in my self once again.

This new fellowship started to show me that it wasn't about me; it was about service to others. For some reason focusing on helping others helped me. It reminded me of why I served my country in the first place Service, meaningful service. Service occupies my mind on how I can make the world better. Since then I have stopped having racing thoughts, rage and anger. I still have tough days but the depression is gone. I can sleep peacefully at night. I have confidence and self esteem. This has been the biggest form of rehab in my life! The Mission Continues understands this concept. Our Fellows understand this concept. We need to continue to serve our country in our country. We need to have a sense of value and belonging. We need to be tasked out on missions. Why can't the government figure this out?

Cont. Pg 6 "Doc Havig"

Doc Havig (Cont. from Pg 5)

Throughout my fellowship, I continued to break down barriers and civilian stereotypes. I continued to use the tools that I learned while I was in the military. Our military assets are powerful beyond measure. Hard work, honor, dedication, commitment, accountability and team work are a needed commodity in the civilian sector. I got a degree in Fire Science. You know how much that degree has helped me out in life? ZERO. My values, character and military tools have opened more doors for me than anything. I'm not saying an education is not important because it is. It's more of a requirement in society. Take the educational opportunities as they come along because they are another tool to add to your always growing tool box. If you're not learning and evolving you're dying. Don't neglect the gifts and skills that the military gave you, because they can't teach that skill set in any college.

Since the end of my 6-month fellowship with The Mission Continues, I have had continued success in my life. I accepted a full time salaried position with my former host organization as The Director of Programs for Team Kids. I continue to network and have made some great friends. I even added a few new family members. I have opened a new bright chapter in my life. I continue to grow and learn daily. I'm continuously challenged on a

daily basis. I've had the privilege to work with thousands of children to inspire them to serve others in need. I work with my amazing new team and we are working to change the world one child at a time.

One thing that really impacted me to change the way I live my life was a question I was asked at FOCUS. The question was, "...what would friends and family say about you at your funeral?" That really made me think about my life and how I affect others on a daily basis. Have I left this world a better place than I found it? At FOCUS the answer in my mind really rocked me to my inner core. It hurt me so bad inside that I tossed and turned at night for weeks. I've made it my personal mission to leave this world as philanthropist; best friend; and amazing family man. I will make the world a better place.

I know that you, our warriors, have done more for our country than the other 99%. I'm asking you to challenge yourself once again. Show the rest of this world that you are a member of the finest generation of warriors that's here to make this world a better place. You will improvise, adapt and overcome. Pick yourself up and dust yourself off and let's fight this fight together.

SEMPER FI
Doc Havig



FOCUS Profile

Eric Calley

FOCUS 6/12

I became a Marine in 2002. Like many others, I enlisted in the Marine Corps after the World Trade Center fell on Sept. 11, 2001. After boot camp and infantry training, I joined the Third Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion in October of 2002, and was assigned TAD with the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force. My first deployment was to Camp Commando Kuwait in January of 2003, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Upon successfully completing this deployment, I returned to the states in August 2003. After a brief stay in CONUS, assigned to recruiting and training duty, I deployed for the second time in October 2004 to the Soonie Triangle in Iraq with Charlie Co. 3rd LAR. My unit was responsible for the capture of many important enemy prisoners of war. After returning from my second tour in Iraq in April, 2005, I was honorably discharged in 2006 from the Marine Corps.

After the Marine Corps, I earned an Associates degree in General Education in my home state of Michigan. But

while transitioning into college and society, things became difficult and a downward spiral began. After dealing with PTSD, alcoholism, a DUI, and other disabilities, I began my road to recovery. In 2009, I married my wife Melinda and had our first child, a son we named Gage. During my recovery, I discovered the Midwest Marines Foundation FOCUS program, and attended the FOCUS session in June of 2012. MMF is an organization with a mission to help Marines transition from combat to civilian life. As a result of the FOCUS program, sobriety followed and the transition into the person I wanted to be had begun.

I started motivational speaking to student veterans in August, 2012 with another FOCUS alumnus, James Sperry. Shortly thereafter, because of my sobriety, and goals being reached, I returned to the MMF FOCUS program, but this time as a mentor helping other Marines deal with issues similar to my own.

Cont. Pg 7 "Eric"



FOCUS

Marines never walk alone ...

Forum



The on-line FOCUS Forum site is up and going strong!

The Forum is for our FOCUS alumni exclusively, and provides our FOCUS Marines and Corpsmen with a site to stay in touch, exchange information, and access resources that the MMF provides on an ongoing basis. We've posted nearly 100 active job listings on the Forum in just the past 3 months. 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 'Forum' heading'.

The Forum is by e-invitation only, but if you've misplaced your invitation – or not received one – simply send an email request to the MMF Forum Admin at (focus.marines@yahoo.com).

“Eric” (cont. from Pg 6)

Subsequently, I and three other FOCUS Marines developed The Fight Continues, a 501C non-profit organization to help raise awareness in America about the sacrifices of our veterans. And just as importantly, The Fight Continues will raise the bar of awareness to show the true effects of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). We are also endeavoring to get help and assistance with transitioning back into the workforce for our veterans.

I've rejoined society. I'm a part the American Legion and VFW 4646 in Lyons, Michigan. James Sperry and I, through The Fight Continues, have undertaken a monumental task. On Veterans Day, November 11, 2012 we will organize the reading of all the names of our fallen warriors in the recorded history of the United States throughout the country, from coast-to-coast

I would like to invite all my FOCUS Marine brethren to join in and be a part of the Fight Continues in all that we're doing this Veterans Day, and our future endeavors. For more information on our immediate project to Honor the Fallen, and other information on The Fight Continues, check out our web site at...

www.the-fight-continues.org.

SemperFi Marines



MMF Board Profile Jeff Arnold

Have you ever wondered how all the great things get done at the FOCUS sessions? From the facilities at the bunk-house, the barn, the recreation area, the fishing, the lake itself, the bonfire, the ever popular potato cannon, etc., etc., there's one person responsible for making it all happen - Jeff Arnold of the MMF Board of Directors. And of course, Jeff is a Marine.

Jeff was in the Marine Corps from 1982-1986. He served as an avionics tech for AV-8 Harriers and was deployed on three occasions on WestPac cruises.

After leaving the Marine Corps, Jeff had a couple of starter jobs

like all of us, before landing a job with McDonnell Douglas and working on the F-15 flight line.

He began working at the FOCUS camp in 2000. Jeff manages the FOCUS property 365 days a year, and he has the 'misfortune' of living at the farm full time with his wife Chris, and their four children.

Jeff's talents are amazing, and true to the Marine Corps spirit, there is nothing that he cannot do – there is no job too tough.

Next time you think of the outstanding facilities that the FOCUS camp offered thank Jeff and give him a hearty “SemperFi”!





Heroes Ride

At recent FOCUS sessions, we've had the privilege to showcase the **"Heroes Ride"** in honor of Marine Cpl. Phillip Vinnedge.

Phillip was deployed with the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment to Sangin Afghanistan. On October 13, 2010 Phillip was driving the lead vehicle, an MATV, on a security patrol. A remotely detonated IED was triggered, killing all 4 instantly. During their 7 month deployment, 3/5 Marines had 25 men killed in action, and hundreds of casualties.

For years Phillip had talked of getting a classic Chevy truck. Prior to his deployment to Afghanistan, he vowed to find and restore one when he returned. Phillip was not able to fulfill his dream; however his loving family decided to fulfill that dream for him by restoring a 1951 Chevy pickup to honor Phillip and all our fallen heroes. Now completed, it features a Fallen Heroes themed paint job and is used for parades, car shows, various events to raise awareness of those that **"gave all"**, and to support military charities.

We will continue to feature images of the **"Heroes Ride"** in future editions of the FOCUS newsletter. However, if you want to learn more of the full story and history of the **"Heroes Ride"**, go to www.fallenherosdreamride.org.



Book Review

"The Ultimate Gift"

Jim Stovall

One can read *"The Ultimate Gift"* cover-to-cover in less time than it takes to watch a football game. But unlike a football game, the life lessons discussed in this book will reinforce the lessons learned at the FOCUS sessions, and help set a course for the rest of your life.



Important Contact Information

Wounded Warrior Regiment hot line
Visiting Nurses
FOCUS Forum
FOCUS Newsletter
Midwest Marines Foundation
The Fight Continues
This Able Vet
The Mission Continues

877-487-6299
ruthi.more@nmcrs.org
focus.marines@yahoo.com
sheric@mmffocus.org
www.midwestmarinesfoundation.org
www.the-fight-continues.com
www.thisableveteran.org
www.missioncontinues.org

Upcoming Events

Honor the Fallen
FOCUS Winter Session
FOCUS Newsletter Issue #2
FOCUS Spring Session

November 11, 2012
December 2-8, 2012
January, 2013
March 3-9, 2013



FOCUS Program Update

Since many of you have attended FOCUS, the program has grown and undergone changes. Some of the more significant changes include:

- 4 sessions per year instead of 3
- FOCUS now can accommodate 36 attendees instead of just 30
- The CCA Visiting Nurses are now part of every session
- New segments include Service Dogs, Yoga, afternoon game breaks
- More emphasis has been given to The Mission Continues
- New recreation and computer areas have been built in the bunk house

As the program continues to grow, we need help from you, our FOCUS alumni. We need to seek out and find every Marine or Corpsman out there that needs the help that FOCUS provides.

Many of you know of other warriors that are in need of, or that could benefit from, the life lessons presented in the FOCUS sessions.

If you read Jamie's and Eric's stories on Page 4, you can see what a difference the program has made on their lives.

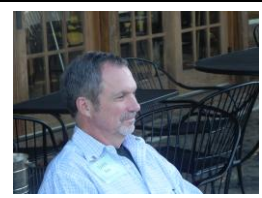
If you're still having issues, pick up the phone and call any member

of MMF. We're here to help you now as much as we were when you originally attended the program. Our motto is "*fall down seven, get up eight*". As long as you get up one more time than you fall down, you are making progress.

Also, if you're doing great in your life and would like to tell your fellow alumni about your victories, let us know, and we will report your progress in a profile section.

And as always, if you would like to contribute to the newsletter we welcome your input.

SemperFi
Be Safe Marines



Midwest Marines Foundation
1880 Schlusersburg Road
Augusta, MO 63332



FOCUS

Newsletter

Issue 1
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