



# In FOCUS

## Newsletter

Issue 10  
December, 2015



**FMF Chairman  
Walt Suhre**

From all of us at Focus Marines Foundation --- HAPPY 240th BIRTHDAY!! And while we have the opportunity – MERRY CHRISTMAS AND ALL THE VERY BEST IN 2016!! We're very proud of each and every one of our 542 FOCUS graduates. You're Maines – the best, toughest fighters in the world who NEVER QUIT!

I'm pleased to report that our November session ended our 2015 program year on a traditional high note. Our class consisted of 35 participants from 15 states. Of the 35, we were pleased to include one greenside corpsman and one soldier (another of those who mistakenly got in the wrong recruiting office). We continue to refine our FOCUS course as we learn more and recognize opportunities to make FOCUS better.

Our November session fell over the week that also included the 240th birthday of our Corps and Veterans' Day. We seized both opportunities to respect tradition, exhibit pride and relive memories. We were blessed with the chances to honor two 90+ year old St. Louis Marines, both of whom fought on Iwo Jima and, not long thereafter, fought at the Chosin Reservoir. What a treat to have two members of The Greatest Generation, Elmer Dapron and Charlie Stockhausen, meet our FOCUS participants and share their stories.

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



### FOCUS November 2015

The November 2015 FOCUS Course was a tremendous success! 35 Marines, Corpsmen and Soldiers from across the country had the opportunity to meet fellow warriors and work together to determine the next steps in their lives.

Participants settled in to their new surroundings with a question and answer session with NMCRS nurses and WWR DISCs, an introduction to therapeutic horsemanship, a relaxation session, and a variety of other activities. From there, a series of instructors led the class through programs and exercises to help determine where they've been, where they are, and where they want to be.

We celebrated the United States Marine Corps' 240th birthday with age-old traditions, complete with a cake cutting ceremony and words honoring the oldest and youngest Marine in attendance. The Marine Corps Birthday should be spent with fellow Marines and that's just what we did.

Each FOCUS class is unique but certain aspects remain constant. Friendships are made, experiences are shared, goals are set, and lives are changed. Take pride in the fact that you are now FOCUS Marines. You will always find support within the FOCUS family. More importantly, you are called upon to help your fellow Marines, Corpsmen and Soldiers find their own strength and resolve to attend a FOCUS course.

## Walt's Welcome (cont.)

We took full advantage of the traditions of November 10th and had a birthday party. Dennis Simpson led the cake cutting ceremony, first presenting General Lejeune's Marine Corps Order No. 47 issued on November 1921, summarizing the history, mission and traditions of the Corps and to be read at every command on November 10th every year. We next heard the annual birthday message from The Commandant and The Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps.

Next by hallowed tradition Mr. Simpson cut a cake (somewhat smaller than the traditional replica of Tunn Tavern) with a Mameluke sword. He presented the first piece to Elmer, at age 91 the oldest Marine present. Elmer, in turn, presented the piece to Joel Wright, attending FOCUS from Stillwater, Oklahoma, and at 23 the youngest Marine present. The passing of the first piece by the oldest Marine present to the youngest is a symbolic gesture of the passing of experience and knowledge.

The following day, Harry Hegger led a brief ceremony honoring Veterans' Day. Harry traced the history of the day and read excerpts from two historical speeches given almost 2400 years apart – one speech from Pericles Funeral Oration in 431 B.C., the second from General Douglas MacArthur's Farewell Speech in 1962. Both recognized that free citizens are indebted to those who gave their todays for the citizens' tomorrows.

It was quite a week.

Semper Fi,  
Walt



## Don't Let Current Events Take Control of Your Feelings

*Posted by Sarah Heynen, DCoE Public Affairs on November 20, 2015*

On November 13<sup>th</sup> tragedy struck Paris when it was attacked by terrorists. A disrupted city, dear to so many, created a ripple of despair worldwide. It seemed that the world was in mourning.

At the same time, controversy grew, particularly on social media. Was it fair to only recognize Paris? What about the other attacks and violence around the world? Would the United States accept refugees from Syria and other countries with terrorist ties? Almost immediately, social media feeds and news outlets were baited into controversy and debate.

We don't have the answers to these questions. But, what we do know is that for our warriors, terrorism and violence are not new topics. Strong opinions and images of violence can be emotional triggers for those who have fought in conflicts or for family members who have lost loved ones in similar attacks.

Post Traumatic Stress (PTS), anxiety, depression and intense feelings can resurface when something unsettling happens. When you start to feel overwhelmed, we want you to know that we understand. We offer these tips and resources to help you manage those situations:

- **Step away from social media. Turn off the news.** It's easy to stay glued to your screens for updates about ongoing events, to see what your friends are saying and to share your own thoughts and opinions. But it can also fuel stress. If gathering facts and staying connected is helpful for you, allow breaks and step away from your screens when the chatter becomes too intense.



## “Nurses Corner”

(Cont. from Page 2)

- **Connect with loved ones.** Connecting with those we love can bring a sense of calmness and stability. Make sure you plan friend or family time.
- **Do something you enjoy.** Make time for uplifting activities: exercise, meditate, listen to music or read your favorite book. Doing things that lift, or calm, your mood can help refocus your thoughts.
- **Take a deep breath.** It sounds simple, but practicing diaphragmatic breathing can actually help you calm down during moments of stress or anxiety. If you are new to concentrated breathing, there are mobile apps that can help. The National Center for Telehealth and Technology Breathe2Relax app is a great tool to carry with you. Are the kids stressed? Sesame Street for Military Families teaches kids breathing exercises with Breathe, Think, Do.
- **Stay Positive.** When life gives you lemons, make lemonade. That may seem like a nonchalant statement for mass tragedy, but scientific research shows your grandma’s advice was actually right on. Positive thinking and optimism can reduce stress and improve your health.
- **Ask for help.** There’s no shame in asking for help when your anxiety or PTSD symptoms creep up. Call your mental health provider to check-in or set up an appointment. If you’re not sure who to talk to, the DCoE Outreach Center is open 24/7 by phone at 866-966-1020, email or chat.

There will always be periods of turmoil, devastation and conflict in our world. Usually, the only thing we can control is ourselves—how we think and feel, how we choose to respond to others, how much information we consume, and when to ask for help.

## Seven Ways to Manage Stress During Holidays

By Dr. Peg Dundon, VA NCP and  
Amanda Koehler, Staff Editor, The StayWell Company

Family, friends, fun, and food: holidays can be the best of times.

But they’re also stressful times, full of demands and deadlines.

“Stress during any time of year can become a problem and affect your health when it goes on for too long or feels overwhelming,” says Dr. Peg Dundon. Dundon is the National Program Manager for Health Behavior at VA’s National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP).

Use these seven tips to de-stress during the holidays and year-round:

1. **Get physical**—Take a brisk walk or be physically active in another way. Regular activity is best. Even a 10-minute chunk of active time can help!
2. **Be part of the solution**—Learn problem-solving skills. They can improve your ability to cope. Your VA medical center may offer a class or information session. A web-based problem-solving program called “Moving Forward” is also available at [www.veterantraining.va.gov](http://www.veterantraining.va.gov).
3. **Learn to relax**—Discover relaxation and mindfulness skills. They can help you manage stress and even protect you from it.
4. **Express yourself**—Keeping your thoughts bottled up can increase stress. So speak up in respectful ways. Sharing thoughts and feelings in a polite yet firm manner can help reduce stress.
5. **Manage Your Time**—List what needs to get done, make plans for addressing issues, and stick to the plan as best you can.
6. **Use positive power**—Stress often is associated with negative, self-critical thinking. Focus your attention on positive thoughts about yourself and others.

Cont. Pg. 4 “Nurses Corner”



NAVY-MARINE CORPS  
RELIEF SOCIETY

## "Nurses Corner"

(Cont. from Page 3)

7. Enjoy Yourself—Despite extra pressures from busy schedules, it's important to take time for yourself. Plan something you enjoy. For suggestions, see VA's Pleasant Activities Tip Sheet.

If you sense that stress is hurting your health or causing physical symptoms, talk with your health care provider. VA primary care teams have staff members who are experts in stress management.

If you feel overwhelming stress, call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and press option 1. You may also reach confidential help by sending a text to 838255 or through online chat at [www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net).

Stress is part of all of our lives to varying degrees. The key is learning and practicing ways to manage stress that work for you, so stress doesn't manage your health and well-being.

### Apps To Help Manage Holiday Stress

Check out these mobile apps, and consider downloading a few, for strategies to help you identify stress and plan for a peaceful, happy holiday.

- Use **T2 MoodTracker** to figure out when your stress levels are rising. This free app from the National Center for Telehealth and Technology (T2) helps you identify the things in your life that contribute to feelings of stress and anxiety. By monitoring mood and behavior over a period of time, you can see how environmental influences and life stress may affect your psychological health. Unique features make it easy to keep a record of your emotional experience for your own awareness, or to share with your therapist or health care provider. MoodTracker is available for Apple and Android devices.
- Release stress with **Breathe2Relax**. Deep breathing helps activate the body's relaxation response. This



popular app guides you through breathing practices to help you physically calm yourself in stressful situations. Practice the exercises regularly on their own or in tandem with clinical care directed by your health care provider. The app is available for Apple and Android devices.

- Manage stress with **Tactical Breather**. T2's customizable stress management tool introduces you to the benefits of controlled breathing through a tutorial and guided exercises. Primarily created for service members during intense combat situations, the app teaches you how to gain control of your heart rate, emotions, concentration, and other psychological and physiological responses to your body during any challenging situation in life. Free downloads for Apple and Android devices.
- Practice mindfulness. **Mindfulness** is a term used to describe a set of strategies designed to change the way people think about everyday life. **Mindfulness Coach**, developed by T2 in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs, introduces the concept of focusing mindfully and can help you maintain a meditation practice during the holidays. Even if you can't practice regularly, taking a moment to be mindful will help in times of stress. While the free app is currently only available from the iTunes store, there are plans to develop it for other devices.

If apps aren't your thing, the Mayo Clinic suggests some low-tech ways to cope with stress: take a walk at night and stargaze, listen to soothing music, get a massage, or read a book.



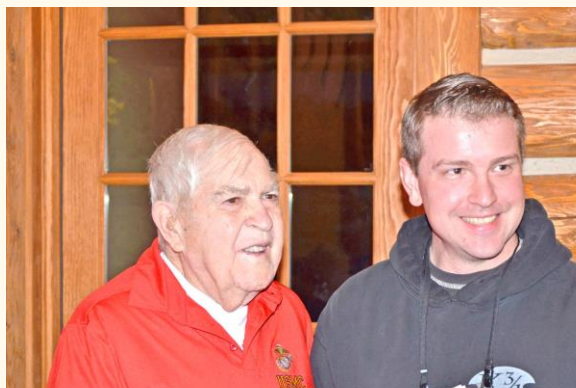


November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
USMC Birthday at FOCUS  
Elmer Dapron – Oldest Marine/WWII Vet  
Joel Wright - Youngest Marine/Afghanistan Vet



*“Everything has been great since I've been back home, I feel reinvigorated with hope, motivation, and purpose. I feel more like the old me, like the go -getter gung-ho devil dog I truly am, more than I have in a very long time!*

*I unloaded a lot of my burden in St. Louis and I am very grateful and utterly thankful for the experience I shared with all our warrior brothers and sisters, team leaders, mentors, volunteers, basically everyone! I had kind of given up on people, myself and had become reclusive from the world, just merely existing day to day.*



*That's not the case anymore. I've dug myself out from my dark hole and took to the ground running with everything I learned at FOCUS:) For myself, my new brothers and sisters and to honor my fallen brothers by living an honorable, worthy and full life in their memory.”*

Angel Alvarez  
San Diego  
FOCUS November 2015



## New FMF Website

During the summer of 2015, FMF completely redesigned our public website.

The new website is more informational and functional with features like “Call To Action” buttons for easier access to important pages and forms such as the FOCUS participant application. It also contains updated blogs on important topics related to our mission to support this generation of veterans. And now our FMF site is mobile friendly and can be accessed from any of your favorite mobile devices.

We’ve also made it possible to make recurring monthly donations to FMF via a secure PayPal transaction. Simply click on the “Donate” Action button from any page on our site, then click on the Yellow PayPal Donate icon to complete your secure PayPal transaction.

You can access the new FMF website at ....

[www.focusmarines.org](http://www.focusmarines.org)



## Bob Woodruff Foundation

FMF is once again honored to be recognized by the Bob Woodruff Foundation. Their grant will help continue our efforts to assist Marines, Corpsmen, Sailors and Soldiers in the 2016 FOCUS Course.

The BWF mission is:

*“Since September 11, 2001, 2.8 million troops have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Now, they’re coming home. Yet even after they return to the love and support of their families and communities, many will struggle. Physical and hidden injuries are challenging on their own. But sometimes, these injuries can lead to a cascade of other trouble – unemployment, depression, substance abuse, even suicide. Our mission is to ensure injured veterans and their families are thriving long after they return home. That’s why we find and fund innovative programs in communities where veterans, their families and caregivers live and work. That’s how we tackle the problems that can prevent our veterans from fulfilling their dreams for the next chapter of their lives.”*

It is truly a privilege to work alongside an organization who shares our dedication to our nation’s veterans. For more information about the Bob Woodruff Foundation, visit their website at...

[www.bobwoodrufffoundation.org](http://www.bobwoodrufffoundation.org)

## FMF Fundraising Activities

Thank you to all who supported Focus Marines Foundation this year, whether through sponsoring an event, volunteering, or donating monetarily. You are the ones responsible for giving the veterans we serve a “new lease on life.” Over \$150,000 was raised by 22 fundraisers sponsored by friends of FMF in 2015. This compares to 10 events in 2014.

Our goal for fund raising in 2015 is \$800,000. To date we are close to that amount. We believe the goal will be achieved with our recent Fall campaign. As this newsletter goes to print, letters are in the mail to past supporters who have as yet to make a donation this year. Contributions can be made on-line at our web site, by credit card, or by mailing a check to our \*NEW\* mailing address...

**Focus Marines Foundation  
15455 Manchester Road, #476,  
Ballwin, MO 63022**

Next year we look forward to repeats of many of the activities held in 2015.

The next big event is the St. Charles Paramedics Association Poker Tournament to be held on Feb. 13th. In addition to the poker tournament, there is a casino room where black jack tables and a roulette wheel will add to the fun of the evening. We need 10 to 12 volunteers to assist with set up the morning of the event. Additional information will be forthcoming.

A new event for FMF is the St. Louis Ribfest to be held at New Town in St. Charles. It will be held over the Memorial Day weekend, beginning on Friday evening and going through Monday. The organizers estimate attendance will exceed 100,000 visitors. Ribfest provides us with the opportunity to spread the word about the work of FMF and to receive donations. We also have the opportunity to man one of the concession stands, thereby earning a percentage of all food and drink purchased at our stand. Volunteers are especially needed for this purpose.

During 2015, FMF was approved by the Regional Combined Federal Campaign to participate to their annual fundraising campaign. FMF representatives have attended five CFC events. Participating in these events provides us the opportunity to solicit funds, but also to spread the word about FOCUS with the hope of reaching out to veterans who could benefit from attending a FOCUS class.

On behalf of the wounded warriors we serve, and our board of directors, team leaders, and FMF staff, thank you for your generous support and assistance with our fund raising activities this past year.

### Amazon Smile

As an organization, we rely on the generosity of our donors and grants we receive to serve our wounded warriors. We continually look for other funding opportunities, especially as word spreads about our program.

Recently, FMF enrolled in the Amazon Smile program. Amazon Smile was created by Amazon as a way for those who shop Amazon to give to their favorite charity. Every time someone enrolled in Amazon Smile shops .5% goes to the charity of their choice. Amazon Smile is the same Amazon you know - Same products, same prices, same service.

If you shop Amazon consider enrolling in Amazon Smile. To start using Amazon Smile simply go to [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com) on your computer or mobile device. On your first visit you will be given the opportunity to select Focus Marines Foundation as the charitable organization to receive donations from your purchases. Once you have selected FMF everything else functions the same. Shop as you normally would. Most products are eligible on Amazon Smile – if not, you’ll be notified.

So while shopping on-line this holiday season, sign-up for Amazon Smile. It’s an easy and cost effective way to support the veterans that have sacrificed so much for our freedom and security.





## FMF 2015 - Year In Review

This past calendar year has been a watermark year for Focus Marines Foundation. After our last session in November, FMF has now provided transition support for 542 Marines, Sailors, and Soldiers since our beginning in 2010. Not only have we affected the lives of these veterans who sacrifice so much for our freedom and security, but we have also affected the lives of more than 2,000 family members, friends and loved ones.

Each of the four FOCUS sessions in 2015 averaged 34 participants. Below is a review by the numbers of FOCUS for 2015.

(4) FOCUS sessions (Apr, Jun, Sep, Nov)	(14) Participants referred by FOCUS Graduates
(135) Attendees	(199) Children of participants
(128) Marines	(20) NMCRS nurses in attendance
(3) Navy Corpsmen/Sailors	(16) USMC WWR DISCs in attendance
(4) Army Soldiers	(48) On-site FMF team leaders
(7) Service dogs	(32) Returning FOCUS Marine mentors
(30) States represented	(250) On-site Volunteers
(32) Average age of participants	(100) Off-site Volunteers
(159) Deployments...	(16,000) Volunteer man hours contributed
(97) deployments to Iraq	(\$3,500) Cost per FOCUS participant
(50) deployments to Afghanistan	(93%) Percentage of <b>every</b> dollar donated to
(12) deployments elsewhere	FMF going directly to support veterans