



# 2015

## Annual Report



# LETTER TO SUPPORTERS

*The Year 2015 was one of progress on many fronts for the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes, but also a struggle as we continue to wrestle with the unique challenges facing a small charity such as ours, and a widespread, though mistaken, perception among many Americans that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are winding down and the plight of wounded warriors is no longer a priority. That perception, which is largely a result of media coverage beyond our control, makes it even more difficult to focus attention to the wounded heroes paying the price for our freedom, and to elicit the support we must have to do our work on their behalf.*

*I believe this perception of a receding war will be short-lived as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) continues its grotesque depredations and calls forth radicals to commit atrocities against unarmed citizens. But the grim reality is that an enemy like this – well armed, well-funded and fanatical – cannot be defeated by air power alone. We may have to come to grips with them on the ground and that means possibly another surge of wounded coming home with missing limbs and broken spirits – often to find there is no money to pay the bills while they await the bureaucratic resolution of their disability compensation and medical care.*

*The irony to me is that our fellow citizens do not really need to see the news reports of American casualties to be reminded that we are at war with a determined foe. As I travel around the country visiting wounded in Veterans Administration hospitals and meeting with Coalition supporters, I am reminded of what we have already lost in terms of our now missing sense of security and well-being. Every time I go through an airport security checkpoint – emptying my pockets and removing my shoes – I feel that we now are forced to live in a police state thanks to the terrorists so determined to destroy our way of life. When I am in downtown Washington, DC participating in various events honoring veterans, I cannot help but note the conspicuous armed guards at public buildings and patrolling the streets.*

*There is everywhere and at all levels a permeating sense of unease that we live in a dangerous time in which threats can emerge suddenly and unexpectedly from any quarter. We are in a sense a nation under siege and it is not a pleasant thought to contemplate. The terrorists cannot stand against us on the field of battle, but they are making us fight their kind of war in which our advanced weaponry is useful but not decisive. One terrorist with*

*a \$20 homemade bomb can destroy a \$100,000 armed Humvee or even an Abrams tank. Their willingness to sacrifice their lives for a hideous cause fomented within us both perplexity and anxiety. This battle is one that will inevitably take a toll on the brave young and women who bear our nation's security on their shoulders.*



**"The Coalition, with your help and support, continues to fight on their behalf, providing direct financial aid in their times of crisis, supporting a variety of programs to help them readjust to civilian life, finding homes for the many who have no place of their own to lay their heads, and encouraging a variety of therapies to deal with the post-traumatic stress that afflicts so many of them."**

*Despite a decline in general revenues, I am pleased to report we have continued our direct support to wounded veterans of nearly \$1 million a year. We have also continued to make progress reducing our administrative costs from 8.5% in 2013, to a little over 6 % in 2014, and down to 5.7% in 2015.*

*The Coalition was named a "Top-Rated Nonprofit" by the Great Nonprofits organization which is aligned with GuideStar, The Huffington Post, TechSoup, and Volunteer Match.*

*We continue to be embraced by the Combined Federal Campaign which is a profound testimony to our credibility. And of course we have received and retained the Gold Label – the highest rating from GuideStar.*

*In this report you will find more detailed accounting of our finances and extensive coverage of our work throughout the year. As always, I welcome your comments and questions regarding our administration and service to those we are here to serve.*

*Respectfully Yours,*

David W. Walker  
President and Chief Executive Officer

## Board of Directors

**Lt. Col. Thomas J. Orlowski, U.S. Army (Ret.), Chairman\***

**Tom Sircher, Vice Chair\***

**Bruce Kelly, Secretary and Treasurer\***

**David W. Walker, President and Chief Executive Officer**

**Command Master Chief Stephen Page, USAF (Ret.), Director\***

**Matthew Cary, Director\***

**Col. Charles Bogle, U.S. Army (Ret.), Director\***

**Honorable Fred Foreman, Special Counsel to the Board**

(\* Independent Voting Board Member)

# 2015 DONATIONS MARCHING ONWARD

## EMERGENCY FINANCIAL AID

We help severely disabled veterans meet a wide range of day-to-day urgent financial needs – particularly if they are waiting for their disability benefits to begin or have lost income because their spouse or parent had to quit working to become their primary caregiver. This aid is used to cover pressing basic expenses such as:

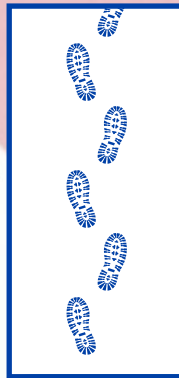
- ★ Utility bills
- ★ Mortgage and rent
- ★ Food and necessities
- ★ Car payments/repairs
- ★ Medical bills
- ★ Home maintenance

\$309K



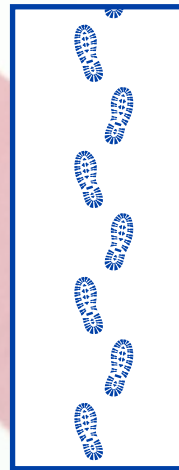
HOLIDAY MEALS

\$115K



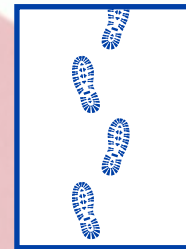
UTILITIES & GAS

\$253K



HOUSING

\$52K



GRANTS

## EMERGENCY AID MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Our primary mission is to provide direct financial support to wounded veterans returning from the battlefields who must wait for months to receive their benefits, and often find themselves unable to pay for the basics – food, rent, car payments, medical bills, kids' clothing, etc. We verify the applicants and process payments quickly. (For the sake of their privacy, we do not give their full names.) Some examples of aid requested and fulfilled in 2015:

- ★ Marine LCPL Chad K.; from New Richland, Minnesota, suffers from post-traumatic stress after serving in Iraq. He needed \$1,951.28 to avoid foreclosure and pay overdue utility bills.
- ★ Army Sgt. Kelley M. from Tamworth, New Hampshire, was medically retired after being paralyzed in Iraq. He needed \$1,277.23 to avert eviction and car repossession.
- ★ Army SPC Tracy B. from Houston, Texas, suffered a back injury while serving in Iraq – and asked for \$500 to put food on the table.
- ★ Marine Cpl. Joshua M. was honorably discharged after serving in Afghanistan – service that left him with PTSD. He needed \$2,513.58 to avoid foreclosure and pay urgent medical expenses.
- ★ Air Force Airman First Class Rachel D. of Austin, Texas, was paralyzed while serving our country. She desperately needed \$1000 to pay for food and gas.
- ★ Army SPC Erina D. of Raeford, North Carolina, suffers from post-traumatic stress after serving in Afghanistan. She was in desperate need of \$642.76 for food and to pay her auto insurance.
- ★ Army SSG Casandra from Tennille, Georgia was paralyzed while serving in Afghanistan. She desperately needed \$629.18 to avoid eviction.
- ★ Air Force veteran Andrew P. served in Afghanistan and suffers from severe PTS. He needed \$1,989.43 for urgent health care costs.



*"The Coalition was able to step in and help us when we needed it the most, when I was leaving the Army but not yet in the VA. They covered that gap for us financially and kept the lights on, a roof over our heads and food in our stomachs. That to me is an incredible gesture of thanks."*

*- Ret. Army SSG Dan Shannon*

# YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2015, we continued our good work with fierce intensity and commitment. The media reported a decline in our military commitments to Afghanistan and Iraq, but you would not know it from the volume of appeals we receive for assistance from returning veterans afflicted with physical and psychological wounds who are left in limbo for weeks and sometimes months without income waiting for their benefits from the government.

We launched a new radio program, *Today's American Veteran*, hosted by Emmy-nominated actor, patriot and Coalition friend – Jack Scalia (pictured here). This is a fresh and timely production that will grab your attention and provoke discussion. Among the first episodes:

- ★ An inspirational interview with U.S. Navy bomb disposal combat veteran, CEO of Shoulder 2 Shoulder, Inc., and disabled veteran Master Chief Petty Officer Ken Falke, USN (Ret.). "I don't actually feel disabled," Falke said. ***"I sometimes think that injury actually propelled me to places that maybe I never would have got to before. And I tend to think that is the normal that comes out of this wounded community. It's been 13 years of war and these guys and gals are beaten up and battered but nobody's broken. They want to get on with their lives and they want to thrive."***
- ★ An incredible interview with Coalition spokesperson Sgt. Mary Jessie Herrera, U.S. Army (Ret.) (pictured on right). "The round that hit my forearm ended up blowing everything out of my arm," Herrera said. "The only thing attaching my hand to my arm was skin. It started my road to recovery. It was a whole year of therapy, 42 surgeries and a different outlook on life. They reconstructed with a cadaver bone and wrapped it in hardware."

Sgt. Herrera along with Field Representatives Jorge De Leon and Matthew Pennington participated in the American Veterans Center's 2015 annual conference in Washington, D.C., that included events structured to preserve the legacy and honor of our nation's heroes. The weekend began with the *Wounded Warrior Experience*, a televised program which gives wounded veterans the opportunity to discuss their experiences on the front lines as well as their transition into civilian life.



In 2015, we also released another round of new public service announcements (PSAs) about the challenge of helping wounded veterans and the important work done on their behalf by the Coalition. This year's stars – all of whom donated their time and energy – were actors J.K. Simmons, Jason Alexander and Jack Black.

## The Washington Times

*Paying Heed to the Walking Wounded*

May, 2015 op-ed by:  
David W. Walker

"Because we depend on such a small number of professional military people to carry the flag," Walker wrote, "many of them must return to the combat zones time and time again. All too often they come home with both physical injuries and less visible afflictions that render them unable of participating in normal life." Walker's op-ed also paid tribute to the wives of the wounded: "who must often bear full responsibility for their households, taking care of the children and paying the bills, while the warriors struggle to return to normalcy."

SURVIVE. RECOVER. REBUILD.



You can tune into the Coalition's new radio program online [www.radioactivebroadcasting.sbe-inc.net](http://www.radioactivebroadcasting.sbe-inc.net) and search "Today's American Veteran." Or you can go to [www.saluteheroes.org/todays-american-veteran-radio-program/](http://www.saluteheroes.org/todays-american-veteran-radio-program/)



***"Wounded veterans are not getting a fair break, it's much too difficult for them when they come home with serious injuries to try to raise their families and pay the rent or mortgage and other bills. I think if you are a real red, white and blue American, you always want to contribute."*** - Raquel Welch, actress

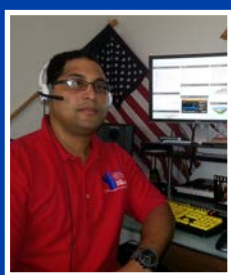
[www.saluteheroes.org](http://www.saluteheroes.org)

# EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES

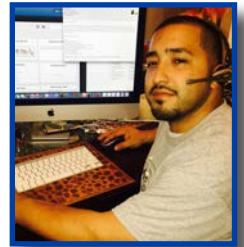
# 66%

OVER TWO-THIRDS OF  
OUR STAFF ARE COMBAT-  
WOUNDED OR THEIR  
CAREGIVER

2015 marked the ninth year of the Heroes Thanking Heroes program which provides transitional part-time, flexible employment to wounded veterans or their primary caregivers, enabling them to make phone calls from their homes, most often to personally thank donors. Qualified participants obtain basic training and experience, thereby preparing them for other potential jobs.



Those enrolled in the program, like David Nunez U.S. Army (Ret.) (pictured on right), find increased self-worth and continued healing from this opportunity. Some severely disabled veterans like Hugo Gonzalez (who was blinded in combat), find it very difficult to find civilian employment. Since the program's inception, over 215 wounded veterans or their primary caregivers have participated and they have been responsible for over 1.5 million completed calls.



*"The Coalition gives the opportunity to work from home so our veterans and caregivers can earn a living while being physically present to care for their families. As long as a veteran's family is secure, they will never fail."*

— Hugo Gonzalez  
U.S. Army SPC (Ret.)

We are proud to announce a new member of the Coalition family – Shilo Harris (pictured on right). Shortly after 9/11, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. In 2007, Shilo's armored vehicle was struck by an IED. For 48 days, he remained in a medically-induced coma and spent nearly three years recovering and undergoing intensive physical therapy. He has had more than 75 surgeries, requiring as much as six hours a day on wound care. Shilo also struggles with PTS. Despite his injuries, he reflects positively on his time in the service: *"Everything in life is a gift. Sometimes it may not be the gift you want but you realize that your challenges are a new beginning."* Today, Shilo is a motivational speaker, sharing his story with groups around the country, raising awareness of PTS and serving as an inspiration to fellow soldiers.



We also gave \$5,000 to Operation: Job Ready Veterans (OJRV) whose mission is to positively impact the lives of veterans, their families and communities by providing effective career development and employment services to veterans, empowering them to meet their individual career and employment goals. The Coalition's grant helped underwrite the cost of providing Veteran Employment Transition Seminars to wounded OIF/OEF/OND veterans.

## EXPANDING PUBLIC AWARENESS



all military branches from across the country.

In June, David Walker and Field Operations VP Donny Daughenbaugh represented the Coalition at the 2015 Department of Defense (DoD) Warrior Games in Quantico, Virginia. This annual sporting competition brings together wounded or disabled service members and veterans from

Adaptive sports and athletic reconditioning activities play a fundamental role in the recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration of our service members and veterans. David (shown above with Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter) and Donny spread the word about the Coalition, and participated in the Transition Fair – educating warrior teams about the services offered by the Coalition, including our one-of-a-kind Heroes Thanking Heroes work from home employment program.



of the best from our Armed Forces, and they exemplify what it means to 'never quit.' We all owe a debt to them that we can never repay."

Six amazing combat-wounded veterans represented "Team Coalition" at "Never Quit" extreme physical challenge in Jacksonville, FL. They skydived onto the beach and landed among thousands of participants. "It's a tremendous honor for us to host these incredibly brave men and women," said Erik Petroni, the event's director. "Donny, Matthew, Rob, Gary, Stephanie and Dana represent the best

The Coalition was also excited to have a float in the 2015 America's Parade – an annual event held on Veterans Day in New York City. The parade was broadcast on the Hallmark Channel and the CW on December 5.

# COALITION IN THE NEWS

The Coalition gave a \$13,000 grant to enable two combat-wounded veterans to participate in an innovative flight training program offered by Purdue University. The program provides seven weeks of intensive flight instruction and ground training led by aviation professionals with significant industry experience. It includes classroom training and flying in Purdue's state-of-the-art fleet and matching simulators. A few members of the graduating class of 2015 (pictured on the left) along with combat-wounded serviceman Jason Gibson (on the right).



"We're proud that the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes is supporting our program, which offers tremendous benefits to every man and woman that completes it," said Dr. Bernard W. Wulle, who manages the Able Flight program at Purdue. ***"Few experiences are more exhilarating than piloting an aircraft, and we've found that wounded veterans make some of the best pilots out there."***

In May, the Coalition was featured in the National Memorial Day Parade in Washington, D.C. Coalition President and CEO David Walker had the honor of making a speech prior to the start of the parade, joining several high profile participants including actors Gary Sinise, Joe Mantegna and Miss America 2015.

The parade, the nation's largest Memorial Day event, honors America's fallen heroes from the Revolutionary War through the present conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was broadcast live to troops stationed around the globe and to 1,500,000 national TV viewers from 400 unique media outlets. Hundreds of thousands of spectators lined the streets of D.C. to watch the parade. During the parade Walker presented a check to War on Terror veteran and double-amputee Aaron Causey and his family. Being involved in this particular parade has become something of a tradition for the Coalition, and we expect to be there again in 2016.



David Walker, Causey Family, Field Rep. Matthew Pennington and Kirsten Haglund



Coalition Field Rep. Juan Perez and Gloria Edgeton

In January, we honored a Veterans Administration (VA) case worker, Gloria Edgeton, who had gone beyond the call of duty to help a wounded veteran who was down on his luck and facing loss of his home. Kareem E. served his country bravely, but he returned home bearing the scars of war deep inside in post-traumatic stress (PTS). By the time he got to the VA in Denver, he was deeply troubled. He had been unable to find a job and was living on the street. By his own account, he was considering suicide – an all too common occurrence among our wounded veterans.

Edgeton took his situation to heart and did all that she could within the limits of her resources. When that wasn't enough, she went the extra mile to contact the Coalition asking us to intervene. We were only too happy to oblige, helping Kareem find decent housing and providing him with funds for his needs while he sought employment. But Gloria did not stop with that. She stayed in contact with him advising on his job search and offering him encouragement. Within a few weeks he had found a good job and is today self-sufficient and living on his own. A message from Kareem:

***"The Coalition has saved my life...I needed a job, a place to live and food in my stomach...if I had to do it all again I would not hesitate for this great nation."***

In a time when the Veterans Administration has been frequently criticized, Edgeton is an outstanding example of the commitment of the people who work for the VA and who go the extra mile to help those who need our support. We recognized her selfless dedication with our Hometown Hero award which recognizes the extraordinary service of people who assist the Coalition's efforts to serve the brave men and women who have sacrificed so much on behalf of our country in the War on Terror.

# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

FOR YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 30, 2015

## REVENUES AND OTHER SUPPORT:

Cash Contributions	\$15,774,505
Gifts in Kind	\$6,106,356
Unrealized Loss on Investments	(\$43,650)
Realized Gain on Investments	(\$1,815)
Dividend and Interest Income	\$35,626
Other Income	\$213,105
Total Revenue, Gains and Other Support	<u>\$22,084,127</u>

## EXPENSES:

Total Program Services	\$13,008,224
Fundraising	\$6,845,060
Management and General	\$1,602,899
Total Expenses	<u>\$21,456,183</u>

The Coalition 2015 Audited Financial Statement is available on request by contacting us at [info@saluteheroes.org](mailto:info@saluteheroes.org), or writing to: Coalition to Salute America's Heroes, 552 Fort Evans Road, Suite 300, Leesburg, VA 20176. A copy of the current Coalition IRS Form 990 can be viewed at [www.saluteheroes.org](http://www.saluteheroes.org).

## ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

### ROAD TO RECOVERY CONFERENCE AND TRIBUTE

A multi-day all expenses paid educational and motivational event for wounded veterans and their families to enable them to approach the future with hope and to be better prepared for the challenges that lie ahead. It features seminars, workshops and panel discussions where attendees learn about resources and services available. Experts from government, private sector and other veteran-focused non-profit groups and corporations offer advice and guidance on: career counseling and transition, caregiver support, family counseling and enhancing personal relationships.

### VETERAN CIRCLE MEMBERSHIP

A free membership program designed to provide a network for America's combat-wounded troops. Qualified members receive numerous benefits including: being eligible for holiday meal and gift checks, receiving monthly updates of events and employment opportunities across the nation, special discounts and the ability to communicate with other disabled veterans in a private environment.

### RECREATIONAL OUTINGS AND EXPEDITIONS

The Coalition organizes sporting events, outdoor expeditions and a host of activities that provide wounded veterans time to recreate and interact with their peers who are also overcoming their injuries.

### PUBLIC INTERACTION

The Coalition informs millions of Americans about the needs of our veterans and how they can help through its direct mail program. The Thank You card program distributes hundreds of thousands of cards each year to wounded troops. We also encourage the public to ask Congress for more adequate financial assistance and compassionate treatment for injured service members.

### ONLINE TRAINING

As service men and women transition back to civilian life, an important ingredient for their future is ensuring they have the training to be self-sufficient. Through our partnership with SkillSoft, a leading provider of e-learning programs, qualified service members can take free, self-paced classes with over 1,500 course options. These classes offer them the chance to earn credit toward college degrees, continuing education and business certifications.

### GIFT IN KIND

Our relationship with other organizations allows us to be the key factor in facilitating the disbursement of donated goods. In 2015, we partnered with Feed the Children and successfully distributed over 200,000 books to military bases across the nation.

# THE COALITION IN ACTION

In 2015 Coalition staff, board members, field representatives and volunteer spokespeople attended numerous events related to combat-wounded veterans across the nation. From parades to job fairs, the Coalition was there; creating public awareness, supporting veterans, providing books to military bases and raising funds for our much-needed programs.



## Field Management Team

*Donny Daughenbaugh, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.),*

*Vice President of Field Operations*

*Matthew Pennington, U.S. Army (Ret.), Field Rep. East*

*Jorge De Leon, U.S. Army (Ret.), Field Rep. West*

*Mary Jessie Herrera, U.S. Army (Ret.), Field Rep. West*

*Jill Hinds, Field Rep. Southeast*

*Col. Martin L. Badegian, U.S. Army (Ret.), Special Projects Officer*

# GRANT PROGRAM

The Coalition provides direct funding to thousands of wounded veterans in need, and also offers grants to other organizations that support disabled veterans and their families in a variety of ways. We have a dedicated committee that reviews monetary endowments to other groups that reflect our own priorities.

A few such grants disbursed in 2015 were: a \$5,000 grant to Our Military Kids a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Virginia, dedicated to helping the children of military families affected by battlefield injuries to enjoy normal lives, doing the things that kids in less stressed home environments are able to do. Our grant will enable 10 children of wounded veterans to enjoy the extracurricular activities of their choosing – activities their families would otherwise be unable to afford.

***"We are so grateful for the Coalition's support which will go directly toward helping the children of true American heroes," said Linda Davidson, Executive Director of Our Military Kids. "We've learned over the years that one of the best ways to serve our veterans is by helping to give their kids as normal a life as possible. Sports, fine arts, camps and academic tutoring programs help nurture children during a parent's lengthy recovery and/or rehabilitation."***

We awarded another grant to the Rocky Mountain Hyperbaric Institute which uses its amazing pressure chamber



serve to exacerbate the problems.

Hyperbaric therapy, related to the decompression that deep sea divers go through when they return from the ocean depths, enhances the body's natural healing process by inhalation of 100% oxygen in an atmospheric pressure increased chamber. The treatment process is safe, painless and has few side effects. It has proven very effective for many combat-wounded veterans, and is especially useful in the fields of neurology and wound care.



In February, we awarded a \$5,000 grant to the Patton Veterans Project, to help fund a therapeutic filmmaking workshop for wounded veterans that took place at Fort Stewart, Georgia.



## Ambassador Corps

*Major General John K. Singlaub, U.S. Army (Ret.)*  
*Jack Scalia, Emmy Award Nominated Actor*  
*Master Sergeant Leroy Petry, U.S. Army (Ret.)*  
*Col. Evan G. Miller, U.S. Army (Ret.)*  
*SFC Dana Bowman, U.S. Army (Ret.)*

*David Wetherell, U.S. Army (Ret.)*  
*Senior Airman, Daniel Acosta, USAF (Ret.)*  
*Bonnie S. Tyrrell, Eastern Region*  
*Michael Meyer, Western Region*  
*Jimmy Gunn, Southern Region*



**Coalition to Salute America's Heroes**  
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## SURVIVE. RECOVER. REBUILD.

