Support the Men and Women Who Secure Our Freedom

A NEWSLETTER ADVOCATING FOR OUR AMERICAN TROOPS

“WE ARE DEDICATED TO PROVIDING SUPPORT AND NEW BEGINNINGS FOR INJURED VETERANS AND THEIR SPOUSES, CAREGIVERS AND CHILDREN.”

WVST WINTER RETREAT HONORS LOCAL MONTANA VETERANS

Seven injured veterans and their spouses/significant others are hosted at the Whitefish Veterans Support Team Winter Retreat March 6–11, 2018.

The Whitefish Veterans Support Team (WVST) hosted its Winter Retreat on March 6-11, 2018. Seven injured veterans and their spouses/significant others spent five days of winter activities including mountain tours on the grooming machines, skiing/snowboarding and a cross-country skiing and snowshoe outing. This retreat is the first time that all new attendees were from Montana. “With rural and small towns in Montana making up a disproportionate share of our U.S. military it is appropriate to honor our local veterans,” said Steve Shea Board member of WVST.

One of the goals for the program is to engage veterans in physically challenging and fun activities. Studies suggest that adventure-based activities and the social communities around those activities play a vital role in the successful rehabilitation and reintegration journey of veterans that are ill, injured or disabled. One of the veterans in the retreat said, “This retreat made me realize the importance of engaging in fun, physical activities for myself and my family. I'm going to purchase skis for my daughter so we can spend healthy time together.”

Continued on page 2

WVST WINTER RETREAT
MARCH 6-11 | SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

TUESDAY, MARCH 6
Buddies Pick Up Veterans
Groomer Tour of WMR
Welcome Dinner at Kearney Residence
Introductions, Goals and Expectations

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7
Group Breakfast for Veterans
Morning Ski/Board Lessons
Group Lunch at Base Lodge
Afternoon Ski/Board Lessons
Group Counseling Session I
Dinner at Hellroaring Saloon

THURSDAY, MARCH 8
Group Breakfast for Veterans
Morning Ski/Board Lessons
Group Lunch at Base Lodge
Afternoon Ski/Board Lessons
Group Counseling Session II
Groomer Tour of WMR
Dinner at Farrens Residence

FRIDAY, MARCH 9
Group Breakfast for Veterans
Group Counseling Session III
Cross Country Skiing, Snow Shoeing and Dinner at Jones/ Diamond Residences

SATURDAY, MARCH 10
Group Breakfast for Veterans
Morning Ski/Board Lessons
Group Lunch at Base Lodge
Afternoon Ski/Board Lessons
Group Counseling Session IV
Dinner at Williams Residence

SUNDAY, MARCH 11
Breakfast/Recap at Kearney Residence
Veterans Depart
WVST WINTER RETREAT HONORS LOCAL MONTANA VETERANS CONTINUED...

The Whitefish Veterans Support Team and the Kalispell Vet Center teamed up to support veterans at this year’s winter retreat. “The Vet Center counselors have the skills to engage the veterans in topics that are unique to veterans while creating a safe and comfortable atmosphere for sharing,” said Larry LaRocque, Board member of WVST.

“Often times these short counseling sessions can result in changing someone’s perspective and result in meaningful change.”

“This Retreat Exceeded My Expectations in Every Way.” — JONATHAN

Many returning vets suffer invisible psychological wounds from close proximity and repeated exposure to combat zones. In addition to psychological wounds, veterans often suffer from other invisible wounds such as severe back, knee and ankle disabilities due to serving long hours wearing and carrying up to 130 pounds of combat gear.

War exacts heavy casualties on our troops that can go unnoticed to the general public. By every measure the casualty statistics are staggering. “Due to the advancements in field medicine, improved body armor and close proximity to advanced medical care in war zones, U.S military combatants have a 90% to 95% chance of surviving a combat injury,” said Dr. David Shaw Donaldson. “This increase has also resulted in a proportionally larger population of combat wounded veterans returning home and living with severe and chronic physical, cognitive and psychological injuries and disabling conditions.”

“The Retreat Made Me Realize The Importance of Engaging in Fun Activities with My Family.” — NATHAN

The veterans and their significant others started their retreat with a mountain tour on the groomer machine. The Veterans and their spouses/significant others and close proximity to advanced medical care in war zones, U.S military combatants...
GOLD STAR SUMMER RETREAT HOSTS CHILDREN OF PARENTS LOST WHILE SERVING OUR COUNTRY

On July 26-31, 2017 the Whitefish Veterans Support Team (WVST) and Folded Flag Foundation (FFF) co-hosted five Gold Star young adults who have lost a parent while serving in the United States military. The FFF is a non-profit organization that provides scholarships and grants to spouses and children of the U.S. military began with a yoga session, (TI yoga), aimed at soothing and healing trauma induced behaviors. Outdoor adventures—river rafting, fishing, boating, swimming, hiking, a red bus ride up Logan Pass, overnight camping in the forest, a chairlift ride to the top of Big Mountain and experiencing the zip line filled each day. These participants were busy!

The WVST members, the Glacier Outdoor Center and local restaurants provided the meals; most were consumed while the participants were “on the go.” WVST volunteers provided all the transportation.

After five days of successful explorations in Montana’s summertime playground the participants returned to their homes, all extolling the exciting adventures and therapeutic counseling provided by WVST.

Whitefish Veterans Support Team will host this program again this summer.

The Gold Star participants enjoyed a Red Bus tour on Going-To-The-Sun-Road in Glacier National Park.

“THE NATURE WALKS AND LAKE DAY WERE SPECTACULAR. YOU TREATED US LIKE ROYALTY.” — BRANDI

Vertikal Counseling Service (Whitefish, MT) led two group counseling sessions each day. “Our goal is to build a safe space for participants to connect over shared loss, experience nature, and explore self-identity,” said counselor Katrina Platt. Two counselors, one West Point Cadet and one local teenager comprised the 24-hour on-site counseling support.

The schedule of activities kept the participants active and engaged. Each day

A white-water river raft trip provided a day of adventure for the participants.

SUMMER RETREAT
JULY 26-31 | SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

DAY 1
Group Counseling Session
Meet & Greet BBQ;
Fly-casting Lessons
Group Counseling Session
Reflections and Free Time

DAY 2
Morning Yoga and Intentions
Group Breakfast
Red Bus Tour in Glacier Park
Group Counseling Session
Hike to Shea Dome-2 miles
Camp Set Up/Dinner
Group Counseling Session

DAY 3
Morning Yoga and Intentions
Group Breakfast
Group Counseling Session
Rafting the Middle Fork
Group Dinner
Group Counseling Session

DAY 4
Morning Yoga and Intentions
Group Breakfast
Group Counseling Session
Whitefish Mountain Resort
Chairlift to Summit House/lunch
Zip Line Adventure
Group Dinner
Group Counseling Session

DAY 5
Morning Yoga and Intentions
Group Breakfast
Group Counseling Session
Reflection and Free Time
Pontoon Cruise and Lunch
Lake Activities
Group Counseling Session
Dinner at Williams Residence
Group Counseling Session

DAY 6
Morning Yoga and Intentions
Breakfast and Pack Up
Group Counseling Session
Retreat Feedback/Lunch

WHITEFISH VETERANS SUPPORT TEAM PROGRAM GOALS:

• Engage veterans and caregivers in physically challenging summer and winter retreats in Flathead Valley
• Provide veterans and caregivers with much needed down time and access to fun and appropriate community events
• Build meaningful relationships that advance the healing process and encourage veterans to overcome challenges of readjustment to civilian life
• Raise community support to foster awareness and action to aid veterans in their recovery
by Congress in 1979 out of the recognition that a significant number of Vietnam vets were still experiencing readjustment problems. Since 1979, as American military members have gone to war, Vet Centers have been there to support them and their families when they return.

Additionally, Vet Centers provide counseling services for survivors of military sexual trauma. Bereavement counseling services were added in 2003 for surviving parents, spouses, children and siblings of service members who die of any cause while on active duty.

“We were honored to partner with Whitefish Veteran Support Team to facilitate daily group counseling sessions covering topics of readjustment, self-care and military related mental health challenges. We understand, and most of all we care,” said Brandon Spangler, MSW readjustment counselor.

To learn more about the Vet Center go to [www.vetcenter.va.gov](http://www.vetcenter.va.gov).

**COMMUNITY SUPPORT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE**

**Major Donors:** Bill & Betty Bayne • Mike & Liz Byrd • Larry & Nancy LaRocque • Mark & Donna Lyes • Janet Mayo • R. Matthew & Ellen Moan • Jim & Wendy Pauli • Harry (Hap) & Pamela Peters • Tom & Teresa Quinn • Richard Stevens & Ellen Johanson • Scott & Patty Strelinauer • Steve and Ardee Whisler • David & Judy Williams • Squadron Charitable Trust • Squadron Capital LLC • Whitefish Community Foundation.

**Donors:** John & Carmen Adams • Melanie Anton • Timothy R. Babiak • Jerry & Sharan Baracker • Stephen Boone • William J. Burg • Luther & Dorothy Campbell • Larry & Helen Cates • Nick & Karen Chickering • John & Anne Collins • Linda Cornutt • Sara & Joshua Deyoung • Ilia B. Dousman Fund • Noel Drury • Leaf (Bart) & Carole Erickson • Elinor Hess • Frank & Nancy Hinchy • Jan & Bowie Houghton • Susan Katten • Frank & Betty Sue Kearney • John & Maureen King • John Kramer • Patrice La Tourelle • Benny Lawrence • William & Melissa Leady • Rebecca Logan • Jerry & Rhona Meislik • Mark & Kathy Panicek • Lee & Jean Pinski • Joseph & Beverly Raudabaugh • Kim & Janice Richards • Arline & Kenneth Richter • Harriet & Thomas Rogers • David & Lisa Senior • David & Lisa Senior • Maryann Shea • Paul H. & Connie Silverman • Robert & Michelle Small • Beth Sobba • Timothy Strand & Sukey Pitman • David & Jeannine Trousdale • Michael (Mike) & Leslie Warning • Yvonne Washer • Tania Williamson • Arvin Wilson

**In-Kind Donors:** Dan & June Diamond • Lyle Hausauer • Bill & Clemane Jones • Burket Knivet • Alan Myers-Davis • Mike & Robin Farren • Julie & Sam Tickle

**Special Thanks:** Christina Ryan and Brandon Spangler, Kalispell Vet Center • Katrina Cherry Platt and Brie Shulman, Vertikal Counseling Service

**PLEASE HELP SUPPORT OUR VETERANS**

**IT’S EASY TO MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION**

**Retreat Sponsorship** $5,000
**Sponsor a Veteran Couple** $3,300
**Sponsor a Veteran** $1,650-$3,299
**Brigade Donor** $1,000-$1,649
**Battalion Donor** $500-$999
**Company Donor** $250-$499
**Platoon Donor** $100-$249
**Squad Donor** Up to $100

Credit Card Billing:

- [ ] MasterCard
- [ ] Visa
- [ ] Discover
- [ ] American Express

Credit card #: ____________________________
Exp. date: _________________ Code: _____________

PayPal online donation

AMT DONATED $ ____________________________

Mail your tax-deductible donation to:
Whitefish Veterans Support Team
200 Parkhill Drive
Whitefish, MT 59937
TAX ID: 47-2873695

**WHITESTONE VETERANS SUPPORT TEAM**

**WVST BOARD MEMBERS:**

- Dave Williams, President
- Bret Luedke, Vice President
- Kim Richards, Treasurer
- Mark Panicek, Secretary
- Larry LaRocque
- Steve Shea

**WVST ADVISORY BOARD:**

- Betty Sue Kearney
- Frank Kearney
- Nancy LaRocque
- Bret Luedke
- Ruth Luedke
- Kathy Panicek
- Mark Panicek
- Jean Pinski
- Lee Pinski
- Kristin Ramasy
- Judy Williams

**PARTNERS:**

- Commit Foundation
- Kalispell Vet Center
- Vertikal Counseling Service

**MISSION STATEMENT:**

Empower veterans and caregivers by providing opportunities to build meaningful relationships and engage them in emotionally and physically challenging activities to advance their healing.

**The Whitefish Veterans Support Team is a charitable 501(c)(3) organization that is solely funded by private donations. We are a small group of Whitefish residents that are dedicated to empowering the lives of injured veterans and creating community awareness to assist in this meaningful effort.**

TO LEARN MORE GO TO: [WVSTMT.ORG](http://WVSTMT.ORG)