

Veteran Voices: SITREP - Episode #22 - More Veteran Resources

[Chris Faust]

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[Tom Faust]

Yeah. It gives you an opportunity to continue your service. Uh, the reason most of us would join and, and serve in the military is because we feel a desire to do something to, to help out.

Welcome to Veteran Voices, CITREP with your hosts, Tom and Chris Faust. Welcome to Veteran Voices. I am Tom Faust here with my son and co-host Chris.

And, uh, today we'd have a couple of subjects on hand. We want to talk about a few different organizations that provide resources for veterans. Uh, and, uh, the first one we wanted to talk about is called Heroes on the Water.

Uh, they have a mission to provide wellness and community to veterans, active duty military. And they've expanded to law enforcement officers, first responders and such, and their families through kayak fishing and other outdoor activities. Um, they want to create a supportive environment that promotes healing and wellbeing through this recreational therapy.

Um, and, and the idea is to help the participants reconnect with themselves and their families and their communities. So it really does in, in the sense of things we like to promote, it does support the idea of reintegrating into civilian life after your military career.

[Chris Faust]

I don't know. Yeah. It would be more of a, you know, things that you can do to balance the, you know, stress or pressure you might be feeling from leaving the military.

Uh, you know, kayak fishing. It's not for everybody, you know, some, some of us like me couldn't just sit out on a boat and fish. That's just not me.

For some people, I have a kayak.

[Tom Faust]

I have a kayak. I like sitting out on the boat actually, and just kind of sitting out in the water and enjoying the sun and all that. So that's depends who you are, I guess.

Yes. Could be.

[Chris Faust]

It's just too quiet for me, but I mean, fishing can be used as a therapeutic activity for, you know, let you decompress and reduce stress. And the, the, the thing about the, uh, heroes on the water thing is, you know, that's, it's no cost, no cost participation for, you know, these fishing experiences. So, you know, the events are free equipment, meals, guidance, and, uh, they can even include family, you know, they're designed to include family members to promote healing and bonding.

[Tom Faust]

Yeah. Yeah, that's true. And, uh, and apparently, you know, they're all over the place there.

It's a nationwide, uh, presence, the volunteers and, and staff, uh, programs available across the country. Um, and they also like to work with, uh, like building community. Uh, the volunteers will help and create a welcome and supporting environment for the participants, of course.

Uh, and then, uh, you know, as you were talking off screen earlier, Chris, about the therapeutic programs, the therapy part of it.

[Chris Faust]

Uh, so they actually do partnerships with the VA and the DOD. The, their current reach for that. It's like, you know, over, you know, 38,000 veterans, first responders and their families that, that are, that are benefiting from it currently.

They have regularly scheduled, uh, fishing events across the country. Um, but yeah, one of the things that I noticed about this too, is it started with a focus on veterans and then yeah. Expanded to the first responders and families.

So it's really cool. They did that. It's like, Hey, this is also good for other people who've served the country in one way or another, not necessarily in war or combat, but first responders, uh, you know, from firefighters to EMS, things like that.

They, they go through some of the same things and they also need some of that. So it's a good thing that it, uh, helps them out too.

[Tom Faust]

And the thing about first responders as well is that they also, uh, can tend to have PTSD and the similar issues because of the stress and the type of work that they do, uh, and so there's a lot of mental health benefits to this, uh, and the participants, people who

have gone through this do report that they've had significant reductions in their stress and symptoms of PTSD. So it is helpful, uh, sitting quietly on the water. Like you don't like to do it, Chris, that can help.

And, uh, yeah. And so, yeah, there's a lot of community support for it as well, where they do it. So that that's really good.

And they're rated pretty high too, as far as charities are concerned, they have a 96% score with the charity navigator. So that's, that's good. That means that, you know, whatever donations and things they get, they're using them wisely, they're actually spending it on helping the veterans and the people involved, uh, not going all to administration into somebody's pocket, which is an important thing to, to be aware of if you're going to donate to any organization.

And they have volunteers, they have volunteer opportunities as well. So, you know, if, uh, you're interested in helping out with something like this, uh, particularly if you do like sitting in a boat fishing, this might be something for you to help with. Um, but there's ways to contact them and we'll provide a link to their website and everything.

Uh, but you can help with, uh, you know, coordination of events, guiding participants, uh, with the outreach, um, and they collaborate with various other organizations. So if you're involved with a similar organization, then, uh, you know, you might be able to get involved with this as well.

[Chris Faust]

So another, uh, another organization that focuses to help with veterans is called the Mission Continues. And what's interesting about this one here is a lot of the times when, you know, veterans, you know, when they get out of the military, they, you know, they, they can kind of lose their way and kind of figure out what, you know, what, what, what can I do that, you know, can help continue things? Cause they've been doing it for a few years, so it's kind of what they know.

So the Mission Continues, uh, actually connects veterans with opportunities to, uh, continue their service and leadership, uh, in under-resourced communities. And, uh, it aims to empower veterans to apply their skills and, uh, dedication to foster community development and support. Uh, all veterans who desire to continue the service, you know, could be a part of the transformative movement, uh, that, you know, helps positive change in, uh, communities that could be in desperate need of, you know, development and leadership and guidance and help to get to where they I'm sure want to be.

[Tom Faust]

Yeah, it gives you an opportunity to continue your service, uh, cause you've already been, I mean, the reason most of us would join and, and serve in the military is cause we

feel a desire to do something, to, to help out, to serve our country, to, and to, to use that as a way to grow as well. Cause you get, when you give, you also get back. It's, uh, it kind of works both ways.

And so it can be very fulfilling to help out and to, to serve in these ways. And they'll do things like helping, uh, you know, schools if they, you know, the schools need some work done outside or, uh, a community center needs some help. You might help with that.

There's a lot of food drives and things that, that they work with. Uh, and they're, they're all over the country. They're, they're, they have what they call platoons in various places.

And, uh, most, not all States, but most States have at least one. Uh, there are 74 altogether. Uh, looks like they've done almost 1500 service projects since 2019.

So it's like 300 a year on average or something. That's pretty good.

[Chris Faust]

Mm-hmm. Um, they also, uh, have like a, uh, uh, like a six month community-based leadership program, uh, to combine in-person and online learning, uh, in order to equip veterans, uh, with skills to serve as community leaders is, you know, you, you might have the experience of doing things there, but leading communities or doing something like that is a little bit different. Uh, especially when you're trying to, you know, lead people who might not have been in the military.

Uh, that was one of my biggest things of going into any job is having to talk differently because there's, there's a method of communication and conversation that you've had for years when you were in, then you get outside and some of the same terminologies don't translate as well to, uh, civilian people who've never, uh, experienced it. Um, but another good thing that this, uh, this has is, uh, for women veterans, they have leadership programs, um, and that's a five month program that supports women veterans, uh, in identifying, you know, leadership pathways, strengthening skills, and helps to create a nationwide network of like-minded women veterans.

[Tom Faust]

And then they have a thing that they call Volt, a veteran online leadership training. This is the online part that Chris mentioned a few moments ago, uh, which offers, you know, offers veteran focused courses on the community leadership and personal development. So it works both ways.

You can kind of help develop your own skills. I'm pretty sure they teach things like, uh, uh, speaking skills and leadership skills to be able to, uh, like help with or head up some of their platoons in the various cities. You can join up for one near you.

If there isn't one near you, uh, I'd imagine you could contact them and say, Hey, we don't have one here. Let's create a new group here and get some work done in my local community. Uh, but, uh, they've got, uh, what does it say here?

93,000, over 93,000 volunteers have been working with them and they've done over almost 9,000 service projects, uh, in 4,000 different communities. So there's really a lot of, a lot of stuff there, a lot of impact that they're having.

[Chris Faust]

Yeah. They were, uh, they were also named one of the, uh, 50 best nonprofits to work for, uh, from 2012 to 2014. Um, they received an innovation award in 2011 from the social venture network, um, have some other accolades and they are definitely recognized for their transparency and effectiveness in their operations.

[Tom Faust]

And so, yeah, so they do have volunteering opportunities. If you're interested, they of course would take donations and also like the, uh, heroes on the water. They also collaborate with other local organizations and try and expand the reach and impact that they can have.

And then the third one that we wanted to talk about today is called vet ticks, which is a veteran tickets foundation. Um, and this is the one that, that, uh, prompted me to come up with some ideas for this episode, because it turns out that, uh, I've been signed up with vet ticks for some time and I get their emails, but hadn't actually made use of anything, uh, but they, they offer different things from concerts to sporting events to, uh, just all different kinds of things that you might need, uh, tickets to get to, but can't afford. And, uh, a few weeks ago, uh, I was out with my daughter and granddaughter, and we noticed a billboard as we were driving by for, uh, the frozen, the Disney show, Broadway show of frozen coming to town. And it's, you know, a few nights and my daughter looked into the price and it's, it's, it's not terribly cheap.

It was, you know, more than, more than we could afford. And so, uh, the other day I just happened to notice that vet ticks had some tickets available for that. And then I managed to get three tickets to take them to go see frozen.

So we're going to do that next week. Uh, and I just thought that was really awesome because the tickets were free. And it's just a thing they do for veterans and first responders.

Uh, their mission is to provide these free event tickets to currently serving military members, honorably discharged veterans and immediate families of troops killed in action. That'd be like the gold star families. Uh, and the goal is to reduce the stress, strengthen the family bonds and encourage veterans to engage with their communities.

[Chris Faust]

That's actually really cool that they promote things like that. Um, you know, especially it's like, yeah, you, you get things for the veterans, but being able to get like additional tickets for family members is, is great. Cause you know, you might not want to go to some of these things by yourself.

I mean, you could, but, you know, things are always better with, you know, immediate family. Um, I checked in my, I checked in my area cause I just signed up for it. Uh, I wasn't aware of it until you had mentioned it to me.

I haven't used it yet, but I did sign up for it. And, um, they, they do cover a pretty wide gamut. Like I saw opportunities for, you know, uh, you know, Denver improv and things like that for, you know, comedy shows, uh, baseball games.

Um, and then just some other general things that didn't particularly interest me in general, but they have, I mean, it goes from sports to ballet to, you know, musicals, things like that. It's just crazy what they have. And it's all, it's all based off of either, you know, they'll purchase the tickets with, uh, you know, with what they get from donations or they get it from sponsors, like, you know, so-and-so event will give them, Hey, we've got this many here tickets that we can give you to, you know, hand out for people that might want them.

Um, so it's actually really cool, you know, performing arts, educational events, even museums, um, concerts. And it's really cool where you just, the veterans just sign up on the vet ticks website, uh, where the, you know, your service gets verified. And then from there you can request tickets to events and it's, it might be like a small processing.

Maybe you would know better than I would on that one.

[Tom Faust]

Yeah, it costs, it costs me like, uh, \$15 or \$20 or something like that. Uh, uh, a fee that's in addition to the tickets to whatever it is that covers. But so basically the tickets are free is a small fee and it's, uh, just amazingly reasonable price for what you get.

And the, the idea came about when, uh, when the founder, uh, noticed that the at a super bowl game, he was watching, there were a whole bunch of empty seats and he started thinking, well, if they have all these empty seats, maybe there's a way to share those with veterans and first responders. And, uh, that's how that came about. And it's just a great idea.

Yeah. They, they, you can request tickets for various events. You can choose within reason how many you need for yourself and your family members.

Um, and that's, uh, that that's what it's all about. They've distributed over 20 million tickets, estimated value of over a billion dollars already. That's just phenomenal.

But again, this helps, you know, veterans with their families reintegrated into civilian life. It helps, uh, because you get to go out and do something outside of the house. So you're, you know, you're improving your mental, uh, mental health and strengthening the social support networks.

They partner with various organizations in order, like Chris said, in order to get these tickets, uh, sports teams, venues, uh, et cetera.

[Chris Faust]

Yeah. And for those wanting to give back to, there's also volunteer opportunities because the volunteers can help with event coordination, ticket distribution, and, you know, community outreach to get the word out of these things.

[Tom Faust]

But of course you can donate yourself if you want to as well.

[Chris Faust]

You could, you could, maybe you're at a point where you can, unfortunately, like, Hey, I've got something I, you know, can't go to, or, you know, came across or it's like, Oh, Hey, I've got something that I can contribute to. So it's, it's a good way to, you know, kind of have that circle of like, you know, if you've needed it and then you might not need it. It's like, Oh, Hey, I can give back.

Then, you know, that's also good for helping to build a, you know, build a community or at least help better yourself as well. Um, the charity does hold high ratings as well from watchdog organizations. Um, so that's always, that, that, that's always good when you get higher because there's, it's sad.

It's there's a lot of charity organizations that pop up that aren't really. And it's, it's, it's sad that people try and take advantage of veterans. Like there's, you know, I've seen them out in front of stores, uh, around my neighborhood where someone would go there wearing, you know, BDUs and they'll just stand out there with a fancy poster or whatever they made around the table and try and get donations from people that are walking into stores.

And when you look at it, it's not, you know, the person is not prior military. It's a fake organization. They basically just take your money and go.

It's sad. It's really sad that it comes down to that where people are trying to take advantage of, you know, Oh, we're helping veterans. We're helping military members.

And then you just run away with the money. It's, it's sad. So I'm glad there's these watchdog organizations that look over these to make sure that, Hey, it is legitimate and it does really want to help people and help who they're saying they're supposed to be helping.

[Tom Faust]

Uh, yeah, that's a excellent point. Uh, and, and then, uh, vet techs also, of course has a lot of very positive testimonials from veterans and their families. And, uh, I just might be adding one next week myself.

So they do encourage you to take a picture of yourself with, you know, your group with the tickets and, uh, and link to their organization, um, you know, on social media and all that too. So anyway, that's, uh, those are the three particular items we wanted to discuss today. And, uh, I, I hope you found something interesting in this and find something that you can either make use of or volunteer your time or resources too, because these, these organizations do help veterans and they always are looking for additional support.

Yeah.

[Chris Faust]

Well, I got there. So yeah, thanks for taking the time out of your day to watch, listen. Um, you know, hang, hang out with us for a little bit, uh, from a virtual way.

And, uh, if you know, if you, if you haven't yet, you know, spread the word, get the word out about, you know, us, somebody might need it or want to hear it like subscribe, all the other good stuff. We appreciate, uh, anybody who tunes into these things.

[Tom Faust]

That's indeed we do. Yes. Thank you for listening.

And until next time we will see you then.