## **STOP SOLDIER SUICIDE** 2020 IMPACT REPORT



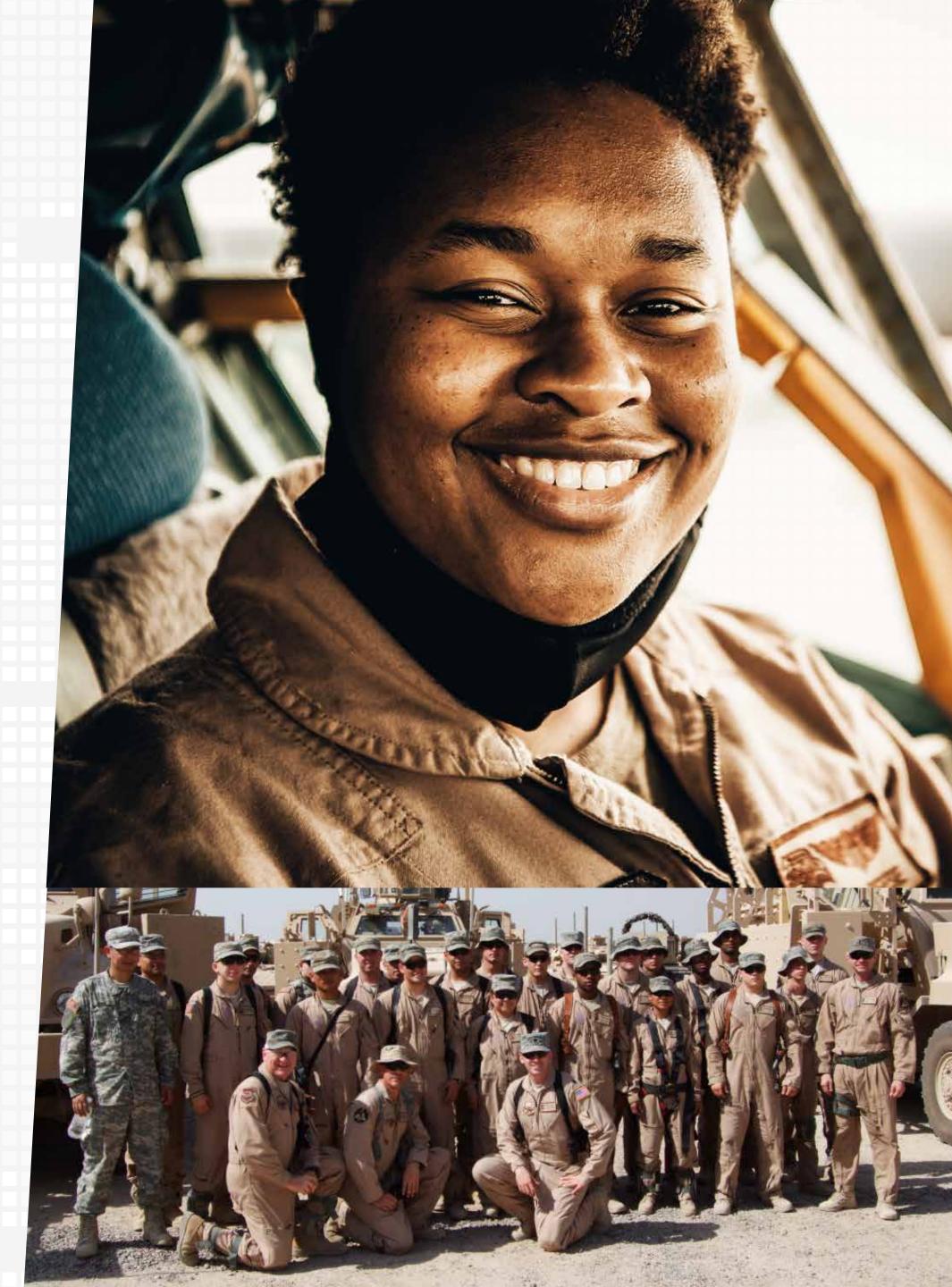


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### A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

In conversations with colleagues and peers, I often get the same question.

"Do you really think military suicide is a solvable problem?"

Well, yes, I do. Vehemently. Which always prompts a follow up: "What makes you think you can solve it when nobody else has been able to?"

Well, we're different. The world doesn't need another VSO that wants to "help veterans." There are literally thousands of them.

We don't "help veterans." We save lives. That makes us different.

That means investing in the development of a one-of-a-kind suicide intervention model that doesn't just put a band-aid on a problem and pass veterans on down the line. It means investing in exceptional teammates who a) put the model to work for our clients or b) generate the resources needed to fuel the life-saving efforts. That means putting technology, data and cutting-edge acquisition methods to work to not just find veterans, but find the 6,400+ veterans whom the data tells us will die by suicide each year.

And, there's a lot more to the story. In the following pages, you'll get an in-depth look at what we do, how we do it and the impact we're making.

2020 was a second-straight year of aggressive growth for Stop Soldier Suicide. It was one in which we moved aggressively to keep up with increasing client demand; one in which our capacity was tested by a global pandemic, but we didn't miss a beat thanks to our investment in - and eagerness to embrace - technology. The growth we drove and investments we made in 2020 have accelerated the pace at which we can save lives in 2021 and beyond.

As I look back on our accomplishments from last year, I'm humbled and proud. More so, however, I'm hungry for more. How far can we go? How hard can we push?

The further and faster we distinguish ourselves as different than the organizations that "help veterans," the more impact our life-saving work will have. That's the driver of the story told in these pages.

Lastly, to our partners, supporters and community, I offer my sincere thanks. Our team numbers less than 30 people, but we're able to accomplish so much because of you. You empower us to save lives.

This is the story of why we know that military suicide is a solvable problem. Take it in, process it, digest it, but stay hungry for more...we're just getting started.

Yours in the fight,

Chris Ford, U.S. Air Force (Ret.) CEO, Stop Soldier Suicide





## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Veterans and service members are dying by suicide at a catastrophic rate. They don't need "help." They need real, personalized care and support.

Over the last 12 months we've made strategic investments that have pulled our life-saving work forward, accelerating the pace at which we'll be able to save lives in 2021 and beyond, faster than even our own projections.

#### **OUR CULTURE**

**Established "Our** True North," a program of standard-setting characteristics to which we hold ourselves and our teammates accountable.

#### **OUR SERVICE**

Refined a holistic, data-driven model that is equally accessible to all veterans and service members, with 24/7 coverage through multiple channels.

Accelerated laserfocused acquisition tactics to serve 20% more clients than 2019, reaching all 50 states and Washington, DC.

As we've laid the groundwork for 2021 and beyond and the way forward has become more clear, we've never taken our eyes off of exactly what we're fighting to accomplish.

-40%

**Reduction in the** military suicide rate



#### **OUR CLIENTS**

#### **OUR IMPACT**

Effected an average decrease of 27% in clients' suicide risk, and a 72% increase in clients' Personal Wellbeing Index within their first 90 days under our care.

#### **OUR INVESTMENT**

Increased our program spend by nearly 30% yearover-year, investing more than \$2 million into the fight to save veteran and service member lives.

2,400 Lives saved per year



**Public costs of** suicide avoided

## **OUR VISION**

A nation where service members & veterans have no greater risk for suicide than any other American.

## **OUR VALUES**



**VETERANS FIRST** Taking care of those in need comes above everything else.



Try things and learn. It's okay to fail and try again.



#### WE ARE ONE TEAM

Create an environment of mutual respect, empathy, and transparency. And have fun!

## **OUR MISSION**

Reduce service member & veteran suicide by using enhanced data insights, focused client acquisition, and best-in-class suicide intervention services.

Goal: Achieve a 40% reduction by 2030.

### **STAY CURIOUS** Discover with intention.



#### LET CHANGE **FUEL YOU** Embrace the journey

and be resilient, even when the path forward isn't clear.



**SWEAT THE** SMALL STUFF Care about the details, require the highest standards of quality, and use the best data.



#### **MAKE A** DIFFERENCE

Innovate to create meaningful impact. Turn your passion into purpose.





## **OUR TRUE NORTH**

Excellent teammates are the backbone of any organization. We consider excellent teammates our number one asset. As such, we hold ourselves and our teammates accountable to a high standard and measure ourselves against these characteristics.

### IMPACT

Consistently delivers quality results; demonstrates a passion for winning, strong work ethic, a bias for action and commitment to achieving life-saving work with integrity, honesty, and in accordance with our values.



Makes data-based decisions with decisiveness, balancing short-term and long-term considerations and ensuring decisions advance the SSS mission.

### COURAGE

Communicates with candor and transparency and demonstrates the confidence to make tough decisions, take smart risks, and question actions that are inconsistent with our values.



Continuously learns and adapts to obstacles, setbacks or uncertainty with tenacity and resolve; embraces change and challenges as opportunities to learn new skills and grow.

### INNOVATION

Identifies and champions new ideas, continuous improvements, and transformative solutions that enable us to better achieve our mission of serving service members and veterans

### **A** INCLUSION

Win as one by demonstrating unwavering respect for teammates, freely sharing information, collaborating with and supporting you colleagues, and leveraging differences that make us stronger.

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### **OUR SERVICE**

We don't just "help veterans." We save lives. So we didn't build our service model to be better than that of other VSOs.

We built it to be different.





#### **24/7 COVERAGE THAT ACTUALLY HELPS**

We're not your average VSO. We know that crisis moments don't only happen from 9-to-5, Monday-through-Friday. Our difference is 24/7 coverage to mitigate crisis in real time.

We provide 24/7 access to actual human beings who are able to assist potential clients in an array of situations, ranging from intake, to qualified handoff to our Wellness Center, to triaging crisis moments in real time.

We've also partnered with behavioral health leader **Neuroflow** to provide our clients 24/7 access to a mobile app that both empowers the client with on-demand mental health resources and provides our Wellness Center with alerts on high-risk behavior.

#### **CONSISTENT FOLLOW UP, LONG-TERM SUPPORT**

Our care isn't episodic. We're not a hotline. We don't put a band-aid on a problem.

Clients have consistent, 1-on-1 interactions with their Wellness Coordinator, enabling us to build trust and rapport while working to uncover the root causes of suicidality. The service we provide to our clients doesn't have a shelf life; we work with them for as long as it takes to see a life worth living.





#### DATA-DRIVEN CARE (CAMS, CASE, RAS, PWI)

Talk and estimation aren't good enough. We exhaustively track data points on our clients' progress and wellbeing, giving us enhanced insights into their gaps and gains.

Our model and methodology were built - and continue to be refined - in consultation with a council of some of the nation's top suicidologists. We use advanced suicide risk stratification methods, such as CAMS and CASE, to inform best-in-class care. The support we provide to our clients is vetted by experts and vigorously reviewed to ensure we're on the leading edge of suicide intervention services.

#### **REMOVING BARRIERS**

There's no one-size-fits-all solution. So we don't hem clients into one way to request our help. Both our phone lines and web-based help request form are covered by mental health professionals 24/7. We're also working to build other communications capabilities, such as web chat and text messaging.

For our work with clients, we've fully embraced telehealth technology and video-based sessions as options for clients if they so choose.

We also know that in-patient appointments can be overwhelming and ineffective for many of our clients. To that end, we've built licensed cognitive processing therapy (CPT) and a life coaching team into our Wellness Center to provide seamless care to those who need it.

### **OUR SERVICE**

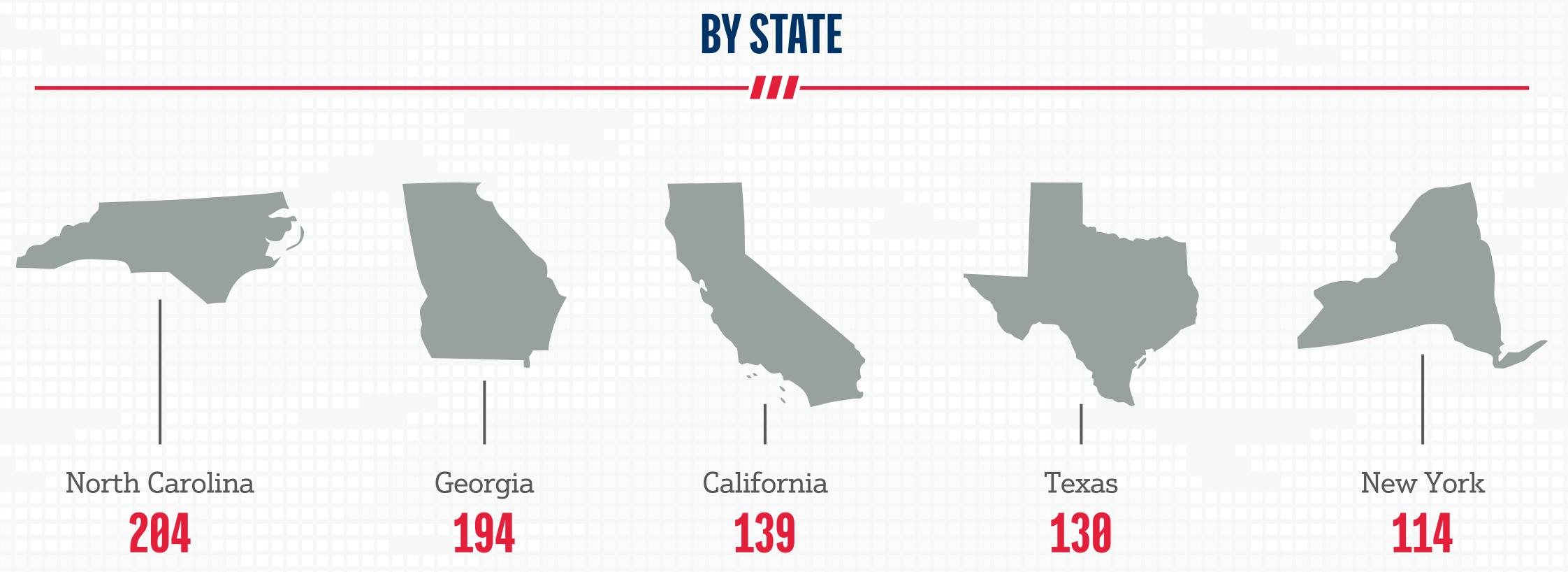






### **OUR CLIENTS**

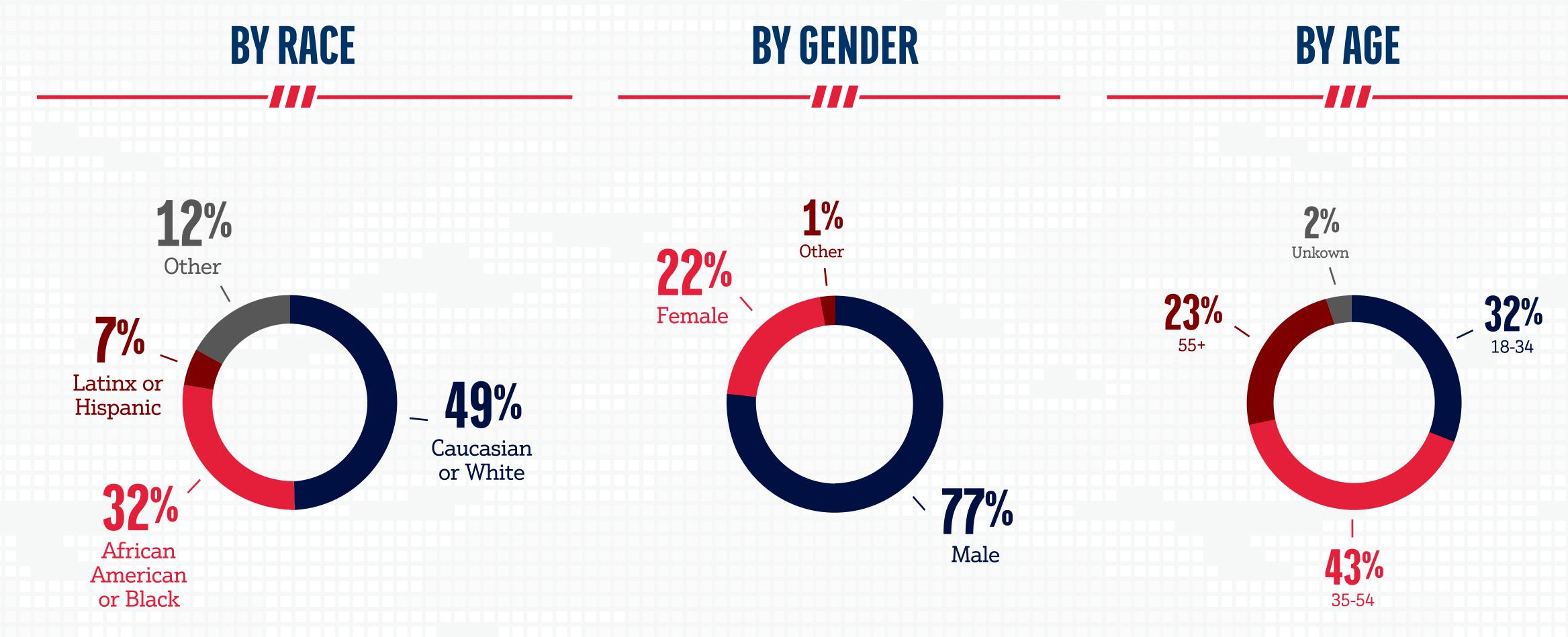




**700+ Clients Served** In all 50 states and Washington, DC

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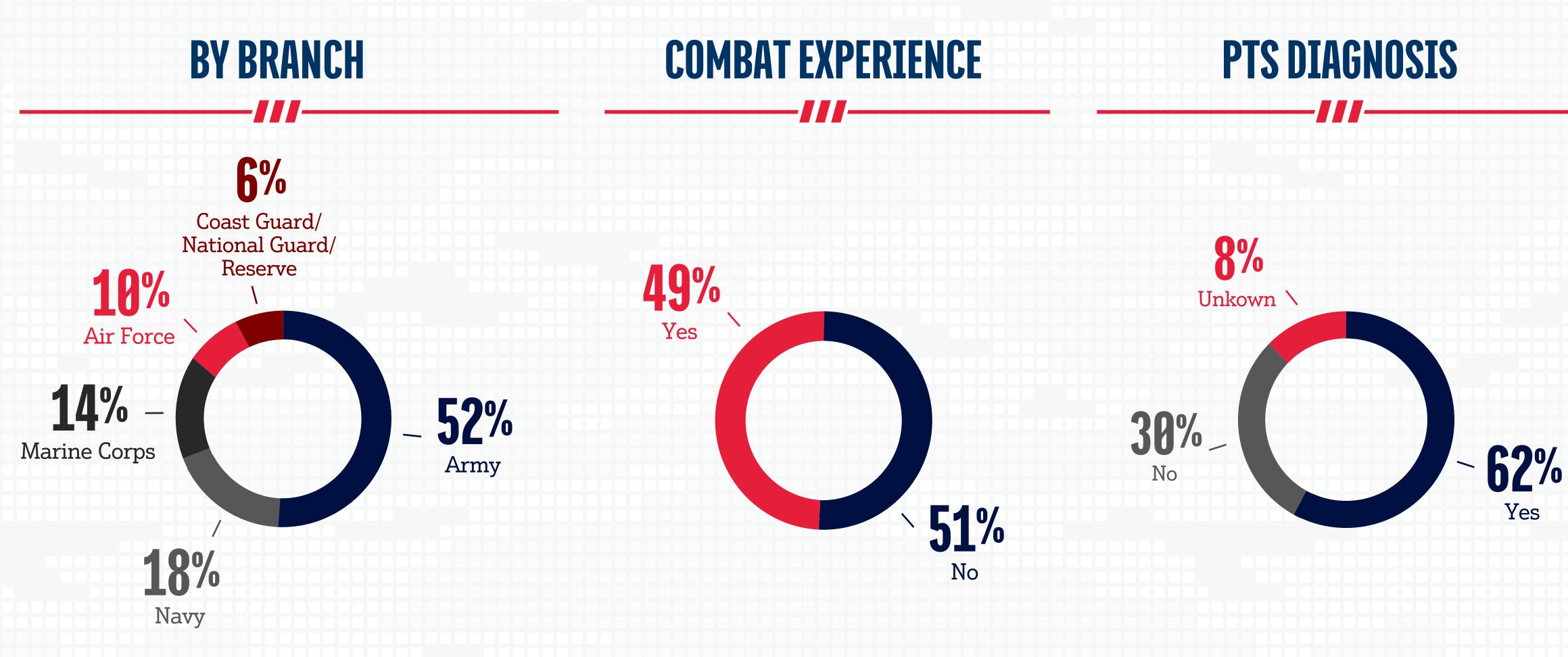




### **OUR CLIENTS**

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## **OUR CLIENTS**

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## FIGHTING FOR ALL VETERANS

We're proud that our services are equally available to all veterans, no matter who they are or what they're going through.

In 2020, the population of clients we served was often over-represented in comparison to the overall veteran population in the United States.

#### **FEMALE VETERANS**

**Overall veteran population: 8.7%** SSS client population: 19.5%

**AFRICAN AMERICAN OR BLACK VETERANS** 

**Overall veteran population: 11.4%** 

LATINX OR HISPANIC VETERANS

**Overall veteran population: 6.7%** 

SSS client population: 6.8%

### **HOMELESS VETERANS**

**Overall veteran population: 0.2%** 

SSS client population: 24.9%

SSS client population: 38.7%

Sources: 2019 U.S. Census Bureau data; 2019 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to Congress.

+124% Increase	
+239% Increase	
+1% Increase	
+12,350% Increase	
s Assessment Report to Congress. <b>11</b>	

### **COVID IMPACT**

## from COVID-19.

Having anticipated that trend early, the pandemic has had minimal impact on our ability to serve them. Since March 2020, we have provided client services remotely and securely via both phone and video conference.

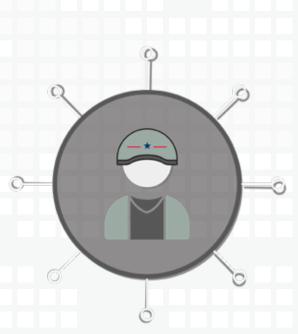


Nearly **20%** of clients rate suicidality as "significantly" or "drastically" worse during the COVID-19 pandemic.

More than 40% of our clients have indicated negative impacts



84% of clients indicate that their mental health has worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.



More than **40%** of clients report increased discrete impacts (anger, loneliness, etc.) during the COVID-19 pandemic.



### **OUR IMPACT IN 2020**

Through aggressive client acquisition and personalized care, we get the job done. Real people, real hope.

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**Clients served** in 2020



YoY increase in requests for help 63%

**Clients acquired** via proactive digital tactics





Average increase in clients' Personal Wellbeing Index within first 90 days



Average reduction in clients' suicide risk within first 90 days



### **SSS FINANCIAL INVESTMENT**

As long as veterans and service members are at a much higher risk of dying by suicide than any other American, we'll never stop investing in the fight to save lives.

Investing both smartly and aggressively in our people and in technology is absolutely vital as we break new ground and work to rapidly scale our services over the next decade.

After nearly doubling our overall programmatic investment - and more than tripling the amount spent on client acquisition tactics - from 2018 to 2019, we continued to lay the groundwork for the next phases of our mission in 2020, despite headwinds caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

\$2.2M

Total program spend A 28% YoY increase +40%

YoY increase in full-time program staff



YoY increase in program staff compensation to attract elite behavioral health professionals



Investment in internationally renowned experts to refine service model

A 68% YoY increase



### **DISRUPT MILITARY SUICIDE**

We use groundbreaking methods to 1) better understand, 2) locate, and 3) serve at-risk veterans and service members.

#### **ENHANCED INTELLIGENCE**

Our innovative service model - built in collaboration with a council of the nation's leading suicide prevention experts - empowers us to better stratify risk levels and mobilize to support high-risk clients.

#### **LASER-FOCUSED ACQUISITION**

We translate our best-in-class data into targeted, multi-touch marketing geared toward bringing the highest-risk veterans and service members into the fold.

#### **HOLISTIC SERVICES**

Our comprehensive services are personalized to each client and drill down into risk factors for suicide, rather than temporarily addressing episodic problems.

2010	2012	2016	2018-2
3 combat vets answering a toll-free phone number	Social work volunteers and interns	Paid social workers operating a resource & referral model	Highly-ed equipped evidence- Implemen consultati

Embrace of best-in-class technology to diversify options for client care

### 2020

ducated clinical staff d with a high-touch, -based service model

ntation of world-class tion and research

### 2021 & BEYOND

Investment and focus to date position us to:

Spend more high-quality time with highest-risk clients

Provide world-class training to Wellness Coordinators, enabling advanced screening capability for all clients

Increase client acquisition efforts to more effectively find those who most need our help

Outpace our own projections for how many lives we can save each year

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## **A STORY OF SUCCESS**

John is a U.S. Army veteran who discovered Stop Soldier Suicide That's when Sarah found him a hotel and began helping him while homeless and living out of his truck. process his veteran housing voucher.

Depressed and desperate to find housing solutions, John began researching information about suicide online. That's when he saw a Google ad for Stop Soldier Suicide and decided to call for help.

John came to us feeling hopeless. He was stressed and overwhelmed. His mental health was deteriorating. Increased isolation and limited resources due to the COVID-19 pandemic made matters worse.

John's Wellness Coordinator, Sarah, referred him to several resources to help secure temporary housing. After getting the runaround from multiple organizations, John was ready to **give up.** He made a plan to kill himself, but decided to try getting a roof over his head one last time before acting on his plan.

"There's no doubt in my mind, if it was not for you, I would not be alive today," John told us.

With his immediate needs met, Sarah began working with John to complete his suicidality assessments and treat his underlying mental health concerns. She helped him secure stable, long-term housing, connected him to a counselor, and helped him maintain his 20-year sobriety despite a multitude of medical challenges.

Thanks to the holistic approach of his Wellness Coordinator, as John put it, "For the first time, I'm hopeful again."



### **SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COUNCIL**

To advance our mission of reducing military suicide by 40% by 2030, Stop Soldier Suicide formed its Scientific Advisory Council (SAC), comprised of nationally-renowned experts in suicidology and suicide prevention for veterans and service members.

The SAC provides expertise and recommendations regarding best practices in the field of suicidology, emergent research, and innovative approaches to suicide prevention and intervention.

In 2020, the SAC helped us analyze the challenges in identifying and acquiring veterans outside of VA care who are at extreme risk of suicide, and gave impactful feedback on the use of historical and existing client data to confirm our Wellness Coordinators' clinical formulation of suicide risk.



**DR. TRENA ANASTASIA** 



**DR. CRAIG BRYAN** U.S. AIR FORCE (RET.)



**GENERAL PETER CHIARELLI** U.S. ARMY (RET.)



**MELANIE GIDEON** 

The Scientific Advisory Council gives us access to the foremost thinkers in the field of suicidology and suicide prevention to review what we're doing in the Wellness Center and provide continual feedback.

- Keith Hotle, Chief Program Officer

We consult directly with several SAC members on a regular basis to refine critical elements of our one-of-a-kind suicide intervention model, which enables us to move aggressively in our life-saving work.



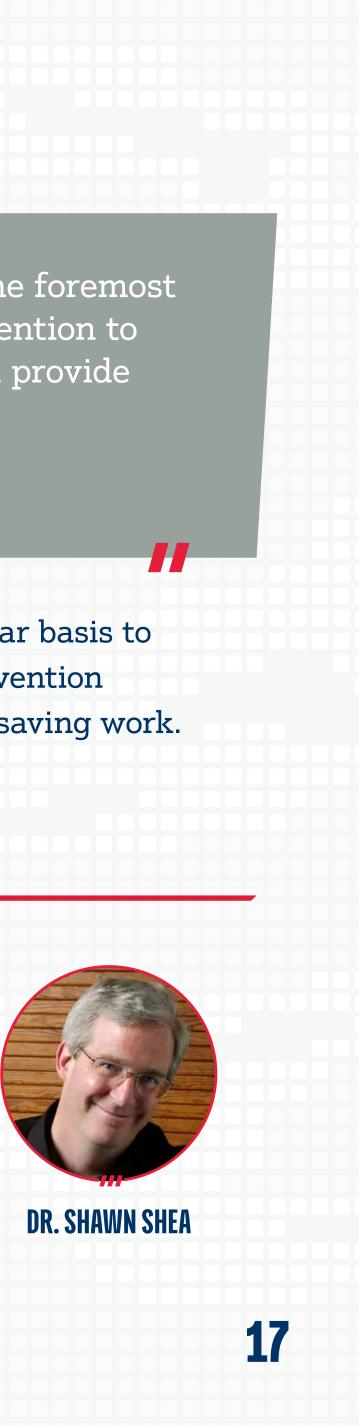
**DR. TERRESA HUMPHRIES-WADSWORTH** 



**DR. DAVID JOBES** 



**DR. ANTHONY PISANI** 



### **CREATING COMMUNITY, RALLYING SUPPORT**

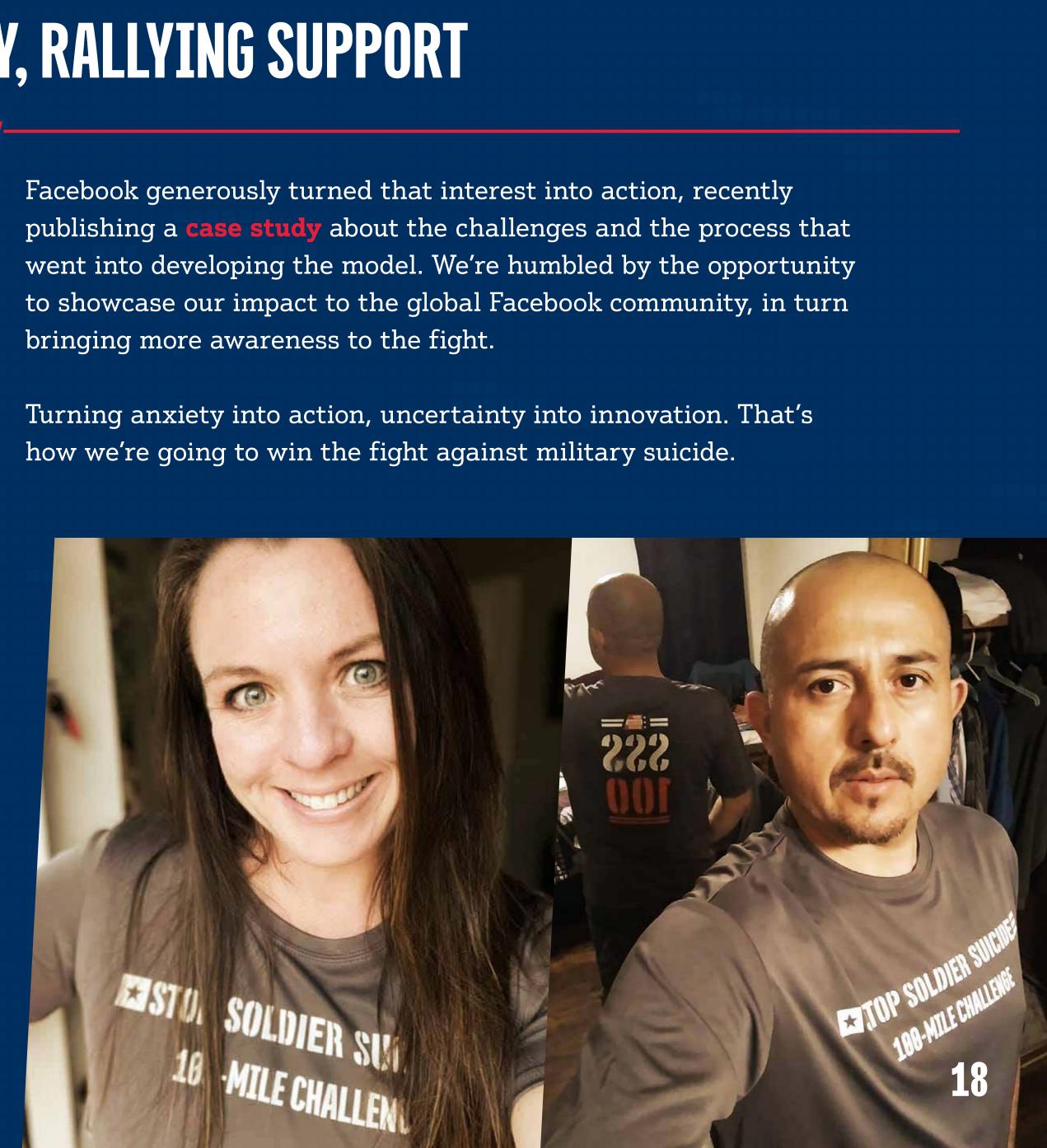
As the COVID-19 pandemic rocked life as we know it in early 2020, uncertainty was everywhere. Our main focus was two-fold: how we care for active clients who are impacted by the pandemic, and how to meet a surge in demand for our services that we could already see coming.

We needed the financial resources to put that practice into action, but so did everyone else. We knew we needed to stand out from the crowd, find an innovative solution so our Wellness Center wouldn't miss a beat.

From that need, the idea of Facebook challenges emerged.

In collaboration with GoodUnited - a complete social fundraising solution, and one of our staunchest allies - we were able to leverage Facebook Groups in a way no one had imagined: creating communities of like-minded veteran allies, and challenging them to run 100 miles in a month in pursuit of a collective fundraising goal. We haven't looked back since. In fact, we've put our foot on the gas to bring these communities to more people across the country.

It didn't take long for Facebook to notice, either. The impact we and GoodUnited were making on the platform - an innovative way to rally people to the cause and support our life-saving work - was hard to miss.



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