



**WARRIOR FOUNDATION**  
**FREEDOM STATION**

*PRIDE, PASSION  
and PATRIOTISM*

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## Warrior Foundation Origin Story: Sandy Lehmkuhler

By Danny O'Neil

*The Warrior Foundation Freedom Station didn't start with an idea so much as a belief.*

*We can do better.*

That's what Sandy Lehmkuhler thought when she was visiting an active-duty Naval Hospital in November 2004, but more importantly it's what she felt as she met a four Marines, each of whom had lost an arm, leg or had a neck halo on because of an IED explosion. She asked them what they needed with Christmas coming up, and after those four Marines stood up as straight as their injuries allowed and insisted, they were just fine, ma'am. Only the second time, she asked after she had stepped between them, pushed the "Stop" button on the elevator so those Warriors would know she was serious. She was a Navy wife, a Navy mom and she really wanted to know what the one thing was they needed.

Turned out there was something: a Norelco Cool-Skin electric razor with built-in lotion dispenser. The four Marines were amputees, and while they were able to help each other with the buttons and tie their shoes, shaving was impossible, hence the razors.

This is where the Warrior Foundation started, not in terms of paperwork or formal designation as a 501 (c) (3), but something more important: its mission. Back before the Warrior Foundation raised a single cent, or opened either of its Freedom Stations, Sandy Lehmkuhler believed we could do better for our critically injured and ill Warriors. She believed that we should do better and that the country could do better was to get these razors for these Warriors who already given so much. Except it was 300 razors, and they were \$68 apiece so she needed a little help.





That's why she wound up writing to KMFB 760 AM the next morning to see if they'd be willing to help spread the word about what these Warriors needed. The radio station, which is now 760AM (iHeart Media), was more than just

interested, it chipped in. The campaign raised more than \$68,000, and Norelco provided the razors at cost.

Turned out that Sandy was just getting started. The Warrior Foundation Freedom Station has raised more than \$20 million in donations and services. It moved from those electric shavers to buying airline tickets so injured Warriors could travel home for the holidays. It arranged for custom-made combat boots that zipped up from the heel, which meant they could be worn on prosthetic limbs, allowing Warriors who lost a portion of his/her leg to appear in complete uniform with matching combat boots.

In 2011 the Warrior Foundation opened the first Freedom Station, an eight-cottage development in the South Park area of San Diego. The objective was to provide a transitional housing option for Warriors preparing to leave the military. In 2020, the Warrior Foundation opened Freedom Station II in the same neighborhood.

### **Two things have remained constant through all of this:**

1. The belief that we can do better as a country for those members of our military who suffer critical injuries while serving their country.
2. Sandy Lehmkuhler

She may not have planned to start a multi-million dollar non-profit when she visited that active-duty hospital in 2004, but she turned out to be uniquely suited for it. She had worked as a union stage manager, which gave her a background in managing a lot of moving parts. She was also working full-time at the corporate headquarters for Jack in the Box, and maybe as important as anything, her life as a Navy wife had taught her not just to pinch pennies but to make them scream.

“*The Warrior Foundation Freedom Station has raised more than \$20 million in donations and services.*”  
- Sandy Lehmkuhler

She brought that focus to a specific group of Warriors: those who have been injured or become ill during service. Everything from injuries on the battlefield to a cancer diagnosis to the scourge of post-traumatic stress. These active-duty Warriors have both immediate and long-term needs that the Warrior Foundation Freedom Station seeks to address with quality-of-life items like razors, combat boots and specially designed ultralight wheelchairs for competitive basketball and more long-term assistance such as transitional housing.

The Warrior Foundation has seen a specific need among those Warriors who have suffered injuries that meant the end of their military service. The day a Warrior is told he or she won't be able to continue in the military is harder than most of us can imagine. That Warrior, who has already given so much, has been told they will no longer have this position that they have sacrificed so much to hold. Over the next nine months, which is how long it usually takes to finalize the discharge, the Warriors find themselves caught between two worlds. On the one side there is the military life to which they are accustomed, but where they will no longer serve. On the other side is the civilian world, which is going to take some getting used to, and on top of all that these Warriors are dealing with the physical and emotional trauma that comes from injuries.

It's this reality the Freedom Stations were designed to address. Sandy Lehmkuhler had been looking for a suitable site for something like this for years, and she believed that when she found it the property would talk to her. Turns out it was a palm tree that spoke loudest as she came across eight little cottages with a palm tree right in the middle.

That palm tree is gone now, replaced by a flagpole with a big eagle on top. The cottages are still there, painted a light yellow so that it's reminiscent of the military buildings. Like military housing, but not military housing. Their own place where they will live next to Warriors facing the same challenges, sharing step in the journey back toward civilian life.

As for Freedom Station III and Freedom Station IV? Stay tuned. This foundation that started with Sandy Lehmkuhler's conviction that we can do better is committed to doing just that for our ill and injured Warriors.





## Meet Our New President

### Warrior Foundation Freedom Station Appoints Andrew Gasper as New President of Non-profit Organization

As President, Gasper will be working with the foundation’s team and will be responsible for overseeing daily operations, fundraising, directing programs and services and providing transitional support for ill and injured active-duty/veterans residing in Freedom Station properties.

“We are thrilled to have Andrew join the team at Warrior Foundation Freedom Station as the new President,” said CEO and Founder Sandy Lehmkuhler. “Andrew has years of career experience working with all branches of service providing leadership, guidance and intermediate support for Warriors transitioning from the military to civilian life. He is a natural leader with a big heart and extraordinary communication skills – who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.”

During his 20+ year career, Gasper has served as a Military Policeman in the U.S. Marine Corps, worked as a Sales/Finance Manager in the private sector, operated as Recovery Care Coordinator and Careers and Education Manager at USMC Wounded Warrior Battalion-West in San Diego and Hawaii, functioned as an Adjunct Professor at Vincennes University and acted as Regional Transition Care Coordinator for Navy Wounded Warrior Program in Naval Region Southwest (six states).

I am excited and honored to be joining Warrior Foundation Freedom Station,” said Andrew Gasper, President of the Warrior Foundation Freedom Station. “Warrior Foundation has long been the gold star standard focusing on the ill and injured Warrior and Veteran care issues. I have witnessed firsthand the successes of Freedom Station I & II, outdoor therapy, cancer support lunches, financial aid assistance, transitional support and many other programs. My goal is to live up to the reputation and build upon the legacy of such an outstanding non-profit foundation.”

Gasper is a medically retired U.S. Marine Staff Sergeant, who possesses a Bachelor of Arts degree in History and Political Science from Chaminade University, a Master of Business Administration from Argosy University and Master of Homeland Security and Emergency Management from National University. During his spare time Andrew enjoys spending time with his wife Glenna and their children.



“Warrior Foundation has long been the gold star standard focusing on the ill and injured Warrior and Veteran care issues.”  
- Andrew Gasper



# Volunteer Page

## Volunteer Your Time or Talent:

Warrior Foundation Freedom Station is always in need of enthusiastic volunteers who want to join our mission to assist, honor and support the ill and injured military heroes we serve. Volunteering is a wonderful opportunity to not only give back to the community, but to experience the fun, camaraderie, and shared sense of mission that is so integral to our work. We are fortunate to have many longtime volunteers who have been a part of the Warrior Foundation Freedom Station family for many years.

Whether you have a special skill set or would like to volunteer in a general capacity, we would love to hear from you. To start the process, please complete our brief volunteer application today.

## Apply to be a Volunteer

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about volunteer opportunities with Warrior Foundation Freedom Station, please contact our Volunteer Coordinators at [volunteercoordinators@warriorfoundation.org](mailto:volunteercoordinators@warriorfoundation.org).



# Who We Are

## Transitional Housing

### Freedom Stations I, II & III

The transition from military service to civilian life is one of the toughest battles that Warriors face – especially while coping with both visible and invisible injuries.

Freedom Station I and Freedom Station II are the first transitional housing residences of their kind in the San Diego region, providing service members with a place to heal and prepare for the next chapter. Move-in ready cottages shift Warriors from barracks to independent living, central spaces provide crucial camaraderie during the transition, and qualified professionals offer guidance on new careers paths, college enrollment and more.



Both properties are near Naval Medical Center San Diego, one of the nation's largest military hospitals. Residents pay reduced rent and learn financial responsibility. Dozens of success stories have proven that our Freedom Stations can ensure a bright future for our Warriors in civilian life.

Today, the need for transitional housing for Warriors remains. It is because of that continued need to support for our ill and injured Warriors, that we are excited to and honored to announce the acquisition of a new property in 2022 and the conversion and build-out of Freedom Station III in 2023.



## Who We Are

The new Freedom Station III is located just a few miles away from the Naval Medical Center and will provide 12 more unique cottages for ill and injured Warriors to transition into new life of independence.

These unique Freedom Stations provide a home for our Warriors, but it also provides an occasion for the Warrior Foundation Freedom Station, and its donors, with the opportunity to provide a – “Hand up, not a Handout.”

### *Wellness*

#### **Outdoor Therapy**

The foundation sponsors and leads group physical activity programs that promote fitness, mental health and cultivates camaraderie through group activities that take place in San Diego and throughout the country. Outdoor Therapy programs include: cycling, hiking, golfing, surfing, paddle boarding and fishing.



#### **PTS | TBI**

The Warrior Foundation Freedom Station provides guidance, referrals, emotional and financial support for Warriors seeking medical treatments and therapy from the top medical and mental health professionals in the region.

## Who We Are

#### **Cancer Support**

Each month the foundation hosts a luncheon in the San Diego area with Cancer Warriors and caregivers to foster and promote fellowship, create a peer-to-peer network, and provide comfort and counsel for Warriors and their families working through treatment or recovery.

#### *Personal Support*

#### **Mentorship Programs**

Through our Mentorship Program, we sponsor training courses and mentorship partnerships that pair Warriors with professionals who provide career, financial, self-sufficiency, leadership and life-skills counseling as they transition into civilian life.

#### **Dress for Success**

To spark a successful career launch, The Warrior Foundation Freedom Station provides transitioning Warriors with certified expert career advice, resume writing guidelines and interview tips, along with fresh suits and business attire for male and female Warriors to assist with transitioning into new professions.





## Who We Are



### Adaptive Equipment "Quality of Life" Items

One of our goals at Warrior Foundation Freedom Station is to provide adaptive equipment, personal items and support that improves the "Quality of Life" for our ill and injured Warriors.

Warrior Foundation Freedom Station provides:

- Ultra-light wheelchairs
- Modified combat boots with built-in zippers to accommodate prosthetic limbs
- Special hiking boots for Warriors with lower leg injuries and IDEO braces
- Comfort items and meals for those in the hospital and in the active-duty recovery barracks
- iPads with specialized applications for those with post-traumatic stress (PTS) and traumatic brain injury (TBI)

### Family Support

As part of our support system, while an ill or injured Warrior is recovering in the hospital or at a Freedom Station in San Diego, Warrior Foundation Freedom Station provides Warriors with the comfort of traveling "Home for the Holidays" or flights for family of Warriors who are not able to travel.

## Who We Are

*Ambassador Program: "Educate. Inspire. Motivate."*

### Warrior Ambassadors

Warrior Foundation Freedom Station created the Ambassador Program, a group of Warrior Foundation Alumni, who strive to "Educate, Inspire and Motivate" their audience by sharing their success stories through public appearances, motivational speeches and media interviews.

### Wolfpack Wheelchair Basketball

The San Diego Wolfpack is a championship-winning adaptive sports team supported by the Warrior Foundation. The military focused wheelchair basketball team competes across the U.S. and fields a roster of active duty, veteran and civilian players.





## Who We Are

### Athletic Sponsorship

At the Warrior Foundation Freedom Station, we believe that physical activity, camaraderie, competition and representing a team or your country, helps the mind, body and soul and generates an internal sense of purpose and meaning in a Warrior's life. It is because of that fundamental philosophy that we feel it is important to sponsor and support athletic endeavors in the following ways:

### Paralympic Sponsorship

Warrior Foundation Alumni travel the world demonstrating grit, determination and athleticism and help "Educate, Inspire and Motivate" Warriors, Volunteers and Supporters. Our Warrior Foundation Freedom Station athletes include:

- Mike Spivey, USA National Paralympic Snowboard & Surfing
- Josue Barron, USA National Paralympic Cycling
- Jorge Salazar, USA National Paralympic Wheelchair Basketball Team
- Ray Hennagir, USA National Paralympic Rugby (Sliver Metal)
- Anthony Pone, USA National Paralympic Track & Field (Shotput) & Wolfpack Wheelchair Basketball
- Eric Rodriquez, Team USA Camps
- Matt Grashen, Team USA Camps



## Who We Are

### Cycling Team

The Warrior Foundation Freedom Station Cycling Team is an adaptive sports program that provides a therapeutic outlet and the all-important camaraderie that Warriors experience in the military. The Warrior Foundation Cycling Team comprises representatives from the Army, Navy and Marine Corps and competes in numerous events throughout the year.

### Warrior Foundation Podcast / Videocast

The Warrior Foundation Freedom Station posts 15-minute Podcasts (audio platforms) and Videocast (YouTube) that expands the reach and positive impact on Transitioning Warriors by "Educating, Inspiring and Motivating" on subjects that matter in their lives. Podcast subjects include:

- **Mentorship / Leadership Content**

Provide financial, self-sufficiency, career planning, leadership, mentorships and life-skills content, and information post military career.

- **WFFS Success Stories**

Illustrate and motivate Warriors through success stories, testimonials and positive steps that have helped other Transitioning Warriors.

- **Military Life Focus**

Interviews with veterans and military leaders of all branches of services, celebration of Military Holidays and stories of honor, etc.

- **Wellness | PST & TBI | Medical Retirement Navigation**

PTS and TBI symptoms, diagnosis and treatments, how to navigate and understand disability benefits, tips and advice, etc.





WARRIOR  
FOUNDATION  
FREEDOM  
STATION

*Residents & Alumni*



*“Disabilities? They only see possibilities because of you.”*

- Sandy Lehmkuhler  
CEO & Co-Founder





## Meet our Warrior: Povas Miknaitis

**Scout Sniper,  
Marine Corps  
2006-2012**

**By Erin Cartaya**

### **The Movie Image**

When people think “Sniper,” they think of the Hollywood stereotype. They envision the sharp shooting, the heroics behind the gun, and the honor of being among the top snipers in the world. They don’t see the danger the men put themselves into, the risks, and the aftermath. They witness far more horror than even the movies could portray.

Povas Miknaitis joined the Marine Corps in San Diego and went to Camp Pendleton for infantry training. He later ended up at a training facility in 29 Palms when an opportunity to try for the Scout Sniper Platoon came up, and he made it in. He was deployed to Iraq in 2008 and then to Afghanistan in 2009. During this tour, his team was assigned to a city in Afghanistan that had not been seen since the beginning of the war in 2001. The area they were traveling to had already had so many casualties that many Marines intentionally tried to get kicked out before being sent there (to paint a picture of the extent of danger that lay ahead).

### **Know Before you Go**

Although that area had been essentially abandoned since 2001, the Taliban moved in and had full range throughout the city. They took advantage of that and planted booby traps to hinder any movements, to the point that the Marine Unit prior to Povas’ entry could hardly venture out past their base. Enter Povas.

They were there for about two months when Povus’ team got tasked to observe and discover what was happening in the city’s center. Traveling from compound to compound, the group ventured into one with a hole in the wall. While trying to avoid doors because of the risk of a booby trap, Povus’ teammate kicked in a door, which immediately exploded...

Povas got thrown from the explosion, and other team members also sustained severe injuries. Medical help wouldn’t arrive for two hours because of the danger of traveling through the city. He went from teammate to teammate to see how everyone was doing. “I’m not sure how reassuring that was since a third of my mouth was missing, and I couldn’t talk.”

### **No Time**

It’s hard to fathom how much your life can change in just one moment. For Povas, there was no time to think about that. No time to see the damage done to his face and ear. No time to be scared for his brother’s lost legs. He immediately started to reassure everyone that help was on the way. “You’re going to be fine,” he kept telling them. But Povas knew that even if you’re totally fine, your body can tell you to die if it wants. Using his knowledge about treating trauma, Povas knew to stop the bleeding, start the breathing, and treat for shock – the order of what might kill you the fastest.

Recounting the one moment between normal and forever changed can last a lifetime. Some memories fade. Others are just as vivid as the day it happened. Recounting these moments will never make the time go away – or the pain. It comes with many pauses, a few deep, labored breaths, and tears. As if no time has passed, some memories remain clear as day, every day. Time is a precious thing, but it can also be an enemy. Moments we cherish seem fleeting. The horrific ones last a lifetime. But what happens in between those moments? Life goes on.

### **What Becomes of Us?**

Povas ended up back at the Balboa Naval Medical Center in 2009. The first time Povas met Sandy, Founder and CEO of Warrior Foundation, was later that year. While being treated at the hospital after Afghanistan, it wasn’t a requirement to show up for Formation. But one particular day, it was. A group of women were standing there with postcards. They gave everyone cards that read, “You are going to wake up in your bed, in your own home, in your town.” The Warrior Foundation had flown the Warriors home for Christmas in 2009. That was when Povas met Sandy.

After a year in the hospital, the Marine Corps discussed retaining him. Not sure if he could keep his current job as a Scout Sniper, he began the separation process, which led him to Freedom Station I. He immediately felt at home, knowing he was with others going through the same



transition or some version of the same story. He was happy and grateful for the opportunity to be with others and being supported while being lifted up.

Having the Warrior Foundation has given Povas more than he could've dreamed of. From a roof over his head to a job to help finding a house of his own, the support he's gotten while transitioning into civilian life has been something that Povas thinks of daily. He often thinks about where he might be if he didn't come to Freedom Station as he left the Marine Corps. Would he be on that street corner begging? Would he have a home? Knowing some of the dark places he's been in, what he's gotten out of the Warrior Foundation inspires him to give back. "They've helped me with the different battles I've faced in my life."

For Povas, everything the Warrior Foundation had provided for him "was enough." But it also wasn't enough. He wanted to give back. Having learned handiwork from his dad, Povas was able to help around the facility while transitioning into civilian life. He got into school at the University of San Diego and became the property manager for Freedom Station while earning his degree.

Working, living life, and owning a home, Povas has transitioned into civilian life but continues to give back to Warrior Foundation. He helps with the setup for new Warriors coming through, helping with their transitions. He wants to give back as much as the Warrior Foundation has given him. Wherever he is needed, he'll be there. Povas continues to give back, hoping others will follow in his footsteps someday.

Of everything Povas has gotten out of his time in service and transition into civilian life, he mainly recognizes that many people live selfishly. It's good to give back.



## Meet our Warrior: Josue Barron

**Marine Corps  
2007- 2013**

**By Erin Cartaya**

### **"I'm Not a Hero Because I Got Injured"**

To be combat-wounded in the 2010s was somewhat familiar; adapting to a new normal was not. Josue Barron was in Afghanistan in 2010 when someone's misstep on patrol changed his and his group's lives forever. But that isn't what makes him a hero, not in his eyes. "I don't want to be a hero because I got injured. I want to be a hero for what I did after. I am blessed; I have a beautiful family and life. I have everything I need, but the injury is a tool in my life to make it even better. You know, where I come from, I never envisioned myself with a family, dedicated to sports or raising kids. I was supposed to be on the streets hustling."

### **Where Loyalty Leads You**

A single mom. Seven siblings. The streets of LA. As Josue recounts his childhood, he always had a fear of his mother in the back of his head. It made his loyalty go from "brotherhoods" on the streets to commitment to the Marine Corps. Around 14, he saw himself propelled into gang life, and although he thought he was tough, he was afraid to disappoint his mom. He knew deep down that he didn't want that life. It was a single path he was going down and a label he didn't like. So he and a friend reached out to several different Military branch recruiters. And while his friend was unable to join, Josue finally found the Marine Corps. His service started in 2007. He was home shortly after his first deployment and met his now-wife, Debbie, in 2007. They were engaged six months later. He then got deployed to Afghanistan in 2010. Sangin was a small city where everything was happening; casualties were everywhere. Josue was part of the first U.S. troops to go into this area. One night in October, Josue went on a foot patrol to look for a Taliban soldier that a sniper had shot. But due to protocol, they had to wait until morning to recover the body.



When they got to the body, they discovered it was missing. The Taliban had gotten it. Even though they took the same path back from the body, one of the guys in their group tripped or misstepped and stepped on a landmine... He knew what had happened, but he was upset. With his vision gone immediately, all he remembers is wanting to stay "until the job was done," but he was in pain. He remembers asking for help with tourniquets. Medical came 20 minutes later and took them to Germany to clean them up. Josue didn't wake up until they had reached Maryland - 4 days. His wife was there when he awoke. "You won't recognize him," they said. He couldn't see her when he came to, but he held her hand and knew she was there. He didn't care that his leg was missing, but he couldn't under why he couldn't see. As he started to recover, including partial vision, Josue wanted to be near his family. The closest medical facility was in San Diego. So he and his wife moved to San Diego.

### **The Freedom Station Married Life, with Fluffy**

When in San Diego, Josue was assigned a therapist to get him back into "normal" life. He loved basketball and wanted to play. He knew there was a community of people that played adaptive sports. Josue wanted to be a part of a group of people going through the same thing he was. At first, he was afraid of the look of it; what people might think of him. But he still got in a wheelchair and started playing. Little by little, he got better and more involved. He began to see men around him going through the same thing, making him more comfortable. But they couldn't compete; they didn't have the equipment to compete. Josue then met Sandy Lehmkuhler. They discussed his situation and that basketball had been helping him, and a few others, recover. But they needed more. Together, with Sandy and a few others, they created "The Wolfpack." He created the logo, came up with the name "Wolfpack," and got uniforms made. Sometime later, Josue attended a fundraiser where he saw the Freedom Station. Renting a house in Point Loma, Josue knew he wanted to live in San Diego and have a family after retiring. Although he was married, he approached Sandy and asked if he and his wife could live at Freedom Station I with their Yorkie, Fluffy. Sandy allowed them to live there.

Josue recounts the support he had for transitioning, for his wife, and Fluffy. He lived there for almost two years. From the time he got out of the hospital to the time he left the Marine Corps, Warrior Foundation helped him recover in more ways than he could have expected. He had people from his unit also transitioning, which gave him that sense of "brotherhood" he always sought. After getting his leg amputated, Josue

was embarrassed to come out into the world. He felt like he was being stared at and constantly judged. Being at Freedom Station helped him to be with people in similar situations - or worse- and that helped him accept himself physically and mentally.

For Josue, living at the Freedom Station was like going home to mom. "They are not going to let you fall. There is always someone there in your ear to tell you to pick yourself up, to tell you've got this." He says that had he gone straight into civilian life, he would've been in a darker place. Most of his friends from Los Angeles were still on the streets. He would've gone right back into that life.

### **The (Bi)Cycle Continues**

From his retirement in 2013 until 2022, Josue was not only helping the Wolfpack grow, but he was also growing his family. He and his wife moved up to Temecula and have been living life to the fullest. During the pandemic in 2020, however, contact sports were not an available outlet for Josue anymore...so what was he going to use for a physical outlet? With the Wolfpack out of the question, it was time to find something else.

#### ***Enter cycling.***

Josue borrowed a friend's adaptive hand-crank bicycle and spent several days getting acquainted with adaptive cycling to keep from getting antsy at home. Within days he was acclimating and finding ways to better his times.

He knew immediately that his love for this sport would continue to grow. So, Josue turned to the Warrior Foundation Freedom Station for their support, and he was outfitted with a customized adaptive bicycle and athletic sponsorship to pursue his new endeavor. Now ranking among the top in the world, Josue has a 5-year plan to make the Paralympics.

Josue knows that someday he won't be competing at a professional level in hand-cycling nor wheelchair basketball. His goal is to be able to show his kids his accomplishments and for them to know that whatever happened in the past does not dictate what your future can bring.

**“ It's not what happened to you that makes you who you are. It's what you do after what happened that you should be proud of. ”**

-Josue Barron





## Meet our Warrior: Junior Rodriguez

**Corpsman,  
Marine Corps,  
1999-2015**

**By Erin Cartaya**

### **I'm Here for a Reason**

When does failure turn into success? When do you feel like you are here for something greater than what you thought life had to offer?

*"I felt like a failure; because I couldn't even take my own life."*

When Junior Rodriguez reflects on the dark times in his life, he often wonders who is up there looking out for him. He knows there's a reason he's here. He knows he has a purpose and will continue searching for it as long as possible. Being a part of the Warrior Foundation and becoming the Program Director of the Wolfpack (the San Diego wheelchair basketball team) has been one of the most meaningful things for Junior since his time in the Military. You won't see him boasting or touting his accomplishments. You will, however, see him celebrating with his athletes and bonding with the Wolfpack. "Wolfpack is my family. Like family at Thanksgiving."

PTSD is a quiet Devil that continuously haunts your mind – no matter who you are with or what you're going through. Some days are Hell. Some days maybe not so much. Each day, you never know. When the physical pain subsides and injuries heal, the stress and emotion from PTSD never fade. But even when you feel alone, it's important to remember that you're not alone. That's what the Warrior Foundation taught Junior. He finally found people around to talk to, to listen, and to support him. When Junior found the Warrior Foundation, he found himself. With a renewed sense of purpose, Junior can face these demons and come out the other side, stronger. Working with the Wolfpack, Junior knows he has a support system that will always be by his side, no matter what each day brings.

When you can't run away from even your own mind, you hit rock bottom. But you have to hit rock bottom, says Junior, because at the bottom is where you can look up to see what you have on the other side.

*"You have to go through Hell to get to Peace."*

Junior continues to fight through Hell. One day at a time. "Sometimes, one hour at a time." This time, he has a purpose, a belonging, a family.

### **Serving His Time**

Junior joined the Military partly through college, following in his family's footsteps. His dad was in the Navy; his sister was in the Army, and his great uncle was a Marine Corp Officer during the Vietnam War; he thought it was the right thing to do. He was deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan and faced several injuries that he would recover from... physically. It wasn't long after healing from an injury that a more permanent injury surfaced: PTSD. Seeing, dreaming, and remembering; it would ultimately become what Junior thought would take him from this world. It wouldn't be until years later that Junior understood how his role in service and now after impacts his own life, his daughters, and his brothers (the WolfPack).

### **The Warrior Foundation Finds Junior**

Dealing with PTSD wasn't easy for Junior. He never accepted the severity of it; he only got angry. But while serving as an intern at the medical center, Junior was approached by a woman. Not thinking anything of it, Junior dismissed this approach and carried on. Soon after, he was encouraged to head to the Health & Wellness center one morning.

### **It was a Saturday, 8 am.**

It would be the day that changed Junior's life. It would be the day Junior learned about wheelchair basketball, the Warrior Foundation, and its Co-Founder and CEO, Sandy Lehmkuhler. Talking with Sandy, all she said to him was "to embrace it." But when Junior saw himself retiring, still angry, unsure where his life was going, he was recommended to the Warrior Foundation and saw Sandy waiting for him when he arrived.

"This is your home now," she said. But Junior didn't believe it. Instead, he got into his car and drove to his dad in Houston. It was then Junior realized he had a choice. He could stay home and find a job or go back to California to "finish what he started." When Junior found himself back in California, Sandy was there waiting and he hasn't left her side since.



## The Wolfpack

The Warrior Foundation led Junior to the Wolfpack, San Diego's adaptive sports team. The military wheelchair basketball team includes active duty and veteran U.S. Army, Marine Corps, and Navy players. While the players have sustained life-changing injuries such as amputations, spinal cord injuries, and traumatic brain injuries, they see this program as much more than a sport. The Wolfpack, and the wheelchair basketball community, have enabled its players to improve their mental health, physical health, and self-confidence by creating a peer group that focuses on what can be achieved – not what has been lost.

For Junior, it was the same. It wasn't just a sport to keep busy or to distract himself. It was a group of individuals, Warriors, and soldiers, continuously fighting and looking for something to give back to others. With the Wolfpack, Junior has not only become a coach and program director, but he serves on tournament committees, has been the commissioner for the women's league, and helps people all over the country. But most of all, it allows Junior to share with others, to help give back—it gives Junior a reason to be here.

## Brotherhood

Because of the Wolfpack, Junior has felt a part of something. There is a special kind of bond that he has developed through this basketball program that gives him a sense of purpose. He's been able to focus his mental energy on others, making his role with the program impactful. When Junior talks about this group of athletes, he does so with a sense of pride. Their success is his success. His success is because of this bond. Whether on the court winning games or hanging out grilling food, their humor and camaraderie remind Junior that he is here for a reason. What that reason is, he doesn't know (or it changes), but having this brotherhood allows Junior to live one day at a time, or one hour at a time if need be.

“*There is a special kind of bond that he has developed through this basketball program that gives him a sense of purpose.*”  
- Junior Rodriguez



## Meet our Warrior: Mike Spivey

**A U.S. Marine  
Turned Paralympian**

At Warrior Foundation Freedom Station, we're inspired every single day by the military heroes we serve. Meet Mike Spivey, a retired Marine Sergeant turned Paralympian, who shows us what it means to be unstoppable. Mike was among the first Warriors to live at Freedom Station I. Today, he is happily married, a proud homeowner, and successful competitive snowboarder. Read our interview with Mike below and his mindset leading up to the 2022 Winter Paralympics!

**WFFS:** You were one of the first residents to move into Freedom Station in 2011, shortly after being injured in Afghanistan. What is your favorite memory about living there?

**Mike:** Whether it was having barbeques outside or getting together in someone's cottage, we had dinner together almost every night. Many of the residents at the time were from the same unit. We fed off each other's energy and pushed each other to do more – get in the gym, go golfing, get out of the house and enjoy nature. We were also able to talk to each other about the difficult things we'd all just experienced. The more you talk about it, the more you bring it to the surface, so you can process it and deal with it. That camaraderie was so important.

**WFFS:** You discovered snowboarding during a trip to Colorado and it quickly became a passion of yours. What is it about the sport that you love so much?

**Mike:** Being on a snowboard feels like freedom. When I'm around big crowds, it's sensory overload. There are so many variables, and you can't control what's happening or what's going to happen. On the mountain, everything else goes away. Even though I'm still aware of the periphery, I know what I can control and fully focus on my task. I also



loved having the competition aspect back in my life. Snowboarding is like getting ready for a mission – there are guys right next to you who give you something to strive for – shave off a second here, make a faster turn, have a cleaner run, or reach a certain ranking. Unlike surfing or golfing, which I do to slow down and relax, I love the speed and adrenaline of snowboarding

**WFFS:** What would it mean for you to make the 2022 Winter Paralympics?

**Mike:** It would mean everything to me. If I was 20, I would pursue snowboarding for another 20 years, with dreams of making it to the Paralympics five or six times. That is the goal for this sport, and being able to live a life that you love is one everyone hopes to achieve one day. But with me being 39, it would be the pinnacle of my career and represent my retirement as well. All of the hard work and effort I put in for the past 5-6 years has really led up to this moment. It would also be a turning point. I'll be done with competitive snowboarding after this, especially with all the other things I want to accomplish career-wise. I would be shifting gears to work toward supporting the next generation of adaptive athletes.

**WFFS:** What's next for you? What are your future goals?

**Mike:** In between race seasons, I've been taking CNC machining classes at a vocational school. My goal is to become a machinist in the automotive industry, working either in San Diego or Colorado. I have my basic certification and will be working on my advanced certification next, which has been slightly delayed due to the pandemic. I hope to complete my robotics certification by 2022. My dream is to operate the robotic arms in manufacturing plants. I'm missing a hand, so I love the idea of working with giant robotic arms!

On the personal side, I'm committed to nurturing the next generation of up-and-coming adaptive athletes and preserving the sport of snowboarding. I'd love to create something similar to Freedom Station up in Colorado for adaptive athletes. The racing season costs about \$40,000 a year. Housing will cost you \$15,000 if you have a roommate, or \$20,000 – \$24,000 on your own. If you're a young Paralympian or hopeful, it's really tough to come up with that kind of money. If we could open up a housing residence, we could cut that cost in half. Athletes wouldn't have to rent expensive houses or apartments during peak season.

**WFFS:** You're an inspiration to many people, having endured a lot of hardship to get to where you are today. What gave you the strength to persevere, even when times were tough? Do you have any advice for people who are chasing their dreams?

**Mike:** The support of all the friends I've made over the years gave me the strength I needed. If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't have been able to do any of this. There were people who were always there, whom I could always count on. They shared so many nuggets of wisdom and knowledge with me. The programs put in place by nonprofits like Warrior Foundation Freedom Station, and their support, were also important in helping me reach my goals.

Mike Spivey competed in the 2022 Winter Paralympics and is ranked 13th in the world. Of course, that is quite an accomplishment considering he is one of the oldest athletes to compete at the age of 41. For the moment, Mike has traded in his snowboard for a surfboard. Of course, in true "Spivey" competitive fashion, he is doing it as one of the newest members of the USA National Surf Paralympic Team. To support Mike Spivey and other Warriors, please visit [www.warriorfoundation.org](http://www.warriorfoundation.org) to donate or learn more about Warrior Foundation Freedom Station.





# Freedom Stations

## *Transitional Housing: Freedom Station I*

### **What happens to America's ill and injured Warriors when they can no longer be in the fight?**

After enduring the demands of war in battlefields around the world, any task should seem easy for the heroic men and women of the United States military. Yet the reality paints a different picture. The aftermath is an untold story of heartache and healing, as Warriors leave one fight just to take on another – except they're now ill or injured, have no training or preparation for what happens next, and for the first time, feel they're fighting the battle alone.

Ill and injured Warriors quietly endure an enormous amount of fear, uncertainty and self-doubt when they're told they can no longer be in the military. In many ways, the world no longer makes sense. They may struggle to cope with post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, new prosthetic limbs, rehabilitation, a changing identity, and the seemingly enormous task of learning how to be a Mister or Miss instead of a corporal or sergeant.

### **The Missing Link: Freedom Station**

Warrior Foundation Freedom Station realized there was a missing link in one crucial place – the transition from military service to civilian life. During this period, Warriors are at the highest risk of homelessness, joblessness, and physical and emotional distress. In 2011, we pioneered a new concept designed to address the needs of transitioning Warriors. When Freedom Station opened its doors, it became the first transitional housing residence of its kind in the San Diego region - a place for healing, personal growth and preparation for the new opportunities that await in civilian life.

Each of the charming cottages and apartments is fully furnished, move-in ready and stocked with basic household necessities. The idea was to shift Warriors from a "barracks mentality" to independent living. The central courtyard and interconnected spaces offered Warriors the sense of camaraderie that is so crucial during the transition period. They recover among their peers, share war stories, and know they are supported by others experiencing the same transition.

# Freedom Stations

During this critical time, Warriors face many decisions that will affect the rest of their lives. They need help choosing a new career, enrolling in college or vocational schools, and learning how to manage personal finances – all while continuing to undergo medical treatment and rehabilitation. Warrior Foundation Freedom Station provides access to professionals and qualified volunteers who assist with issues relevant to transitioning to civilian life.

### **How does Freedom Station differ from other military housing and transitional facilities?**

Freedom Station proudly provides a hand up, not a handout. Many military housing facilities do not charge their residents any rent – an unrealistic preparation for real-world living. Our residents pay reduced rent so they can learn how to save, budget and be financially responsible.

Most military housing facilities also work with service members after they have already been discharged from the military. Freedom Station moves Warriors in before they leave the service, giving them the necessary time to acclimate. To not do so in the manner we have constructed at Freedom Station would be very hard and stressful on our service members.





## Freedom Stations

### Journey to a New Life

Freedom Station measures the success of our program by our residents' ability to demonstrate a successful transition from the military to civilian life, and engagement in society as self-sufficient, productive and contributing citizens.



Since 2011, dozens of injured Warriors have lived at Freedom Station and validated the concept of a transitional environment for servicemen and women as they return to life outside the military. These “graduates” and success stories have gone on to enroll in college and vocational schools, establish fulfilling new careers, secure long-term independent housing, start families of their own, and manage continuing care for their injuries.

Freedom Station has proven that the existence of a supportive transitional environment truly makes the difference for ill and injured Warriors as they begin a new journey outside the service.

## Freedom Stations



### *Freedom Station II*

#### **Home of the Brave: Freedom Station II Welcomes Our Warriors**

On May 29, 2020, Warrior Foundation Freedom Station proudly announced the opening of our second transitional housing residence for ill and injured service members. The nine-unit property has been named Freedom Station II, a nod to its sister property Freedom Station I, which opened in 2011 and has been highly successful in helping service members transition from military service to civilian life. The first group of Warrior residents has moved into Freedom Station II and includes veterans from the U.S. Navy, Army and Marine Corps.

When Warriors leave active duty, the loss of that tight-knit family and sense of purpose is incredibly overwhelming. Freedom Station II provides a sense of psychological safety, camaraderie and community during a difficult time – a time when those are exactly the things they're afraid of losing. By promoting their recovery, independence and passion for the future, our goal is to put injured Warriors on the path to living purposeful and self-sufficient lives once they leave Freedom Station II.



## Freedom Stations

Located in the South Park neighborhood, Freedom Station II features eight one-bedroom, one-bathroom cottages that are approximately 475 square feet. Each unit is fully furnished and stocked with household necessities to help shift Warriors from a barracks environment to independent living. The units surround a central courtyard and common areas including an outdoor kitchen, firepit and BBQ - an essential design feature that fosters the camaraderie that is so crucial during the transition period. An additional 1,000 square-foot, two-bedroom unit, known as the Doyle Foundation's Legacy House, serves as an extended stay residence for out-of-state Warriors and their families, who are visiting the San Diego region to receive specialized medical treatment.



Freedom Station II's location was chosen to facilitate access to nearby Naval Medical Center San Diego, one of the nation's largest military hospitals and leading centers for amputee care. While living at Freedom Station II, residents continue to attend their medical appointments while preparing for the next chapter in civilian life. This includes pursuing new careers and job opportunities, applying for college or vocational schools, financial planning and more. The foundation's first property, Freedom Station I, features 8 units and is located just a few miles away in the Golden Hill neighborhood. Current residents represent the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force.

## Freedom Stations

### *Freedom Station III*

#### **Warrior Foundation Freedom Station Purchases Third Warrior Transitional Housing Property in San Diego**

Warrior Foundation Freedom Station announced the acquisition of Freedom Station III, the foundation's third transitional housing property in San Diego to support ill and injured Warriors transitioning from active duty to civilian life.

Warrior Foundation Freedom Station's mission is to act as the leading force in assisting, honoring and supporting the military men and women who have so bravely served and sacrificed for our country. The foundation is committed to providing Warriors with quality-of-life items, support services and transitional housing designed to assist them and their families during recovery.

In 2011, Warrior Foundation Freedom Station pioneered a new approach and opened Freedom Station I - a unique transitional housing residence that provides injured Warriors with the acclimation time, guidance and resources to successfully make the transition from military service to civilian life.





## Freedom Stations

“We are excited and honored to announce the acquisition of Freedom Station III. Our Freedom Stations are designed to fill the gap for our medically retiring military heroes who need the time and place to transition from active duty to civilian life,” said CEO and Founder Sandy Lehmkuhler. “That is the reason we named our properties Freedom 'Station.' A station is a transition point where a train pulls in, gathers passengers, and then builds momentum or changes course on the way to their destination. That is exactly what Freedom Station III does for our Warriors.”

The Freedom Stations are specifically designed to craft a sense of community and promote recovery, while at the same time, cultivate independence and a passion for the future. The community features individual cottages or apartments (400-600 sq. ft.) with select units customized with ADA friendly appliances, showers and entrance ways for disabled Warriors.

In addition, each complex features a central courtyard with a BBQ and gathering area to encourage a sense of community and camaraderie that is essential to the Warrior's recovery.

“We are grateful to be at the forefront of transitional housing in San Diego,” said Andrew Gasper, President of the Warrior Foundation Freedom Station. “Sandy Lehmkuhler and the board of directors of the foundation are visionaries in creating extraordinary housing for our Post-911 ill and injured Warriors. We are blessed and fortunate to be able to build Freedom Station III to support even more Warriors.”

“*That is the reason we named our properties Freedom 'Station.' A station is a transition point where a train pulls in, gathers passengers, and then builds momentum or changes course on the way to their destination.*”

- Sandy Lehmkuhler

## Freedom Stations

The Freedom Station III is the third transitional housing complex constructed within a few miles of Balboa Naval Medical Center. The Freedom Stations are designed to provide a home in a supportive environment, while geographically selected to be close to the hospital, where a high percentage of the Warriors receive medical treatment, physical therapy and surgeries.

During the past 11 years, the two Freedom Station properties have housed more than 100 Warriors. Intended as a “Hand-up, Not a Hand-out,” tenants only pay approximately a third of the cost of the median San Diego rental expense and average a 17-month residency before graduating into the civilian world.

The new property features 12 cottages and apartments in a courtyard setting resembling the other two Freedom Stations. The new facility increases the total housing to 29 cottages and apartments (Freedom Station I – 10 units / Freedom Station II – 7 units).

The new Freedom Station III property was purchased under the assistance and guidance of PNC Bank – a Warrior Foundation Freedom Station sponsor and supporter of the foundation's annual CBS8 (KFMB TV) and iHeart Radio Give-A-Thon.

More than \$2M in funds/donations will be required for improvements, ADA friendly buildouts and new construction to complete the Freedom Station III project. A projected Grand Opening will take place in 2023.





# Ways to Donate



## Ways to Donate

We rely on your kindness, compassion and commitment to make miracles happen daily for those who need it most. Your generous gift to Warrior Foundation Freedom Station will provide America's heroes with hope, a home and a chance to start the next chapter of their lives with the honor and dignity befitting the world's finest fighting forces. Please donate today and let our Warriors know they will never be forgotten.

## Donate Online

We make donating online convenient and easy. You can choose a one-time donation or provide a monthly support plan – either way your support will help an ill or injured Warrior transition from military to civilian life. Donate today at [www.warriorfoundation.org](http://www.warriorfoundation.org).

## Send Us a Check

If you prefer to mail your donation, checks can be made payable to Warrior Foundation Freedom Station and mailed to:

Warrior Foundation Freedom Station  
1223-1/2 28th St., Suite A  
San Diego, CA 92102

## Donate Your Car or Property

Warrior Foundation Freedom Station has partnered with CARS (Charitable Adult Rides & Services) to help run our vehicle and property donation program. We use the proceeds from the sale of donated cars, trucks, SUVs, RVs, boats, motorcycles and even airplanes to help fund the programs you love. Call 855-450-GIVE or submit the secure online donation form at [www.warriorfoundation.careasy.org](http://www.warriorfoundation.careasy.org)

## Stocks, IRAs & Gift Planning

It's easy to put your retirement funds, insurance plans, bank accounts and brokerage accounts to work in immeasurable ways, creating better lives for the ill and injured Warriors.

## Wills & Living Trusts

A bequest to Warrior Foundation Freedom Station in your will or living trust is a gift toward the future of those who fought for our nation's freedoms. Your bequest will translate your values into action for many generations of veterans and ensure that programs important to you will thrive for years to come. Simple language of just a few sentences or less can be included to establish a bequest when you prepare a new will or add a codicil to an existing one.

## Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)

Federal employees may donate to Warrior Foundation Freedom Station directly through the Combined Federal Campaign by using CFC Charity #40485 at [GiveCFC.org](http://GiveCFC.org).

## Matching Funds

If your company provides matching funds, you can magnify support and impact for the Warrior Foundation. Employee matching gifts are donations an employer makes to match its employees' charitable contributions to eligible nonprofit organizations. Employee matching gifts often are dollar-for-dollar, but some companies will double or even triple the size of your original donation.

## Corporate Giving

We welcome support from Future 500 Companies to local small businesses for Warrior Foundation Freedom Station with Corporate Sponsorship, Program and Freedom Station Naming Rights, Local Fundraisers and In-Kind Donations.

## Amazon Smile

If you shop on Amazon, you can support the Warriors, by designating the Warrior Foundation Freedom Station as your Amazon Smile supported charity.

## Warrior Foundation Store

Support the Warrior Foundation Freedom Station by shopping at the Warrior Foundation Store for t-shirts, hats, jackets, mugs and other foundation merchandise at [www.warriorfoundation.org](http://www.warriorfoundation.org).

## Taxpayer ID

Warrior Foundation Freedom Station's taxpayer ID# is 20-0067633.





**WARRIOR FOUNDATION**  
**FREEDOM STATION**

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

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