

2022 President's Report



It has been a real honor to be the President of the Starfish Foundation!

Working with each member of the Board and all the Volunteers has made this a very rewarding experience. Thank you for this opportunity to serve!

Here are the highlights of 3 areas I'd like to report on: Retreats, Outreach and Growth. There are more details below.

Retreats: Collectively, we supported (30) Participants in their healing journey in 2022: 13 in the Taking it Lightly Retreat and 17 in the Healing Warrior Hearts Retreat. While it was life-changing for them and the staff who supported them, we know that there are many more who need these retreats! Word of mouth and personal recommendation are the most effective methods of attracting people to these retreats so please help us reach them. There are many Facebook posts, flyers, emails and LinkedIn posts to use as tools for outreach!

I extend a very special **THANK YOU** to all the volunteers who staff these retreats! Together, we continue to heal and grow; personally and as a supportive team.

Outreach: We continue to find new areas for outreach to promote our healing retreats and suicide prevention, while strengthening partnerships with other organizations. We welcome your recommendations and invite you to get involved.

The Center-Sponsored EQ Leadership Toastmasters Club conducts hybrid meetings from the Center so people can participate in person or by zoom. This is an excellent opportunity to improve communication and leadership skills, promote our work and stay connected with a focus on emotional intelligence.

With the support of Ellen Kozel of the fellow nonprofit *No Veteran Left Behind*, we now have access to the podcast, "Warrior Wisdom and Wellness". Let us know if you know someone we should interview!

Growth:

Personal and Professional: I've continued doing "my work" through my involvement with the Center and am very grateful for the life I now enjoy as a result of this

commitment to my mental health. I want that for you as well so I invite you [USE THIS LINK](#) to register to staff or participate in a retreat this year!

My training to be an instructor has created the need to recruit more Supervisors. *Please let us know if you're interested in that growth opportunity.* You can also help by registering to staff as many retreats as you'd like (today) so we don't have to call you ;)

As I've reached the term limit of being a Board Member, I'm excited to continue supporting the Starfish Foundation as the Immediate Past President which we haven't had in several years. I'll also be training to become the Veterans Program Committee Co-Chair and am excited to serve in this capacity.

To continue to grow our Board in a healthy manner, we need to find more Volunteers and people who are willing to Chair, Co-Chair or Champion events. Please let us know if you're interested and we'll review the opportunities that match your skills and interests.

Financial Support: Thank you to everyone who invested in the Starfish Foundation! We appreciate you and your generosity, no matter the size of your donation! I'll be increasing my monthly donation to the Starfish Foundation out of gratitude and ability. I invite you to consider even a small monthly donation as well to continue to support this important work.

JANUARY: January kicked off with great excitement because of our Annual Membership meeting and intentions for the New Year established during the Board Orientation Meeting!

Though our Healing Warrior Hearts Retreat had to be cancelled due to Covid, we were grateful to be able to meet for the Healing Warrior Hearts Couples Retreat Reunion. This is a very special opportunity to stay connected, celebrate successes and provide support!

FEBRUARY: The Taking it Lightly Retreat had to be cancelled due to Covid.

We were able to have the Strategic planning meeting for the Board which kept the momentum going.

I traveled to Texas to co-instruct for the Texas for Heroes, Healing Warrior Hearts Couples Retreat. It is really exciting to see that team growing and learning together!

MARCH: We got to support 6 Participants through the Healing Warrior Hearts Military Sexual Trauma Retreat.

Texas For Heroes had their first Annual Heroes Gala which included a “*Veterans Journey Home*” screening – a movie about Healing Warrior Hearts. This really demonstrated what’s possible when we stick with our healing! This was co-organized by a new Healing Warrior Hearts Veteran who continued her trauma recovery by participating in the Taking it Lightly Retreat. To pay it forward, she has staffed and joined the Board of Directors for Texas for Heroes and is now a Supervisor for those Retreats.

The Milwaukee VA coordinated the first Clergy Connection at the Milwaukee County War Memorial Center which was a great opportunity to educate the local clergy about Healing Warrior Hearts retreats for the Veterans they’re serving.

APRIL: We got to support 6 Participants through the Taking it Lightly Retreat.

We were invited to the Veteran Ink event at the Menominee Falls library which gave us the opportunity to promote Healing Warrior Hearts. It was great to see the local support of Veterans there!

By attending the Combating Veteran Suicide event at the Fox Valley College, we were able to promote Healing Warrior Hearts and make new connections.

It was an honor to be invited to the Readiness and Retention Partnership Muster for the MKE Army Reserve and meet their Members. We were happy to confirm that they are eligible to attend our retreats as they’re considered ineligible for many other benefits normally provided to Veterans and Service members.

The Dare to Be Aware Fair is special opportunity for graduates of our retreats to be able to reconnect with each other while promoting them to this specialized community!

MAY: Texas For Heroes supported 5 Participants through the Healing Warrior Hearts Retreat.

We were blessed to be the featured charity again at a Milkmen Baseball Game! The donations were especially generous and we gained a new community partner, Sandra Eiler of Thrive Therapy who sponsored us for the event and gave us a large donation!

JUNE: We got to support 8 Participants through a Taking it Lightly Retreat for Veterans.

There was quite a “reunion” at the *I Am Not Invisible* event where many of our Healing Warrior Hearts Women Veterans gathered to be part of this special event that promotes the contributions of Women Veterans.

We had the opportunity to participate in the *Combating Veteran Suicide* event in Brookfield. Again, we got to promote our healing programs and make new connections.

Our *Flocking* activity was very light this year due to shortage of volunteers. It is a lot of fun and really easy so if you'd like to help with this fundraising activity, please let us know.

I had the privilege of supporting Patricia as a speaker at the Milwaukee Vet Center. Please let us know of any organization that would welcome us to present about our healing programs and we will be happy to follow up on that!

JULY: Texas For Heroes supported 5 Participants through the Healing Warrior Hearts Retreat.

We got to support 4 Participants through the Healing Warrior Hearts LGBTQ+ Retreat in Milwaukee.

It's always a very special treat to participate in Veterans Day at the Milwaukee Zoo! They have a very nice facility they provide for a Veterans Resource Fair as they welcome Veterans in for free that day.

There is another beautiful facility with a well-organized Veterans Resource Fair that we got to participate in - Hometown Hero Day at the Dane County Fair.

There was so much to see and do at the West Allis National Night Out and we were delighted to have a table to promote our healing programs and support suicide prevention.

Waterstone Bank is one of our Community Partners and treated us to the VIP Air & Water Show. It was a beautiful day on the Lakefront, socializing and promoting Healing Warrior Hearts.

The Center Picnic is a really nice time to just unwind and catch up with our Purple Family of program graduates, staff and instructors, and even donors. Thank you once again to Carl and Diane for opening up your amazing back yard and lovely home to host this special event!

AUGUST: We got to support 2 Couples through the Healing Warrior Hearts Couples Retreat

The ROC Golf Tournament is a great example of being Community Partners! It is a fundraiser for the same organization that invites us to be the featured charity of the month at the Milwaukee Milkmen game so this gives us a chance to strengthen that

relationship, share our successes in part due to their support and create an opportunity for some “healthy competition” for some of our members.

The Irish Fest had a very nice area for Veteran Resources with complimentary beverages and popcorn for Veterans. Again on the Milwaukee Lakefront, it was a couple beautiful days of promoting our healing retreats, socializing with our Volunteers, making new connections and enjoying some great food, music and parades!

A few years in the making there was finally another Veterans Journey Home Screening at the Menominee Falls Library. This is a movie about Healing Warrior Hearts.

SEPTEMBER: We got to support 6 Participants through Taking it Lightly Retreat.

We also got to support 1 Participant through the Healing Warrior Hearts Military Sexual Trauma Retreat. *“It matters to this ONE!”*

We participated in ISFAC Meeting at the Wehr Nature Center. That’s the Inter-Service Family Assistance Committee that brings together organizations that provide services to Service Members and Veterans so it was really great to be able to promote our programs with that group!

We were really grateful to be invited to have a tent at the EIG Veterans Appreciation Event, sponsored by the Ellenbecker Investment Group! It was a beautiful (windy) afternoon spent with a community of philanthropists who were there to learn about our organization.

Again, we were gifted chicken dinners by the Monogram Club of West Allis that we were able to share with Veterans. With much gratitude, this created another opportunity to celebrate with our local Veterans.

It was a special opportunity to be given a table at the Mental Health Summit at the Fond du lac Expo Center! What a beautiful facility, an impressive group of people and an outpouring of community support!

OCTOBER: Texas For Heroes supported 9 Participants through the Healing Warrior Hearts Retreat. This is an area of growth as it was their first retreat to be held in Dallas. I missed this one to be with family – sharing as a reminder to take time for family and fun.

It was an honor to be invited to the Women’s Leadership Reception at the Women’s Club of Wisconsin! There were several Veteran Speakers there who inspired us with their military experience and how their using that in service of others today. Another lovely venue with great food, great people and lots of community support!

It was quite an honor to be invited to the *Storytelling for Nonprofits* training provided by EIG. It was an opportunity to get clear about my “WHY” for serving the Starfish Foundation and being able to explain that more clearly when promoting the work we do.

NOVEMBER: We got to support 6 Participants through the Walking in the Light retreat. This incredible retreat is only offered once per year so if you’re interested, check out the schedule and plan accordingly. I would love to see you there! It’s already on my calendar 😊

Once again, we had a table at the Wisconsin Veterans Business Chamber Awards Luncheon/Expo and made some great connections while promoting our healing retreats.

We were the recipients of the raffle basket auction at the Veterans Ball, held at the MKE Hilton City Center. This is thanks to Michelle Hawley for leading the auction efforts, to our many volunteers, and our partnership with UW MAVRC (Military & Veterans Resource Center).

Attending the Vets Court 10 year Anniversary Celebration at the Milwaukee County War Memorial provided the opportunity to connect with Veterans and supporters of this priceless program!

DECEMBER: We got to support 2 Couples through the Healing Warrior Hearts Couples Retreat.

Chaplain Allan of the Milwaukee VA coordinated a PACT ACT Panel Discussion for the local Clergy and others who support Veterans. There were several organizations there who explained the expanded benefits provided by this act, shared resources and assisted Veterans in applying for military benefits. It was rewarding to be a part of this event to garner more resources and connections!

Operation Grateful Giving was another spectacular display of generosity and fun! Hundreds of gift bags were filled with donations and delivered to Veterans. It was such a joyous event for those who could participate! I can only imagine how the Veterans receiving them were blessed!

The “Fill the Boat” fundraising event was conducted by Reed’s Marine and Whiskey Ranch Restaurant and Bar, both of Delavan WI. Again, a gathering of some of the most fun and generous people! We are so grateful for the financial donations and supplies we received!

With so much gratitude, Dianne Young, USMC Retired, President, Starfish Foundation