



Long Beach Retreat Report

Nov. 6-11, 2020

40 people registered for the retreat
 +50 people registered for the ride
 35 Brain Scans
 10 Study Participants
 4 Innovative Therapies Presented
 17 hours of Physical Activity



Town Hall - Empathy

125 people online
 65 in-person

Media: <https://bit.ly/3kPJOPs>
<https://bit.ly/2Uxbvlo>
<https://bit.ly/36Gz3tB>

25 Dodger Bags of Gratitude for Deployed Veterans
 8000 Letters of Gratitude to Veterans
Total Veterans, First Responders & Families Served:
8,305 – 30% Female



Thank You to all of the Partners and Supporters that make this Retreat possible L.A. Dodgers, LAPPL, NeuQ, American Legion, Newport Aquatic Center, BJ's Restaurants, Thrivent, and Electrocore

I just wanted to say I truly enjoyed the retreat and feel like it was super beneficial. I honestly didn't know what I was getting into and was even a little skeptical but I'm sold. This organization is doing great things for a lot of people!

The best way to describe my VA help and support, I had given up on it. Multiple types of antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications along with what I would describe as "cookie cutter" treatment programs just weren't helping. As much as I know they wanted to help, I felt many couldn't quite relate. Before the retreat, I was at a point where I honestly felt my life wasn't going to get any better and accepted it.

After the retreat, and spending time with such a great and supportive group of people, I can honestly say I have a far more positive outlook on life. I already have a stronger support system in new friends and connections made. Looking forward to seeing them again, and being a part of what I have come to truly believe is a great organization with a great cause, gives me purpose and something to look forward to.

Thanks again!

Collin

This year has been a roller coaster, as most would agree. Before 2020, I thought I was doing okay by myself with little military service issues. However, in November of 2019, things took a darker turn as I began to realize the impacts of war on my body. I saw these, finally, by talking with others who were where I was. Yes, I was diagnosed with PTSD and many other mental health issues throughout the years, but I kept fighting those things. Still, it took those conversations for me to realize that I was hurting more than I knew. Some of my mental issues resulted from other health issues that my doctors were ignoring due to my age. With the beginning of 2020, that all changed since I had more evidence to present to the doctors and the VA. Unfortunately, COVID happened, and all came to a quick halt. That was a big kick in the pants for me. I was faced with isolation and a major depressive episode, which is a horrible combination.

However, as luck would have it, I would be introduced to John Wordin a few days into it all. It took a push from others, but I sat in on a teleconference call with the Life Aid Institute. That call focused on brain health and some of the research that was happening. As a scientist, I was hooked and began doing some research of my own into the presented science. I will admit I was very excited about the potential for answers to questions I had about my own brain, but that wasn't exactly what kept me coming back each week. That was the people! I felt like I was accepted quickly with this group, which is very hard for me. Due to COVID, that would be all it was for a while, conference calls. Then in July, I was able to attend my first event in person. I brought the whole family with me. That event helped me open up more about my struggles since I was able to hear others. It was good to know I wasn't alone in this fight.

In August, I brought a good friend's son with me to another event since I found so much benefit in the first one. My other goal was for that young man to get some tools for his future since, as of this writing, he is in week two of basic training. I hope that knowing how to deal with things before he has things to deal with will benefit him and his fellow airman. The eight-hour drive back home was spent with him telling me things he had learned and/or how some of what I had told him over the last year others too had told him. Of course, that trip strengthened belief in what was being done since I was able to see people push themselves further than they thought possible.

Jerald



Thank you! I don't think he would be on the bike right now if we didn't meet you and have last week's experience. So glad that I reached out to you and it worked out for our family to come!

Greg deployed to Iraq in 2008 with the Air Force out of Scott AFB, Illinois. Before deployment Greg was easy going and laid back but after his return the littlest things were aggravating him. He started attempting suicide by February 2009.

He was diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder, PTSD, Diabetes, Crohn's and mild TBI. At one point a psychiatrist at Jefferson Barracks VA told me I was not to accompany Greg to any of his appointments, even though I am his VA appointed caregiver.

We live in the St. Louis area but he has found himself in Nashville TN with no recollection of how he got there, due to a major TBI, or who he encountered along the way.

The Migraines started to plague Greg more and more frequently. After many tests at the VA but no relief to the migraines we traveled to the Mayo Clinic for some answers. Greg spent the majority of 2020 inpatient for either PTSD or Complicated Migraines. His psychiatrist and I agreed that Greg needed a longer term treatment than what this local VA could offer. The search began but no other VA programs (Leavenworth and Minneapolis) would accept Greg, stating he was too acute. Other programs weren't accepting out of state veterans. He was sent home to be in my care.

I was then able to secure the week with Life Aid. We were able to have a qEEG test. We had time with Dr. John Fellus, a neurologist and he brainstormed with me and Greg a couple different times. I like the vision John has for Life Aid in providing opportunity for whole health. Their goal to have the qEEG's at the retreat then neurofeedback and other therapies to be completed at home is life changing.

Life Aid provided opportunity for activity through cycling, walks, and an outrigger canoe without completely overwhelming or putting too much pressure on anyone. Greg was able to try a handcycle and I've known Greg to sit and shake his head no when asked to do something out of his norm. I've known Greg to not get out of bed for days. The support I saw from fellow veterans in that moment was impactful. Camaraderie is awesome and it was felt among everyone. No one was left out due to rank or branch of service. Life Aid gave our family an opportunity to experience this together. Our daughters had never been on nice bikes before this event. I am proud of them for riding on the Pacific Coast Highway. We had run out of options with the VA and now we have hope.

Heather



It's no mystery, 2020 has been a really hard year for everyone. I have especially suffered greatly from everything that this year has brought. Earlier this year, I felt something was really off with my health. I fell into a deep depression and was lashing out in anger and didn't know exactly why. I didn't want to admit there was anything wrong with me. It was everyone else that was an issue. My marriage suffered, I became suicidal and hospitalized for my own protection. I was hurting, my blood pressure became erratic and I found myself in the ER with severe chest pain. I didn't know there was a connection between my mind and my body.

The VA Healthcare system is great at treating veterans with known illnesses, but I was a harder problem to solve. So many doctors shook their head and told me my health was related to my depression and anxiety, others said the opposite. I was prescribed medication after medication. All of which were only treating the symptoms, none of which were able to target the underlying cause, ME. I had been asked several times by fellow veterans and friends if I wanted to be a part of Life Aide and attend a retreat, but it was never the right time for me. It wasn't until late August, 2020 that I finally ran out of excuses. I was separated from my spouse, on 7 different medications from blood pressure, to anxiety, to depression to sleep, couch surfing and essentially homeless. I was "safe" but not in a good place mentally and even worse physically. I swallowed my pride, bit the bullet and went to the retreat.

Bend was a whole health, mountain biking and clinic retreat, and it was just the right for me. I arrived and was instantly met with open arms and no judgement. It was hard to tell at first, who were the organizers and who were the other participants. Everyone was friendly and I immediately felt like part of the family. I was so welcomed, it was as if everyone there were my friends already.

The organizers were kind enough to explain the brain-to-body connection; They went on to tell me about the research with qEEG brain scans and with the data collected, they could help treat the brain health through therapeutic modalities other than prescription medication. I was all in, I didn't want to take any more medications. Doctors tend to rely on the patients ability to effectively communicate symptoms, so they can match those symptoms with what is printing on a label of a pharmaceutical. The EEG puts the brain health into more of a objective, qualitative data category, where we can actually see what is happening. Is your brain over active, underactive, easily disrupted and so much more. With this data JW and the team of Neurologists are able to suggest non pharmaceutical therapeutic modalities to treat the entire body. Photo biomodulation, hyperbaric chamber treatments, yoga, physical exercise, meditation, nutrition and others are all ways we can effectively treat the whole body.

Life Aid Research institute has given me a path to take, a simplified road map to better health, both physical and mental. They have provided me with a new group of people, a family, that support this journey. This family helps hold me accountable, they keep me honest and push me to always take care of myself. I am pleased to report my health is getting better and better. I have continued to cycle, pushing myself harder each week. My medication list is dwindling, and I am sleeping better. Call it science, call it luck. I call it Health.

Tyler