



It all started with a lobster boat...

John Niekrash is a man who never stops thinking. He never stops smiling either because here is a man comfortable in his own skin, who ten years ago performed a random act of kindness that has since exploded nationwide, creating smiles in place of profound sadness and confusion.

Noank is a sleepy little fishing village, part of the larger town of Groton. Many Connecticut residents have never even heard of Noank with its total area of just 2.2 square miles and a population of barely 1800 people. Known since the 1600s for fishing, lobstering, and ship building, at times Noank has boasted more ships and boats than churches, but still it remains a bucolic little picture postcard. Behind the boats bobbing quietly in the harbor, on any given day you may find John Niekrash bringing in his catch, and in the process choosing the next worthy veteran to whom he will offer a life-changing opportunity.

In 2008 Niekrash decided to upgrade from his current lobster boat to a bigger vessel and wondered what he should do with “Krasher I.” Shortly thereafter he met a Marine just home from the Iraq war, now permanently altered. But Niekrash would make sure his war injuries would not define him. He gave the Rhode Island fisherman his Krasher I, and by doing so a legacy was born.

Not even John Niekrash could have envisioned that just ten short years later Work Vessels would give not only boats but also cars, vans, computers, and tractors to veterans who wished to start their own businesses, whether it be a retail enterprise or a farm. Their mission has been embraced nationwide, and now veterans, many of whom suffer from the ravages of PTSD and were deemed “unemployable,” have an opportunity to make something of their lives because someone affirmed their worth and invested in them.

To date over 1800 veteran-entrepreneurs in all 50 states have received a new lease on life through equipment from WVFV valued at over 2.5 million dollars.

Work Vessels for Vets is run by just nine people, none of whom draw any salary from the charity, but the benefits they derive are overwhelming. Former Connecticut state senator Cathy Cook serves as executive director for WVFV and is a walking billboard of its success. Retired from 26 years of public service, Cook is a one-woman band answering phones, sending out correspondence, fundraising, speaking, and traversing the country to present work equipment to grateful veterans.

Work Vessels has won the prestigious Top-Rated honor a number of years in a row from Great NonProfits, as 95% of all funds are used to help veterans, with only a scant 5% used for administrative expenses. That gives John Niekrash, Cathy Cook, and thousands of veterans who’ve been given a new lease on life a reason to feel proud.

And it all started with a lobster boat and that smile.

***“One person can make a difference,
and everyone should try!” - John F. Kennedy***



Since 2008 when the first lobster boat was given to an injured U.S. Marine, these dedicated patriots have given a “hand up” to more than 1800 returning veterans in all 50 states with equipment valued at over 2.5 MILLION dollars! Veteran awardees are “paying it forward” by creating thousands of jobs and hiring fellow veterans!

The Beating Heart of Work Vessels for Vets: Our Board Members!

L to R: Vice President Rick Crolius, Executive Director Cathy Cook, Dan Burns, Paul Jacey, Kathleen Burns, President John Niekrash.

Not pictured: Frank Gaglio, Secretary/Treasurer Bob Fiore and Brian Hughes



2012...Now We're COOKing!



Work Vessels for Veterans was started in 2008 solely through the selfless gesture of John Niekraash, but he could not have predicted how this one small donation would explode into thousands, crisscrossing the entire United States in scope.

One “vessel” a year was the original goal, and for the first few years it was supported with the generosity and hard work of volunteers and interested parties who believed in giving disabled veterans a better life and a better way to make a living.

Then in 2012 **Catherine Cook**, who had years of public service as a state senator and as Connecticut Governor’s Appointee for Veterans Affairs, came onboard, and Work Vessels for Veterans grew exponentially, now powered by a solid structure and Cook’s seasoned organizational skills. Cathy Cook’s background lent itself perfectly to the mission of Work Vessels. As a former military spouse, Governor M. Jodi Rell assigned Cook to attend to the needs of returning veterans, wounded warriors, Gold Star families, and veterans affairs. Prior to that appointment Cook had been Chief Deputy Leader of the Connecticut State Senate for 14 years. Her rolodex enabled her to connect with resources around the country to help vets. Work Vessels for Vets went national!

As Executive Director of Work Vessels for Vets, she runs the office, writes grants, and keeps in constant contact with the veterans. Like Niekraash and the board members her salary is paid daily in the gratitude of the veteran, the smiles from their families, and the futures she helps secure through her selfless actions and tireless dedication.



Photos: Cathy Cook with vets Dan Burgess (above) and Sean Adams with John Niekraash (right)



***“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day.
Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”***

Familiar, right? Well, there’s a good deal of truth in that old saw; in fact it’s the unofficial mission statement of **Work Vessels for Veterans** because 10 years ago a fisherman from a small Connecticut village gave a veteran in Rhode Island a way to make a living, and he’s been feeding himself and his family ever since.

That small act of kindness gave birth to **Work Vessels for Vets**, and just 10 short years later, Work Vessels for Vets has become the Top-Rated NonProfit at Great NonProfits Rating Agency for the past five years, and has earned the prestigious Guide Star International Platinum Level in recognition of its integrity, efficiency and effectiveness. Donors have confidence that Work Vessels for Vets uses charitable funds in service to the mission. Less than 5% is spent on administration so 95 cents of every dollar works hard to help veterans succeed.



The result? Work Vessels for Vets, Inc, an all-volunteer charity, has donated equipment valued at over 2.5 million dollars to over 1800 veterans in business throughout the United States. These new veteran-owned businesses have hired thousands of fellow veterans.

That’s a whole lot of new “fishermen” who will be fed for a lifetime because of this little organization that “could” - and does.

★ **TIM SMITH** US Army Sergeant and Iraq Veteran
Patriot Commercial Cleaning
St. Louis, Missouri

“It’s hard for me to explain in words how grateful I am to Work Vessels for Veterans for helping me start up Patriot Commercial Cleaning. WVFV has provided me with the tools to accomplish my dreams of hiring other veterans and helping them become part of a team after their military service.



Work Vessels enabled us to get from Point A to Point B. When we started up nine years ago, in addition to everything they had already done, they gave me a loan for \$10,000 so I could buy equipment I could not afford. That enabled us to not only get a big contract, but also to hire four additional vets.”

Patriot Commercial Cleaning specializes in professional cleaning services and hires veterans because of their service to our country as well as the attention to detail they learned in the military. Work Vessels for Vets gave Tim a van and equipment to start the business. He now has hired 50 veterans and delivers on contracts in both Missouri and Illinois.

★ **GREG TROST** USMC Sergeant, 90% disability rating
No Surrender Productions
Bow, New Hampshire

“As an entrepreneur in a small veteran-owned business, it takes a lot to stay competitive. Work Vessels gave me a slider for my video camera which enables me to give a smooth, cinematic look to my work. Then they contacted me a second time and bought me a broadcast quality camera which now allows me to compete on a higher level, put out a better product, and make more money.”



Greg’s full-service video production company works with some of the top brands and companies throughout the country, developing and integrating video content into a creative and cohesive message to help them attract new business. In 2012 Work Vessels for Vets awarded Greg the initial video equipment to start his business and five years later the upgraded HD camera that his growing business needed. Congratulations, Marine!

★ **TARA HUTCHINSON** US Army Sgt (ret.), amputee
Tara Hutch Fine Jewelry
San Antonio, Texas
www.tarahutchjewelry.com

“After my injury, even though I was still alive, I thought my life was over. Work Vessels for Veterans has given me the opportunity to have hope again which has allowed me to choose life.”



What do you do when your leg is severed above the knee and you have third degree burns, PTSD, and traumatic brain injury? What do you do when you can no longer feed yourself and have virtually lost your independence? Many contemplate and tragically carry out suicide. Tara was no different, and had entertained the idea of ending her life. It was a therapist who suggested a hobby, one that might utilize her motor skills. Tara chose jewelry, then spent years of her recovery learning and practicing her craft. Work Vessels for Vets helped start her successful career by purchasing a precious-metal jewelry welder valued at \$5500, with a \$2000 in-kind discount from Gesswein Company in Bridgeport, Connecticut matched by a Newman's Own Foundation grant to Work Vessels for Vets.



Tara's jewelry is featured both online and in the very prestigious Lux, Bond & Green jewelry stores throughout New England. Check out her creations and buy a trinket made with love and tenacity! And there's an extra bonus—10% of her sales are donated to Work Vessels for Vets!



★ **GULOID ISMAIL** USMC Reserves Corporal, Iraq Veteran
DribbleBabies Mobile Clothing Boutique
Meriden, Connecticut

“Every time we get in the van we think of Work Vessels. There are a lot of groups out there in the name of helping vets, but they don’t do much. Work Vessels doesn’t require anything from you other than to have a dream and a goal. To this day, our business would not have grown as exponentially as it has if it wasn’t for Work Vessels for Veterans. They do exactly what they say they are going to do and more.”



Pride. That’s what Gulaid Ismail has. He has pride in his military service, pride in his family, and a special pride in having a disabled veteran-owned business. The business he and his wife Davina started in 2013 meant taking a risk, but Ismail was used to that. They had no business experience and two children under the age of five (now three!), and Gulaid was a disabled vet who fought and lost buddies in Fallujah, Iraq. They both completed the Entrepreneurial Bootcamp for Veterans (EBV) training. DribbleBabies, their online and mobile children’s clothing company, took off and is growing by the year. All the branded clothing for boys and girls from birth to age six is made in Connecticut using local seamstresses the Ismails hand-picked for their fine work, conscientiousness and tenacious work ethic.



“Work Vessels was impressed by the depth of thought in their business plan, and their unique idea. We worked together and determined that a refurbished stepvan would be the critical vessel they needed. We set out to raise the funds,” said Cathy Cook, WWFV Executive Director.

That’s when musician Joe Walsh, founder of The Eagles, entered the picture. He announced that Work Vessels for Vets would be one of only ten small veterans’ charities to be assisted by his first **VEISAID**

benefit concert in the Washington DC area in September 2017. With funding secured, Joe Walsh and WWFV presented the van to the Ismails soon after.

★ **M. JOHN GREEN** USN PO 2C, 90% disability
OXI Fresh of RI Green Carpet Cleaning
Groton, Connecticut
www.oxifresh.com/locations/ri



It's difficult enough being disabled, but even more difficult trying to convince people that disability has little to do with ability. That was the situation facing John Green when he first came home, but it did not deter him from seeking out franchise opportunities. Franchise management depends upon following a proven business model and maintaining and complying with the highest level of standards. He'd learned those skills in the military. Work Vessels supported Green's pathway to ownership, awarding him \$4000 worth of equipment to jump start his carpet cleaning franchise, which is thriving today.

★ **DAN LAFFIN** US Army Staff Sergeant (ret.), 70% disability
Rivers of Recovery New England Chapter
North Haven, Connecticut



"I'm a wounded Afghanistan vet helping other vets recover through the sport of fly fishing. Work Vessels for Vets purchased a drift boat for my nonprofit so I can take other vets out on the water and introduce them to the sport. The money saved on the boat will go directly toward putting more vets on the water. I see a lot of fly by night organizations claiming to help vets and I can tell you with certainty that WVFV are the real deal! Thank You!"

Rivers of Recovery specializes in the rehabilitation of combat veterans suffering with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), minor Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), stress, anxiety and depression. The program combines outdoor recreational activities with instruction on the self-treatment of symptoms of stress, depression and anxiety, empowering veterans to live a life that is no longer restricted by psychological or physical disabilities.

★ **JAMES McCORMICK** US Army Captain (ret.)
Purple Heart, Silver Star
Raising Cane Farms
New Haven, West Virginia

“Work Vessels for Vets supports our Veterans-to-Agriculture Program. In doing so they supported the training of over 200 Veterans in Beekeeping and specialty crop vegetable production. In addition they helped to build a memorial training apiary for one of our veterans who battled cancer for so long. Work Vessels for Vets, you have touched the hearts and lives of so many through your program and helped create a training program that honors our veterans and keeps the training going. Thank you .”



Raising Cane Farm, a family-run business, works to grow and harvest bamboo for food, timber and crafts and serves as a respite retreat for returning combat-wounded veterans and families of fallen soldiers. The farm has an education facility for veterans to learn the farming, craftsmanship, and business skills needed to develop and manage their own properties. The organization also employs veterans who work to assist other service members in their transition to civilian life and into the workforce.

“We are here to help veterans grow their farms from start to finish,” says McCormick. “We go to their properties and assess the space, whether it’s acres of land or the rooftop of an apartment building. We teach them everything from the basics to beekeeping to how to operate a tractor.”

In 2012 McCormick was honored by the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation with one of America’s most prestigious civilian awards, the Citizen Service Before Self Award, for his work helping veterans to find jobs. There are fewer than 85 living recipients of this award. The publicity and contacts McCormick gained from this honor led him to work with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture to establish the West Virginia Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture, the first state-sanctioned farming cooperative of its kind that provides specialized training and enables veterans to share farming equipment and other resources to develop and manage their own agri-businesses.

“Our mission at Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture is to mobilize veterans to feed America and to utilize agriculture as a source of therapy and revenue,” says McCormick. “None of this work would be possible without the ongoing help I receive from Work Vessels for Vets.”

HOW IT ALL WORKS



WHAT WE DO: Work Vessels for Vets, Inc. awards that critical piece of equipment to help America's returning veterans reach their dreams of self-employment. We have found no other veterans' charity with the sole mission to award the equipment needed to help these eager entrepreneurs get their businesses off the ground.

WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO: A recent national survey of veteran-entrepreneurs recorded that veterans returning from combat with PTSD and physical injuries seek self-employment as an accommodation for "bad days" and frequent medical appointments.

"...being an entrepreneur affords me the ability to work around my [service-connected] disabilities. It affords me flexibility to take time off when needed. It also affords me to be in control of my time." Survey respondent

Applications from wounded veterans to WVFV are sharply increasing. More than 80% of applications from veteran-entrepreneurs note significant service-connected disabilities (50% to 100%) including many with comorbid diagnoses of PTSD along with amputations and other severe physical injuries. Each is looking to move forward to support a future while adapting to the aftermath of wartime wounds.



USN MH2/E5 James Wright of CONNECTICUT receives tools for his home repair business with donations from Brescome Barton Distributors

WORK VESSELS FOR VETS PROGRAMS

Work Vessels for Vets, Inc. divides its mission into three programs:

1. Equipping Veteran-Owned Small Businesses

This WVFV program provides critical new or used equipment (adapted to accommodate injuries if needed) to returning veterans who are starting a non-farming business, like injured Army Sgt. Tim Smith, who founded Patriot Commercial Cleaners in St. Louis, MO with a van, vacuum cleaners and floor machines from Work Vessels for Vets. Today he has contracts in two states and has hired over 50 fellow veterans in Missouri and Illinois as his way to “pay it forward.”

2. Equipping Injured Veteran-Farmers

This WVFV program provides agricultural equipment (tractors, fencing, farm equipment) to America's veterans who are starting farms or ranches. Working closely with the Farmer Veteran Coalition and AgrAbility chapters around the country, Work Vessels for Vets identifies needed farm equipment and any modifications required to adapt equipment for combat injuries.

3. Equipping Nonprofit Programs that serve veterans

Knowing that “start-up” nonprofits need equipment too, WVFV awards equipment to equine therapy programs and veteran training programs, boats for therapeutic fishing programs, electronics to programs for vets with PTSD, and other “vessels” for nonprofits to help meet their missions to give back to fellow veterans.

THE COMMITMENT

- Work Vessels for Vets, Inc. serves veteran-businesses in all 50 states.
- Applications are received on a rolling basis and awards are made throughout the year.
- All awardees are matched with a volunteer business mentor with expertise in their field.
- Awardees are expected to follow their business plans, communicate with their mentors, and “pay it forward” by hiring fellow veterans when they are ready.
- Work Vessels for Vets receives ongoing reports from mentors to monitor progress and assist new entrepreneurs as they work through their first year in business.

FAQ – ABOUT WORK VESSELS FOR VETS

Do you give away only boats? No! A “vessel” is any equipment you may need to reach your goal of self-employment.

What kind of businesses do you equip? We support all kinds of veteran entrepreneurs and frankly marvel at the ingenuity of business ideas.

Is the equipment new? Not always. Sometimes used equipment is donated or purchased in good condition.

What is the average value of equipment grants? Most of our vessels are valued at \$5,000 to \$6,000 but some may be much less or more as needed.

Do I have to be a Post 9/11 veteran to receive a vessel? No, but Post 9/11 returning combat veterans do receive extra consideration. Veterans with VA disability ratings over 80% also have preference.

How long does the application process take? It depends. We do not have a warehouse of equipment. All approved applications are matched with corporate or individual donations or purchased from donor funds.

Is there a long waiting list? Often we have a waiting list of up to 6 months, but it depends on the availability of the vessels requested and the ability to match a donor with needed equipment.

Is my DD214 kept secure? YES! All DD214 forms are maintained on a locked external drive that is available only to designated staff. We highly recommend that you redact your Social Security Number.

What geographic area do you serve? We cover the entire United States.

Why do you need a Business Plan? WVFV has partnered with the expert evaluators at The Mentoring Corps who work with our veteran applicants to assure that you have the right plans to be successful and that the equipment will contribute to your success.

May I still apply if I do not have a complete business plan? Yes, but you need to submit a full description of your business concept and your timeline.

I have a service-connected disability rating. Can I apply for adaptive equipment to help me in my own business? Yes! And we can recommend resources to identify adaptations to equipment.

How will you use my photographs and story if I receive a vessel? WVFV finds that your stories are the most successful way we can generate new funding to help more veterans. We will publicize our awards to media in your area and the nation as well as include them in our grant applications to foundations.

What do you want in return? NOTHING! We thank you for your service and ask only that you “pay it forward” by helping fellow veterans in need and by serving your community as you served your nation.

A Vessel is Not Just a Boat

For Work Vessels for Vets, a vessel doesn't have to be a boat. A vessel is anything that transports, that gets you where you want to go, that gives those who worked to preserve our freedom something that will work to preserve their dreams and offer them the promise of a viable livelihood.

For over ten years, Work Vessels for Vets has been solely dedicated to its mission to equip veterans. It is our way of saying thank you to America's veterans and beginning to repay the debt we owe them.

Here's just a partial list of the "vessels" we've given to veterans since that first lobster boat in 2008.

**TRACTORS
BOATS
MINIVANS
LAPTOPS
FARM EQUIPMENT
CARS
FARM LAND
CARPENTRY TOOLS
CORRAL FENCE PANELS
REFRIGERATION SYSTEMS
HEATING SYSTEMS
METAL JEWELRY WELDER
SEWING MACHINES
VIDEO EQUIPMENT
TRUCKS
PIG AUGER
TEXTBOOKS
POLE BARN
BLUEBERRY BUSHES
JOHN DEERE "MULE"
JOHN DEERE 50HP TRACTOR
GOATS
HAY BALERS
LOBSTER BOATS
FISHING BOATS
EGG WASHING MACHINES**

**LAYING HENS
DIGITAL INCUBATOR
PORTABLE SHEEP FENCING
UPHOLSTERY MACHINE
SAWSTOP TABLE SAW
LASER ROUTER
DUMP TRAILERS
WELL DIGGING EQUIPMENT
COMMERCIAL VACUUMS
PLUMBING SUPPLIES
ROOFING MATERIALS
FURNACE
WELDERS
GRAPHICS SOFTWARE
MACBOOK LAPTOPS
IPADS FOR BUSINESS
PRINTERS
EQUINE THERAPY TRAINING
HORSE TRAILERS
BIKE TRAILERS
CAR TRAILERS
SEMI TRAILERS
FLORAL COOLERS
SCREEN PRINTING PRESSES
SIX WHEELED UTVS
ATVS FOR FARMING**

WORK VESSELS FOR VETS PARTNERS

Working Together to Help Veterans Succeed

No man is an island, and that's true for veterans. Work Vessels for Vets maximizes its ability to help by partnering with fellow causes across the nation. The combined efforts reach more veteran-entrepreneurs with the help they need to achieve their dreams of self-employment and post-combat careers.

ENTREPRENEURIAL BOOTCAMP FOR VETERANS



Business School Programs at Syracuse University, Purdue University, University of Connecticut, Louisiana State University, Florida State University, Texas A & M, Cornell and UCLA.

The EBV Program brings business executives together with budding veteran entrepreneurs for free training classes. Work Vessels for Vets sends hundreds of laptops to disabled veterans at EBV programs and also has equipped many start-up businesses with critical tools.

“I have worked with Work Vessels for Vets for several years, on a weekly basis. I am more than happy to attest to the great work they do for veterans, in a vastly underserved niche in the area of work-force reintegration for veterans. In truth, I don't know how they manage to do what they do. It's truly amazing how resourceful they are when it comes to obtaining equipment for veterans. I have referred many, many of the veterans in my own program to them in the past, and will continue to do so in the future. They are absolutely part of the solution to the manifold problem of veterans' post-combat, post-enlistment reintegration. They are miracle workers!”

Lt.Col. MIKE ZACCHEA
Director, UCONN Business School—EBV Program
Founder, US Veterans Chamber of Commerce
Director, Entrepreneurial Bootcamp for Veterans UCONN

FARMER VETERAN COALITION

We cultivate a new generation of farmers and food leaders, and develop viable employment and meaningful careers through the collaboration of the farming and military communities.



Work Vessels for Vets works closely with the **Farmer Veteran Coalition** to assist America's veterans who pursue careers in agriculture after military service. WVFV refers applicants to FVC for training and programs in farm management, and FVC recommends candidates in need of critical farm equipment to WVFV. FVC Fellowship Fund awards equipment annually, while WVFV awards are made on a rolling basis throughout the year. Working together, FVC and WVFV have helped hundreds of veteran-farmers begin their new lives.



The **Homegrown By Heroes** (HBH) label is the official farmer veteran branding program of America. The label tells consumers that agricultural products bearing the logo were produced by U.S. military veterans. Additionally, farms and agricultural businesses that display the logo are certified by Homegrown By Heroes.

“WVFV supplied me a tractor so I could attend fellowships with Veterans Farm and Farmer Veteran Coalition. Because of the tractor I was able to start farming a 10-acre plot in Newberry, Florida even with great physical limitations due to combat injuries. You changed my life; now I pay it forward through 10 CAN, Inc, to honor, revive, and grow Military and First Responder families through outdoor recreation, education, and rehabilitation.”



FLORIDA

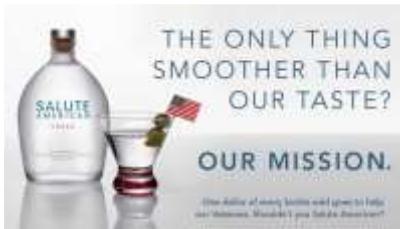
US Army MSgt Matthew Burke

WORK VESSELS FOR VETS cannot do this alone. Many generous donors, including these foundations and corporate partners, share our mission to equip America's injured veterans.

NEWMAN'S OWN
FOUNDATION

*"It is not so much a responsibility to support them, but more a privilege to express our gratitude for their service....We are proud to fund **Work Vessels for Vets** as they work to make a difference for the men and women who have served."*

Bob Forrester, President and CEO, Newman's Own Foundation





Freedom Medal (\$200,000+)

Newman's Own Foundation

Medal of Honor Donors

(\$20,000-\$100,000)

GAMMILL Co.

Academy of Country Music

Bob and Blanche Boucher

Foster Family Foundation

Barrett Family Foundation

Joan Power & daughters

Salute American Vodka Co.

In Memory of Mr. Love

Rock 'n Roll Rick Productions

Five Hour Energy

Michael Bolton Charities

Gold Star Donors (\$10 -\$20,000)

Myers Family Charitable Foundation

Laura Roman

Specialty Lighting Group

AVON UNICO Golfers

Dockery Family

Jeffrey Lent

Silver Star Donors (\$5 -\$9999)

Brescome Barton Distributors

Camp Ave. Carwash

PMW Marine

Valenti Family of Auto Dealerships

VETS AID

SkyDive for Vets

Col Kevin Brown, US Army (ret.)

Word of Mouth—Our Supporters Speak

Over the past 10 years we have had so many generous and thoughtful contributors: those who donate their time, those who donate material goods to enable our veterans, and those who donate funds to keep Work Vessels for Vets afloat financially. There is no way to separate which is a more valuable donation; they are all equal in our eyes. What matters most is that people understand our purpose and are committed to helping us perpetuate it. Below are unedited comments from just a few of our supporters; we thought you'd like to see them.

“Veterans are something I am very passionate about. Our country does not do enough to assist our veterans after they have given their time and efforts to protect our freedom. After researching WVFV, I was comfortable that they use the majority of their resources to actually assist veterans to find their next chapter in life. I love that many of the items provided to the vets allow them to chase a dream or function in a capacity where they can use their talents. One great example is the jewelry maker...I wear earrings made by her almost daily. I wholeheartedly believe in what WVFV is doing and wish I could do more to help.”

- Ralyn Wheeler, monthly donor

“My husband is a Vietnam vet who had a very successful career in business while serving part time in the Connecticut Air National Guard. As a retiree he wanted his military pension to go toward helping disabled veterans. When I happened to read a news article about WVFV and realized that John Niekrash had been an eighth grade student of mine the year my husband was overseas, I contacted him. What an honor to be able to help such a wonderful organization! Nothing could be more gratifying than seeing our donations give brave people and their loved ones a new lease on life—not to mention how our dollars are greatly multiplied by the incredibly low overhead, as well as the generosity of merchants who often supply needed equipment at cost or even for free. We feel hugely grateful to John and Cathy and marvelously blessed to be part of the WVFV family!



- Blanche and Bob Boucher

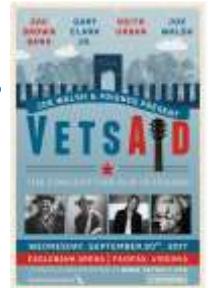


“We are proud to support the Work Vessels for Veterans program. These men and women work hard to support and protect our country, and this program helps them to get a fresh start or opportunity they need when they return from their service. The program has helped so many returning vets, and in turn their new adventures have supported the communities in which they live. I hope our continued support will help this program thrive and grow over the years to come. I cannot believe it has already been 10 years. Congratulations on your continued success.”

- Rob Valenti, Valenti Family of Dealerships



“Congratulations! Work Vessels for Vets, Inc. was selected as a charity partner for **VETSAID Concert for Our Veterans**. Your org is 1 of 10 smaller organizations that will be benefactors of donations made supporting this concert.” Joe Walsh



“We are proud to fund Work Vessels for Vets as they work to make a difference for the men and women who have served.” - Bob Forrester,
President and CEO of Newman’s Own Foundation



Work Vessels for Veterans, Inc and **Lifting Lives Foundation of the Academy of Country Music** pooled resources to purchase a new \$50,000 tractor for a deserving warrior.

A special thank you to Col. Kevin Brown, Chairman of Mohegan Tribal Nation and Mohegan Sun, founder of **VETS ROCK**, whose steadfast support of Work Vessels for Vets has raised thousands of dollars and brought hope to wounded veterans.





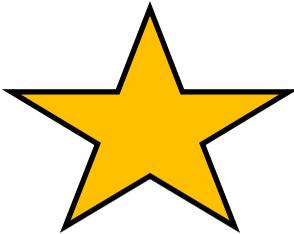
THE PATRIOT STAR AWARD



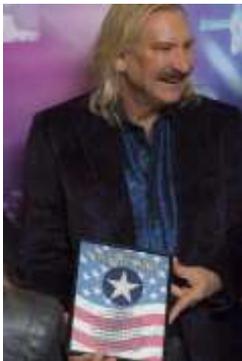
*“No person was ever honored for what he received;
Honor has been the reward for what he gave.” - Calvin Coolidge*

Every once in a while there are those whose generosity and commitment deserve special recognition. Work Vessels for Vets created the **PATRIOT STAR AWARD** to bestow a special honor upon those individuals and organizations who stand out in dedication to our mission.

The **PATRIOT STAR** is made from a flag flown over the Battle of Fallujah, Iraq in tribute to America’s military heroes.



**NEWMAN’S OWN
FOUNDATION**



Joe Walsh/VETS AID



Dave Foster



GAMMILL, INC



Mike Ennis/CT Vets

OUR VETS TELL THEIR STORIES BEST



Mickey Clayton, ★ US Army SGT (ret.), Scio, Oregon

I'm a disabled OIF/OEF veteran, with extensive physical disabilities from service-connected injuries in Iraq. I came home and started a small ranch in Oregon, and Work Vessels for Vets came through with a much-needed grant to purchase an ATV for me. With the ATV, I'm now able to check fence lines, do repairs, bring in injured or sick calves and sheep, haul hay out to my farthest pastures, bring in water trailers during summer months, and accomplish much work that previously I was forced to rely on the kindness of friends for. This organization is highly professional, deeply supportive, and personally invested in every single veteran that they help. Furthermore, they encourage vets to help not only themselves, but to succeed and grow until they can help other veterans in their own turn. This fosters a sense of community that goes beyond our military background, and invests into the wider society that we are all reintegrating into. Please know that donations to Work Vessels for Vets go to real live people, and to veterans who actually need the assistance, and use it to better both themselves and their communities.



EQUIP A VET...

CHANGE A LIFE

"I wanted to let you know how appreciative I am for everything you have done for my family and all the veterans you have touched. It's not just the tangible things you are graciously able to provide. It's so much more than that. The hope, support, and direction you provide us helps us realize we really aren't forgotten."

**USN CWO S. Farmer,
WYOMING**



RHODE ISLAND



NEW YORK



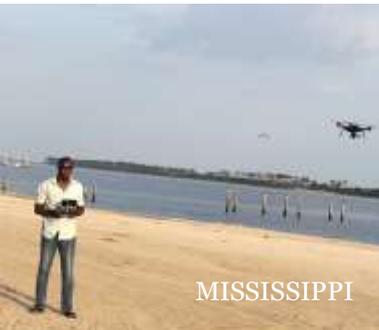
KENTUCKY



TENNESSEE



HAWAII



MISSISSIPPI



MAINE



WYOMING



MASSACHUSETTS

"I was medically retired from the USMC after receiving wounds from a roadside bomb in 2006. Work Vessels was able to raise money to help me get my ranch up and running. I would not have been able to get it started without their help."...USMC Kyle Cooper, FLORIDA



CONNECTICUT



FLORIDA



NEW YORK

"I was living in a tent, so essentially homeless, but still determined to further my education with taking online courses by walking to the local library. WVFV approved me for a refurbished laptop, making it easier to complete courses in other nearby establishments when the library was not accessible. I am no longer homeless and still use this very laptop to complete assignments. Thanks, WVFV!"

Anonymous



NEW HAMPSHIRE



WASHINGTON

★ **JUSTIN MORSETH** US Army Capt (ret.) 100% disability

Willing & Able Woodworking
Bloomington, INDIANA

“I applied for help with my business plan at the end of June, and by the middle of July they sent me the very expensive CNC laser machine that I couldn’t afford. I couldn’t believe it only took 3 weeks; I was expecting that it would take 6 months. Catherine Cook was amazing, always keeping in terrific communication with me, and of course the positive energy through her telephone calls or emails.”

Work Vessels for Vets thanks Next Wave Automation of Ohio for making an inkind donation by deeply discounting the laser.



★ **ANDREW WOOD** US Army Captain (ret.) 100% disability

Worthington, INDIANA

I am a combat veteran who sustained injuries to my back and legs. I needed help getting around the farm. Once I contacted Work Vessels for Veterans and amazing thing happened – they contacted me back and treated me with dignity. Most organizations treat you as a number. I put in an application with Work Vessels, and they contacted me again...I have never really won or received anything, and Work Vessels was dedicated to helping me. About four months ago Work Vessels told me to go to my local Kawasaki dealer and pick up a brand new Kawasaki Mule 610 4x4. I am still in awe.



US Army Capt. (ret.) Andrew Wood, INDIANA

US Army Captain Andrew Wood wrote to Work Vessels for Vets for help managing his 35-acre cattle spread. As a combat-injured veteran who is 100% disabled, he had trouble getting around and caring for his animals. Like many others, he found farm work therapeutic. WVFV was happy to use funds matched by Newman's Own Foundation to purchase a new Kawasaki Mule to accommodate his injuries.



"What an amazing organization! Not only did they assist me with obtain two key pieces of equipment for a start-up business, they also placed me in contact with an outstanding mentor with extensive experience restoring cars. I've since recommended Work Vessels for Vets to several friends and colleagues."



USAF Maj. Scott Bullis,
Golden Age Preservation
and Restoration, LLC
Colorado Springs,
COLORADO



New business in Chantilly helps drivers with disabilities

Driver Rehabilitation Center of Excellence, LLC

USMC Cpl (ret.) Josh Himan and USA Maj. (ret) Tammy Phipps



Work Vessels For Vets worked tirelessly to help us find a vehicle to use in our Driving Rehab (Adaptive Driving Services) start-up business. They were able to collaborate with a local dealer and we were presented with a Chevy Impala, that we immediately sent to Florida to have a state of the art Digital Accelerator Ring installed. We also installed a left foot accelerator. We have trained well over 30 clients using that vehicle and we can't be more pleased with the efforts of this nonprofit! Thank you, Work Vessels for Vets ! Josh and Tammy



USMC (ret.) Corporal SEAN ADAMS, Georgia

Work Vessels for Vets used funds from an anonymous donor and a matching grant from Newman's Own Foundation to purchase a specially adapted John Deere tractor valued at \$60,000 to help Sean manage his 67-acre farm. A recipient of the Purple Heart from injuries sustained in Afghanistan, he recently moved into his Smart Home built by RISE and the Gary Sinese Foundation. The IED blast took both of Sean's legs above the knee and injured his right and left hands as well as his right arm. He also lost partial vision in his left eye.

"I am so grateful for this unbelievable tractor! Thank you again for the assistance with regaining my independence. It's just what I need to help me maintain my farm for as long as my body is able," said Marine Cpl Sean Adams to the crowd of former comrades, friends and family at his farm.



USMC (ret.) Corporal PHILIP MARK RHYNE, Tennessee

One of those fellow Marines celebrating Adams' new tractor was a comrade who was injured in the same blast. Rushing to help his buddy Sean left scars on Mark too. Mark struggled with PTSD for years following the explosion that left him with a 100% disability rating. Like many returning vets, he didn't want to make a fuss. Working to regain balance, he turned to equine rescue and therapy for healing. His beautiful but aging Belgian horse makes you wonder who rescued whom. But Mark was feeding his horse out of the trunk of his old sedan. He desperately needed a truck. So Work Vessels for Vets gave him a Chevrolet Silverado pickup only a few months after Sean's award.



OKLAHOMA

Work Vessels For Vets helped me with purchasing corral fence panels for my longhorn cattle ranch. Our small operation, Victory Garden Homestead was in need of these to safely handle our cattle and Work Vessels For Vets helped us greatly when we really needed it. Thank you, Work Vessels For Vets!



TEXAS



VIRGINIA



TEXAS



MISSOURI

Sgt J. Golinhorst, OKLAHOMA

In the middle of medical studies WVFW provided a much needed laptop. It's folks like you that help vets like me feel supported, validated, and invested in.” Sgt M. Pereira, MISSOURI



KENTUCKY



FLORIDA



SOUTH CAROLINA

After the war, my wife, three children, and myself have really been struggling to get by. PTSD has taken its toll on us. I found Work Vessels for Vets, and they donated my family a car! I just felt so alone in the world since I came back from the war, but you guys really made me feel special. I haven't felt that way in a long time. Because of WVFV I can go to college now and not have to struggle."



CONNECTICUT



FLORIDA



FLORIDA



CONNECTICUT

A Connecticut Veteran



NORTH CAROLINA



MASSACHUSETTS



CONNECTICUT

★ **DAN BURGESS** US Army SSG (RET.), Amputee, Purple Heart
Afghanistan veteran
One Foot Quilting Cape Coral, Florida



On Nov. 20, 2011, on patrol in Afghanistan, Army SSG Dan Burgess stepped on an improvised explosive device (IED), resulting in a traumatic amputation of his right leg, severe injuries to his left leg, traumatic brain injuries and other injuries throughout his entire body, not to mention PTSD. Burgess could have done nothing else the rest of his life and still be considered a hero for what he lost while serving his country. Instead he decided to open a new chapter



in his life for himself and his family, with a little help from some new friends. Burgess wanted to pursue quilting as a career. Work Vessels for Vets and Gammill Company, a Missouri-based manufacturer of quilting equipment, teamed up to present Burgess a \$40,000 state-of-the-art quilting system adapted to the veteran's severe injuries. "On Dec. 15, Cathy Cook called me and asked if I was sitting down. She said she had talked with Gammill and they were going to donate a Statler Stitcher," Burgess said. "I was completely floored. It took the breath out of me." Gammill's truck and employees came to Florida

to install the system, which barely fit in the room. Among those present was Paul Statler, who invented the machine that uses computers to make the designs. "We looked at it and thought he's done a lot for us as a country. This is a way we can give back," said Michelle Weaver of Gammill. "This story fits in with why we do what we do at Gammill. We empower quilters to achieve their dreams." "It gave him purpose in life and he started to think about the future. He realized he could have a business and support his family," Cook said. "With some minor accommodations, we helped him get One Foot Quilting started."

Burgess said this day was one of the greatest blessings he has ever received.

(Excerpts by permission CHUCK BALLARO, Cape Coral Daily Breeze, FL)

Thank You

- ◆ Rona Mann, Writer, Radio Host, Rotarian and Volunteer and Blanche Boucher, grammarian for writing and editing articles for this publication and cheering us on.
- ◆ Lou Torregrossa of **Lou's Computers of Mystic** for refurbishing dozens of laptops for veterans at no charge all year long.



- ◆ Ron Wickham and **Skydive for Vets**, for raising funds for Work Vessels for Vets by asking folks to jump out of perfectly good airplanes.
- ◆ Col. Ted Larson, USMC (ret.), for wrangling volunteers and using his logistics skills to help get vets where they want to go.

- ◆ The prize-winning **SALUTE American Vodka Company**

for giving \$1 of each bottle sold across the nation to Work Vessels for Vets and other veterans' charities.

- ◆ **Avon UNICO** and other golfers for raising money for equipment by hitting little balls into little cups.
- ◆ J.P. Pereira of **PMW Marine**, whose annual fishing derby hooks funds for WVFV, rain or shine!
- ◆ All the grieving families who honor their loved ones with memorial gifts to Work Vessels for Vets so we may help other veterans.
- ◆ Thank you, all our friends, supporters, donors, volunteers, corporations, foundations, big and small businesses, fellow veteran service organizations,



**and YOU,
for helping us help veterans succeed!**