



2025 Annual Report

From our Founder

Dear Friends,

There are moments in life that stop you in your tracks — moments that shake you, humble you, and force you to look at the world a little differently. I had one of those moments this year. It was the kind of news that knocks the wind out of you, the kind that makes you question whether anything you've done has mattered at all. I felt angry. I felt heartbroken. And for a while, I felt like I had failed someone I cared about deeply.

But in the middle of all that, I came across a line that's been echoing in my mind ever since: "If not now, when?"

Those four words pulled me back to center. They reminded me why Project Gallantly Forward exists in the first place — not because any of us are perfect, not because we have all the answers, but because showing up for each other is the one thing we can always choose. Healing begins with that choice. Community begins with that choice. Hope begins with that choice.



This past year, I watched Veterans make that choice again and again. I saw people walk into our space carrying things no one else could see — and still choose to sit around a fire, take a breath in the woods, lend a hand on a project, or simply be present with someone who understood. Those moments don't show up in charts or spreadsheets, but they are the heartbeat of everything we do.

I saw you — our supporters, volunteers, partners, and friends — choose to show up. You made it possible for Veterans to rest, reconnect, and remember that they don't have to walk alone. You helped build a place where community forms naturally, where connection replaces isolation, and where purpose grows quietly but powerfully. The numbers in this report tell part of the story, but the real story lives in the people whose lives were touched this year.

As we look toward the year ahead, I feel something I didn't expect to feel in the middle of that hard moment: hope. Not the fragile kind — the steady kind that comes from watching people choose each other, again and again. We have more work to do, more Veterans to reach, more opportunities to create. But we also have a community that refuses to wait for "someday."

So here's my promise: we will keep showing up. We will keep building. We will keep creating spaces where Veterans can breathe, connect, and move forward — together.

Thank you for standing with us. Thank you for believing in this mission. And thank you for choosing "now."

With Gratitude,

Mission

Cultivating peace and purpose.

A rural retreat where Veterans can move forward together.



At Project Gallantly Forward (PGF), it's our goal to **reduce Veteran suicide** by combating one of its biggest risk factors: **Isolation.**

How?

Our approach is simple but intentional: create opportunities for connection and healing follows. We are building a community of support by offering R&R stays, classes and events that are low-pressure and approachable for all honorably discharged US Military Veterans.

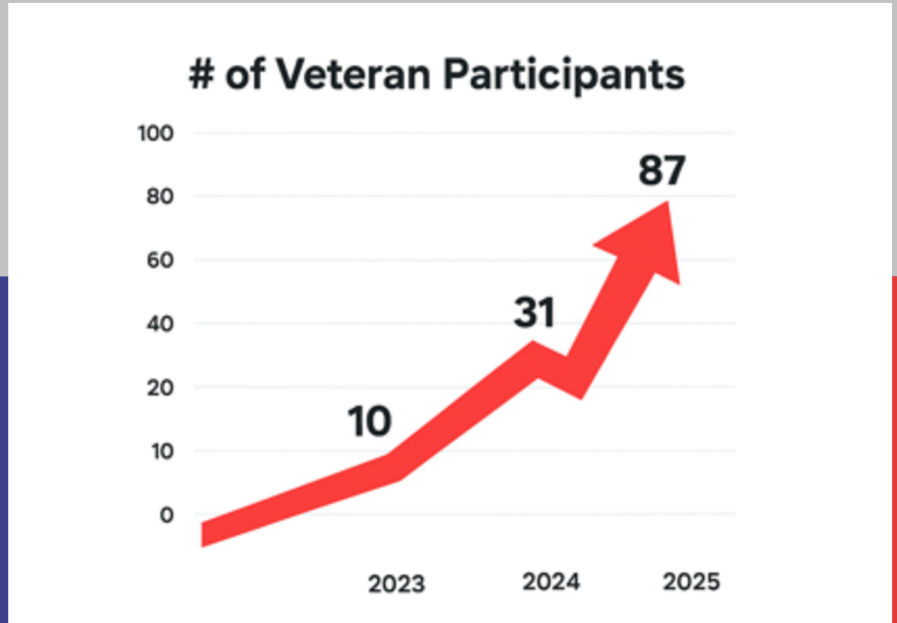
At PGF, we build programs with Veterans, not for them. Veterans are the experts in their own healing, and our role is to create environments where community forms naturally. The same support many relied on during service becomes a bridge back to purpose, belonging, and hope.

Research continues to show how powerful simple things can be: time in nature, meaningful activity, community, and being surrounded by people who understand. That's exactly what our programs offer. And it's especially important for the many Veterans who never walk through the doors of the VA but will show up for another Veteran, a project, or a shared experience. That's the foundation of PGF's mission and the heart behind every opportunity we create.

2025

Year in Numbers

87
VETERAN
PARTICIPANTS



16
CABINS STAYS

4
OFF-SITE
ACTIVITIES

26
FISHING TOURNEY

14
ON-SITE ACTIVITIES

28
PEER SUPPORT

Veteran-to-Veteran Connection: No Excuses, Just Opportunities

PGF's programs turn our mission into action by giving Veterans simple, low-barrier ways to reconnect—with each other, with nature, and with themselves. Every offering is designed to reduce isolation and replace it with community, purpose, and support.

Our programs include **R&R stays** that offer quiet rest, nature, and space to breathe; **outdoor activities** like fishing, camping, and hiking that rebuild camaraderie; **classes and events** that create low-pressure ways to learn, contribute, and connect; and **on-site projects** where Veterans work side-by-side toward something meaningful.

There's no stigma, no expectations, and no need to "be okay." Just opportunities to show up, spend time together, and rediscover the kind of connection that saves lives.



Veterans said they were **“Very Satisfied”** with their experience with PGF programs.



Report the statement “Since participation in programs with PGF, I feel like my support system of fellow Veterans has improved” as **“Extremely True.”**



Would recommend PGF to other Veterans.

“Being part of PGF has allowed me to connect with other Veterans and build my community.”

– Veteran Participant

“The love and brotherhood isn't just a one-time deal. It doesn't stop when an event is over like a lot of other Veterans support... The ability to have a chance to be around like-minded people that understand is truly relaxing.”

– Robert, Veteran Participant

“PGF has a true heart for veterans and their families. That heart leads all their efforts. From the initial encounter, PGF makes you feel like part of the family... They set themselves apart by building strong connection, and that is something all of us Veterans need.”

– Veteran Participant

Our People

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lucas Lewis

President and Founder
US Army Veteran

Christine Lewis

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Dr. Mark Miller

US Army (Ret.)

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US Navy Veteran

Chris Welch

STAFF

Jason Lane

Volunteer Coordinator

Ashley Latham

Fundraising Coordinator

Special Thanks!

Gary Phillips had the most volunteer hours in 2025!*

**Excludes board and staff*

2025 Volunteer Impact





Building

In 2025, our volunteers pushed the mission forward in remarkable ways. None of this happened alone. It was made possible by an outpouring of support—from community members sending essentials through our Amazon registry to local partners like Bryan College, C4 Church, TVA, and BCBST showing up to volunteer. Every contribution, big or small, moved the mission forward.

But the real building goes far beyond structures. A stronger community is being built here—one project, one gathering, one Veteran at a time.



- ✓ 2 cabins complete and open for Veteran R&R stays
- ✓ Flag Installed
- ✓ Hook-ups for Camping Installed
- ✓ Disc Golf Course Open
- ✓ Groundbreaking for Community Center



Open House

In May, we welcomed approximately 200 guests to our Open House—a celebration of the completed cabins and the many hands that made them possible.



It was a moment to honor every volunteer, donor, and partner who helped bring these spaces to life.

The Sequatchie County Chamber of Commerce led a ribbon cutting that marked not just the opening of the cabins, but the beginning of a new chapter for the retreat.



The day reflected the spirit of community that fuels PGF: TrailLife Troop 180 raising the flag donated by WoodmenLife, Chapter 6, a moving Quilts of Valor presentation, and the unveiling of the tiny library donated by the Soddy-Daisy Library.



Cabin Interior

The cabins are now fully furnished and open for stays. Veterans can now book at www.projectgallantlyforward.org/book.



The cabins themselves were designed with one purpose in mind: giving Veterans a place to rest, recuperate, and reconnect.

Veterans of any military branch can stay for one week at no cost. Thanks to a collaboration with UTC's Responsive Design class, every detail inside the cabins was created to maximize comfort and ease.

From thoughtful layouts to calming finishes, the spaces were intentionally crafted to feel welcoming from the moment a Veteran walks through the door.



Space to Reconnect

At the 2025 Annual Fundraiser - Stars, Stripes and Ugly Sweaters - Brittany Lawson, Air Force Veteran, shared about her stay at the retreat:

"I am Brittany and I'm here with my husband, Tim. I retired in 2023 and he retired in 2024. We were in the Airforce on an Army installation. There were only about 250 of us at Fort Campbell, and finding a place to get away is kinda hard to do. I celebrated my 40th birthday this past May, and I wanted to get away from something. I wanted to decompress. I wanted to unplug, not have any WiFi...

We came with my two daughters, and another family whose daughter was having a rough time with suicidal ideations. We needed time to decompress, because I did back-to-back deployments, then I got injured down range, and we moved to South Carolina and back to Kentucky. So we didn't really have time to just be a family. We got a new RV and we wanted to stay somewhere in the middle of nowhere, preferably farmland, because we love animals. So we found PGF...

“ Our family was always on the go and this gave us an opportunity to slow down and reconnect. We had several laughs, tons of hugs and beautiful pictures to always remember our time together ”

While here, the cabins weren't completed yet, but my children were heavily interested in helping and getting dirty. My youngest created a new outfit - We call it her "leopard pants" because she was staining the posts on the patio and now they have spots. We were able to teach the kids how to fold the flag, which is something obviously near and dear to all of us who serve...to be able to have a flag here to teach the kids and just have that moment with them was special.

His dog, Mina, she's a sweetheart. She actually babysat my kids most of the weekend while they roamed the farm, got lost, played in the woods, got wet, and got dirty, while us adults just hung around the campfire and enjoyed each other's company. So it was nice to get away and enjoy just being with each other without having the pressures of the real world, as we call it, pounding down on us.

We are definitely very grateful to be able to come back and now stay in the cabins that we helped paint and can't wait to see what else is on the horizon and what other events will be done, because I think it's amazing for Veterans out there, so I appreciate it."



Moments that Matter

"This experience was a meaningful way for us to reconnect, recharge and enjoy the outdoors together. From disc golf and hiking to time with baby calves and evening by the fire making smores, every moment reminded us of the simple joys of life. Our children made new friends and also disconnected from technology all weekend. The peaceful sounds of nature and the vibrant pollinator gardens quickly became some of our favorite parts of the stay. PGF Veterans retreat is truly a gift, offering the chance to slow down, breathe deeply and appreciate what matters most."

- Veteran R&R Participant



"I was going through a rough patch personally. It provided me with a safe place and a forest bathing program I never would have done on my own...I needed to focus on healing. I was able to do just that."

- Sam, Veteran R&R Participant

"A few weeks ago I was in a bad place mentally and I needed a place to go. I booked a stay and met with Lucas and we talked. It was late, cold, and raining and he stayed with me and helped me get my military bearing back and helped me see what was important. I stayed a few days and the woods helped me to reset. I am back home now with my wife and kids I am forever indebted to you both."

- Veteran R&R Participant

"Before I came, I felt like I was alone and nobody could understand what I was going through or how I felt. Afterwards I felt relaxed and more normal. I wasn't alone in feeling the way I did. It's not necessarily good but it's normal to feel that way and talking with others helps."

- Eric, Veteran R&R Participant

Purpose Restored

At the 2025 Annual Fundraiser - Stars, Stripes and Ugly Sweaters - Gary Phillips, US Army Veteran, (in his award-winning Ugly Sweater) shared how volunteering with PGF has impacted his life:

"I got out of the service back in 93...and got busy working 80 to 100 hours a week. I did that until 2022 when we moved down here and had a 40 hour a week job. I thought, oh, man, this is great; but it was not enough busy time. I started thinking about things, and in 2023 I hit a real dark spot, and found out I had anxiety and PTSD. I just figured it was normal, just another idiot.

I'd always enjoyed fishing, and we had a group that had a fishing tournament down here, but they all moved to the far East Tennessee area, and they said they weren't going to have a fishing tournament anymore. I just couldn't let that happen, because I know the enjoyment that the Vets always get out of it...So I went up and I talked to Lucas about it and he said we could run it under the nonprofit. Without his pushing, that thing would never have happened. Without Christine doing the all the administrative stuff it definitely wouldn't have happened. She was sending me, what are those things called? Spreadsheets?...

“ *I had fallen in a really dark place...had plans to end the pain. By the grace of God, He prevented that and led me to help. My therapist recommended getting involved with Veterans to help with coping, that's where PGF fell in place...The connection that Veterans have with each other is the best therapy.* ”

When I was talking to Lucas about the fishing tournament, he's like, "Why don't you come up to the retreat? We're having a workday up there." So I went up there and from that day forward, it's like - This. Is It. Working with Veterans...we didn't have to say anything. We could look at each other and know what we were talking about, know what we were thinking we're going to do next. I hadn't had that in 37 years. So ever since then, Lucas can't get rid of me. I'm there working on the cabins. That was super helpful, just being with guys who understand you.

We don't talk about ugly stuff or anything like that. It's just guys hanging out and talking, and that's the joy of being up there. It's nature.

The fishing is the most peaceful thing that I have found.



I take Veterans out during the week... And sometimes we talk, sometimes we try to fish, but we always come back as friends. Without you guys supporting PGF none of this could happen...it's all about just getting together, meeting people and healing. Your support is a big part of it."

“ *Before being involved with PGF I didn't have a support group, I had lost purpose. Now that I have been involved with PGF I have found a purpose and support group and many new friends. I have been able to do things that I once wasn't able to do. The support and encouragement has grown my confidence to do the uncomfortable things I once had. PGF has given me hope that I once didn't have, camaraderie with other Vets, pride in helping other Vets. PGF has had a huge impact in my journey with PTSD, depression and anxiety.* ”

Healing and Connection Through Fishing

The inaugural Fishing with a Veteran Tournament held on November 1 was a huge success. The tournament SOLD OUT with 25 teams and 28 Veterans participating.

Gary Phillips, our event organizer, brought together an incredible tournament—made possible by dedicated volunteers, generous sponsors, and the boaters and Veterans who showed up to share a day on the water. We're especially grateful to everyone who donated to cover boater registration for Veterans.

More than a friendly competition, the tournament paired local anglers with Veterans to see who could bring in the biggest catch while creating space for camaraderie and connection. Time in nature has been shown to support healing for those navigating PTSD, and this event offered exactly that: a chance to stand shoulder-to-shoulder, swap stories, and build genuine relationships.

Conversations about service, transition, mental health, and simply being seen don't always happen in everyday life. But events like this create the conditions where those connections can happen—where stigma softens and Veterans feel understood. It reminds Veterans that they're not alone, and that their community is ready to show up for them.

It was a memorable day on the water, but at its core, it was a catalyst for engagement, understanding, and the kind of connection that strengthens the entire community.



What's Next?

Expanded Offerings for visiting Veterans

- Local Veterans to take visiting Veterans on excursions such as fishing, hiking, or visiting local attractions.
- Partner with local resources to provide wellness opportunities such as equine therapy, forest bathing, and more!

Community Center completion

- The Community Center will be the heart of the Veterans retreat: a place where camaraderie, healing and shared purpose will come to life. Thanks to the generosity of the Wright Brothers Construction, 2025's triple match campaign, and the low-cost construction by Weathered Oak LLC, the Community Center construction is FULLY FUNDED and on target to be completed Summer 2026.



What is it?

A space for conferences and workshops, as well as classes which encourage Veteran connection, stress reduction, improved mental health and holistic coping skills for Veterans. Classes may include subjects such as martial arts, agriculture, yoga, meditation, peer support groups, etc. These will be available for both local Veterans and those staying at the retreat for R&R.

Additionally, this multi-purpose building will provide bathrooms for visiting Veterans who are not staying in the cabins, a laundry room, and expanded capacity for short-term stays including a handicap-accessible bedroom.



Join Us

At Project Gallantly Forward, everything we do is built on one simple belief: community heals. Every cabin stay, every fishing trip, every workday, every shared cup of coffee—these moments create the connection so many Veterans are searching for. And the truth is, we can't do any of it alone. Whether you're a Veteran, a family member, or a community supporter, there's a place for you here.

Help Furnish the Retreat

Scan the QR code below to access our Amazon registry and help us furnish the Community Center. Every item—big or small—supports a Veteran's experience.

Join Upcoming Work Days

As we prepare the Community Center for opening, we'll host volunteer days to finish projects and assemble items donated through our Amazon registry. Many hands truly do make light work.

Stay Connected

Watch for upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, and community gatherings at: www.projectgallantlyforward.org/events

The Most Impactful Way to Help: Become a Monthly Supporter

The biggest need any nonprofit has is consistent funding, and PGF is no exception. Monthly giving allows us to plan ahead, expand programming, and ensure R&R remains cost-free for every Veteran who walks through our doors.

Our monthly donor community—**Project Moving Forward**—is made up of people who commit to giving \$20 or more for at least six months of the year. Members are recognized on our website and receive a small token of thanks, but more importantly, they become part of the foundation that keeps this mission alive.

Join at www.projectgallantlyforward.org/donate

Veterans: Walk With Us, Lead With Us

PGF is Veteran-founded and Veteran-driven for a reason. No one understands the journey like those who've lived it. Veterans know what Veterans need—and we want to empower that. If you have an idea for how to support fellow Veterans, we want to help you bring it to life. We'll provide the space, the structure, and the support to make it possible. Here are a few ways to get involved right now:

Stay at the Retreat

Come experience the peace, the land, and the camaraderie firsthand. A week at the retreat is cost-free and designed to give you space to breathe, reconnect, and reset.

Take Visiting Veterans on Excursions

We're building a network of local Veterans who can take visiting Veterans fishing, hiking, exploring the area, etc. These simple outings often spark the conversations that matter most.

Be Part of the Community Center

When the Community Center opens, we'll need Veterans to help bring it to life—teaching classes, attending classes, or simply being present. Even volunteering once a week or once a month to make coffee and welcome drop-ins can make a world of difference.

Together, We Move Forward

Whether you're swinging a hammer, leading a hike, brewing coffee, or giving monthly, you're helping build something that lasts. You're reminding Veterans that they're seen, valued, and never alone. And that's the heart of PGF.

**Community Center
Amazon Registry
Link**



SCAN ME



A huge thank you to ALL of our generous donors. In 2025, many individuals and organizations made a direct investment in helping Project Gallantly Forward, not all are listed here, but we are grateful for each and every one.

Thank You

2025 Allies of PGF (\$1000+)

84 Lumber
Anonymous
Anonymous (2)
Anonymous (3)
Anonymous (4)
Anonymous (5)
Binkley Clark
Brannan's Heat and Air
C4 Church
Challenge 22 Sequatchie
Charlotte Swafford
Chattanooga Tree Service
Common Spirit/CHI Memorial
Consolidated Pipe and Supply
Doug McDaniel
Floyd's Hardware
Foametix
Gary and Molly Phillips
Go Baby Go Partners
Great Ginny
HCA Healthcare Foundation
Heath and Carol Rogers
Jason and Mandy Lane
Mark and Brittany Miller
Mission BBQ
Old Boy
Old Tar Woodworking
Osborne Foundation
Pacific Life Foundation

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Quality Home Improvements
Rent All Chattanooga
Southeastern Salvage
SVECares
Scripps Howard Foundation
Soddy Daisy Smiles

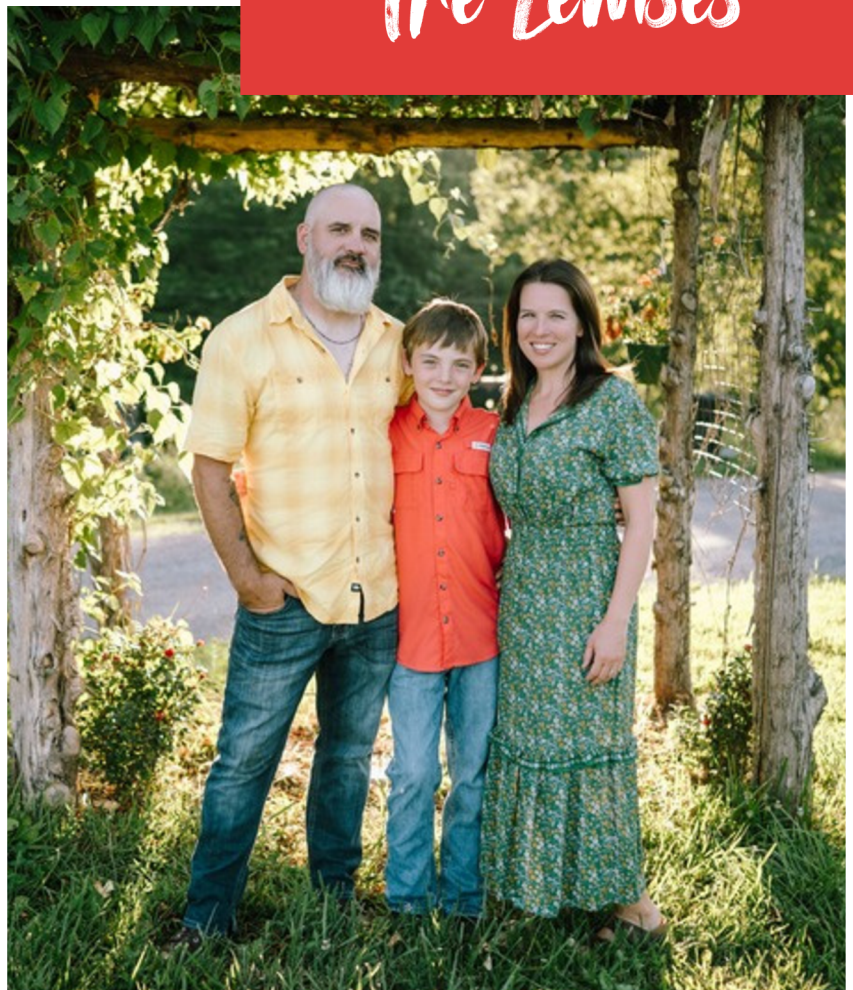
Texas Roadhouse
Tennessee Valley Authority
Tile Liquidators
Walmart Spark Good
Weathered Oak
Construction The Westin
Wholesale Supply Inc
Wright Bros Construction
Yogis Primo Promo
Zach and Ashley Latham

Thank You,
The Lewises

2025 Project Moving Forward

(Monthly Donations)

Anonymous (1)
Chattanooga Tree Service
Jim Fickley
Kathy and Ed Fickley
Mark and Brittany Miller
Soddy Daisy Smiles
Travis Uptegrove
Zach and Ashley Latham



“PGF is an excellent opportunity for us to give back to Veterans, to give back to those who have served, and to help those who have put their lives on the line for our country. And we really appreciate that opportunity...”

I also have the opportunity to serve on the Board of PGF, and I'll tell you that every donation goes a very long way...donations are spent in a very, very economical manner, and that nothing is wasted...if you do choose to donate, please know that your money is going to a really good place. It's going to be used in the best way possible, and it's going to be used to support Veterans.”


- Zach Latham,
PGF Board Member and Monthly Donor



Financials

	Fiscal Year 2023 (Nov 23 - Oct 24)		Fiscal Year 2024 (Nov 24 - Oct 25)	
CONTRIBUTIONS				
Cash Contributions	\$	221,204	\$	224,771
Non-Cash Contributions	\$	81,857	\$	100,407
Special Events	\$	4,403	\$	35,473
Investment Income	\$	-	\$	716
Total Gross Revenue	\$	307,464	\$	361,367
EXPENSES				
Total Program Services	\$	78,862	\$	136,235
Management and General	\$	3,842	\$	15,382
Fundraising	\$	20,417	\$	6,121
Total Expenses	\$	103,121	\$	157,738
NET ASSETS				
Change in net assets	\$	204,343	\$	203,629
Net Assets at Ending Balance	\$	203,581	\$	407,204

Project Gallantly Forward


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