

EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN:
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FIGHTING THE WAR AFTER THE WAR

Operation Second Chance provides hope and financial stability to injured veterans and their families to restore their strength and stand strong in civilian life.



For many veterans, returning home isn't the end of the war. It's a new series of battles marked by post-traumatic stress, physical limitations, and difficulty adapting to everyday life. Without support, it can lead to a downward spiral of crippling debt, addiction, and self-harm.

As the sister of four veterans, Cindy McGrew has witnessed this cycle too often to stand by. In 2004, she began providing clothing and companionship to a group of young soldiers and their families recovering at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Before long, this mission to help a few men get back on their feet evolved into a nonprofit: Operation Second Chance (OSC).

"Veterans often live at the poverty line," says McGrew, CEO. "They face eviction as they fall behind on rent, which leads to other serious concerns. We give them a second chance by getting them caught

up on mortgage and rent payments and focusing on bonding with their loved ones. Given what they've been through, it's a blessing for us to serve them."

HEROES RIDGE

With funds from an Estate, OSC was able to purchase a 275-acre property to create Heroes Ridge at Raven Rock, a transitional space for veterans to connect with one another, their families, and therapy animals.

Located at the top of a mountain near Gettysburg with four cabins, a dining hall, a pool and a recreation center, Heroes Ridge is a peaceful gated retreat with miles of trails for horseback riding and exploring on ATVs. The retreats—which include programs for veterans, families, couples, Gold Star Mothers, and battle buddies—come at no charge to the veteran or their family.

"When someone comes back injured from war, it affects the whole family," says McGrew. "Some need time for family connections, others need to see the men they served with. It's a time for them to meet other families and veterans, creating new connections as they offer support through their trials."

RESTORING HOPE

A recent veteran confessed in the guestbook at Heroes Ridge, "If you want my honesty, last week my only plan was to shoot my dog and then myself. It is real. That's all I had. Now as I sit here, with momentum growing in my soul, I finally feel God again



whispering into my heart that the power within my soul can crush evil. Not through vengeance, but through love."

Witnessing these testimonials, McGrew realizes how much a community can heal. "We want to show veterans that the morning will be better," she says. "We'll work together to make sure of it. If that's by removing their financial stress, providing meditation, or giving them time to be around people who have been through similar situations, we'll find a way to make it happen."

The most important message to them is "not to lose hope," she adds. "We are here to shower them with love and respect." Contact OSC today to see how you can make a difference.

