

LETTERS FROM WOUNDED WARRIOR COUPLES - WINTER 2025

We would love to say THANK YOU VERY MUCH for a very fulfilling and relaxing week, our first time in Panama City Beach. We both served in the Army at Fort Stewart, GA 1988-1994. The support from the area for Warrior Beach Retreat was beyond belief. We were picked to do the morning TV interviews. We were astonished by the half-dozen or more people who recognized us at the complimentary carwash, strolling the hotel lobby, deep sea fishing, and eating in the outstanding, local restaurants. If we forget to thank anyone, we apologize as there are many, many, many to thank. The listing is in NO particular order. First and foremost, we want to thank the Lord for being able to experience this event and strengthen our 35+ year marriage. ☐ To the Copes and their dedication, commitment, and strength to pull off this event and use such a tragic event and turn it into a positive occasion and help hundreds of couples over the past 16+ years. ☐ Thank you to the Hyatt for great accommodations. ☐ To those brave men, women and kids who stood in the brisk conditions for the parade. WOW!! Seeing those American Flags flying in the breeze, especially in and around the bridge, did bring tears to both of our eyes. ☐ LTC West, your inspirational speech was, and will be something that will we build upon as we continue to grow to make sure we stand guard to protect this great nation of ours. ☐ LT Larry, thank you for our conversation after the ceremony dinner to discuss what a “HERO” really is in life. It was humbling to listen to the words and what inspired you to write your song. Also, thank you for confirming that Krispy Kreme is the donut of choice for the police force. 😊 ☐ Thank you to those who came through the greeting line after the WBR Ceremony to share your stories and say thank you. ☐ The police escorts for the parade and dinner were powerful and made life much easier to arrive as a group to the meeting place. Jeanne only wishes she could have ridden in one of the police cars. ☐ To all the area schools who composed letters/cards, Thank You for the words of thanks and encouragement. ☐ Thanks to Tabitha and Mike for the immediate concern and support for our needs as evident the first night after dinner with genuine, loving hugs. ☐ To the volunteers who assist the Copes in the coordination of this event, thank you for sacrificing your time and energy to organize and support. As volunteers ourselves, we know it is rewarding. ☐ Thank

you to the local businesses who donated their products and services to show their appreciation of those attending the retreat. They added extra. ☐ A shout out to Jonathan Cope for the conversation and strength to remain optimistic in life especially when life experiences bring you down. An entertaining time was had playing putt-putt! ☐ Although only 2 fish were reeled in, thank you to Craig, Captain Charlie, and the entire staff of Jubilee Deep Sea Fishing, for an exciting, and sometimes turbulent time deep sea fishing! ☐ Ronnie and Debbie Mills – Thank you for the great conversation over a few dinners and THANK YOU for your service. Ronnie! ☐ Thank you for the extra free activities. We enjoyed putt-putt at Coconut Creek, the Man in the Sea Museum and the ride on the Sky Wheel. ☐ To the Pancakery- I have had a meat lovers' omelet, but nothing will compare to your version. The omelet was OVERFLOWING with bacon, sausage and ham. EXCELLENT FOOD and SERVICE. ☐ Thank you to the volunteers who coordinated the Fish Fry at the Oakland Terrace Club. All the food and desserts were top notch! ☐ A shout out to those who donated the gifts at the Fish Fry. We were both blessed to receive quilts, and Jeanne received a quilt handbag. We won a handmade wooden serving board also. ☐ Although I didn't catch a grouper, I was blessed to catch the elusive coral steel rod and have a picture to prove it. Thank you to the Jubilee Deep Sea Fishing staff for capturing the moment and the quality gift bag the night of the Fish Fry. ☐ During the Sea Screamer boat ride, we were blessed to see plenty of dolphins and capture the moments of them jumping in and out of the Gulf of America on our cameras. A special shout out to the captain of the boat for allowing each of us to drive the boat. A great time and great views of the shoreline.

US Army Captain Daniel Ferrere & US Army First Lieutenant Jeanne Ferrere

Tina and I want to take this opportunity to thank you for everything. Warrior Beach Retreat is an amazing organization and you are amazing people. Words cannot express how much this retreat meant to us. During the retreat we could feel your love and compassion. Your passion for serving our wounded veteran couples is inspiring and infectious. You are a force of nature and God is using you to make a difference in your community, and country. You truly turned Joshua's tragedy into Triumph. His injuries may have taken his legs but I could never take

his spirit. He is an invitation to us all and the sacrifices he made for our country will never be forgotten.

To the Warrior Beach Retreat staff and volunteers, thank you for treating us like family! Thank you for being valued members of your community and most importantly thank you for being great Americans! I know Linda, Phillip & Jonathan appreciate all you do for them and Warrior Beach Retreat would not be the same without your steadfast support.

To all the businesses that provided support or free items and services to the Warrior Beach Retreat couples I say thank you! You are staples of your community and your kindness shines bright for everyone to see. Hyatt Place, The Grand Marlin, Jubilee Deep Sea Fishing, Capt. Anderson's, Serenity by the Sea Spa, J. Michael's Restaurant, Boardwalk Convention Center, Sea Screamer, Dat Cajun Place, Bayou on the Beach, The Pancakery, Dave & Busters, Bayou Bill's Crab House, Gulf World Marine Park, Zoo World, Wonderworks, Ripley's Believe it or Not, Coconut Creek Family Fun Park, Sweet Frog Premium Frozen Yogurt, Great Clips, and Sky Wheel. Thank you for supporting our Wounded Warriors.

To the students that wrote letters and cards for us I say thank you! Your thoughtful words were so nice and were a great welcome at the beginning of the retreat. I spent the first night at the retreat reading those letters. I love to see young people support our military and veterans. Students of Breakfast Point Academy, Deer Point Elementary School, Hutchison Beach Elementary, Patronis Elementary, and University Academy, we thank you for your support and your patriotism.

To the fellow Warriors & Spouses that attend the retreat with us. It was a pleasure to meet and get to know you. Daniel & Jeanne Ferrere, Sharita & Sheldon Johnson, Daniel & Christen Lowery, Chelsea & Benjamin Majeske, Leon & Lashunda McCord, Edward & Brenda Tyree, and Kaji & Maribel Villalobos, you guys are amazing and you now have friends for life.

To the Police Officers who escorted us to dinner each night and during the parade I say thank you!. Officer Larry Grainger and Officer Tim Bentley, you guys rock!! Please pass on our big THANK YOU to all your amazing officers.

To the Panama City Beach Community. Thank you for treating us like family. Thank you for being a patriotic community and most important thank you for supporting Warrior Beach Retreat. I have lived in many military communities but have never seen a community support their veterans quite like you. Seeing

everyone standing on the side of the road waving American Flags during the parade brought a tear to my eye. You have an amazing community that you can be proud of.

So many times people have thanked me for my service. I always found myself not knowing what to say back. What I tell people now is, the best way to thank me for my service is to be an American worth fighting for. Panama City Beach community, you are worth fighting for!!!

During my last deployment to Iraq I was wounded three times and earned three Purple Hearts. My wounds consisted of a broken neck, collapsed lung, fractured skull, fractured femur and shrapnel wounds to my left leg. I recently wrote and published a book titled Why My Heart is Purple. The book tells my story of being wounded and my recovery process and it also details my experience treating casualties of war as a Combat Medic. I would love to donate one of my books to the Panama City Public Library.

God Bless Everyone & may God continue to Bless America!

US Army Master Sergeant Matthew & Tina Sims

Hello and happy Monday, it's been one whole day since returning from the Warrior Beach Retreat and let me tell you all, I truly miss everything about this experience.

It was a blessing, an honor to be part of this amazing journey, even though it was short it was inspiring, overwhelming and beyond what both my wife and I expected, everyone from the PCB area; the Police escorts, the volunteers, the children that wrote those beautiful welcome letters, all the way up to the leaders of the Organization Linda, Phillip and Jonathan Cope made us feel like family!

Thanks for all the pampering, from the really awesome Hotel, to the fishing, the Spa Day, the Parade, the guest speaker Retired LTC Allan West and to all the great restaurants that fed us absolutely 5 star meals! Again we appreciate and love you all, thanks for making us feel special and loved.

This is not goodbye, this is until next time...
God bless everyone of y'all!!! And thanks for everything y'all.

1 Peter 3:8

Finally, all of you, be like minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.

US Army Sergeant Kaji & Maribel Villalobos

My husband and I would like to thank the community of Panama City Beach for their marvelous support in welcoming the Veterans and their spouses/caregivers from the Warrior Beach Retreat. It was very heartwarming to see how the community came together for an awesome event honoring those who have served and still serving. We cannot thank you enough for all of the accolades that also came with it. From being in a parade to being led by the Bay County Sheriff's Department every night for dinner. We have never had this opportunity or been treated in such a great way. The outpouring of love from each and every one of you was so overwhelming in a great way. There were tears of joy shed throughout the entire week. The compassion and care from every person was felt from the founders/organizers Mr. and Mrs. Linda & Phillip Cope, and their son Johnathan who went over and beyond for us all. Thanks to all of the volunteers who also helped in such a major way so that we were able to enjoy each moment. We thank you, thank you, and thank you!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

US Army Staff Sergeant Leon & LaShunda McCord

First and foremost, I would like to thank Linda, Phillip and Jonathan Cope for putting their all into this retreat, we have been on numerous ones, and this by far was the most pampered and relaxed I have been. So a huge thank you to the Cope family. I would also like to thank the Hyatt hotel for putting us in such beautiful rooms with gorgeous views, all of the restaurants that gave us meals and filled our bellies the whole time. The limo service for taking us to the spa and the spa itself for pampering us. The Bay County sheriff's department, where do I even begin with you guys, above and beyond amazing. Lt. Col West for coming to be our guest speaker. It was such an honor to meet you. To say that the community was amazing is an understatement, the way they came out and showed up for us made me feel like I really was appreciated for my service, never have I ever had that happen. To those struggling in your marriage or even not struggling and need some time away, I highly encourage this retreat. They truly make you feel like

family. To those I attended the retreat with, thank you for making me feel loved and welcomed with open arms. I have never connected with other veterans on a retreat like this. I miss you all already and hope to see everyone again soon. Sincerely thank you to everyone who had a part in this retreat. I know I missed many people and places but just know it is truly appreciated. This will be something I will talk about for the rest of my life.

USMC Corporal Chelsea Majeske & USMC Sergeant Benjamin Majeske

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Panama City Beach area. It is absolutely astonishing the amount of support and love this area shows veterans. The genuine well wishes have inspired a healing in our hearts and spirits. Your passion for supporting this retreat will be paid forward by ourselves and hopefully others that bore witness to it as well. Despite the chilly temperatures and wet weather your community came out in groves for the event and your compassion is infectious. The amazing letters and cards the students wrote to say thank you touched the hearts of our family deeply. To see the support of even the youngest in the area instills a patriotism our country desperately needs and we cannot thank you enough. The Cope family with your help is creating a legacy in your community that is unmatched. I pray that support never ceases and it continues to heal and bless both the veterans, spouses, and community it serves. The Warrior Beach Retreat, INC would not be the same without the steadfast community support. I encourage all to support each business that contributes to this mission. We would like to highlight a few of the businesses that extended the red carpet to us and deserve your support as well. The Hyatt Place Hotel hosted our stay and really provide top-notch customer service. We were met with friendly smiles and a “can do” attitude for any of our needs. One employee even made the effort to know our names and faces and made sure we felt important each time we even walked through the lobby. The local cuisine was amazing and the service was above reproach. Deep heartfelt gratitude for The Grand Marlin, Capt. Anderson’s Restaurant, J. Michael’s Restaurant, The Boardwalk Beach Hotel & Convention Center, Dat Cajun Place, Bayou on the Beach Café & Oyster Bar, The Pancakery, Dave & Busters, and Bayou Bill’s Crab House. Our bellies have never been so full! The Serenity Spa not only provided amazing food but a comforting and relaxing atmosphere most of the women had never had experienced before. Jubilee Deep Sea Fishing provided an amazing day despite the weather conditions for the men and picture proof of their catches and adventure. We have been blessed with new lifelong friendships from all of the volunteers, other participants in the retreat. The

Warrior Beach Retreat week was filled with events that will never be left behind. There is absolutely no way for one to forget being able to enjoy priceless time and connection with their spouse and others that support healing broken spirits. Just saying Thank you doesn't seem enough so we have found inspiration from this event to pay it forward as much as possible and encourage all to support it as well.

**US Army Specialist Brenda Tyree &
US Army Sergeant First Class Edward Tyree**

We are deeply moved by the support of the community during the Warrior Beach Retreat. We would first like to take the opportunity to thank the Cope family for all the efforts that were put into a great and wonderful experience. As we sat down to write this letter of thanks, we were overwhelmed with gratitude for a wonderful community. The fact that the community supported us with patriotism and welcoming smiles cannot begin to express our feelings. Thank you all for so much effort that was put into pampering us as veterans give something important that we are cared for.

We did not feel like just another number, we felt as if we belonged. Thank you for the devoted and selfless time put into the gifts, food, activities and the parade. Being a part of something so unique showed us that our sacrifices did not go unnoticed. Thank you for the rental car, hotel, spa, deep sea fishing, sea scream ride and the different dining experiences. This experience in this community will not be forgotten. You all have made a huge difference in our lives by sharing your experiences and lives with us through small conversation or through shared experiences. Thank you for the encouragement that there is life to live after trauma. We appreciate compassion and seeing the need and responding to it.

Thank you all once again

**US Army Chief Warrant Officer Three Sharita Johnson
US Army Sergeant First Class Sheldon Johnson**