



Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund
Wounded Warrior Center • Bldg H49 • Camp Pendleton, CA 92055
Phone: 760-725-3680, Fax: 760-725-3685, Web: www.semperfind.org

History of the Semper Fi Fund

“Our mission is crucial. Our duty is clear.”

Our story began in The Spring of 2003. Just back from Operation Iraqi Freedom, the first wave of wounded Marines and Sailors landed at Camp Pendleton, California. Karen Guenther, a registered nurse and spouse of an active duty Marine, saw first hand the challenges faced by wounded Marines and sailors as they returned from Operation Iraqi Freedom. She, along with a dedicated group of military spouses (Annette Conway, Sondria Saylor, Helen Toolan, Karen Kelly) began to organize Welcome Home activities at the hospital. They arranged travel for family members who couldn't afford airfare. They found ways to provide a specialized van for a Marine who is now a quadriplegic through the generosity of donors like retired Marine Colonel Jack Kelly. The group assembled and distributed care bags filled with toiletries and phone cards. And still, the injured kept coming.

Realizing that a growing number of families across the nation were facing similar situations, Karen assembled a dynamic team to expand the initial efforts to become a nationwide nonprofit so that wounded and critically ill service members and their families would never be alone or forgotten. Wendy Lethin, Dawn Olson, and Sarah Dalke came on board to take this dream to incorporation. Soon Joanna Woblewski, Lyndsie Hesner, Rene Bardorf, and Liz Quist joined them. The mission was clear: to provide critically injured and ill service members with immediate financial aid and quality of life solutions to lift the burdens of their new reality so each family could focus on their loved one's recovery. The group's first official headquarters? Karen's kitchen table.

The Fund's first official donation came from the Lighthouse Christian Church in Oceanside, California, the entire donation was given to the first three wounded Marines referred by the hospital, with the thought that if that was all that was raised, it would at least help these three wounded service members and their families at a difficult time in their recovery. Little did the Fund realize that this donation would be the first of many to follow.

In the years since, the Semper Fi Fund has transformed the lives of thousands of wounded and their families, providing over \$46 million in assistance. The Fund now has a dedicated small staff, plus more than 120 volunteers across the Nation and overseas. Administration and fundraising costs are kept to an absolute minimum, as to never forget the core mission.

The success of the Fund has been beyond what was first envisioned, due to the extraordinary generosity of patriotic citizens across the country. As the original members look back on the development of the Fund, they truly believe that divine intervention helped this Fund surpass the goals set for “helping those who preserve our freedom”.

The Marine Corps motto, *Semper Fidelis*, translates to “always faithful.” Our goal is to embody this spirit to the fullest, and to always be there faithfully helping Heroes in need.



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How We Help:

- Service Member Support
- Family Support
- Help with Combat Stress/PTSD
- Transition Assistance
- Adaptive Housing
- Adaptive Transportation
- Specialized Equipment
- Therapeutic Arts
- Team Semper Fi

Special thanks to the following men and women whose generous gifts of time and service helped build the Semper Fi Fund:

Peter Murphy, Esq.

General Al Gray

Lt. Gen. Newbold

Major Gen. Myatt

Colonel Saylor

Sergeant Major Sanders

Master Sergeant Bonney

Vince Bartolotta, Esq.

Daral Mazarella, Esq.

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