


HEARTBEAT SERVING WOUNDED WARRIORS®



Let the healing begin ...

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023



Letter from Janice Buckley,
President and Founder of Heartbeat Serving Wounded Warriors®

Heartbeat Serving Wounded Warriors® is the passion of my heart. As Founder and President, I consider it an honor every day to serve the most courageous heroes in our country and the world. Heartbeat is a team effort with many key people and great volunteers who are making this vision a reality.

When Wounded Warriors come home, because of their injuries, the spouse may have to quit work to be that 24/7 caregiver that is needed. That sets up a new financial dynamic in the family. More often than not, after the Warrior leaves their branch of service due to medical reasons, the wait for their VA claim can take many months. During this time, the Warrior is without funds until his disability pay becomes available. These Warriors that were completely in control of their lives, and doing what they loved to do in serving our country, now, are disabled. That is why we offer these programs, so that we can be that extended hand to these families. At Heartbeat we are choosing to be an answer. We are choosing to be a voice and not just an echo.

We have served many Warriors who were left on their own with no family support - homeless at a young age. That is not the way these courageous heroes should be treated. We must do more for them. After all, they have paid a very high price to keep our country free. Warriors and their families have told us that Heartbeat has been like a family to them, not only for the help they need but also to know that they are not alone with the struggles they face on a daily basis. For some Warriors, the battle they face when they come home is almost unbearable because the very same skills and training they utilized to stay alive while in a war zone are now making it difficult to be at home. This is one of the reasons why we offer three different types of therapy programs, Scuba Warriors®, Back in the Saddle Warriors® (BITS) Hippotherapy and Equine Therapy and our new service dog program: K9 Healing Warriors.

As Heartbeat continues to grow, we are very aware of how much the whole family serves our great country but at a high price. With spouses having secondary PTSD and children being put on suicide watch, we knew we had to do more. Though our Christmas Programs do serve the entire family, we felt our therapies needed to be made available to the family. So Heartbeat decided to allow spouses and children over the age of 11 years to be able to enroll in our Scuba Warriors therapeutic diving program at the same time as the Warrior. The hope was to bring unity and healing to the family.

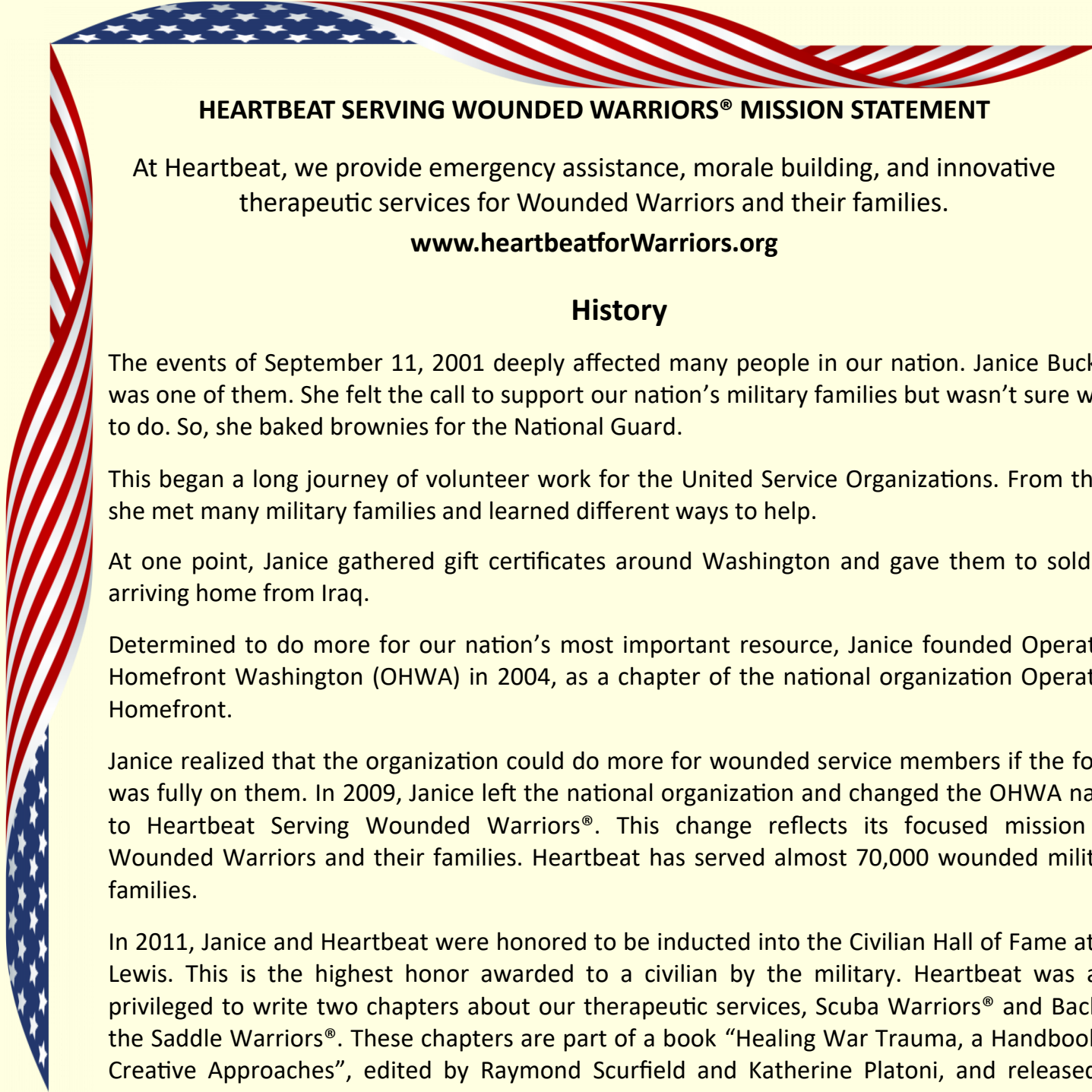
Heartbeat also added to our Back In The Saddle Warriors Equine Program a new extension: BITS Kids. We have seen so many Wounded Warriors with children that have disabilities or special needs, so after meeting with our equine team, we thought we could make a difference. So we extended the same therapeutic program to these children in BITS Kids as our BITS Warriors receive and we are delighted with the results.

If this country is to remain great, we must honor and treat our returning heroes with integrity and an open heart. These courageous and amazing Warriors live “visibly” in all they do by serving with honor, courage, integrity and respect. How can we do any less in serving them? They are the plum line of excellence for this country and we cannot ever let them down.

Please help us serve them as they have served us. With your help, we can make a difference.

Sincerely,
Janice Buckley





HEARTBEAT SERVING WOUNDED WARRIORS® MISSION STATEMENT

At Heartbeat, we provide emergency assistance, morale building, and innovative therapeutic services for Wounded Warriors and their families.

www.heartbeatforWarriors.org

History

The events of September 11, 2001 deeply affected many people in our nation. Janice Buckley was one of them. She felt the call to support our nation's military families but wasn't sure what to do. So, she baked brownies for the National Guard.

This began a long journey of volunteer work for the United Service Organizations. From there she met many military families and learned different ways to help.

At one point, Janice gathered gift certificates around Washington and gave them to soldiers arriving home from Iraq.

Determined to do more for our nation's most important resource, Janice founded Operation Homefront Washington (OHWA) in 2004, as a chapter of the national organization Operation Homefront.

Janice realized that the organization could do more for wounded service members if the focus was fully on them. In 2009, Janice left the national organization and changed the OHWA name to Heartbeat Serving Wounded Warriors®. This change reflects its focused mission on Wounded Warriors and their families. Heartbeat has served almost 70,000 wounded military families.

In 2011, Janice and Heartbeat were honored to be inducted into the Civilian Hall of Fame at Ft. Lewis. This is the highest honor awarded to a civilian by the military. Heartbeat was also privileged to write two chapters about our therapeutic services, Scuba Warriors® and Back in the Saddle Warriors®. These chapters are part of a book "Healing War Trauma, a Handbook of Creative Approaches", edited by Raymond Scurfield and Katherine Platoni, and released in 2013. In October, Heartbeat Serving Wounded Warriors was given the 2018 Outstanding Service to Veteran's Award from Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs. Out of 165 nominations, only 9 were chosen. It was an honor to be one of the chosen.

Each year Heartbeat continues to be honored by awards from the various military units in Washington State as well as accolades from civil organizations.

In April 2019, Heartbeat moved its office to Onalaska to be closer to all of the therapy programs. Now, instead of a three hour commute, the President and Founder drives only 40 minutes to participate in each of the three therapies.



HEARTBEAT PROGRAMS

Our brave Warriors and their families make daily sacrifices for all of us. Heartbeat believes it is critical to step up and serve those who give endlessly for our freedom and way of life.

When Warriors return home with physical and psychological injuries, everything changes. Health issues present unexpected challenges for the entire family. Injuries such as traumatic brain injury (TBI), post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and paralysis are life changing. Our goal at Heartbeat is to help our service members gain control over their health challenges and lead productive lives.

The military teaches our men and women to take care of themselves and others – they're givers, not takers. They don't ask for help. When their community voluntarily helps them, it creates a powerful impact on our wounded service member's emotional and physical well-being.

Emergency Assistance Program for 2022

Our Emergency Assistance Program delivers support in the form of food gift cards, rent, gas cards, utility payments and "emergency funds". Emergency Funds are for those Wounded Warrior families that are in dire straits. Frequently, they are living out of their car or have used all of their savings for rent and utilities and now are without food. Almost 12% of our Emergency Assistance Program budget is spent on this one category. In 2022, Heartbeat spent over \$28,000 for emergency services and the number of clients supported was more than double the number of clients in 2021.

Morale Building Programs



Knights of Columbus, Our Lady of The Americas
Donna "Mrs. Claus" & Bill Nash
deliver Christmas gifts to a Family

Christmas Wish: One of our largest programs where community families adopt Wounded Warrior families for Christmas. This connection creates a bridge of friendship and support. Both the military families and the community families love this program. Besides a warm connection that develops, beautiful gifts and sometimes dinners are also given. Sometimes the gifts for the Wounded Warrior family can include vital home repairs such as a new hot water heater or new brakes and rotors for the family car. It



HEARTBEAT PROGRAMS

is the season of miracles. More warrior and family members were adopted for Christmas in 2022 than the previous year. Heartbeat was able to fill in the gap and adopt those not adopted by the community.

Christmas Gift A Card: This is the 5th year for our Gift A Card Program. The beautifully designed and sewn envelopes by Diane Campbell and Project Linus were filled with gift cards for each warrior or family. Just under 800 were surprised by these gift cards. Sometimes these gift cards are used for Christmas sometimes they are used for more pressing issues. Fortunately, the warrior and family get to make that decision.



Christmas Toys: So many wonderful toys were donated through the outstanding support of Assistant Chief Kevin Crossen and the South King County Fire and Rescue. Heartbeat is so very grateful for all of the amazing toys and hard work that was provided so that 3 separate units had an overflow of toys for their kids.



Assistant Chief Kevin Crossen and the South King County Fire and Rescue



Carol Robinson, Dave Meyers, and Tony Robinson

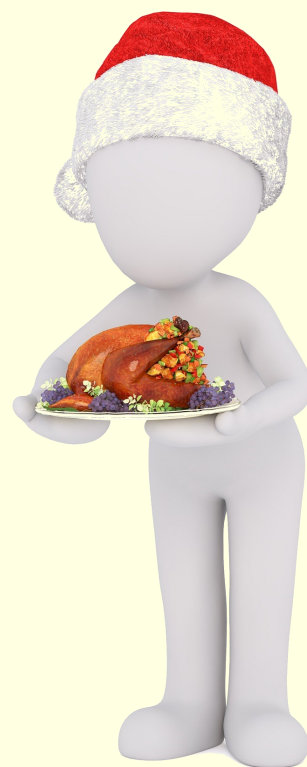
HEARTBEAT PROGRAMS



Back To School: Heartbeat spent almost \$17,000 for Special Forces, Rangers and Wounded Warrior children with new back packs and multiple school supplies. These children and their parents were so excited.

Thanksgiving Dinners: Heartbeat was also able to help almost 300 Rangers by partnering with the Family Readiness support assistant for Rangers for Thanksgiving so that they could have a delicious turkey dinner. Then there were 100 single Rangers who we provide a basket of homemade baked goodies. Included in the baskets were gift cards of \$50 for each warrior. We also gave gift cards to Special Forces by working with the Critical Care Coordinator for Special Operations Wounded Warriors. Heartbeat loves to work with these different support groups for the warriors. In all, Heartbeat helped to give over 500 warriors or family members a truly special Thanksgiving.

A special thank you to all of the Knights of Columbus, Tulalip Cares, and The Biella Foundation for their generous donations that went above and beyond what we could have imagined.



THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

Back in the Saddle Warriors® (BITS)

Heartbeat's Equine Assisted Therapy Program, Equine Therapeutic Riding, is used to capture those Warriors who do not fit in the "normal box" for treatment. For many Warriors, sitting in a room with a therapist does not bring the desired results.



THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

Since horses and humans have identical hip movements when walking, sitting on a moving horse allows the Warrior's body to move naturally. It strengthens muscle groups. Staying upright on a horse requires balance, coordination and muscle strength. Injuries from war such as TBI, spinal cord injuries, loss of limbs and injuries due to shrapnel damage can be helped with this therapy.

Due to the continued generosity of The Biella Foundation, The Florence B. Kilworth Foundation, and Haggen Cultivating Community Together Fundraiser, Heartbeat is able to provide the necessary expertise for all of our Wounded Warriors in the program.

Warriors also participate in grooming the animals, which can strengthen the bond that develops between them and the horse.



The warriors begin the therapy day grooming and preparing his horse for riding. Horses are gentle and sensitive and have a unique ability to sense human emotions. This special bond helps warriors to work through difficult issues.



Grooming reinforces that bond. It helps the warrior to slow down and enter into a calm place that the horse picks up on and responds to positively.

It is beneficial for both.

THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

This in turn can help the Warrior to heal emotionally. Warriors are natural protectors. It is their job to take charge and perform brave acts every day. Injuries often make it difficult to contribute in the same manner. It changes the Warrior's role – in the family, in the job and in society.

Horses are gentle and sensitive and have a unique ability to sense human emotions. This special bond helps Warriors work through difficult issues.

This can build confidence which changes their outlook on life. In short, it can help bring healing.



One of our female warriors is blossoming in this program. She recently stated on her evaluation:

Truly the best program I have been fortunate enough to be involved with. I find that I am connecting what I learn during my sessions into my daily life. (February 2023)

Today was amazing. I can't imagine my life without it. I feel truly blessed to have this opportunity. (March 2023)



THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

Heartbeat offers Equine Therapy for both Warriors and any disabled child of a Wounded Warrior. Heartbeat is fortunate to have a PATH certified instructor who is equally competent to design therapies for both the Wounded Warrior and the disabled children. The program for the children is called BITS Kids. Both BITS and BITS Kids take place at a beautiful and serene ranch, the perfect place for therapy and healing.

Healing Hearts Ranch is home to more than just the horses. One BITS Kid's participant (shown in the pictures below) loves the resident kitties and dogs that often accompany them on the trail. It makes for a relaxing and fun atmosphere for the children. It truly is a place of healing.

In a recent therapy session one of our disabled children (shown to the right), who is autistic, was able to recite his mother's phone number, and spelled his name correctly. His mother was in tears. This was a first for him. Even our therapist was impressed: "I am so impressed by how motivated he is to learn and do things with the horse and for his own empowerment in his life by spelling his own name and learning a phone number to help keep himself safe".

His mom sent a note to our President and Founder:
Thank you! Your organization has been such a blessing for us during such a terrible time in our life. We are so grateful to you.



THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

In October 2020, Heartbeat initiated an experimental program called BITS Couples. This therapy program works with horses to strengthen relationships through ground based activities and at times riding.

The relationship with horses through horsemanship brings powerful ways of healing trauma, and gives couples insight that can help improve all areas of their lives. Each couple meets once each week for 1 hour. Goals are determined in advanced and assessed after each session.

Our newest equine program is BITS Spouses. Each spouse gets an individual lesson that includes not only riding but also trauma awareness, grounding, distress tolerance and self-compassion utilizing the horse. This course has been very successful in helping spouses of Wounded Warriors deal with the difficulties they face.



Female Warrior: *"I am learning to lead without forcing an agenda."* According to research, bidirectional healing occurs when we are near horses. Sometimes we need only be in a horse's presence to feel a sense of wellness and peace.



Wounded Warrior riding on the trail. Understanding the horse enables the warrior to be a better rider.

As with all of our therapy programs, Heartbeat pays for all costs associated with this program for every Wounded Warrior. Heartbeat also evaluates this program's success statistically and since its inception, Equine Therapeutic Riding has shown amazing changes in six different aspects: improved muscle tone, balance, posture, coordination, strength, and flexibility.

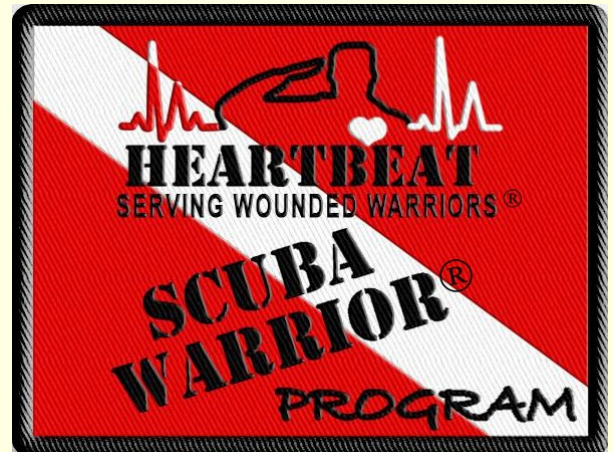
Balance is particularly important for warriors with Traumatic Brain Injury. Heartbeat also noted that several of the warriors were able to come off many of their medications and one warrior who needed a cane for walking was able to walk independently after weeks of Equine Therapeutic Riding.

THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

Scuba Warriors®

Therapeutic scuba diving allows the Warrior to move limbs that were previously injured during the war and may be too painful to move on land. This therapy is a unique healing activity in which the weightless environment gently supports muscles and limbs that have been ravaged by combat. The ability to move pain free for the first time can contribute to positive changes in attitudes.

For Warriors struggling with PTSD and TBI, the waters offer a quiet place to be, a place free from the constant storm in their heads. In combat, the Warrior needs to be hyper vigilant to any possibility of danger. They learn not to show fear, to do whatever it takes to keep fear buried deep inside. When they return home, it is a confusing and sometimes painful time. This changes when they are underwater. One Wounded Warrior stated “I



hear the bubbles and the air moving through the system and it is calming. I find I have more energy after diving and it calms my thoughts.”

For some of these Warriors, even a mundane event such as sitting in traffic can trigger trauma. During these times, the Warriors are taught to return to their underwater environment and that even in the most trying of circumstances, they need only breathe.



Scuba Warriors practice breathing techniques in the pool. It is important for the warrior to perfect all of these new skills in the pool under close supervision in preparation for the open water dive. Another skill that is practiced and that most new divers find difficult is the mask skill. This skill is learned to make sure a warrior can comfortably flood a mask or replace it underwater. With this skill, they can calmly recover the mask, if it is accidentally knocked off, and clear out the water safely. They must be able to get passed the urge to inhale through the nose immediately upon taking off a mask which just leads to a nose full of water.

Because of these benefits, Heartbeat offers an open water certification course. Each Warrior enrolled in the course also receives their own bag with made to fit fins, mask, snorkel and boots. This



THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

course enables the Warrior to receive a certification that allows him/her to dive outside of the class. Heartbeat also supports this added activity by providing equipment at no cost to the Warrior.

Because the family unit is one of the first casualties of war, being together diving can help with the healing process. Four years ago Heartbeat incorporated spouses into the program. Several years ago we allowed children (over the age of 11) to be part of the program with their family. This family activity can generate trust, increase communication skills, and help forge bonds where none may have existed before. It is healing for the entire family. We recently enrolled a family that was very fractured and after the Scuba Program communication and trust have been so much better. They continue to dive together and are in close contact with the rest of the Scuba Warriors for support.

Heartbeat offers Advanced Dive classes and “Stress and Rescue” classes in addition to the Basic Open Water Course. We have also expanded our curriculum to include a Dive Control Course, which is the big step before taking the Instructor’s Course. Upon completion of the “Dive Con” Course, the Warrior can be classified as an assistant to instructors and find employment in this field. Our scuba program is now officially recognized by the Warrior Transition Battalion as a physical therapy for the Warriors

and not a recreational sport activity. Also, the Veterans Administration is interested in adding all of our therapy programs to their web site and as an added phone application for their Wounded Warriors to utilize these successful programs.

The instructor and all of the safety divers are NAUI (National Association of Underwater Instructors) certified. Heartbeat pays for all of the costs associated with all of the scuba course. In 2019, Heartbeat revamped the Scuba Program. It is held on the week end instead of during the week, to accommodate more warriors. The

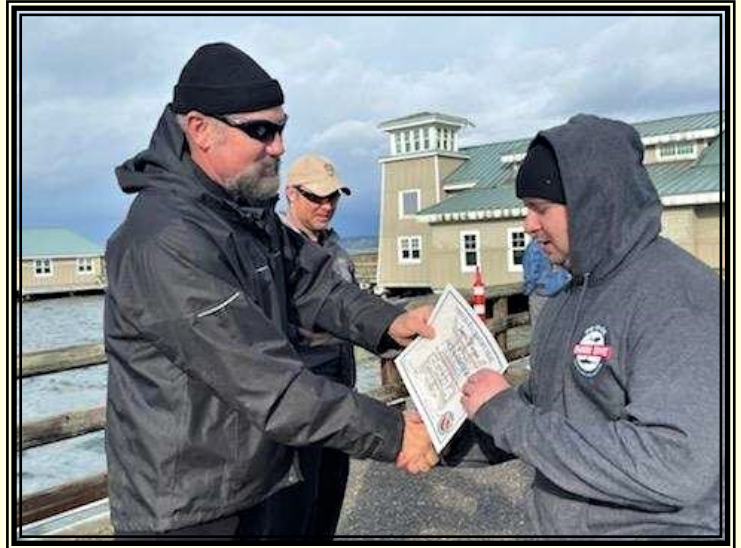


Scuba Warriors get ready to practice in the open waters of the Puget Sound. The first weekend of the course is spent in class and the pool. The second weekend of the course is open water practice and the open water test.

THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

size and efficiency of our organization allows us to offer more flexibility to those we serve. The format will be similar to the week day program. The new swimming pool improves the success of the practice sessions.

Heartbeat welcomes to our Scuba Warrior Program a new Scuba instructor, Daniel Henderson who is a retired Special Forces Soldier. We are so very thankful that our new Scuba Instructor is so flexible with our program demands. This year we had several Rangers, a Special Ops Unit partake in the program. They were able to participate because the course is over weekends which did not interfere with their training during the week. Many of these warriors continue Scuba diving after the course as it helps so much with PTSD and TBI.



November scuba class receiving certificate after open water



November scuba class with Dan on far right and retired SF soldier on far L



Heartbeat Serving Wounded Warriors®

Leadership Team

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Janice Buckley, Founder and President

Janet Raulerson, Treasurer

Florence Dix, Secretary

Charles Farmer

Walt Amidon

ADVISORY BOARD

Mike Bohm

David Boze

Danny Dudek, Lt. Col.

Carl Higbie

Ron Monaco

Ed Nixon

Dan O'Brien

Steve Rapkoch

Carol Robinson

Tony Robinson

Other Essential Personnel

Kendra Giersch, Communications Manager

SCUBA Warriors®

Walt Amidon: Senior Advisor for SCUBA Warriors®, prior elite Navy UDT and three tours in Vietnam

Dan Henderson, retired Special Forces Soldier at Ranger Sport Scuba Adventures: Lead Dive Instructor.

Michael Garmin, Dive Master

Back in the Saddle Warriors® (BITS) and BITS Kids

Kristy Dees, PATH Instructor, Certified Peer Counselor (CPC) for Mental Health Support, and owner of Healing Hearts Ranch

Over 100 Volunteers who give selflessly many hours to our organization. Without their help, Heartbeat would not exist.

HEARTBEAT FINANCIALS

	Income	Expenses
Contributions	\$278,621	
Inkind	\$58,599	
Program		\$285,485
Administration		\$25,757
Fundraising		\$21,464
Total	\$337,220	\$332,706

Administrative Costs: 14.0%

Percent of Expenses for Programs: 85.8%

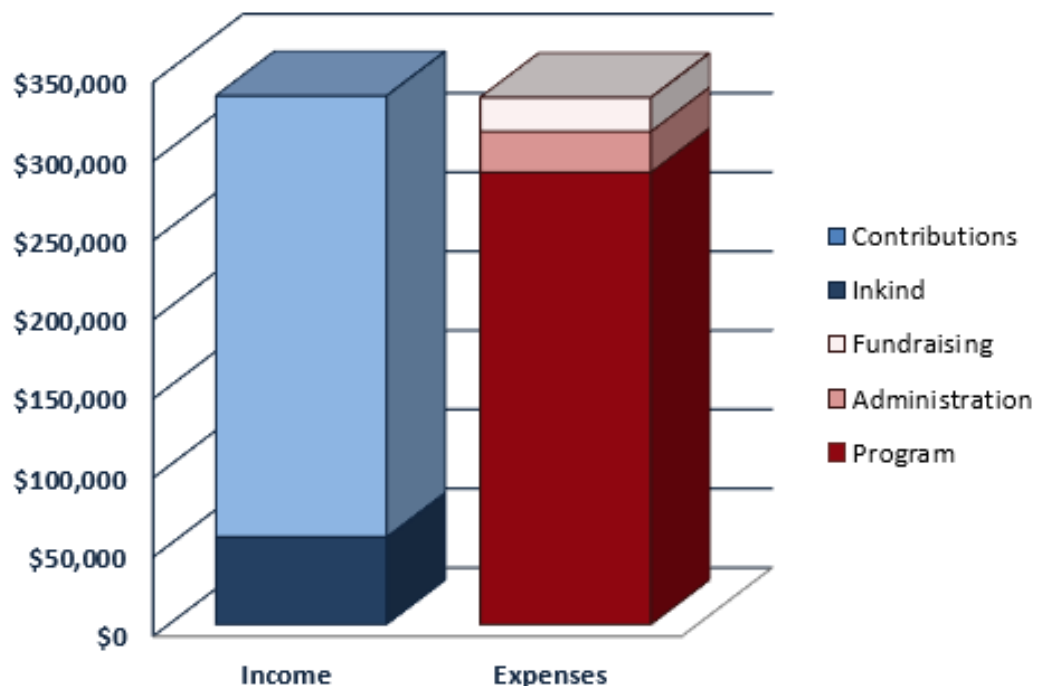
Percent of Expenses for Admin: 7.7%

Percent of Expenses for Fundraising: 6.5%

Total Assets: \$247,929

Total Liabilities: \$134

***Heartbeat:
Income and Expenses for 2022***



Heartbeat is extremely grateful and fortunate that our recurring donors and those organizations that fund our grants were so generous. We also had numerous new donors that helped us. We are so appreciative for all of those who gave in 2022. Many people and organizations have been supporting us since 2009 and we are deeply honored. THANK YOU!



HEARTBEAT'S DONORS

The Biella Foundation:

Heartbeat is extremely grateful to the Biella Foundation and Joni Wolfe for all of their financial support over the years. Since 2013, the Biella Foundation has been instrumental in supporting our equine therapy program: Back in the Saddle Warriors (BITS). Their donations have allowed our Equine Therapy Program to expand beyond the WTB (Warrior Transition Battalion) and to even support disabled children of Wounded Warriors in our BITS Kids Program. The Biella Foundation has also allowed Heartbeat to utilize some of the funds for our other therapy programs.

In 2022, the foundation helped with our Christmas Programs. We are so grateful for this. Thank you so much Joni and the Board of Directors at the Biella Foundation.



In the picture, from L to R: Cynthe Slaybaugh, PT, Mike Buccieri, and Joni Wolfe, Grants Administrator. Also pictured is Kosmo, one of the therapy horses.

Tulalip Tribes Charitable Contribution (Tulalip Cares): Since 2007, the Tulalip Indian Tribe has supported Heartbeat and our programs through the generous grants they have given us. In 2022 a grant of \$4,000 was awarded to our Christmas Give A Gift Card Program. Tulalip Cares has been almost like a partner with Heartbeat and we are so very grateful. THANK YOU!



For the last 5 years the Tulalip Casino sponsored a benefit for Heartbeat on Veterans Day, November 11th. It was a Best of the Northwest Tribute Show featuring three bands: Jar of Flies, Washed in Black and Outshined. All proceeds were donated to Heartbeat: almost \$4,000. We are so very grateful for the support of the Tulalip Casino.



HEARTBEAT'S DONORS

Knights of Columbus:

Faithful Navigator Dan O'Brien, Sir Knight Tony Robinson and his wife Carole Robinson and Sir Knight Mike Bohm led the way organizing and gathering donations for the Christmas Gift A Card Program. This program was such a success due in part to the generosity of the Knights and their Parishes. They also participated in Christmas Wish by adopting a number of warrior families.



Knights of Columbus #676: L to R:
Mike Donohue, Phil Philbrick, Joe Kessler, Janet Raulerson and Larry Kessler.

Heartbeat Serving Wounded Warriors is so honored to have worked with, actually partnered with, all of the Knights of Columbus chapters that have been so instrumental in making Heartbeat a success. They have given so selflessly with their time and resources.. We are so very grateful. As pictured above, the Knights of Columbus #676 donated \$100,000 to Heartbeat which enabled us to expand our Back in the Saddle Warriors Program. THANK YOU!

Heartbeat would also like to acknowledge the generous support given by so many of the Knights of Columbus parishes and chapters to our Christmas Programs. Both dollars and gift cards were given to help our Christmas Gift A Card Program, which was a huge success. And like previous years, the Knights of Columbus always adopt the largest warrior families. We are so very grateful.



HEARTBEAT'S DONORS

In August 2022, **Cascade West Productions** once again organized a barrel race and silent auction event in Oregon for the benefit of Heartbeat's Back in the Saddle Warrior Program. Karen Askins worked so hard to organize this three day event. This is the eighth year that Karen and her wonderful organization have supported Heartbeat. Thank you so very much!

A special thank you to an anonymous donor who has supported Heartbeat since the beginning and this year gave a substantial donation to help with our Christmas Programs as well as all of our therapies. We are truly grateful. THANK YOU!

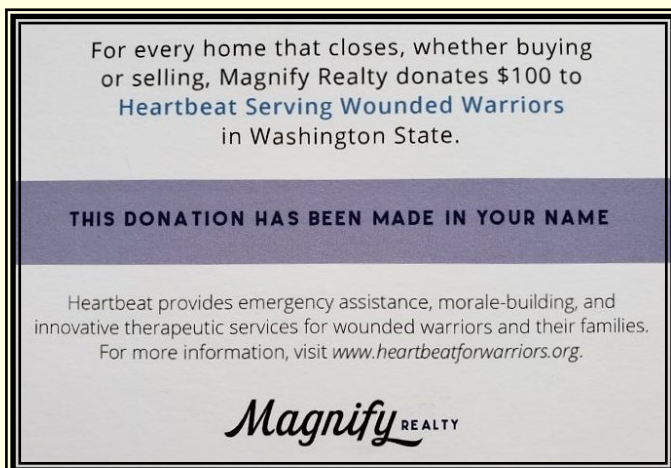


A special thank you to the **Dimmer Family Foundation** in Tacoma, Washington. This family has supported Heartbeat since 2015. We are so appreciative. Thank you for the \$2,500 gift.

Another wonderful Foundation, the **Griffiths Foundation**, has also been a generous donor to Heartbeat since 2011! Thank you Dave Griffiths for the \$16,000 check. We are honored by your continued support.

Since 2014, **General Dynamics**, a global aerospace and defense company, has been supporting Heartbeat. In 2022 they donated \$3,500. Thank you so much for your generous support.

John Weston (pictured right) is the owner of **Magnify Realty** in Everett, Washington. Since 2018 John has donated to Heartbeat \$100 for each house sale he completes. This year, he sent us a check for \$1,200. Thank you so much John for your generosity!



HEARTBEAT'S DONORS

A Special Thank You to **Florence B. Kilworth Foundation** who has supported Heartbeat's therapy programs over the years. This year funds were received for our Back in the Saddle Program. We are also grateful to the **Allison Foundation** for funding our Back to School Program, which delighted over 500 Special Ops children. This grant had such a positive impact on both the children and the parents. We are so grateful for the generous donations through the grant program of **Union Bank**. THANK YOU!



In 2022 Heartbeat received a \$10,500 grant from the **Haggen Foundation: Cultivating Community Together Fundraising Campaign**. We are honored to be one of the recipients for this grant. THANK YOU!

Heartbeat would also like to thank Diane Campbell and Project Linus, whose volunteers design and sew all of the beautiful Christmas envelopes for our Gift A Card Program. THANK YOU!

Finally, to all our individual and business donors, many who give anonymously, we owe a great deal of gratitude. Many of these individuals have been donating since our inception. Without them, Heartbeat would not be able to serve our Wounded Warriors. Special thanks to those who donate monthly or quarterly through the multiple giving campaigns such as:

- ♦ The Combined Fund Drive
- ♦ King County Giving
- ♦ Give with Liberty
- ♦ Microsoft Giving Program
- ♦ AT&T and Thrivent
- ♦ The Benevity Community Fund
- ♦ The Boeing Giving Campaign
- ♦ Truist
- ♦ Snohomish County Giving

THANK YOU!



LETTERS TO HEARTBEAT



Dear Janice,

I just wanted to update you. Our furnace is all fixed thanks to you. It feels so good to be warm again. My family and I are so thankful for you and Heartbeat. You really made this year's holidays very special for us. You have no idea how blessed I feel and I am literally in tears right now. God's grace and his faithfulness to His children always amaze me. Thank you so much.

A Wounded Warrior



Just to let you know, Janice, we held the school supply give away last Thursday. It was so hot and muggy, but it didn't stop folks from coming and enjoying the day. Everyone loved the school supplies. With the amazing funds from Heartbeat, I made sure to get the "good quality" supplies this year. Three moms came up to me to say thank you for buying the "expensive" supplies.

One mom also said:

"You have no idea how much back to school costs us with four kids. Thank you. Heartbeat really made a difference in our family!"



LETTERS TO HEARTBEAT



Hi Janice,

I wanted to thank you for the fabulous lunch. What a great day for lunch outside on that deck. My family is enjoying Scuba so much more than I could ever imagine. It has been rough for us since Chris' injury. He has a lot of memory loss in addition to some physical issues. There has been a big disconnect between Chris and our son Camden. Chris has had to re-learn a lot of things he used to know and he gets frustrated. So learning Scuba together and then working as a team is incredible. It also gives them something to talk about. The added plus is how proud Chris is of Camden doing so well so far.

Of course I love it as well. I love the water, and I didn't realize how good it would make me feel. We also look forward to being with everyone. Since 2010 we have really been alone. You have most likely heard it before, but families have a hard time understanding injuries. Mike, another Wounded Warrior in Scuba Warriors, shared with Chris about his own parents and it helped a lot. I just wanted to thank you and let you know we will all be diving next week Tuesday and Wednesday to finish. You expressed that you didn't have a lot of time to travel. I would love to volunteer and help out however I can. Just let me know if I can help out. Thank you so much for the Scuba experience!!! Best gift of the year!

A Scuba Warrior's spouse

Prior to beginning our program, J. was prescribed eighteen different meds and could not walk without a cane. After participating in our program for several months, he is only requiring two medications and can walk without his cane. He attributes these changes completely to the BITS Program. Our program has also helped him psychologically with his PTSD. He is able to communicate better with his family and his affect is so much calmer now. Much of his anger is gone. His wife has also commented that there is a dramatic improvement with him and she also feels that this is due to his work in the BITS Program.



LETTERS TO HEARTBEAT



Remarks from a BITS Warrior:

"I have become more aware of my anxiousness and stress that affects my body posture, which the horse somehow detects and identifies for me."

"My social anxiety and emotional discomfort have diminished to a life-changing degree! I am getting better and better at being able to converse outside of the US Army."

"My daily life has become more relaxed and positive and less tense and nervous. I have learned how to stay calm and steady during trot and canter movements."

"My sessions have allowed me to identify problems with my body movements and habits related to my VA disability."

Note to Heartbeat from Scuba Warriors lead dive instructor regarding a session:

"At the end of the first day in the pool, I noticed he was hanging back as the rest got out of the pool. He seemed focused on the corner of the pool, just floating there, looking at the wall. I swam over to him and asked if there were more skills he wanted to work on. He looked over his shoulder at me, eyes red. He shakenly whispered, 'No, it's just the first time in years that all the other noises I hear were quiet. I could just sit on the bottom and hear my bubbles and nothing else, no voices, no noise, no bangs. Nothing.' He went on to pass the class and moved from the area, but was diving heavily the last I heard."



LETTERS TO HEARTBEAT

A note from a Christmas Wish Military Family to Janice:

I just wanted to say thank you. If it wasn't for you and the many people that donate to the cause, my family would not have a Christmas. Thank you so much for all that you do and for all of your generous supporters who make it possible. Again, thank you.



Dear Ms. Buckley and Heartbeat,

I am writing to express my family's gratitude and appreciation for supporting Veterans and our family this holiday season. My twelve year son and I were fortunate enough to participate in your Christmas Wish Program. Both my son and I were so excited to see all of the thoughtful gifts and warm wishes we received from our sponsor family. Everything was perfect and my son and I both truly appreciate the time, energy and support provided by Heartbeat.



Remarks from a BITS Warrior:

I am so thankful for the BITS program. It has helped me get over anxieties that would have normally sabotaged my job interview. Thankfully I am celebrating starting a new job. I am extremely grateful to the horses for teaching me to stay calm, focused and to trust myself.



