

## RESURRECTING LIVES FOUNDATION BUDGET REQUEST

### Background Info

The Resurrecting Lives Foundation (RLF) is an Ohio non-profit that assists veterans with traumatic brain injury (TBI) through advocacy, treatment, research, and education.

The RLF mission is very narrow, but it is also very deep: Over 400,000 American veterans have traumatic brain injury. Over 15,000 live in Ohio. And they all need help.

The Resurrecting Lives Foundation (RLF) was created by Dr. Chrisanne Gordon, a certified rehabilitation physician at The Ohio State University.

Dr. Gordon's area of research and expertise is traumatic brain injury (TBI). In 2008, the Department of Defense predicted a surge in brain injuries from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts and invited Dr. Gordon to assist. Because of her expertise, Dr. Gordon worked with the DOD and VA for nearly a year to evaluate returning service personnel and veterans who were experiencing signs and symptoms of mild TBI, the signature wound of the two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was during this time that she realized that the civilian world needed to collaborate with the VA and DOD to rehabilitate and reintegrate these American warriors.

RLF assists in the recovery and reintegration of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom veterans with traumatic brain injury (TBI) by defining brain pathology and developing protocols for recovery. RLF advocates for veterans and their families in areas of healthcare and employment opportunities while educating the public about the injuries and co-morbidities associated with TBI.

In 2015-16, RLF provided direct services to over 200 TBI-affected veterans, assisted with US Senate bills affecting millions of service personnel, presented over 35 programs to audiences ranging from 10 to 400 attendees, and met and collaborated with the US Army, VA, DOD, Joint Chiefs, Ohio National Guard and members of Congress.

Although Dr. Gordon has traveled to many regions of the country on this mission, and has met with top officials from the DOD, Joint Chiefs, VA, and Congress; the geographic focus of RLF and our initial projects are centered in Ohio.

RLF has raised funds for operating expenses, but we are asking for additional funding to support us with our employment initiative:

#### **1. 2017-18 Employment Initiative**

Post service employment is key to resurrecting the lives of these struggling heroes. Having stable work that is rewarding for the Veteran reduces their risk of substance abuse, homelessness, incarceration, and even suicide.

To make this happen, RLF has formed our first employment initiative pilot program with the DOD at the Fort Belvoir Intrepid Center. This is an effort to put boots on the ground, so to speak, by aiding the transition of TBI-affected service members into civilian life and civilian employment. This program would also include Veterans already living in Ohio, but that are unemployed or underemployed.

We are initiating this pilot program in April 2017. Starting in January 2018, we will be following 100 transitioning service members for one year regarding any employment concerns. From the first group of 100, we plan on serving at minimum 35 Veterans and their families that are either living in Ohio or will be relocating to Ohio for employment.

The pilot program at Fort Belvoir, which bases members of the Army and Marines, will help transition service members into jobs in Ohio. Separating service members with TBI have a six-week program with the RLF team. The team creates a plan for discharge to include:

- a. A post-separation appointment at the VA medical center within two weeks of discharge,
- b. Crisis application for smart phone or tablet, and
- c. Job or education placement.

RLF is forging partnerships for employment opportunities with large companies such as Cardinal Health and Honda right here in Ohio. This is a significant commitment for employers, because it requires a 12-week integration plan for the veterans and special training for management and supervisors.

This program is the first of its kind anywhere in the United States. Ohio has the opportunity to be the gold standard when it comes to reintegrating our Veterans back into the workforce. It will be a one-year program of data collection and will then be modified as necessary and marketed to the remaining eight Intrepid Centers, VA and DOD.

The projected cost per Veteran and family is \$3,600. We estimate that 35 of the initial 100 Veterans of this initiative will be from Ohio for a total of \$126,000 to fund their medical testing, establishing aptitude and ability for employment, medical record transfers for continuity of care, and ongoing communication with our Veterans via iPad and Telehealth so that we may act swiftly to prevent the complications of substance abuse and unemployment. These complications of TBI are very costly for the community, so

the investment of an iPad and the continued communication to prevent these issues is miniscule in comparison to the costs of treatment or incarceration. The employers, therefore, will not be responsible for their war wounds, but will be able to grant health care benefits for all non-service connected issues as well as family members.

An assessment, funded by the University of Southern California is already secured and ready to begin employment follow up. After the initial pilot program, this initiative will be marketed to Fortune 500 companies in the United States as a means of creating a qualified, dedicated, diversified and trained workforce.

Securing this funding for our Veterans would serve as prevention from unemployment or becoming incarcerated, which would be a much heavier burden to Ohio's taxpayers. We are very proud of this initiative to help our Veterans. We must, however, seek funding for the technology, tools and services that are imperative to make this successful. Now is the time to make sure that Ohio is delivering on the solemn promise made to our veterans for their voluntary service.

Resurrect a Hero—Strengthen Ohio.

**RLF projects costs of this program at \$48,000 for calendar year 2017 and \$410,000 for calendar year 2018, for a total cost of \$458,000. RLF is applying for grants and conducting a capital campaign to raise the remaining amount of money needed for this employment initiative. RLF seeks state funding of \$126,000.**