

# FORWARD FLAG NEWSLETTER

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By Melissa Endean

## Congrats!



This month we are celebrating the graduation of two more veterans from the Veteran Diversion Program. Brothers in Arms, Matthew Mahon & Benjamin Marquez. These veterans have demonstrated incredible growth & modeled unfailing integrity over the past 18 months. It has been a pleasure and an inspiration to see the dedication with which both of these vets have committed themselves; to the program, their fellow participants, and personal growth. Although graduating the program, both have plans to remain active members in the NM Forward Flag community. Benjamin Marquez has plans to bring a fitness program and nutrition class to the Flag and Matthew has committed to ensuring the sustainability of Operation Feeding it Forward. Congratulations to both of you and best of luck in this newest part of your journey. We are so excited to see the wonderful things the future holds for each of you!



## Bunker Deployment

The fine folks at [Smoky Mountain Knife Works](#) in Sevierville, TN welcomed our outreach team and coffee bunker into their parking lot for a day of shaking hands and saving lives. The incredible team in Tennessee spoke with over 50 veterans, friends & family members during this outreach event and shared the veteran crisis line phone # and information on Question, Persuade & Refer; the internationally recognized suicide prevention curriculum. A great big THANK YOU to all who stopped by to talk to our team and for the generous community donations.



## Battle-Buddy Bike Riding

Group cycling; just another great activity organized by the vets of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial Veteran Diversion Program in NM. This cycling club is a great way to stay healthy, provides a fun atmosphere in which veterans, their friends & family members can get to know one and other and to stay active. As we move towards making this a regular activity, with plans for meet-ups every other weekend, please contact us if you are interested in joining the next group ride on August 16<sup>th</sup>. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for future dates & rides. If you do not have a bike and would like to join us, please call ahead and we will work to assist you in finding a bike you can ride!





## A MUCH NEEDED GIFT

Thanks to the donation of a much needed shed and the hard work of a group of veteran volunteers our Albuquerque location is one step closer to perfection. Our veteran volunteers put in long hard hours under the hot desert sun to dismantle the donated shed. The team effort paid off and we now get to move on to the next phase of re-constructing the shed this month and clearing out some of the space in our back room. A special shout out to Xavier Hernandez for stepping up, using his expertise and acting as group foreman and to Peter Mares for donating the shed.



Plans at the TN office are quickly moving into reality. The calendar for outdoor yoga, art classes and a SMART Recovery meeting is being hammered out and will be available at the TN location very soon. There are plans for fishing trips to a pond at a local veteran's home and another local veteran has generously offered horseback riding at their home. The TN office is currently being set-up to house a tv room in which to relax and a workout room in which you can sweat. Look for the coffee bunker at more locations around Rogersville, Greenville and Sevierville. On September 12<sup>th</sup> the outreach team will have the bunker parked at the Harley Davidson store in Morrisstown.



## A GOOD DAY FISHING ...

The Fishing/Kayaking Club enjoyed another extraordinary group outing to Abiquiu lake. The group of veterans & family members spent the day swimming, paddling around in kayaks & fishing the lake. This was followed by a shared feast of hot dogs fresh off the grill. The therapeutic benefit of being out in nature in the company of other vets is unparalleled. It was a treat to eavesdrop; hearing conversations about jumping out of Chinooks and Black Hawks. The comparable backgrounds of our veterans allows for an immediate familiarity in language, shared purpose and similar experiences. Our outings into spots surrounded by the natural beauty of NM give way to an overall sense of well-being that is hard to get any other way. Sometimes we all just need to get out of town!





## 505 LEASH PROJECT

Even though the Warrior Canine Connection classes are on a brief pause, as we all find a way to safely navigate the global pandemic, we are proud to continue our work with the incredible folks at [Assistance Dogs of the West](#). Thanks to our veteran volunteers we are able to continue making leashes for the 505 leash project. The proceeds from leash sales goes directly to support the Warrior Canine Connection. Veteran volunteer Dominick Perea, pictured below, finished over 20 leashes in just one day!



### Hard at work

Co-Founders, John McGil & Roger Pipkins, enjoying casting and catching in Oklahoma.

## A LIFE WELL LIVED Captain Michael Davis

Honoring Army Veteran Michael James "Jamie" Davis, Jr. - September 1, 1974, entered eternal rest July 20, 2020.

Michael enlisted in the US Army at age 18, and proudly served his country, achieving the rank of Captain before his retirement. During his successful military career, he served in two active combat tours of Iraq and Afghanistan and later joined the National Guard. In addition to his military accomplishments, Michael had a philanthropist's heart, and great capacity for helping others, especially with regard to his experience as a veteran. At home in East Tennessee, he worked to improve the lives of justice-involved juveniles and those with barriers to education attainment. Michael later earned a PhD in Psychology and served at the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services as the Director of Housing and Homeless Services. During his time with the state of Tennessee, Michael created thousands of affordable housing and therapeutic intervention opportunities for individuals with mental health barriers, including veterans.

Despite Michael's many outstanding achievements during his military and civilian career, he remained humble, always a country boy at heart. He felt best when comforting others with laughter and grace rather than relishing his accomplishments. Above all, he was a loving father, grandfather, sibling, husband, and son. He touched the lives of so many and will be loved eternally.

- In loving memory, from his Tennessee Department

## IN MEMORIAM

Ellen Argyres, the Operations Director for our NM office, suffered a great loss this month. After many incredible years of life, Ellen's mother, Mary Argyres, passed peacefully in her sleep having been surrounded by her loved ones. Our sincerest sympathies and deepest condolences to the Argyres family.



Thank you to all those who generously donated to TN Forward Flag as a way to honor the life of Capt. Davis. We will work to serve the veterans of our country with the same passion and integrity of Capt. Davis