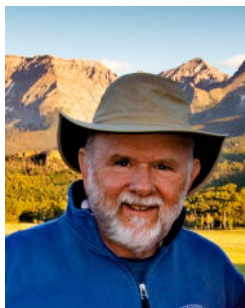


President's Message



John Pierce

WRS OFFICERS

Elected Officers

President

COL (R) John Pierce

First Vice President

COL (R) Brian Foley

Secretary

COL (R) Edward Coll

Treasurer

LTC (R) John Wetterau

VP Patient Services

SGM (R) Dan Bullis

VP Projects

COL (R) S. Avery Davis

VP Communications

CSM (R) Ricardo Alcantara

VP Public Affairs/Outreach

Tansill Johnson

Member-at-Large

COL (R) Rick Erdtmann

Appointed

Historian

COL (R) John Pierce

Liaison

Alexander T. Augusta
Military Medical Center
Yamayra Ahorrio

Liaison

Sports and Recreation
Carlton Kammerer

Director, Operations

(ex-officio)

Editorial/Graphics/Design
Hermalene M. Taylor

Office of Distinction

President Emerita

COL (R) Janet Southby

Past President

COL (R) Joseph Konzelman

I am excited to let you know that the Society continues to be very active at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) as well as Alexander T. Augusta Military Medical Center (ATAMMC) at Ft. Belvoir assisting patients, families and staff. The Society is seeking out and developing more service and assistance opportunities within the hospitals, as well as other non-profit partners in the area.

We have excellent relations with leadership and staffs of the hospitals. As you well know one of the hallmarks of military culture is movement and change. Fortunately the leadership in place at WRNMMC will remain for another year. The National Capital Region (NCR) and ATAMMC both have new Directors that we plan to meet with soon. I recently met with the new Chief Medical Officer at WRNMMC, CAPT Debra Buckland-Coffey, to introduce her to the Society.

Despite the changes in military leadership the Society's leadership has been fairly constant for several years. We elected a couple of new members to the Board at our Annual Meeting in May, COL (Retired) Rick Erdtmann who has been very successful reaching out to other local non-profits and Tansill Johnson, a long-time Army public affairs official, as VP for Public Affairs/Outreach. Biographies of both are available on our new website — walterreedsociety.org.

We were pleased to present along with the American Red Cross the third annual Rose Mologne Award to Dr. Inge Guen, a long time Red Cross Volunteer. See accompanying article about her work.

We extended our efforts to become a "force multiplier" by providing grants to like-minded nonprofits. Grants are provided to those outside the NCR on a case by case basis if their work matches our mission and our vetting yields results we all support.

In this newsletter there are articles about two such organizations, Leashes of Valor and Warriors on the Way. We introduced you to Leashes of Valor before and now we are pleased to follow-up on their work with a story about our first sponsored animal named Walter in honor of Major Walter Reed. By the time you read this, two more WRS sponsored animals will have graduated to be presented to their new owners. We are also delighted to have a new partner in Warriors on the Way. You will enjoy reading about their exciting work with combat veterans and you may even want to join them. Both articles demonstrate the outstanding work these folks do and how our support enhances their ability to assist patients and families.

I am pleased to report we completed two of our ongoing administrative projects. Our redone By-Laws and renewed Articles of Incorporation are approved with DC government. We started in DC and chose to keep our incorporation there.

As always I sincerely thank our all-volunteer Board for their hard work and effort to make our mission a success. Also a great big THANK YOU to Hermalene Taylor our Director of Operations who does so much to keep the wheels turning.

I hope you can join us at our Holiday get together on December 7, 2025.

★★★ WRS 2025 HOLIDAY GATHERING ~ DECEMBER 7 ~ USUHS ~ DETAILS PAGE 3 ★★★

Issue 28

IN EVERY SEASON — SERVICE TO OTHERS ‘BELONGS’

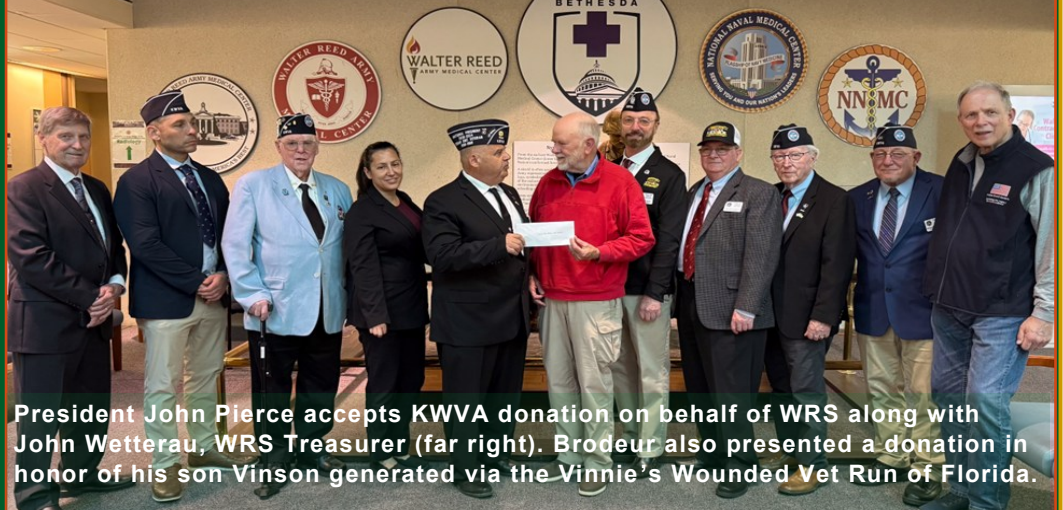
Jeffrey Brodeur, National President, Korean War Veterans Association presents a donation to Walter Reed Society President John Pierce at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

REFLECTIONS ON DAY OF BELONGING 2025

By COL (R) Rick Erdtmann
WRS Board Member at Large



KWVA CONTINUES SUPPORT TO WRS



President John Pierce accepts KWVA donation on behalf of WRS along with John Wetterau, WRS Treasurer (far right). Brodeur also presented a donation in honor of his son Vinson generated via the Vinnie's Wounded Vet Run of Florida.

For three successive years the Walter Reed Society has co-sponsored a special day-long event organized by Mission Belonging, a local non-profit that focuses on using art expression of every form to help veteran and military members with lingering unpleasant effects of their military experiences, in particular combat. The organizers believe that by giving voice to these participants via the arts they can

foster bonding, and a sense of community with others who have similar mental health and life challenges. So they employ music, poetry writing, public impromptu speaking, painting, carving, and even bookbinding to recount their personal story. Workshops are set up for participants who choose which art form would be most useful to them. Based on comments from participants, this Day of Belonging was wildly popular. Several participants “re-upped” this year and new participants attended.

Comments from attendees support the program's high value: *“I felt...welcomed. It was...a lovely experience. I felt like my soul was watered”*. A sense of feeling comfortable in a social setting, and listening to...stories, poetry, and art. *“The entire day was well planned to create holistic belongingness”*.

WRS was happy to provide financial support for this superb event. I personally had a chance to see the event as it happened. I spoke with attendees and could see the positive impact this had on those who came together.

THIRD ANNUAL ROSE MOLOGNE AWARD

Dr. Inge Guen was presented the Rose Mologne Award for 2025 by WRS and American Red Cross.

She has volunteered with the Walter Reed Service for over 15 years. Guen leads a highly trained team of volunteers who hold weekly art sessions in inpatient behavioral health. These sessions are credited by staff with achieving major break throughs for patients outside of their clinical protocol and, in some cases, saving lives. Yearly, she contributes anonymous patient work to the Arts in Health Exhibit hosted in the America

Building, showcasing Walter Reed patients' artistic talents and journeys over the course of their treatment. In addition to her clinical work, on special holidays Guen traverses the hospital with a cart loaded with decorations and gifts for staff, lifting the spirit of staff members working holidays away from their families. She regularly contributes donations of stuffed animals.



Awardee Dr. Inge Guen (pictured third left) stands next to WRS Board President John Pierce (photo right). Board members Rick Erdtmann (photo left) and John Wetterau also attended.

Walter Reed Society, Inc.

— TIDINGS & TRADITIONS —

2025 "NEW" VENUE



TOGETHER WE GATHER FOR ANNUAL HOLIDAY CHEER

Sunday

December 7, 2025

11:30 AM - 2 PM



Uniformed Services
University of the
Health Sciences
(USUHS)
Dining Room

4301 Jones Bridge Rd
Bethesda, MD, 20889

GUEST SPEAKER

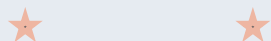
CAPT Debra Buckland-Coffey
WRNMMC Chief Medical Officer



COMPLIMENTARY BRUNCH

RSVP by **NOVEMBER 17th**
support@walterreedsociety.org
301-571-1580

Underground Parking
Available at USUHS



Visit WRS website for updates
walterreedsociety.org

WALTER REED SOCIETY

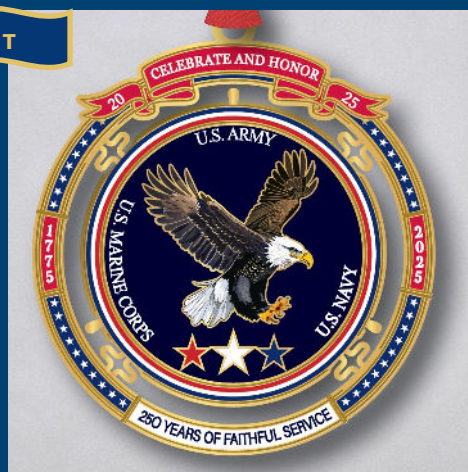
PRESENTS ITS

2025-2026 CELEBRATORY COLLECTIBLE

For the first time the Society's Collectible Ornament will be two-sided honoring the 250th anniversary of the US Army, US Navy and US Marine Corps in 2025 and the 250th anniversary of the United States of America in 2026.

FRONT

Sales will be available on-line;
and in-person at both WRN-
MMC and ATAMMC -- pending
sales date(s) confirmations to
be announced.



BACK



This is an early iteration of
the reverse of the ornament.
The flags will switch sides
to correspond to the correct
dates.

\$20 each

Includes S & H

CHECK payments: Make payable
to: WRS. Mail to:

8901 Rockville Pike, Box 303,
Bethesda, MD, 20889.

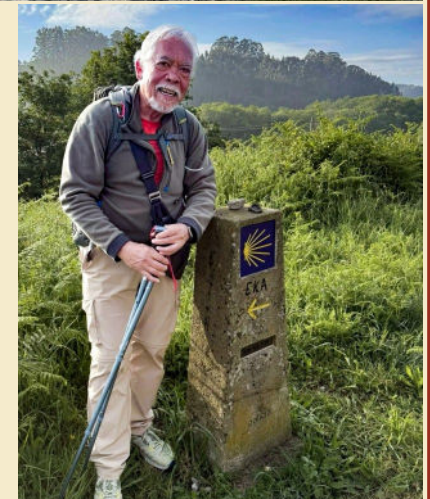
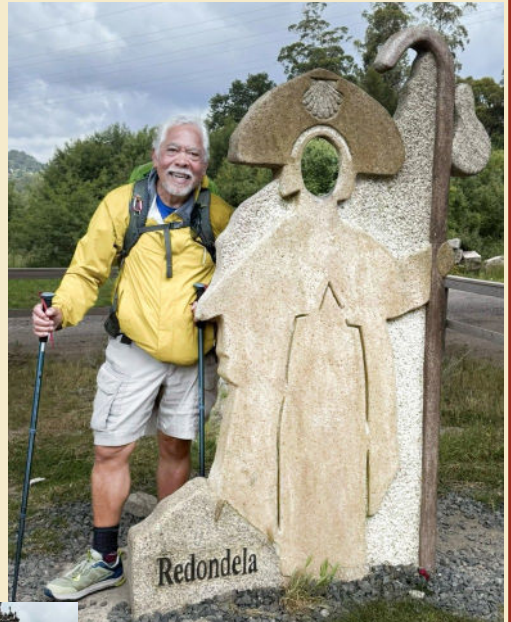
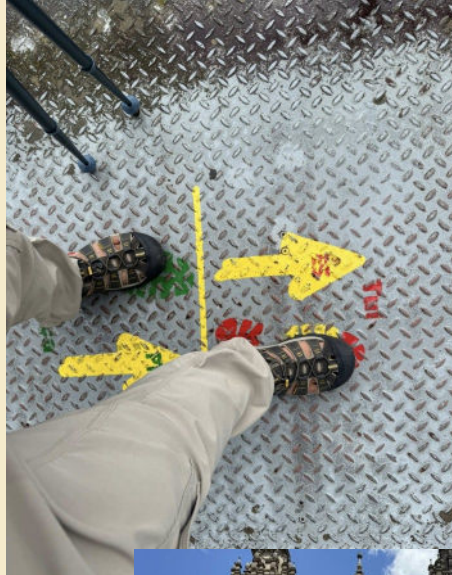
WANT ITEMS RECEIVED BY 12/25?
Estimated Recommendations: Pay-
ments should be received for pro-
cessing by: 12/11. Visit website:
walterreedsociety.org for online
credit card purchases and to find
more collectibles.

Walter Reed Society, Inc.

WRS BOARD MEMBER CSM (RET) RIC ALCANTARA 'WALKS THE WAY'

As told to WRS President John Pierce by WRS VP Communications Ric Alcantara

Last year I made a decision to walk the Camino de Santiago to test my new knees starting in Porto and doing the coastal route, then transitioning to the central route. Altogether 260 Km/ 180 Miles. Arriving in Santiago de Compostela filled me with an overwhelming joy. The city itself seemed to celebrate: hugs, tears, familiar faces, camino families and shared memories of the journey. Everyone was happy for one another when we entered Plaza de Obradoiro as if we had all walked not just the same road, but the same inner journey. The Camino was more than just a physical and mental path; it was an inward journey, too. I'm deeply grateful for every step and now I'm ready for the next one (starting in Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port in France to Santiago). ★



The Ruck March—just about everyone who served in the military has done it and benefitted from it, even if only in training. The Warriors on the Way pilgrimage intends to capture the benefits while leaving the negatives behind. A 180-Mile pilgrimage in Spain on the Camino de Santiago the last two weeks of September, Warriors on the Way travels thru historic cities: Astorga, Ponferrada (one of the largest standing Knight Templar Castles), Portomarin, and the Galicia mountains.

A 180-Mile pilgrimage in Spain on the Camino de Santiago the last two weeks of September, Warriors on the Way travels thru historic cities: Astorga, Ponferrada (one of the largest standing Knight Templar Castles), Portomarin, and the Galicia mountains.

It's a time to think, consider, contemplate, plan, and pray, all while putting one foot in front of the other. Each pilgrim has the opportunity to participate in the ancient ritual of leaving burdens at the foot of the Cruz de Ferro, see the site of a documented miracle at O Cebreiro, and, ultimately, complete their journey at the amazing Cathedral de Santiago de Compostela.

Warriors on the Way is a purpose-designed pilgrimage for combat veterans by combat veterans. Capitalizing on the latest PTSD and moral injury care research, pilgrim veterans walk in the tradition of those in the 9th Century.

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Walter Reed Society, Inc.

THE WALTER REED SOCIETY IN STEP WITH WARRIORS ON THE WAY

Several years ago your Board of Directors decided that they would provide support to other non-profits assisting patients and families. We thought this would allow us to become a “force multiplier” reaching beyond ourselves to others with a similar mission. In addition to assisting like-minded organizations within the National Capital Region (NCR) we have on a case-by-case basis provided assistance to non-profits outside the NCR. All of these non-profits and their activity are well known to at least one of our Board members.

We are very excited to inform you of a new collaboration between the Walter Reed Society and Warriors on the Way, a non-profit founded by Father Steven Rindahl, a retired US Army

Chaplain. Steven had a 31 year enlisted and officer career having served in combat as well as at the Army Medical Department Center and School.

Since 2017 Warriors on the Way has sponsored combat veterans on a pilgrimage on the Camino De Santiago or Way of St. James, a network of European pilgrimage routes leading to the tomb of St. James the Greater in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. The purpose of the pilgrimage is to facilitate a combat veteran’s healing from PTSD and moral injury. Over the years of these pilgrimages, they have had multiple former Walter Reed patients and staff journey towards their own needed healing.

PTSD and moral injury are both

directly linked to an overall reduction in quality of life and increased veteran suicides. The Warriors on the Way pilgrimage for combat veterans, through the reduction of PTSD and moral injury symptoms, improves quality of life and helps in the effort to reduce the veteran suicide rate.

Fr. Steven Rindahl (US Army, Retired) leads the pilgrimage. Having made multiple pilgrimages focusing on veteran healing, Fr. Steve is an experienced pilgrim and has designed this pilgrimage based on those experiences and what he learned completing a doctorate in responding to combat trauma, and developing and teaching the US Army Chaplaincy course on how to provide a Ministerial Response to Moral Injury. ★

WRS will sponsor three pilgrims during the trek this year that will be from 26 September to 12 October 2025. The total group consists of 10 veterans with a verified combat tour and they start and end in San Antonio, TX and travel to Spain and back together. All faiths are eligible and attendees have been Veterans with no faith to profound faith. Sponsorship includes airfare, equipment, supplies, lodging and food. It also includes a trekking pole; see image of trekking poles we are providing with the WRS logo. Upon returning home, this reduction of symptoms improves the life of the veteran, is noticed by family (many of whom have sent messages of thanks), and enables the veteran to more fully engage other PTSD/moral injury treatment programs, allowing them to reap continued and increasing benefit from each method of care.



VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
WALTERREEDSOCIETY.ORG FOR
MORE IMAGES AND UPDATES.

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Today pilgrims from all backgrounds around the world are welcomed with an established route and full logistical support. While each day is long, the weight each pilgrim must carry is light (max 18 lbs). The pilgrimages

change lives and give opportunities to those in need. The program consistently yields a group average of 70% reduction in the participants' experience of PTSD and moral injury symptoms. ★

Issue 28

IMPACT IN ACTION — WRS 2025

LEASHES OF VALOR held an open house on March 22, 2025 inviting local residents, supporters and others to learn more about their mission and celebrate three new service dog graduates and their veterans. Retired Marine Corps Capt. Jason Haag, founder and CEO of the national nonprofit based in Fredericksburg, Va., opened with a moving speech that held the attention of everyone. He spoke with candor about being shot in Iraq during the opening months of the war. Though physically injured, it was the unseen wounds that impacted him most. Haag, who went on to serve two more combat deployments, was ultimately diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Haag tried multiple treatments over the years. But it was a service dog named Axel who was instrumental in helping him find positivity in his life. He apologized for shedding a few tears, but his tears enabled him to be beautifully and openly connected with his audience.

The first graduate was a large black Labrador, Walter, named in honor of Major Walter Reed for whom the Army hospital was named in 1909. A generous grant from the Walter Reed Society covered all costs associated with caring for and training Walter. Leashes of Valor dogs spend up to two years in training before they are matched with a veteran, who also attends a 10-day, in-resident program to learn to work with and communicate effectively with their dog. Prior to being paired, dogs live with foster families to become accustomed to a different environment and ensure they are ready before being given to a veteran.

Walter was abused as a young puppy. He was found chained outdoors under an extremely low deck, where he sought protection from the elements and suffered neck damage as a result. But Walter's life changed dramatically when he was rescued by local

authorities who contacted Leashes of Valor to assist. Walter grew to become a handsome, obedient and loving dog. He was paired with Jennifer, an Iraq War veteran from Montana, who was diagnosed with PTSD.

"Having Walter in my life has been wonderful and so very helpful," Alexander said. "I am taking care of myself better by getting out for walks in the woods. I'm showering and brushing my teeth more. I have gone grocery shopping on my own. ... Walter is always there and so forgiving. I am so grateful to the Walter Reed Society for making this possible."

The next graduation ceremony is planned for November 8, 2025, when additional dogs sponsored by the Walter Reed Society will be presented to deserving veterans. These veterans will benefit from a relationship with a dog trained to recognize and respond to the needs of a person whose mobility had been damaged.

Leashes of Valor's whose motto is "one leash saves two lives" is a program that gives every day, and usually for many years.

**By Tansill Johnson, Board Member
WRS VP Public Affairs/Outreach**



Walter, WRS' first LOV service dog graduate, sits as veteran Jennifer (center) holds his leash; WRS Board member Dan Bullis admires the black Lab as Board member John Wetterau shares in the moment.

OPERATION KEY WEST (OKW) is one of our successful partnerships with a non-profit outside the NCR. We have featured them in our Spring 2024 and 2025 newsletter issues. Below is an update on their activities.

Creating Smiles

After the pandemic put a halt to Operation Key West's initial plans to support military families who had lost a child they turned their attention to seriously-ill and chronically-ill children of military families. OKW partnered with the Pediatric Oncology Department at the Naval Medical Center Portsmouth to provide families with children suffering with cancer and other debilitating diseases. continued on page 7

Issue 28

IMPACT IN ACTION — WRS 2025



continued from page 6

OKW sends these children (and all their siblings) "smile packages" which include things their Mom expressed they like and enjoy. Also included is a gift card for the parents to enjoy a night out. OKW also sponsors parties 4 times a year at Dave & Busters in Virginia Beach for all the families they have connected with. This includes meals, game play cards and a special gift drawing for one of the families. A recent child, Mary Ann, was only 3 months old when she was first helped by Operation Key West. She was diagnosed with aggressive myeloid sarcoma. She had already been diagnosed with an atrial septal defect and mild hip dysplasia. She had 10 chemo treatments, several infections and battled pneumonia. Most of her infancy was spent in a hospital.

She is now 2 years old and "in remission" and has recovered fully from her heart condition. At a recent OKW party her parents were worried that she might need heart surgery but were waiting on future check-ups. She is but one of many children whose lives are given happiness by the parties given by OKW for seriously ill children and their families. These parties provide connection to other families who face similar crises and challenges with their children's health. At the OKW parties the children become friends, the parents bond and share their experiences and build happy memories that contrast to the time spent in medical visits and treatments. Creating smiles in a child's life is indeed an immeasurable gift.

**By Tansill Johnson, Board Member
WRS VP Public Affairs/Outreach**

— GIVING THANKS —

Words of gratitude from those helped by the generous support of WRS members.

Letter from a Grateful Dad Every year our VP Patient Services Dan Bullis receives an update from the father of a soldier he and WRS assisted during difficult times while a patient at Walter Reed. —
Dear Dan, Our daughter had another successful year—her 18th since leaving Walter Reed. She took on a new position at King County Jail and enjoys the work. It's a different...with unique challenges, but she finds it rewarding. It's hard to believe she's starting her ninth year as a Nurse Practitioner...She continues to improve her garden and enjoys kayaking... Her Shih Tzu...is adjusting to [her] new work schedule...None of this would...[be] possible without your...help. I will always be grateful. You cared...[and] gave her the chance to excel and reach her potential. Her successes...[and] your decisions in assisting with her care were crucial...I believe it was one of the...reasons she was able to withstand the stresses...I appreciated you...and [the] financial assistance from WRS. —Tom, A Grateful Dad (July 2025)

Disabled American Veterans — Quarterly Friday Night Dinners —The Society sponsors quarterly Friday Night Dinners for the DAV at American Legion Post 41. Positive feedback from attendees and thanks from DAV have been consistent.



"Thanks and appreciation to American Legion Post 41 and Walter Reed Society..."

"God bless America, and thank you everyone that put this on!"

Operation Key West Leaders. --Hello Walter Reed Society! We are so grateful to receive your most generous contribution to our OKW program. It means so much that we are able to continue to bring "smiles" and fun times to these military families. Without all of you and your support, this would not be possible...thank you for continuing to make that happen! Jim is smiling. Best, Kathy McGonigle and Patty McGonigle



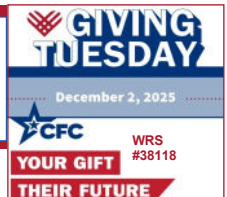
WALTER REED SOCIETY, INC.
8901 Rockville Pike, Box 303
Bethesda, MD 20889
Phone: 301-571-1580
www.walterreedsociety.org

MEMBERSHIP CONNECTIONS: We continue to develop an electronic mailing list of our membership. Please share your email address and indicate interest in receiving our newsletter electronically.

ARE YOU A WRS MEMBER? ANNUAL - \$25; TWO YEAR - \$40; FIVE YEAR - \$100; LIFETIME - \$500



A SALUTE TO VETERAN'S DAY 2025



Leashes of Valor - WRS Grant recipient organization

ALL-PAWS TO "WALLY" REED

Named in honor of Walter Reed, Wally is the first of four LOV service dog graduates that we will sponsor.



appreciate all you do for Leashes of Valor and all you did for Walter!
—Thank you, Jenni and Walter

Letter from Jennifer

Hello, Walter has been wonderful for me! I am getting out of the house more because Walter calms me when I am overwhelmed. He is such a good boy and always eager to please. Today we went on a hike and to a local spot on one of three rivers in town...Walter and I went for a hike this morning up a hill that I haven't made it up in over ten years...I am super proud of the team Walter and I have become.

Mission Belonging WRS Grant recipient organization

I attended Mission Belonging's Day of Belonging event today. I'm reaching out to your organization to thank you for supporting them. I'm a Veteran and I've had some tough times these past couple of years. Mission Belonging's programs and their Day of Belonging event have made a difference in my life. Their event and their programs make feel a little less lonely and more connected with others.

--Note from A 2025 Event Attendee

Visit our website for an online copy of the November issue with extended articles and more images. WALTERREEDSOCIETY.ORG

TOGETHER WE GATHER ~ DECEMBER 7 ~ UNIFORMED SERVICES UNIVERSITY~ DETAILS INSIDE PAGE 3

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