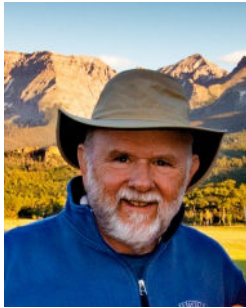




President's Message



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

It is a great honor and privilege to write this message on the 30th anniversary of the Walter Reed Society. Founded in 1996 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC and moved along with the medical facility to Bethesda in 2011, we have served for 15 years at each location. In the beginning and continuing now our mission is to serve patients, families and staff at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and our motto remains "Sustaining the Legacy Beyond Excellence." As in the beginning, our officers are all-volunteer with their only compensation a sense of fulfillment and pride in continuing to serve and to serve well. We do no fundraising ourselves and subsist through the enormous generosity of faithful donors for whom we are forever grateful.

I believe the Society continues to make a difference with support and service to Walter Reed and the National Capital Area military community. Several years ago we made a substantial effort to reach out to other area non-profits to provide financial support to pair with their manpower and programs. One of our first and greatest partners has been the American Red Cross Station at Walter Reed. This newsletter contains articles about our successful relationship with them, the most recent during the longest federal government shutdown in history. Red Cross has publicly recognized us for our support and early this year the hospital leadership recognized the Society as well; see follow-up inside articles and photos. We are pleased to continue our spring collaboration with Red Cross for the fourth Annual Rose Mologne Award, which recognizes one of their outstanding volunteers. Rose was both a life-long Red Cross volunteer and a founding WRS member.

Other successful collaborations concern the outstanding efforts of Leashes of Valor, a Virginia non-profit that trains service dogs for veterans. You will be moved by the story of a Marine Corps helicopter pilot and Ronnie, his new service animal named in honor of WRS member and former Army Surgeon General, LTG (Ret) Ronald Blanck. Our second sponsored dog that graduated was Emily, named in honor of Emily Lawrence Reed, Walter Reed's wife. More on her and her veteran in the next newsletter.

In addition, we supported Warriors on the Way led by a retired Army chaplain in San Antonio whose organization helps combat veterans "walk off the war." It was amazing to see the Society's banner displayed in front of iconic 11th-century cathedral Santiago de Compostela by those who completed the pilgrimage. You will be moved and impressed by the efforts of these organizations to normalize and to support the lives of veterans.

A partial list of 2025 support WRS provided patients, families and staff within the military health care system in the National Capital Area is also included. Access the entire list on our website.

As always a sincere thanks to our all-volunteer Board for their hard work and effort to make us successful in our mission. Also a great big THANK YOU to Hermalene Taylor our Director of Operations who does so much to keep the wheels turning. The outstanding efforts and work of our folks was recognized last year by the Red Cross with their Fundraising Award recognizing the Society's financial support and early this year by the WRNMMC leadership's recognition of the Society for "Exceptional Service" in 2025.

I hope you can join us May 3rd for our Annual Meeting at American Legion Post 41 in Silver Spring, MD. We will elect additional Member-at-Large Board members. Happy 30th Anniversary!!

Issue 29

'EXCEPTIONAL' HONORS FOR SERVICE

WRNMMC LEADERSHIP RECOGNIZES WALTER REED SOCIETY

At her January 2026 Town Hall Meeting, CAPT Melissa Austin, Director, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, recognized the Walter Reed Society for Exceptional Service supporting the hospital during 2025.



CAPT Austin (center) with WRS members (photo left to right) Mary Maniscalco Theberge, John Pierce, Jan Southby, Richard Southby and Ed Coll

The Town Hall Meeting is a monthly event held in Clark Auditorium where CAPT Austin and other leadership provide updates and information to the staff about important events in the life of the medical center. ★

HOLIDAY PRESENCE



This past Christmas for the first time ever, WRS was asked to decorate a Christmas tree within the hospital. Of course we jumped at the opportunity. We were fortunate to get a location in the America Building lobby--the heavily-trafficked main outpatient building. The tree was festively decorated with WRS ornaments from years past and our afghan was used as a tree skirt. Hopefully this becomes an annual tradition.

AMERICAN RED CROSS AWARDS WRS FOR OUTSTANDING FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

American Red Cross Montgomery, Howard, Frederick Chapter presented WRS with a 2025 Fundraising Award



The award honors WRS for outstanding fundraising efforts.

Board Member at Large Rick Erdtmann accepted the award on behalf of the Society. It reads:

For over 10 years, this passionate group has raised significant funds to support the Red Cross programs at Walter Reed, with an annual contribution valued at \$18,500. The Walter Reed Society purchases and ships around 50 Heart Math Inner Balance Devices each year, supports the patient discharge program that provides rides for patients, and coordinates the prestigious Rose Mologne Award. Through their dedication and support, the

Walter Reed Society has improved the lives of many, and their ongoing commitment to the mission is truly commendable. We are proud to honor them with this well-deserved award.



Presented to WRS for contributions to American Red Cross at WRNMMC

Walter Reed Society, Inc.

— TOGETHER WE HELP EACH OTHER —

The Society Helps During 2025 Government Shutdown

Between October 1 and November 12, 2025, the federal government of the United States experienced its longest shutdown in history. Of course the hospital remained open and military and most civilians continued to work, some without pay or limited pay. In an effort to support hospital workers, the Walter Reed Society partnered with the American Red Cross to provide food items for meals and other assistance to those affected. With financial support from the Society the Red Cross prepared bags of food items that were offered to hospital staff. In addition, gas gift cards were provided to those in need. Flyers were placed on the food bags recognizing the WRS.



After the shutdown, American Red Cross Station Manager Molly Wilson wrote the Society:

*Good Afternoon, First, I would like to extend enormous gratitude to you for your support over the past two weeks. With your help, I estimate we distributed about **550 food bags**, totaling about **6,600 meals**, and about **270 gas gift cards**. We heard from both individual staff and hospital command that this direct assistance was a critical support during the shutdown. In fact, CAPT Austin publicly thanked both Red Cross and the Walter Reed Society during today's Town Hall. Best Regards...*

WRS ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting convenes the membership to conduct WRS business and elect officers for the board of directors.

★
Sunday

May 3, 2026

11:30 AM - 2 PM

****Cissel-Saxon****

American Legion Post 41

905 Sligo Avenue

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Brunch ~ \$30 per person

Mail checks to:

Walter Reed Society

8901 Rockville Pike

Box 303

Bethesda, MD 20889

or

pay in-person at door

*****RSVP by 4/21*****

support@walterreedsociety.org

301-571-1580



**Entrance is located in the back of
building via parking lot at
8110 Fenton Drive**



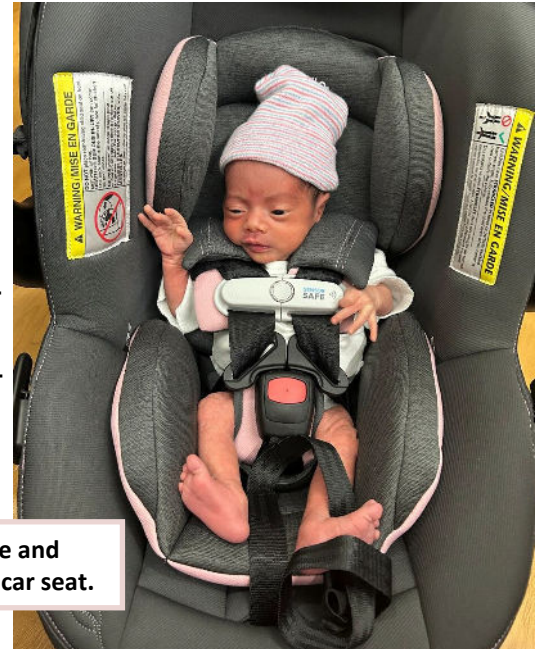
DIRECTIONS — Post 41 bldg.
parking and entry location on
Fenton Street. Point smart
phone.

Walter Reed Society, Inc.

LEGACY IN ACTION...

NICU GRAD 'FIT' FOR PREMIE CAR SEAT

WRS learned on a Friday morning that a family needed a special car seat so their baby could be discharged from the NICU at WRNMMC. Notified of the impending discharge, the parents purchased a car seat but the baby was still too small for it to be safely used and could not be sent home. Through the wonders of the internet and Amazon, the Society purchased an appropriate car seat that was delivered to the family in two days. The baby was able to be discharged home the next day, avoiding a potentially much longer NICU stay until she could grow into the regular sized car seat. The family wanted to share the image of their baby in her new special car seat with the WRS membership.



Mighty, Tiny. Safe, secure and sound in preemie-fitted car seat.

WARRIORS ON THE WAY



U.S. combat veterans who have just completed a 180 mile pilgrimage across northern Spain to Santiago de Compostela pose in front of the city's iconic 11th-century cathedral with the Walter Reed Society's banner.

BEYOND OUR WALLS In our last newsletter we shared WRS was pleased to sponsor combat veterans in a unique effort to “walk off the war” as they participated in Warriors on the Way -- a holistic effort that combines proven modalities, incorporating mind, body, and spirit. Lead by Father Steve Rindahl, a retired combat veteran Army chaplain, from San Antonio, TX, the 2025 Warriors on the Way pilgrimage started in Astorga, Spain. Participants hiked 180 miles to Santiago de Compostela, the capital of Galicia in northwestern Spain, a renowned UNESCO World Heritage site and culmination of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route.

Participants selected for the 2025 pilgrimage were Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps combat veterans.

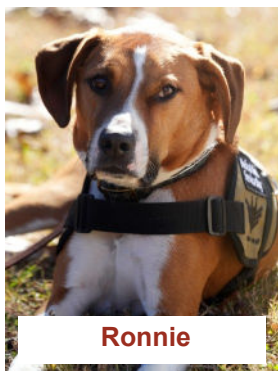
As the pilgrims physically trek 180 miles along Camino de Santiago, their thoughts, emotions, spirits, and souls journey towards healing. Each day, with every step, the generosity of WRS helped America's veterans walk off the war. Both through direct sponsorship (for a portion of our pilgrims) and tangible reminders of their journey placed in all of their hands, each was given trekking poles with the reason for

their journey emblazoned on them. (For pilgrimage reflections, see “Thankful” on page 5.)

NOTE: Evidence-Based Results using a validated test instrument, the PCL-5, Warriors on the Way measures the before-and-after outcomes of our pilgrims. Warriors on the Way typically has a group average of a 70% +/- 2% reduction of symptoms during any given iteration. The 2025 iteration pilgrims experienced an 80.33% group average reduction of symptoms. The likely cause of increased efficacy is the substantially higher unit cohesion.

Walter Reed Society, Inc.

...BEYOND OUR WALLS



Ronnie

Ronnie was found in an overcrowded animal shelter in Richmond, Va. The shelter was holding an adoption event and a dog trainer from Leashes of Valor saw Ronnie and just by looking at his eyes, sensed that he would be an excellent service dog.

Sponsored by the Walter Reed Society, this new service animal was named for Ronald Blanck, a former commander of Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and the 39th Surgeon General of the U.S. Army. General Blanck was also a founding member of the Walter Reed Society.

Ronnie was paired with Shayne Frey, a Marine who served for almost 31 years. A helicopter pilot Shayne served in combat zones in Iraq and Afghanistan – nearly six years in combat.

On an early tour in Iraq, he assisted in recovery of the remains of 31 service members who died in a tragic aviation accident. The memory of those lost plagued him. As a senior leader later in his career, he faced losing 25 Marines who committed suicide

over a three year period.

The darkness, the profound grief captured him after his retirement in 2022. These dark memories evolved into anger. This anger became so dark that it spread to the lives of the people he loved the most.

The pairing of Shayne with Ronnie has diminished the darkness and opened a door for healing. The emotional weight of the people who died, by accident as well as suicide subsided. Shayne, with the help of Ronnie realized that he could be a better – a better husband, a better father and a better man.

Ronnie was living up to his namesake as well, showing service, compassion and commitment. Now, Shayne shares his perspective, “There’s more to live for, especially when Ronnie is laying on me.” Thankfully the weight of the loss of service members is lightened greatly by the love of Ronnie. Thankfully, Shayne is right...” there is more to live for.” ★ — *By Tansill Johnson*



Shayne with Ronnie

—THANKFUL—

Father Steve Rindahl —retired combat veteran Army chaplain heads Warriors on the Way, San Antonio, TX.

I would like to thank the Board of the Walter Reed Society, and the Society at large, for the generous support provided to Warriors on the Way for the 2025 pilgrimage. Fundraising had been lower than average during the year and the WRS grant not only safely put us on the margin where we could comfortably execute the pilgrimage without worrying over each penny, we were able to address an emergency contingency that occurred along the way. We build into our typical fund raising goal enough margin to cover such contingencies, but when you are not on glide path for your operating expenses you also do not have the margin. As the cards from the pilgrims, already sent forward, attest - this was a life-changing experience for all involved. May you each be richly rewarded for your concern for the ongoing health and recovery of America’s men and women who have answered the call to serve our nation during the time of conflict. Buen Camino. Fr Steve ★

Thank you for support of the Warriors on the Way program. Without you many veterans like me would not be able to participate in this program. I came with suffering and left restored. The Camino hike was the hardest thing I have ever done but was so rewarding in that it helped me clean my heart, mind and soul. AG USMC Veteran

...My deepest thanks for helping fund the 2025 Warriors on the Way. These last couple of weeks have been difficult but very rewarding. For years I could not find a way to find peace. In three weeks the Camino de Santiago has given me a lot of healing, that was elusive in the last 10 years. J.F. CW2 (Retired)

Issue 29

A LEGACY OF CARE...

WRS 2025 SUMMARY OF ASSISTANCE

For three decades, WRS' motto "Sustaining the Legacy Beyond Excellence" has driven the mission to serve others. Today our work continues as we assist and support patients, families and staff within the military health care system in the National Capital Area. In determining assistance we do not apply a means test or exclude needs based on rank or position. Requests are vetted by our very experienced Board, many with more than 50 years of association with the military health care system. In 2025, the WRS community continued our commitment to serve and assist military families.

A snapshot of our impact is spotlighted here. For the full impact summary – which includes our support and partnerships with like-minded non-profits –visit our website: walterreedsociety.org

SUMMARY OF ASSISTANCE

WRNMMC and National Capital Region (NCR) grants

Mobility Assistance

- ◆ **special wheelchair** to support a **Naval Academy midshipman with Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS)** function at his current level. For community distances he needed use of a **portable and compact power wheelchair** to allow: safe and independent mobility for attending classes; and integration into the community. Staying in barracks at the academy with limited storage, the wheel chair provides the best option and gives him the ability to get around independently and attend classes.
- ◆ **specialized wheel chair for the spouse of a retiree treated for MS since 2015** that allows her to have more independence as she is unable to wheel herself in a manual chair and not TRICARE approved.
- ◆ **lightweight power chair** to a 64-year-old female **dependent of a retired Navy member** who recently received a diagnosis of **amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's Disease)**.

trophy lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's Disease). Due to the progressive nature of the condition, a wheel chair was needed for use and transport. Since her condition had progressed to being wheel chair bound, she was able to use the light-weight power chair to get around independently; and easily transportable so they can use it to get her to her many appointments. TRICARE would not provide this chair.

Pediatric Assistance

- ◆ PEDIATRIC MOBILITY CLINIC REQUESTS:
- ◆ **9 year-old daughter** of a retiree with Mobility clinic referral: "a patient that needs help with getting a wheelchair. with **the most severe form of spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy...** Dependent on the wheelchair as primary means of mobility in the community and at home...has a power wheel chair that is used primarily in school. She is **in need of a new wheel chair...**she has

outgrown her previous one. She needed: **both a power wheelchair for the school and the manual wheelchair for home and in the community.** TRICARE would not cover a second piece of mobility equipment for the patient. The WRS provided the requested **second wheel chair**

- ◆ **7 year old Army dependent with a history of autism** who has limited safety awareness, is unable to consistently follow instructions and has fallen multiple times due to poor protective reflexes. Falls resulted in multiple injuries and at least one documented concussion. **Stroller needed to help with fall prevention and further injuries and elopement.** TRICARE denied the stroller. **Assistance provided for family to complete purchase.**

- ◆ **7 year old female dependent of an active duty soldier in need of a gait trainer.** She has outgrown the current one due to her growth and TRICARE denied the request for a replacement. She has a

complex medical history including **chromosomal abnormality syndrome, global developmental delay, significant equino-varus deformity.** She needed a new one to accommodate her growth.

- ◆ **co-pay for a wheelchair.** TRICARE covered the wheelchair but not the co-pay required of the retiree sponsor for a **16 year old female with spina bifida s/p MMC closure tether cord release. New wheelchair needed to replace her 5+ years old one in constant disrepair.** Enrolled in college, and used to navigate around campus.
- ◆ **5 year old dependent son of a veteran's former spouse diagnosed with autistic disorder** and has no safety awareness; unbuckles his car seat while the car is in motion. The clinician's request for a **special car seat (Roosevelt Car Seat) equipped with a special tamper proof lock** was denied by TRICARE. WRS provided the special car seat.

(cont. on page 7)

Issue 29

...IN SERVICE TO OTHERS

(cont. from page 6)

- ◆ **special car seat provided** for the child of an **active duty Marine** who could not be discharged home from **NICU at WRNMMC** because she was too small in weight and length to safely fit into the seat the family purchased. An appropriate car seat is required for discharge.
- ◆ **13 year old with adjustment disorder** (familial conflict) in need of child/adolescent Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) after an overdose suicide attempt. At the time, care was unavailable within the military system. Family was referred to civilian care. Because the sponsor was retired from active duty a co-pay was required. Given the family's financial situation, **WRS covered the co-pay** to help with the daughter's care.
- ◆ **art program** for pediatric inpatients centered around tie dye shirts that children make themselves. The logistics on base and patient access were too great to overcome. We had to conclude support.

Prosthetics Assistance

- ◆ **one time financial assistance to an Army retiree. Bilateral amputee** with multiple medical issues. Knee replacement surgery September 2024 at ATAMMC that resulted in left leg amputation. Several months later

right leg amputated due to infection. In June, an **additional 5 inches was taken from one of his amputations** at WRNMMC. A number of issues have led to temporary financial help.

- ◆ **MATC REQUESTS:**
- ◆ **triple amputee** lost both arms almost up to shoulder level. The short length challenges use of prostheses. At **WRNMMC from Ukraine on a 1 year Secretarial Designee** status accompanied by his wife. MATC coordinating with the VA, for a feeding device, **Obi Medical Robot**, that would allow him to feed himself and provide as much independent living as possible. He is not TRICARE eligible. After Board discussions, support provided. He is a WR authorized patient.
- ◆ **National Guard Soldier BLK** right leg **amputee** from a 2023 accident. Difficulty with skin grafts required prior to having a prosthesis made and complications that could lead to an ATK amputation. Uses a manual wheel chair and crutches; his shoulders are shot. Provided **TRICARE co-pay for power wheel chair.**
- ◆ **24 y/o AD sailor involved in a boating accident** in May. Fell off boat, hit by propeller, damaged arm and chest. Results: **amputation of arm**; grade 4 liver laceration, laceration

to lung, near drowning. At WR on TAD status, and no Non-Medical Attendant (NMA). Sister drove from Texas on unpaid leave. She can stay with him in Bldg. 62 while NMA status is pending. **WRS provided a grant to help cover unpaid expenses at home, during her travel and while at WR.**

- ◆ **25 year old former Marine with metastatic osteosarcoma and end stage renal disease** transitioned home; in-home hospice for end of life/ comfort based care; still receiving peritoneal dialysis. With ATK amputation and significant weight loss, **prosthesis** won't stay on. A new socket is needed but TRICARE will not cover it because he is in hospice. WR is unable to provide one because it is too difficult to travel back from North Carolina with the dialysis. A highly recommended prosthetist located in NC by the Special Operations community offered to make the socket and provide needed supplies at cost. **WRS funded the new prosthesis.**

Additional Assistance:

- ◆ **Reimbursement for lodging** for a person with chronic lung condition unable to ambulate more than a few feet at a time and living alone. The sudden passing of her live-in, 30y/o caregiver-daughter left her unable to maneuver her

apartment stairs and care for her dog. She is in a hotel until family from out of town come to relocate she and her dog to live with them.

- ◆ **OIC of the Active Duty Medical Home**, Internal Medicine for an **active duty Sailor** who had a lower body tumor removed. Now, loss of feeling in the left leg. **Adaptive vehicle equipment needed to allow Sailor to use hand devices to drive again.** TRICARE will not provide equipment. With command and JAG approval, WRS did.
- ◆ transitional health request for a **family of a retiree** with terminal cancer requires urgent in home hospice. WRS provided **medical ground transportation** needed to Florida from WRNMMC.



WRS 2025

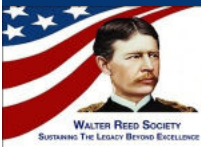
SUMMARY OF ASSISTANCE



Read full report, visit website/News: page:

walterreedsociety.org or scan the QR code below to visit WRS website:





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

#38118 

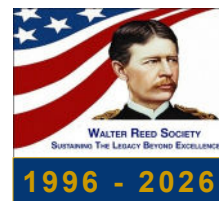
A SALUTE TO THOSE WE SERVE: WRS TURNS 30

— EXPANDING OUR MISSION FORWARD —
 MEETING MOMENTS



Walter Reed Society members meet with Alexander T. Augusta Military Medical Center Director COL Gina E. Adam (third from right) and her staff. WRS members photo from left to right: John Wetterau, Ed Coll, Rick Erdtmann, John Pierce and Yamayra Ahorrio.

Three Decades of mission-driven service and care provided to active service members, families, veterans and staff at WRNMMC and the National Capital Region. WRS celebrates our legacy as we



recognize 250 years of American independence!



Commemorate WRS at 30 & America at 250
 Visit walterreedsociety.org/Shop



WRS ANNUAL MEETING ~ MAY3RD ~ 11:30AM-2PM

MORE WRS MEETING EVENT INFORMATION AND DETAILS ON PAGE 3