



Camaraderie Foundation

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Dear Readers:

It is an honor to have been selected in February to serve as the new Executive Director (ED) for Camaraderie Foundation. As a retired Armor officer with 33 years of service, I understand and appreciate the service and sacrifice of our Service Members, Veterans and their family members. As the ED, I am once again able to assist them and maintain that spirit of camaraderie and support.

The first six months on board has been exciting and rewarding for me. Within the first two months of my tenure we hired our Tampa Development Manager and opened our office in Pinellas Park. We also hired the Orlando Development Manager to facilitate our outreach to the community and local business leaders. In addition, we have held several key events to include the Pars and Stripes Golf Tournament and the American Patriot Gala. All these things could not have happened without the support and generous donations of our partners and friends in the community.

The good news is that so far this year, we've provided counseling services to over 230 new Service Members, Veterans and/or their family members at no cost to them. That's the biggest year-to-date gain of clients in our history as a non-profit, and it's thanks to your support.

Unfortunately, there is an even greater need. More than 4.1 million Americans have or are serving in the military since 9/11. According to the most recent census, over **1.5 million** Veterans live in Florida of which **76,328** are post-9/11 Veterans living in Central Florida (along the I-4 corridor). According to the American Psychological Association (APA), one third or **25,442** of these Veterans will experience cognitive or readjustment issues. Only **8,905 - 12,721** (35% - 50%) of those Veterans will seek treatment according to the Veterans Administration. In addition to the Veterans, 50% of Military Spouses reported experiencing stress, financial concerns, family and/or marital issues according to the APA.

Because of this large need within the community, Camaraderie Foundation created the **"Saving Lives - Saving Families"** Campaign. The goal of the campaign is to serve **1,000** of those Service Members, Veterans, and/or their family members by December 31, 2019.

I ask that you tell your friends, family and business associates about us and the great work that we are doing. You may never meet these families, but you will have made an impact in their lives. They fought for us, now it's our turn to fight for them.

Neftali "Nef" Rodriguez