

**FLORIDA BRAIVE FUND
NORTH FLORIDA
REGION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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North Florida & South Georgia

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*Helping Floridians impacted by
deployment to Afghanistan & Iraq*

Year I Report

**CONQUERING NEW TERRITORY,
MEETING NEW CHALLENGES
TO SERVE NORTH FLORIDA'S
MILITARY COMMUNITY**

The Florida BrAlve Fund has its roots in the Iraq Afghanistan Deployment Impact Fund, an initiative of the California Community Foundation created in 2006 to provide funding to nonprofit organizations that offer direct services and other assistance to American military personnel and/or their families who have been impacted by deployment to Iraq and/or Afghanistan.

In September 2008, The Community Foundation in Jacksonville received a \$5 million, two-year grant from IADIF to help nonprofit organizations address the unmet needs of Florida-based military personnel and their families impacted by deployment to Afghanistan and Iraq.

In collaboration with two other Florida community foundations, each of which also received \$5 million, two-year grants, The Community Foundation

established the Florida BrAlve Fund.

The Foundation faced a number of challenges in fulfilling the mission of the BrAlve Fund:

- Identifying and mapping the military and former military population in Florida, particularly North Florida;
- Understanding the unique way the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan affected military personnel and their families.
- Identifying and networking with nonprofit organizations that serve the military community.
- Coordinating the work in North Florida with the work being done elsewhere in the state by two other community foundations.

This report published in October 2009, addresses the Foundation's accomplishments in Year I of the grant.

Building a Statewide Coalition and Launching The Florida BrAlve Fund



Helping Floridians impacted by deployment to Afghanistan & Iraq

Three community foundations are collaborating to provide access to The FLORIDA BRAIVE Fund throughout the state. The foundations and their respective regions are:

The Community Foundation in Jacksonville – North Region

Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice – Central Region

Dade Community Foundation – South Region

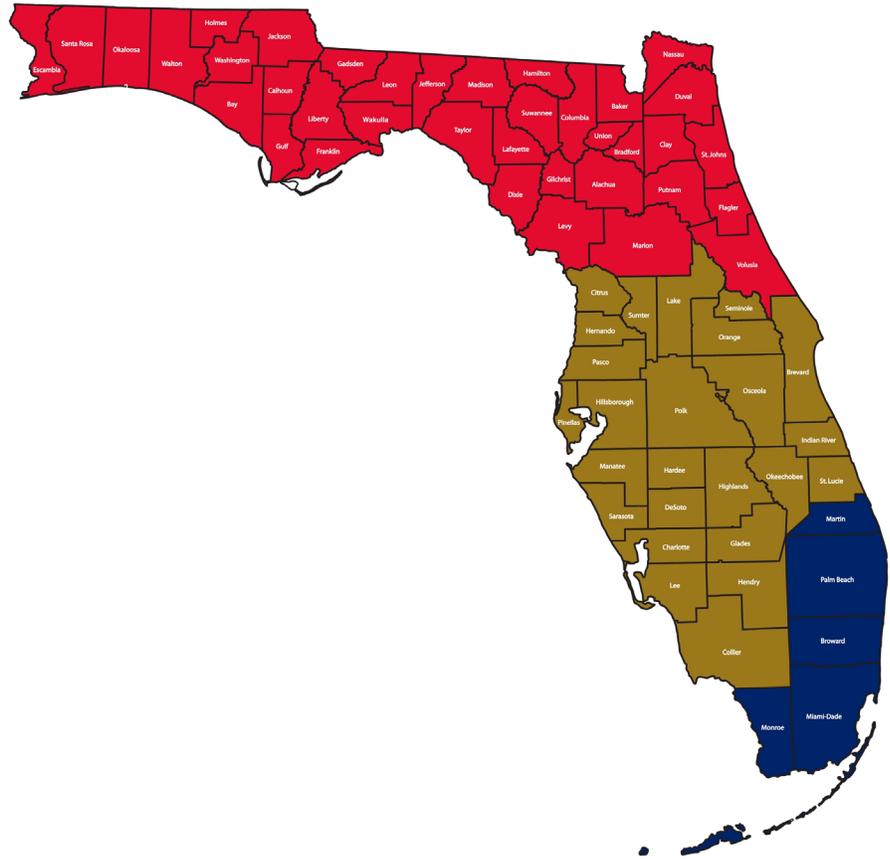
The Iraq Afghanistan Deployment Impact Fund awarded grants of \$5 million each to The Community Foundation in Jacksonville, The Gulf Coast Community Foundation in Venice, and the Dade Community Foundation. The understanding was that the three foundations collectively would provide resources to support the needs of targeted military personnel and their families throughout Florida.

The three-foundation collaboration was inspired and informed by the TRIAD Fund in Texas, created through the collaborative efforts of The Dallas Foundation, The San Antonio Area Foundation, and The Permian Basin Area Foundation. These three foundations received funding from IADIF in 2007.

Following the model of the TRIAD Fund, the three Florida community foundations divided the state into regions. The Community Foundation’s North Florida region covers 37 counties — the largest geographical region of the three. It also contains the highest concentration of military facilities.

In October 2008, representatives of the three Florida foundations visited with representatives of the TRIAD Fund to learn about their research into the unmet needs of military personnel and families affected by deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan and the strategies TRIAD had used to respond to those needs.

Based on those lessons, the three Florida foundations developed common application materials and agreed to accept each others’ applications to facilitate requests from statewide organizations.



The Foundations also agreed to create a common brand (The Florida BrAlve Fund) and launch a common website, with basic information and links to each of the three foundation’s websites.

The three foundations met with military and nonprofit leaders across the state, including several base commanders and family readiness officers, as well as local government military and veterans’ affairs offices.

The foundations ultimately agreed, however, that each would set its own priorities for funding. This enabled each foundation to respond to the unique needs of its region. This decision provided The Community Foundation more flexibility to build relationships and address specific needs, which was critical given the breadth and diversity of the military community in North Florida.

Developing Relationships with The North Florida Military Community

Though most residents of Jacksonville recognize that the military is an important presence in the community, few appreciate how extensive that presence is.

Northeast Florida has the fourth largest active duty military population in the United States.

Within a 40-mile radius of Jacksonville are three major Naval installations (Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Naval Station Mayport, and Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base across the border in South Georgia); the headquarters of the Florida National Guard and Camp Blanding Joint Training Facility; two major support installations: Naval Aviation Depot Jacksonville and the Marine Corps Blount Island Command; and Whitehouse Field, a major flight training facility.

Beyond Jacksonville, Florida's combination of mild weather, extensive coastline, available land and open airspace has proven attractive to the military.

The Panhandle, from Panama City to Pensacola, is home to a string of military installations, including Pensacola Naval Air Station, home of the Blue Angels and a major training facility for flight officers from multiple branches of the Armed Services.

Identifying and understanding the missions of each of these facilities became important to The Florida BrAlve Fund: these were the professional homes of the men and women the Fund was established to support.

Along with its two partner foundations, staff of The Community Foundation reached out to local military experts, retired military personnel, and

nonprofit executives with military connections to identify and map the various military installations, understand their missions and identify the organizations that already were providing services to these populations.

In North Florida, The Community Foundation assembled a temporary Research Task Force comprised of high-level military officials, leaders of military-serving organizations, foundation trustees and community leaders to assist in this task.

The Research Task Force proved so valuable that the Foundation transitioned it into a permanent Advisory Committee, convening the group bi-monthly in the first year to address issues of strategy, approach and networking. The Advisory Committee serves as a "critical friend" to Foundation staff, providing continuous assessment and feedback. (See list of Advisory Committee members, Page I.)

Additionally, the staff reached out to other community foundations in North Florida — The Community Foundation of East Central Florida (Volusia-Flagler counties), Gainesville Community Foundation, Community Foundation of North Florida (Tallahassee) and Greater Escambia County Community Foundation (Pensacola).

These foundations convened members of their communities to learn about The Florida BrAlve Fund, which greatly expanded the network of organizations and connections. In Volusia-Flagler counties, this convening led to a community-wide collaboration that assessed local needs and agreed to work together to increase access to local mental health services.

MILITARY INSTALLATIONS IN NORTH FLORIDA

U.S. NAVY

Jacksonville Naval Air Station, Jacksonville - Considered to be one of the hubs for naval activity in the U.S. South.

Mayport Naval Station, Jacksonville - The third largest naval fleet concentration area in the United States.

Naval Aviation Depot Jacksonville - Operations on designated weapon systems, accessories and equipment.

Panama City Naval Surface Warfare Center, Panama City - Conducts research, development, test and evaluation and in-service support of missions that occur primarily in coastal regions.

Pensacola Naval Air Station, Pensacola - The primary training base for all Navy, Marine and Coast Guard aviators and Naval Flight Officers.

Whiting Field Naval Air Station, Milton - Among the busiest Naval Air Stations in the world, responsible for an estimated 46 percent of the Chief of Naval Air Command's total flight time and over 10 percent of Navy and Marine Corps total flight time.

U.S. AIR FORCE

Eglin Air Force Base, Niceville - The military's primary non-nuclear test facility.

Hurlburt Field, Fort Walton Beach - Home to Headquarters Air Force Special Operations Command, the 1st Special Operations Wing, the USAF Special Operations School and the Air Combat Commands' 505th Command and Control Wing.

Tyndall Air Force Base, Panama City - Home to the 325th Fighter Wing of the Air Education and training Command.

Whitehouse Field, Jacksonville - One of the few sites available for simulated aircraft carrier landings and the only East Coast site that can simulate a night landing.

OTHER

Marine Corps Blount Island Command, Jacksonville - Responsible for the United States Marine Corps' Marine Prepositioning Ships Maintenance Cycle operations and oversight of the Marine Corps Prepositioning Program-Norway.

Camp Blanding Joint Training Facility, Clay County - The primary military reservation and training base for the Florida National Guard the Florida Army National Guard and Florida Air National Guard.

Florida National Guard, St. Augustine - Headquarters for Florida National Guard.

In addition to facilities listed here, there are numerous military support and training facilities in the region, as well as military personnel and veterans not affiliated with one of these installations, all of whom comprise the military community in North Florida.

Establishing Grantmaking Priorities

The Advisory Committee and the staff of The Community Foundation studied the research of the TRIAD Fund and other organizations, and also conducted its own research into the unmet needs of the military community in North Florida. Through focus groups and interviews with nonprofit providers and others, a picture began to emerge of the challenges facing Iraq-Afghanistan veterans and their families in North Florida.

The Fund identified four priority areas: provision of mental health services, emergency financial assistance, peer support and counseling for families, and access to medical assistance for the wounded.

As the economic recession took hold in 2008-2009, providing financial assistance gained increasing importance. Gaining employment after deployment for Guard and Reservists is increasingly difficult, particularly for those returning to rural areas.

Local research revealed that there are many available support services, but there is little information available about them. Thus, increasing awareness of and access to existing services became a priority. Not only do veterans and their families lack knowledge of available services, many providers are unaware of what others in the field are doing and how they might collaborate or coordinate services.

To learn more about the unmet mental health and physical health needs, staff has turned to mental health associations, the Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, the VA and Military One Source. In addition, staff has networked with the Coalition of Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans (CIAV), a national network of organizations. The Fund anticipates increased emphasis on these priority areas in Year 2.

WHAT MAKES THIS WAR DIFFERENT?

The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan present unique challenges to American military personnel and their families. Among them:

REPEATED DEPLOYMENTS: Repeated deployments in extremely unstable and unpredictable environments result in very high levels of traumatic exposure for all service members, regardless of gender or job title. The toll of multiple deployments is felt by the family members at home as well.

USE OF GUARD AND RESERVE FORCES: Approximately 45% of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are National Guard and Reserve. These forces, known as “weekend warriors,” are not accustomed to serving continuously with active duty. When called to duty, these individuals are given a little time to transition out of their civilian life and employment. After a tour of duty, which can last up to 15 months at a time, they are thrown back into the civilian sector with no adjustment time.

National Guard members usually stop receiving pay and benefits within two weeks of returning home. Even if the soldier successfully regains his or her previous employment, the lack of time for decompression and adjustment can contribute to future employment instability.

Moreover, these individuals and their families often do not reside in a military community, but are isolated in civilian communities where few understand military/veteran specific issues and resources. Despite efforts to aid reintegration, many Guard and Reservists are not prepared to focus on the resources and benefits that exist.

WOUNDS & SURVIVAL: The massive use of explosive devices can cause devastating wounds. The physical wounds from IED’s or suicide bombers include traumatic brain injury, traumatic amputation, shrapnel wounds, burns and other very complex injuries. Because of improve-

ments in evacuation techniques, body armor, and battlefield medicine, many who would have died can now be saved. This creates an influx of service members returning home from war and needing specialized long-term care.

“INVISIBLE WOUNDS”: Relentless physical pain, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Depression, Traumatic Brain Injury. Untreated or undertreated, these invisible wounds can affect not only the individual, but their families and caregivers as well. They can impact physically, psychosocially, economically, and spiritually, taking away quality of life.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is caused by blunt force injury to the head and/or the concussive force of explosions, which cause the brain to push against the skull. TBI results in a broad range of physical, cognitive, behavioral, emotional and social challenges. Diagnosis can be difficult because there need be no obvious injury or penetration of the skull and the symptoms are diffuse and mimic those of PTSD. Recent screening of returning troops show that 20% of infantry and 10% of other troops have at least mild brain injury.

Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a natural reaction to the extreme trauma and chaotic circumstances of war. For Iraq and Afghanistan veterans this can include trauma from combat, sexual assault, repeated deployments, and urban warfare. Symptoms may include: hypervigilance, loss of sleep, disassociation, flashbacks, numbing, and avoidance. Symptoms of PTSD may be onset or not appear for months or years after the traumatic event(s). As of October 2007, more than 100,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have been diagnosed with PTSD or other mental health conditions. Women veterans are showing higher rates of PTSD.

Source: Coalition for Iraq-Afghanistan Veterans

Grants Awarded During Year 1

The Florida BrAlve Fund awarded more than \$2 million in grants from August 2008 through August 2009. Grants awarded included:

American Red Cross, Capital

Area Chapter (Tallahassee) -

\$150,000 for emergency financial assistance to meet the needs of military personnel, veterans, and families affected by deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan and based in Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor and Wakulla counties.

American Red Cross of Northeast Florida Chapter (Jacksonville)

- \$607,256 for emergency financial assistance to meet the needs of military personnel, veterans, and families affected by deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan and based in Hamilton, Suwannee, Lafayette, Dixie, Columbia, Levy, Gilchrist, Union, Bradford, Alachua, Baker, Nassau, Duval, Clay, St. Johns, Putnam, Volusia and Flagler counties.

American Red Cross of Northwest Florida (Crestview) -

\$150,000 for emergency financial assistance to meet the needs of military personnel, veterans, and families affected by deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan and based in Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton Holmes, Washington, Jackson, Calhoun, Bay and Gulf counties.

Eglin AFB Support Center Activities Council -

\$20,000 to provide a monthly Deployed Spouse dining program and special events for families affiliated with Eglin Air Force Base while their loved ones are deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, and to offer emergency assistance to fill gaps beyond services currently available for these families.

Florida Alliance of Information & Referral Specialists (211) -

\$152,990 to establish the BrAlve Helpline, a single 1-800 number accessible throughout the State of Florida and operated through regional 211 call centers. The Helpline will offer information and referral services for active military personnel and veterans serving or who have served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan and their families. The focus will be on supporting and connecting these military families to services to help them cope with the challenges of daily life prior to, during, and after their deployment, including the often stressful transition back to civilian life. Military personnel and their families will also be able to search for services in their area via a BrAlve Helpline Online Resource Database.

Hurlburt Field Airman & Family Readiness Activities Council -

\$40,000 to provide reintegration retreats and activities for returning military personnel and their families, and a deployed spouse and returning families dining program for military personnel and families affected by deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. Services are provided for those in Okaloosa, Escambia, Santa Rosa and Walton counties.

Jacksonville Community Council, Inc. (Jacksonville) -

\$74,692 to research and develop a training model to educate nonprofit service organizations and mental health counselors on culturally appropriate methods to use in working with military personnel and their families.

National Guard Foundation -

\$425,956 to establish the Florida National Guard Emergency Relief Fund, assisting eligible Florida National Guardsmen and families impacted by deployments to Iraq and/or Afghanistan with financial emergencies, as well as reintegration assistance following a deployment.

United Way of Volusia-Flagler

Counties - \$240,000 to increase the community's capacity to care for Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom military personnel, veterans, and families who need access to quality, culturally competent, and timely mental health support services.

Workforce Board of Okaloosa/Walton Counties -

\$50,000 to provide specialized training for school guidance counselors and local community support organizations (including nonprofit and government agencies, substance abuse and mental health providers, and others) to enable these professionals to better understand and provide support to military personnel and families affected by deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Workforce Plus -

\$150,000 to add a staff member to the Veterans Services department of WORKFORCE Plus, serving Gadsden, Leon, and Wakulla counties, to provide job referral and counseling services and help Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans translate and market their military experience in a civilian employment environment.

Challenges And Strategies For the Future

Establishing The Florida BrAlve Fund has not been without its challenges, but those challenges have created opportunities for the future.

The BrAlve Fund represents the first opportunity for The Community Foundation to engage in grantmaking beyond the greater Jacksonville area. Researching community needs and developing relationships in new places took longer than originally anticipated.

Though the Foundation has been active in Jacksonville for more than 40 years, it did not have relationships with the military community. It proved challenging to forge new relationships with the military and understand the complex system of support. The Advisory Committee and staff of the main military installations, Florida National Guard in particular, were very helpful in this regard.

As a result, the Foundation enters Year 2 with strong relationships and a good strategic perspective. Year 1 grants addressed many infrastructure needs throughout the area, creating the possibility in Year 2 of focusing more on targeted needs, potentially making smaller grants to more organizations.

Year 2 also will bring the first evaluations of grants made in Year 1, allowing better documentation of the impact that The Florida BrAlve Fund has had on the community.

HOW THE BRAIVE FUND HAS HELPED

With four-year-old twins, this single-parent veteran was living in a motel room and was in financial distress. He contacted the American Red Cross for help. With the assistance of a BrAlve Fund grant, he received financial assistance to enable him to move into an apartment and buy food for his family. He was on the verge of losing his vehicle and had no money for insurance. The financial assistance helped him to keep his truck and pay the insurance until he received his paycheck the following month.

A veteran who had not been employed since his discharge was behind on his house payments and had an initial foreclosure notice on his house. He found a job but was unable to catch up on his bills. The BrAlve Fund enabled him to meet his mortgage obligations so that he could make future payments from his paycheck.

One veteran's job required him to use his own vehicle, but the vehicle needed major engine repairs. The BrAlve Fund paid for the repairs so the veteran could continue working.

The aftermath of war left one veteran unable to live independently. He decided he should move back to Colorado and live with his parents. The BrAlve Fund helped him pay for a rental truck and gas to make the move.

After being turned down by several agencies, a veteran with a family of four turned to BrAlve Fund assistance for financial support. He was seeking employment but had been unsuccessful in finding a job. The family's only vehicle was about to be repossessed. The wife was attending college and was facing the possibility of dropping out of classes. The BrAlve Fund made the vehicle payment and paid insurance premiums, enabling the veteran to continue his job search while his wife continued her education.

A veteran was facing eviction and termination of electrical service, and was behind on his truck payments. With the help of the BrAlve Fund, his bills were paid and he was able to continue his job search.



Helping Floridians impacted by deployment to Afghanistan & Iraq

Kathleen Shaw
kshaw@jaxcf.org
Tracy Tousey
ttousey@jaxcf.org
Program Directors

www.floridabraive.org
www.jaxcf.org



245 Riverside Avenue
Suite 310
Jacksonville, Florida 32202
904-356-4483