



JULY 2026 ★ VOLUME II ★ ISSUE III

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE

Dear Friends,

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday weekend spent with family, friends, and moments of gratitude. It is hard to believe we are already halfway through the year. Time has certainly flown by, and we are deeply grateful for your continued support and partnership.

As we reflect on the Fourth of July and our nation's 250th anniversary of independence, we are reminded that some of our greatest strengths have always been found in unity. While our country continues to evolve, the values that have sustained us for generations; service, resilience, compassion, and a shared commitment to one another, remain as important today as ever.

This spirit of togetherness has been especially evident as communities from around the world have gathered in Los Angeles to celebrate the excitement of the FIFA World Cup. Moments like these remind us that, despite our different backgrounds and experiences, we share many of the same hopes: to build stronger communities and work toward a brighter future together. In a time when it can be easy to focus on what divides us, it serves as a powerful reminder of what can be accomplished when people come together around a common purpose.



Leo Cuadrado, M.B.A
Captain (Ret.), USMC
Executive Director

As we continue through the summer, we also look ahead to Purple Heart Day on August 7, when we honor the extraordinary courage and sacrifice of the service members who were wounded or gave their lives in defense of our nation. Their selflessness reminds us that our gratitude is best expressed not only through remembrance, but through our continued commitment to supporting veterans and ensuring they receive the care and opportunities they have earned.

Thank you for standing alongside us in this mission. Your generosity and partnership make this work possible, and together we will continue restoring hope, strengthening our communities, and ensuring that no veteran is left behind.

With Gratitude,

HOLIDAY SEASON IS FAST APPROACHING

LEARN HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT OUR HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS AND HELP BRING JOY, CONNECTION, AND COMMUNITY TO THE VETERANS WE SERVE. YOUR SUPPORT HELPS US CREATE MEANINGFUL MOMENTS OF CELEBRATION AND TOGETHERNESS THROUGHOUT THE SEASON.





Putting Veterans First Since 1992
NEW DIRECTIONS *for* VETERANS

Honoring Our Heroes Gala 2026

6:30 pm | *Cocktail Reception*

7:30 pm - 9 pm | *Dinner and Program*

SUNDAY **NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM**
NOVEMBER 8, 2026 **OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY**

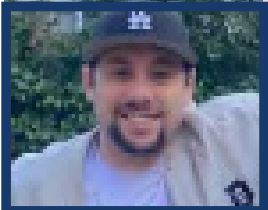


**TAKE A LOOK BACK AT OUR PAST HONOREES
AND JOIN US IN CELEBRATING THIS YEAR'S HEROES!!**

2025



DONITA BERRY
United States Army



SETH FERRARO
United States Marine Corps



ANTHONY ROBINSON
United States Army

2024



JOY BRICKHOUSE
United States Army



DARRYL MOSBY SR.
United States Marine Corps



DANIEL MARTIN
United States Army

**CLICK HERE OR
SCAN THE QR
CODE TO RESERVE
YOUR TABLE TODAY**



QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

PLEASE CONTACT:

SCOTT BRUMER

SBRUMER@NDVETS.ORG | 310.806.8413

PROFILES IN COURAGE

DON M. UNITED STATES ARMY

For many veterans, the transition from military service to civilian life is filled with unexpected challenges. For Don McCastle, a United States Army veteran, that transition became a journey of healing, purpose, and a commitment to helping others.

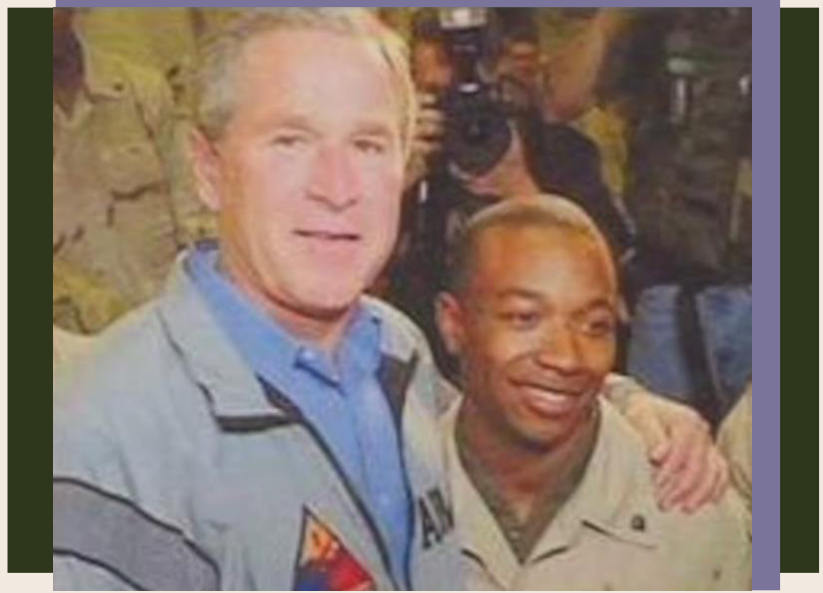
Don was raised in Baton Rouge, LA in a family of notable Union and Civil Rights activists. When tragedy struck on September 11, 2001, he carried this legacy of service, enlisting in the United States Army as a combat medic.

However, little was known about what would transpire after 9/11, and with the invasion of Iraq, Don was soon deployed. There, he faced many challenges, seeing firsthand the brutality of war. A bright spot in his deployment came on Thanksgiving Day in 2003, where he met President Bush, Secretary Rice, General Sanchez and General Rumsfeld within Baghdad's infamous "Green Zone." The reality of the moment hit home when Don called his mother to share the news, but he was already too late.

"I KNOW- I AM LOOKING AT YOU ON CNN RIGHT NOW."

After Iraq, Don was stationed at West Point, serving there for two years and establishing a family- his two daughters, Kennedy and Yasmine. Tragically in 2005, his brother who had planned to join him in New York, passed away in a car accident. It was then that Don began to truly feel the effects of combat. **"I was masking a lot of injuries, both physical and mental."**

Living with the effects of PTSD and a traumatic brain injury (TBI), Don found himself self-medicating to numb the realities he faced. Despite the Army adage of "suck it up and drive on," Don was honorably discharged in 2006.



Back in civilian life, Don spent the next decade managing warehouses, at one point working for Delta Airlines. In 2016, he was invited to participate in a four-month pilot program through the Wounded Warrior Project and UCLA Ronald Reagan Hospital. The program, *Operation Mend*, provides treatment and support for post-9/11 veterans, with this pilot specifically focused on serving veterans living with PTSD and TBI.

Don fell in love with Los Angeles; with the passing of his mother and his two daughters away at college, he decided to make the move. He accepted a position with the United States Census; however the pandemic disrupted those plans, and soon after Don found his way to New Directions for Veterans.

Today, Don lives within our PSH, where he continues to build on the resilience and determination that have guided him throughout his life. He is attending college and working toward a master's degree in Social Work, with the goal of helping fellow veterans. Drawing from his own experiences, Don hopes to give back by supporting others through challenges, sharing the common bonds of service, and the unwavering belief to never give up.

"TOMORROW IS NEVER PROMISED. I HAVE LOST SO MANY IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN MY LIFE, AND REFLECTING ON MEMORIAL DAY, THAT HAS SHOWN ME WHAT IS TRULY PARAMOUNT."

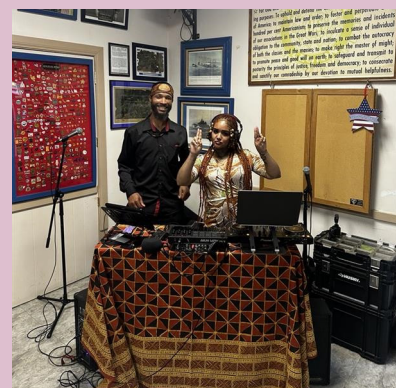
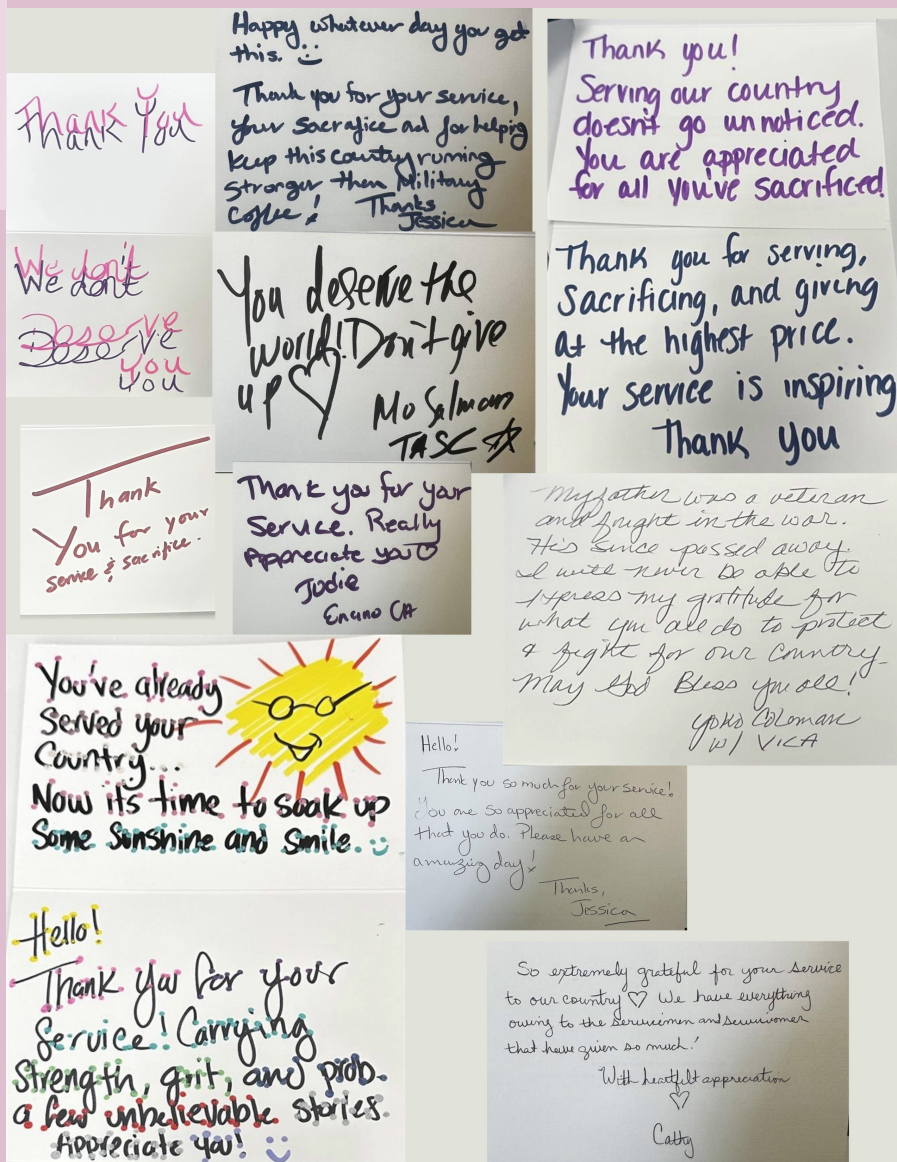


VICA AFTER DARK

Last month, we had a wonderful evening bringing together members, partners, and supporters who make up the Valley Industry and Commerce Association for a special "VICA After Dark" program. The night began with networking, where members participated in veteran-focused bingo and wrote heartfelt cards for veterans.

The program continued with a beautiful performance by the Granada Hills Charter High School Choir, followed by a panel discussion moderated by Scott Brumer, Director of Development. The panel which included John Cohn, Board Chairman; Leo Cuadrado, Executive Director; and Dr. Susan Michael, Vice President of Programs; highlighted our organization and the impact of community support.

A special thank you to Nate Foersch and the American Legion Post 826 Woodland Hills, for helping bring everyone together. We are grateful for the opportunity to connect with our community and share the mission of enhancing the lives of veterans throughout Los Angeles.



Left: Venus Sublime and Ambassador Band of Heroes, provided the tunes and good vibes for the evening.

Sunshine and Fun Times

Just in time for spring, we had an amazing day at the ballpark as the Back-to-Back World Series Champion Los Angeles Dodgers took on the Miami Marlins!

Veterans from across our Los Angeles sites headed to Dodger Stadium in style, thanks to the generosity of Councilmember Traci park (CD11).

It was a fun-filled day of baseball, sunshine, and memories; especially for those attending their first-ever Dodgers game. We're grateful for the opportunity to share these moments together and create experiences our veterans won't forget!



Friday, August 7th is Purple Heart Day- on this solemn day we honor and remember the sacrifices made by the brave men and women who were wounded or killed during the line of duty, in service to our country.

PURPLE HEART DAY

August 7th



**Donate in honor or memory
of a Purple Heart Veteran**



Since the early 2010's, Ebell Rest Cottage Association has been a prominent support of our OASIS program for Women Veterans. OASIS aims to create a therapeutic environment to enhance the lives of women veterans recovering from the stressors caused by trauma, addiction, homelessness, and transition to civilian life.

In April, as a grantee, alongside Saint Barnabas Senior Services, our organization was honored to speak at the Rest Cottage Association Luncheon to celebrate admirable impacts we have made on behalf of at-risk women.

We are incredibly thankful to the Rest Cottage Association and its Chair, Kay Balue, who for over 100 years have dedicated their support to women in need. We look forward to partnering with them for years to come.



On July 9th, Tom Waits War Songs will be coming to the Dynasty Typewriter in Los Angeles. Created and produced by Michelle McGregor, this powerful live musical and visual concert reflects on the cost of war, set to music written by Tom Waits and Kathleen Brennan.

We are honored to be their official philanthropic partner, not only raising awareness to our mission, but supporting veterans in our care with a Donation Drive at the show.

**Please click here and get your
tickets today.**
We look forward to you joining us!