

# A ‘Beacon of Hope’ for Veterans

## A VFW District in Virginia has donated \$215,000 to a Virginia-based program that helps war veterans dealing with PTSD

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Over the past five years, a VFW District in Virginia has made it its mission to support a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing a haven for veterans with PTSD and their families.

Virginia’s District 11, based in the heart of the commonwealth, has donated a total of \$215,000 to the Boulder Crest Foundation, a nonprofit organization that offers programs free of charge to veterans who deployed to war zones from any generation or conflict. The latest donation took place in November, when members of District 11 presented \$42,000 to the foundation.

Alexander Thymmons, commander of Virginia’s VFW District 11, said that the District does not donate the funds on its own behalf, but for the VFW as a whole, saying that VFW “changes the lives of veterans” for the better.

“This wasn’t just a financial contribution,” said Thymmons, who medically retired as an Army major. “It symbolized a profound dedication to the welfare of those who have served.”

Thymmons said that organizations such as the Boulder Crest Foundation are important for the veteran community and help those “to regain self-worth” in their lives outside of the military.

“The Boulder Crest Foundation is a beacon of hope for many of our nation’s veterans,” said Thymmons, a former intelligence officer. “Not only was Boulder Crest founded by a former service member, but the people also leading the program have gone through it and have seen the significant changes the program brought to their lives.”

Thymmons said that District 11 throughout the years has raised money for the Boulder Crest program through its Valley Veterans Ride for Heroes, a cycling event in the Shenandoah

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Valley. The event, hosted by a dozen VFW Posts in the area, garnered about 150 cyclists last year.

### **A ‘PATHH’ TO GROWTH**

The Boulder Crest Retreat in Virginia is a 37-acre resort in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Founded in September 2013 by Ken Falke, a retired Navy master chief petty officer and explosive ordnance disposal technician, Boulder Crest’s approach to helping military members, veterans, first responders and their families is based around the concept of “post-traumatic growth.” The foundation guides veterans and their families to transform life crises or traumatic events into the pillars of strength and resilience.

Boulder Crest provides visitors with the chance to complete the Warrior PATHH (Progressive and Alternative Training for Healing Heroes) program. It is based on post-traumatic growth. This is defined as a veteran making positive psychological changes based on struggles with trauma.

The 90-day journey is led by combat veterans dedicated to connecting and supporting those transitioning from the military into civilian life. The program uses education to help participants understand post-traumatic stress and provide ways to alleviate it.

The Boulder Crest Foundation has a secondary location in Sonoita, Ariz. For more information about the Boulder Crest Foundation, visit <https://bouldercrest.org>.

### **RIDING FOR VETERANS**

This year’s Valley Veterans Ride for Heroes, according to Thymmons, will rally under the banner “Veterans: Not Just a Number.” He said that this theme is deeply personal to every veteran and serves as a reminder that behind every statistic, “there’s a story, a life lived and sacrifices made.”

Thymmons, who said he has faced his own battles with PTSD, supports the Not Just a Number Act (S. 928), a bill he said “brings humanity to the forefront” of the veteran suicide crisis.

“This is not just another piece of legislation — it is a call to action,” said Thymmons, a veteran of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. “It demands that the secretary of VA provide a detailed, empathetic analysis of veteran suicides and push for better data and understanding of the crisis. This is about seeing the person behind the uniform and about changing how we as a nation approach this heartbreaking issue.”

Learn more about 2024’s Valley Veterans Ride for Heroes at <https://www.valleyvetsride4heroes.com>.

*This article is featured in the 2024 April issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Dave](#)*

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