

# MARINE RECONNAISSANCE FOUNDATION



SPRING 2022  
Vol I Issue 4



## ANNUAL PROGRAMS

- Recon Gold Star Family Retreat
- Wounded Teammate and Family Retreat
- Recon Gold Star Children's Retreat
- Recon-Owned Business Grant Program
- Financial Support to the Annual Recon Challenge

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## OUR MISSION:

We support the Reconnaissance Community through action. We are committed to providing support to our teammates and their families — both active and former members — through annual, reoccurring programs and appropriate emergent or emergency funds, all generously provided by our donors, supporters and sponsors.

All supported initiatives are aimed at enriching the well-being of our warriors and their families.

Our services include:

- ◆ Deliberate/Reoccurring Programs
- ◆ Emergent/Emergency Support
- ◆ History and Traditions Preservation

These form the core of our three Marine Recon Foundation "Lines of Effort," or LOEs.

We provide wide-ranging support,

to include an extensive assessment of our programs contributing directly to the success and preservation of the Reconnaissance Legacy.

Our mission is to provide immediate and ongoing support and assistance to the Active-duty and Veteran Marine Reconnaissance Community and their families.

Incorporated in 2013, MRF is a nationally-registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. We are eternally grateful for all your continued support to our members and families.

## LINES OF EFFORT 1: Deliberate Program

### An Aloha Experience Awaits Families at 2022 Gold Star Retreat

This year we will execute our 4th Annual Recon Gold Star Family Retreat from April 28 to May 6. We are honored to have the families of Michael Guillory, "Jack" Dempsey, Brent Morel and Justin Hansen with us.

The purpose of the Recon Gold Star

Family Retreat is to demonstrate our love and commitment to the families of our fallen teammates and show them through action that they are not forgotten. This is an "all expense" paid event for our families made possible by you.... our teammates and supporters!

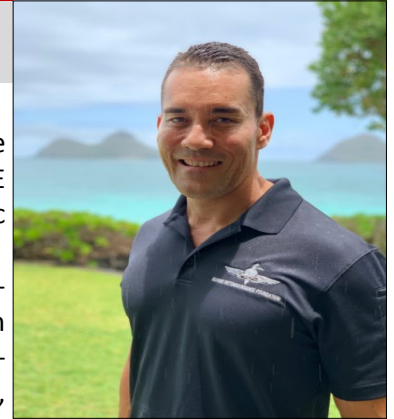
The retreat will begin on Thursday, April 28 with the arrival of our families at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

On Friday, April 29, the families of Alex Romero, Ryan & Riley Pape, Kevin Shea and John Sealy will be joining the Recon Foundation Gold Star Retreat to observe the 13th Annual Recon Challenge, which will be held at Camp Pendleton.

That night our brother,

*Continued on page 3 —>*



**UPDATE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

***“Honoring  
Our  
Nation’s  
Finest and  
Supporting  
Their  
Families at  
Every Step”***

**Aloha** to our teammates and supporters! As the Reconnaissance Foundation begins the 2nd Quarter of Calendar Year 2022, I wanted to provide our teammates, families and supporters an update on the first half of 2022.

I am happy to report that we have been able to execute each of our Lines Of Effort successfully, time on target for the first quarter of this year.

Since the last newsletter update in November 2021 we have been extremely busy supporting our teammates and their families.

Under Line of Effort 1 (LOE 1) "Deliberate Reoccurring Programs" we have finalized planning and have fully funded this year's annual Recon Gold Star Family Retreat, taking place in San Diego and Hawaii from 28 April to 6 May 2022. This year's retreat will honor the families of Michael Guilory, Brent Morel, "Jack" Dempsey and Justin Hansen. The purpose of the Annual Recon Family Gold Star Retreat is to demonstrate our love and commitment to the families of our fallen teammates and to show them through action that they are not forgotten.

Under Line of Effort 2 (LOE 2) "Emergency Support," in the first four months of 2022, we have executed numerous discreet missions providing emergency or emergent support to teammates and their families, to include organizing the funeral services and wake for Chief Petty Officer Kevin Callahan, who died doing what he loved.... surfing the huge winter swell at Haleiwa on January 2, 2022. This is just one example of the discreet support provided to numerous qualified and deserving teammates and their family members in need.

Under Line of Effort 3 (LOE 3) "Historic Preservation", we have conducted in depth research on significant figures, teams, battles and accomplishments of Reconnaissance men throughout our communities storied history, and subsequently drafted numerous Reconnaissance history preservation articles, posts, written narratives accompanied by supporting photo/document evidence.

We have also worked to support and perpetuate Recon community veteran organizations, to include providing funds and services to the 2nd Force Reconnaissance Association in order to support their annual reunion, which is an event that allows senior teammates and their families the opportunity to come together in the spirit of brotherhood and kinship.

We will continue to strive to live by the Reconnaissance Creed and to take care of our own. If you would like to get involved, apply your personal time and effort, provide goods and services or provide a monetary donation to the MRF, I give you my personal assurance that any support provided will be applied directly and completely to the Foundations mission, Lines of Effort and associated programs.

I am personally always available to answer any questions regarding the foundation so please feel free to reach out.

Always by your side.

**Jose "Pep" Tablada III**

President

Marine Reconnaissance Foundation

[jose.tablada@reconfoundation.org](mailto:jose.tablada@reconfoundation.org)

MRF is a nationally-registered 501(3)c charity  
Tax ID #46-3009425



**LINES OF EFFORT 1: Deliberate Programs**

**An Aloha Experience Awaits Families at Gold Star Retreat in Hawaii**

—> Continued from page 1

Master Sergeant Jim "Ripper" Rutan, will be hosting our families at his restaurant "Big Jim's 395 Grill" for a family dinner.

On Saturday, April 30, we will host the Warrior Night dinner and awards ceremony, where all members of the Recon community — past and present — are welcome to attend.

From May 1-6, our families will be at the Paul Mitchell Estate on Lanikai Beach, on the island of Oahu in the State of Hawaii. For this period, the families will be able to relax on an exclusive, private beachfront estate provided by our good friend Angus Mitchell and the Paul Mitchell Estate.

Events that our families will participate in during this week include yoga, art, water sports (kayak, Hawaiian canoe paddling, SUP and sailing) and visiting historical sites such as Pearl Harbor and USS *Missouri*. They will also get to experience live music, native Hawaiian food, art and dance during their time at the estate.

A huge thank you to our generous supporters, big and small businesses and Recon-owned companies for your efforts in helping us plan, resource and execute this event!



**LINES OF EFFORT 1: Reoccurring Support**

**MRF Teams with School of Infantry-West for Recon Challenge 2022**

Each year, the Reconnaissance Foundation is a proud sponsor of Recon Training Company's Annual Recon Challenge, held at Camp Pendleton. The Recon Challenge is an annual event, planned and executed by the School of Infantry West's Recon Training Company (RTC), that allows two dozen two-man teams made up of Reconnaissance Marines and Special Amphibious Reconnaissance Corpsmen to cover a distance of 35+ miles through the ocean and over the hills and firebreaks of Camp Pendleton while conducting tactical tasks along the way – all to honor our fallen teammates.



The MRF provides direct support to RTC, the active duty force, Recon families and community supporters by providing the team awards, purchasing Recon Challenge event items, which include challenge coins, banners and other items requested by RTC, as well as purchasing the food that's provided at no cost to families, supporters and observers at RTC Headquarters.



We are also honored to be flying in Major James Capers (USMC, Ret.) for the event to act as 2022 Recon Challenge's Guest of Honor. Major Capers will preside over the awards ceremony and will present the awards to the 1st, 2nd & 3rd Place teams.

## VICE PRESIDENT'S CORNER



We are excited to have 3 returning campers and 1 new camper for the 1<sup>st</sup> session so far this year at Echo Hill Ranch in Texas hill country. Echo Hill

Ranch's stated mission is "to provide a safe, fun, relaxing, and empowering professional summer camp experience for the children of Gold Star families, immediate family members of a fallen service member who died while serving in a time of conflict, or those of first responders."

The MRF will be onsite for the June 14 to June 23 camp session, and we are actively seeking both volunteers and kids to attend the camp this year. If you are interested, please reach out to me so I can start working the details and provide registration information for volunteers and camp

attendees. Kids can attend either or both camp sessions, but the goal is to have all our kids at the same camp session again this year.

The MRF team donated \$10,000 dollars to assist in camp maintenance over the 2021-2022 winter to make needed repairs to the Kitchen, bathrooms, bunk houses, outside benches and many other projects around the camp.

My father has donated his time and completed much of the work, to include major repairs to the kitchen so these kids can have the best experience possible. I'm very grateful for his time and support of the Reconnaissance Community and our families. Without him staying on site for several months this would not have been possible.

**Chris May**  
MRF VP  
817-501-5931  
brotherrecon@gmail.com



### GOLD STAR CAMP SUMMER 2022

June 10-13 — Orientation and Volunteer Training

June 14-23 — Gold Star Camp Session I

June 24-June 26 — Intersession I

June 27-July 6 — Gold Star Camp Session II

*Note:* Session II includes the July 4 weekend. If volunteers want to spend the holiday with their families, they can leave camp a bit early.

*Note:* Summer 2022 ranchers will be allowed to register for both sessions.

### **MARINE RECONNAISSANCE FOUNDATION**

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**MRF Marks '0321' Day with Fundraiser at Ballast Point Brewery**

On March 21, Ballast Point Brewery rolled out their double IPA "Sub Surface" in support of the Marine Reconnaissance Foundation.

The fundraising event was coordinated by our teammate Randall Parkes and included a beer-tasting event with active duty and retired teammates as well as coordination with Paul Elder (Ballast Point artist) on the art that would adorn the Sub-surface crowler.



The event took place at Ballast Point brewery's Miramar location in San Diego, Calif., and was a great event bringing over 200 active duty, retired teammates and family as well as support from NSW and OGA communities.



The funds provided by Ballast Point will cover the total cost of food and provisions for this year's Recon Foundation Gold Star Family retreat in San Diego and Oahu, Hawaii, from April 28 to May 6, 2022.



**TREASURER'S NOTES**

The Foundation is very fortunate to be financially stable. What does that actually mean? It means "Mission Accomplishment and Troop Welfare" is a reality. We're in a financial position to be an asset for our Gold Star Families, Active/Reserve Recon brothers, Recon-owned businesses, Projects, Retreats, etc. So, being financially solid, the goal is to stay financially solid; to always be an asset for you, our Reconnaissance community and your families.

It's very sad, heartbreaking, when we hear Recon brothers have passed away or tragedies in their families. We will all be "Extracting" someday. That's life. Anytime I hear of a death, the financial coach in me asks, "Did they have life insurance? Did they have savings to leave to their families?" Since I've been the MRF Treasurer, not a single family has had either. Unfortunately, not being prepared financially, they end up creating GoFundMe accounts, fundraisers, and/or get in touch with the MRF for financial assistance. Let me be clear, we will always be there for our Recon Marines and their families, but we can also fix this problem that's not only affecting our community, but families across the country.

A few years ago, one of the founders of GoFundMe wrote an article asking why families were using his platform to raise money after the death of a loved one when they should have life insurance.

Life is either long or short. If it's short, leaving money to your family (through life insurance) makes sense. If it's long, you'll need retirement savings. Doesn't it make sense to be prepared for BOTH? Life insurance is the first step for you and your family. It doesn't protect you from harm, so it should actually be called "income insurance". If something happens to you, there is money for your loved ones. No need to set up GoFundMe accounts, fundraisers, bake sales, etc., just to bury your loved one.

Problem fixed. At the same time, put away some money/savings. When you've



accumulated enough wealth, get rid of the life insurance. Once you're "self-insured" with your own money, you don't need the insurance anymore.

Not everyone needs life insurance... but if someone is depending on you to stay alive and make money, you need it.

The Foundation is more than excited to help individuals, families, and businesses with any financial guidance they want or need. The foundation of any financial plan is life insurance, income insurance. If you are employed, your biggest asset isn't your house(s), car(s), jewelry, etc... it's YOU! You insure your house, your car, your health, but doesn't it make sense to insure your income? That's life insurance. If you currently have a policy, we applaud you, but not all life insurance is equal. I can provide a free life insurance policy analysis to show you how your policy actually works. I mean, who actually reads their insurance policy?

In closing, I want everyone in our community as financially solid as our Foundation.

**Marty Williams**

Treasurer

Marine Reconnaissance Foundation

**SARC CORNER:**

**Special Amphibious Recon Corpsmen Take Arctic Dip to Hone Cold-Weather Skills**



Over the last two years, there has been a transition from preparing to operate on the battlefields of the Middle East to preparing forces for the many varied environments — hot or cold, dry or humid — that Reconnaissance teams may have to face in a future battlefield. Operators must learn to operate in a multitude of environments in order to be successful and mitigate friendly casualties in those new battlespaces.

*"No Respect for Distance."*

This is the motto of the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol Squadron that mentored 2nd Recon Battalion, Company B, 1st Platoon above the Arctic Circle during the Patrol Course Winter 2022. Over the span of 60 training days, 1st platoon spent 32 nights unsupported in the arctic tundra. They traveled over 200 kilometers in temperatures as low as -19°F with wind gusts of 30 mph.

Hypothermia and frostbite are not simply concerns in these environments — they must be constantly battled through active education and constant monitoring. HM1 Adam Emery and HM3 Braden Johnson, 1st Platoon's SARCs, used this training opportunity to sharpen their skills as they endured the cold miles alongside their Recon brothers. Ensuring proper cold-weather equipment is utilized and worn properly, doing nightly physical assessments, practicing active rewarming and cold-water immersion training are all part of the equation.

SARCs Emery and Johnson had this to say: "If you can operate in the arctic, you can operate in any environment. The lessons learned in the arctic will be carried forward throughout the rest of our careers and will be implemented worldwide."

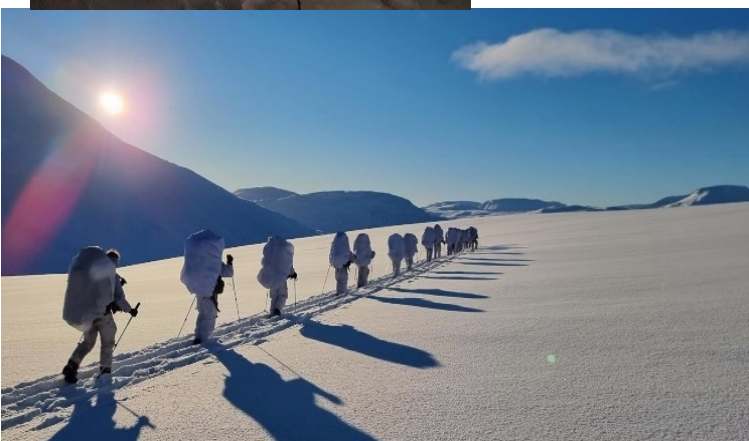
"The Difficult Anytime. The Impossible by Appointment Only."

If you are a current or former SARC and would like to support a future Marine Reconnaissance Foundation event, please reach out to me at [jeff.sarc@gmail.com](mailto:jeff.sarc@gmail.com).

**Jeff "El Jefe" Stevens**  
MRF Board of Directors  
SARC Representative



**BRRR! It's cold-water immersion for Special Amphibious Recon Corpsmen (above). During a recent winter training course, they covered some 60 kilometers (37+ miles) in the Arctic and experienced patrolling under Northern Lights-lit skies.**





## GOLD STAR FAMILIES: Retreat Brings Support to Families of the Fallen

I remember when I got the first call from Pep Tablada. He told me he was with the Recon Foundation. The Foundation was planning a Gold Star families retreat. The Foundation would pay for the flights, the food, and we would stay at the Paul Mitchell Estate. My first thought was, "What?!" My response was, "Oh no. You don't have to do that. That is a lot." Pep replied, "You have paid with your son's sacrifice. You have paid more than we can ever repay." I had to stop. I took a deep breath. I answered, "Ok." Pep said, "Just accept it. I don't want to hear another word." If you know Pep, he meant it, with all the love he has. My husband and I were with the first families to go to Hawaii. That was three years ago. Every year since then, families have been guests at the Paul Mitchell Estate.

As it is with families whose loved one has left this world, there were a myriad of emotions. Thinking it was because of Caleb's sacrifice that we had this gift, was beyond words. Gratitude for the generosity, and sorrow because of the son who was now gone. I am sure some if not all families who are going to the retreat, go through similar emotions.

Every year I hear of the new families going to Hawaii, I reminisce. I know what they are going through. It is a new experience. They are going to spend almost a week with other families they've never met, from across the United States whose loved ones were in Special Forces in the Marines-loved ones now gone from this earth. Pep said we could do as much or as little as we wanted. It was our time. I remember wondering what I would do. Would I engage with other families? Would I want to do things? What things were we going to do?

For some reason there was apprehension. Should I do this? You see, a lot of times, it is an intentional decision to do things. It is easier not to move out of that comfort zone built around the familiar.

I remember stepping off the plane. Pep said they would find us, and he did. There he came carrying leis. There was no mistaking that it was Pep. There were hugs and warm hellos. The welcome was genuine and so appreciated.

We met the other families, shared our stories of our loved ones, and talked a little about our lives.

I think of the new families. I know we and the families we were with established such a bond in that short time, that it truly is like we are family. We shared our meals, we shared tears and laughter. We sat together for meals, and planted memorial trees for our loved ones.

The new families are in for a life-changing experience. The moment they get off the plane, and get their luggage, they will know they are with Family.

I can't wait for them to meet. I can't wait for them to experience the peace and beauty of the Paul Mitchell Estate. I can't wait to hear all about their experiences.

Even though I won't be there in person, I can share their adventures from afar. I can imagine them sitting around the table at breakfast, with barefeet, the fresh ocean air welcoming a new day. I can see them standing on the beach like Austin Byrd and I did, watching the sunrise, talking about our loved ones.

I can feel the emotions they will go through, planting that memorial tree. I know the mixed feelings that come when it's time to leave. There will be hugs and tears.

When they come home to the mainland, they will join us who have been to Hawaii for the Gold Star Family Retreat, in memories only we who have been there can share.

Much like our loved ones – it's a bond that time or distance will never sever.

Always beside you.

**Diane Homm**

Gold Star Recon Mom

Recon Foundation Gold Star liaison



**LINES OF EFFORT 3:**

**Historic Preservation: CPO Kevin “Doc” Callahan**

CPO Kevin Callahan lost his life on January 2, 2022, while doing what he loved most..... surfing the big waves on the North Shore of Oahu. Kevin was a respected teammate who received the Bronze Star with combat distinguishing device while a member of A Co.,3rd Recon Battalion during the Battle of Khafji in January 1991.

Two Recon teams deliberately remained in urban observation posts when enemy forces invaded the town, in order to conduct close target reconnaissance and direct fires onto the enemy formation



made up of thousands of enemy ground forces rein-

forced by Iraqi armor. The two teams in the middle of the large enemy formation displayed incredible tactical professionalism by remaining undetected, while continuing to report and direct fires. This is the hallmark of Marine Reconnaissance.

Kevin, the Recon Team Special Operations Technician or SOT (the



precursor to today's SARC), took command of his Reconnaissance Team when the Team Leader was wounded due to danger close, indirect and aviation delivered fires.

Displaying superior tactical professionalism he continued to lead the team, accomplishing the mission and successfully coordinating his teams extraction from behind enemy lines. Kevin and his family had requested a military funeral and the spreading of his ashes and during Military Free Fall.

In keeping the faith and following through on a teammates last wish-

es, the Reconnaissance Foundation planned and executed his military funeral and the spreading of his ashes. Kevin was truly an admired and respected teammate, friend and family member. He was loved by all who knew him.

Never Above You  
Never Below You  
Always By Your Side





## Honoring the Fallen

### In Memoriam: Lt. Col. Nicholas “Kolya” Nikonov

Lieutenant Colonel Nicholas “Kolya” Nikonov is a beloved father, husband, son, friend and teammate who gallantly sacrificed his life while conducting combat operations against Russian forces in Ukraine.

Lt. Col. “Kolya” Nikonov served as an officer in the Ukrainian Naval Special Operations Forces from 2007 to 2022. In 2010, Kolya was selected to travel to the United States and attend the U.S. Marine Corps Basic Reconnaissance course (BRC). Kolya graduated BRC with distinction and earned formal recognition as a member of the Reconnaissance Community.

Lt. Col. Nikonov was known throughout the Ukrainian Special Operations Community as an extraordinary combat leader and selfless teammate. He completed extensive military training and education at home and abroad. Throughout his career, Kolya demonstrated superior English language skills and knowledge of U.S. Marine Reconnaissance doctrine. He was selected to represent the Ukrainian Naval Special Operations community during two multi-national training exercises where he trained with and supported a U.S. Marine Infantry Battalion and a Marine Reconnaissance detachment. In 2015, Kolya was again selected to represent the Ukrainian military, earning a school seat at the U.S. Marine Corps Expeditionary Warfare School in Quantico, Va. During his time in Quantico, Kolya supported his American friends visiting them and in one case checking in on the family of a de-



ployed service member.

From 2014 to 2022, Lt. Col. Nikonov spent most of his time forward deployed to eastern Ukraine fighting separatists allied with Russia. Kolya passionately refused offers to serve in non-combat roles and elected to stay on the front lines. He courageously led Ukrainian troops in combat against a superior Russian Force, achieving multiple tactical victories near the besieged city of Mariupol.

Kolya was known to push himself beyond the physical limits of some of the fittest special operations troops in the Ukraine and the US. He approached every challenge with an intense desire to succeed, inspiring his peers and subordinates to do the same. Nick loved skydiving, contact sports and scuba diving. He was never deterred by unfavorable winds or cold water and always maintained a good sense of humor and a positive outlook.

Tragically, Lt. Col. Nicholas “Kolya” Nikonov was killed in action on March 12<sup>th</sup> 2022, in combat against Russian forces near the city of Mariupol. Kolya lived how he died, demonstrating an indefatigable drive to serve, boundless love for his family and total dedication to his teammates and friends. He will also be remembered as a brother in the Reconnaissance community.



***Please support MRF programs and donate today***

# MARINE RECONNAISSANCE FOUNDATION



We are supporting the Reconnaissance Community through action. We provide annual re-occurring and emergent emergency support to our teammates past and present, support the active duty & reserve operating forces and foster and perpetuate Reconnaissance history, lineage and traditions. The Marine Reconnaissance Foundation provides assistance with flights and lodging for wounded service members and their family members when needed.

### HOW TO REACH US:

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**Instagram:** @marinereconfoundation  
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### PLEASE DONATE VIA:

**Paypal:** [https://www.paypal.com/donate?hosted\\_button\\_id=REZQ2Q3EKZH2G](https://www.paypal.com/donate?hosted_button_id=REZQ2Q3EKZH2G)  
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**On our web page:** <https://reconfoundation.org>

MRF is a nationally-registered 501(3)c organization, Tax ID #46-3009425



*“The cost of freedom is always high — and Americans have always paid it. And one path we shall never choose, and that is the path of surrender or submission.”*

- John F. Kennedy



## SHOP AT THE MRF STORE



**Brother Recon** has MRF merchandise on our site at <https://www.brotherrecon.com/mrf>

Here are a few of the products we have in stock. We will continue to bring on new products and support the Foundation going forward, so please check the website for the latest. I can do some limited custom requests and look forward to supporting the community with this new line of products.



**Website:** <https://www.brotherrecon.com/>  
**MRF Page:** <https://www.brotherrecon.com/mrf>  
**Email:** [brotherrecon@gmail.com](mailto:brotherrecon@gmail.com)



— Chris May (MGySgt Ret)

CEO & Founder  
Brother Recon LLC

