

CHANGING LIVES ONE WAVE AT A TIME



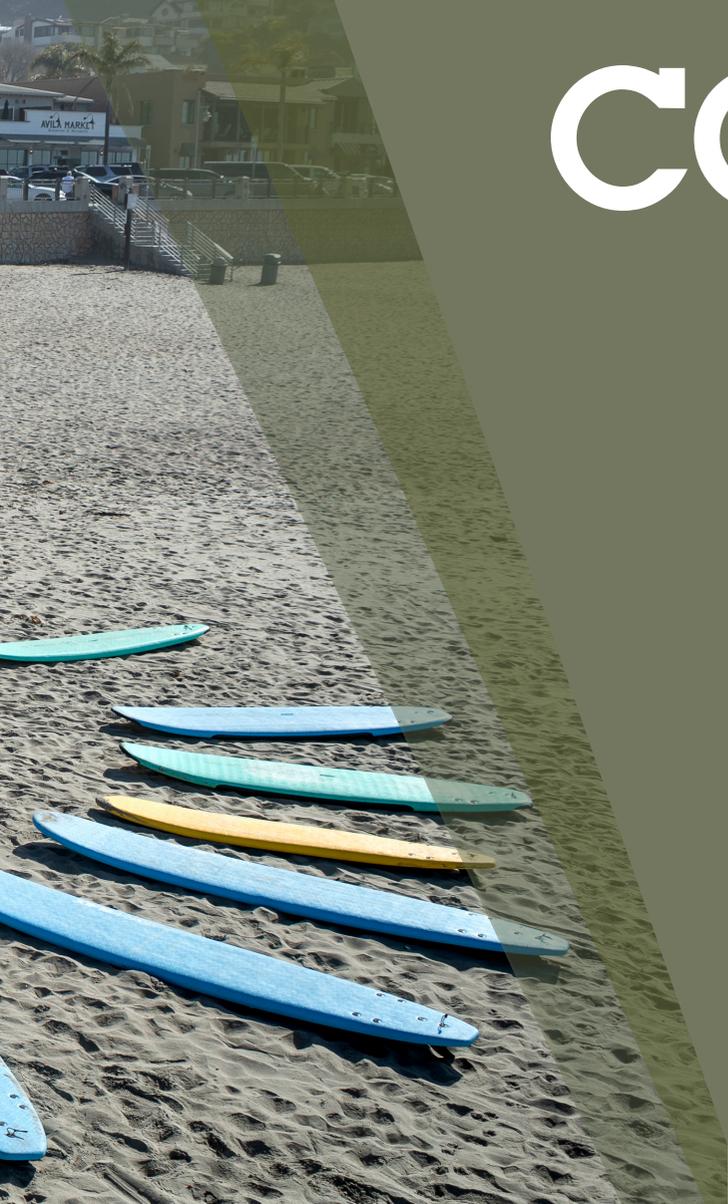
OPERATION
SURF[®]

2021

Annual Report







CONTENTS

- 01 LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
- 02 OUR MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES
- 03 OUR IMPACT
- 04 OUR PROGRAMS
- 05 CONNECTION BEYOND THE OCEAN
- 06 WHOOP RESEARCH DATA
- 07 OUR STORIES
- 08 2021 HIGHLIGHTS
- 09 WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON
- 10 2021 FINANCIALS
- 11 GET INVOLVED

01 LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In the beginning of 2021, we set out to accomplish a year like no other. We took what we learned from 2020 in adapting the way we operate: maximizing our resources, refining our programs, and focusing on operational wellness. We were able to double our programs and safely serve more people than we ever have in a single twelve month period. We were given the ability to grow our mission, expand our reach, and ultimately serve more participants largely because of your continued support.

This season has significantly changed Operation Surf and encouraged us to think about what the future holds for our organization. We are reigniting our ultimate vision, recruiting with alignment, and building outward to reach our next step in the journey; seeing surfing be recognized as a form of nature-based therapy to all who are in need.

To see this become a reality, we seek to continually lead research and stay in the forefront of what surf therapy can provide. In 2021, we launched a new study building upon our previous one with PhD candidate, Jon Ossie, and WHOOP. The study expands the understanding of mental health benefits Operation Surf and surf therapy provide veterans. In addition, the study seeks to understand physiological benefits through biometric markers such as sleep, recovery rate, and heart rate. In order to help veterans, we believe we must know how to do so effectively.

AMANDA
CURAZA





In addition to research, this past year taught us the importance of continual education for our team, volunteers, and board of directors. Trauma training and gaining a deeper understanding of important topics that our participants navigate is vital to our growth and ability to best serve them. Through this education, we will make better decisions, create safer environments, and provide more resources for those we serve.

We strengthen our post-program care of our online community through "The Canteen." Multiple times a week, we offer virtual connection for alumni all over the nation. These virtual meetings provide a wide array of topics and guest speakers for participants. One of my favorites featured Dr. Susan Fay who led us through an understanding of somatic responses to trauma and the power of mental imagery. What began as a way to stay connected during lock-down, "The Canteen" has now become a critical component of Operation Surf's success. Through shared experiences and community, members feel empowered and learn that they are not alone.

As we lean into 2022, we are focused on our thematic goal: Reignite, Recruit, and Build. While you read through the past year's accomplishments and this year's goals, please know that all of our team and those we serve are deeply thankful for the dedication and support our community has provided for Operation Surf. It takes commitment from many hands and hearts to make our programs possible, and your impact is beyond the programs we provide—it truly saves lives.

Amanda

02 OUR MISSION

Operation Surf's mission is to channel the healing powers of the ocean to restore hope, renew purpose, and revitalize community.

Our mission is built on a solid foundation of values that foster a culture of progressive wellness, community, and hope.



Care



Inclusion



Commitment



Integrity



Communication

Our mission and values continue to serve as our guiding principles toward our vision to **Serve More People.**



WHY WE DO IT

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other traumas can have a lasting and detrimental impact on the human body. Rates of PTSD, suicide, and other lingering effects among military veterans are so alarming that the matter has been classified as a National Health Crisis by the VA and CDC.



An estimated **1 in 3** veterans are diagnosed with PTSD.



Less than 40% seek help.



22 veterans commit suicide daily.

WHY SURFING?

Surfing is a form of healing that promotes wellness through nature-based therapy.

Surfing is **strength** and **confidence**.

Surfing is **hope** and **inspiration**.

Surfing **heals the soul**.

HOW WE DO IT

Operation Surf's curriculum-based programs aim to inspire injured military and veterans to seek wellness in all aspects of their lives while providing the necessary resources, tools, and support to continue this mindset indefinitely. By staying true to our core values and what we do best, we change participants' lives - one wave at a time.

Restore Hope

Through a safe, supportive environment, our participants accomplish their goals and have an experience of a lifetime, which restores hope to all involved. With respite, encouragement, and increased self-efficacy, they gain the motivation needed to face their past and current life challenges.

Renew Purpose

We continue to support those we serve through ongoing aftercare programs, giving them an opportunity to share their experiences, renew purpose, and give back to others.

Revitalize Community

We connect people with nature-and something bigger than self- through the therapeutic benefits of the ocean and surfing. Bringing individuals together with shared experiences revitalizes community and fosters feelings of belonging and support.

03 OUR IMPACT

THE IMPACT OF OCEAN THERAPY

Dr. Russell Crawford's book, *"The Impact of Ocean Therapy on Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder,"* suggests that surf therapy offers an alternative form of nature-based therapy that could potentially be effective for treating veterans with PTSD.

His research on the Operation Surf program showed that participants experienced:



36%

**A 36% decrease
in PTSD symptoms**



47%

**A 47% decrease
in depression**



68%

**A 68% increase
in self-efficacy**



OPERATION SURF

OPERATION SURF

WHOOPIE

WHOOPIE

Jamba

Jamba

NEILL

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THE RAILLY LAW FIRM

THE RAILLY LAW FIRM

04 OUR PROGRAMS

WEEK-LONG

During this all-inclusive, rehabilitative program, large steps of healing take place for wounded military men and women from all over the nation – including addressing deep grief by honoring fallen brothers and sisters, learning to build trust with new people, and accomplishing goals.

The week consists of two days of travel and five days of adaptive surfing. Additional activities include pre/post peer-to-peer support, a powerful opening blessing, daily yoga, mindfulness, group meals, nightly 'Recap Reel,' a closing award ceremony, and a powerful paddle out to honor fallen heroes.

OS6 - SIX-MONTH

Focusing on four key pillars, this six-month program aims to provide coastal veterans mentorship, support, and unity created through the peace and healing of surfing and community. It enables veterans to create relationships through shared experiences, regular communication, and common purpose.

Participants are held accountable to each other by taking on roles within the program. Regular scheduled family days and outings encourage new family relationships, and a unique sense of community develops that might otherwise never arise due to the high levels of isolation that are common among veteran populations.



PLUS! We are now connecting earlier with our incoming program participants through *The Board Room*, a virtual platform that eases anxiety and strengthens the bonds throughout our programs. Participants meet our entire staff, Veteran Support, and Instructors who they will interact and get to know throughout the program.

05 CONNECTION BEYOND THE OCEAN

Operation Surf's care extends far beyond the ocean. The core of what we do is create connection. Once participants leave a program and integrate back into daily life, we provide access to important tools, resources, and platforms to stay connected.

When our participants come together they develop genuine relationships through vulnerability and shared experiences—reminding them they are not alone. We believe the healing powers of the ocean coupled with meaningful relationships is the best recipe for providing hope, healing, and belonging to all who participate.



THE CANTEEN

The Canteen is our virtual platform that serves as a place for our veteran community to 'come to renew.' We conduct *The Canteen* via video Zoom calls multiple times a week, which focus on building communication skills, expanding personal wellness journeys, and sharing experiences.

By extending our support beyond the ocean, we provide a continuous source of peer-to-peer support when our veterans need it most.

The Canteen provides a consistent space for veterans to learn, grow, and support each other in their healing journey's.

As the Canteen continues to grow our team aims to find the best tools & resources in health and wellness to help veterans grow after their time in our programs. We know surfing's therapeutic benefits and seek to learn additional ways to promote healing.



MONDAY COFFEE WITH THE TEAM

Every Monday morning, our team hosts the Canteen with a warm coffee and a specific topic related to health, healing, and wellness. For an hour Operation Surf Alumni and other veterans get a chance to re-connect, or meet the Operation Surf staff for the first time.



"Canteens on Monday give me a constant reminder of Operation Surf's mission and why I love working here. We take participants surfing and foster community. The Canteen represent a piece of our beautiful growing community."

—Payton, Operation Surf Communications Manger

FRIDAY VETERANS HIGHS & LOWS

Keeping Community Strong

An important element of our program is called 'highs and lows'. It is a space for reflection, vulnerability, and trust. During highs and lows, each person shares a high and low point of their day. This allows everyone to know that they are not alone; we all have challenges and are more similar than we think. It's a safe way to connect and check-in with one another. We continue this powerful element post program during our weekly Friday Veterans Highs and Lows Canteen call.



10TH ANNIVERSARY IN SANTA CRUZ

It was amazing to be back in Santa Cruz hosting a week-long Operation Surf program for our eight participants from the Brooke Army Medical Center. The Santa Cruz and Capitola communities welcomed us in with open arms and the Patriot Guard riders and local law enforcement put on an amazing heroes welcome motorcade for our injured military and veterans. It was a life-changing week—one we will never forget.

The support of Santa Cruz communities, surf instructors, water safety, and volunteers helped make it possible for participants to conquer and exceed their individual goals and expectations. One of our Santa Cruz participants said it best:

"I haven't really 'felt' in what seems like forever. The past week was all about the feels and it was something I actually needed and didn't know it. A lot of things stretched my comfort zone and challenged me on many levels. I met a group of strangers and, in a very short time, had a sense of belonging. I was physically pushed. I had to make an effort versus drowning. I was humbled, and felt small in the greatness of the ocean, and, at the same time, my heart expanded to infinity. I've 'felt' and it was wild."

—Duncan, OSSC 21' Participant

SANTA CRUZ
Dream Inn
JACK O'NEILL
RESTAURANT & LOUNGE

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ONLY





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RAYVETS - Raytheon Employee Veterans Network

Avigilon - A Motorola Solutions Company

UTAH GOES ABOVE & BEYOND

The 3rd Annual RAYVETS Charity Golf Tournament benefiting Operation Surf was a HOLE IN ONE!

Operation Surf Alumni, Butch, and his outstanding team reported, *“By the numbers, the player field was completely filled with 144 players, 20+ sponsors, and 60+ volunteers helping us drive the results this year.”*

Through the generous donations, player registration, hole sponsorships, games, and virtual auction, they raised a total of **\$95,817** this year. A **142%** increase over 2020!

These contributions made a significant difference in 2021 by directly helping us continue our mission—providing injured military and veterans curriculum-based surf programs to help them seek wellness in all aspects of their lives while providing the necessary resources, tools, and peer-to-peer support to continue this mindset indefinitely.

Though Utah is far from the ocean, its community has shown tremendous passion and dedication to serving our nation’s heroes. We are humbled by their generosity and we can’t wait for next year!

06 WHOOP RESEARCH DATA

Jon Ossie is currently leading our research and data analytics efforts, conducting a study to evaluate the effectiveness of the Operation Surf program.

For his doctoral dissertation research at the University of San Diego in the School of Leadership and Education Studies, Jon and his team of advisors have kicked off a study examining the psychological and physiological impact of our program and mission to channel the healing powers of the ocean to restore hope, renew purpose, and revitalize the veteran community.

Dr. Russell Crawford's initial research (2015) showed that participants experienced a decrease in PTSD symptoms and depression, and an increase in self-efficacy, using self-report assessment surveys. His study in 2015 suggested surf therapy offers an alternative form of nature-based therapy that could potentially be effective for treating veterans with PTSD. Building upon Dr. Crawford's work, our current research study gathers data to measure the impact of Operation Surf's week-long surf program on veterans with PTSD, utilizing wearable technology provided through a partnership with Whoop. The Whoop technology allows us to unobtrusively capture physiological biomarker data, such as Heart Rate Variability, Resting Heart Rate, and Sleep (REM and



Sleep). Self-report survey assessment data, along with qualitative data, will support the quantitative physiological data to analyze to what extent, if any, there is a change in physiological biomarker data among veterans who participate in Operation Surf, as well as to what extent, if any, there is a change in PTSD symptoms, depression, or anxiety.

The analysis will use a repeated measures ANOVA statistical method utilizing three different points in time: before the program, immediately after, and thirty days following the program. This study correlates strongly with our goal to advance surfing as recognized form of nature-based therapy.

07 OUR STORIES

We see the impact of our work first-hand every day—in the transformations we witness on the faces of our participants, the inspiring words we hear from these individuals, and the praise our programs receive from participants' families and loved ones.

As a results-driven organization, we believe in gauging the effectiveness of our programs through scientific research and studies. However, the magnitude of impact Operation Surf provides is realized best through the inspiring first-hand stories of our participants.





THE GIFT OF RECEIVING HELP

Bert

"The picture (featured to the left) spoke to me on so many levels since I first saw it at the Day 4 Recap. I believe it embraces everything that Operation Surf strives to do; surround veterans with respite, grace, mercy, compassion, hope and love, unconditionally. In addition, it shows the very moment when the healing started for me, at the very core of my being.

I was physically, mentally and emotionally defeated. I had no choice but to let what little of my guard that was still intact come crashing to the ground as I willingly accepted help. *I WILLINGLY accepted help.*

While I tend to be very transparent about my life and story, and how we can't and shouldn't go through life alone, I've always struggled to allow others to help me in any capacity. This ultimately led me to a place of intense suicidal thoughts and ideation this time last year. Over the course of 2021, I have worked hard to improve upon myself, to heal and to grow through my trials and struggles.

This photo, is without question, a physical reminder of another major milestone in my journey. Through my defeat and desperation, I was surrounded, not by judgment and criticism for my shortcomings and physical limitations, but by grace, compassion and love, manifested physically through Robert (Lifeguard).

In the event any of you ever have doubts about yourselves, the 'whats' or the 'whys' or what you're capable of, I ask only that you look at this picture to remind you of the incredible power each of you possesses to help bring healing and change to others, because I for one, will never forget it.

I love each of you dearly, my Ohana, and I look forward to serving others alongside all of you in the future."



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WHO'S



STORMBLADE

EMBRACING DETERMINATION

Lisa

Lisa is a first generation who joined the military and went to college in her Chinese cultured family. Her time in the military taught her dignity, loyalty, leadership, and integrity, preparing her for when the sudden attacks of September 11th occurred. Lisa was immediately deployed to Afghanistan and shortly after deployed again, spending a year between Kuwait and Iraq.

"Iraq changed my perspective of life. Being in a combat zone with mortar rounds flying over your head, while gunshots become music to your ears, made me realize how much us civilians take life for granted. My life just flashed right before my eyes, and I was changed for ever."

Battling PTSD and General Anxiety Disorder, Lisa suppressed her emotions and feelings, but with time, it caught up with her. Her belief that nature is the best anti-depressant led her to apply for Operation Surf.

"I wanted to be whole again; wearing my PTSD badges while acknowledging that I am not disabled, but unique and different, and that I should be different."

Lisa was named "The Determinator," by her Surf Instructor during her week-long program in July.

"If I can face the fear of waves, be vulnerable, learn to trust the ocean, and learn to trust others, then I can definitely face anything life throws at me. There are a million words, and then there are no words to describe the impact, dedication, and support that this Ohana has done for me. The ocean is beyond powerful—it's magical."

The stoke continued on when Lisa came back as Veteran Support several months later.

"I am craving for more of these deep connections, laughter, smiles, tears, pain, wipeouts, party waves, community, healing, and being present... with strangers, with myself, and with the ocean. I cannot thank the Operation Surf family enough for allowing me to be of service. It has been a privilege, you've made a big impact on my healing process."



GIVING BACK TO OTHERS

Neil

Neil is a true testament to the power of sharing your story with others. His roots are growing deep here on the Central Coast with his family, but his story didn't start here.

"My resistance to Veterans, and any veteran program is very important to note. I wanted nothing to do with veterans. After my time in the military, specifically in Iraq, I came back very distrusting of people."

Although resistant and guarded, Neil made the commitment to join OS6 in 2019, driving three hours to the ocean and three hours back weekly.

"I knew if I started something, I would complete it. And after meeting another Veteran from Fresno who was interested in the program, I had accountability. I wasn't going to let him down by not showing up."

As the months progressed, he found the healing powers of the ocean and community begin to take healing inside him. Neil learned how to share his story with others and help veteran's find connection through vulnerability. As the group began to connect and experienced the joys and challenges of surfing, Neil began to understand the importance of community and processing emotions in a healthy outlet.

After six months, the Hancox family took a leap of faith and moved their entire lives out to the Central Coast to be a permanent part of the Operation Surf community. Soon after, Neil completed a life-changing week-long program, and then went on to become the OS6 2021 Veteran Lead—giving back to his fellow brothers and sisters in the same program that first helped him. Today Neil is a significant part of the Operation Surf team and leads by example.

08 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

We entered 2021 with an open mindset and plan to accomplish more than we had ever completed in a year. Directly following a year that shut down our world, this ambitious goal proved we can do so much more when we are flexible, work as a team, and are open to new ideas. Through the dedication of our team, volunteers, and community, we successfully and safely operated TEN programs, serving over 100 veterans—more than we have ever served in a single year!




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Served over 100 participants over the course of the year, the most we have ever done. Our vision is to serve more people, and we are proud to see this number growing.



Held six transformational week-long programs; double the amount ever hosted in a year!



Our OS6 program in 2021 thrived under alumni Veteran leadership and had the largest committed attendance to date. Graduates received a custom surfboard shaped by our Ohana at One More Wave.



Held two record breaking fundraising events. These successes were made possible by the support of our phenomenal Operation Surf community!



Enhanced and strengthened our team. Through focusing onboarding individuals who embody our values and align with our mission, we are creating a sustainable driven organization.



Collaborated with Operation Healing Forces for our fourth year, serving SOF couples in Kauai, Hawaii and Avila Beach, California.



Persevered through the ongoing impact of COVID-19 by continuing to utilize the Table Group concepts and leadership tools.



Increased media exposure through local and national coverage. Highlighting healing in action through professional video and story telling.



Obtained our own equipment vehicle fully branded and designed to accommodate program needs. Mahalo to Simons Construction INC!

09 WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON

In 2022, we are committed to training, education, research, and the cultivation (onboarding) of individuals who embody our values and align with our mission. This allows us to enter the next phase of our vision to serve additional populations while simultaneously providing our alumni veteran's with leadership opportunities. In addition, through alignment and collaboration, we aim to move the needle to help surfing be recognized as a therapeutic option for those in need.



BEING OF SERVICE TO OTHERS

Operation Surf exists today because I made a personal decision to take ownership of my own life and change for the better. This decision to humbly admit I needed help, ultimately led to a life of giving back. *Through my own recovery, I realized the powerful solution to many of my issues was to be of service to others.*

Operation Surf continues to impact lives across the world through this shared value in our community. One of my personal favorite ways this is carried out is through our alumni veteran supports. Past participants have the opportunity to return and share their personal experience of their time in the program with the new participants through their week-long journey.

In addition to giving back, I believe the success of our program comes from the elements of which we passionately do not compromise: professional surf instructors, a healthy community, and constant thought of others. These elements combined with surfing being recognized as certified nature-based therapy will support our vision—to *see this reality offered not only to veterans, but to anyone in need.*

Van



IVAN
TURAZA

OUR 2022 GOALS



Grow Alumni Leadership

Create alumni positions to grow in leadership and carry out Operation Surf's mission.



Serve More Populations

We will enter the next phase of our strategic growth plan and begin serving additional populations, like first responders.



Collaboration

Focus on the importance of collaboration, and come together with like-minded organizations and individuals who share the mission to offer healing for those in need.



Training & Education

Our top priority is to educate our team and organization with a deeper understanding of how we can best help and serve others. We will do this through training and education on important topics such as: Trauma, Military Sexual Trauma, and Moral Injury.



Collect Data & Research Studies

Contribute to the growing movement of Surf Therapy by conducting studies which examine the psychological and physiological impact of our programs.



Celebrate and Recharge

Just as we support our community in their wellness journey, we are committed to our own personal growth, health, and wellness.

Enhance Volunteer Experience

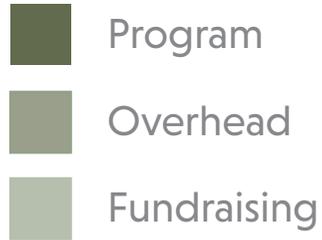
In 2021, we began incorporating our dedicated volunteers safely back into support positions. Our volunteers directly impacted the success of being able to achieve more programs than ever before. Their selfless acts of service were above and beyond and we could not have done it without them. This year, we are committed to providing enhanced experiences for our volunteers.

10 OUR FINANCIALS

In 2021, Operation Surf focused on how to strengthen its income through the economic hardships the pandemic brought on in 2020. We operated more programs than any other year to date. Though the economy was still suffering, we accomplished this by continuously learning how to keep the costs of our programs more efficient and minimal. We hosted smaller groups and kept financial boundaries. Challenges we faced included: the increased cost of hotels during peak seasons, a national spike in flight costs, and restaurants impacted by the pandemic. These challenges taught us what to look for and change for 2022.

Our total income increased from 2020, and through a successful Operation Surf-a-Thon and golf tournament fundraiser, we reached an all-time success with fundraising events! We also grew our foundation and grant support to continue the mission. Our Board of Directors and Leadership team take great care and responsibility in how we spend and steward every donation. We send you our deepest waves of gratitude.

2021 TOTAL EXPENSES



\$408,700

\$196,600

\$13,900

2021 TOTAL INCOME



\$180,300

\$156,600

\$104,800

\$65,200

\$23,500

OPERATION SURF-A-THON

The Operation Surf-A-Thon 2021 fundraiser was our most successful fundraiser to date. Together, with corporate partners and community, we exceeded our goal and raised over \$115,000!

Individuals and teams from all around the globe surfed, hiked, biked, and swam, over the weekend of August 13th – 15th, 2021.



26 Teams and 100 Individuals registered to pledge their "waves."



600 individual family members and friends united to donate.



Over 1,000 "waves" surfed across the globe.

Together, we raised over \$115K for Operation Surf!



Team 'Operation Turf' caught 'waves' by conquering the tri-tip challenge—hiking three iconic San Luis Obispo County mountains back to back in the same day!



11 GET INVOLVED

With your help, we can help so many more. There are many ways to contribute to our mission! The life-changing programs of Operation Surf are made possible by contributions from people just like you.

VOLUNTEER

So much time and energy is required to accomplish our mission and work towards realizing our vision. Without the help of our dedicated volunteers, our programs wouldn't be possible.

PARTICIPATE

We are very proud of, and grateful to, our military personnel, and it's our honor to be able to make our programs available to them at no cost. All housing and program expenses are fully paid for by our generous donors and sponsors.

DONATE

Without support from our generous supporters, Operation Surf wouldn't be able to provide these life-changing experiences to our military heroes who have given so much for our country.

Find out more at operationsurf.org

PLUS! CAL POLY INTERNSHIPS

We offer various internship opportunities for students at our local college, California Polytechnic State University. Operation Surf Interns gain practical, real-world experience and are significant roles in our organization.





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