



# SEMPER FI FUND

SemperFiFund.org

*Serving those who preserve our freedom*

July 2010



## HELPING A HERO, HELPING A FAMILY

In 2006, Army Sergeant Ryan Major's unit from Freidberg, Germany, was attached to Marines in Ramadi, Iraq. The unit was due to return to Germany soon, but Ryan came back to the US instead; he was on foot patrol on November 10 when he was severely injured by an IED. Both of Ryan's legs were amputated. He suffered burns and injuries to both arms and hands, and had many other abdominal injuries.

Ryan's mother, Lorrie, a registered nurse who is also the single parent of two other boys, took a leave of absence immediately and stayed by Ryan's side during many months of surgeries, therapies and procedures, centered between the Baltimore Shock Trauma Center and Walter Reed Army

Medical Center. To this day, Ryan continues to have surgeries and ongoing medical care for his injuries.

The Semper Fi Fund began assisting the family in March 2008. In 2009, Ryan was improved enough to complete his license requirements to drive a handicapped-modified vehicle; along with the \$11,000 that the VA allows, the Semper Fi Fund helped him purchase a Toyota 4Runner...and he's been running ever since!

In his words, "This assistance means a lot. One of my goals was to drive again, and the assistance of the vehicle purchase has helped me meet my goal—getting a vehicle is a big step." The vehicle has given Ryan more independence, made it easier

for him to be at his appointments on time and without extra assistance, and freed up some time for Lorrie.

Lorrie says, "There are tremendous unmet needs and gaps in finances basic to every family that has a wounded service member; IMSFF helps to close that gap and meet those needs. No one government organization can cover all the needs since recovery and recuperation requires time...most often resulting in job loss for one or more family members, thus putting a financial strain on all of the family."

Step by step, day by day, this courageous young man and his family continue to move into the future. Semper Fi Fund looks forward to watching as that happens!



## SEMPER FI FUND

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**General Alfred Gray**  
USMC (Ret.)  
29th Commandant of the Marine Corps  
Chairman

**Annette Conway**  
First Lady of the Marine Corps  
Vice Chairman

**Robert M. Bowlin**  
Treasurer

**Wendy Lethin**  
Secretary

**Bonnie Amos**

**John M. Dowd, Esq.**

**Karen Guenther**  
President and Founder

**Major General Tom Jones**  
USMC (Ret.)

**Colonel Michael E. Lowe**  
USMC (Ret.)  
Chairman of the Investment Committee

**Peter M. Murphy, Esq.**

**Major General James (Mike)  
Myatt**  
USMC (Ret.)  
Chairman of the Audit Committee

**Dr. James Wright**  
President, Dartmouth College,  
1998 - 2009

## A NOTE FROM OUR FOUNDER

Dear Semper Fi Fund Team, Family, and Friends,

As we reflect on the July 4th holiday to celebrate our freedoms, we would love to take this time to send our heartfelt thanks to you ALL!

Right now, our hospitals are filling back up with newly injured service members, and the injuries are serious. Many are arriving with multiple and life-threatening injuries; quadruple, triple, double, and single amputations; head trauma, significant body burns, and severe internal injuries. They have joined others in the intensive care units who are fighting for their lives. Your support allows our team to hand their families a check to make sure they are able to remain at the bedside to provide the support that is critical to recovery. And, be there when they go home to help with the best possible quality of life.

The support provided by the Semper Fi Fund is far reaching across this great nation. Not only do we reach out to those who are newly arriving to our hospitals and their families; we reach out to the wounded heroes in every state, every city, and every rural community. Many of you know these heroes as son, daughter, mother, father, friend, neighbor, or employee. We ask you, all Americans, corporations, and foundations to join us, join us in honoring these men and women who dedicated themselves in protecting our Freedoms and Liberties.

God bless you and thank you!!

Warmest Regards,

*Karen Guenther*

Karen Guenther  
President, CEO, Founder

## A WORD FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Greetings from the Chairman of the Board. I am proud to report that The Semper Fi Fund is stronger than it has ever been. Generous donors, selfless volunteers, and concerned citizens form the bedrock on which our success is built. Together, we form a coherent Semper Fi Fund team with the singular purpose of ensuring that so long as a single service man or woman suffers physical or mental challenges, they will be neither alone nor forgotten, so long as the Fund exists. We should all be justifiably proud to be a part of this tremendous effort.

My hospital visits continue to reveal the power of the human spirit and dedication of those wounded and seriously injured Marines, Sailors, and Soldiers who so courageously bear the burdens of answering the Nation's call. Our military continues to improve the situation on the ground in Afghanistan. However, the onset of spring and summer in that country, combined with the planned expansion of NATO-held territory, is certain to increase casualties. Therefore, the Semper Fi Fund's grants and services will remain in high demand.

We remain largely a grassroots organization. The wide variety of fundraising—from golf tournaments, to individual athletes, to cookbook sales, to online donations—is truly indicative of America's generosity and care for its warriors. Thanks to each and every one of you who provide the life-blood that keeps our mission succeeding.

Thanks and Semper Fidelis,

*Al Gray*

General Al Gray, USMC (Ret.)  
29th Commandant of the Marine Corps  
Chairman of the Board of Directors

## REPORT FROM THE WARRIOR GAMES

Another great day watching our wounded Marines compete against the Army, Navy, and Air Force at the 1<sup>st</sup> Warrior Games at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs.

My favorite story from yesterday came from Chuck Sketch/USMC. He is a double amputee above the knee and blind in both eyes.

When a mom of another wounded Marine told Chuck how honored she was to be present at the Wounded

Warriors games with Chuck (right after he swam 4 events), Chuck said: "I'm the one who is so HONORED to be here because HERE I am treated like an ATHLETE!"

Chuck is truly an "athlete" here, with his sense of humor, strength, and perseverance. He instantly evokes love by all around him!! Even though he came in last for his swim heats, he received the loudest, most enthusiastic applause of the day!

Here he is not disabled, he is an ATHLETE! And, he is here with his fellow Marines, the best medicine in the world! It doesn't matter here that he is blind and a double amputee; that is the power of these games and the mission of TEAM SEMPER FI! His father watches proudly and when Chuck competes, there is not a dry eye in the arena!

Wish you were ALL here!!  
KG



## A LETTER FROM CPL JOSE D. GASCA

September 6, 2008, was a day I will never forget. It was the day we got hit in Iraq by an IED and I lost both my legs, fractured my ribs and spine, and ruptured my spleen. It took three days for me to come back to the United States, longest three days of my life. As I arrived at Bethesda Naval Hospital and got settled in the ICU, my wife walked in. It seemed like all the pain disappeared once I saw her. When you're in so much pain and disbelief, there is always that one person who can put a smile on your face.

A couple days passed and people started coming in to visit me. A certain organization I remembered the most was Semper Fi Fund because not only were they concerned about my health but concerned about my family's well being. As I started progressing and going through therapy it always seemed like the unexpected happened. It became stressful knowing we were going to have to move states and find new housing, but at times likes this Semper Fi Fund came to us to offer their help. We felt blessed because when I'm trying to cope with my injuries and learning how to walk again, the last thing I want to think about is financial issues.

I'm in a stage in my life where I am going through med board and focusing on what's for me and my family in the future. What kind of job am I going to have, where am I going to live, and is this house going to be handicap accessible? Semper Fi Fund has offered me a grant to make this happen. We are very grateful for all the opportunities they gave us, and how they are always there to take some weight off our shoulders. They made it possible for us to focus on the future and not have any worries. It's a true blessing to have met the Semper Fi Fund family.

Thank you so much.  
Cpl Jose D. Gasca



## SUBJECT: THANK YOU

Hi,

I still can't believe I was at THE Olympic Training Center where the best of the best live and train. It was one of the greatest experiences I had in my life. Still excited thinking about every event, cafeteria dining with other great athletes, spending time with coaches and staffs and other team members.

Thank you very much for the experience and opportunity. It was truly motivating and a kick in the butt to make me realize how much I need to work harder to achieve a goal. I really appreciate everyone taking your personal time to organize and helping me and the rest of the team out. It was truly one of the best learning experiences, physically and mentally.

Sincerely,  
Peter Park

## SURPRISE MEMORIAL DAY VISIT

Over Memorial Day weekend, we received a surprise visit that we still can't stop talking about. Richard Krist, retired Marine Master Sergeant, dropped by the SFF offices to personally deliver two very generous donations. First he handed us a \$100,000 check in memory of his beloved wife of 62 years, Laura Ann Krist. He then produced a second check, also for \$100,000.

Mr. Krist's stories and his amazing spirit left a big impression. Over the course of our visit, he had us laughing at his political commentary one minute, then shedding tears at the recent loss of Laura Ann, herself a retired Marine Staff Sergeant.

We hung on every word as Mr. Krist shared WWII combat stories. Here is a Marine who was captured at Guadalcanal, then beaten by Japanese soldiers until they believed him unconscious. While his captors

hungrily turned their attention to his food, he crept up and battled with his captors before escaping. This man is truly a living legend.

Once again, we are reminded that you never know when or where a hero might appear.

We feel deeply honored to have met Richard Krist. His generosity will make such a difference in the lives of other brave service members and their families. Once again, we are reminded that you never know when or where a hero might appear.

---

Richard Krist (top), MSgt/USMC, Retired, made our Memorial Day weekend.

Laura Ann Krist (right), SSgt/USMC, Retired, photographed in the 1940s.



## LANCE CORPORAL TYLER J. SOUTHERN USMC



Tyler left for Afghanistan March 10<sup>th</sup> but was unable to complete his tour after encountering an IED (improvised explosive device) while on unmounted patrol in the Now Zad district, Afghanistan, on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Tyler lost both legs and his right arm supporting our freedom.

He arrived at the National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, May 9<sup>th</sup>. Our family was kept well informed by the medical team in Germany and were prepared for what we would see when Tyler arrived four short days later.

We were introduced to Janine Canty of the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund the next day and relieved to learn we would be able to stay with our son throughout his recovery without fear of losing our jobs or being unable to pay our bills. General Al Gray, retired, presented us with a grant to use as we needed it a few days later.

Tyler is doing well, although he has remained in the ICU for over 30 days. He was promoted to Corporal on June 1<sup>st</sup> while still in the ICU. The Semper Fi Fund paid for Tyler's brother, Jake, and sister-in-law,

Susan, to attend the ceremony. Both are Active Duty Army and currently stationed at Fort Polk, LA.

Our local McDonald's, where Tyler worked while in high school, asked us what they could do to help. We told them about the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund, and they have set up a collection which they will match dollar for dollar and donate to the fund.

As we continue along Tyler's long road to full recovery, we are grateful to Janine and the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund for all of their tremendous support to Tyler and our family as well as all the other Marines and families we have met while here.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your support and prayers, Lee and Patti

## TEAM SEMPER FI “RECOVERY THROUGH SPORT”

Team Semper Fi is an athletic sports team made up of more than 170 injured service members who compete in athletic events across the country. With their motto “Recovery Through Sport,” Team Semper Fi is a rehabilitative sports program offered by the Semper Fi Fund. The team is made up of injured Marines, Sailors, and Soldiers who have overcome significant challenges and refused to let their injuries prevent them from competing in athletic events.



### TEAM SEMPER FI'S LATEST STATISTICS:

- Team Semper Fi is in its 5th season of training and competition.
- 170 wounded service members active on team. (In the last 3 months we have gained 37 members.)
- We have completed 6 events to date in calendar year 2010. (Team participation is up by 50% from last year.)
- We have an increase in biking at both Camp Lejeune and Camp Pendleton. (Both teams have doubled in size in the past three months.)
- The entire team, across the country, is making an effort to train and join in Team Semper Fi events, US Paralympic events, and community events.



## “JUST COWBOY UP”: THE STORY OF CPL JUSTIN ROKOHL

On June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008, while manning the turret of a Humvee in Afghanistan, Cpl Justin Rokohl was hit by a roadside bomb and blown 90 feet into the air. He landed feet first inside the engine compartment, which was still on fire. Justin broke his back and his hip and lost both his legs; his incredible spirit remained intact.

Prior to his injury, the rodeo was a big part of Justin's life. Although he was determined to ride again, doctors predicted his recovery would take over a year. Justin had other plans. Less than three months later, the cowboy from Orange Grove, Texas, was back in the saddle competing in team roping events.

“...a lot of people didn't want me to ride because I'd be strapped in....But you just got to go out there and say hey, if it's going to happen, it's going to happen. I'm not living in a hole.”

The Semper Fi Fund was honored to assist Justin with the purchase of a custom saddle which could better

accommodate his physical situation. The new saddle enables him to continue doing what he loves, which inspires everyone who sees him ride.

Like so many other service men and women, Justin seems unaware of his extraordinary courage. He sees himself as lucky, not as a hero. When asked what he would tell others who have been wounded, Justin replied, “Just keep at it. Find something you like doing and don't let anything bring you down.”

And then in three simple words, describing how he overcame hardship, he added, “Just cowboy up.”

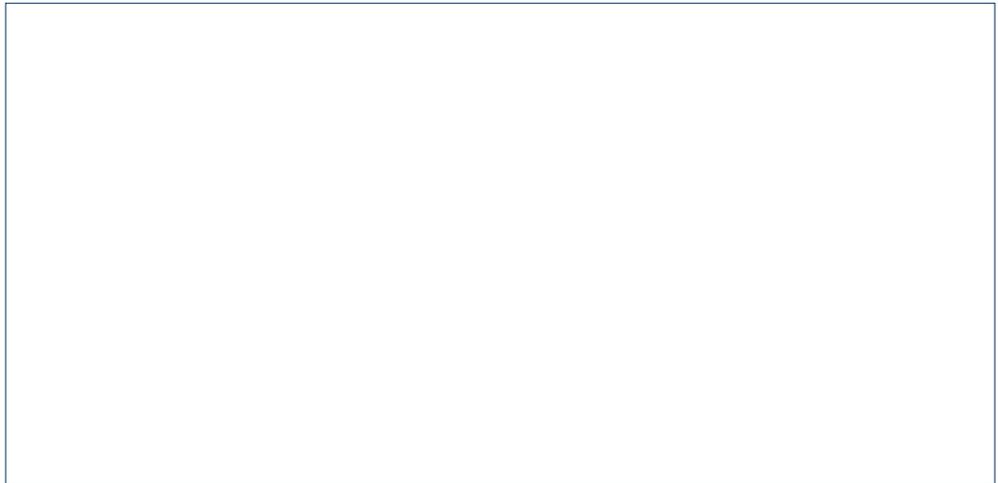
We'll remember that. Thank you, Cpl Rokohl—for your service and your strength.

The IMSFF  
Rokohl, Justin. Interview. Katy Kiser, KIII-TV, and Heidi Collins, CNN Newsroom (transcript). Nov. 17<sup>th</sup> 2008



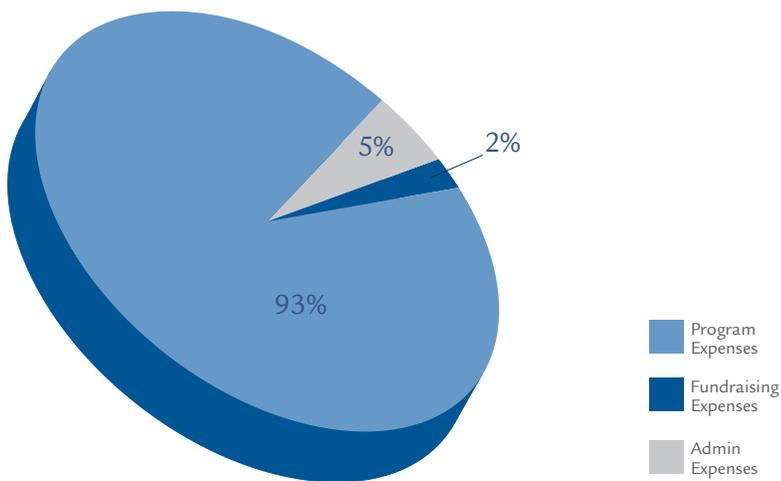
## SEMPER FI FUND

Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund  
825 College Blvd., Suite 102  
PMB 609  
Oceanside, CA 92057  
SemperFiFund.org



Founded in 2004

Awarded over 20,000 grants totaling over \$40 million  
84% of all grants provided to E-5s and below.



### DONATION AND SUPPORT INFORMATION

Donations may be made online:  
[SemperFiFund.org](http://SemperFiFund.org)

Please send check donations to:  
Semper Fi Fund  
825 College Blvd., Suite 102  
PMB 609  
Oceanside, CA 92057

For any additional information  
please email:  
[info@semperfund.org](mailto:info@semperfund.org)



A+ ranking from the American Institute of Philanthropy (AIP)  
Highest Four Star Ranking from Charity Navigator