

FEBRUARY 15, 2023

# Family

[familymedia.com](http://familymedia.com)

The Magazine For Military Families

## SURVIVE & THRIVE

Nonprofit Boulder Crest Foundation  
Helps Wounded Warriors Overcome  
Trauma & Achieve Growth

PAGE 8



## Cover Story

By DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ

# SURVIVE & THRIVE

Nonprofit Boulder Crest Foundation Helps Wounded Warriors Overcome Trauma & Achieve Growth

**W**ounded warriors, veterans, and first responders regularly face intense trauma and often struggle to find purpose and meaning in the aftermath of that tragedy. The privately-run, non-profit, Boulder Crest Foundation, has been working for nearly a decade to help military troops, veterans, first responders, and their families work through these challenges and achieve post-traumatic growth.

"Our main goal at Boulder Crest is to teach our program participants how to thrive in the aftermath of trauma and achieve post-traumatic growth in their lives," explains Ken Falke, founder and chairman of Boulder Crest Foundation. "We do this through a variety of both onsite and offsite programs called PATHH (progressive and alternative training for healing heroes) and Struggle Well trainings. We show our military and first responders a path to an alternative, effective way of managing their stress and experience, teaching self regulation, not self medication, which is an ongoing crisis among these men and women."

Falke is a retired executive and a 21-year retired combat veteran who served as a U.S. Navy Special Operations Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Technician and achieved the rank of Master Chief Petty Officer. He was seriously injured in a parachute training accident in 1989 and is a service-disabled veteran. During his career, he made more than 1,000 parachute jumps and roughly the same number of un-

derwater military dives. Falke led thousands of high-risk operations to include rendering safe unexploded ordnance, landmines, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

Boulder Crest was inspired by Falke and his wife Julia Falke, who initially founded the EOD Warrior Foundation; although, they are no longer active with the organization. When they were visiting wounded EOD warriors from the wars in the Middle East, the Falkes witnessed firsthand the desolation and frustration these warriors and their families experienced while spending time in long-term care inpatient and outpatient military hospitals in the Washington, D.C. area.

In 2010, the Falkes began bringing wounded EOD warriors and their families for barbecues, meals, and short stays at their home in Bluemont, Virginia, a 100-year-old farmhouse named Boulder Crest. The impact this individualized family care made on their fellow warriors inspired them to make a more lasting and sustained commitment: They donated 37 acres of their property and made a substantial contribution to establish and build Boulder Crest Foundation, which was chartered in 2013. The foundation opened a second location in Sonoita, Arizona in 2017.

"On average, we run on-site programs in Virginia and Arizona for approximately 1,500 participants per year and off-site, we run programs for about 2,000 others per year," Falke says. "Dur-



**Above: Boulder Crest Foundation Founder, Ken Falke**

ing the COVID pandemic, through a series of other programs, we served more than 50,000 others.

"To date, Boulder Crest has been 100% privately funded," he adds. "We have recently been awarded two grants from the Department of Veterans Affairs that will be executed in 2023. Our goal is to continue to partner with other nonprofit organizations and share the pro-

The 2023

sponsored by

# CuteKidContest



SEND US YOUR PHOTO AND YOUR CUTE KID COULD

# WIN \$1,500

AND BE FEATURED IN AN ISSUE OF FAMILY!

## Enter Your Cute Kid Photo Today!

### Entry Deadline June 4, 2023



2022 Grand Prize Winner:  
**NIKKO**



Look for Seventh Generation Products  
at your Commissary and Exchange



Visit [familymedia.com/cutekidrules/](http://familymedia.com/cutekidrules/) for details and complete rules.

gramming we have created globally and continue to help those who serve."

Boulder Crest's PATHH curriculum was developed by co-founder and executive director Josh Goldberg and has been widely disseminated to other organizations serving the military, veterans, and first responders. Together, Goldberg and Falke published *Struggle Well: Thriving in the Aftermath of Trauma* in 2018, and in 2020, the pair co-authored *Transformed by Trauma: Stories of Post-traumatic Growth*, along with Dr. Richard Tedeschi and Dr. Bret Moore.

Going forward, the organization's focus will be suicide prevention. "Since 2001, about one out of every three veterans have returned home from war with invisible wounds: symptoms of PTSD, depression and anxiety," Falke points out. "Right now, more than 20 active duty and military veterans die by suicide every day, and there's a parallel epidemic of personal and professional struggle within the first responder and public safety community. More



**Boulder Crest Foundation serves about 1,500 participants on-site in Virginia and Arizona each year.**

first responders die annually by suicide than in the line of duty.

"We know the underlying causes and how to treat them, but as a country, we're failing to step up," he continues. "Three interrelated causes are at the heart of it: depression, often coinciding with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and substance abuse. Though dubbed 'invisible wounds,' the changes in psychological health that accompany these conditions have very visible manifestations, such as depression,

anxiety, suicide and substance abuse, impacting not just the veterans themselves, but their families as well.

"Unlike physical wounds, invisible wounds don't get better with age if untreated and are passed from one generation to the next," he adds. "Current options for veterans to resolve these needs are inadequate and ineffective. Although pockets of excellence exist, most organizations don't have a comprehensive approach for veterans and their families, nor are they capable

or equipped to meet the growing demand. To address this epidemic while helping veterans and their families live to the fullest, we have created a variety of programs to help them live the great lives that they deserve."

By all accounts, the program is succeeding in helping many wounded warriors and their families. "At Boulder Crest, we see amazing recovery stories every day; the thing we consistently hear most is, 'I would not be here if it wasn't for this program,'" Falke relates. "This is absolutely the most rewarding thing we have ever done in our lives."