

CABIN CLIPS

June 2016

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Salute to the Flag



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Our Guests Tell Us

“Mom, since we have been in South Dakota, everywhere we go everyone is so nice to us. It is like they know us. And it makes me feel loved!” Ten-year old Benjamin reflected.

Katrina, mother of Benjamin and wife of Danny, Ogden, Utah veteran, said, “I had the privilege of listening and watching Danny play board games with the kids and he was smiling, laughing, and being silly, being able to be a kid with them. I have not seen that since before deployment.”

“To know there are still people who appreciate the sacrifice that military families make is what makes it worth the sacrifice!” concluded Katrina. (*Continued, p. 3*)



OBHC Fifth Year Anniversary

Operation Black Hills Cabin is celebrating our fifth year milestone of responding to the wounded veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Below is a brief accounting of OBHC history:

- Founded in 2011.
- Board of Directors designated in 2011.
- 501(c)3 non-profit and tax exempt status acquired in 2011.
- Permanent cabin built by prisoners at the Springfield, SD Minimum Security Prison in 2013.
- Served 55 veterans, 228 family members from 27 states since 2011.
- Established a web page and Facebook account.
- 100% volunteer support (approximately 250 to date).
- Ninety-one community organizations and individuals have donated time, talent, materials or money to acquire a permanent cabin.
- Fifty-five individuals and businesses help with the families needs each week during the summer.
- Recent support given by South Dakota Elks Association, each chapter of the SD Daughters of the American Revolution, Lake Area Technical Institute Automotive Department, ND Air National Guard Tontine Group, Custer Hospitality, and Mobridge/Pollock Student Council. (*Continued p. 2*)

OBHC Fifth Year Anniversary (cont.)



Funds raised by the students of The Lake Area Technical Institute Annual Car Show in Watertown, SD are always designated to a cause of the students' choice. This April the students overwhelmingly voted to designate Operation Black Hills Cabin in Custer, SD as their recipient. Students indicated continuing support for OBHC.

★ Word of Mouth
is the Best Form of Communication ★

- Initiated the Rocky Knolls Golf Tournament fundraisers.
- Initiated the Black Hills 2-Fly Fishing Tournament fundraiser.
- SD School of Mines and Technology and the Ellsworth Air Force Base 34th Aircraft Maintenance Unit helped develop the Healing Hike in 2014.
- Each veteran receives a Quilt of Valor from area quilters.
- SD Community Foundation video created telling the story about OBHC.
- Article featured OBHC in January 2014 Down Country Roads magazine, titled "Providing Respite For Wounded Warriors."
- October 2013, Co-founder and Board President Pat Baird presented with the Spirit of Dakota Award.
- Co-founders Jeff and Pat Baird selected as Custer's 2013 Citizens of the Year for their dedication to OBHC.
- OBHC featured in November 2014 issue of the Black Hills Pioneer newspaper
- In 2015, OBHC is one of 17 grant recipients of The Frontier Fund in celebration of the state's 125th year of statehood. The one time grant provided partial transportation costs to veterans.



Our Guests Tell Us (cont.)

“The trip has given us ... a chance to spend time with each other. [It] has breathed new life into our entire family,” said Amanda, wife of a Watertown, SD veteran.

Amanda confessed, “I have never been so proud of my fellow veterans and South Dakota.”

Pennsylvania veteran Patrick’s wife stated, “... the donors have provided us an amazing opportunity to recharge our batteries, get a fresh start, and look forward to the future.” She added, “Patrick has fallen in love with Crazy Horse ...a person who sacrificed all for what he believed in.”

“The Black Hills are truly a sacred place filled with people of a kind spirit and open hearts,”

Jennifer, wife of Colorado Springs veteran Brice, said, “... the time my husband and I have spent together in the gorgeous, serene community was just amazing and we have connected on a higher level.”

She continued with a “shout out” for the Buffalo Jeep safari in Custer State Park, “Our guide was so open and friendly and personable. He did his best to find all the buffalo we wanted. The view on top was just breathtaking and the conversations were like we have known each other forever!”

Floridian combat veteran William reluctantly arrived around midnight at OBHC with his baggage of daily depression, memory loss, cognitive issues, hearing loss, sleep apnea, and anxiety. After inspecting the cabin for the family, he declared, “Area secured!”

“The next morning a man came to the front door and dropped off muffins. We were speechless.” Then Pat ‘The Angel’ Baird delivered the welcome packet. I started to cry!” confessed William’s wife, Lauren. William remarked, “Let’s enjoy this town!” After being gifted and thanked for his military service at Flora’s, William asked, “Why would they be so kind?”

“... William was playing blocks with the children, laughing and smiling - something I can’t remember the last time I saw,” beamed Lauren. “It is because of you-the town of Custer. This is a once-in-a-life-time experience.



OBHC receives a donation of \$1,000 from Custer Hospitality to help with expenses during this year’s season. OBHC’s operating costs are \$700 per family, which is covered through grants and donations. From left, back, are Steve Olson director of Custer Hospitality, Pat Baird of OBHC, Candace Atkinson of Comfort Inn and Marty Mahrt of OBHC; front, Susan Beesley of Best Western, Kim Reifschneider of Holiday Inn Express, Tanya Ekeren of Super 8, Glenda Kittinger of Econolodge and Lone Fejfar of OBHC.



OBHC was recognized by the 91st Legislature of the State of South Dakota for all it does for wounded veterans coming home from the country’s War on Terror and other recent conflicts. District 30 Rep Mike Verchio (back) presented the award. Verchio read the proclamation and presented it to OBHC board members, from left, Marty Mahrt, Lone Fejfar and Pat and Jeff Baird.

Why Would They?

Land of the free ... Home of the brave ...
But ... why would they?

A 6-year old daughter waves as her daddy marches off.

A 12-year old son hides a tear as his mom boards the plane. Parents and friends all wish them well and promise to pray.

But ... why would they?

Why would they risk life and limb?
Not knowing if their next day would be their last.
Or, come home half the person from their past.

From the beginnings of our Red, White and Blue,
Many a soldier has answered that call.

In the back of my mind the question remains...
But ... Why would they?

Back home, anxiously awaiting letters or phone calls,
The families persevere with their daily routines.
The next-door neighbor changes her oil, long overdue.
Friends and relatives all help them get through.
But ... why would they?

Care packages, letters and cookies are sent.
Groups and organizations gather to help, whatever the need, from boots to shampoo, all want to do their part.

But ... why would they?

A different war, this time, they say.
Our soldiers come home with a bigger price to pay.
“So now what can we do?” asked of the Red, White and Blue,
To help those in pain and who haven’t a clue.

Operation Black Hills Cabin evolves.
A respite to help the families heal and reconnect.
A hideaway where they can feel like you and me.
And adjust to their “new normal”.

But ... why would they?

The restaurants and attractions all step up to the plate.

Giving free meals or tours, even though tourists already fill their gates.

Donations arrive and help pay the bills.

Volunteers graciously mow, clean, bake and serve.

But again ... why would they?

The “they” in this story will all be different.
The reasons are also varied and many.

From obligation or duty and to support our troops.

To protect our freedoms, give back and say thank you.

You will all recognize yourselves and your personal motivation. But, I think LOVE is the reason, you cannot deny it.

Love of freedom! Love of country! Love of fellow man! Love of living in the USA.

By lone Fejfar

Operation Black Hills Cabin

A week-long respite in the Black Hills to qualified combat injured veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

It enables the families an opportunity to unwind, relax and reconnect.

They experience smiles, laughter, and compassion, reminiscent of pre-combat days. Families take good feelings home with them to resume everyday life, with a feeling of interconnection, rejuvenated and stronger to face the challenges.

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