



### DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS,

As we reflect on 2024, we are reminded of the countless moving parts that make Project Sanctuary the life-changing organization it is today. This past year has been a masterclass in balance—running retreats across the country, transforming Patriot Pines into a welcoming retreat center for military families, and forging new partnerships with trusted, likeminded organizations. Through every challenge and transition, we have remained steadfast in our mission: to support military families in their journey toward healing and resilience.

Like any year, 2024 brought its share of challenges—staff turnover, logistical hurdles, and the continuous effort to stretch every resource to serve as many families as possible. But through each of these, we emerged stronger, with new faces bringing fresh perspectives and an even deeper commitment to the mission. This strength is a testament

to our incredible team, our passionate volunteers, and our dedicated supporters who believe in the power of healing together.

As we look ahead to 2025, we are more excited than ever. With the guidance of our most robust and engaged Board of Directors to date, we are poised to grow our impact in new and meaningful ways. We will continue to expand our reach, refine our programs, and ensure that every military family who walks through our doors feels supported, valued, and empowered.

None of this would be possible without you—our families, staff, volunteers, donors, and partners. Your unwavering dedication fuels our work, and we are deeply grateful for the role you play in this journey. Together, we are building stronger military families and a brighter future for those who have served. Thank you for being part of our mission. We can't wait to see what we will accomplish together in the year ahead.

With gratitude,

Heather Ehle Ray

Joachen E. Ray

Founder & CEO

Ron Testa

Chairman of the Board

Fonald P. Testa



#### **MISSION**

Project Sanctuary is a leading provider of therapeutic retreats and ongoing support for military families by reconnecting and empowering the entire family towards healing.

#### **VISION**

Project Sanctuary believes that when one person serves the entire family serves and envisions a world where military families find healing, strength, and a lifeline to a more hopeful future together.

#### **VALUES**

HONOR, INTEGRITY, EXCELLENCE, INCLUSIVITY, HOPE

#### **TAG LINE**

Healing Military Families

## Board Members

AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2024

**RON TESTA** 

Chairman of the Board (Navy Veteran)

MAJ. GEN BILL SPANGENTHAL, USAF, RET.

Vice Chair (Air Force Veteran)

TODD AMEN

LIDA CITROËN Secretary

**MARI AKERS** 

PATRICK CASH

Air Force Veteran

**ODETTA DELSOL** (Marine Corp Spouse)

JODI EPPLER (Army Veteran)

**K.C. GROVES** 

AUDREY HOCKMAN
(Air Force Veteran)

**TED LAVENDER** 

**DON MARCUM** (Navy Veteran)

STEPHANIE OTERO

**JESS PEONIO** 

DR. JASMINE TOWNSEND

## Pursuing Wellness

**IGNITING TRANSFORMATION FOR** 

**MILITARY FAMILIES** 

Over the course of two years, Project Sanctuary advanced its data collection efforts around general family functioning and communication—gathering meaningful insights that allowed us to assess, analyze, and validate the effectiveness of our programming.

With a focused lens on at-risk military families we translated that insight into action. In 2024, Project Sanctuary piloted a new workshop for the adults at our therapeutic retreats entitled Pursuing Wellness. Through intentional program adjustments based on participant feedback, we refined our approach to better meet the evolving needs of those we serve.

These efforts culminated in the creation of Pursuing Wellness—a groundbreaking

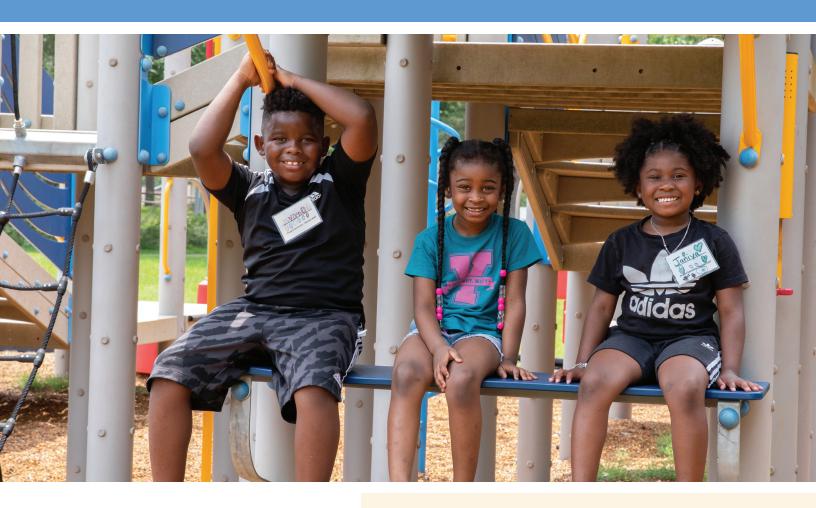


workshop born directly from what families told us they needed. It's a bold, holistic initiative that addresses the emotional, relational, and financial well-being of military-connected families, helping them not just to cope—but to thrive.

At our therapeutic retreats, in Pursuing Wellness 1, participants embark on a journey of self-discovery, learning to recognize the hidden weight of trauma, understand the factors that impact their mental health, and embrace strategies that foster resilience, balance, and self-care. Through powerful group discussions, creative activities, and goal-setting exercises, families begin rewriting their stories—from surviving to truly living.

"PROJECT SANCTUARY WAS AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE. WE WERE ABLE TO RECONNECT AFTER A LONG DEPLOYMENT IN A VERY RELAXING YET FUN AND INFORMATIVE SETTING. THE WORKSHOPS WERE STRUCTURED PERFECTLY, GIVING US TIME TO LISTEN AND CONSIDER OUR COMMUNICATION AND CONNECT"

- An Army Family, October 2024



Pursuing Wellness 2 shifts the focus to financial empowerment, helping participants uncover the "why" behind their money decisions through the lens of their unique Money Habitudes. Couples explore financial behaviors, dismantle communication barriers, and cocreate practical, achievable financial goals—building not just budgets, but trust and teamwork.

What makes Pursuing Wellness truly exceptional is its heart: a safe, supportive space where military families feel seen, heard, and uplifted. This program does not offer quick fixes—it offers tools for lifelong transformation. It's where healing begins, growth ignites, and futures are reclaimed.

"This was a powerful experience, and we will utilize the skills we learned here for the rest of our lives. The staff, volunteers, and the therapists were fun, engaging, and facilitated "REAL" open discussions that were comfortable. Many of us shared our story. You could feel that the staff genuinely cared. There were many hands-on tasks. I really wanted the sessions to go long. It was well structured and straight forward.

My kids were dreading this retreat. By day two they were having fun and growing. The family session we did at the end was tailored to our family and it was like the therapists had been working with our family for years. My family laughed together...it had been a long time. Now we enjoy being together and understand each other better. We learned that we are better together. Thank you, Project Sanctuary, for providing this family based, educational and one of a kind therapeutic experience. You are changing lives."

- An Army Family, July 2024

#### **FAMILY SUPPORT**

Led by a licensed Social Worker, Family Support provides personalized case management to all military connected families including veterans, active-duty, guard/reserve, spouse and caregivers in addition to pre- and post-retreat support.

FAMILIES

REACHED OUT FOR HELP

SPECIFICALLY FROM OUR FAMILY

SUPPORT PROGRAM IN 2024

REPRESENTING

871

MILITARY FAMILY

MEMBERS

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
PROVIDED TO
FAMILIES IN NEED:

Travel Assistance: \$3,935
Resources paid to families: \$3,600

Support includes but is not limited to utilities, rent assistance, medical needs, etc.

"My husband and I went to the retreat thinking that it would be a nice time away. We thought we would learn some skills for dealing with our teenage daughter. Honestly, we didn't think that we needed any help with our relationship. We were wrong. The way that we handled conflict was not healthy. The classes we took addressed that issue head-on. We both learned we have to compromise. We learned to share our appreciation and not just our frustrations with each other. It was such a great time."

- Petreal participan, 6 month post-retreat follow up

## Impact

Of the service members that Project Sanctuary served in 2024, 77.4% reported having a serviceconnected health issue.

#### **TOP REPORTED HEALTH CONCERNS:**

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
  - Traumatic Brain Injury
    - Depression
      - Anxiety
  - Suicide ideation or attempt
    - Military sexual trauma

## icensed counselors & social workers

Experienced Licensed Counselors and Social Workers lead dynamic, transformative workshops for both adults and teens, diving deep into mental health and emotional well-being. Throughout the week, they also offer personalized one-on-one sessions for individuals and families, providing support and guidance tailored to each person's needs. In 2024 Licensed Counselors spent **320 hours** with families during therapeutic retreats on personalized issues directly impacting their family.

"WE WERE STRUGGLING WITH COMMUNICATION WITH EACH OTHER AND HAD BUILT UP BARRIERS PRIOR TO OUR RETREAT HOWEVER, WE NOW REALIZED THAT OUR FEARS WERE UNFOUNDED AND HAVE FOUND A RENEWED CONNECTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF EACH OTHER."

-A Navy Family

#### **TOP TOPICS DISCUSSED INCLUDE:**

- Communication
- · Health/Wellness
- · Parenting/Children
- Psychoeducation
- Trauma
- Purpose/Hope

Since 2021, our Licensed Counselors have spent 1,990 hours in family counseling sessions during our therapeutic retreats.



#### **2024 NUMBERS**

18
RETREATS

170 FAMILIES

556

#### ALL TIME NUMBERS

308 RETREATS

2,659

9,646

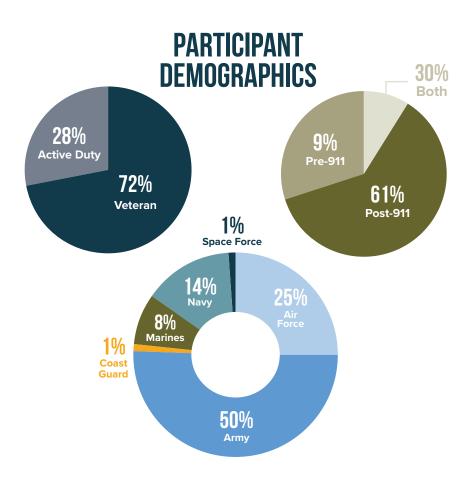
9.4
Average Number of families per retreat

30.9
Average Number of individuals per retreat

# 2024 THERAPEUTIC RETREAT

#### 898 APPLICATIONS IN 2024

Top self-reported mental health challenges of military family participants include anxiety, depression, and PTSD.



#### **RETREAT CENTER PARTNERS**

YMCA Snow Mountain Ranch - CO
Historic Banning Mills - GA
Epworth by the Sea - GA
Sandy Cove - MD
The Retreat at Balcones Springs - TX
Lakeview Conference Center - TX
Warm Beach Conference Center - WA

Since launching in Fall 2022, Project Sanctuary tracked meaningful progress in key areas that influence family connectedness—laying the foundation for stronger, healthier relationships.

This analysis was developed in collaboration with Dr. Jasmine Townsend, a Project Sanctuary Board Member and Associate Professor of Recreational Therapy at Clemson University in South Carolina. The first two years of data revealed promising outcomes:

#### NOVEMBER 2022 — JANUARY 2025

#### **SURVEYS GIVEN IMMEDIATELY:**

32.3% increase in positive perception of family communication & 18.2% decrease in problematic family functioning.

#### **3 MONTHS POST-RETREAT:**

24.4% increase in positive perception of family communication & 16% decrease in problematic family functioning.

#### **6 MONTHS POST-RETREAT:**

20.9% increase in positive perception of family communication & 10.2% decrease in problematic family functioning.

#### 12 MONTHS POST-RETREAT:

23.8% increase in positive perception of family communication & 12% decrease in problematic family functioning.

#### 18 MONTHS POST-RETREAT:

27.9% increase in positive perception of family communication & 14.7% decrease in problematic family functioning.

#### 24 MONTHS POST-RETREAT:

29% increase in positive perception of family communication & 16.9% decrease in problematic family functioning.

"ATTENDING THE FAMILY RETREAT WAS A
TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE FOR US. IT PROVIDED
A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH OTHER
FAMILIES WHO SHARE SIMILAR CHALLENGES AND
TRIUMPHS. THE SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT ALLOWED
US TO OPEN UP, SHARE STORIES, AND FIND STRENGTH
IN OUR SHARED EXPERIENCES. THE ACTIVITIES WERE
BOTH FUN AND MEANINGFUL, FOSTERING DEEPER
BONDS BETWEEN FAMILY MEMBERS. WE LEFT FEELING
REJUVENATED, MORE CONNECTED, AND EQUIPPED
WITH TOOLS TO NAVIGATE OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER."

-Petreal Participant,
Immediate Post-Retreat Survey

The following average scores were reported for the 2024 retreat season in the wrap-up survey:

**Project Sanctuary met my expectations:** 

4.84/5 (98%)

Project Sanctuary staff supported my experience:

4.86/5 (97%)

Leaving the retreat, I had a renewed sense of confidence/hope:

4.69/5 (94%)

My overall experience was healing:

4.71/5 (96%)

I would recommend Project Sanctuary to military families:

4.94/5 (99%)

The recreation activities enhanced our retreat experience & connection with our family:

4.80/5 (97%)



#### 2024 RAND CASE VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

In 2020, we said goodbye to a beloved friend and Project Sanctuary's longest-serving board member, Rand Case. To honor his incredible legacy of service and heart, we created the Rand Case Volunteer of the Year Award—an award that celebrates those who truly embody our mission, recognize the deep needs of our military families, and give of themselves with unwavering dedication. Nominated by our staff and board, this year's honor goes to extraordinary volunteers who have made a lasting impact: Ann and Kurt Sorys.

"Kurt and Ann have been incredible volunteers throughout the years, consistently going above and beyond what we could ever expect. No task is too big or too small—from shoveling snow to lending a hand in the kitchen, they're always ready to step in wherever they're needed." said Scott Harper, Project Sanctuary retreat manager. "Their dedication and heartfelt passion for Project Sanctuary and its mission shine through in everything they do."

Below Ann and Kurt share why they are such passionate volunteers for Project Sanctuary and why they chose to get involved.

### HOW DID YOU GET CONNECTED TO PROJECT SANCTUARY?

I work for a company in Omaha that is near Offutt Air Force Base. One of our customers asked if we would distribute a flyer for a charity golf tournament to be held at the base. The beneficiary of this charity tournament was Project Sanctuary. My wife saw the flyer and investigated Project Sanctuary on the web site and found out about the volunteer opportunities in Colorado. We are outdoor enthusiasts, and Colorado is one of our go to places. So, the idea of what could be called a 'meaningful working vacation' appealed to us. We signed up shortly thereafter.

### WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OR MOST MEANINGFUL VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE?

One of the most meaningful experiences my wife and I have had because of volunteering was a relationship that we developed with one of the families on our first retreat. We kept in touch with them over time, visited them on a few occasions, and got to see the long-term positive benefits that the retreat had on the family.

### WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF VOLUNTEERING THAT KEEPS YOU COMING BACK?

Ann and I keep coming back because of the people we work with, both staff and families. Spending the better part of a week with a group of people allows you to develop connections that you wouldn't otherwise get from a shorter encounter. We've met people from all over the country with all sorts of varied life experience.

### WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO THOSE CONSIDERING VOLUNTEERING?

Volunteering has allowed my wife and I the opportunity to be of service to those families that have served our country. The appreciation and gratitude that the families have expressed is worth a lot more than the time and effort that is asked for in return. For anyone considering volunteering, this is a great opportunity for non-military couples like us to show appreciation to those families that have sacrificed on our behalf.

## WITH tear fet GRATITUDE

The impact of Project Sanctuary is made possible by the incredible generosity of our volunteers and donors, who give so much of themselves every single day. In 2024, your time, talent, and treasures helped bring hope and healing to military families across the country. We honor each and every one of you who stood beside us in this mission. Every contribution—big or small—has created meaningful change and reminded our families that they are never alone. Thank you for being the heart of what we do.

#### **2024 VOLUNTEERS**

Clifton Blanks Maryl Burch Paul & Rebecca Ceciliani Rebecca Christy Lauren Ciccarelli Eugenena Coleman Benjamin Colon-Hellstrom Colleen & Sherwood Diggs Angela Dorsey Wilfredo Febres Tvan Geissler Jared & Jesse Hansen Andrew & Audrey Hockman Thomas Houdek Karen House Ken Jacobsen Wendy Karczewski

Andrea Kirkland **Amy Kreimeyer Project Linus** Jacob Lombard Juan Lopez Donielle Madden Dan & Lee Mahoney Don & Elizabeth Marcum Christina McCulley Jalid & Rosalinda Mencia Jason Mugg Casey Muhlestein Jamir & John Munn Jennifer Nash Maria Niriel Kim Ortega Winter Park Christian Church Retreat

Ann & Doug Petersen
Lynn Shore
Ann & Kurt Sorys
Alisa & Bill Spangenthal
Patrick Sullivan
Joann Terry
Linda & Ron Testa
Joseph & Misty Tokarsky
Maryalicia Verdecchia
Gini Warren
Leroy Williams
Matthew Willis
Esther Worman



"OUR FAMILY DID THE RETREAT 3 YEARS AGO
AND NOW BEING 1-YEAR EMPTY NESTERS, WE
ARE NOW ABLE TO GIVE BACK. SERVING CAN
BE FLEXIBLE BASED ON YOUR LIMITATIONS
AND SKILLS. I CONTINUE TO LEARN MORE
AND RECEIVE THINGS THAT I CAN APPLY
TO MY DAILY LIFE. SO, UNPLUG FROM THAT
COMPUTER AND IPHONES. COME JOIN ME AND
LET'S GO ON ADVENTURE SERVING OTHER
MILITARY FAMILIES." — JONIEW

"PROJECT SANCTUARY WAS A **BLESSING FOR MY FAMILY AND** ME. WE WENT IN THINKING THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT TO SALVAGE. HOWEVER. THE PROJECT SANCTUARY RETREAT AND STAFF HUMBLED US IN SHOWING US VALUABLE TOOLS TO REKINDLE AND HEAL OUR MARRIAGE AND **HOW TO NAVIGATE PARENTHOOD** DURING THIS CHALLENGING TIME. **WE ARE FOREVER GRATEFUL FOR** THIS OPPORTUNITY AND WILL SPREAD OUR KNOWLEDGE OF SUCH AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE WITH PROJECT SANCTUARY!"

- An Air Force Family, November 2024

"Project Sanctuary was an amazing experience. We were able to reconnect after a long deployment in a very relaxing yet fun and informative setting. The workshops were structured perfectly, giving us time to listen and consider our communication and connection while also having a balance of free time and scheduled activities. It was a perfect week of reconnecting that was so needed. Thank you!"

- An Army Family,
October 2024

#### **2024 MONTHLY AND RECURRING**

as of December 2024



John Altemueller Tamera Benejam Indya Benton Laura Berman Dave and Debbie **Brooks** Cheryl Buckley Richard Canino John and Therese Cermak Vanessa Chambers Mary Coan Tim and Peg Custer Jan Danziger Jennifer Dawe John and Wendy DeBusk Charles Dixon Allison and John Draper Martin Easters Heather Ehle Ray Michael and Anita **Endres** Jodi and CW5 (ret) **David Eppler** Henry Evans, Sr. Ameen Farwana Dani and David Feret Tracy Heichelbech Matt Hembree Ethan Hokanson Heather Holden Jacobs Family Charitable Trust Stephanie Jess Corry Juedeman Prestidge John Kafer Brad and Jennifer Kelsey William Kepley Jane Klingensmith **Kurt and Corey** Langenwalter

James Langlois

Benjamin and Joanna Lievestro Craig Liguori Suzanne Long Kim Long Donielle Madden Dan and Lee Mahoney Timothy and Kathryn Malinski Kristina March Jeanne Mathews Connally Kendall Matthews Kristy and Raymond McCormick Christopher McLoughlin Henry Milich Wes and Kelly Mlcak Joseph Morrin Sr. Mountain Equipment Recyclers Alisha Muroni James Murphy Sherry Nelson Megan Newman Ginger Nielsen Trish Norten The Norwood Family Lee Olinger John Osarczuk Kris Pancoast Jerry & Graziella Panetta Jill and John Pietrusinski Kimberly Provo Zachary Pruitt Louie Ray

Erika Reilley

Richard and Patricia Rhinesmith Jeff Richardson Tamila Romeis Matthew Rose Annette Rowland Cathy Rubin Claudia and Anthony Ruoti Robin Sacks Shane Schmutz Holly and James Shook Lynn Shore Lance Shore Robert Silva Gary Sjurset Tony and Stephanie Smith Bill and Alisa Spangenthal Trudy Spratta Michael and Angie Stowell **David Thompson Dustin Thoren** Bryan Tuschen Sandy Wade Rick Wallace Ken and Kara Walsh Frank and Jane Watts John Weitzer Frank and Rochelle Wheeler Christopher Wilson Matt and Shelly Wineriter Jack and Kate Wyman

Christopher Young

If your name is not properly
listed or we've made an
unintentional error, please contact
tracy@projectsanctuary.us to
update your information.

## 2024 Major Donors & Financials

#### \$50,000+

99.5 The Mountain Radiothon

**Anonymous** 

May & Stanley Smith Charitable Trust

Naval Postgraduate School Alumni Association and Foundation, Inc.

The Anschutz Foundation

The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation

The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc.

The Milanovich Trust

#### \$10,000-49,999

**AIR Communities** 

Altitude Energy Partners

American Truck Business Services, LLC

Anonymous

Anschutz Family Foundation

Chatham Financial Foundation

Chip Terry Fund for First Responders, Inc

Disabled American Veterans Charitable Service Trust

**ERF** Foundation

Lockheed Martin Space

Nordson Corporation Foundation

PB&J Family Fund

Permian Basin Oil & Gas

Poker Classic

Peyback Foundation

Prevent and Prevail

Rocky Mountain Oil & Gas Poker Classic

Ronald and Linda Testa

RS&H

Shannon and Brad Case

Tee It Up For The Troops

Veterans United Foundation

#### \$5,000-9,999

**Amy Davison** 

**BAS Family Fund** 

**Battle Betties NFP** 

Bill & Alisa Spangenthal

CoServ Charitable Foundation

Gerald Oppenheimer Family Foundation

Grand Design RV Rally

La Plata Electric Association

Lida Citroen-LIDA360

Mari Akers

Patterson Drilling

**RCS** Energy Services

Rotary Club of Parker

Adam & Jamie Sayers

Stan Zuege

Strom Family Charitable

-und

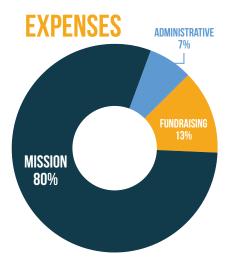
The Gregg Family Foundation

XConnect, LLC

ZECO Equipment Co. LLC

"Since we left the retreat we continue the family game night each week and we also pick a Saturday activity twice a month. Our communication as a family is much better. The kids feel comfortable telling us how they feel about different situations that arise. And we have opened up to them about how we feel in certain situations. Overall the tools we received from the sessions at the retreat have really brought us together. Thanks for the work you do Project Sanctuary!"

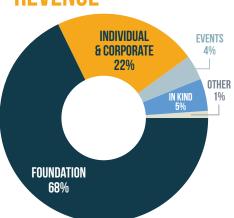
An Air Force family,
 3 month post-retreat survey



Mission: \$1,820,744 Administrative: \$156,432 Fundraising: \$291,738

TOTAL: \$2.268.944

#### REVENUE



Foundation: \$2,328,970 Individual & Corporate Contributions: \$763,752

Events: \$141,467 In kind: \$161,021 Other Income: \$49,742

TOTAL: \$3,444,952



# A Pream Pealized PROJECT SANCTUARY'S FOREVER HOME IN PAGOSA SPRINGS, CO

In 2023, Project Sanctuary achieved a historic milestone: acquiring a permanent 42-acre retreat center in Pagosa Springs, Colorado. This achievement marks a major evolution in our capacity to serve military families, providing a year-round sanctuary for healing, connection, fostering resilience, and growth.

This dream was set in motion by Fred and Linda Milanovich, whose \$1 million lead gift honored founder and Chief Executive Officer Heather Ehle Ray's long-standing vision to create a dedicated retreat space for military families. Their commitment established the foundation for Project Sanctuary's forever home.

The vision expanded through a meaningful partnership with the Bill Ackerman Estate. A military veteran with a heart for supporting children, Mr. Ackerman's legacy is honored through a second \$1 million investment, which played a critical role in securing the property.



Further capital support from Project Sanctuary's Board of Directors finalized the acquisition and launched the transformation of the property.

In 2024, the site began to come alive:

- A custom-built playground was constructed to ensure every military child who visits can experience the joy and healing nature of recreation.
- Groundbreaking began on our Tiny House Village, which will offer families a peaceful and private space for rest and reflection during retreats.
- Our inaugural therapeutic retreat was held in August 2024. Alumni couples were welcomed for a special reunion and pilot experience of our new programming. Their participation and insights helped us refine and elevate future therapeutic retreats at Patriot Pines.

With this permanent home, Project
Sanctuary can expand access, increase
program frequency, and deepen
program impact, offering military families
a place of belonging and renewal for
generations to come.

Stay up-to-date with Patriot Pines progress: projectsanctuary.us/capitalcampaign



### A SANCTUARY FOR MILITARY FAMILIES DBA PROJECT SANCTUARY

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