

Cover Letter

From: Don Andrew
Campground Owner
Honor Ridge Campground
2497 Pent Circle
Pensacola, Florida 32514

May 20, 2021

To: Andi Ritcher
Investor
Heroes Hope Foundation
323 Maplewood Ridge Drive
Aurora, Illinois 60503

Dear Andi Ritcher,

Honor Ridge Campground respectfully requested \$1,200,000 to fund the Brave Trails project.

This project is to seek funding for the lack of resources at the campground. Since 2019, the campground has lost 115 out of 1,500 members. We have surveyed to evaluate the loss and found that members left due to inaccessible cabins and utilities for veterans with disabilities, outdated infrastructure such as hardware, landscape, and amenities, and a lack of security.

We propose securing funding to revitalize our veteran campground by modernizing critical infrastructure, upgrading security systems, and installing accessible amenities designed to meet the needs of disabled veterans. These improvements will create a safer, more inclusive, and restorative environment where all veterans — regardless of physical ability — can enjoy the peace, community, and healing they deserve.

After a few months, we have seen member improvement by gaining 25 new members due to our campground's success in specialized programs and services.

We appreciate Heroes Hope Foundation for taking the time and interest in reading our grant proposal and consideration in investing in our project. Please feel free to contact me at 850.229.3453 or D.Andrew1@gmail.com for questions or additional information.

Sincerely,

Don Andrew

Campground Owner

Executive Summary

Honor Ridge Campground seeks a grant of \$1,200,000 to support the Brave Trails Project, a transformational initiative aimed at restoring access, safety, and dignity to veterans and their families through critical infrastructure improvements. Veterans have dedicated years in service to protect the nation and deserve a safe, welcoming place to return to. Honor Ridge Campground offers support, but limited funding and outdated infrastructure create barriers, especially for those with disabilities. Uneven terrain, inaccessible restrooms, and outdated amenities can make it difficult for disabled veterans to enjoy these spaces fully. This project will focus on three key areas: upgrading infrastructure for ADA compliance and accessibility, enhancing site-wide security to support veterans with PTSD, and updating amenities and digital systems for improved usability and organization. A detailed budget outlines costs for accessible pathways, restroom retrofitting, security camera installation, and reservation system upgrades. With this funding, we aim to create a safe, inclusive, and restorative space where all veterans — especially those with disabilities — can find comfort, connection, and peace.

Statement of Need

A veteran campground that's not updated could lead to outdated reservation information, incorrect amenity descriptions, and difficulty in finding suitable sites for camping. This can also create a sense of disorganization and a lack of professionalism. It's important that the campground requires updated infrastructure to maintain accessibility to all members.

A member named James, a former Marine with a disability, reached out and voiced his disappointment in the campground when he visited. He stated that the veteran campground is a place for peace and connection. Instead, he faced gravel paths his wheelchair couldn't navigate, restrooms without accessibility features, and no security when loud noises triggered his PTSD. Stories like James's highlight the urgent need for funding to improve accessibility, infrastructure, and safety, so every veteran can feel welcome and supported.

Project Description

The Honor Ridge Campground is nestled in a natural setting. The campground is a place for healing, reflecting, and community-building. The grant will support a revitalization effort aimed at modernizing the campground while ensuring it remains inclusive, secure, and environmentally friendly.

Infrastructure Modernization

- **Road and Utility Improvements:** Resurfacing of roads will be performed and repaved. Underground utility lines for water, electricity, and sewage will be replaced with modern and durable materials.
- **Restroom and Shower Modernization:** The campground's core facilities – restrooms, water systems, and electrical lines – are old and in need of urgent repair or replacement. The facility will be rebuilt using eco-friendly designs with low-flow water fixtures, solar-powered lighting, and sustainable materials.

Accessibility Improvements

- **ADA-Compliant Trails and Campsites:** Trails will be constructed with ADA-compliant surfacing and slopes. Campsites will be redesigned with accessible picnic tables and tent pads.
- **Restroom and Parking Modifications:** Restroom facilities will be rebuilt with wider doorways, bars, and wheelchair accessible features. Designated ADA parking spots will be paved near the main entry points.

Security Enhancements

- **Lighting and Surveillance:** Motion activated LED lights will be installed in communal areas and along main paths. Strategically placed surveillance campgrounds will combat vandalism and improve visitor safety.
- **Emergency Systems:** Call boxes with direct lines to local emergency services will be installed with signage indicating locations and procedures.

Evaluation Plan

Phases	Activities	Duration	Start - End Dates
Phase 1	Planning & Design	2 months	January - April 2022
Phase 2	Site Prep & Infrastructure Work	4 months	April - July 2022
Phase 3	Accessibility Construction	2 months	July - September
Phase 4	Security Installations	1 month	October 2022
Phase 5	Testing, Training, & Opening	1 month	November 2022

Organizational Background

Organization Name: Honor Ridge Campground

Founded: 1985

Type: 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

Location: 555 Northway Street Pensacola, Florida 32514

Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide U.S. military veterans a place to heal, connect, and thrive by providing an accessible nature-based experience with a supportive veteran community.

History and Founding Purpose

Honor Ridge Campground was established in 1985 by a group of veterans and community leaders who recognized a gap in services for veterans returning from deployment or struggling with long-term effects of service. Our founders were inspired by personal experiences and the therapeutic power in nature. They envisioned a space where veterans could find peace, build connections, and access support without stigma.

In our early years, operations were peer-support hiking groups and hosted weekend retreats on borrowed land. As our program grew in popularity and expanded, so did our commitment to create a permanent space where veterans could gather, recover, and lead.

Core Programs and Services

Honor Ridge Campground has established a range of programs serving more than 1,500 members and their families. These programs include:

- Wilderness Retreats: 3-5 days of nature-based healing experiences combining recreation, group discussion, and mindfulness
- Veteran Peer Support Circles: Small group sessions led by trained veteran facilitators.

- Outdoor Skills Training: Survival skills, land stewardship, and nature education that builds confidence and leadership.
- Family resiliency Weekends: Programming for veterans and their spouses/children to reconnect and strengthen relationships.

Budget and Justification

Category	Estimated Cost	Justification
Cabin Accessibility Renovation	\$XXX,XXX	Renovate or replace 8 existing cabins to meet ADA standards, including ramps, widened doors, accessible bathrooms, and furnishings suitable for veterans with mobility impairments.
Utilities Modernization	\$XXX,XXX	Upgrade water lines, electrical wiring, and septic systems to meet current codes and handle year-round capacity safely and efficiently.
Infrastructure Repairs	\$XXX,XXX	Rebuild deteriorated walkways, outdoor restrooms, common areas, and recreational structures to ensure safety and usability.
Security Enhancements	\$XXX,XXX	Install surveillance cameras, solar lighting, a secure front gate system, and emergency response systems to protect guests and staff.
Project Management & Oversight	\$XX,XXX	Cover costs of hiring or contracting a project manager, site inspections, and compliance with local/state regulations.
Contingency (5%)	\$XX,XXX	Reserved for unforeseen construction costs, supply delays, or inflation-related adjustments.

Outcomes and Evaluation

Short-Term Outcomes (0-6 months)

- Infrastructure Development: Completion of Campground Infrastructure (e.g., cabins, restrooms, cooking areas, fire pits).
- Veteran Engagement: Recruit 50 members from Honor Ridge campground
- Community Integration: Host 4 open community events, including a welcome ceremony and a veteran story sharing circle.
- Data Collection: Complete intake surveys for all participants to gather data on demographics, mental health indicators (e.g., depression, anxiety, PTSD symptoms), and social support networks.

Intermediate Outcomes (6-18 months)

- Improved Mental Health: 50% of participants will report a decrease of anxiety or depression symptoms or PTSD on self-assessment tools (e.g., PHQ-7, PCL-3).
- Skill Enhancement and Empowerment: 65% of participants will engage in at least one skills training program (e.g., nature trail, wilderness survival, job readiness workshops, wood shop).
- Peer Leadership: Train 12 veterans as peer mentors or program facilitators.
- Program Growth: Host 15 therapeutic group retreats with 15-25 participants each.

Long-Term Outcomes (18-36 Months and Beyond)

- Continuing Mental Health Improvements: At least 80% of long-term participants will continue with mental health improvement for six months.
- Reduce of Social Isolation: Participants will report an average increase of 50% in social connectivity and support networks (measured by UCLA Loneliness Scale).
- Veteran Leadership Development: Graduates of the program will be engaged in leadership roles, with at least 25% taking on mentorship or staff positions with a 2-year span.

Evaluation Framework

Objective

- Measure the effectiveness and impact the campground's activities will have on veterans' mental health and social well-being.
 - Assess satisfaction rate for reach, engagement, and participants.
 - Identify areas for program improvement and expansion.
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- Evaluate the number of veterans that served (monthly and cumulative totals)
 - Retention and return rates of participants
 - Participant satisfaction scores, target 85+ with "satisfied" or "very satisfied"

Evaluation Timeline

Month 1-2: Baseline assessments and pilot evaluation tools

Month 3-6: Gather Data Collection and Quarterly Report

Month 12: 1 Year evaluation report

Year 2-3: Annual impact reports shared with funders, stakeholders, and public audiences.

Sustainability Plan

A Diversified Revenue Stream: Reduce dependency on a single funding source, the campground will implement a blend of funding models

1. Financial Sustainability

A. A Diversified Revenue Stream

- Grants & Foundations: Continued pursuit of local, state, and national grants
- Donor Campaigns: Launch an annual donor drive, targeting individuals, veteran families, and corporate sponsors.
- Fee-for-Service: Fees for retreats, workshops, or events (waived for low-income veterans)
- Merchandise & Rentals: Revenue from branded merchandise, gear rental, and space rental for private events
- Membership Programs: Veterans and community support can contribute monthly and annually.

B. Fundraising Infrastructure

- Hire or designate a Development Manager to coordinate fundraising events
- Build a grant calendar to track recurring opportunities
- Use CRM software to track donors and alumni

Operational Sustainability

A. Veteran-Led Staffing and Volunteerism

- Train veteran participants become peer mentors, facilitators, and support staff.
- Launch a Veteran Service Corps where alumni “give back” by volunteering in maintenance, program delivery, or outreach.
- Create internship opportunities in outdoor recreation, mental health peer support, and event management.

B. Maintenance & Stewardship

- Develop a 6-year maintenance plan that covers cabins, trails, and common areas.
- Implement a volunteer “Adopt-a-Cabin” program for upkeep.
- Partner with local businesses and veteran-friendly contractors for in-kind maintenance services.

Community Involvement

A. Strategic Partnerships

- Establish formal partnerships with local VA hospitals, veteran support centers, mental health organizations, universities, and outdoor education programs
- Partners with local schools, faith groups, and civic clubs for volunteer support.

B. Year-Round Engagement

- Host community events such as open houses, veteran family days, and wellness fairs
- Involve local artists, chefs, and performers in programming to create shared culture values.

Environmental Sustainability**A. Eco-Friendly Infrastructure**

- Use solar panels for energy and composting toilets to reduce environmental impact
- Build using sustainable or repurposed materials
- Establish water conservation practices and native plant landscaping

B. Conservation Education

- Integrate environmental stewardship into all programming of trail clean-ups, conservation workshops, and veteran-led ecology talks

Long-term Sustainability**A. Measurable Outcomes**

- Regular evaluations will demonstrate the campground's impact, supporting ongoing fundraising and visibility.
- Publish annual impact reports for stakeholders and funders.

B. Replication & Expansion

- Explore acquiring or leasing nearby land for future expansion of capacity or specialized programs.