

## 2018 Annual Report

# AMERICAN FREEDOM FUND

ATHLETICS. EDUCATION. ADVOCACY.

*“AFF is the epitome of the American spirit – a spirit and drive that inspires us to enrich, motivate and challenge”*



MANHATTANS, MARTINIS & MISTLETOE



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### A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Patriot –

It seems just like yesterday, I was sitting down to reflect on the first year of the *American Freedom Fund* (AFF) and how much this group of young men and women had accomplished in just 12 months. Today, the AFF team's spirit is stronger than ever, and the energy that our leadership, advisory board and volunteers bring to the table each day is nothing short of amazing. Together, we have grown to exceed all of our goals from last year and continue to enrich the lives of our active duty, reserve, and separated service members and their families in everything we do.

The cornerstone of our athletics program, *Patriots Softball*, has continued its momentum of success for a fourth year by empowering more than **80 veteran athletes** and **5 independent teams, providing** an opportunity for these heroes to connect and compete at tournaments in more than **10 states**. In 2018, we fielded two teams at the USSSA Military Softball Worlds Tournament in Coco Beach, FL, where we finished in the **top 10 nationwide**. The continued support of our donors and sponsors has provided not only an opportunity for these athletes to compete, but also has covered the registration fees, uniforms and much needed equipment for participating athletes, many of whom would not have been able to participate without such tremendous support.

I am also very proud of the strides that the *Patriots Shooting Team* made in its second year of competition, thanks to the essential funding and support our sponsors provided by helping us to send our Veterans to nationally recognized marksman and snipers competitions. The success of the *Patriots Shooting Team* program gained national attention, and laid the foundation for our team to educate others, compete and bond at events on both coasts of the country. In fact, at the University of Washington VIBE Inaugural Trap competition, our *Patriots* brought home the awards for first, second and Top Gun.



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In 2018, AFF also hosted at least one event a month that brought our Veterans and their families together for the opportunity to socialize, make new friends and build a greater sense of community. Many of these events, like the Remember Everyone Deployed (R.E.D.) Friday Socials, allowed us to partner with some amazing allies in the VSO arena as we continue to build a collaborative and all-inclusive Veteran community.

Finally, AFF's *Manhattans, Martinis & Mistletoe Veterans Awards Gala* kept up with tradition as the signature event of the holiday season. In its 5<sup>th</sup> year in 2018, we were honored to have 35



Members of Congress serve, in a true bipartisan spirit, as Honorary Co-Chairs of the event, and to have more than 400 Patriots gather to celebrate the courage and service of our men and women in uniform. It was an amazing evening hosted by Graham Allen, with attendance by celebrities, Members of Congress, and military leaders from

across the region. In keeping with our mission focus to support and collaborate, and through the support of sponsors and ticket sales, we recognized the impact made by three veteran-focused organizations, along with grants awarded to each organization. The 2018 Patriot Awards recognized the outstanding community service of the Maryland Gold Star Mothers, the Chris Kyle Frog Foundation and Team ADDO.

As we turn the page to 2019, I am extremely excited by what lies ahead for AFF, as each of our current programs continue to grow, and new programs come online to empower and enrich our Veteran community. I am personally excited about two of these programs: *Headshots* and *Patriot Outdoors*. Through a partnership with Team ADDO, *Headshots* has a goal of helping 1000+ transitioning servicemembers and their spouses, across the country, find their next adventure and sense of purpose in the civilian world by offering complementary professional headshots and mentorship. Speaking of adventure, *Patriot Outdoors* will launch this year with a full schedule of rock climbing, kayaking and camping for adaptive and non-adaptive outdoor aficionados.

As AFF closes the chapter on another year, I cannot express my gratitude enough to all of those fellow *patriots* who attend the planning meetings, volunteer long hours and are there no matter what the conditions to support our nation's heroes. To the many sponsors and corporate partners who have raised their hands in support, and pledged their time and resources, please know that we could not sustain our mission to serve to those who have served by our side **without you**.

I could not be prouder of what this small army of volunteers has accomplished in such a short time. They are truly the epitome of the *American spirit* – a spirit and drive that inspires us to

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enrich, motivate and challenge just as so many before us have. My challenge to you, as we continue this story, is to join us, bring a friend and make some new ones. Together the future is yet to be written.

With regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Bramer".

Donald R. Bramer  
Executive Director

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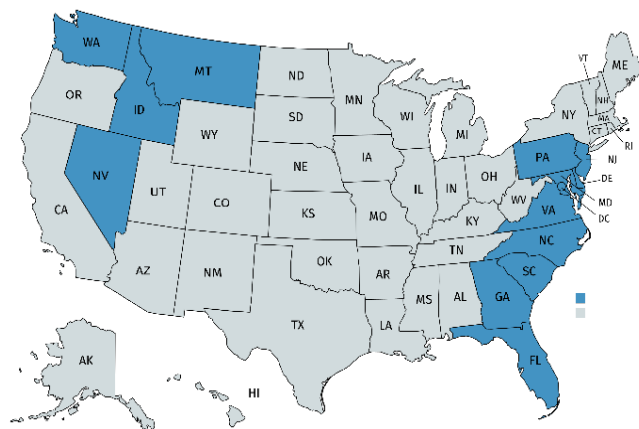
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### 2018 – A Year of Growth

In 2018, AFF Raised \$150,000+ to  
Support Our Veteran Programs!



The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual *Manhattans, Martinis & Mistletoe Veterans Awards Gala* (M3 Gala) was the largest yet, as celebrities and military influencers from across the country and more than 34 Congressional Members from both sides of the aisle came together to honor and celebrate our heroes at the 2018 M3 Gala in Washington, D.C.



*We sent nearly 50 Military Athletes to 10 States for national competitions . . . including the USSSA Military Softball Worlds tournaments!*



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*A big, big thank you!*

As we close the books on another year of milestones, we look back – sometimes in awe – at the community that we’ve built and continue to build as the countless number of active duty, reserve separated service-members, their families and allies came together in spirit of inclusiveness and collaboration to show that MSO’s and VSO’s can work together to serve each other. Together, we are an unstoppable force that can build and sustain communities that enrich and empower each other. Whether at a large event, the ball field, or a small gathering of friends, our commitment to our family of Patriots has never been stronger. Thankfully, this spirit of inspiration and motivation binds us all as American.

### **AFF Leadership**

**Don Bramer, Executive Director**  
**Rob Miller, Director**  
**Gabe Stecker, Director**

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### *Get Off The Couch*

As we enter into the second year of our Five-Year Plan of Sustainability, AFF continues to exceed our own benchmarks by providing more opportunities for the Veteran community to further inspire and empower each other. Through collaborations with other organizations, corporate partnerships, and our commitments to each other, we are kicking off this year with one simple campaign, ***Get Off the Couch.***

To us, ***Get Off the Couch*** is a message to our community that, while you may feel safe locked away at home with the doors shut and the blinds closed, you are stronger and more powerful when you stand with friends and in fellowship.

Whether through athletics, adaptive sports, community service, scholarships or advocacy, our charge is to continue the sentiment we've said before, and as set forth by Abraham Lincoln many years ago, "honor to the soldier and sailor everywhere."

Moving forward, look for more competitions, outings, and activities as the AFF family grows to more states across this nation, bringing more opportunity for healing and growth while eliminating excuses. Of course, this is only possible through **you** and our amazing volunteers, donors and business leaders. What are you waiting for? ***Get Off the Couch!***

**Be A Patriot. Join the Revolution!**

