

OPERATION HEAL OUR PATRIOTS FACT SHEET

WHAT:

Operation Heal Our Patriots is a project of Samaritan's Purse designed to strengthen the marriages of wounded and injured members of the U.S. Military. The project includes a weeklong wilderness retreat at Samaritan's Lodge Alaska providing physical and spiritual renewal to wounded veterans, active duty service members, and their spouses.

With picturesque scenery, individual cabins for couples and a dedicated staff, couples are allowed to escape the pressures of home and focus on renewing their marriages. During the week, couples participate in Biblically based marriage enrichment classes, devotions and recreation activities ranging from bear watching to fishing, kayaking and hiking. All lodge facilities and activities are handicapped accessible.

Operation Heal Our Patriots is the only program of its kind for wounded military service members and their spouses. The ministry to military couples extends beyond their stay at Samaritan's Lodge Alaska. Ongoing aftercare connects couples with military chaplains and churches in their local communities to create a system of support upon their return home.

WHY:

Coping with an injury can be incredibly difficult for military service members and the stress of this new reality can significantly impact a marriage. In 2011, approximately 30,000 military personnel marriages ended in divorce, according to the U.S. Department of Defense (*USA Today*, December 2011). Through Operation Heal Our Patriots, Samaritan's Purse is working to help strengthen and preserve the marriages of those wounded while serving our country.

WHO:

Operation Heal Our Patriots is open to current and former military service members who entered service after Sept. 11, 2001. Wounded veterans and active military personnel are selected through military and private network referrals. Couples interested in participating can also submit applications online. All expenses, including accommodations, airfare and activities, are covered by Samaritan's Purse through donations. In 2012, 80 couples participated in the program. Nearly 150 couples are expected for 2013.

WHEN:

Operation Heal Our Patriots opened for its first Alaskan summer season in June of 2012. Samaritan Lodge Alaska is open annually from June until mid-September and guests typically arrive on Sunday and stay through Friday evening or Saturday morning.

WHERE:

The retreat center, Samaritan Lodge Alaska, is located in the village of Port Alsworth, Alaska, approximately 150 miles southwest of Anchorage. Nestled in the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, the lodge is surrounded by mountains, glaciers, waterfalls and wildlife.

Samaritan's Purse, headed by Franklin Graham, is an international Christian relief and evangelism organization working in more than 100 countries to provide aid to victims of war, disease, disaster, poverty, famine and persecution. For more information, visit SamaritansPurse.org or OperationHealOurPatriots.org.

