

VALOR Retreat Aims to Give Back to Returning Combat Veterans

BY MARGIE WILBER



VALOR Retreat began as an idea of Larry Teichman's, a U.S. veteran and founder/owner and president of Caritas Financial, based in Chesterland. Larry owned several cabins and considerable acreage in Hocking Hills, Ohio and, while enjoying the tranquil setting and breathtaking landscape there, considered how returning U.S. combat veterans and their families would equally enjoy such a retreat. As they say in the military, it was "boots on the ground" immediately in pursuit of this vision.

Larry recalls, "I always wanted to find a way to give back to our veterans and their families who have sacrificed so much for our freedom. I thought this serenity could be used to help the veterans and their families. The property already had three rental cabins on it, so my initial thought was to build a cabin or two and allow veterans and their families to use the place as a respite at no cost to them. That was the initial thought—the beginning."

After several months' conversing with trusted advisors and friends, the VALOR Retreat Board was formed, comprised of several community leaders and fellow veterans from various military branches. They were committed to meet monthly. Within a few months, the nonprofit organization received its 501(c)3 tax-exempt status. "As the VALOR board was working on this application, I consulted with my CPA and attorney. For a variety of reasons, it was recommended that High Rock enter into a lease with Valor to build on and use the property. Therefore, a written lease with VALOR Retreat was drawn up whereby High Rock would lease to VALOR Retreat for 50 years at \$5 per year and renewable for another 50 years."

According to Larry, the exclusive purpose of VALOR Retreat is to provide a free, recreational facility for combat veterans and their families. VALOR Retreat is located in a 197-acre, private reserve in Hocking Hills that encompasses breathtaking landscapes, massive rock formations and abundant hiking trails, as well as fishing, archery, birdwatching and peaceful solitude.

"This tranquil respite is a suitable way to honor and thank our brave veterans by offering them an opportunity to relax,

reconnect with their families, and recover from the ravages of combat," Larry, who is a VALOR Retreat Board member, passionately states. "I became personally involved because I wanted to make sure this project would be completed."

The VALOR Retreat Board acknowledges that a lot of work remains to be done to see this vision into fruition. Board members are currently hitting the pavement in pursuit of individuals who would like to partner in their mission and provide support—whether financial, in materials, or simply manpower.

For VALOR Retreat Board member Barbara Titus, vice president of Sheoga Hardwood Flooring & Paneling in Middlefield, serving on this board seemed a natural fit.

"I am currently very involved with the Gary Sinise Foundation," Titus explains. "The Gary Sinise Foundation was established by actor Gary Sinise, who portrayed Lt. Dan in the movie *Forrest Gump*. His R.I.S.E. program, an acronym for Restore Independence, Supporting Empowerment, helps those who sacrifice to defend our country: combat veterans, first responders, and their loved ones. Donations to the Gary Sinise Foundation R.I.S.E. program are primarily used to build specially-adapted smart homes for our nation's most critically wounded defenders."

Titus says Sheoga Hardwood Flooring and the National Wood Flooring Association has donated approximately \$4.3 million in hardwood flooring, logistics and installation labor for the R.I.S.E. homes. "VALOR Retreat gives me and others the opportunity to continue to serve our deserving veterans at a local level," Titus adds.

The VALOR Retreat Board's mission is to build fully equipped, handicap-accessible cabins and eventually a lodge that can serve as a gathering place for veterans who desire to share time with their "brothers" in the military. Delicious meals will be provided in the lodge as well as one-on-one counseling, family counseling, PTSD therapy, art and music therapies, and other evidence-based therapies for free through the Department of Veterans

Affairs. Comfortable overnight accommodations including linens and bath towels will be provided in each cabin as well.

Tim Oldani, of the Veteran's Center, says, "Outdoor recreational activities are now considered one of the most effective therapeutic services we can offer our veterans."

Valor Retreat is only minutes from the popular Hocking Hills destinations of Old Man's Cave, Ash Cave, Cedar Falls, Boulder Canyon, Hemlock Falls and Falling Water. ATV trails, horse stables, a canoe/kayak livery and ziplining are also available within a 10-minute drive.

Whether for a weekend or a week-long vacation, VALOR Retreat at High Rock will be available to all veterans, regardless of age, race, income, sex or religion.

Larry concludes, "Our goal is to raise \$3 million for the construction of four VALOR Retreat cabins and a lodge. Freedom is never free. Join with us

as we honor, thank, inspire and strengthen those combat veterans and their families who gave so selflessly to protect the freedoms we enjoy today in the United States."

Larry is a resident of Waite Hill. He formed Caritas (different name at the time) 22 years ago in Middlefield, then moved to South Euclid, then Mentor for eight years, and eventually moved to Chesterland in 2007.

To donate to VALOR Retreat, visit the VALOR Retreat website at valorretreat.org or call Barbara Titus at 216.410.8993 or Larry Teichman at 440.376.0121.

"This tranquil respite is a suitable way to honor and thank our brave veterans by offering them an opportunity to relax, reconnect with their families, and recover from the ravages of combat."

- Larry Teichman, VALOR Retreat board member



3/4" Thick Solid & Engineered Wood Flooring & Paneling
9 Species • Random Widths • Textures • Herringbone • Wood Vents

Choose from Unfinished or Prefinished



real wood
Real Life

Visit our showroom at: 15320 Burton-Windsor Rd., Middlefield, OH 44062 • 440-834-1710 • www.sheogaflooring.com

Save the Date

Christmas in July Golf Outing

Saturday, July 27

Berkshire Hills Golf Course

Registration & continental breakfast: 8:30 a.m.

Shotgun start: 10 a.m.

Grilled lunch at the turn

Steak dinner and prizes following

All meals and beverages included

Cost: \$500 for a foursome

Register today!

**Call Walter at 440.478.9151 or
email: jmiraglia@gmail.com**

All proceeds go to the
2019 Bethlehem Hills Christmas Light Park charities:
Fieldstone Therapeutic Riding Center and **VALOR Retreat**

VALOR Retreat is a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation
involved in building cabins in Hocking Hills
to provide a free vacation for returning
combat veterans and their families.

