

# The Blaster News

Fourth Quarter 2024

## Upcoming Events and Retreats

### December

**December 1:** EOD Warrior Holiday Dash, 6K, Half & Marathon - Georgetown, Washington D.C.

**December 3:** Giving Tuesday

**December 5:** Civilian Workforce Lunch & Learn Series - Niceville, FL

**December 10:** Holiday Zentangle Class, Niceville, FL (and virtual)

**December 11-12:** ASIST W Workshop, Niceville, FL

**December 14:** Operation Toy Drive & 5K, Niceville, FL

**December 19:** Holiday Zentangle Class, Niceville, FL (and virtual)

### February

**February 1:** 2025 EOD Memorial Ball Tickets sale begins!

**February 8:** Polar Bear Plunge - Fredericksburg, VA

**February 8:** Chili Plunge - Niceville, FL

For information on all of our events and retreats, please visit our website at [eodwarriorfoundation.org](http://eodwarriorfoundation.org)



**EOD WARRIOR**  
FOUNDATION

## We Remember

### EOD Warrior Foundation and Volunteers Honor the Fallen at Arlington National Cemetery

As part of the EOD Remembrance Flag program, the EOD Community gathered on Friday and Saturday, November 1 & 2, at Arlington National Cemetery. There, in respect of ANC's guidelines, over 320+ roses with biodegradable tags were placed on all the known EOD graves located in the cemetery. In addition, a wreath was laid at the Tomb of the Unknown to honor the 80+ EOD Techs listed as MIA, Lost, or Buried at Sea.

The wreath, adorned with a scroll listing the names of those lost and missing, was presented by Marc Seidler - Gold Star Dad of EOD AIC Matthew R. Seidler, 1LT Madison Faust and CPT Caroline Hamann, both at Fort Belvoir and Kellie Perry - Director, EODWF.

They were joined by over 150+ volunteers, including EOD Techs from Fort Belvoir, Indian Head, and Andrews AFB, Quantico, the FBI, friends, and family. The regular tourists who were simply touring Arlington that day were treated to a spectacular sight of full dress uniforms and the deep love and respect the EOD Community shares with all who ever wore the badge.

Photos of this event and of the graves at Arlington may be found here: <https://albums.memento.com/EODWFArlington2024>

As always, our thanks to Crescent Cities Charities whose generous grant makes this program free for all participants. And, to the hundreds of volunteers who have placed EOD Flags around the country this year!





Thanks to two generous grants from Impact100 – Northwest Florida Chapter and the Forever Warriors Foundation, established by Step One Automotive Group, we are proud to offer the ASIST Program during two sessions in November and December.

As most in the EOD Community know, the threat of suicide is ever present. The ASIST program gives participants knowledge and confidence to ask questions, handle the crisis, and stabilize the situation until professional help is obtained.

To begin addressing the threat of suicide within the greater EOD Community, the EODWF, in conjunction with Wounded Warrior Project, offered the ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) program in 2023 to EODWF staff and several area partners to judge and evaluate the program. It received excellent feedback and was put on the 2024 Programs Calendar to be offered again.

The training is conducted by trained LivingWorks professionals and designed to provide suicide first aid interventions to non-professionals. It is approved by the World Health Organization and has been a proven, tested training program for over 40 years.

The ASIST program will take place at our offices in Niceville and is a two full day program that involves role playing, audiovisuals, discussions, and simulations in a group and small group breakouts setting. Participants learn how to recognize when someone may be thinking about suicide, how to provide a skilled intervention, and how to develop a safety plan with the person to help with connecting them with further support. It is designed to be approachable and accessible to non-mental health or first aid professionals.



Thank you so much Impact100 – Northwest Florida Chapter and the Forever Warriors Foundation, established by Step One Automotive Group for making this program and the support possible to the EOD Community!

**Brave the Cold, Honor the Bold!  
Dive In for EOD Heroes!**

**February 8, 2025**

**Fredericksburg, Virginia  
Polar Bear Plunge  
Indian Acres Club of Thornburg**



**Niceville, Florida  
Chili Plunge  
Turkey Creek Park**



# EOD MEMORIAL Weekend

*May 2 - 3, 2025*

Tickets  
go on sale  
Feb. 1

As the holiday season approaches, we're preparing for the highlight of 2025—EOD Memorial Weekend. Mark your calendars for **May 2nd and 3rd**, a time to honor, celebrate, and unite as a community.

On Friday, May 2nd, the weekend begins with the exclusive auction and the ever-popular Golf Tournament. Then, on Saturday, May 3rd, we gather at the EOD Memorial, NAVSCOLEOD, in Niceville for the 56th EOD Memorial Ceremony—a solemn tribute to honor our fallen heroes and their enduring legacy.

Later that day, enjoy the EOD Chefs Event, showcasing culinary excellence within our community. The weekend culminates with the 57th EOD Memorial Ball at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center—a night of reflection, camaraderie, and celebration.

Stay connected on social media for updates, and join us for this powerful and meaningful weekend. We'll see you there!

## 2025 EOD Auction

As the 2025 EOD Memorial Weekend swiftly approaches, we extend a heartfelt invitation for your generous contributions to the EOD Auction.

The EOD Memorial Weekend stands as a paramount event, uniting the EOD family and friends, and serves as the cornerstone of fundraising efforts by the EOD Warrior Foundation. On **May 2, 2025**, we will once again come together to commemorate, celebrate, and bolster our tightly-knit community.

We warmly encourage you to consider donating an item to be featured in this significant event, contributing to the success of our shared cause. Your support will undoubtedly make a lasting impact on the EOD community.

EOD Shops, Teams, Units, Platoons, businesses and individuals have donated a variety of items over the years that have been incredibly successful. Some ideas include:

- Unit's EOD Challenge Coin
- Coin racks
- EOD paraphernalia/gear
- EOD furniture, poker chips, poker table, trailer hitch covers, cups, mugs, etc.
- Blasting Machines (old, new, unique, replicas)
- EOD Badges/Patches: U.S. and Foreign
- Handcrafted EOD-related items: Quilts, Stained Glass, Wood IED clocks, Art
- Sports memorabilia
- Experience Packages: Getaways, adventures, dining opportunities

Please send items to:  
EOD Warrior Foundation  
Attn: Auction  
716 Crestview Ave  
Niceville, FL 32578

Be sure to include the Item Information sheet for each donated item



# Bridging Generations: EOD Warriors Across Decades Connect in Scottsdale

## Highlights from the US Navy EOD Vietnam Veterans Rendezvous 2024



This year, the EOD Warrior Foundation had the honor of supporting the annual US Navy EOD Vietnam Veterans Rendezvous in Scottsdale, AZ. Through our support, which included transportation for the group, veterans and active-duty members alike were able to share stories, learn from each other, and strengthen the bonds of the EOD community across generations.

Captain James Lake, US Navy EOD/SEAL Retired, shared his gratitude: "The bus transport made it easy to get to and from our group dinners. The evening we spent with Air Force EOD from Luke AFB was fantastic. We had great conversations and learned so much from each other. This was so successful that I'll be inviting other EOD Techs to join us at our 2025 Rendezvous in San Diego!"

The gathering featured retired Navy EOD members, who exchanged stories and insights with active-duty members from the Air Force's 56th EOD Flight, led by CMSgt Carlos Sanchez. Reflecting on the event, CMSgt Sanchez noted, "The meeting was not just about exchanging technical knowledge. We also took the time to share stories and build camaraderie with our retired colleagues. This event demonstrated the strong bonds that exist within the EOD community, which transcend generations and continue to inspire new members of the profession."

As both veterans and active-duty EOD techs shared their experiences, they were struck by the evolution of their craft, yet equally inspired by the unchanging camaraderie and shared dedication to their mission. The evening fostered a unique connection and respect across generations, deepening the sense of belonging in the EOD community.

This gathering exemplified the power of bringing generations of EOD together: it not only preserves the legacy of those who came before but also strengthens the resolve of those who continue the mission. The EOD Warrior Foundation is proud to support events that honor this legacy and ensure that each generation can learn from and inspire the next.





## Midnight Tattoo

In our first independent partnership with SongwritingWith: Soldiers, on September 6-8th, eight female EOD Technicians past and present converged at Evin Mills, a scenic Tennessee resort property located near the town of Smithville - just an hour east of Nashville along with four incredibly talented and famous songwriters Jay Clementi, Erin Enderlin, Dylan Altman and Maia Sharp.

The goal was for each EOD Tech to leave with their own song and a group song, and to relax and enjoy the beauty of Tennessee, and dive into creativity workshops and mindfulness meditations.

There were lots of tears, hugs, music and the beginning of lifelong friendships. Bonds which were cemented by a Saturday Night trip to Iron Tusk tattoo parlor, where the attendees all got matching tattoos, which spawned the name of their album 'Midnight Tattoo'

Support the EOD Warrior Foundation and Songwriting With: Soldiers and order your limited edition EOD "Midnight Tattoo" vinyl record and apparel today! Each vinyl comes with digital copies of all the songs. All proceeds go to the EODWF and SW:S. Visit [www.eodvinyl.com](http://www.eodvinyl.com) to learn about this amazing project that started with healing from trauma with music. The vinyl record project is made possible by the EOD and veteran community.

This album will only be printed once! All songs are performed and recorded by the EOD and veteran community and sales stop

December 3.



## Surfing in Costa Rica!

"My experience on the mental health surfing trip to Costa Rica was truly impactful. The peaceful beaches and natural surroundings created an ideal setting for healing. Each day started with individual mental health coaching with Michelle, who provided a safe and supportive space to work through personal challenges. Surfing and spending time in nature added to the sense of calm and helped me reconnect with myself.

The camaraderie among the group was another key part of the trip. Being around others who understood similar struggles fostered a sense of support and understanding. We built connections that made the journey even more meaningful.

Michelle, the mental health coordinator, deserves a special mention. She was incredibly flexible and accommodating, making sure everyone's unique needs were met. Her support made a real difference in the overall experience.

I am very thankful to the EODWF for this opportunity. This trip has given me a renewed sense of peace that I haven't felt in a long time".

-Tim Colomer

**For more information on EOD Warrior Foundation's retreats and programs, visit our website.**

# EOD *Monthly Gathering*

The EOD Warrior Foundation believes that the EOD family is for life and understands the tremendous value of community and connection. Our monthly gatherings, sponsored by EODWF, are family-friendly with food and drinks provided.

Find an EOD Monthly Gathering in your area! We are proud to host gatherings in:

- 📍 Niceville, Florida
- 📍 Colorado Springs, Colorado
- 📍 Oahu, Hawaii
- 📍 San Antonio, Texas
- 📍 San Diego, California

Exciting news! In 2024, we've expanded to new locations:

- 📍 Huntsville, Alabama
- 📍 Seattle, Washington
- 📍 Las Vegas, Nevada
- 📍 Fairbanks, Alaska
- 📍 Anchorage, Alaska
- 📍 Washington D.C.



Stay connected and find more details on the [EOD Monthly Gathering](#) Facebook page.

## **Celebrating Resilience and Conservation: EOD Warrior Foundation Receives Force Blue's Blue Max Award**

This November, the EOD Warrior Foundation (EODWF) proudly received Force Blue's first Blue Max Award, a recognition of our dedication to the transformative Ocean Conservation School (OCS). This meaningful partnership showcases the powerful connection between community, resilience, and environmental stewardship in the lives of military families who have sacrificed so much. Each year, Gold Star, White Star, and children of critically injured military members come together at Loggerhead Marine Park in Juno Beach, Florida, for an

unforgettable journey of healing and self-discovery. Central to this experience is the opportunity for these exceptional young individuals to earn their Open Water Dive certification under the mentorship of Special Operations veterans. Alongside this training, participants embrace Force Blue's ethos of "continuing service," immersing themselves in the mission to preserve and restore the world's oceans and marine habitats.

The impact of OCS extends far beyond the water. For many participants, it provides a sanctuary where they can connect with peers who understand the unique challenges of grief, loss, and resilience. It is a place to belong, a community where they can forge bonds and rediscover hope.

If you know a Gold Star or White Star child, or a child of a critically injured EOD Technician, between the ages of 10 and 24 who might be interested in attending OCS, please reach out to Michelle at [michelle@eodwarriorfoundation.org](mailto:michelle@eodwarriorfoundation.org).

Together, we can continue this vital work of fostering growth, healing, and purpose for the next generation.







## Kaden Morton: A Story of Resilience and Hope

In honor of Children's Grief Awareness Day, we had the privilege of speaking with Kaden Morton, a young man whose story is a testament to strength and perseverance. Kaden has faced loss that few can comprehend. At just 5 years old, he lost his mother, and at 18, he experienced the devastating loss of his father, EOD Petty Officer First Class Ron Morton, to suicide. The weight of such grief is unimaginable, yet Kaden's journey is one of hope, resilience, and an unwavering determination to honor his parents' legacy.

In the months following his father's passing, Kaden and his aunt, Carla LaPlaca, were invited by the EOD Warrior Foundation to participate in Force Blue's Ocean Conservation School (OCS). For Carla, this opportunity felt like divine intervention, coming at a time when both she and Kaden were navigating the early depths of their grief. OCS offered Kaden not just an adventure but also a chance to heal.

One of the most poignant moments of Kaden's journey at OCS was using his father's diving equipment to take his first breath underwater. It was a symbolic act that brought him closer to his dad's memory. "It made me feel close to him," Kaden shared, reflecting on how the experience gave him a renewed sense of purpose during such a challenging time.

While grief has been a defining part of Kaden's life, it does not define who he is. Rather than succumbing to anger or despair, Kaden chooses to embrace life with a smile on his face and a helping hand extended to others. As a zipline instructor, he literally lifts people up and shares his passion as a source of healing. Spending time outdoors and finding beauty in the world around him has become a cornerstone of his coping process. Kaden also attributes much of his strength to the love and support of his grandmother, Brenda Morton. He describes her as a pillar of positivity, unwavering kindness, and deep empathy, teaching him the importance of being considerate of others' feelings.

Kaden also refuses to shy away from the truth about his father's passing. Instead, he speaks openly about suicide, becoming a voice for awareness and prevention. His courage to confront such a painful topic inspires those around him and shines a light on the importance of mental health.

When asked how he remains so positive despite all he has endured, Kaden's response is simple yet profound: "I don't enjoy being sad any longer than I need to." His wisdom and strength at such a young age are a reminder to us all that even in the darkest moments, there is light to be found.

Kaden Morton's story underscores the power of community, the importance of mental health resources, and the resilience of the human spirit. He is not only a survivor but a beacon of hope for others walking the path of grief. His journey is a powerful reminder that while loss can shape us, it does not have to define us.



The EOD Warrior Foundation is proud to offer scholarships to dependents of graduates of NAVSCOLEOD. Scholarship funds can be used towards colleges and universities, as well as trade and vocational schools. To learn more, and to see full eligibility requirements, please visit our website.

November 1, 2024 - February 1, 2025: Undergraduate application window

March 1, 2025 - April 27, 2025: Graduate application window

\*Note that prior awardees must renew their scholarship each year.



As we approach the end of 2024 with an eye toward next year and new programs, we can't help but reflect on the many triumphs shared by the EOD Community so far this year.

- Expanded Removing the Stigma programs
- Unveiling of the EOD History Path on the EOD Memorial Grounds, tracing and highlighting the roots of the EOD specialty since 1941
- Serving over 350 EOD families through the Scholarship, Retreats & Programs, and Financial Grants pillars of core support
- Provided immediate support to those dealing with the devastation of Hurricanes Helene & Milton
- Hosting an impactful EOD Ball & other EOD Memorial Week activities, allowing thousands to gather, honor, and remember

We hope that we can count on your support to help us close out 2024 and kick off 2025 strong!

Looking ahead to 2025, we will be:

- Expanding scholarship support for Tech Schools, Undergraduate & Graduate programs
- Expanding the EOD Monthly Gatherings program, creating more volunteer and social opportunities around the country
- Expanding programs focused on those nearing retirement from active duty or an overall career change

Many more exciting programs, retreats, and events are coming in 2025 and we look forward to sharing them all with you! It is our deepest honor to serve you and your family.

Thank you for your continued support and generosity. We couldn't do it without your enthusiasm, participation, and help!



# EOD HOME BUYING

We are so excited to be working with Justin and Christine Hamilton of EOD Home Buying! In addition to assisting EOD families across the country with their home purchasing needs, the Hamiltons have generously pledged to donate 5% of their PERSONAL commission to the EOD Warrior Foundation.

Simply mention the EODWF when working with them! The Hamiltons are licensed lenders in all 50 US States, so no matter where you are located, they can assist you. Learn more about their nation-wide network by visiting [www.eodhomebuying.com](http://www.eodhomebuying.com) or contact the Hamiltons directly by calling 815-908-9363!



## Giving for Tomorrow

EOD has been part of your life for years and EODWF is there for you and your family every step of the way. From support to new graduates and their families to scholarships for the grandchildren of Vietnam-era EOD Techs and everything in between, we fully embrace the belief that the EOD Community is for life. We are here for you and are grateful that you are here for us!

Ensure your legacy and support to the EODWF and EOD Community continues by including EODWF in your Will or living trust. For more information, please contact Patricia Adelmann, Development Officer, at 770.655.4028 or [patricia@eodwarriorfoundation.org](mailto:patricia@eodwarriorfoundation.org) or speak with your financial or legal advisor. The process is simple, quick, and completely confidential.

## Gift Donation of Stock & Wire Transfers

As the end of the 2024 tax year approaches, remember that we welcome your gift of appreciated stock and wire transfers! It's a fast, easy way to support both our programs and the entire EOD Community. Check with your personal tax advisors on how to best accomplish your goal of support and reducing your 2024 taxes.

Please contact Patricia Adelmann, Development Officer for Broker and Account numbers.

EOD Warrior Foundation Phone: 850.729.2336

Patricia's Direct Phone: 770.375.8375 (best number to call over the holidays and at year end)

EOD Warrior Foundation Address: 716 Crestview Ave. Niceville, FL 32578

Nonprofit EIN#: 20-8618412

Thank you again for making such a positive and lasting difference in the lives of EOD families.

## Monthly Giving

Giving can be easy, painless, and still make a major impact! Just sign up for a recurring gift and we will be happy to charge your card a set amount on a set schedule until you tell us to stop! Your small (or large!) gifts add up quickly and make a big difference in the lives of EOD Techs and their families.

