



Heroes in the Sky Foundation is committed to recognizing and commemorating the significant sacrifices made by our first responders, active-duty military personnel, veterans, and individuals who have, unfortunately, succumbed to internal war. We organize highly personalized memorial ceremonies that feature carefully crafted memorial boards, which include name tapes, Public Battle Vest Dedications, and Casket Flag Presentations , thus ensuring that their legacies are perpetually honored.

Our mission transcends the ceremonies themselves. We are devoted to providing solace and support to surviving family members, while also working to dismantle the stigma associated with seeking mental health care. By raising awareness of the pressing suicide epidemic, we actively support and sponsor like-minded organizations and the families of fallen warriors. Through our fundraising efforts, we enrich the lives of veterans and first responders in our community, fostering a culture of remembrance, support, and understanding.

At the heart of our foundation lies camaraderie and outreach. We foster connections by engaging both active and retired personnel from the veteran and first responder fields, as well as local motorcycle groups, in our ceremonies. Through these collaborative efforts, we aim to strengthen bonds and unite our communities in remembrance.

Our ceremonies are meticulously orchestrated, encompassing poignant elements such as the folding of a ceremonial casket flag by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 660, the stirring rendition of the national anthem, recitals of the pledge of allegiance, and heartfelt biographies and images of fallen warriors. Additionally, we are privileged to host influential guest speakers who impart wisdom and inspiration.

As a symbol of utmost honor and respect, we are honored to feature the Savannah Chapter of the Veterans Enforcers Motorcycle Association (V.E.M.A) as escorts for memorial vest presentations to families in attendance. Their presence serves as a poignant reminder of our enduring commitment to honoring the sacrifices of our heroes.

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OUR PROGRAMS- POWERFUL COMMUNITY IMPACT

1. **Honoring the Fallen:** We safeguard the memory and sacrifice of these warriors through Memorial Battle Vest Dedications (honoring 19 heroes) and Memorial Board Ceremonies (honoring 60 heroes). These sacred traditions ensure their service is never forgotten. These efforts are further accompanied by the preparation and presentation of Casket Flags, folded with honor and reverence, and entrusted to the families as enduring symbols of gratitude and remembrance.
2. **Empowering Families:** We provide families of the fallen with a voice, identity, and purpose. By creating a platform for them to share their warrior's story, we ensure that their legacy continues to shine long after their passing. This not only preserves cherished memories but also plays a vital role in reducing suicide rates within affected populations. Through interviews and open, often difficult conversations, families become advocates for awareness, resilience, and hope—turning their grief into a force for prevention.
3. **Advancing Awareness and Prevention:** The Foundation actively disseminates vital statistics regarding trauma-impacted populations who face heightened exposure to high-stress, high-risk experiences. By bringing these realities to light, we shed necessary attention on the increased vulnerability to suicidal ideation, emotional suffering, and completed suicides within these communities. Our advocacy works to challenge stigma, foster dialogue, and promote national awareness and prevention.
4. **Breaking the Silence Together: The Aftermath of Suicide Podcast:** This platform confronts the raw realities of suicide loss, the immediate crisis families face, traumatic grief, and the role Post-Traumatic Stress plays throughout the healing process. Our focus is on transforming pain into resilience and purpose while amplifying the voices of families who are too often unheard. Emily Evans will be joining me as the co-host as we engage in these difficult but necessary conversations to drive measurable impact within our communities.

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5. **Family Resilience Postvention Outreach Panel :** The Family Resilience and Postvention Advisory Panel is composed of individuals who have personally endured the profound trauma and grief associated with losing a loved one to suicide. The panel exists to provide hope, comfort, and practical direction to families in the immediate aftermath of their loss, and to continue offering support as they navigate the ongoing stages of grief.

The following Mortality / Suicide Rate Data solidifies our mission scope and purpose to honor those first responders and veteran warriors that have lost their internal war.

- I. (S2)(S7) To better understand the self-inflicted act of suicide, we must first recognize the conditions that are commonly present. According to the **Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicide**, three key factors often contribute to the risk of lethal suicidal behavior:
 - A deep sense of disconnection or lack of belonging, (**THWARTED BELONINGNESS**)
 - The belief that one's existence imposes a burden on others, (**PERCIEVED BURDENSONEMESS**)
 - **INCREASED CAPABILITY FOR SUICIDE**
 - For many Veterans and First Responders, these factors can converge through **isolation, guilt, and constant proximity to high-risk tools**. Every day in America, we lose heroes—not in combat, not on the front lines—but in silence, to suicide.
 - (S14) It is estimated that **85% of people in the United States will know someone personally who has completed suicide**



II. (S15) Reported veteran suicide rates are higher than VA data due to significant limitations in VA data collection.

- The VA cannot reliably identify who qualifies as a veteran or VA-eligible individual.
- VA definition of a veteran is limited to:
 - Minimum 180 days of service
 - Honorable discharge
 - Federal service and/or active orders at time of death

This definition excludes:

- Army National Guard and Reservists
- Service members with Other Than Honorable or Dishonorable discharges
- As a result, many service members are not counted as veterans in VA suicide data.

(S16) Veteran suicide is further underreported in research:

- Only 8 states verified veteran suicide data
- 42 states and U.S. territories were excluded
- Death certificates lacking veteran status or suicide as cause of death were omitted
- Despite these exclusions, studies still validated 44 veteran suicides per day, indicating the true number is likely higher



III. BY THE NUMBERS – VETERANS

- (S3/S16) On average, 44 veterans die by suicide each day, 24 from direct suicide and 20 from overdose-related deaths or Self Injury Mortality (Vehicle Accidents / Undetermined causes.
- the combined death rate of at least 44 FSMs per day is 2.4 times higher than the VA reported suicide rate.
- (S15) According to Dr. Kevin Cameron, it is estimated that 18.5% of Veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq will develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder/ and the veterans that develop PTSD are 9.8 x more likely to commit suicide than those without the disorder.
- (S4) Veterans face a 57.3% higher risk of suicide than the general population.
- (S5) According to Mission Phoenix and their Code Phoenix Officer Training Curriculum, approximately 1,080 veterans have been involved in officer-involved shootings.
- (S16) Former Service Members (FSMs) from the Coast Guard are most likely to die from Suicide, followed by the USMC, Army, Navy, and Air Force.
- (S15/S18/S19)- Female veterans are 92 to 95% more likely to die by suicide than their non-military peers.
- (S19) However, this is particularly pronounced for women veterans who die by firearm suicide at a rate 144% higher than their civilian peers
- Military Sexual Assault (MSA) plays a significant role in elevated suicide rates among female service members and veterans
- Military Sexual Trauma (MST) extends beyond rape or sexual assault.
- MST also includes behavioral changes driven by fear of unwanted sexual acts.
 - Examples include Female service members requiring a battle buddy when walking on base.
 - Policies where male and female service members or NCOs should not be alone together, reflecting perceived risk rather than misconduct.
 - These measures highlight the persistent fear of sexual harm, which contributes to long-term psychological impact.



- (S19) Intimate partner violence (IPV) rates remain tragically high among military-affiliated women; create lasting impacts that extend far beyond active-duty service.
- (S13) Studies show that each suicide impacts about 5 family members and as many as 135 people in the community. Analyzing only the Veteran Rate of 44 a day, this means that veteran suicide alone will affect 29,700 people daily.

IV. BY THE NUMBERS- FIRST RESPONDERS

(S7) Our First responders also experience alarming rates of suicidal ideation, attempts, and completed suicides.

(S7) Our First Responders also have greater availability and access to means of completing suicide – weapons, medicine, ETC.

(S6) There are several Key factors driving suicide rates within our First Responder ranks:

- 44% relationship problems
- 42% mental health challenges
- 29% legal or administrative issues
- 24% workplace stress
- 12% financial strain

(S7) Common risk factors for suicide also include - history of suicidal thoughts, previous suicide attempts, and alcohol/substance abuse problem

(S7) Many of our first responders have a history of service in the U.S. military

// NOW Lets take a closer look at each trauma population //

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V. FIREFIGHTERS

- (S4) experience a **72% Higher Risk for suicide than the public.**
- (S9) Approximately **100-200 firefighters die by suicide each year** (U.S. Fire Administration).
- (S8) Those in the fire service experience much **higher rates of mental health challenges** than the general population, particularly with
 - **sleep disorders,**
 - **depression,**
 - **substance abuse,**
 - **post-traumatic stress disorder,**
 - **and suicidal ideation and action.**

VI. (S4/S10) LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

- **Experience a 54% Higher Risk for suicide than the public**
- **(S10) Every 17 hours**, a Law Enforcement Officer or Peace Officer dies by suicide.
- **(S5) PTSD encounters with veterans heighten the emotional toll on officers.**
- **(S10) Suicide is the 5th leading cause of death among retired LEOs/Peace Officers.**
- **(S10) Three to four times as many officers succumb to suicide than are killed by felonious assault.**
- **(S10) There is evidence that smaller police agencies have even higher suicide rates than large departments due to the increased workload and lack of mental health resources**
- **(S10) The shame and stigma surrounding police suicide that creates the problems:**
 - **The fact that officers who die by suicide are generally not buried with honor**
 - **The names of officers who die by suicide are not permitted on the National Law Enforcement Memorial in D.C.**
 - **The fear of adverse career consequences associated with seeking mental health support.**



VII. EMS PERSONNEL

- (S4) experience a **24% Higher Risk for suicide than the public**
- (S12) EMS personnel experience **cumulative stress of witnessing physical and emotional pain**
- (S11) They are **1.39X more likely to succumb to suicide** compared to other careers.
- (S12) **37 percent of EMS providers had contemplated suicide** at some point in their career
- (S12) EMTs face high levels of **acute and chronic stress as well as high rates of depression and substance abuse**, which increase their risk of suicide.

VIII. (S17) CORRECTIONS OFFICERS

- Corrections Officers are exposed to **violence at significant rates**
- **85 percent reported seeing** someone else **seriously injured or killed in the workplace**
- **Violence can come with a host of negative repercussions**
- **50 percent of all officers** in the sample reported that they rarely feel safe at work.
- **higher incidence of digestive issues, high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease**
- the added psychological stress of not feeling safe at work can coincide with alarmingly high levels **of burnout, depression, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts**.
- The risk of suicide is **39 percent higher for corrections officers** than for people in all other professions
- **1 IN EVERY 3 Corrections Officers** report at least **one symptom of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**.



IX. BEREAVED FAMILY IMPACT:

- (S14) Parents (2X more likely)
- (S14) Widows (3X more likely), to die by suicide after such a loss.
- (S1) Kids with military parents have higher suicide risk driven by
 - a. trauma exposure from military parents combat experience
 - b. Cultural resistance to mental health treatment
 - c. Availability and general acceptance of guns in the home
 - d. constant moves,
 - e. school changes
 - f. and parental absence DUE TO MILITARY COMMITMENTS
- (S6) In 2022 alone 146 family members died by Suicide: 93 Spouses/ 53 Dependents
- (S14) They often experience complicated grief, compounded by stigma, guilt, shame, and feelings of responsibility, along with depression, anxiety, PTSD, and an increased risk of psychiatric hospitalization.
- (S13) Studies show that each suicide impacts about 5 family members and as many as 135 people in the community

To all Veterans, First Responders, and Emergency Personnel, and beloved families, whether here with us or listening from afar—

Please hear this clearly: when a life is taken by one's own hand, the demons do not disappear; they transfer to the loved ones left behind.

Those burdens become wounds and scars they carry throughout their grief



X. Heroes in the Sky Foundation sheds light on the alarming disparities in suicide rates among veterans, first responders, and emergency personnel. These individuals endure repeated exposure to intense trauma, helping us understand the underlying causes of this ongoing suicide epidemic.

XI. In light of the data highlighting the impact on families left behind after losing a loved one to suicide, Heroes in the Sky is committed to reducing stigma and lowering suicide rates among surviving family members by fostering a strong support network during their time of profound grief.

Heroes in the Sky Foundation Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization with an exemption date of January 17, 2024. We are recognized as a tax-exempt Public Charity under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donors can deduct contributions they make under IRC Section 170. Heroes in the Sky Foundation Inc. is qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under Section 2055, 2106, or 2522. Contributions to organizations with 501(c)(3) status may be tax-deductible. Please consult your tax advisor to determine the deductibility of this contribution. No goods or services were provided to you by Heroes in the Sky Foundation Inc. in return for your contribution. This form satisfies the contemporaneous written acknowledgment requirements under the Charitable Contributions-Substantiation and Disclosure Documents under Section 170(f)(8) of the Internal Revenue Code and Treas. Reg. § 1.170A-13(f) of the Income Tax Regulations. This letter is your receipt for income tax purposes, and for reference you will find our EIN number and address in the footer of the document.

Respectfully/ **JAMES COLLINS**
President & Founder
James@heroesinthesky.org

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Resources:

S1-<https://www.magellanfederal.com/whats-new/mfed-inform/military-child-suicide-prevention-techniques-and-best-practices/>

S2 -<https://PMC3130348/>

S3 -<https://www.clermontsun.com/2022/10/19/veterans-17-or-44-suicides-per-day>

*S4-National Occupational Mortality Surveillance (NOMS)-
<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/wr/mm7250a2.htm>
<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/surveillance/noms/index.html>*

S5-<https://missionphoenix.org/>

*S6 -Annual report on Suicide in the Military 2023
https://www.dspo.mil/Portals/113/2024/documents/annual_report/ARSM_CY23_final_508c.pdf*

S7 <https://cgi.edu/news/suicidology-among-first-responders-a-literature-review-of-causal-and-protective-factors/>

S8- MnFIRE:

<https://mnfireinitiative.com/raising-awareness-for-firefighters-on-world-suicide-prevention-day/>

*S9 -Firefighter Mental Health and Well-Being:
<https://www.firehero.org/firefighter-mental-health/>*

*S10 -Law enforcement suicide: The depth of the problem and best practices for suicide prevention strategies:
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1359178921001038>*

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S11 -Suicides Among First Responders: A Call to Action

<https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2021/04/06/suicides-first-responders/>

S12 -Having Difficult Conversations: Talking About Suicide in EMS:

<https://www.statmedevac.com/blog/having-difficult-conversations-talking-about-suicide-in-ems/>

S13 -The Ripple Effect: Impact of Suicide on Family and Friends

<https://behavioralhealthnews.org/the-ripple-effect-impact-of-suicide-on-family-and-friends/>

S14 - Suicide bereavement and complicated grief:

<https://PMC3384446/>

S15 - Dr. Kevin Cameron – Doctorial Dissertation

S16 – America’s Warrior Partnership – Operation Deep Dive (OPDD) Summary of Interim Report - https://e55c5558-502f-457d-8a07-a49806f5ff14.usrfiles.com/ugd/e55c55_1cd5b99bea734bb295762263a003e767.pdf

S17 - Berkeley Study Shines Light Pressures Being Corrections Officer, The National Reentry Resource Center , <https://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/resources/berkeley-study-shines-light-pressures-being-corrections-officer>

S18 – 2024 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report ; Office of Suicide Prevention-https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2024/2024-Annual-Report-Part-2-of-2_508.pdf

S19 – Military Women: By the Numbers / <https://www.cohenveteransnetwork.org/military-women-by-the-numbers/>

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Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service
Tax Exempt and Government Entities
P.O. Box 2508
Cincinnati, OH 45201

HEROES IN THE SKY FOUNDATION INC
C/O HEROES IN THE SKY
1322 SAND HILL RD
GUYTON, GA 31312

Date:
04/02/2024
Employer ID number:
99-0774284
Person to contact:
Name: Customer Service
ID number: 31954
Telephone: (877) 829-5500
Accounting period ending:
December 31
Public charity status:
509(a)(2)
Form 990 / 990-EZ / 990-N required:
Yes
Effective date of exemption:
January 17, 2024
Contribution deductibility:
Yes
Addendum applies:
No
DLN:
26053429008574

Dear Applicant:

We're pleased to tell you we determined you're exempt from federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3). Donors can deduct contributions they make to you under IRC Section 170. You're also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under Section 2055, 2106, or 2522. This letter could help resolve questions on your exempt status. Please keep it for your records.

Organizations exempt under IRC Section 501(c)(3) are further classified as either public charities or private foundations. We determined you're a public charity under the IRC Section listed at the top of this letter.

If we indicated at the top of this letter that you're required to file Form 990/990-EZ/990-N, our records show you're required to file an annual information return (Form 990 or Form 990-EZ) or electronic notice (Form 990-N, the e-Postcard). If you don't file a required return or notice for three consecutive years, your exempt status will be automatically revoked.

If we indicated at the top of this letter that an addendum applies, the enclosed addendum is an integral part of this letter.

For important information about your responsibilities as a tax-exempt organization, go to www.irs.gov/charities. Enter "4221-PC" in the search bar to view Publication 4221-PC, Compliance Guide for 501(c)(3) Public Charities, which describes your recordkeeping, reporting, and disclosure requirements.

Sincerely,

Stephen A. Martin
Director, Exempt Organizations
Rulings and Agreements

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Candid.

Generated on November 27, 2024

GuideStar Charity Check

Heroes in the Sky Foundation

Aka HEROES IN THE SKY

1322 Sand Hill Rd
Guyton, GA 31312

- ✓ Foundation Status Code: PC*
- ✓ Public charity described in section 509(a)(1) or (2)

IRS Publication 78 Details

IRS Pub 78
verified

Organization name	Location	Most recent IRS Publication 78
Heroes in the Sky Foundation	Guyton, GA	November 2024
EIN	Deductibility status description	Verified with most recent Internal Revenue Bulletin
99-0774284	A public charity (50% deductibility limitation).	November 25, 2024

IRS Business Master File Details

IRS BMF 509(a)(2)

Organization name	Most recent IRS BMF	Reason for Non-Private Foundation Status
HEROES IN THE SKY FOUNDATION	November 11 2024	Section 509(a)(2) organization
EIN	IRS subsection	Ruling date
99-0774284	This organization is a 501(c)(3) Public Charity	04/2024
Foundation Code	Foundation Code Description	
16	Organization that normally receives no more than one-third of its support from gross investment income and unrelated business income and at the same time more than one-third of its support from contributions, fees, and gross receipts related to exempt purposes.	

This organization was not included in the Office of Foreign Assets Control Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) list.

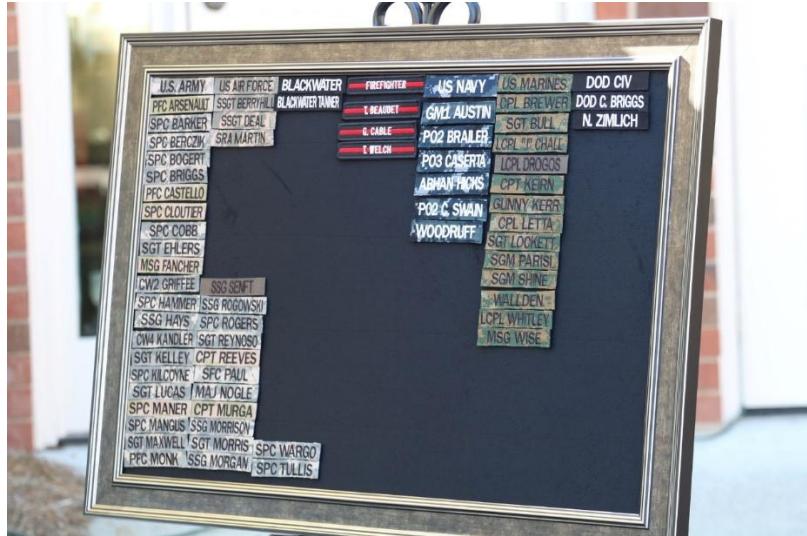
On September 8, 2011, the IRS issued [regulations](#) which eliminated the advance ruling process for a section 501(c)(3) organization. [Learn more](#)

* The Foundation Status Code is the code that foundations are required to provide for each grantee annually on part XV of Form 990PF. Note that this code cannot be derived in some cases (e.g., supporting organizations for which 'type' can't be determined).

[IRS Revenue Procedure 2011-33](#) allows grantors to rely on third-party resources, such as GuideStar Charity Check, to obtain required Business Master File (BMF) data concerning a potential grantee's public charity classification under section 509 (a) (1), (2) or (3).

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