

Angie Colella
1218 N. 22nd Ave. Unit 1
Melrose Park, IL 60160
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To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Angie Colella. I am a U.S. Air Force veteran and a member of the 2019 Trail to Zero: Ride to End Veteran Suicide team. I am writing to tell you about the impact that these rides have on at-risk veterans like me and how important it is to continue to raise public awareness of the veteran suicide epidemic.

The response we received from the public during our Washington DC and New York City rides was amazing. The vast majority of the people I talked to did not know that we are losing an average of 20 or more veterans a day to suicide, and they showed great concern when I told them. Most had also never heard of equine therapy, but their own enthusiastic reactions to our horses helped illustrate the positive effect that horses can have on people.

The veterans I spoke with were equally responsive to what I shared, and showed the same enthusiasm. I know that the BraveHearts email inboxes were flooded with their inquiries immediately following the DC and NYC rides and the flow hasn't stopped.

I shared some of my own story with both veterans and the public, detailing how working with the horses at BraveHearts has helped me cope with PTSD and major depression. The fact that I was reaching out and speaking with strangers in public is itself a testament to the healing effects that horse therapy has had on me. I also told them about the ribbon attached to my horse's mane, inscribed with the name "DeLong". He was a friend, a Vietnam veteran, and he hung himself in 2009. All our horses bore ribbons with the names of veterans like him, lost to suicide. I only wish that there had been a Trail to Zero back then, to tell him and all the others about places like BraveHearts and equine therapy.

The necessity of reaching out to other veterans and letting them know that therapy with horses can help cannot be overstated. It's too late for the men and women whose names we remember, but it's not too late for many others. I ask that you give 100% support to our ride, so that we can continue to successfully connect with veterans in need.

Sincerely,

Angie Colella
U.S. Air Force Veteran
Trail to Zero 2019 Team Member

To Whom It May Concern:

Having just completed the Washington DC and New York City Trail to Zero rides, I want to express my sincere belief that we are definitely expanding the awareness of the tragedy of Veteran suicide. While we were riding in those cities and NYC especially the response from the people on the streets was positive and enthusiastic. They asked for information and their questions were caring and relative to our purpose. The media coverage was overwhelmingly positive and supportive. I have been privileged to be included in all 3 of the TTZ rides and have experienced, firsthand, the increased interest and awareness to our crusade to end these suicides. I have also found that I have become more deeply committed as well.

Last year a friend, a fellow Vietnam Veteran, left our VFW post, in seemingly good spirits, and took his life in the parking lot. He had not talked about his battle with PTSD. His name is on a ribbon on my horse's neck when we ride.

Two yrs. ago I lost my 28 year old son to the Opioid epidemic and found myself contemplating suicide. Had it not been for the BraveHearts Organization -- their selfless staff and instructors, their kindness and understanding, and the healing I derived from being with our amazing therapeutic horses for literally 4 months, I very possibly could have been a statistic myself. I can say categorically that equine therapy is truly beneficial in the battle for Veterans' lives. The more attention we can bring to bear on our cause -- the more people we make contact with to help get the word to Veterans that there IS an alternative to the traditional therapies they've experienced -- the quicker we'll be able to reduce the number to zero.

Respectfully, William Mercurio US. Army

To whom it may Concern:

I recently had the amazing opportunity to participate in 2 BraveHearts 20 mile rides, one in Washington D. C. and the other in New York City. I say "amazing" because it was the opportunity of a life time. I have never experienced such a warm greeting from so many as we all experienced on the streets of those cities!

The value of such an experience is priceless. The support from the local bars, police departments, and all support personnel was endless. We wanted for nothing and shared all. Some would pay a high price to be able to participate and be part of such a supportive atmosphere!

I would do it again in a heartbeat.

God bless!

Clarence Harper

United States Marine Corps Retired

September 19,2019

To Whom it may concern,

For the second time I was given the amazing opportunity to ride 20 miles to bring awareness of the epidemic of veteran suicide with BraveHearts Trail to Zero, I cannot begin to explain how personal and important this ride has become for me.

I am a Gold Star father who's only child Marine Corporal C.J. Boyd was killed in action in Sangin Afghanistan. The depression both my wife and I endured was devastating. I cannot even count the number of times you would go to the edge of the cliff but not follow through. Suicide was always an option, nothing seemed to matter until we found the healing power of the horse. This has now become a personal mission to bring awareness that there is support and other options available.

This year's ride in Washington D.C. was a success despite roadblocks thrown in our way. Our veterans and horses are living proof that equine therapy works, With the help of the U.S. Army and others we delivered our message of the epidemic of veteran suicide to the public.

The second ride in N.Y. City was truly humbling, my heart was filled with joy to see our veteran riders share their personal stories of addiction and suicidal tendencies and how they were healed by their special relationship with the horse. The love and support given to all of us was incredible, from the Mayors office, the N.Y. Mounted Police and many other Police agencies we were able to tell our story and speak to thousands about the epidemic of 20 veteran suicides every day.

I am honored to be a small part of Trail to Zero and to ride with my Brothers and Sisters of BraveHearts helping to save the lives of our veterans.

Ken Boyd
Gold Star Father

To whom it may concern,

I am proud and honored to be a Veteran and to have been a part of Trail to Zero for the past 2 years.

The outreach and love of everyone involved is beyond words. It has evolved greatly from the day of its inception, 3 years ago, to what it has become today. I have experienced a chapter in my life that left me down and looking for a way out. Horses have been truly lifesaving and being able to ride and share the message of Trail to Zero is more than important to me. We are not only giving out flyers to help show veterans there is an answer but also riding with these remarkable horses to prove that equine assisted services work.

The bond between the horse and Veteran at any level or affliction is a blessing. Trail to Zero is not a parade; it's a mission I ride with conviction, to make a difference for those who need help. It's important, and I will ride until the number is zero!

Semper Fidelis, Marshall R. Wolfe, United States Marine 81-89.

To whom it may concern,

With much gratitude I find myself writing this letter. I was overwhelmed by the support of all agencies involved in both Washington DC and NYC. When I speak of the success and magnitude of this endeavor, I speak as a Veteran of all three annual Trail to Zero rides. I speak from a Veterans perspective and a PATH Therapeutic Riding Instructor. On all accounts these rides were a success. No veteran pedestrian or horse was harmed in our endeavor. In fact, much the opposite we rode for a noble cause and our reception from the public was overwhelming, the outpouring of support was unbelievable. We were able to reach people in their homes even this year through the media. The support on the front end from all the donors was more than gracious. And we are truly grateful. As always Meggan Hill-Mqueeney and her staff were more than competent and accommodating throughout the process. Thank you very much for all your support. My special Thanks to Barry of the NYPD mounted, Mark of National Parks mounted and Mary Jo of Caisson Platoon.

Cpl. Reno, Mitchell L
PATH Therapeutic Riding Instructor.

To whom it may concern,

Trail To Zero the title has a lot of room for interpretation and the best way for me to summarize what this amazing cause has done for me is to start from 2012 when I first crossed the barn doors my head was low, self-worth gone, hopelessness, depression, anxiety, guilt, shame and grief were overcoming my life! I dare not leave home, as I was sure of another attack. So, I sat like a prisoner in a different war. It was not until I mustered up and got honest about what was happening that I went to a recovery meeting. Shortly after stating my journey with sobriety, I was introduced to Bravo, a wild mustang, and worked to train and competed him at the Mustang Million. He has ridden in Trail to Zero for the last three years, is ridden daily in veteran sessions, therapeutic riding sessions, horse shows, special events, and assists weekly with the all-veteran drill team. He is an all-around rock star!

When I came to BraveHearts I was lost in a world of bad thoughts I was on many occasions so close to being part of the statistic but Bravo and Trail to Zero pulled me out and showed me that if I can take a horse through the busiest city known to me, then that horse has my back! I got to spend 2 weeks on the trail and build a camaraderie that I haven't had since my days in the Army. Trail to Zero is about Veterans who have found a way out of the darkness and the only way for us to breathe is to give it away! Just one less and I will hang my hat for tonight!

Respectfully,
Michael J. Sullivan

Tim Detert

September 18, 2019

Trail To Zero Summary

Washington D.C. & NYC

Being that it is my first year with BraveHearts and first TTZ (trail to zero), I wasn't sure what to expect. I'd heard all the amazing success stories from those who had gone in previous years and how they couldn't wait to embark on this journey. The epidemic of veteran suicide in this country is a tragedy, and one that hits close to home for me. I've personally lost four dear friends to this epidemic, and have encountered many grieving families and friends who have felt this pain as well. I myself on multiple occasions struggled with suicidal thoughts and even made a few attempts at my own life. The equine assisted therapy that I've received has brought me such strength, joy, and confidence that I can no longer fathom the thought of taking my own life. I know that I was brought here for a purpose, and I believe that purpose is to help bring that same hope that I now feel to those who need it.

The first week of the trip brought us to the capital city of Washington D.C. and before we could even get settled in to the hotel the first night I had a plethora of people asking me about TTZ and the response was shocking. There is such a large number of people in this country and around the world who are unaware of the epidemic of veteran suicide, and also unaware of the option of equine assisted therapy and what wonders it's done for so many. I got to be living proof of these facts and a messenger for the veteran community who need a voice to be heard. You see so often when veterans get out of the military and back to the civilian world, their training and regimented lifestyle remains but their situation doesn't. I was trained to push through pain mental and emotional. To suck it up and not let it show takes strength, but it also takes its toll. Many of us don't know how to express their emotions properly and therefore seldom have our voices heard. This trip changed that for me, and I know it will for many others. The media took note of our cause in D.C., and flocked toward us to know more. Though we

encountered resistance from certain organizations, our ride continued and our message was delivered to the public.

New York City was our second leg of the tour and went better than I could have ever imagined. Though it was a somber time being the eighteenth anniversary of the attacks of 9/11, we were able to reach such a large number of people. The support we received from the agencies and the people of NYC was overwhelming. We were featured on a number of national media platforms that reached 10's of millions of viewers and interviewed by some of the largest news outlets in the world. They took us in as if we were their own, and helped to coordinate an amazing team that we were glad to be a part of. We successfully brought the word to so many from Central Park to Time Square and all over in between, showing them firsthand the unlimited healing power of the horse and of the community of veterans and equine professionals. I cannot say enough about how professional and efficient the Bravehearts staff was on this journey, and how far their efforts have gone. Many veterans life's will be saved because of this mission including my own. I have already received multiple messages from veterans who needed help and have reached out because of the efforts of the TTZ crew.

I am privileged and honored to ride with such an amazing group of individuals and will continue to push this mission further so that we may have more programs available to veterans all across the U.S.

Thank you for reading, and God bless.

-Tim Detert

U.S. Army veteran/BraveHearts rider and volunteer

To Whom it may concern,

Trail to Zero is very important to me. I was a veteran who lived in a suicidal state daily. I had been through every program, both inpatient and outpatient to help me with my PTSD, anger, homicidal tendencies - nothing was working. I just wanted to be dead. I wanted it all to go away, for the noise inside my head to be silent and the only way I could think of to make that happen was a bullet through my skull. Then one day I touched a horse and something began to change. For the first time a peace began to fill my soul and a quiet came over my body. Horses saved my life. They make a difference when nothing or no one else can. Trail to Zero is my way of getting that same message to other veterans just like myself or to a family member who might know of a veteran in need. They are my brothers and sisters. I want to shout, "WE ARE HERE AND HORSES CAN HELP!" Trail to Zero is my way of doing that.

Trecia Rodgers