



Strong Family | Strong Military | Strong Nation

Dear Friends and Family of the Rick Herrema Foundation,

I hope each of you had a safe and peaceful Holiday Season. As I write, I cannot help but to reflect on this past year. Who could have imagined a worldwide pandemic that caused many unexpected challenges, fearful moments and the loss of people and things we cherish? It was a reminder to me of the unexpected challenges, uncertainty, moments of fear and loss our military families face every day as they serve our nation. As the pandemic spread, our military families still had loved ones deployed around the world. Deployments did not stop. It confirmed once again **the importance of what we do at Rick's Place to maintain healthy and strong military families.**

With all the challenges that 2020 presented, we remained diligent and mission focused. In January 2020, an unexpected need arose for RHF to support a unit tasked for a short-notice deployment. The RHF staff met the mission with excellence and as a result was **awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, for outstanding support** given during their Immediate Response Force deployment. February was a month of planning and preparation as the busiest time of year approached.

In early March we began to experience restrictions in response to COVID-19. During one of the most difficult times in our history, we made it a priority to keep our park open and come up with innovative ways to connect our families through virtual activities during the most restrictive months of the year. When new directives required that we close our playgrounds, we chose to leave the property open. Initially, no one visited the park as everyone figured out how to 'be in the new normal' and as we moved into April, **we celebrated when one family at a time came** to simply enjoy being outdoors, able to breathe without a mask and thankful for the peacefulness of our park. We came to realize that our 50 acres of space **remained a critical respite for all** who entered through our gate. Again, the importance of our park set in the heart of Fayetteville, NC and next to Ft. Bragg the largest military installation in the world was reinforced.

We moved through this season **celebrating the extra time to complete some important infrastructure projects** as well as improve our tree fort in preparation for the reopening of our play areas. The Foundation continued to stay positive and plan for events.

As we moved into July, we hosted three successful summer camps with smaller numbers but with families who were so grateful for an outdoor camp that offered adventure, education, leadership skills and lots of fun! I want to highlight the generous donation given by the **Fayetteville Woodpeckers** that made our Super, Fun, Quality camp possible. We were disappointed to postpone our largest fund-raising event of the year, our Ninja Warrior event, but our planning effort will ensure that our 2021 event will be the BEST one ever!

Because we stayed open, families continued to visit the property and September highlighted a lift in the playground restrictions. We celebrated as we were able to open our areas of play, especially our newly renovated Long Leaf Tower! We were **grateful to be a destination spot**, especially over the Labor Day weekend, given the traveling restrictions and other closures in place.

The last three months continued to confirm the need and importance of our mission and our strategic location next to Ft. Bragg as **over 1500 people visited our park during this time!**



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December was a special month with two new events taking place.

On 5 December we hosted our **first Warrior Project Day**. A battalion from the **82nd Airborne Division** brought 30 soldiers who we put to work clearing out our retention ditch. Four hours later, the mission was accomplished, and we fired up the grill and provided lunch for them. Each service member thanked me for introducing them to our park and mission and the leadership left with a promise to return.



We concluded the year with our **first Christmas Open House** on 23 December to honor our dedicated local supporters and to introduce several new families to the RHF mission. We connected families before the holiday break and introduced them to the Rick's Place Family. **Over 100 attended our invitation only event** and enjoyed stations of cookie decorating, Christmas crafts and of course Christmas music, hot chocolate, and a roaring fire while roasting marshmallows.

Throughout this particularly challenging year, Rick's Place continued to be the place military families and active-duty Soldiers chose as their destination for fun, team building, connection, and even a place to gather to mourn and remember fallen comrades.

I want to **celebrate our founders and their vision** to build Rick's Place as a place of connection and fun. I want to **applaud all who made it possible** to stay open and meet our mission with excellence this year. Thanks to all...our amazing Board of Advisors, Board of Directors, dedicated staff, and to each of you, our generous supporters who have given of your time, talent, and treasure to make our mission a reality. We are looking forward to 2021 and the plans already in motion to continue to strengthen the military family and continue to improve our grounds increasing our capacity for more.... more people, more opportunities, more fun.

Will you help us in the New Year by sharing our vision and mission with someone new? I encourage you to share your story of becoming a part of the RHF family and then ask that someone to consider becoming a part of the legacy of individual and corporate sponsors who are making a difference in the lives of military families.

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Diana and the RHF Team



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Thanks to the 30 soldiers from **82nd Airborne Division** who cleared our retention ditch in 4 hours!



First Christmas Open House
We honored our dedicated local supporters and welcomed our new friends and families!

