



SWORDS TO PLOWSHARES

Healing and Empowering Veterans

VETS HELPING VETS SINCE 1974

When Vietnam veterans returned home, our nation treated them as second class citizens. Veterans became a symbol of the unpopular Vietnam War and we denied them the support they need to **transition back** home. After dedicating years serving our country, thousands of veterans ended up on the streets unable to find effective treatment or benefits to cope with their invisible wounds.



William Banks, like so many other Vietnam Veterans, suffered on the streets for 37 years before hearing about Swords to Plowshares and deciding to seek help. He was denied benefits and care for decades, suffering alone with post-traumatic stress disorder. *"At first I was told to suck it up and be a man, but Swords bent over backwards to get me off the streets. They helped me get a home and treatment and benefits for PTSD when all the others would not."*

Today he has a permanent home, a steady job, and is volunteering his time to advocate for other veterans in need. *"We don't want to make the same mistakes that we made after Vietnam as new veterans are coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan,"* he says about his dedication to helping young veterans.

The Challenge: Growing Needs as New Veterans Return Home

Today citizens are coming together to support our troops, but **bumper stickers and care packages simply are not enough**. We are facing a huge disconnect between veterans and the rest of society. For most veterans today, there is a strong sense of isolation once they change out of uniform and into civilian clothes. The veteran population continues to suffer, experiencing mental illness, poverty, unemployment and homelessness at disproportionate and astounding rates. They need support in starting their lives over again.

- ♥ 25% of the nation's homeless population are veterans
- ♥ The unemployment rate among current veterans reached as high as 21%
- ♥ Of veterans who are employed, 25% earn less than \$22,000 annually
- ♥ Nearly 40% of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans will suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder

And in California...

- ♥ There are 30,000 veterans in San Francisco alone
- ♥ California has more veterans than 48 of 50 states

When their service ends, ours begins

"As troops continue to be deployed multiple times to Iraq and Afghanistan, we are committed to helping veterans break through cultural, educational, psychological and economic barriers that they often face in their transition to the civilian world," says Michael Blecker, Swords' Executive Director. "We help them turn their lives around and restore dignity, hope and self-sufficiency."

Helping Veterans Overcome Obstacles

When their service ends, ours begins

Today's soldiers are being recognized as heroes, yet our government, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and even soldiers themselves are not prepared for repercussions of the current wars. To begin, the VA has a massive backlog with **nearly one million veterans** waiting to receive the disability benefits they deserve and the care they need. Disability claims can drag on for years. Many veterans give up on the slow, burdensome bureaucracy and take matters into their own hands —often through self-medication and isolation. And for those soldiers who lack family support or access to care, their lives quickly unravel.



Jessie Anderson knows what it means to play the waiting game. As a woman, her experiences in the military were very challenging. A California native, she was sexually assaulted during her service in Iraq in 2005. She waited for years for VA to process her claim and by early 2008, she was desperate and facing homelessness, a result of her debilitating anxiety.

"I felt really depressed and hopeless when I got out of the military. I was able to get my life back together and cope with my anxiety with the help of counselors and other vets in Swords' transitional housing program."

Another veteran encouraged Jessie to contact Swords to Plowshares. Swords staff placed Jessie in a transitional housing program on Treasure Island and the legal department intervened to assist with her VA disability claim. In the program she was able to receive counseling and support from other veterans, and begin to heal. After receiving her benefits, she enrolled in school and continues to use Swords' employment and training services for help in finding a job.

A Leader in Shaping National Policy

With a long track record of success in helping veterans to lead stable and healthy lives, Swords is nationally recognized for its expert leadership and **dedication to improving the systems that our veterans rely on**. They advocate for reforms at the local, state and national levels to increase access to timely physical and mental healthcare, and improve services for veterans.

In its dual role as a service provider and an advocate, Swords' draws upon **decades of experience working directly with veterans**, helping hundreds of thousands of veterans each year throughout the country.

War causes wounds and suffering that last beyond the battlefield. Swords to Plowshares' mission is to heal the wounds, to restore dignity, hope, and self-sufficiency to all veterans in need, and to significantly reduce homelessness and poverty among veterans.

"Veterans are a disproportionate share of the nation's homeless, jobless, mental health depressed patients, substance abusers, and suicides. And so the issue is what happened here. Something happened. And that's what we're about is to try and figure this out."

- VA secretary Eric Shinseki

Providing the Most Comprehensive Care

When their service ends, ours begins

With 35 years of experience as a community-based nonprofit organization, **Swords to Plowshares has pioneered the most coordinated model of care in the country.** Their innovative approach and continuum of care promotes healing and empowerment for men and women from all walks of life. Swords respects each veteran as an individual with a unique set of complex needs. They provide direct services to more than **2,000 veterans** every year with the following services:

Swords' Frontline Drop-In Center, is a unique one-stop resource that provides critical services to homeless and at-risk veterans. The counselors are vets themselves, and are dedicated to helping vets suffering from PTSD and other service-related mental illness overcome addiction and poverty. *Swords has seen a 30% increase in visits to the drop-in clinic, a direct result of veterans returning home to economic instability.*

"It's all about vets helping vets. If another vet can hear my story and understand the advantages of going through Swords to Plowshares, that's all the pay off I need." —Helo, Swords client who credits Swords' Transitional Housing program with saving his life

Helping veterans find jobs is key to Swords to Plowshares' mission. In the past year, the program helped nearly 300 veterans with job training, job placement and education. "Career Pathways," a nationally acclaimed vocational training model was created to meet the needs of returning veterans by offering career opportunities in high-growth, high-wage industries. *There is a critical need for these programs now when the unemployment rate among veterans has reached as high as 21%*

"The folks at Swords to Plowshares are amazing! I could not believe that I was able to receive the financial assistance I needed to complete my training as a paramedic. I felt supported and dignified throughout the whole process." —Heather, EMT Training Program participant

Helping veterans find homes improves the health and quality of life for veterans with chronic conditions. Swords has operated successful Transitional and Permanent Supportive Housing Programs for more than two decades. Their residential programs, combined with a continuum of care, have provided thousands of homeless veterans with the stability and support they need to rebuild their lives. *There's a big need for housing. Experts estimate that 3,000 homeless vets were on the streets in San Francisco last year.*

"When I was homeless, I prayed for a place. Swords just stepped in and they did everything that needed to be done. They had all the resources under one umbrella." —Gustaza, Swords client

Providing free legal services sets Swords apart. They have widespread impact on veterans by helping them access the VA benefits and healthcare they have rightfully earned and rely on to rebuild their lives. Last year they provided free legal advice to 500 veterans, 189 who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. *With an estimated 700,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who will suffer from Traumatic Brain Injury PTSD or depression, benefits advocacy is critical and in high demand.*

"I knew I had PTSD and fought long and hard to get help. I finally went to Swords and they gave me a free lawyer who knew VA benefits and the system. —John, Swords client

\$500,000 to Meet the Growing Need

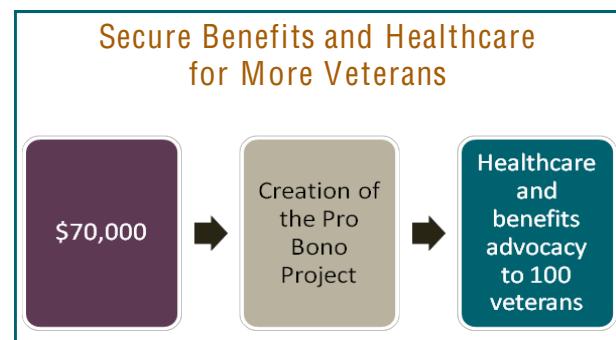
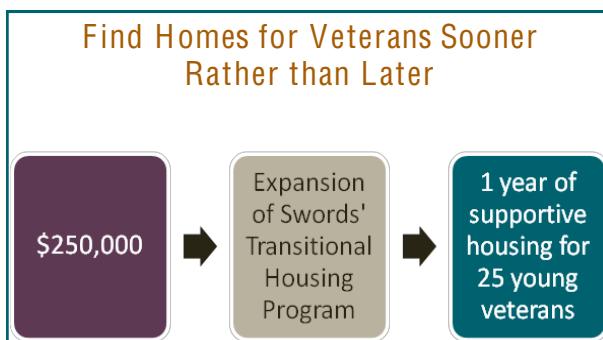
When their service ends, ours begins

There is an increase in soldiers returning from the current wars needing help to assimilate back into society. Swords to Plowshares has seen an increase in demand for services — a 30% rise in some programs. This is happening at the same time Swords is experiencing a loss of funding from the local government, major institutions and individual donors due to the recession. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and federal government heavily rely on community-based organizations like Swords to deliver the locally-based, wrap-around services they do not have the capacity or expertise to provide.

Therefore, Swords is turning to lead investors to help give back to those who have given so much. Swords' campaign goal of \$500,000 will ensure they can expand and sustain services for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans as they **transition from combat to community**.



Your gift can turn around the life of a veteran and provide critical services that will heal the wounds of war and restore hope and dignity to our nation's heroes.



You can have widespread impact!

- ♥ \$10,000 will provide one year of transitional housing
- ♥ \$5,000 will prepare a veteran for a new career
- ♥ \$2,000 will provide benefits advocacy
- ♥ \$1,000 will provide emergency services for one year