



LEGACY[®]

NEWSLETTER

2024 Volume 2, Issue 42



**COAST TO COAST:
PEDALING WITH PURPOSE FOR NMCRS**

MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR SAILORS, MARINES, AND THEIR FAMILIES

From the Signal Bridge



I hope this issue of Legacy finds you in good spirits and health. It is with immense pride and gratitude that I reach out to you to highlight the incredible contributions of individuals like Darren Anderson and Tonya Murphy, who exemplify the spirit of service and generosity that defines our organization. I also share with you the impact NMCRS had on Travis Johnson, a young

Sailor who at the beginning of his time in the Navy needed a little help – before he went on to soar in his career.

As we navigate the challenges and uncertainties of our time, it is more important than ever to recognize that everyone has something valuable to offer. Whether it be time, treasure, or talent, each contribution plays a vital role in supporting our mission and making a positive impact on the lives of those we serve.

Darren Anderson, through his dedication and newfound passion for bike riding, has demonstrated the power of mobilizing communities and rallying support for NMCRS. His efforts have not only raised much-needed funds but have also inspired others to join our cause and become advocates for our mission.

Similarly, Tonya Murphy's selfless commitment to volunteering embodies the true spirit of service. Her tireless efforts ensured that our

Budget for Baby® program ran smoothly and efficiently, enabling us to reach more new parents in need and provide them with the guidance they deserve.

And then there's Travis Johnson, a shining example of resilience and courage in the face of adversity. Through the assistance provided by NMCRS, Travis was able to overcome a financial challenge and go on to pursue his goals with determination and perseverance. His story is a testament to the transformative impact of our programs and the unwavering support of our donors and volunteers.

As we reflect on the stories of Darren, Tonya, Travis, and countless others who have been touched by NMCRS, let us be reminded that each of us has the power to make a difference. Whether it's by donating our time, contributing financially, or sharing our skills and talents, we all have a part to play in supporting our military community and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Thank you for your continued support of NMCRS and for personifying the spirit of giving that defines our organization. Together, we can continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of active duty and retired Sailors, Marines, and their families.

Semper Fidelis and very respectfully,

LTGEN ROBERT R. RUARK, USMC (RET.)

President, Chief Executive Officer

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Cover photo: Darren Anderson, USN (Ret.)

Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society's Legacy® Newsletter allows us to share with donors the impact of their gifts. It also informs active duty and retired Sailors, Marines and their families about the programs and services available to them. We value your privacy. The Society does not rent or sell names, addresses, or e-mails to third parties.

Coast to Coast: Pedaling With Purpose for NMCRS

By James E. Brooks, LCDR, USN (Ret.)



Photo: Darren Anderson

Reunions are the time to renew old friendships and share stories. But for the U.S. Naval Academy Class of 1983, their 35th reunion in 2018 was much more.

When it was over and former classmates returned to their respective corners of the country to resume retirement, they left with a commitment to stay in touch, assist veterans needing help and to have fun doing it together.

Darren Anderson remembered the 2018 reunion where a plan was made to achieve that very commitment.

“John ‘Holtzie’ Hults proposed a bicycle ride across America to be completed before our 40th reunion in 2023. But things didn’t really come together until 2019. A shorter bike ride from Pittsburgh to Annapolis was planned that year but it almost ended before it started. The group needed someone to drive a truck to support the group otherwise the ride would be canceled. I volunteered at the last minute,” Darren recalled, “Holtzie commented that if I hadn’t volunteered, the ride probably wouldn’t have happened.”

“ONE THING I KNOW IS THAT NAVY-MARINE CORPS RELIEF SOCIETY HISTORICALLY HAS ALWAYS BEEN THERE TO HELP SAILORS, MARINES AND THEIR FAMILIES EVEN WHEN THE MILITARY DIDN’T ALWAYS HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC.”

—Darren Anderson

After helping his classmates make the first trip a success, Darren decided to join them on the trip across America that began Aug. 23, 2023 at Whidbey Island, Washington. In addition to the challenge of biking the 3,253 miles to the finish in Annapolis, MD, each rider dedicated their effort to raise money for a veteran charity of their choice. Darren chose to raise money for Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society.

“I always admired the work Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society did. I never used their services, but came close when I was on my first submarine deployment and my pay got screwed up. I was out of touch and the boat’s ombudsman referred my wife to the Society for an interest-free loan until my pay was fixed. But things worked out and she didn’t have to use their services.”

“One thing I know is that Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society historically has always been there to help Sailors, Marines and their families even when the military didn’t always have the support of the American public. Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society was always there to support,” said Darren.

Darren was not a dedicated bike rider like many of his teammates. But being a seasoned cyclist wasn’t a prerequisite for the trip.

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Photo: Darren Anderson with the Navy83Ride team

(Continued from page 3)

“I grew up in Kansas and I always had a fascination with bicycles but I did not pursue it like many of my teammates. The coast-to-coast team stressed participation, not performance. I was not physically ready to ride the full days when we began the cross-country riding. Early on, I rode portions of each day and shared the duties of driving the support vehicles. Later on, I rode full daily segments.”

Darren was one of 13 classmates that completed the entire coast-to-coast trip. When the team arrived at Annapolis, MD on Oct. 5, 2023, the team ceremoniously dipped their bicycle tires in the Severn River. Over the 3,253 miles biked, they crossed 11 states, gained 94,920 feet in elevation, repaired 65 flat tires and recovered from one dog bite. More importantly, the riders raised \$663K for veteran charities. Darren raised \$6,524.00 by himself. Other donations brought the total for NMCRS to \$10,269.

“This was a really great fundraiser and a lot of fun to follow on social media as they made their way across the U.S.,” said Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society’s Community Engagement Manager Chelsea Davis. “Peer-to-peer fundraising is a relatively new program for NMCRS and we encourage any veteran group or others wanting to do a fundraiser for us to please contact the Society so we can assist in any way possible.”

Darren Anderson’s riding days are far from over. He’s found his new “hobby” good for his physical and mental health. He tries to get in several bike rides each week, with a goal of 75 miles per week. And the Naval Academy Class of 1983? The team’s commitment to stay in touch, have fun and help veterans causes remains strong. This fall, the class plans to make a 500-mile trip across Alabama, from Huntsville to Gulfshores, Oct 4-13.

“We are honored to continue our mission of giving back to those who served our country. The support we received during our first ride was overwhelming and we are eager to make an even greater impact with BamaRama 500,” said rider Scott Watson in a press release last month.

More information on the Navy83Ride team and their accomplishments can be found online at: navy-cycling.com

If you would like to support Darren on his latest fundraising adventure, please visit:

<https://www.givegab.com/p2p/fundraising-events/darren-anderson>



2023 AFI Navy Spouse of the Year, Tonya Murphy on Volunteering at NMCRS

By James E. Brooks, LCDR, USN (Ret.)



Photo: Tonya and her husband

Tonya Murphy, NMCRS volunteer, was chosen to be the 2023 Armed Forces Insurance Navy Spouse of the Year. The AFI MSOY award was created in 2008 to recognize military spouses’ important contributions and unwavering commitment to the military community and our country. That spirit is in the DNA of all NMCRS

volunteers. The pathway to becoming an NMCRS volunteer is different for everyone.

Tonya said she became an NMCRS volunteer in 2012, shortly after arriving in Guam with her husband, a submarine officer.

“That was the first duty station our family was sent where I didn’t know another family already there. I decided to volunteer so I could meet new people. NMCRS also provided volunteers child care and I was like ‘Cool! Absolutely!’ she recalled.

It didn’t take long to make a friend.

“I met my new best friend the first day. I started talking to the receptionist and we had so much in common. We’re still close friends today. Not only had I found a purpose in Guam but I found the connection I needed.”

Tonya said NMCRS is a phenomenal resource wherever you are but especially when families are deployed overseas.

“That move overseas with a family is just such a heavy lift. It was a great place to volunteer and meet people. Volunteering for NMCRS is also beneficial for people who aren’t ready to work because of family demands or can’t work at all.”

As the Navy took her husband around the world, Tonya and her three sons followed. At each duty station, she volunteered at the local NMCRS office. In Naples, Italy, Tonya was trained and began

Making a difference for Sailors, Marines, and their families — Thanks to your donations

to teach the Budget for Baby® class. Here, she taught future Navy and Marine Corps families how to develop a financial plan with a new addition on the way.

“This is such an important workshop and my biggest regret is that I never took it when I was pregnant! By the time I taught the class, I already had my three boys. But like I said, a class like this is even more important if you’re overseas. Everything is so different and financial planning is important with our young Navy families just starting out.”



Photo: Tonya pictured with her family

Tonya continued teaching Budget for Baby® workshop after the family was transferred to Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, CT. She also volunteered at the NMCRS Thrift Store on base. Another transfer found the family stationed in Washington, DC. This was in 2020 when COVID was in full swing.

“It was too hard to go back to volunteering with NMCRS with the move, and juggling a family in the midst of the pandemic.”

Though she has taken a pause from volunteering with NMCRS, Tonya has not slowed down in helping military families. She has been a Military Parent Advocate Volunteer with Military Child Education Coalition, and been on the Diversity Equality and

Inclusion Committee for the Command Spouse Leadership Course. She has expanded her network to connect military families to the resources they need and she uses it every day. Tonya is now working with the Travis Manion Foundation whose mission is to encourage veterans and families of fallen military heroes to serve as role models for younger teens and children in their respective communities.

“My favorite part of working with our veterans and families who lost someone in the service is the sharing of stories and experiences. I never think veterans and families we work with ever quite give themselves full credit for what they accomplished or overcame or achieved. However, in sharing their stories, they’re not only able to connect with younger generations, but also inspire them as they go through their personal journeys. I am honored to be a part of the Travis Manion Foundation.”

Following her husband’s career, Tonya has several more years as an active duty spouse. No matter where they go, she knows NMCRS is there as a valuable resource.

“NMCRS is a very inclusive resource. When you walk through that door, you feel the sense of belonging. You always have it there with you when a problem arises. It’s a phenomenal resource and a great place to volunteer.”

To learn more about NMCRS resources or volunteering, go to: WWW.NMCRS.ORG.



Congratulations to Angela Litteral, 2024 AFI Navy Spouse of the Year, another shining NMCRS volunteer!

Harness the power of your will

Empower your future, loved ones, and and Sailors and Marines with your legacy!



Remember August is National Make-a-Will Month. To help you create your legacy, NMCRS has partnered with FreeWill, an estate planning tool that is free and easy to use. Learn more at <https://plannedgiving.nmcrs.org> or contact us at giving@nmcrs.org

To learn more visit www.nmcrs.org

Being There For A Last Goodbye

By James E. Brooks, LCDR, USN (Ret.).



Photo: Travis at the Navy Ball

Travis Johnson was running for his life. His mother, suffering from a bipolar mental health crisis was threatening to kill him. Learning to survive wasn't new to the nearly sixteen-year-old. He already survived the turmoil from 36 moves, 12 schools, and five different foster families. To say his life was unstable would be grossly understated.

"I crouched down behind the house and realized I was on my own. In a moment of reflection, I knew no one was coming to save me. I had to take control and

responsibility for myself and my life," said Johnson in a story he shares with many others who seek help in trauma recovery. At that moment, he decided to move away and live with his grandmother. She provided the first stable environment in his life. More importantly, she became his hero.

Within two years, Johnson graduated from high school and entered the work force jumping from one hourly-wage job to another. Unsatisfied with the path he was on, he decided to join the U.S. Navy.

"The Navy provided the framework and possibility for success. The Navy didn't care about my past background or my family's troubles. Enlisting didn't fix everything, but it was a lot better than where I came from. It allowed me to build who I was. They told me what I had to do to be successful and what qualifications I needed," said Johnson.

After bootcamp, Johnson was assigned to an F/A-18 squadron. During that first year, while on a training detachment to NAS Fallon, NV, Johnson was handed a Red Cross message

with bad news. His grandmother suffered an aneurysm and was hospitalized in critical condition.

"I was devastated. She was my hero. I wanted to fly home to be with her, but the plane ticket was \$750. For an E-2 like me, that was an incredible amount of money. I couldn't afford to buy the ticket," he said.

Johnson's chain of command referred him to Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society. He met with a representative and was offered an interest-free loan that made it possible for him to get home on emergency leave.

"That loan meant the world to me. With their help, I made it home to see my grandmother. Afterwards, I able to repay Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society back at \$100 a month," said Johnson.

Emergency Travel assistance is ready when a service member receives word of a serious illness or death of an immediate family member. Navy and Marine Corps retirees, surviving spouses, family

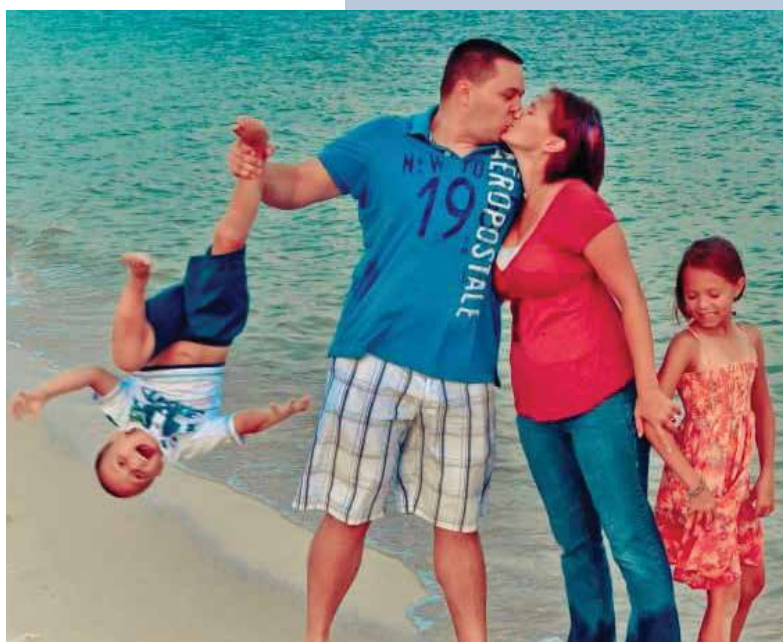


Photo: Travis Johnson pictured at the beach with his wife and children.

“NAVY-MARINE CORPS RELIEF SOCIETY HAS A LEGACY FOR BEING THERE TO HELP SAILORS AND MARINES. IT WAS THERE FOR ME.”

—Travis Johnson

members with an ID card and reservists on active duty for 30 days or more are also eligible for this interest-free program.

According to Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, travel assistance and Quick Assist Loans are the most recognized of the Society’s assistance programs. In 2023, between 150-200 Sailors, Marines and others are assisted each day. Approximately \$4 million is loaned each month.

Close to \$50 million in loans were made in 2023.

Travis Johnson never forgot the assistance he received from Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society. He carried that memory through a very successful Navy career where he eventually received a commission and earned his Naval Flight Officer wings. He referred the programs to other Sailors when they faced a seemingly insurmountable financial obstacle.

Today, Johnson continues to dedicate his service to others as an award-winning podcaster, keynote speaker, and mentor to many trying to overcome and deal with the trauma in their lives.

“Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society has a legacy for being there to help Sailors and Marines. It was there for me. I like to say, ‘my superpower is my voice’. If I can use it to help share the resources of Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, I will.”



Photo: Travis with the VQ-3 Hawaii Crew

IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

HOW DID NMCRS HELP YOU TODAY AND WHAT IMPACT DOES THIS HAVE ON YOUR LIFE?

“I didn’t have the money to fly back home to see my mom, so I went to the local NMCRS. They were helpful and understanding, provided all the information I needed and helped me secure a flight. It was a hard time for me and they took care of the hard part.”

—Cheriz M.



Show your Support – Be a Fundraiser

Fundraising is a great way to show your community support. Raising funds and awareness for NMCRS not only helps the Navy and Marine Corps community, it shares our mission and impact with others! Spreading the word about who we are can bring more support to those who need it most.

You can become a fundraiser by:

- ★ Setting up a fundraising page
- ★ Hosting a fundraising event
- ★ Creating a Facebook or Instagram fundraiser
- ★ Hosting a fundraising live stream using Tiltify
- ★ Designing your own shirt through Bonfire Fundraising
- ★ Asking your employer if they support matching gifts to double or triple your impact

To learn more, visit:

[NMCRS.ORG/GET-INVOLVED/DONATE](https://www.nmcrs.org/get-involved/donate)



MARK YOUR 2024 CALENDARS!

August
01-31 National Make a Will Month

August
17 National Thrift Shop Day

August
12-17 NMCRS Thrift Shop Week

October
09-26 MCX Coupon Sales

October
24-26 MCX Coupons Redeem

Oct.-Nov.
06-02 NEX Coupon Sales

Oct.-Nov.
27-02 NEX Coupons Redeem

NMCRS does not receive any government funds, we operate entirely on private donations. Thank you for your support!

To explore ways you can support Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, please contact NMCRS Development Department at giving@nmcrs.org or (800) 654-8364.



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