



March 2021 Newsletter

Looking back on 2020

Over a year ago, the world came to a standstill as COVID-19 spread and impacted not only our neighbors, friends and loved ones, but our daily lives, routines and freedoms. As businesses closed and mandatory quarantine became the new normal, we at The Big Red Barn Retreat knew it was more important than ever to serve our Veterans, Active Duty Service Members, First Responders and their spouses as they have served us.

We are proud to say that in 2020 we managed to help over 1,500 people and hit a milestone in fundraising. We have also reintroduced several of our beloved programs, continued with our Yoga & Tai Chi classes, and successfully completed three Warrior PATHH training classes.

All our accomplishments were only possible with the efforts of our team of service providers, Warrior PATHH guides, volunteers, staff, and of course, YOU. Our supporters continued to share our posts, sign up for our newsletter, and financially support our programs. Without a doubt, we are grateful for all we were able to accomplish in 2020 with everyone's support and hard work. Thank You!

We are off to a good start in 2021. Yoga & Tai Chi classes continue. We launched Transcendental Meditation quarterly training classes and our first and second classes are already full. We've planned two Equine Assisted Psychotherapy group sessions, which are full already. We announced our art therapy program, THRIVES, and within weeks, it was full. We've completed two Warrior PATHH classes, and are set with a full class in March! Finally, we reinstated our First Saturday Series of the Month Series with classes that are open to the public. The first class is Archery with the Warrior PATHH guides with more to be announced. We still have more programming to come, including Music Therapy and a Farm to Table cooking class, and more classes that are open to the public with our First Saturday Series.



Robert's Story



For a first responder, it's more than just a badge that makes them eligible to protect us. It takes a particular set of characteristics to walk out the door every day and potentially face danger, violence, aggression, and sometimes even death to protect their community. Bravery, courage, benevolence, fervor – these are all invisible accessories to their uniform.

But for former first responder and Warrior

PATHH alum Robert Stevens and many other officers in the field, these are not always enough to protect themselves from the struggles the job entails.

Robert Stevens knew he wanted to help people from a young age, having come from a strong Christian household and a family history of service. “My dad was an EMT, my uncle was a cop, my great grandfather was a marine,” he says, “so I’d always wanted to serve in some capacity.” While pursuing a degree in theology, he was offered a job at the Columbia Police Department and decided to join the force in 2013.

As Robert continued to suppress his struggles to do his part as a first responder, it started affecting his life at home. “I’ve got three kids,” he says. “Do you want to come home and tell your wife about everything that you saw that was terrible in the last 12 hours? Or do you just hold it to yourself and deal with it? So I never talked to my wife about anything I saw at work. I’d only tell her the exciting stuff.” He never sought outside help either because it’s looked down upon by superiors. “If you tell somebody, ‘Hey, I’m having issues,’ they take your gun and your badge and put you on light duty or unpaid leave,” he says. It started negatively affecting his performance at work, but instead of anyone asking

if he was okay, he was transferred or demoted. "If somebody had just sat down and been like, 'Hey, are you okay?' and made it seem like it was okay to not be okay, then, you know, I might have opened up... but that never happened," he says.

His panic attacks began interfering with his work, to the point where he was having one every day – and after years of struggle, he finally decided to try a new path. His wife and mother heard about Warrior PATHH at The Big Red Barn Retreat and were able to get him in contact with Billy, one of the guides. Warrior PATHH is the only program in South Carolina -- and one of only eight nationally -- that is proven to cultivate and facilitate Posttraumatic Growth among combat veterans, active duty service members, and first responders. It enables these remarkable men and women to transform times of deep struggle into profound strength and growth. He was apprehensive at first, being the only first responder in the program. But when he got there, the other participants quickly realized the similarities in their struggles, and the group built a strong bond over the week. Since completing the week-long initiation, Robert has gone from having an anxiety attack every day to zero in the following 17 weeks. "I think the biggest reason that [Warrior PATHH] is really important for police officers is because we don't have anything like this available to us," he says. Especially in light of increased hostility towards police officers, Robert thinks the program will be more important now than ever. "The number of officers that are going to have PTSD or mental struggles or any type of struggle related to the job is going to get worse the longer this goes on, and it needs to be addressed. There's nothing outside law enforcement to help with that besides Warrior PATHH."

Warrior PATHH also offers an 18-month training service after the initial week to track participants' progress and keep them on the right path. Robert says this has been instrumental in sticking to his goals and growing through his story. His relationship with his three children and wife has improved greatly, and he now finds himself wanting to help others as The Big Red Barn Retreat helped him.



Volunteering in the Outdoor Garden Feeds the SOUL

Warmer weather is on its way and it's time to get The Garden ready for Spring Planting! Join us Monday Mornings on March 8th and 22nd, from 10AM-Noon to "play in the dirt," enjoy the great outdoors, and breath in some fresh air.

This winter has been a tough one for many, having been quarantined most of the time -- but Spring is just around the corner, and our Gardening Volunteer Days at the Big Red Barn Retreat offer a wonderful opportunity to get out of your home,



connect with others, and enjoy the great outdoors... all while staying COVID safe. We ask that volunteers wear masks while gardening and stay socially distanced when possible.

Sign up Today!

THRIVES Art Therapy Group



Veterans struggling with anxiety and depression don't always know or have access to positive, accessible coping mechanisms or wellness practices to channel that struggle into something positive. It's easy to get stuck in one's emotional struggle – especially when there are no positive practices in place to help regulate one's emotions. That's why The Big Red Barn Retreat is excited to announce the return of its Art Therapy Program this March!

THRIVES Art Therapy is designed to Teach Healthy Relationships and Integrate Vital Emotional Skills. The group will meet once a week for 10 weeks with Mary How, co-founder of Full Circle Program, LLC. It is a group therapy-based program that includes self-guided study, one individual coaching session, and a Facebook group for support and accountability.

Art is a wonderful way to transform struggle into something that you can be proud of! It will allow you to foster creativity and channel emotional struggle through a mixture of art and therapy, so that you can feel satisfied and successful. If you're interested in participating in an upcoming art class and other events, [view our event schedule](#) or check our Facebook page for updates. If you want to support groups like this for the future, donate below.

Donate Here

First Saturday Series



We are happy to announce the return of our First Saturday Series! Starting this month on March 6, participants will be able to learn Archery with the Warrior PATHH guides. The class will be taught in three sessions: one from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.; one from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.; and one from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. If archery sounds like something that could help you or a loved one, register below!

[Archery Registration](#)

Our next class is April 3 where Bill Patterson will be teaching: [Tai Chi at 11 a.m.](#)

To stay updated on future classes for our First Saturday Series, [view our event schedule](#).

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP)



Often times, Veterans affected by trauma don't realize its impact until they are back home. Living in a different environment with unfamiliar stressors and surrounded by people who can't always empathize – life after duty can feel complicated or diminished. That's why The Big Red Barn Retreat offers free Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP), a distinctive approach to treating mental health through hands-on learning.

Our upcoming group classes will help participants work towards Posttraumatic Growth. They will develop coping skills for anxiety, improve communication, learn how to set healthy boundaries and discover personal strength that will help them form deeper, healthier relationships moving forward.

This is an 8-week group that will meet once a week starting at the beginning of Spring. We offer individual sessions and group sessions. The groups will be: Post 9/11 Veterans (early March); a Women's group (late spring); and a Men's group (coming this summer). Specific dates for our next group are TBD, but we encourage you to fill out the interest form if EAP sounds like something you or a loved one would benefit from. This does not guarantee you a spot, but rather lets us know how many people are interested in the service.

[EAP Interest Form](#)

Transcendental Meditation (TM) Training

The Big Red Barn Retreat is excited to welcome participants for our upcoming May Transcendental Meditation Training! TM is a cornerstone activity at Warrior PATHH and a technique that allows those struggling with stress and anxiety to calm their nervous system and reconnect the mind, body, heart and spirit. We are honored and humbled to partner with the Maharishi Foundation to offer quarterly TM Training in 2021 for Veterans, Active Duty Service Members, First Responders and their spouses. If you would like to experience TM for yourself, click one of the links below and register for the upcoming training dates that best fit your schedule.



[September 17 - 20](#)

[November 12 - 15](#)

Upcoming Warrior PATHH Programs

The Big Red Barn Retreat is happy to announce its continuation with the Warrior



PATHH program. With the help of our volunteers, we have been able to continue serving our veterans through especially difficult times and provide them with the wellness practices and training on their journey to Posttraumatic Growth. Warrior PATHH is the ONLY program in South Carolina -- and one of only eight nationally -- that is proven to cultivate and facilitate Posttraumatic Growth among combat veterans, active duty service members, and first responders. Warrior PATHH enables these remarkable men and women to transform times of deep struggle

into profound strength and growth. To learn more, [visit our website](#). If you want to help our warriors, fill out the volunteer form below.

Upcoming 2nd Quarter Warrior PATHH Dates:

March 19th - March 25th, 2021 (All Female) - *few spots left*

April 9nd - April 15th, 2021

April 23rd - April 29th, 2021

May 14th - May 20th, 2021

Warrior PATHH Volunteer Form



Join us March 13, 2021 at Doko Meadows Park in Blythewood, SC for the Doko Rib-Fest Cook Off in the Park! The Big Red Barn Retreat will have a cooking team made up of our very own Warrior PATHH guides Jason and Billy. Last year, the event brought in over \$6,000 for donations to local charities -- so to show your support for the Big Red Barn, be sure to come out and try some delicious ribs!

There will be food trucks, live music, cold brews and a rib cook-off (professional, amateur and veteran categories). The Cook-off will commence at 6:00 a.m. with standard portions passed out to contestants on the day of the event in the farmer's market field. Contestants will have until 1:00 p.m. to prepare their offerings. Judging by Southern Barbecue Network, judging will commence at 1 p.m. and winners will be announced at 5:00 p.m. A fenced-in tented area (with tables, seating and "stand-up" tables) will be provided in the farmers market field for judging and rib tasting. Wristbands for personal tastings are available for \$20. You may also purchase a full rack of ribs for \$20 and/or rib plates (3 ribs, coleslaw and BBQ beans) for \$10.



For more information, [visit their website](#). To buy a wristband today, click the link below.

Buy Your Wristband

We want to hear from YOU!

Here at the Big Red Barn Retreat, our mission is to serve Veterans, Active Duty Service

Members, First Responders and their spouses as they have served us. We offer holistic wellness practices and training for Posttraumatic growth through Yoga and Tai Chi classes, Warrior PATHH programs, Transcendental Meditation training, Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and other services. While our community has benefited from these programs, we also want to hear from you! Click the link below to submit your ideas and become a BRBR Community Ambassador today. Examples could be a Memorial Day golf tournament or a Percent Night at a local brewery or restaurant. No prior experience required – just a shared mission for serving our warriors and helping them on their journey to Posttraumatic growth.

[Tell Us Your Ideas](#)
