

What is new with PFDD?

Welcome to our new newsletter – we look forward to keeping you up-to-date quarterly with news, upcoming events, testimonials, affiliate programs and dive shops.

Notes from Leadership



From the Executive Director....

For the first Newsletter in some time, I want to begin my comments with a hearty “Thank You” to all the PFDD Supporters we have out there. If you are an affiliate, donated money, volunteered at an event, helped train a diver, or just “liked” a post on Facebook, we appreciate your support.

PFDD is a unique network of Patriots who all share a common purpose of bringing the joy, adventure and therapy of scuba diving to the Disabled Veteran community. Every time we see that smile, see that release of anxiety or pain, and listen to the testimonials of how scuba has changed someone’s life, we should feel a sense of pride in our contribution.

In this newsletter, we share testimonials, place two of our affiliates in the spotlight, offer opportunities to contribute, and introduce you to some of our partners. If you have something to share for future Newsletters, please reach out on our website contact page or email me directly at bob@patriotsfordisableddivers.org.

A little about myself. I served almost 35 years in the Army uniform as an enlisted Infantryman and then as a Commissioned Officer in the Military Police Corps. While leading Soldiers through three combat tours, a year serving along the DMZ on the Korean Peninsula, and many other Army adventures, retirement has brought me to this opportunity to give back to the community that I respect and admire with all my heart.....the Disabled Veterans.

We are always looking for volunteers to join us in our fundraising efforts. If you work for a company that may want to sponsor a diver or if you want to help at fundraising, let us know by visiting our website at:

<https://www.patriotsfordisableddivers.org>

to see how you can contribute. If you live near an affiliate dive shop that conducts fundraising events, please contact them and volunteer.

As COVID-19 restrictions lift, we are excited to continue our partnerships with the Georgia Aquarium, Deep Sea Valkyries, and to begin a new relationship as a proud Chapter of Move United (formerly Disabled Sports USA). These partnerships are essential to introducing Disabled Veterans to scuba diving, providing PTSD therapy, and more importantly, reinforcing the sense of “family” that we find when living the “dive life”.

A big “thank you” goes to Doreen Frederick for developing this newsletter. I hope you enjoy it. Again, thank you all for your support. It is an honor to serve as your Executive Director.

Sincerely,
Bob Taradash
Colonel, U.S. Army (Retired)
bob@patriotsfordisableddivers.org

June 2021 - In this issue:

What’s New	1
Notes from Leadership	1
Executive Director	1
President	2
How Can You Support PFDD?	2
Testimonials	3
Testimonials (continued)	4
Affiliate Dive Shops	5
Spotlight On: Calypso Divers	6
Spotlight on: Patriot Scuba	7
Spotlight on: Mark Murphy	8
Professional Networks	8
How the Program Works	9
Assist Us With Our Mission	9

Notes from Leadership (*continued*)



From the President....

My involvement with Patriots for Disabled Divers (PFDD) began in 2013 as treasurer and one of its founding directors.

After stepping away for a while and now returning almost ten years later, it is gratifying to see the organization continuing its mission of using scuba as a therapeutic tool and introducing it as a lifelong adventure to an ever-growing community.

I continue to be inspired, as I am sure you will be, by the testimonials you will see in this issue of our newsletter, as well as by the generosity of those who contribute their time and financial resources to our efforts. Not least among these is our Executive Director, Bob Taradash, who is helping lead PFDD into a new era. And of course PFDD would not exist but for the efforts of Patriot Scuba. They continue to partner with others to fundraise for PFDD and their involvement in their community is such that they are repeatedly recognized as one of the area's most respected corporate citizens.

We encourage our affiliates to the maximum extent they are able to pursue such involvement in their communities. To those of you support our mission, I offer a heartfelt thanks, and to those we help access the world of diving I say, ENJOY! and keep diving.

Earnie Porta

How Can You Support PFDD?

Our greatest need is for financial support to enable us to expand services to more disabled veterans. If your company donates to veteran's organizations, please suggest they consider Patriots for Disabled Divers. Companies can sponsor a diver or provide funds for other aspects of our program.

If you live near an Affiliate Dive Shop, contact them to volunteer with their local fundraising events.



A great way to support our cause is very simple – if you shop online with Amazon, sign up through AmazonSmile. Select us from their list of charitable organizations and AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to us. It's that easy!

Please remember, we are a 501(c)(3) non-profit - IRS EIN# 46-1749450 - and contributions may qualify as a charitable deduction for federal income tax purposes.

For more details, see page 7 or visit our website:

<https://www.patriotsfordisableddivers.org>

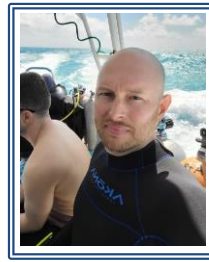
Testimonials

I'm happy to say that I've completed my open water certification and excited to start planning another dive. I've met new friends through the training and plan to dive with them in the future.

I've enclosed a few pictures of the trip from this past weekend.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to start another chapter in my life.

~ Justin F



A couple of months ago I reached out to you with a request for sponsorship about the scuba open water certification course. I just want to share with you what the journey was like.

The initial reason why I wanted to dive was because of a promise I made to a fellow veteran who was going through some very challenging times with alcohol addiction, depression, and suicidal ideation. He is a diver and I promised him that I was going to be there with him every step of the way through his rehabilitation and subsequent path afterward. I told him that if he needed me to dive with him then I was going to be there for him. He is doing well and we have plans of diving when the weather warms up.

From the day I walked into Patriot Scuba shop I have experienced true professionalism, patience with answering my questions and walking me through the entire process. Dave was my first point of contact (POC) and set me up with an account with PADI (although most correspondence goes to my junk mail), we did equipment measurement and fit, and provided guidance. I had a little wait time due to medical requirements (VA took it's time to sign my paperwork), but after it was done, I went through the online course.

My second POC was Scott who took me through the confined dive portion. Now I understand why they teach all the techniques and why they make students go through it.

I had a real-life situation with a free-flowing regulator and thanks to the calm composure that Scott made me feel, it was like a practice drill. Sharon was my third POC who doubled as a secondary instructor and emailed correspondence to keep me updated with the venue and everything I needed to know and prepare for training.

AK Williams was my fourth POC. He took me through the open water portion and when you mention professionalism, patience, experience, knowledge (did I say experience), he was all that and a bag of chips. I love working with all but AK is my favorite. You know he is the kind of guy who will train you to standard but without the Drill SGT mentality.

Finally, I met Jeff (the owner of Patriot Scuba) who welcomed me to the Dive world and all the possibilities that lay ahead. We talked about equipment and gear and trips and the next steps in training and other things that I can't recollect. The journey has been a rewarding one thanks to all the staff and trainers at patriot and PFDD. I can confidently say that I now have the ability to keep my promise to my fellow veteran and enjoy scuba diving.

*One Happy Diver,
Bernard L*

Testimonials (continued)



I completed my open water certification (added peak performance buoyancy) on October 10, 2020. I have since progressed forward getting my advanced open water certification down in Key Largo on Dec 5th 2020. I just got back from a second trip down to the keys doing some more diving trying to get my number of dives up. Right now I'm in the mid-20s and I would like to get to 40 as soon as I can. My goal is to complete rescue diver next and then take the jump into dive master. I feel like it would give me the opportunity to give back to other veterans just as you all gave to me.

Diving has been the most incredible experience for me. I've enjoyed every aspect of it from the initial anxiety the first time I took a breath underwater in the pool before achieving the calmness of scuba diving, to collecting all my gear and experiencing the clear waters of Key Largo. Every time I dive, I enjoy the serenity it provides, the meditative experience, and the overall mental and physical therapeutic attributes of diving. Not to mention, all of the amazing things I've been fortunate enough to see and photograph. This last trip, my girlfriend and I dove together for the first time. Her being a veteran as well, she would like to do the same as I am and move towards her dive master certification. We talked about the enjoyment of being able to do something so special together with diving but at the same time, be able to share our experience and help other veterans and adventurous people experience what we do on every dive.

~ Dan P



Affiliate Dive Shops

Patriots for Disabled Divers is committed to funding quality training and service to participants with disabilities across the United States. Ready to learn to dive or want to get involved? Contact us or visit one of our Affiliates listed below.

Aquatic World

114 Kreisler Road
North Syracuse, NY 13212
(315) 458-1955
<https://www.aquatic-world.com/>

Blue Crew Divers

14 W. Chestnut Street
West Chester, PA 19382
(610) 665-3483
<https://www.bluecrewdivers.com/>

Calypso Divers of Tampa Bay

401 E. Bearss Ave
Tampa, FL 33613
(813) 969-3483
<https://www.calypsotampa.com/>

Conch Republic Divers

90800 Overseas Highway #9
Tavernier, FL 33070
(305) 852-1655
<https://conchrepublicdivers.com/>

First Coast Divers

2777 University Blvd. West
Jacksonville, FL 32217
(904) 737-0050
<https://www.firstcoastdivers.com/>

Lake Norman Scuba

482 River Hwy Suite E
 Mooresville, NC 28117
(704) 660-3483
<https://www.lakenormanscuba.com/>

MASS Diving

247 West Central Street
Natick, MA 01760
(508) 651-0698
<https://massdiving.com/>

Ocean Enterprises

7710 Balboa Avenue
San Diego, CA 92111
(858) 565-9474
Ext. 105
<https://oceanenterprises.com/>

Ocean Extreme

4501 Fairway Avenue
North Little Rock, AR 72116
(501) 812-0006
<https://www.oceanextreme.com/>

Patriots Scuba

305 Mill Street Unit B-1
Occoquan, VA 22125
(703) 490-1175
<https://www.patriotscuba.com/>

SeaVentures

2880 Holcomb Bridge Road
Alpharetta, GA 30022
(770) 992-3772
<https://seaventures.com/>

Texas Dive Center

364 FM 1959 Suite D
Houston, TX 77034
(281) 741-9949
<https://txdivecenter.com/>

The Scuba Shop

1122 S. Greenfield Rd
Mesa, AZ 85206
(480) 705-9327
<https://www.thescubashop.org/>

TL Sea Diving

23405 Pacific Hwy South
Seattle, WA 98198
(206) 824-4100
<https://tlsea.com/>

Underwater Safaris

2950 North Lincoln Ave
Chicago, IL 60657
(773) 348-3999
<https://www.uwsafaris.com/>

Water Dogs

681 North Spring St.
Clarksville, TN 37040
(931) 389-3483
<https://www.waterdogs-scuba.com/>

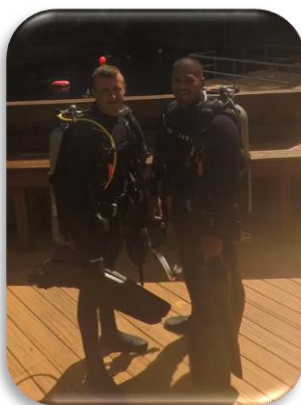
Shop Spotlight on: Calypso Divers – Tampa, FL



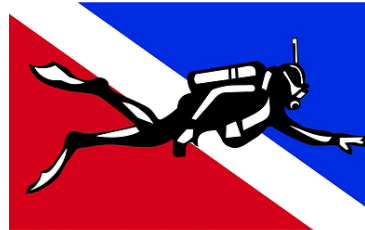
We at Calypso Divers are honored to be a PFDD affiliate. As a Service Disabled Veteran-owned small business ourselves, we know the therapeutic value of diving for vets! Physically, mentally and spiritually, scuba diving is a PERFECT sport for veterans. It's both relaxing and strength-building at the same time. The many PFDD veterans we have trained tend to become very good at diving! Maybe it's the spirit of adventure and exploration that fellow vets share...maybe it's the pure physicality of it...or maybe it's because veterans know how to train well and have fun at the same time.

For Calypso Divers, it's humbling and joyful to help disabled veterans experience their first breath underwater, then go on to earn their PADI certification cards and a lifetime of new adventures.

Sam C., one of our PFDD candidate divers (Vietnam veteran) said it well: *"I have wanted to scuba dive for years, but the initial expense was a real problem. When PFDD stepped up to help out, that made all the difference...especially since I was diving with other veterans. Also, with help from Calypso Divers, I was able to continue to my Advanced Open Water Certification. Thank you PFDD!"*



Shop Spotlight on: Patriot Scuba – Occoquan, VA



PATRIOT SCUBA



Patriot Scuba became the first Affiliate of Patriots for Disabled Divers (PFDD) when our owners, Merial and Captain Jeff Curren, United States Navy, Retired, opened Patriot Scuba in 2013, and took the opportunity to start a non-profit, devoted to supporting disabled Veterans.

The inspiration came when a retired military customer with a paralyzed son came to the shop for help. The young man was not able to participate in any physical activities and had limited social interaction. Jeff and Merial decided to help and after they saw the miraculous effect that Scuba had on this young man, they decided to act. With the help and encouragement of local business leaders in Occoquan to include Mayor Earnie Porta, Jeff and Merial formed Patriots for Disabled Divers. Jeff became the Executive Director and Merial continued to run Patriot Scuba as the first training affiliate.

Since that time Patriot Scuba has facilitated the transformation of hundreds of injured veterans and civilians by introducing them to the joy, adventure, camaraderie and therapy of scuba diving.

What are we proud of? Every disabled Veteran that has completed the program has expressed a new and positive view on their life and what they can accomplish when given the opportunity. Those with mobility issues and pain from wounds and injuries found the forgiving nature of the water while Scuba Diving alleviated the pain and provided much needed relief. For those with cognitive challenges and PTSD, they found that being underwater had a therapeutic affect that provided focus, had a calming effect, and allowed them to accomplish something and overcome their disability. Many of these disabled Veterans who benefited from Jeff and Merial's vision have gone on to become PADI instructors, and Adaptive Techniques instructors so they can give back to the disabled Veteran community.



"The initial reason why I wanted to dive was because of a promise I made to a fellow veteran who was going through some very challenging times with alcohol addiction, depression, and suicidal ideation. He is a diver and I promised him that I was going to be there with him every step of the way through his rehabilitation and subsequent path afterward. I told him that if he needed me to dive with him then I was going to be there for him."

The journey has been a rewarding one thanks to all the staff and trainers at Patriot Scuba and PFDD. I can confidently say that I now have the ability to keep my promise to my fellow veteran and enjoy scuba diving."

Bernard I

Spotlight on: Mark Murphy Studios

"In my travels I have been able to scuba dive in many stunning and exotic locations. It saddens me to see these amazing environments in decline. Many of my paintings celebrate the beauty of the underwater world to remind us of this hidden world that we need to protect." ~ **Mark Murphy**

Mark Murphy is a Northern Virginia artist who has graciously offered to provide a generous donation for sales made as follows:

- Donation applies to any prints purchased (framed or unframed) at **Patriot Scuba** in Occoquan, Virginia.
- Donation applies to ocean life prints purchased online through Etsy. After ordering, you will receive an email asking how you heard about the site, please indicate either "**Patriot Scuba**" or "**Patriots for Disabled Divers**" in the comments.

He offers numerous ocean and sea life themed art in watercolors, ink, photography and stained glass.

You can order Mark's prints on Etsy: www.etsy.com/shop/MarkMurphyStudios and view his other art at: <https://www.markmurphystudios.com/>



Professional Networks

**MOVE
UNITED
MEMBER**

www.moveunitedsport.org/

PFDD is now a Chapter of Move United.

Formally *Disabled Sports USA* and *Adaptive Sports USA*, **Move United** uses the power of sport to push what's possible for people with disabilities, confronting ignorance, fueling conversation, and inciting action that leads us to a world where everyone's included. Sports make us more—more determined, more powerful, more ourselves. Sports have the power to change the world, pushing people further and bringing people closer. And sports shift the narrative from disabled to this abled.



www.deepseavalkyries.com/

Founded in 2014, **Deep Sea Valkyries** provided alternative forms of therapy to injured veterans as a method to combat veteran suicide and enhance lives post-service.

Our mission is simple – we are dedicated to the mission of preventing veteran suicide and enhancing veteran lives by reducing the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder and the treatment of other combat-related injuries, while assisting each veteran in their transition from service member to civilian and introducing them to healthy outdoor activities. Each of our voyages offer healing of the mind, body and soul.

It is our goal that on each voyage, our veterans come together as brothers and sisters once again. Through their shared experiences, that they find emotional, physical and spiritual healing; that they may return to their homes having found the beauty of this life above and below the surface ready to serve and engage within their communities.

How the PFDD Program Works

Patriots for Disabled Divers (PFDD) is a charity for - and inspired by - disabled veterans. We are a group of divers dedicated to bringing the joy and therapeutic benefits of scuba to veterans with disabilities. To date, we've helped more over 750 men and women experience freedom in the underwater world.

Scuba diving provides a unique environment with many therapeutic effects that can't be replicated on land. For one, the weightlessness of being underwater can relieve physical pain. Also, completing a scuba certification can help a disabled person feel more in control and experience a sense of achievement. If I can breathe underwater, what else is possible? Our divers also tell us the mental benefits of scuba and being in the silent world underwater, gives them a chance to focus and just breathe.

We surround disabled divers with a support system. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), is a major cause of suicide for vets - up to 22 veterans lose that battle every day. They can feel very isolated, have difficulty communicating what they're going through or engaging within their community. As U.S. Senator John Walsh of Montana (the first Iraq vet to serve in the Senate) said, "Far too often, we're leaving our veterans to fight their toughest battles alone."

There are a lot of military charities out there, and we salute all those who serve and those who are committed to supporting our military men and women on the home front. ***What makes us different?*** We give disabled divers access to a physical activity that brings them joy, freedom from pain, and something they can enjoy with friends and family.

Patriots for Disabled Divers covers 100% of the cost to train wounded warriors, but we can't do it alone. Help us recover those who have given so much. Help us rebuild dreams and create divers!

Assist Us With Our Mission

What your donation does:

- \$ 50 – Put a diver in the pool for a *Discover Scuba Session*™
- \$ 100 – Pays for a disabled veteran to go diving
- \$ 500 – Covers the cost for an amazing dive at the Georgia Aquarium
- \$ 1,000 – Pays the entire cost for a disabled veteran to be PADI™ certified

I would like to support the work of *Patriots for Disabled Divers*. Enclosed is my donation in the amount of:

\$ 25 \$50 \$100 \$300 \$500 \$1,000 Other: _____

Please make checks payable to: ***Patriots for Disabled Divers***

To donate by credit card, visit our website: **www.patriotsfordisableddivers.org/donate/**

Patriots for Disabled Divers (PFDD) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit tax exempt organization - IRS EIN# 46-1749450

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Email Address: _____

Name of Business / Organization: _____

Please mail your contribution and completed form to:



305 Mill Street, Unit B-1
Occoquan, Virginia 22125

<https://www.occoquanva.gov/town-festivals-arts-craft-show/>

For More information, visit:



Patriots for Disabled Divers will be hosting a tent to distribute information about our program along with selling snacks and beverages



Come visit PFDD at the Spring 2021 Occoquan Artisan Markets in historic Occoquan, Virginia
June 5 & 6, 2021 | July 10 & 11
Saturdays and Sundays from 10 am – 5 pm
Location: River Mill Park



PATRIOTS
FOR
DISABLED DIVERS

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Visit us on

