



SENTINELS
OF FREEDOM

2024

ANNUAL REPORT

HELP US TO CONTINUE OUR

MISSION

*A national nonprofit organization that
assists wounded and injured
Post-9/11 veterans with comprehensive
personal support as they navigate their higher
education towards achieving
success in their Post-Military Careers.*

YOUR INVESTMENT IN THEIR FUTURE
HELPS MEET OUR NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

WWW.SENTINELSOFFREEDOM.ORG



Sentinel Thomas Schlabbach,
POIC US Navy,
Columbia University, MBA



Sentinel Ben Diu,
LCpl US Marine Corps,
University of Denver,
MSc Computer Science



Sentinel Akbar Arsiwala,
LTJG US Navy,
University of Michigan, MBA



Sentinel Michael Matthews,
SSG US Army,
Catholic University,
BArch & MArch
MSc Net Zero Design



Sentinel Paul Mitchell,
CPT US Army,
University of Georgia, MBA

Dear Supporters,

Like many others, I believe that we as citizens must also play our part in supporting our military and our veterans with more than just saying “thank you for your service.” The Government can’t do what we citizens can to provide the personal touch needed in this situation.

These young men and women come from our communities, small towns, big cities, and flyover states. At some point, they return home to us. Some return to cohesive family units, some return to nothing, and some return home wounded and injured.

Our mission at Sentinels of Freedom has always focused on wounded and injured veterans, who need the most help restarting their civilian lives.

This subset of veterans faces high hurdles in their transition back to civilian life. As citizens, we can play a positive role in helping these veterans obtain higher education, leading to successful careers and productive lives. We need to do better, and with your help, we can.

Our doctrine at Sentinels of Freedom is that we would never accept funding from State, Federal, or any Government agency. Our funding and support for these veterans had to come from our citizens; therefore, we have never accepted a penny from any governmental agency.

Our program invests in these veterans who have the potential to do great things in our economy and communities. It is a historical fact that they add tremendous value to our community’s quality of life.

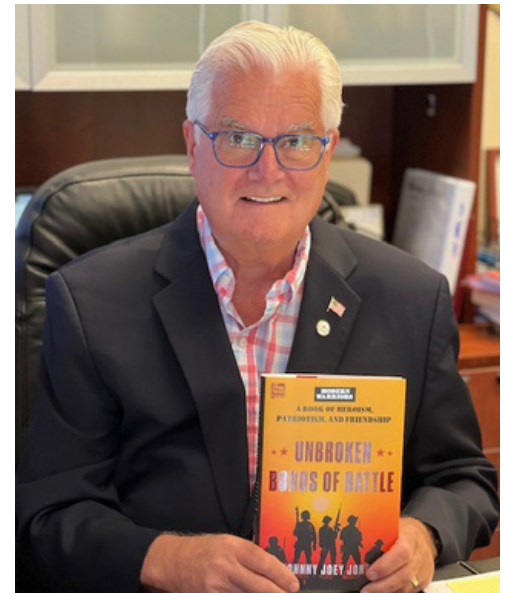
However, I won’t sugarcoat the situation we face today. Public awareness of the need to support our veterans is lower than in previous years.

As we enter the New Year in 2025, with all the technological innovations, political issues, economic impacts, and other changes we are experiencing as a nation, some good, some concerning, like everyone else, individuals and companies, Sentinels of Freedom is not immune to these changes and issues.

Keeping up with change means adapting and continuously improving the services we provide to veterans. Still, despite all this, we remain relevant, effective, and laser-focused on continuing our mission at Sentinels of Freedom.

Thank you again, we look forward to your continuing support in this vital and noble mission.
“Veterans Never Stop Serving”

Mike Conklin
Chairman & CEO





A STORY OF ADVERSITY, FAITH, AND TRIUMPH

Life tests people and shapes them through struggle. Adversity was not an obstacle for brothers Jeff and Chris Nickle; it was the kiln in which their faith, resilience, and character were formed. Through it all, they demonstrated how the trials of life can be overcome with the spirit of service, a heart of love, and a faith that moves mountains.

FROM THE BATTLEFIELD TO THE CYBERSECURITY BOARDROOM: JEFF'S JOURNEY

Jeff enlisted in the U.S. Army in 2010 after receiving a bachelor's degree from East Carolina University. He completed multiple combat deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan, and other places around the world, serving with the 3rd Special Forces Group, 10th Mountain Division, and 101st Airborne Division throughout the tenure of his career. These experiences forged him into who he is today but also exacted a heavy toll.

During his last deployment in 2017, Jeff sustained severe injuries to his shoulder and thigh during combat operations, which required immediate surgical intervention. What ensued was a long and painful year of recuperation — hospital stays, operations, and the mental and physical wear of being bedridden. It was one of the most difficult periods of his life.

In his darkest moments, Jeff turned to faith for comfort. He relied on prayer, believing that God had a plan that extended beyond the pain and suffering. He also had the unwavering support of his family, most notably his father, a U.S. Marine, whose courage and resilience laid the foundation for both brothers. In the wake of everything, their mother, whose love and encouragement were a constant in their sky, remained a grounding presence.

Refusing to quit, Jeff furthered his education alongside his military service and received an MBA. Following his medical retirement, he was accepted to Sentinels of Freedom receiving mentoring and financial support as he continued his education, Jeff earned a Master of Science in Information Management from Syracuse University and his Ph.D. in Information Technology, with an emphasis on Information Security, from the University of the Cumberland where he founded a new theory to support the cybersecurity community that is progressing globally.

Jeff is now an acknowledged expert in cybersecurity. As a Senior Manager for Johnson & Johnson, he secures millions of critical digital assets from around the globe during Mergers and Acquisitions. But his work does not end there. In addition to being an author, he is the owner of a faith-based children's publication company, which aims to introduce stories inspired by biblical writings to young readers. He also advocates for veterans' affairs organizations and local churches and communities to make certain the next generation of warriors and believers has the same encouragement to thrive.

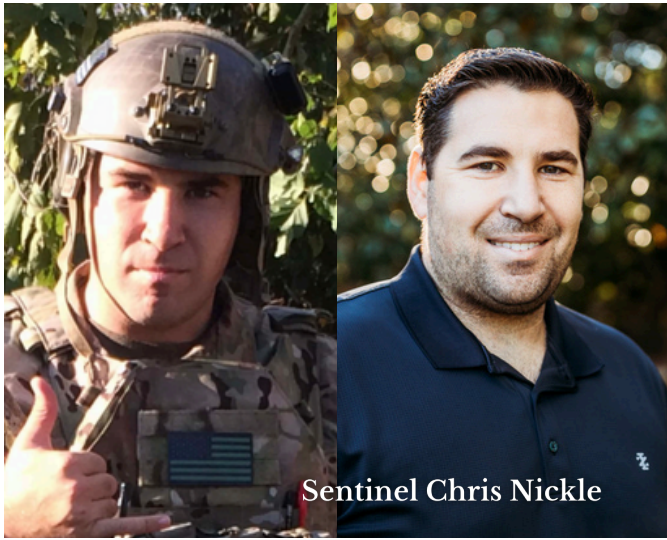


Sentinel Jeff Nickle



FROM HEARTBREAK TO FLIGHT: CHRIS'S STORY

Chris's experience, though different, is also layered with the same resilience, faith, and determination to overcome hardship. Chris served with the 1st and 3rd Special Forces Group, conducting operations that demanded extreme mental and physical toughness across various hostile battlefields where he trained local forces and conducted signal operations in the SOCOM community. But his military career fell apart following an airborne operation, which ended horrifically and left him so badly wounded that, at first, doctors considered amputating his leg.



Chris was immediately MEDAVAC'd to the closest medical facility, where his leg was saved, but the path to recovery was long and agonizing. Months in rehabilitation, tireless physical therapy, and the psychological toll of uncertainty were heavy on him. But Chris never let despair set in. His faith was his anchor, and the knowledge that we serve a God who had more for him served as his wings.

Through the Sentinels of Freedom, Chris was able to follow a new dream — aviation. He graduated from Auburn University with a bachelor's in professional flight and is now obtaining his Certified Flight Instructor (CFI) certification as a pilot in training. He has already been given an offer from a major airline to pursue this exciting new chapter in his life.

Chris's resilience, having turned his pain into progress, is admirable. Having once flown the skies as an airborne soldier, he now awaits to fly high once again as a pilot. The battles one faces in life will never ground a determined soul.

CONCLUSION: THE TRIAL OF AFFLICTION IS A WITNESS TO FAITH

The story of Jeff and Chris is no simple tale of hardship—it is a story of faith, perseverance, and the power of family. One is trusting God through the darkest of days. It is about persevering when the world tells you to give up.

Through the battles of war, wounds, loss, and doubt, these men have come forth stronger, not because life was simple, but because their faith never faltered. They learned that true strength is not the absence of struggle, but the ability to hold fast to faith through the storm.

Their story gives hope to so many as we all fight our own battles. No matter what obstacles stand in the way, with faith, family, and determination, victory is always within reach.

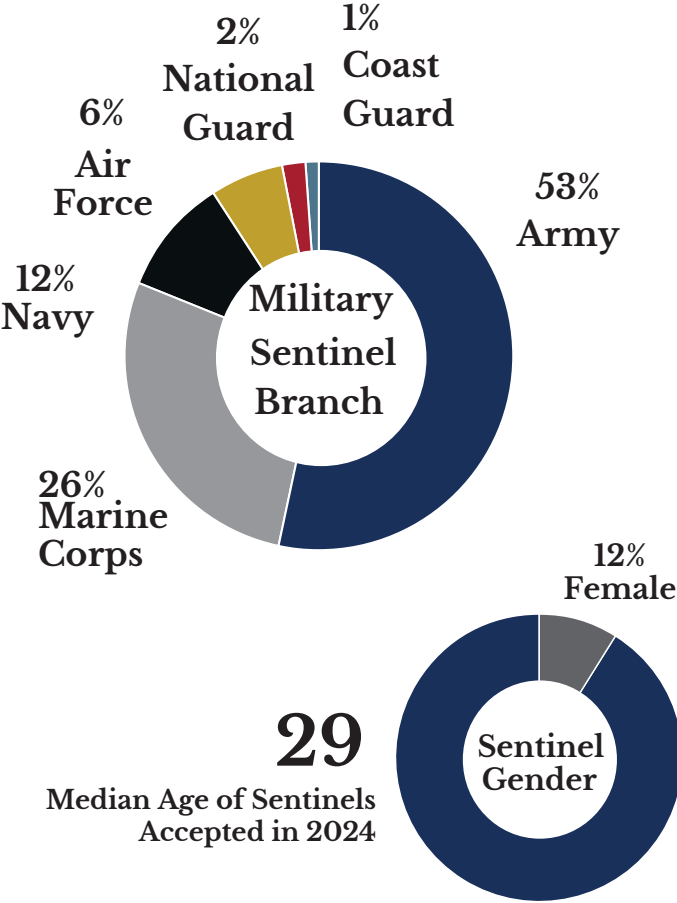
OUR IMPACT:

FINANCIALS

744 VETERANS DIRECTLY ASSISTED SINCE 9/11/2001

1500 Annually use the Student Veteran Resource Centers on College Campuses we helped build and continue to support

Once a Sentinel always a Sentinel. We will always continue to support our Sentinels in their post military transition. Staying in touch long after their graduation to see if any future support or guidance is needed.



90% The Average Disability Rating That Our Sentinels Receive From Veteran Affairs

37% of the Sentinels Since Inception as of 12/31/2024 are Purple Heart Recipients

Each Sentinel must have a VA disability rating of 60% or higher have been wounded or injured in a combat or training related event Post-9/11 and are committed to pursuing their higher education.

35% of Accepted Sentinels with a Visible Injury or Physical Disabilities
Blindness, Deafness, Gun Shot Wound, Paraplegic, Amputation, or Burns

95% of Accepted Sentinels with a Non-visible Injury or Mental Disability
PTSD, TBI, Depression, or Other

70% Combat
18% Service
12% Training
Percentage Of Sentinels Accepted In Our Program Who Were Wounded In Combat, Service, Or Training



Sentinel Jesse Cottle,
SSgt US Marine Corps,
University of San Diego, BA Biology,
Univ. of Colorado Denver, Master of
Physicians Assistant,
University of Colorado Colorado
Springs, MBA



Sentinel Billy O'Neil,
SSgt US Marine Corps,
University of Pennsylvania
The Wharton School, MBA
Entrepreneurship & Innovation

People with disabilities represent the single largest and most diverse minority in the country.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, In 2022, persons with a disability accounted for 12 percent of the civilian noninstitutional population.* Some key statistics on employment rate for veterans with a service-connected (SC) disability rating are 35.1% of veterans with a SC disability have a disability rating of 50% or higher and only 25% of the 131,900 veterans with a SC rating of 70% or higher are employed.**

* <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/disabl.pdf>
** https://adata.org/factsheet/employment-data-veterans-disabilities#_edn9

OUR PROGRAM:

PROGRAM

BRIDGE FOR EDUCATION

EDUCATION

Case managers support our Sentinel's educational journey in line with their capabilities and goals. Sentinel's Bridge for Education helps by connecting Sentinels with local and national resources, networking opportunities, and encouraging them to connect with their Student Veteran Resource Centers. As challenges arise, case managers are able to assist Sentinels in finding a solution.



TUTORING

Recent studies regarding veteran dropout rates in the first year of Community College detail that a high percentage of veterans report anxiety and frustration in completing higher math requirements required to obtain a degree. **For the veterans joining the Sentinels of Freedom Bridge for Education program, we can provide basic math and higher math tutoring at no cost to the veteran.** We also can deliver in-person tutoring with Community Colleges with an active Student Veteran Resource Center with appropriate staffing and resources that align with our mission.

JOB ASSISTANCE

Sentinels of Freedom encompasses a range of services designed to help veterans transition into civilian careers seamlessly. These services may include career coaching, personalized resume building, interview preparation, and skills assessment, tailored to highlight the valuable experience gained during military service. Additionally, we may connect veterans with employers who prioritize hiring from this dedicated pool of individuals. Sentinels of Freedom also provides access to education platforms, like UDEMY, to enhance existing skills or acquire new ones, ensuring veterans are equipped with the tools they need to excel in their chosen fields.

MENTORING

Mentors are an integral part of the educational and professional journey. Sentinels may be paired with a mentor who can share information about their career path, provide guidance, motivation, emotional support, and role modeling. **Over time, these mentors may become a veteran's lifetime friend.**



FINANCIAL EDUCATION

Sentinels are provided resources and accountability to support their financial goals. They are provided with **FREE** access to the RAMSEY+ Financial Peace University and EveryDollar Budget and may also be introduced to a pro-bono financial planner to identify goals and work towards financial peace.

Sentinels of Freedom Scholarship Foundation

Sentinels of Freedom provides numerous ways for you to donate to veterans. Through monetary donations, in-kind, stocks and even crypto, you can ensure that your gift will truly impact the life of a Sentinel.

MONETARY DONATION

You can make a difference by making a one-time or monthly contribution to the Sentinels of Freedom by going to the link <https://sentinelsoffreedom.org/donate-to-veterans/> or scan the QR code below

IN-KIND DONATIONS

Every year companies and individuals donate services, products or other marketable items to Sentinels of Freedom for use by our Sentinels, or for auction and raffle items used to raise money for the Foundation.

PLANNED FINANCIAL GIFTS

These types of donations have a significant benefit to our wounded and injured veterans in our program, and they can have important advantages to you as well. Please discuss this option with your tax advisor before giving: Retirement Plan Donations, Bequest, Real Estate Donations, Stock & Bond Donations or Life Insurance Donations

DONATE IN CRYPTOCURRENCY

Support Sentinels of Freedom by making a charitable gift in Bitcoin or another cryptocurrency. We accept donations in Bitcoin, Ethereum and over 70 leading cryptocurrencies. Make a donation and get an automatic tax receipt. Making your crypto donations through The Giving Block gives you the most reliable way to reduce your capital gains taxes while supporting a cause of your choice.

CORPORATE GIVING

Affinity – We have partnered with corporations in social media challenges, dollar for dollar matching campaigns, as well as hat and t-shirt co-branding opportunities.

Foundations & Grants – Each year, Sentinels of Freedom proudly receives significant support from different types of foundations. If your company has a foundation or charitable giving division, you can make a huge difference in a wounded veteran's life by giving to Sentinels of Freedom.

Matching Gifts – Many corporations match charitable contributions of their employees dollar-for-dollar or more. There is no easier way to increase your impact and investment towards a wounded veteran. Contact your HR department today to find out if your company has a program that can double your gift, or use the search box provided here.

DONOR ADVISED FUNDS

Please discuss this option with your tax advisor before giving.

For more details please visit www.sentinelsoffreedom.org/donate-to-veterans
or contact us at: donate@sentinelsoffreedom.org

SCAN TO MAKE A DONATION





SENTINELS OF FREEDOM

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