



# FIRST RESPONDERS FOUNDATION



**IMPACT REPORT 2023**

## **Mission**

The mission of the First Responders Foundation is to serve and honor all our First Responders, Veterans and their families; build appreciation and respect for their work; and enhance public safety.

## **Vision**

By 2025, be an organization critical to the maintenance and enhancement of public safety in our communities. To serve as a recognized social impact organization supporting First Responders, Veterans, and families.

This will be accomplished by providing caring support to communities and offering tailored individual and family wellness programs and services for First Responders, Veterans and their families.

By 2030 critical services will expand programs and services through Chapter representation in multiple states and national strategic collaborations and alliances.

## **Brand Purpose**

We exist to honor, support and care for the overall well-being of first responders, veterans and their families. We are relentless in our service to First Responders, Veterans and their families out of an immense appreciation and respect for their work and contributions

## **Brand Values**

HONOR

PARTNERSHIP

SERVICE

RESILIENCY

INTEGRITY

## **Brand Promise**

To serve First Responders and Veterans with the same commitment with which they have served.

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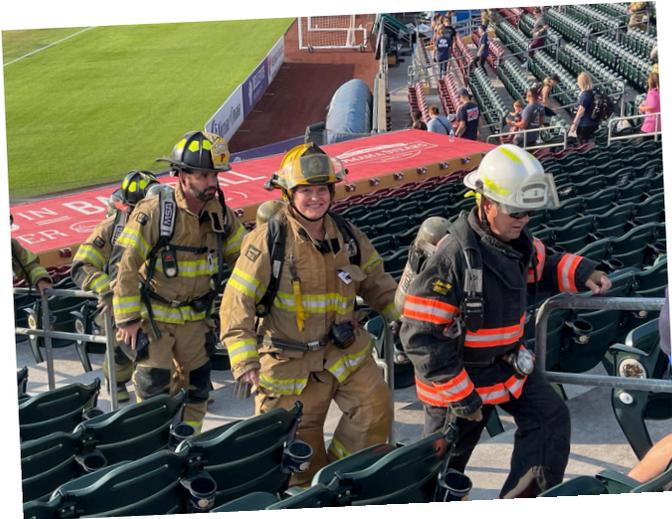
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# MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Positively affecting and saving the lives of first responders, Veterans and their families guided our actions and growth in 2023. 2023 saw growth both programmatically and geographically.

With more and more communities recognizing the need to take proactive measures with regard to the mental health of their first responders, we saw an increase in community-funded mental health checkups and counseling. These sessions give first responders the opportunity to speak with a culturally competent clinician in a neutral, private setting. Many took advantage of the opportunity and our communities are stronger because of them.

Geographically, we continued to follow the plan from our Strategic Growth Initiative and established a chapter in our third state with the creation of Sioux Falls, SD. This chapter secures a foothold to our north that will allow for growth in local chapters as well as counseling and training. Along with this chapter, we have secured a mental health clinician in NW Iowa who will provide counseling and training to South Dakota, Iowa and Minnesota. This is a huge step in our ability to serve an even larger base of first responders and Veterans. Local chapters are directed by local committees made up of area business and community members, along with retired first responders. These committees raise funds to support and assist first responders, Veterans and their families. They direct funds raised in important areas such as lifesaving equipment, mental health assistance, technology and more. As we continue to expand geographically we will stay mission focused and determined to serve and support as many as possible.

Continuing our work towards self-sufficiency we held two primary events. Guns and Hoses Hockey continues to be our largest with nearly \$100,000 raised. This family event saw over 3200 watch area police officers battle area firefighters on the ice. 9/11 Luncheon of Honor is a solemn event that allows us to pause and pay tribute to those lost in the terrible attack in 2001. We also honor first responders and those who have contributed to the success and growth of the foundation. In 2023 we raised \$12,000.

This was a busy and fulfilling year of growth, change and adaptation that allowed us the opportunity to serve those who protect us, our families and our communities. The following pages will highlight specific areas of impact. We look forward to being even better in 2024.

Sincerely,  
Todd Sears

**"After taking the First Responder Peer Support Training,  
I feel much more confident and prepared to support my peers  
before, during, and after a disaster or critical incident."**

Training Attendee

# Behavioral Health

Mental Health in the first responder space has historically been saddled with a stigma and distrust. We are leading the efforts to dismantle this and save lives through consistent training in areas such as Suicide Prevention, Peer Support, Resiliency and Couples curriculum provided by culturally competent therapists.

In 2023, our trainers presented to 9 different departments representing Law Enforcement, Fire/EMS, Corrections, and Dispatch. Approximately 200 First Responders were trained in 2023 with 100 personnel in Peer Support Specialists. In addition, approximately 150 First Responders were counseled from multiple departments in Nebraska and Iowa. Further, seven spouse support groups were held.

**“Highly recommend other departments and agencies to develop a peer support team and send them to this class!”**

**“This training helped me realize how many people actually suffer from some sort of mental illness. This training showed us it's okay to seek help and talk about our problems.”**

**“My rubber band is misshapen now. I feel like I bounce back and forth from “on the edge” to “over stressed”. At work I feel mentally and emotionally spent and (just) keeping my head above water at home. Very good (training).”**

**“This training has given me confidence in myself and my peers to be able to support my department and I look forward to being a part of the change and ending the stigma in mental health in first responders.”**

Quotes from First Responders Foundation Training Attendees



# Physical Health

Our Physical Health initiative advanced the training of First Responders to handle the stress and physical threats of their professions through Gracie Jiu-Jitsu® Omaha. This specialized self-defense training supports both physical and mental well-being, using weight and leverage techniques to control and de-escalate situations, reducing injuries and the frequency of excessive use of force incidents.

## Programs and Impact:

- Gracie Combatives®: Trained 80 students in foundational self-defense.
- Gracie Bullyproof®: Instructed over 84 children of first responders and community members to deal with the bullying epidemic.
- Women Empowered®: Trained more than 40 women in self-defense against sexual assault and abduction.
- Master Cycle®: Advanced training for 10 students, including two Nebraska State Troopers earning Blue Belts.
- Gracie Survival Tactics (GST): Assisted in hosting 1 GST course with 30 police instructors attending.

Jiu-jitsu effectively helps first responders manage job-related stress and trauma through controlled movements that reduce anxiety and foster mental discipline. Our facility uniquely offers both mental health services and jiu-jitsu training in the same space.

**“Jiu-Jitsu has increased my confidence in my everyday life and as a firefighter/EMT. I am able to defend and protect myself with the skills I’ve learned in Jiu-Jitsu. It has increased my physical and mental strength. I have more core control and power on the fire ground with hoses and rescues. The community at GJJ Omaha is incredible, and I’m so grateful for the friends and teachers I have met there.”**

**Lindsay, Firefighter/EMT**

# Spiritual Health & JAVELAN

This year we launched a [Spiritual Health Page](#) on our website. Knowing that many times first responders will first reach out to a faith leader for mental health needs, we created a one-stop solution for those looking for a first responder friendly congregation.

While it is metro area concentrated at this point, we built the site with the ability to expand nationally so that we can serve all first responders. There is no preference given to any faith, rather our intention is to be inclusive for everyone.

**“The Spiritual Health Page was designed by Behavioral Health Specialists, local pastors and first responders. We hope that by providing quick and easy access to a list of places of worship that are committed to serving first responders you can find a place that is right for you to call home or that can simply assist you, your loved ones or your support system when you need it the most.”**

**Todd Sears and Omaha Police Department Lt. Marcus Taylor**

Our [JAVELAN Service Dog Program](#) continues saving lives of Veterans and retired first responders by pairing them with a dog, many times a shelter or rescue dog.

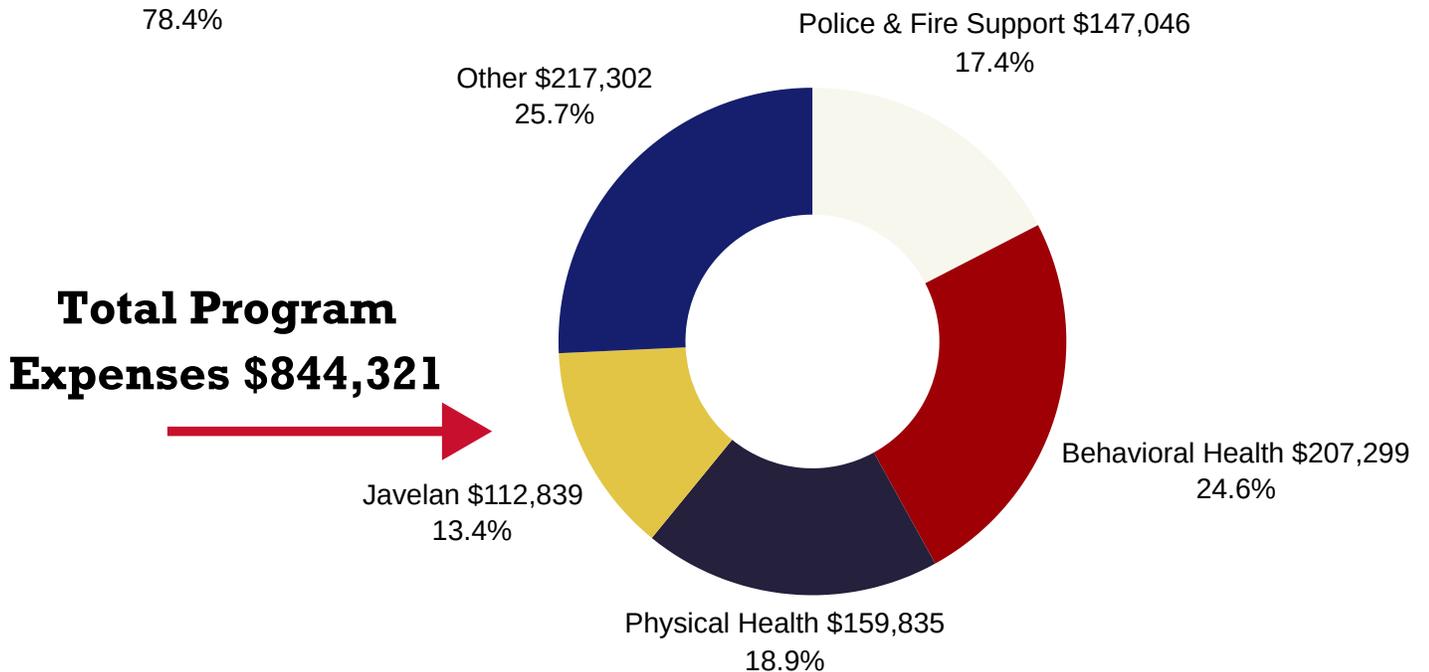
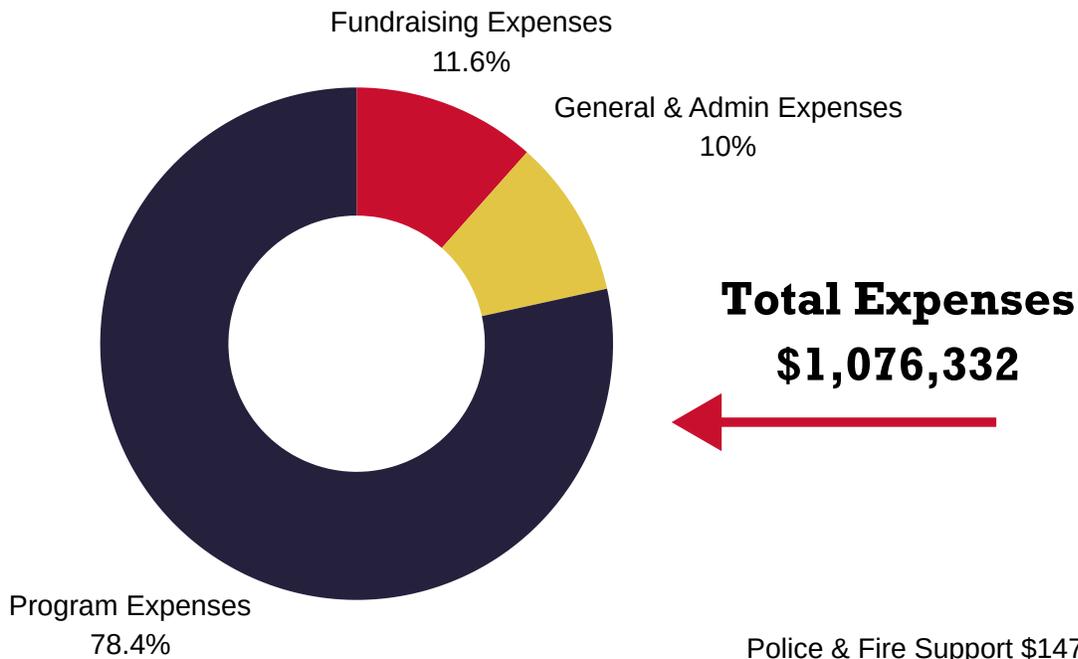
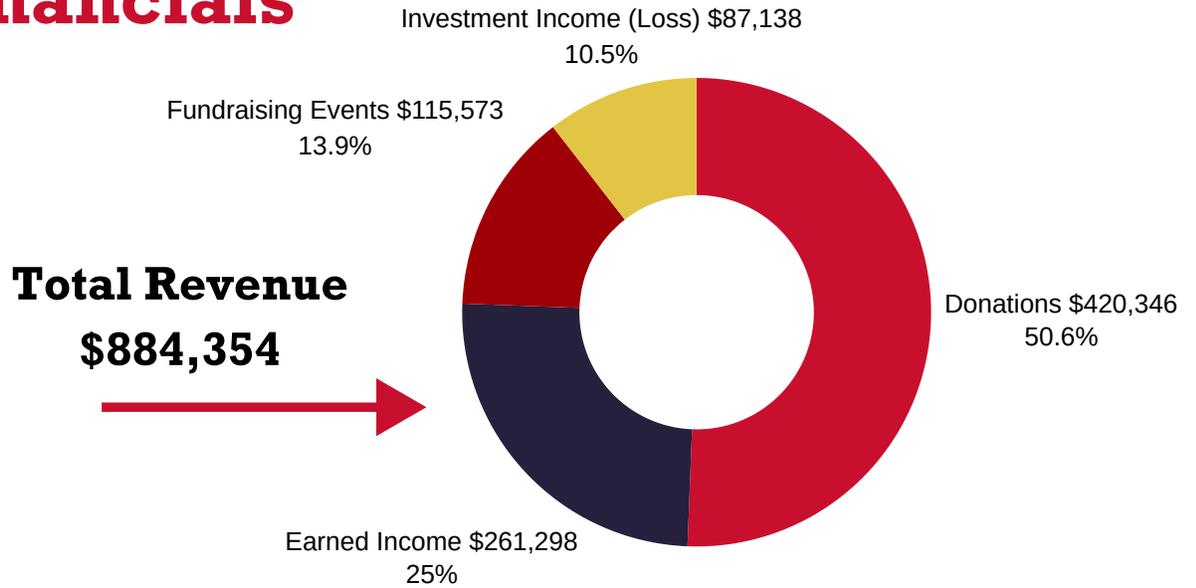
We train these individuals to train their service dog, giving them the skills needed to train the dog for other tasks that may arise.

We provide this service at no charge to the Veteran or retired first responder. In 2023, we surpassed 125 teams graduated since the start of the program, giving these heroes their lives back and ensuring they have the peace of mind knowing their dog will serve them well for years to come.

**“Javelan has given me back my freedom,  
and I have a purpose again.”**  
**Nathan, JAVELAN recipient**



# 2023 Financials



# Events, Community Collaborations & Fundraisers

## **Foundation Events**

Awards of Excellence - Awarded to 48 children of first responders  
3rd Annual Guns & Hoses Hockey Challenge  
7th Annual 9/11 Luncheon of Honor  
15th Annual Appreciation Lunches - with special thanks to Omaha Steaks, Chick-fil-A, NFM, Midwest Premier Beverage, inTouch Communications, PIP Marketing, Signs, Print, & Farm Credit Services

## **Community Collaborations & Fundraisers**

9/11 Stair Climb  
Back 40 Dogs  
Blue Knights International Law Enforcement Motorcycle Club  
Cones with Cops - Graley's Creamery and Confections with Papillion Police  
First Responders Race Team  
Girl Scout Spirit of NE  
ICAN  
K Rush It Golf Tournament, honoring Kevin Rush Spl Agent/Fire Investigator  
Kendra Scott Village Pointe  
Light Bridge  
Makers Mark Private Selection First Responders Barrel  
Marklin, Inc. - First Responders Foundation Model Train  
PTSD911 - A Documentary Film  
Share Omaha - Do Good Week & Giving Tuesday  
Southern Glazers Wine and Spirits  
Summit Media  
Tee It Up For The Troops Gold Tournament/JE Dunn Construction  
The Stranahan's Osopher - Spirits Network



## IN HONOR

Division of Intelligence and Fusion Center  
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Nebraska Order of the Eastern Star  
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## IN MEMORY

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### \$100,000 & ABOVE

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### \$50,000 - \$99,999

Hawks Foundation  
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### \$10,000 - \$49,999

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Nebraska Injured Brain Network  
Prime Time Healthcare  
Roy & Gloria Dinsdale Foundation  
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Sederstrom, Charles  
Woodmen of the World

### \$5,000 - \$9,999

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Allan & Ann Mactier Charitable  
Foundation  
American Legion Riders - Millard 374  
Applied Underwriters  
Basham, J Keith & Stephanie  
Boston Mutual Life Insurance  
Company  
Capitol City Ford and Mustang Club Inc  
Electrical Contractors  
Geist, Mark & Suzanne  
Highline Warren  
Hubka, Maxwell & Andrea  
HyVee  
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Olawsky, Larry  
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Scheels  
Seal-Rite Insulation Inc.  
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Please accept our apologies if we have  
inadvertently omitted a name.  
Every gift is important to us and greatly appreciated.

## DONORS CONTINUED

### \$1,000 – 4,999

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Allheart Strength, Health & Wellness LLC  
American Legion Riders - Lincoln Chapter  
Awaken Chiropractic  
B&D Turf Cars LLC  
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Nastase-Quade, Deborah  
Nebraska Furniture Mart  
Nebraska Realty  
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Nebraska Suicide Prevention Coalition  
Nelson Murphy Insurance & Investments  
Nelson, Robert & Betsy  
NP Dodge Co  
Omaha Broadmoor  
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Omaha Steaks  
Papillion Junior Woman's Club  
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Richard A. Shaw Fund  
Roffman, Silvia  
Ruck-it Up 4Warriors  
Scheels - Lincoln  
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Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits Charitable  
Starks, Katie  
Stinson, Kenneth & Ann  
Stolp, Carol  
Swanson Family Fund  
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Valmont  
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### \$500– \$999

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American Legion Auxiliary Eight District  
Bartelt, Jennifer  
Buckeye Partners LP  
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Knights of Columbus Assembly 2540  
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Patten, Kevin & Amy  
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Randels, Rob  
Ricketts, Joe  
Sides, Karen & Ronald  
Sorensen, Megan & Christopher  
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### \$100 - \$499

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Andersen Construction Company  
Armbruster, Amy  
Black Squirrel Investors LLC  
Black, David & Renee  
Blue Knights LEMC NE II  
Bohaty, Randy  
Bornemeier, Tim  
Bruggeman, Cindi  
Bruno, Patricia & Judie  
Burns, Matthew & Annette  
Butler, Michelle  
Cavey, Kelli & Scott  
Chatterson, Bridget  
Christians, Debbie  
Colella, Roger  
Corrigan, Patrick & Mary  
Crowe, Barbara  
Easley, Gregory  
Eichler, Robert  
Elbert, John  
Elkin, Otis & Sharon  
Engles, Ketchem, Olson & Keith PC

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Garrelts, Lyle & Deborah  
Godowski, Kathryn  
Hancock, John  
Hanson, Rose & James Jr  
Harrier, Bruce & Linda  
Hawk, Camille & John  
Headley, Desiree  
Hoffman, John  
Houlden, Cynthia & Tobin  
Hubka, Linda  
Independence Rising  
Intouch Communications Inc.  
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Lillegard, Hans  
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Lonbom, Kirk  
Maher, Brian & Susan  
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Niess, Debra  
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Willis, Elizabeth  
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# FIRST RESPONDERS FOUNDATION

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**Kearney, NE Chapter**  
**Sioux Falls, SD Chapter**

**To learn more about  
our impact and how to  
support our mission  
visit:**

[www.firstrespondersfoundation.org](http://www.firstrespondersfoundation.org)

