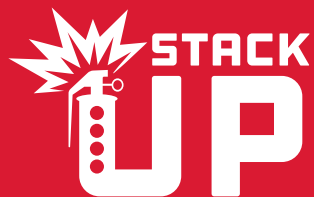





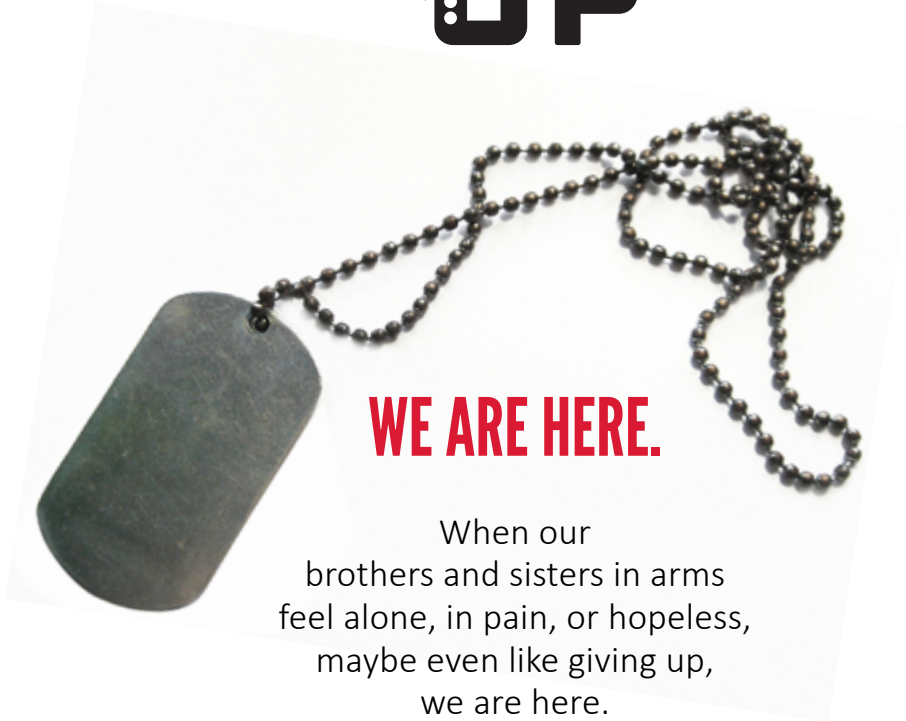
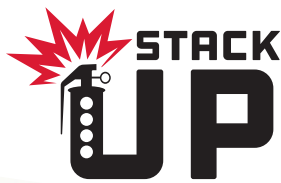
VETERANS ARE OUR MISSION.



**Strengthening Our Commitment**  
Community Report 2018

The background of the image is a solid red color. Overlaid on this is a faint, semi-transparent image of two soldiers in full combat gear, including helmets and carrying rifles, walking away from the viewer down a path in a field. The text is centered over the image.

Veterans have a  
suicide rate  
**50% higher**  
than those who  
did not serve  
in the military.



**WE ARE HERE.**

When our  
brothers and sisters in arms  
feel alone, in pain, or hopeless,  
maybe even like giving up,  
we are here.

That's what Stacking up is about.

## READY TO SERVE



### SUPPLY CRATES

Video game care packages for veterans  
and deployed troops around the world



### THE STACKS

Volunteer teams building supportive,  
game-loving communities for veterans



### AIR ASSAULTS

V.I.P. adventures for disabled or  
deserving veterans at home



### STACK UP OVERWATCH PROGRAM

An initiative to provide suicide prevention  
and promote positive mental health



# WELCOME



Dear friends,

We've come a long way since I boxed up my first used Xbox back in 2010 to ship to Afghanistan.

2018 will always mark the year that things changed dramatically for us at Stack Up, from just being a morale-building organization

providing game-filled Supply Crates and magical Air Assault trips, to one that is actively fighting the scourge of veteran suicide through our Stack Up Overwatch Program. We can look people in the eyes now and confidently say, "We are saving lives through gaming." That's a powerful statement, especially for a hobby that just a few years ago was ridiculed and laughed at by the population at large.

The Overwatch Program came about as a logical extension to having a digital chat room full of people, both veterans and civilians, playing games together with our Redshirt Raider gaming guild. It did not take long before the first community member came in and started talking about the bad day they were having and making jokes about planning on hurting themselves or others. Over time, another community member with these symptoms appeared. And another. And another. Finally, the guild leadership made a note of this phenomenon and brought it to my attention. I knew if we didn't put something in place, we were going to lose a member of this community.

Over 2018, we had almost 50 cases of both veterans and civilians in our community reaching out to our Psych Armor-trained counselors in our Discord chat asking for assistance, ranging from "I'm having a bad day and I need to talk" all the way to our team having to call local authorities to conduct a health and welfare inspection to remove weapons from an individual's house.

It was this unique take on mental health and the veteran suicide epidemic that got us the attention of the Center for Disease Control, scoring us our first federal grant for continued research into providing support to veterans in a place where they feel comfortable. As one of their clinicians noted recently while talking with the White House about Stack Up:

***"The fundamental concept of public health is to 'meet people where they are' and that is EXACTLY what you all are doing. It is not only innovative, it is a perfect example of how we need to look at where people are and find a way to engage them in THEIR comfort zone, by their rules, not force them into an uncomfortable space and expect them to open up and share their deepest, scariest, and what they may even consider shameful secrets."***

It's a dangerous addition to our mission lineup, taking responsibility and attempting to keep people from hurting themselves or others. It would be easy to turn a blind eye and hope for the best, but I also knew where inactivity would lead. And so, with our team's help, we continue to march forward, but with a new invigorating spring in our step. We look forward to all the people we can help with the Overwatch Program in the years to come!

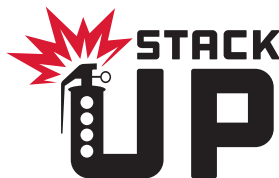
Thank you!



Stephen Machuga  
Founder/CEO, Stack Up



# ABOUT US



## OUR VISION:

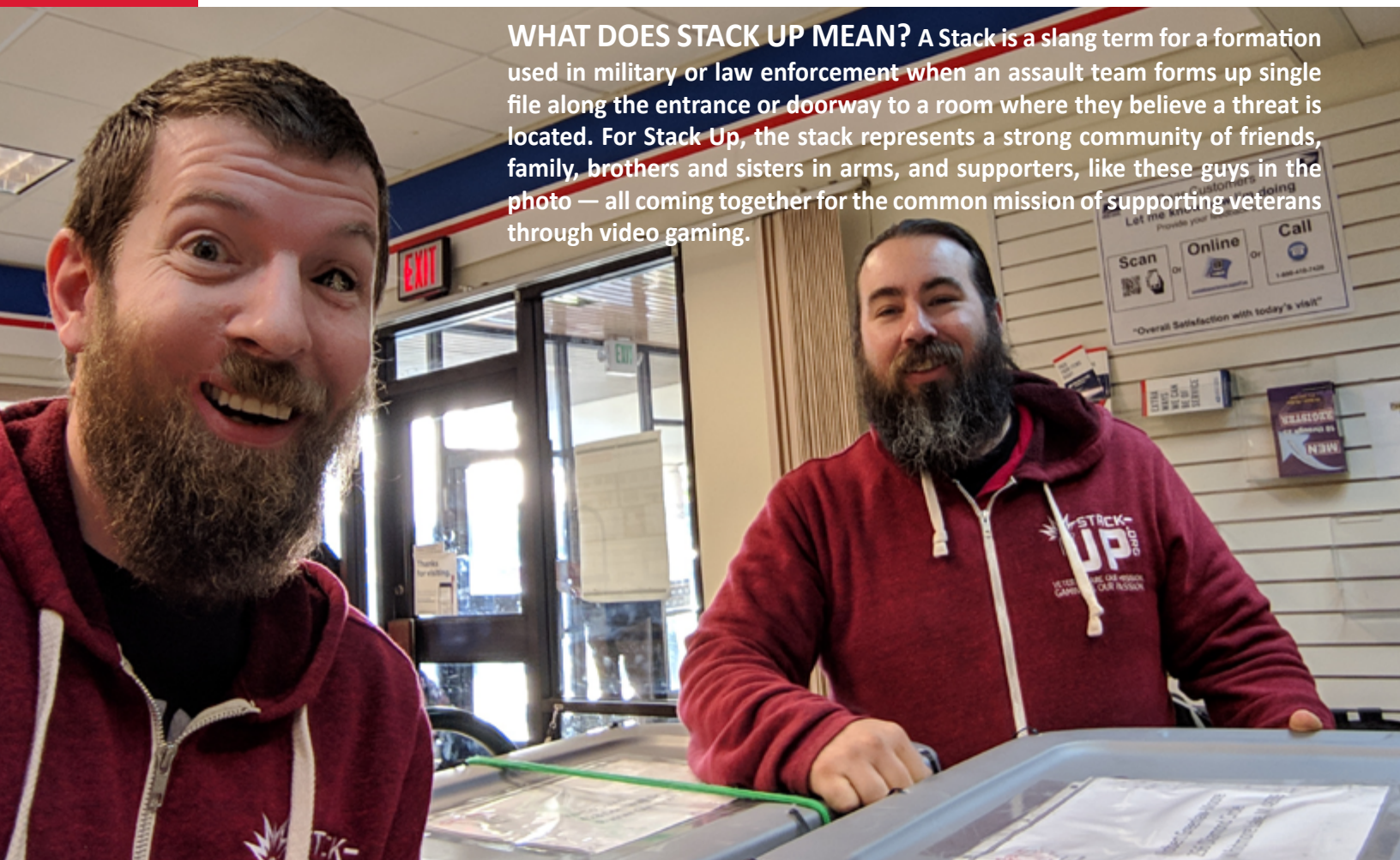
To eliminate extreme symptoms of trauma, stress, and isolation in military service members past and present.

## OUR MISSION:

To fight the effects of depression, combat injuries, and post-traumatic stress by bringing veterans and civilians together through the “shared language” of gaming.

Founded in 2015 by a combat veteran who personally experienced the positive impact gaming can have — emotionally and psychologically — on veterans, Stack Up is the only charity directly supporting the military and bringing together veterans and civilian supporters through the shared love of video gaming. Stack Up programs provide support and gaming benefits to U.S., NATO, Australian, and New Zealand veterans.

**WHAT DOES STACK UP MEAN?** A Stack is a slang term for a formation used in military or law enforcement when an assault team forms up single file along the entrance or doorway to a room where they believe a threat is located. For Stack Up, the stack represents a strong community of friends, family, brothers and sisters in arms, and supporters, like these guys in the photo — all coming together for the common mission of supporting veterans through video gaming.



# ABOUT OUR WORK



**STACK UP PROGRAMS MAKE VIDEO GAME GEAR  
AND EXPERIENCES MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR VETERANS  
AND ACTIVE DUTY MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY.**

## ***BUT, WHY?***

Stack Up's core programs all utilize video gaming to provide outreach, connection, community, and revitalization to our brothers and sisters in arms. We recognize these as some of the key components of assisting with trauma recovery, mental health maintenance, and healthy transitioning. Even before there were reports that confirmed the mental health benefits of video gaming, military folks knew. We knew it from personal experiences during active duty and in retirement. From that first-hand knowledge, the Stack Up mission was born.



## **STRENGTHENING OUR COMMITMENT**

With the ongoing veteran suicide crisis, we took our commitment to the next level by creating the Overwatch Program, which provides 24/7 crisis intervention and suicide prevention support for veterans. Using a private room within the Discord chat platform, staff and trained volunteers are able to quickly respond to veterans who reach out for help in this familiar, safe and easily accessible online gaming space. Many of the volunteers are veterans themselves and can relate to the issues that our Overwatch Program users face.

# ABOUT OUR WORK



## MEASURING SUCCESS WITH THE HELP OF CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION FOUNDATION PROGRAM EVALUATION GRANT

**Stack Up was recently awarded a \$20,000 grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Foundation's Veteran Suicide Prevention: Evaluation Demonstration Project.** The CDC Foundation is committed to preventing suicide among young veterans and found Stack Up programs to be aligned with their goals and preferred model of Community Connectedness. In particular, they found the Overwatch Program to be innovative and promising as it:

- provides mental health assistance through peer-to-peer support, engaging trained volunteers as well as clinicians;
- utilizes an already-existing, technologically sound, secure online platform well known among its target audience;
- meets veterans where they are, literally and figuratively – online with volunteers who are often fellow veterans;
- and is structured in a way that is highly accessible, scalable, and sustainable.

The logic model that describes how Stack Up's resources, activities, and outputs translate into positive outcomes that improve veteran mental health may very well be the future of crisis intervention and mental health assistance. Using the grant funding and following the CDC's evaluation framework, Stack Up will develop a plan for measuring the effectiveness of the Overwatch and Air Assaults programs. The infrastructure put into place through this project will assist with program growth and development, and may help inform other critical mental health research projects that focus on military mental health and peer-to-peer support as well as create opportunities for future collaboration with the CDC.

# IMPACT

In 2018, the growth of our programs continued to speak to the needs within our military community. To meet those needs, Stack Up programs provide a continuum of valuable support and gaming benefits not only when a member of our military family faces crisis, but all along their journey.

Who knows where those pivotal points occur where a supply crate of game gear, an online game night with family back home, or a gaming adventure with fellow military folks might make all the difference? Stack Up is committed to helping make that difference.

The impact of our overall programming can be seen in these 2018 service achievements:





There is no better way to share the value of our programs than to share the impact they have in the lives of veterans and active military personnel.

The next eight pages tell about our Supply Crates, Stacks, Air Assaults, and Overwatch programs, but more importantly, they tell personal stories of four veterans who have experienced healing and connection through these programs.

# VETERAN & PROGRAM STORIES





**BRADLEY**

Supply Crate Recipient

“

I am a Purple Heart recipient for wounds received in Afghanistan while conducting a Route Clearance mission along the Arghandab River Valley in 2009 as a Combat Engineer. Our mission was to search for and defeat the IED threat. My vehicle suffered a direct hit from an IED. My injuries resulted in 29 months at Walter Reed until I was medically retired.

In August of 2017, I was forced to amputate my left leg just below the knee due to a failed limb salvage.

My family and I enjoy spending time together outdoors, watching movies and playing games together.

With my recent amputation, it has been difficult to get out and play with my children. Last night, my daughter asked me if we could play Xbox together. The bonding that took place was something that I had missed and am so thankful to have back.

Thank you so much for this great package, I was completely surprised to see how much awesome gaming equipment was involved. Thank you to all of the donors and supporters that back this great organization.

Thank you so much.



# SUPPLY CRATES PROGRAM

*Video game care packages for veterans and deployed troops across the nation and around the world*



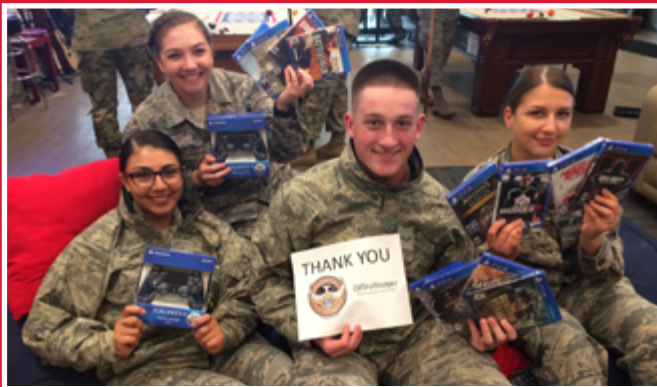
The Supply Crates program puts the joy and benefits of gaming directly into the hands of servicemen and women across the nation and around the world. Stack Up Supply Crates are filled with video gaming and nerd gear and sent to veterans deployed to combat zones, serving in humanitarian missions, recovering in military hospitals, or stationed on stateside bases. The program provides therapeutic respite to help reduce the impact of mental and physical trauma.

## ***Introducing PC “VETROFIT” Support***

As an exciting, boutique extension to our Supply Crate program, Stack Up is retrofitting veterans with Gaming PCs built from the ground up to help them connect with friends both old and new through the power of gaming’s most versatile platform.

PCs are built with all of the hardware needed to run today’s most demanding games and are sent to US and allied veterans all over the world.

It’s all part of Stack Up’s effort to provide the ultimate gaming experience for veterans so they may connect with others through the shared language of gaming!







Anthony  
Stacks Volunteer

“ I served in the United States Army. I left the service in 2013 and have always had a desire to reach out and help local veterans. I know how difficult it is for veterans transitioning out of service. I went to TwitchCon in 2015 thanks to a contest I won through GAEMS and on that day, I met the man, the veteran, the gaming nerd; Stephen Machuga. I had seen his Twitter account and he had followed me before TwitchCon. My initial conversation with him impressed me and I knew I had to work with him.

I joined Stack Up when it launched in 2015. This was where I wanted to be; among other like-minded veterans and Civilians. I am one of the founding members of the San Francisco Bay Area Stack, now the Sonoma County Stack. We started with Garrett, Brandon, Sam and myself, and a simple idea: homemade pizza, video games, and a meeting. That was the beginning of our hard charging ways. We were given the opportunity to begin hosting LAN Zone events at the Rohnert Park Veteran Center. This event became a cornerstone of our Stack. It started with Anthony bringing his own equipment to the events. Stack Up brought in additional equipment as the LAN Zone events had more veterans attending than we had equipment for.

Our Stack assisted the Morgan Horse Ranch with some manual labor. This labor was done to accommodate their equestrian therapy program for veterans. We worked together to volunteer in our local community assisting the Veteran Memorial Building by painting

their green room for their renovation project. Our Stack now provides veterans with a regular, monthly date for LAN Zone events at the Rohnert Park Veteran Center. Every fourth Friday, we will be hosting a LAN Zone event featuring Xbox Ones, Playstation 4s, Nintendo Switch, board games, and card games. We are always open to changing what we play. We feature one game per month and typically have the Nintendo Switch set up for anyone not wanting to partake in the featured game.

Our events are not just about playing video games, they're about camaraderie and connecting with local veterans. During our very first LAN Zone event, we had several veterans talking about the different therapies they have tried. It felt good...we were talking about issues that have been stigmatized and I knew this was exactly why we have these events.

In our mission to reach as many veterans as possible with Stack Up assistance, the Sonoma County Stack has been aided by The Rotary Club of Rohnert Park-Cotati and very soon, AMVETS Post 40. Partnering with local veteran organizations enables the Sonoma County Stack to continue its mission and promote the good work that Stack Up is doing for local and national veterans.





# THE STACKS PROGRAM

*Volunteer teams building supportive, game-loving communities for veterans*

The living extension of the passion behind Stack Up, The Stacks, are local volunteer communities on a mission to support veterans through the shared love of gaming. Stack volunteers help bring comfort and friendship to veterans coping with PTSD or transitioning back to civilian life.

There are currently 240 active Stack volunteers representing 45 Stacks around the world. Stacks host events that support veterans, participate with veterans groups, and help raise funds for and awareness of Stack Up.





JAROD

Air Assaults Selected Nominee

“

Greetings, my name is Jarod Schaefer. I joined the Army in March 2013 and am at the end of a six-year adventure. I deployed to Afghanistan stationed out of Bagram in 2015-2016 and served as a door gunner on the best helicopter known to man, the CH-47F.

Unfortunately, I wasted my back down range but I've found gaming provides a great deal of healing and fun. I PC game for entertainment but also I use it as exposure therapy. My current games played are Insurgency Sandstorm and Rust.

When I found out I was coming out to PAX, one of the major problems I had was I was isolating myself in my house. I was pretty much going to formation

coming home locking my door. It was pretty bad, and when Stack Up called me and said, "Hey, I want you to come out to PAX," I realized that, you know, I needed some practice before I did this. So I go out to my local Walmart and I just go walk around and get to the point where I wasn't quite so on guard, so it really helped me.

Thank you guys. There's not enough words or things I could say to thank all of you guys, the Stack teams, the streamers, enough. What you guys do is absolutely amazing...for everyone to come together and collaborate and do something like this is so heartfelt and I'm just so thankful to everyone. It was fantastic!





# AIR ASSAULTS PROGRAM

*V.I.P. adventures for disabled or deserving veterans at home*



Air Assaults are expense-paid adventures arranged by Stack Up to give disabled or deserving veterans the life-changing opportunity to attend major video game and geek culture events in VIP style!

In 2018, Stack Up's 11 Air Assaults flew 27 veterans to San Diego Comic-Con, E3, PAX East, PAX South, PAX West, TwitchCon, and GuardianCon.

Air Assaults reinforce appreciation and support for veterans while providing revitalization through connection, community, and fun.



## Video Games vs. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

- Researchers are corroborating that trauma sufferers have a significantly reduced number of flashbacks while focusing on a "highly engaging visual-spatial task" (i.e. video games).
- Profound therapeutic effect on soldiers in a war zone or those attempting to readjust back into society following a deployment.



Overwatch Program Participant

“ I started realizing, I am not okay. I tried to talk to friends, but I would talk myself out of it. I’d kind of sugar coat things, like, “I’m just a bitchy millennial, I think I’ll be fine.” But I got to the point where I was like, no. I’m not okay.

So, to combat that, I wrote up a whole document before I even jumped in to the StOP channel on Discord so I could be ready. I was like, “Hey, not to be dramatic or anything, but I’m not okay.” Rain hit me up, saying, “I’m here to talk with you, but you need to go talk to the V.A.”

He looked up the Dayton V.A. and gave me the number, the address and everything. He basically made me promise I’d go to the V.A. for help. My very first appointment, there were intake assessments and they set me up with some medication. Now I’m on a program for severe depression and severe PTSD. They put me on a weekly meeting program with a guy who’s also a Marine, which is helping me.

I think the validation was important, too. I look at my time, my service in the Marine Corps infantry... I went to Iraq in 09 and went to Afghanistan in 2010... and I know what I’ve done, what I’ve seen. But I have friends I’ve met through streaming and some guys I know that I trust... good friends who I know have been through worse than me. So for a long time, I told myself, “Dude, stop bitching, you’re

okay, you’re gonna be fine.” And for the longest time, I had this weird belief that depression is not a real thing. So, to have mental health professionals tell me, “No, you’re right, you’re not okay,” that validation was a huge deal for me. It made me feel better about my situation because I’m not crazy. I wasn’t just being a bitchy millennial.

The noticeable difference that I felt immediately is that I knew I was finally doing something about it.

On the StOP channel, it was helpful knowing that I could talk to them without being judged and I knew that even if they aren’t veterans, they’re willing to be there and that they’ve interacted with veterans enough to at least be understanding. That alone made the difference for me to come to StOP.

I love my wife and she’s wanted to talk to me, but there’s lots she wouldn’t understand, or I’d be afraid to divulge to her. I tried my school’s mental health clinic a few years ago, but they just listened to me and didn’t direct me anywhere or give me any tools to cope or to help change my mindset or anything. With StOP, they were willing to listen, but they also directed me somewhere to make it better.



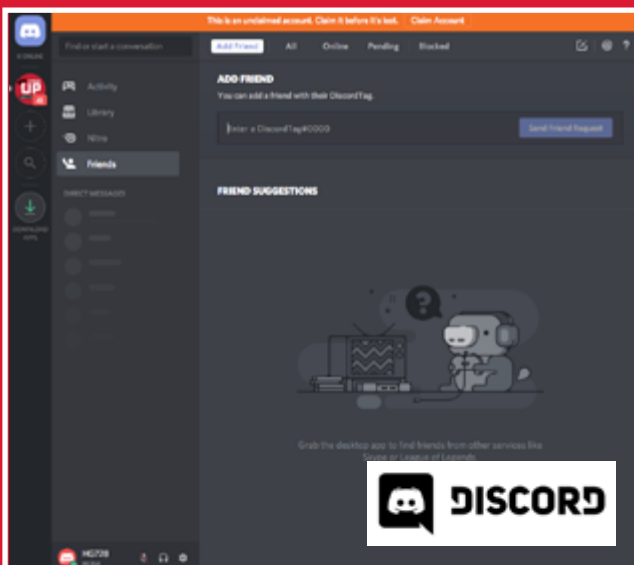


# STACK UP OVERWATCH PROGRAM (StOP)

*An initiative to provide suicide prevention and promote positive mental health*

Our Overwatch Program (StOP) provides veterans and military personnel with 24/7 access to crisis intervention, suicide prevention, and mental health resources and assistance.

StOP utilizes the Discord gaming platform for communication and engages our StOP Squad of trained veteran and civilian volunteers.



## Video Games vs. Soldier Suicide Epidemic:

- Suicides are at an all-time high: in 2013, suicides actually outnumbered the number of combat fatalities in Afghanistan (185 active duty Army suicides to 176 killed in action).
- Trauma has a way of isolating veterans; video games provide soldiers a friendly competitive social environment after duty hours.
- Veterans who leave the service generally have trouble connecting with their civilian counterparts; gaming acts as a shared language to help form relationships.

## The Story Our Numbers Tell

Our number one priority, as seen in our numbers, is serving veterans. Also seen in our numbers is the exceptional support our mission continues to receive from the video game industry and members of the video gaming community. Game gear donations increased by \$200,000 this year. These in-kind contributions help us to meet a large part of our service commitment to veterans and active duty military personnel. Also providing significant resources and fundraising support were hundreds of streamer friends who joined our Call to Arms campaign to raise more than \$150,000.

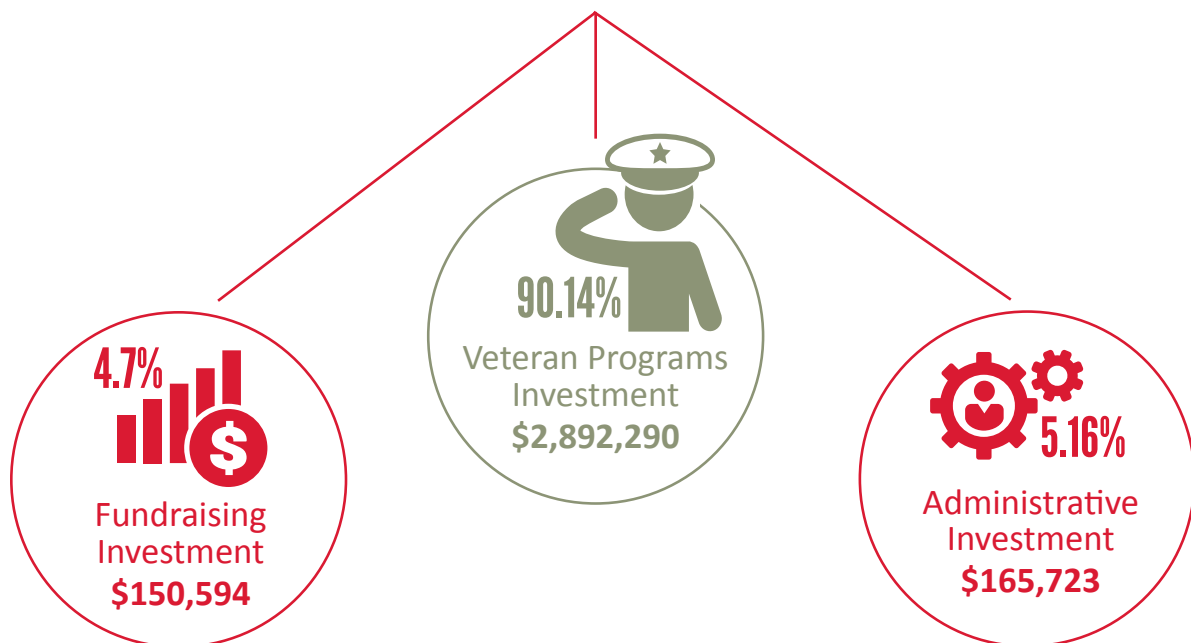
As we grow and enhance our service to veterans, it is important that we continue to invest in reaching the gaming and military communities, and beyond, with our message and with opportunities for engagement and support. Aimed at this goal, in 2018, we launched our first End of Year Giving appeal, "Stack Up for the Season." Through email and social media, this six-week campaign reached more than 3,500 subscribers with the Stack Up message and stories of veterans whose lives have been impacted by our programs.

2018 Revenue

**\$3,085,454**

2018 Expenses

**\$3,208,606**



# JOIN US!

## DONATE NOW

- **Make a monetary donation** to help get Supply Crates to deployed military personnel and to execute Air Assault missions for disabled and deserving veterans here at home.
- **Make an in-kind donation of games or downloadable game codes** to fulfill supply crate requests and to help deliver the “Home For The Holidays” program.
- **Participate in our “Call To Arms” game streaming program** to raise funds for and awareness of Stack Up programs.

## VOLUNTEER

- **Start or join a Stack** to help create welcoming and supportive communities for local veterans.
- **Become a Red Shirt Raider** to help support Stack Up’s online community.

## CONNECT WITH US

- **Visit us at [StackUp.org](http://StackUp.org) and sign up for our email newsletter**
- **Follow and Like us on social media!**



# MEET OUR STAFF

## STAFF

This year brought team additions including a full-time Overwatch Program Manager, an Influencer Manager, and a new Operations Assistant. With a solid and growing team, Stack Up is poised for another successful year serving veterans.



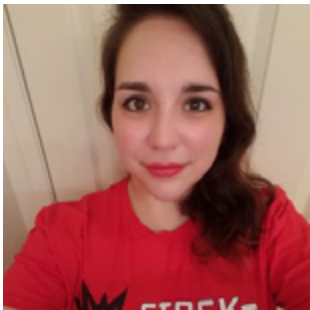
Stephen Machuga  
Founder/CEO



Dave Crouse  
Director of  
Veterans Services



Mat Bergendahl  
Overwatch Program  
Manager



Samantha Seegraves  
Operations Assistant



Brian Snyder  
Director of  
Communications



Chris Case  
Influencer Manager



Daniel Wise  
Stacks Program  
Manager



Amy Fazio  
Development  
Consultant



Cherie Kisla  
Chief Financial Officer  
Consultant



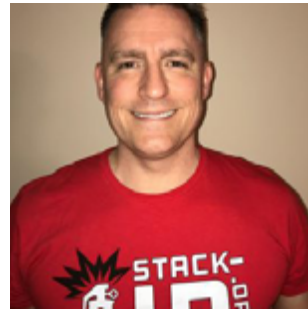
# MEET OUR BOARD

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

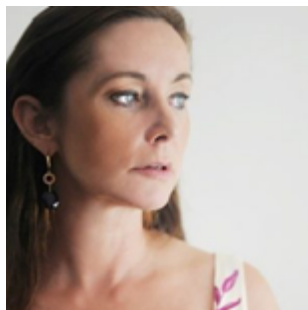
The members of our Stack Up Board of Directors are some of the gaming industry's most knowledgeable and innovative leaders. We are grateful for their commitment, care, and talent, and we look forward to a stellar 2019 with their continued guidance.



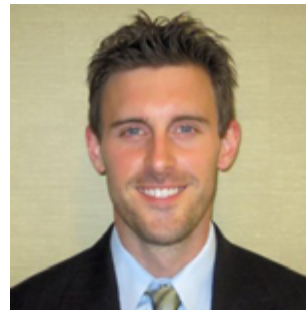
Robert Brown  
Stride PR  
Board Member



Mike Lavigne  
U.S. Army  
Board Member



Louisa Spring  
SAM immersive  
Board Member



Evan Uselton  
FFC Capital Corporation  
Board Member



Jimmy Whisenhunt  
Twitch  
Board Member

# THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

We are pleased to honor and recognize all of the supporters who made donations in 2018. It is care and generosity such as this that helps to sustain Stack Up so that we are able to continue our important work.

Donations can be made online at [StackUp.org](http://StackUp.org) or checks can be made out to Stack Up and mailed to Stack Up at: 14913 West Navarre Way, Office #1, Los Angeles, CA, 91342.

## GOLD: \$10,000 +



Cahlaflour



GryphonAMX



Oculus



Offworld Industries Ltd.



Palmer Luckey



The Astro Pub

## SILVER: \$5,001 - \$9,999



7th Calvary Gaming



Mulehorn Gaming



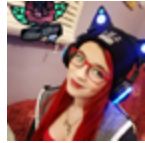
Ogr3Magi

# THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

## BRONZE: \$1,000 - \$5,000



BJPOfficial



Briar\_Rose



Captain\_Richard



DammitRooster



DeeJayKnight



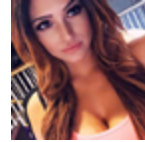
DefiantReaper



Gunz



itsPlanB



JayCGee



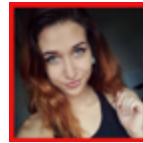
JBisHere



JonsAtWar



KaraCorvus



Khaljiit



LadyAderissa



MaryJLeeeee



Matoro



Mitauchi



NerdShowAndTell



Shinokerah



Snake\_Eater\_Co



Soul3ater



StreamLabs OBS



Uniformed  
Gaming

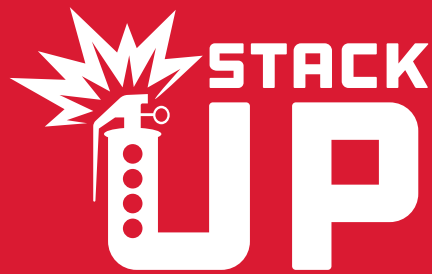


Warframe  
Community

We invite you to  
**STACK UP WITH US!**



Together, we can make a real difference in the lives of veterans.



**Veterans Are Our Mission. Gaming Is Our Passion.**

14913 West Navarre Way | Office #1 | Los Angeles, CA, 91342

**StackUp.org**