



SongwritingWith:Soldiers®

BUILDING CREATIVITY, CONNECTIONS AND STRENGTHS

Founded 2012

- // One percent of the U.S. population serves in the military
- // Since 9/11, the U.S. has been at war—longer than any time in its history
- // Many veterans do not seek services after returning home from combat
- // An average of 22 veterans commit suicide every day

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There aren't enough words to express the freedom I am experiencing since the retreat. My heart is lighter and my head is held higher. Not an hour goes by that I'm not singing a line or two from the songs we wrote and shared.

MAJOR ARPINEE SARKISIAN
U.S. Army



// MISSION AND PURPOSE

SongwritingWith:Soldiers transforms lives by using collaborative songwriting to expand creativity, connections and strengths.

SongwritingWith:Soldiers delivers programs including weekend retreats and custom sessions for veterans from all conflicts. The first retreat was held in 2012 near Fort Hood, Texas with eight veterans. The bonding, the songs, the impact were so powerful that there was no turning back.



Since then, retreats and songwriting sessions have been held across the U.S. with hundreds of veterans and military families connecting, sharing their experiences and writing songs with professional songwriters. Their songs have been recorded and shared through thousands of downloads from our site, reaching and connecting more veterans and raising civilian awareness of the challenges the military community faces.

WHAT WE ARE //

// PARTICIPANT CENTERED

Small group sessions provide more direct connection and make it harder to become anonymous and disappear. There is an immediate, “You matter.”

// POSITIVE FOCUS

Before, during and long after the retreat we provide a supportive, non-judgmental, inspiring environment based on positive psychology tools that help build creativity, connections and strengths.

// EVIDENCE-BASED

Evidence-based program with collaborative songwriting intervention led by acclaimed, professional songwriters trained in the SW:S Program.

// SUSTAINED CONNECTIONS

Lifelong memories are savored and shared through photo books, songs and videos that capture the retreat, along with post-retreat group calls; online creativity courses and songwriting sessions; live events and volunteer opportunities—all serving to strengthen the community and sustain connections.

// NEUTRAL GROUND

We meet participants where they are as human beings. We focus on building creativity, connections and strengths to inspire positive personal growth. We are not a music therapy program, nor affiliated with the military, or any political, religious organizations.

We use collaborative songwriting to build:

CREATIVITY

Discover more possibilities

CONNECTIONS

Be part of a community

STRENGTHS

Gain resilience to move forward



My family can hear my song and understand what I've been through.

SERGEANT JAIME SANTIAGO,
U.S. Army



Every veteran should have this opportunity!

CURT CAMPBELL, SSA
U.S. Marine Corps



OUR PROGRAMS //

RETREATS At the heart of our SongwritingWith:Soldiers offerings are the three day retreats. Held around the country, each retreat is structured around songwriting, creativity workshops and relaxation to spark and fuel positive connections. Our highly-skilled recording engineers, photographers and videographers capture all the songs, performances and activities. Post retreat, participants receive a gift package with all song recordings, performance videos and a photo lyric book to help preserve memories from the weekend. A lasting reminder of their experience and a multi-faceted tool to help share their stories—long after the retreat has ended.

CUSTOM COLLABORATIVE SONGWRITING SESSIONS These custom sessions are designed to meet partner organizations' specific delivery, evaluation and research needs, such as the 1-day SW:S Collaborative Songwriting Module incorporated into the Warrior PATHH 7-day curriculum.

SW:S ONLINE SESSIONS Both group and individual songwriting sessions take the SW:S mission online, allowing us to reach many participants unable to attend our onsite programs. In addition, group online follow-up songs reunite participants and spark memories of their retreat.

CREATIVE COMMUNITY COURSES In addition to our in-person programming, SongwritingWith:Soldiers has a thriving online community. Retreat alumni connect, learn, teach and share through courses and interviews with experts in areas such as songwriting, creative writing and tools for inspiration, visual arts, well-being, meditation, recording tips and more.

// PROGRAM OUTCOMES

SongwritingWith:Soldiers is considered a groundbreaking program by many, including veterans, military families, mental health professionals and researchers studying post-traumatic growth. We are helping to develop studies focused on how collaborative songwriting and positive psychology interventions can affect post-traumatic stress and overall veteran wellness.

The first study on the effects of the SW:S Collaborative Songwriting method on veterans was done in collaboration with physicians affiliated with Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), and conducted at Home Base, a joint program of MGH and the Boston Red Sox Foundation, collaboration with Harvard Medical School. The study found the SW:S Collaborative Songwriting sessions to significantly reduce PTSD symptoms (-33%) and Depressive symptoms (-25%).

RESULTS FROM LONG-TERM STUDY OF SW:S PARTICIPANTS

77% INCREASED FEELINGS OF HOPE AND OPTIMISM

83% INCREASED CREATIVE PURSUITS

78% INCREASED CONNECTIONS WITH OTHERS

100% WOULD RECOMMEND TO OTHER VETERANS

We continue to expand our partnerships and offerings and have now delivered programs in Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Maine, New York, South Carolina, Texas, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington and more.



Trauma is a wordless state of being. This leads to being out of sync, out of tune with other people's feelings. SW:S puts people in sync with each other through music and connections, generating positive vibrations on many levels. Research is showing the beneficial effects of strengthening our rhythmical connections with others. I love what SW:S is doing.

BESSEL VAN DER KOLK, MD

Founder and Medical Director of the Trauma Center in Brookline, Massachusetts



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Whenever I need a reminder of what I can do, I just push play.

SERGEANT JOSH GEARTZ,
U.S. Army



With more than 700 songs written, the SongwritingWith:Soldiers catalog is a vital, growing collection of stories from contemporary military life in our country.

The stories are varied. Often difficult. Always honest. Whether

about combat and loss or the challenge and strength of keeping families close during and after deployment, the cathartic joy of releasing the stories through song is boundless. To do so through collaboration with a civilian is revealing—and transformative.

Each and every veteran gets to hear their song performed at the end of a retreat. They see others listening, feeling and relating to their song and they often say, “I thought I was the only one who felt this way.”

Their songs can all be found on our website where they can be heard, downloaded and shared around the world, allowing others to benefit from their powerful message.



// THE SONGWRITERS



SongwritingWith:Soldiers brings together professional songwriters who are masters in the art of collaboration. They bring years of experience to this work. Many of them have won Grammy awards, written #1 songs or had their songs on albums that sold millions of copies.

Here are just a few of our writers and the list continues to grow:

Michael Bradford, Gary Burr, Beth Nielsen Chapman, Jay Clementi, Ashley Cleveland, Radney Foster, Mary Gauthier, James House, Will Kimbrough, Georgia Middleman, Danny Myrick, Gary Nicholson, Terry Radigan, Darrell Scott, Maia Sharp, and Darden Smith

Collaborative songwriting is powerful and demanding. Our songwriters take the service members' words, their stories and phrases and together with the participant craft the lyrics. Melodies are created on the spot. The participants want their story told. The writers want to tell the truth. The resulting songs are collaborations in the purest sense.

After the retreat, all the participants' songs are registered with ASCAP with each participant listed as co-writers.

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My song turned out to be one of my most important achievements during my military transition into civilian life. It let me focus on my story, obstacles in life as well as reflections which I had a hard time expressing. I can't wait to share it with family and friends.

STAFF SERGEANT MARCIN BUDNIK,
U.S. Army Ranger

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Your program gave me the opportunity to consider what living could be like if I had courage. You gave me the inspiration and a gift (via 'permission') to hope for a future.

CAPTAIN ANNMARIE HALTERMAN,
U.S. Army

Your support will help us:

- // **Train additional program teams and songwriters, enabling us to hold more retreats and post-retreat offerings for veterans and their families.**
- // **Connect to research and advocacy in order to develop best practices for post-traumatic growth and integration of military experiences into civilian life.**
- // **More actively distribute the music to build connections and awareness around the globe.**

With your help, we can be sure veterans are feeling heard, more hopeful and supported.

OUR PROGRAM HAS BEEN FEATURED IN

Los Angeles Times CBS THE WALL STREET JOURNAL  The New York Times npr The Washington Post



Please help support our work and donate.

SongwritingWithSoldiers.org

For more information:

songwritingwithsoldiers.org/contact

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