



SongwritingWith:Soldiers.

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The Power of Connections



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# The Power of Connections



## The Power of CONNECTIONS

by Mary Judd, Co-founder and Board Member, SongwritingWith:Soldiers

Sometimes we don't know we are embarking on a great adventure until we are well into it. Those simple choices, early decisions, and serendipitous connections send us on our way even before we know something remarkable is coming together. Often it is a matter of just saying "Yes" to the small things, before we realize they have the potential to create connections that change lives.

In 2011, my friend Margaret Bentley met songwriter Darden Smith and remembered that he and I had been classmates in middle school. From that chance meeting, she reconnected us after more than 20 years. Within a month, I traveled across the country to observe and write about Darden writing songs with post 9/11 veterans. I was already deeply involved in research related to happiness, well-being, strengths, and the life-saving importance of community. Our backgrounds and experiences led us to the audacious decision to put our skills into practice and that practice became SongwritingWith:Soldiers.

Sometimes, with little consideration, we let an opportunity for connection slip by. What if Margaret hadn't put two old friends back in touch? What if I hadn't caught a plane to observe Darden writing a song? What if we hadn't decided to gather friends and colleagues to provide multi-faceted, hands-on support for our first retreat and onward to sustain this important work? (Margaret, a poet, was the first volunteer and went on to become a program advisor and workshop presenter; Gary Leopold, a colleague of Mary's, has served on the Board of Directors for 8 years, 6 as President!) So many of you reading this have been instrumental in getting us to where we are today — our 10th Anniversary!

Often we choose not to do something because we can't quickly justify it to ourselves. What if we considered our inklings as sparks or seeds that create opportunities to enrich not only our own lives but also the lives of others? The potential for connection and creating positive change exists infinitely around us. We have seen this firsthand at SongwritingWith:Soldiers. We are continually awed by the power of connections.

If *each one of us* hadn't been open to making these connections and the possibilities they represented, SongwritingWith:Soldiers never would have existed. The stories that follow in this book — stories of hope, bravery, compassion, selflessness, lives changed, even saved — would never have happened.

We hope this book helps you become ever more aware of your own connection to SongwritingWith:Soldiers and that it provides personal inspiration, too. Take time to connect to your heart, to your creativity, to play, in ways that delight you — find ways to share it with others. The possibilities are limitless. And, oh, the rewards!

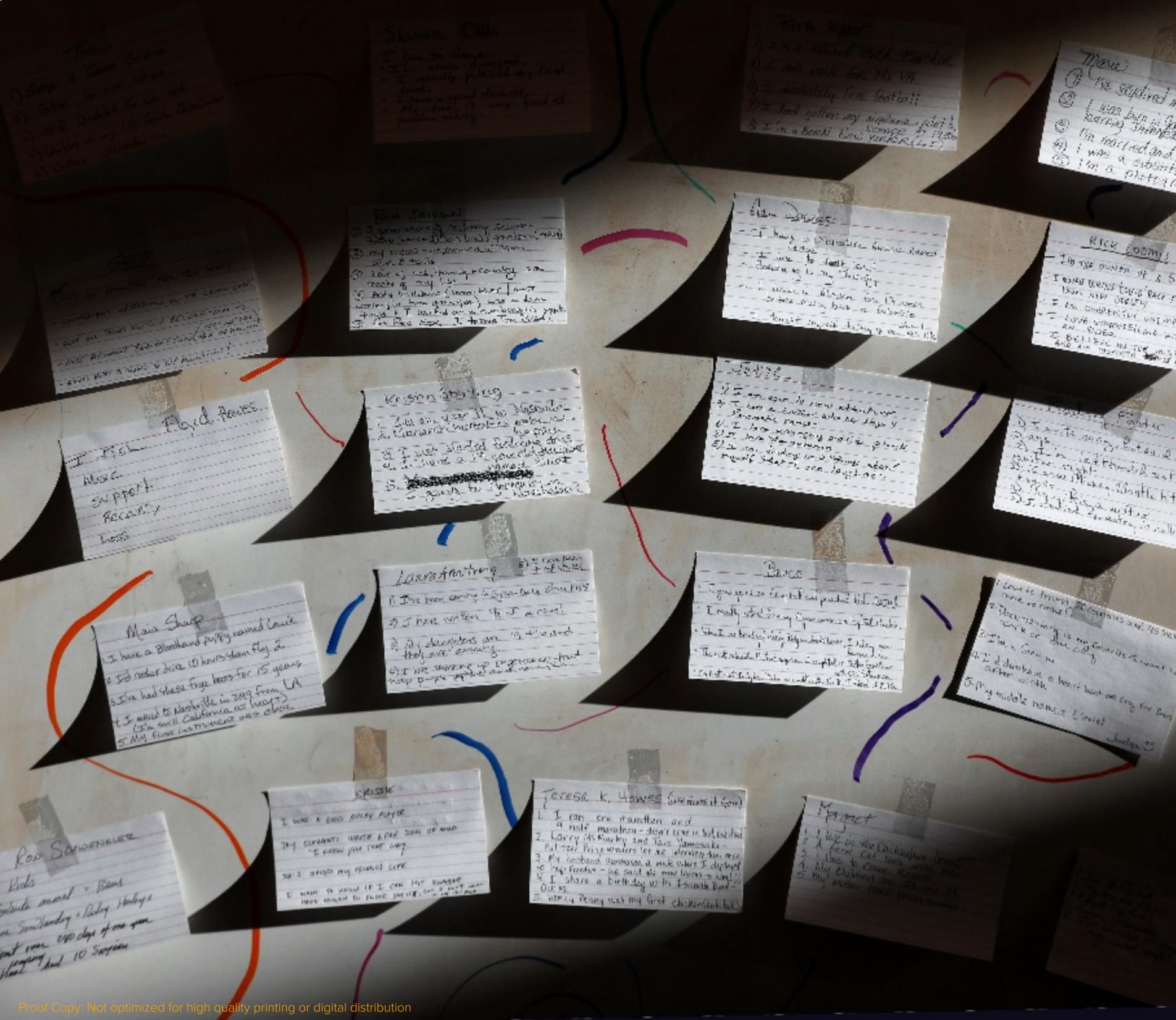
Closing circle at the first SongwritingWith:Soldiers retreat in Belton, TX in October 2012.  
Photo: Andy Dunaway



# Connections Matter

Stories from Our Community

Photo: Rick Loomis



## Five Things About Me

SongwritingWith:Soldiers retreats are meticulously planned so that all involved – the participants, the facilitators, and the organization – have the opportunity to fulfill our mission to build creativity, connections, and strengths.

“Five Things About Me” is a subtle, but important component of each retreat. It occurs just after our Friday night introductory dinner and before we move into the songwriters’ casual jam where introductions are made and they share some of their own songs. Everyone involved in the retreat writes five things about themselves on an index card – any five things. The cards are displayed in a prominent location during the retreat so that all may stop by to get a little more insight into each other. Participants may note their hometown. Songwriters, their first song. Facilitators, why they are drawn to their work. But it can go much deeper! This important exercise allows us to meet each other on our own terms and sparks interest and connections we might never have discovered over a busy retreat weekend.

“Hey! I see you like bike riding. I rode across my state one summer!”

“What? You can mimic a female elk call? Tell me more!”

“You’re a bodybuilder AND a grandmother?”

“French was your first language? Where did you grow up?”

Not only do these rich descriptions introduce us to each other, but we take a moment as we fill out our cards to be reintroduced to *ourselves*. We recognize that yes, we have some remarkable interests, skills, accomplishments.

Let’s share!

Five Things About Me index cards.  
Photo: Rick Loomis



## I Need To Tell My Story

SongwritingWith:Soldiers works hard to ensure that each retreat is convened in a location that inspires creativity, connections, and strengths. The sites must have natural beauty, accessibility, few distractions, and good food. These factors are especially important when participants are asked to come together on Friday night for the first group writing session. Everything and everyone is new. We must create a safe, inspiring space for each person to feel comfortable enough to take some chances, speak from the heart when asked questions such as:

*“How far have you traveled to be here right now?”*

*“What kept you inspired to leave your home and what is familiar to you?”*

*“Why did you decide to join us here this weekend?”*

Often, the response is the same:

*“I need to tell my story.”*

Each participant has their own story to share. That is a given. What is exciting for the facilitators and songwriters, is that through experience, we know they will discover how important it is to hear each other’s stories too.

Our retreats are designed to keep all the pathways open and supportive. With each song that is written, vulnerabilities are shared and with each song that is heard, we learn we have so much more than we ever imagined in common. Connections are made through both writing and witnessing. After the retreat, the ripples increase and continue to spread as more connections are made by sharing the songs.

The pressing need to tell their story was never more apparent than at a retreat in Smithville, TN in June 2021 where six veterans collaborated with songwriter Jay Clementi to pen the appropriately titled, “I Need to Tell My Story.” With that song, the connections immediately strengthened and continue to carry on today.

Music Director Jay Clementi capturing the lines for the first group song, June 2021.  
Photo: Ed Rode

## I Need To Tell My Story

Ledel White / Jeff Wilson / Raymond Moore / David Cagle / Scuba Steve Holt / Milton King / Jay Clementi

Want you to see the true me  
Understand what I'm going through  
I'm tired of feeling all alone  
Got nothing and everything to prove

I need to tell my story  
I have a lot to say and I don't know how to say it  
I need to tell my story  
I've got lot of pain and I can't make it  
Go away, honestly, I just think,  
I need to tell my story

I want the ones, that never listened - to start  
And stop saying I'm broken  
I'm putting together, the pieces I'm missing  
Get rid of that guilt I'm holding, and heal my soul

I need to tell my story  
I have a lot to say and I don't know how to say it  
I need to tell my story  
I've got a lot of pain and I can't make it  
Go away, honestly, I just think,  
I need to tell my story

My body was there  
But my soul was long gone  
I did my family wrong,  
Now I just want to make it back home

I need to tell my story  
I have a lot to say and I don't know how to say it  
I need to tell my story  
I got a lot of pain and I can't make it  
Go away, honestly, I just think,  
I need to tell my story  
I need to tell my story





## Square Wheels

*“When I returned home from the retreat, I founded Uniting US, an arts organization to help veterans and civilians connect to each other, create and exhibit their art.”*

– AnnMarie Halterman, U.S. Air Force, Retired

*“I was at the lowest point in my life when I heard about the SongwritingWith:Soldiers retreat in 2017. I decided to attend with two of my best friends, both military, because I thought it would be a good way to spend time with them before I, you know... said goodbye.*

*“When I sat down to write with Georgia Middleman, she asked who I was behind the sunglasses. I finally admitted that I had been thinking about that a lot lately and felt so stuck, like a broken bicycle that had square wheels, nowhere to go. I had even made a tiny bicycle with square wheels and showed it to her. She said, ‘Let’s write about Square Wheels. Maybe there is a path where square wheels can move, and maybe there are others on that path, too?’*

*“Talking that openly was painful, but within an hour we had a song, called ‘Square Wheels’ and I had an entirely new view of my life – not just my rocky past, but a possible future path waiting for me.*

*“That songwriting session and the creativity and strengths workshops at the retreat changed me. I felt, firsthand, the power of working with others to create something so personal, so beautiful. Before I left, I made a little bicycle out of wire at the retreat, a symbol of hope and authenticity. When I returned home, I co-founded Uniting US, an arts organization to inspire, empower, and unite military, veterans, their families and the communities in which they live through multiple forms of art.*

*“By spring of 2021, I was traveling extensively, collecting works of art from veterans around the country – many I had met through SW:S – for a series of exhibits in Washington DC. including the Women’s Military Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery, the Library of Congress, Dulles International Airport. People from around the world were able to see our creations, hear our stories, and be inspired to connect through art, too.*

*“Another dream-come-true was gathering several Uniting US veteran artists for an online songwriting session with SW:S songwriter Gary Burr. To see other veterans, artists, getting to express their challenges, victories, and support of each other, through song, was yet another gift for which I am truly grateful. We have so much ahead, so many more connections to maximize.”*

AnnMarie Halterman writes with Georgia Middleman, Texas, 2017.  
Photo: Matt Lankes

# Square Wheels

AnnMarie Halterman / Georgia Middleman

Sometimes I feel like a broken bicycle  
I keep trying to pedal but I can't make it roll  
I wanna ride to my future, can I get there or not  
How do you do that when all that you've got (are)

Square wheels, square wheels  
To move forward  
Everyone thinks that they need to be round  
But sometimes you've got to be broken  
Before you can finally be found  
With square wheels  
You just gotta find the right ground

A path full of pebbles may be all that I need  
'Cause the surface don't matter; it's what's underneath  
And it weaves like a staircase but it gives me support  
This road may not look safe but it's perfect for

Square wheels, square wheels  
To move forward  
Everyone thinks that they need to be round  
But sometimes you've got to be broken  
Before you can finally be found  
With square wheels  
You just gotta find the right ground

Where I'm going I'm not so sure  
But one thing I know to be true  
Is this road didn't appear out of nowhere  
And I'm betting...others are riding it too

Square wheels, square wheels  
To move forward  
Everyone thinks that they need to be round  
But sometimes you've got to be broken  
Before you can finally be found  
With square wheels  
You just gotta find the right ground

Square wheels, square wheels  
You just gotta find the right ground





## Beyond Words

*“He did not know such experiences could be put into words.”*

— Richard Erickson, Ch, Brig Gen, USAF, retired

The son of a WWII Navy hero, Richard Erikson, a retired Air Force Brigadier General and Chaplain, has spent his life connecting with veterans. Early in his career, while at Maxwell Air Force Base, he met local parishioners who just happened to be the parents of SW:S songwriter Beth Nielsen Chapman.

*“Beth’s parents all but adopted me!” he told us after a recent retreat. “I had never met Beth so when my father wanted to attend his ship reunion in Nashville, I knew we had to go and also meet Beth. As we talked, Beth told us about SongwritingWith:Soldiers and played two songs she’d written at retreats (‘Never Really Made it Home’ and ‘War After the War’). My father, then 93, said he had never heard such music in his lifetime. When we left, I asked my father what he meant. He said he did not know such experiences could be put to words.”*

Those words hit home. Richard contacted SW:S about participating in our program. The pandemic thwarted his initial attempts, but Richard persisted and was able to attend a retreat in October 2021.

*“I’d been thinking about my deployment to Iraq in 2004, inspired by the great reverence we showed our courageous sisters and brothers who were killed in action. Hundreds of troops gathered to receive and honor the fallen during these ‘Patriot Missions’. A chaplain is always present to render honors, offer prayers, and provide comfort, serving every person regardless of her or his religious beliefs.*

*“The retreat was a time of great solidarity and creativity. I was grateful to be able to articulate what it means to be a medical group chaplain at war. It was such an honor to be paired with Jay Clementi for my writing session that resulted in our song, ‘Born to Bless the Fallen’.”*

Richard continues to connect by sharing his story, and now his song.

Richard Erickson comforts a family.  
Photo Courtesy of: Richard Erickson

# Born To Bless The Fallen

Richard Erickson / Jay Clementi

I'm the loving reminder of the holy  
Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines all come to me  
I'm the promise we'll leave no one behind  
I'm there when the flicker of life leaves their eyes

I'm the last face they see before the face of God  
I give them peace and comfort as they're moving on  
Their souls are set free from the burden and the pain  
I send them off to heaven but the hurt remains  
I'm at the mercy of my calling  
I'm born to bless the fallen

I pray over them with the words written in red  
There's a two-thousand-dollar bounty on my head  
Nobody sees them when they look at me  
My wounds are always here, they're just too deep to see

I'm the last face they see before the face of God  
I give them peace and comfort as they're moving on  
Their souls are set free from the burden and the pain  
I send them off to heaven but the hurt remains  
I'm at the mercy of my calling  
I'm born to bless the fallen

They showed no greater love, fought to the end  
I'd do it all a thousand times again, be there for them

I'm the last face they see before the face of God  
I give them peace and comfort as they're moving on  
Their souls are set free from the burden and the pain  
I send them off to heaven but the hurt remains  
I'm at the mercy of my calling  
I'm born to bless the fallen





## Teens With A Mission

One of the most common feelings among service members and their families is, *“nobody understands what it’s like.”* They often feel disconnected from others within their families and beyond. SongwritingWith:Soldiers has held several retreats over the years to help military families share their experiences and reconnect to each other, and afterwards, to their own communities.

At every retreat we witness the growth of connections – first through the songwriting, then through the sharing of the songs, through learning together at creativity workshops, meditation, conversation and relaxation on beautiful grounds.

On the final day of a SW:S retreat for military families, the teenagers bonded for a mission of their own. They pulled songwriters Jay Clementi and Darden Smith aside and opened up about unexpected difficulties faced when a parent returns home after combat. *“A simple event like a screen door slamming can set off a torrent of fear,”* one revealed.

Within two hours, with their astute observations and deep feelings finally expressed, *“The Battle Rages On”* was created and recorded, all the teens singing along. No holding back. The teens had a song that their parents could hear, a song they could talk about as a family, a song they could all sing, together, and later share with others.

Through connecting, these teens gave their families an enduring expression of what holds them together, what makes them unique.

At the same time, all of these songs written by military families comfort and inform us all. This is the power of art, its ability to capture the truth of our shared humanity.

Through song, we can all connect.

Military family teenagers Jelly Estrada, Alexis, Emmett, and Sydney Wilson sing the song they wrote with Darden Smith and Jay Clementi at a retreat in Virginia, August 2014.  
Photo: Tyler McQueen

# The Battle Rages On

Jelly Estrada / Alexis, Emmett, and Sydney Wilson / Darden Smith / Jay Clementi

I will never know what it's like  
To be fired on at night  
Scared to the bone  
But ready for the fight  
All I can see—  
Slammed door hit the floor just can't take it anymore

The battle  
Rages on  
Even at home  
When the bullets and the bombs and the patriotic songs are gone  
The battle rages on

Soldiers say goodbye  
To their wives and kids  
Everybody knows  
It could be months before we see'em again  
All I see—  
Slammed door thunder roars they just aren't the same anymore

We know the battle  
Rages on  
Even at home  
When the bullets and the bombs and the patriotic songs are gone  
The battle rages on

Daddy listen what I say it's all gonna be ok  
Daddy listen what I say it's all gonna be ok  
Daddy listen what I say it's all gonna be ok  
Daddy listen what I say it's all gonna be ok

We know the battle  
Rages on  
Even at home  
When the bullets and the bombs and the patriotic songs are gone  
The battle rages on





## Connecting To Home

Retired Army Colonel, Christine Rem, heard about SongwritingWith:Soldiers in 2017 through a friend who had donated to the program. *“Come with me to a concert this weekend,”* the friend had said. *“You will hear songs written by veterans.”*

Being a music lover, Chris was intrigued. Being a professor who works with veterans often struggling with transition issues, she was eager to hear what was expressed through song.

*“I was stunned,”* she said. *“It is hard to put into words. The beauty of the music. The relief I saw on the faces. Both the veteran who wrote the song and the others who related to it. And, unexpectedly, something within me knew I had to try to attend, too.”*

That concert connection was the first brick laid in a series of decisions Chris made that would impact countless lives. She attended the next retreat in Rensselaerville, NY and wrote “Eyes of a Deer” with Maia Sharp. The confidence Chris built through writing that song, attending retreat creativity workshops and group discussions led her to a prize winning performance in a poetry contest. *“I had never done anything like that before!”*

*“My passion since retiring from the Army has been helping fellow veterans. When my husband, Christopher, passed away (while active duty, Army) I knew I wanted to create something special to honor his memory and service. After the retreat, I had the inspiration to get going. I created the Capital District Women Veterans organization, and built Christopher House in Troy New York, a home for female veterans needing assistance.”*

Showing up.

Connecting through song.

Chris Rem exemplifies strength and compassion. Constructing homes to comfort and aide others. We are honored and humbled to share her story, to sing her praises here with you!

Christine Rem, Capitol District Women Veterans Ribbon Cutting for the Christopher House.  
Photo Courtesy of: Chris Rem

## Eyes Of The Deer

Christine Rem / Maia Sharp

He pursued her as a hunter  
Predator to prey  
Then he finally caught up to her  
At a sure fire range away

She was lined up, just a target  
Nothing he'd recognize  
But when she looked up directly at him  
He saw a child's eyes

Innocent reflection  
Silent sacrifice  
We bury our confession inside  
Cause no one wants to hear  
About the eyes of the deer

When we meet nobody's talking  
Till I say I've seen it too  
Then the borders, they start dissolving  
We can get to the getting through

We can stop the isolation  
Of thinking anyone is the only one  
What we pushed down into the darkness  
Can finally see the sun

Innocent reflection  
Silent sacrifice  
We bury our confession inside  
Cause no one wants to hear  
About the eyes of the deer  
About the eyes of the deer





## Micro Moments With Massive Impact

*“SongwritingWith:Soldiers showed me how to be happy again...  
how much micro moments of connection matter and what they can lead to.”*

– Sgt. Josh Geartz, U.S. Army, Retired

*“Welcome everyone to SongwritingWith:Soldiers’ Creatively Strong Interview. I am Josh Geartz, the Outreach Coordinator for SongwritingWith:Soldiers and I am here with Army Veteran and French Chef, Kenneth Sargent...”*

So began the second live interview Josh Geartz hosted for the SW:S online community. Josh had trained with SW:S co-founder Mary Judd to eventually host the series where guests (many from the SW:S community) discuss their creative pursuits and tips for staying motivated and connected long after retreats.

Josh has been active in our community since 2015 and his impact on the lives of many, veterans and civilians alike, continues to inspire. When he arrived at the NY retreat in November 2015, Josh knew the day, the time, and the way he was going to end his own life. By the second day of the retreat, Josh had battled through his silence to share a never-revealed story with songwriter Mary Gauthier. Within a few hours, the two had connected through trust and passion for music. Their song, “Still on the Ride” is the result.\*

This collaborative songwriting experience was the unseen bridge Josh needed to reconnect to himself. (Mary Gauthier says the same about herself and her songwriting purpose.)

Over the years since, Josh has shared the performance stage with Mary and his story with the world – through live audiences, television appearances and radio broadcasts. None of this could have been anticipated when Josh attended the retreat. But, once there he connected – like so many others who have been able to expand creativity, connections and strengths through our program.

Today, along with hosting interviews and harmonica workshops online for SW:S, Josh provides peer support at retreats, and advises other veterans who are wanting to connect with their communities. The impact of Josh’s connections – back to himself, to his peers and to the public community at large – have been life-saving for him, and life-changing for so many of us.

His story is one that represents many in our community. We are continually thrilled to keep you updated so you can share the celebration and support!

\*The song was included on Mary Gauthier’s Grammy nominated *Rifles and Rosary Beads* album, a collection of songs written with veterans and military families through SongwritingWith:Soldiers.

Josh teaches a harmonica workshop, November 2019.  
Photo: Brian Lasky

## Still On The Ride

Josh Geartz / Mary Gauthier

Looking back now who the hell knows  
Where the soul of a dead soldier goes  
Guardian angels, maybe they're true  
My guardian angel, maybe it's you

I shouldn't be here you shouldn't be gone  
But it's not up to me who dies and who carries on  
Sit in my room I close my eyes  
Me and my guardian angel we're still on the ride

Got holes in my eardrums bruises and clots  
Double vision, my stomach is always in knots  
Pain in my fingers I hurt from my head to my toes  
I wake up feeling like I'm 90 years old

I shouldn't be here, you shouldn't be gone  
But it's not up to me who dies and who carries on  
I sit in my room I close my eyes  
Me and my guardian angel, we're still on the ride

You were my brother you were more than a friend  
You were family to me right up to the end  
And you're still with me now, I feel you, I know  
You're pushing me forward and you'll never let go

I shouldn't be here, you shouldn't be gone  
But it's not up to me who dies and who carries on  
I sit in my room I close my eyes  
Me and my guardian angel, we're still on the ride





## Connections Help Pay It Forward

One of the most powerful things about making connections is that they continue to bear fruit long after the seeds are sown and can crop up in unexpected places.

A remarkable example of this is how longtime SW:S supporter, Danette (Kelly) Smith, reconnected with her middle school classmates, co-founders Mary Judd and Darden Smith. Like them, she had moved away and fallen out of touch after graduation until years later when she heard about SongwritingWith:Soldiers and wanted to find out more.

When Danette learned about an upcoming retreat in Belton, Texas, she reached out and asked how she could help. Mary replied, *“Come to the retreat concert. You can learn about the program, meet the veterans, and hear the songs they will have written over the weekend.”* Within minutes of arriving, Danette saw the results: the unexpected bonding between military members and civilians; the revealing, powerful stories shared through song; the relief and joy on so many faces, including her own. *“It is nearly impossible to describe what is happening here,”* Danette said.

What Danette witnessed changed her life. Since then, through her and her husband Randy’s generous support of SongwritingWith:Soldiers, the lives of many others have been changed.

But the connections don’t stop there. In fact, they keep multiplying, each time serving to pay it forward. Danette and Randy own a professional paintball team. Through that business they were introduced to a team of veteran paintball players led by Dwayne Pearce, an Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) specialist. This inspired Danette and Randy to make a donation to a charity of Dwayne’s choice which turned out to be longtime SW:S retreat partner, EOD Warrior Foundation.

Soon after, Dwayne and his wife, Sarah, learned about the SW:S couples’ retreats at a gathering Danette hosted that included the executive directors of both the EOD Warrior Foundation and SongwritingWith:Soldiers. And if you are wondering if a song came out of these multifaceted connections, the answer is a resounding YES! They attended a subsequent retreat and with songwriter Gary Burr, they wrote *Not Our Problem Anymore*.

Thank you, Danette, for connecting the Pearces to SW:S, and to everyone who keeps leveraging the power of connections and paying it forward in such creative ways!

Childhood friends Mary Judd and Danette Smith reconnect at Texas retreat.  
Photo: Michael O’Brien

# Not Our Problem Anymore

Sarah and Dwayne Pearce / Gary Burr

Yesterday my biggest fear was keeping friends alive  
Today I'm dragging trash cans to the bottom of the drive  
It's funny how your whole damn world can change with one plane ride

Between the calm and the chaos  
There's an everyday life where you'll find us  
We learned pretty quick not to sweat the small stuff  
Cause we've had big problems before  
It's gonna be an easy day, no doubt  
No matter how big the scrape, it'll buff out  
When the shit hits the fan, we all shout  
We either get it right or it's not our problem anymore

Yesterday I spent the day disposing roadside bombs  
Today I changed a light bulb, washed the car and mowed the lawn  
I start to look for trouble if it's quiet for too long

Between the calm and the chaos  
There's an everyday life where you'll find us  
We learned pretty quick not to sweat the small stuff  
Cause we've had big problems before  
It's gonna be an easy day, no doubt  
No matter how big the scrape, it'll buff out  
When the shit hits the fan, we all shout  
We either get it right or it's not our problem anymore  
We either get it right or it's not our problem anymore

I drop my pack...shed my skin  
Do my best to snap back in  
To the job that always waits for me  
To become the man I need to be





# The Universal Connector

*"I don't feel so alone..."*  
 – countless participants after a SongwritingWith:Soldiers retreat

When the late Dr. Chris Peterson, a Templeton Senior Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Center, was asked if he could sum up his research in one sentence, he said, *"Other people matter."*

At SongwritingWith:Soldiers we witness firsthand how other people matter and how our connections – to ourselves and to each other – are critical fuel for hope, for life. As statistics continue to show escalating levels of loneliness, depression, and suicide in the veteran communities, we remain committed to using collaborative songwriting to build creativity, connections and strengths and to build a more hopeful, joy-filled world.

We hope that through these stories, you feel closer to the powerful connections that have been sparked, sustained and amplified through SongwritingWith:Soldiers over the years. Our goal is to celebrate what has been built and sustained here and to remind each of you what a powerful part you have *and continue* to play!

As we all know well, when we connect and join forces, we are so much stronger. We can't wait to share our next collection of stories with you – on strengths!

An inspiring variety of continued friendships and connections.  
 Photos: Participants, Rick Loomis and Lauren Petracca



## In Gratitude

We are grateful for every donation that has ever been made to support our organization and the well-being of our veterans and their families. We would like to recognize the following gifts received January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021 and to extend our thanks to our donors and everyone who has helped us on this incredible journey .

### \$50,000 to \$75,000

Danette and Randy Smith<sup>🎵</sup> • Anonymous<sup>🎵</sup> • Franziska and Bruno Mancian<sup>🎵</sup>

### \$25,000 to \$49,999

Judith and Harry Ballan

### \$10,000 to \$24,999

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<sup>🎵</sup> denotes 10th Anniversary Multi-Year Gift

Participants from several retreats gather at a Mary Gauthier concert in Albany, NY.



## Special Thanks

*“We all wanna get our dance on, sing a song of hope. We’ve all got more common ground than we don’t…”*

– “Common Ground” Written by Nathan Covey and Jay Clementi

2021 reminded us of the importance of creativity in fostering connections, building community, and growing friendships along the way. We believe that the love and strength of SongwritingWith:Soldiers is a reflection of humanity’s desire to connect and grow forward together. As the song lyric above reminds us, *“We’ve all got more common ground than we don’t.”*

Together we can overcome anything.

We would like to extend a very special thank you to Mike, Cathy, Justin and Angela Godfrey of The Barilla Foundation.

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Boulder Crest Foundation • Wounded Warrior Project • Big Red Barn Retreat • Camp Southern Ground  
Gratitude America • Heart-J Center • The Permission to Dream Foundation • Randolph Business Resources  
Sheep Dog Impact Assistance • Travis Mills Foundation

We offer our sincere appreciation to the 2021 SongwritingWith:Soldiers  
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Closing circle at Evins Mill in Smithville, TN, June 2022.  
Photo: Rick Loomis



Many thanks to each of you who help make it possible for these songs to be written and shared.  
Together we are changing lives, one song at a time.

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Front Cover and Photo Above: Rick Loomis