Our Mission

Bastion provides a supportive living environment for injured veterans and families within our intentionally designed neighborhood by augmenting their care with clinical specialists, neighbors, and volunteers for a holistic approach to community integration.

Community as the Intervention

At Bastion, it is the relationships between community members that serves as the most crucial intervention for returning warriors. Our intentional community provides veterans with a sense of belonging, purpose, and social connectedness.
Contents

2 Letter from the Executive Director

3 Our Residential Impact

4, 5 Resident Spotlights

6 Headway By the Numbers

7 Headway Participant Spotlights

8 Featured Community Events

9 Community-Led Resources

10 Community Wellness

11 Looking Ahead

12 Our Board
Dear Friends of Bastion,

It’s been six months since the residents of Bastion welcomed me into their community, and every day still feels like a dream come true. I first learned of Bastion eight years ago after finishing nearly a decade as a Marine officer, most of that overseas. I was so glad to come home to New Orleans, but in taking off the uniform, I was surprised to feel such a sense of loss - like the identity I had defined myself by for so long was suddenly stripped away. That’s why I was so excited when I heard about Bastion, a place founded to give that sense of identity, purpose, and belonging back to the veterans that call it home.

Since joining our community, I cannot tell you how incredible it is to watch our veterans strive daily to live with the purpose and pride Bastion provides them. I see it when I watch our Bastion Ambassadors speak to the public about the growth they’ve experienced here. I hear it when I enter our Community Center and am greeted by a dozen resident kids enjoying a jam session with our music therapists. I smell it when I walk by Miss Sylvia’s, who most days has a pot on every burner in her kitchen preparing meals for homebound residents. I feel it when I look out the window and see neighbors in the Community Garden nurturing plants that will soon put food on each other’s tables.

You can’t set foot in our community without realizing immediately that this is a special place. Our community has worked for years to make it that way, pulling together to endure hardships from COVID to Hurricane Ida. My commitment, to the members of this unique community and to all of you who support it, is to work just as hard to lead us into the future. It is an honor beyond words to call myself a part of Bastion, and I will never stop working to live up to that. Our veterans deserve nothing less.

As we embark together towards Bastion’s future, know that we are intent on bringing “the Bastion way” to many more veterans in our city and elsewhere who are not yet lucky enough to call Bastion home. The construction of our 14,000 square foot Veteran Wellness Center, which will provide significantly increased treatment spaces and resources for our community, is the first step in that process. Likewise, we are currently developing partnerships with veteran-serving nonprofits in nearby states to deliver our Headway brain injury treatment program to a broader population.

None of these efforts, nor any of the successes we have earned to date, would be possible without you. Your support not only keeps our programs running, it lets our veterans know you are behind them every step of their journey. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for that, and for your continued commitment to our mission.

Forward Together,
Jackson Smith
Our Residential Impact

2022 Food Program Overview

- **24%** increase in food secure households
- **2** Bastion resident chefs employed
- **1** Headway veteran employed
- **500** lbs pantry food into resident homes per week (on average)
- **18** home cooked community meals per month (on average)
- **1** chicken coop producing eggs daily

Thank you to the Bob Woodruff Foundation for sponsoring our food program and helping more veteran families achieve food security.

Our Community At a Glance

- **112** residents including **37** children
- **9** Service Members employed
- **20** Headway participants served
Residents

Jessica Edwards, U.S. Army veteran

Jessica has been a resident of Bastion since October 2019. She recently purchased a home, and will continue to be a valued member of our community as she transitions to homeownership in nearby Slidell.

“Being a resident here and having affordable rent for as long as I did, that really gave me footing to catapult myself into something that had been a dream of mine for a while. And it gave me a support system to really find my confidence again, and remember that before my trauma, I actually was very, very competent. And I still am.

So what it looks like, it looks like hope. And it definitely looks like the Bastion model works. And I hope that I am showing people that they can be successful in transitioning from Bastion as well.”

Richard Huntley, Marine veteran

Richard has been a Bastion resident for 5 years. He lives with his wife, daughter, and son. He is a native New Orleanian and grew up in the Gentilly neighborhood just half a mile from Bastion.

“Knowing that I can rely on my neighbors, they have my back and I have theirs, and it gives me a sense of community. To me, it’s just part of my identity, being a Marine, to be helping out others. And even when I was an active duty Marine myself, that was part of our identity, volunteering our time to help out others.

Because if it wasn't for Bastion, I don't think your typical neighbor would assist you in that type of role, you know? Here, I feel like I’m part of a true veterans community.”

Jessica and Richard are both Service Members at Bastion. In this role, they serve as leaders and points of support in the residential community. They assist residents with tasks like driving our accessible van, accompanying residents to appointments, mediating residential issues, coordinating community resources, sending community-wide text reminders, and generally being there to help their neighbors as needed.
Glenda Diagne, Air Force veterans

Glenda, a native of New Orleans, joined the Bastion community in April 2018 after living on a Native American Reservation where she served as a registered nurse.

“Why Bastion? It’s the community, the services, the staff, the neighbors, all the different programs they have... When my dad, a Vietnam vet, passed away in August, the grief group that we've had here has been really, really instrumental.

It's just good that everybody checks in with you. It's just wonderful. I've never been in a place where anybody in your complex, especially staff, would care about you. But here, you can bounce things off them, you can tell them things and share with them.”
We've really created a family. And there's no better form of therapy than having the support of a family and a chosen family that we've created here.

-Headway Occupational Therapist Caity Bower
Nick Valentino, Navy veteran

Nick joined the Headway program 2.5 years ago. With the support of our staff, Nick has begun vocational training in carpentry and has used these skills in various community projects, like building our chicken coop and beds for the community garden. Nick is working towards a carpentry apprenticeship and would eventually like to work in disaster recovery.

“I did most of the legwork on my own to get connected with the carpentry program, but the Headway staff offered me skills like how to do the interview process, things like managing my anxiety through talking with them to get it all straightened out. They helped me with scheduling, keeping my dates in line, reminding me of when I had to be where I had to be.”

Wilbert 'Wil' Young, U.S. Army & National Guard veteran

Since joining Headway in 2020, Wil has discovered a love for art and has engaged in vocational training to regain his automotive mechanic skills from his time in the Army. When Wil first joined Headway, he rarely spoke. Now, his communication skills have grown exponentially and he has formed strong bonds with his fellow participants.

"I love the art I get to create at art therapy. My favorite kind of art is imagery. The tasks at Headway help keep me sharp, which I like. I also like all the other guys. My favorite field trip we went on was to Whitney Plantation this year."
Featured Community Events

Our inaugural Veterans Experience Project was a full day of programming exploring military experiences through art, music, writing, and spoken word.

The highlight of the event was our resident panel moderated by Social Worker Lovella Calico. Several residents spoke about their experiences living at Bastion and what Bastion means to them.

During the holiday season, we were blessed with a visit from Gayle Benson at our holiday party. She generously provided every resident with a gift card, and brought Pierre the Pelican.

Residents rode in the Krewe of Mars and Krewe of Choctaw parades.
Community Resources

*Innovated and/or maintained by Bastion Community members*

**Our Community Garden**

The fruits, vegetables, and herbs from our garden are used in community meals, stocked in our food pantry, and distributed to resident homes.

**The Chicken Coop**

Our chickens, who were raised as chicks by residents, produce eggs daily. Our chicken coop, built by a Headway participant, is mobile.

**Food Pantry**

Our food pantry and community fridge are stocked with items supplied by Culture Aid NOLA. Our food program is also supported by Top Box.

**Our Resident Chefs**

Bastion employs two resident chefs, Sylvia Magee and Shantrise Sykes. They cook meals for the community through our food program.
Wellness at Bastion

Acupuncture
Provided free of charge on a monthly basis through community practitioners.

Yoga
Monthly outdoor yoga free to all residents, plus adaptive yoga for Headway participants.

Tension/Trauma Releasing Exercises
TRE is a series of exercises that assist the body in releasing deep muscular patterns of stress, tension and trauma.

Walk/Run/Ride Group
Our community meets weekly to walk, run, roll, and ride through our beautiful Gentilly neighborhood.
Looking Ahead

We're expanding! Bastion is building a 14,000 sq. ft. Community Wellness Center that will bring comprehensive community-based health care to Bastion and the broader Gentilly neighborhood, including:

- Primary Care Doctor
- Dentist
- Neurological Rehab Clinic
- Expanded facilities for Bastion’s Headway Program
- Office and event spaces for community organizations and partners
- The creation of an estimated 35 new jobs

This past fall, we held a Blessing of the Ground for our new Wellness Center, featuring a drum circle with local drummer Baba Luther and a sacred blessing by Janet “Sula Spirit” Evan.
Board of Directors

Peyton Bush, Chair
Lakisha Davis Flagg, Secretary
Cody Scott, Treasurer
Daniel Shanks

Heidi Breaux
Jeannette Gaudry Haynie
Tira Jones
Melvin Jones Jr.

Benjamin Simon
Chandra Teddleton
Ann Theriot
Josh Thiel
2022 Sources of Funding:

Revenue by Source

- Revenue by Source: $1,143,622.00
- Bastion Events: $2,70
- Third Party Fundraising: $16,619.34
- Major Gifts: $738.50
- General Donations: $18,201.94
- Corporate/Business Grants: $30,896.31
- Foundation/Grants: $50,000.00

Restoring the role of Community in the health and healing of our warriors and families.
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