

HERO HISTORY

English River Outfitters is part of the healing process for veterans. Our priority is to help foster a healthy readjustment back to civilian life through a positive outdoor experience.

Veterans and families served at English River Outfitters experience a variety of therapeutic, group-based activities designed to re-establish confidence, hope, and health. In addition to our weekend retreats for veterans, we also hold special programs to serve children from Gold Star families, as well as ladies-only veteran camp-out events.

What makes English River Outfitters Different?

We believe there is healing in nature; therefore we emphasize an outdoor experience where veterans can fish, hunt, and hike in the woodlands surrounding our facilities. Veterans with physical disabilities are able to participate fully using our all-terrain wheelchairs. The veterans we serve participate in sporting activities that challenge and empower them, all while immersed in Iowa's natural, refreshing wilderness.

During its first year, English River Outfitters hosted just 6 veterans. The property was a very primitive site with no buildings, electricity, indoor plumbing or water. However, during the next 5 years English River Outfitters experienced tremendous growth. The site now features a finished lodge that is 30 x 40 and can accommodate 10 veterans. In addition to having running water and electricity, the facility also has a deck and patio with a fire pit and fishing pond for families to enjoy.

In 2015, we built our first 10x20 log cabin. A 10x20 pavilion next to the pond is in the works. The grounds has numerous trails and woodlands for hunting and hiking. English River Outfitters has served over 2,400 veterans and their families.

All of our projects to date have been completed by disabled veterans: lodge, retaining wall, electrical , plumbing, pond and trails. The approach of Healing at English River Outfitters "From the Battlefields to the Healing Fields" is a Peer-on-Peer approach method for boosting our veterans self esteem through our "Life Skills" program.



30 LIVES SAVED

Thirty Veterans who were considering suicide have experienced healing and restoration at HERO



3 FAMILIES SAVED

Through HERO's peer-to-peer approach, three families have avoided divorce.



2400 VETERANS

Over 2400 veterans and their families have been served at HERO, included many wounded veterans.

HERO'S LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM

Through our "Life Skills" program, using the peer on peer approach, HERO builds self esteem by allowing veterans to work as part of a group and perform jobs that they believed they were no longer able to accomplish due to an injury or disability. The program is conducted in a relaxed setting designed to reach the veteran who has a bad experience with the VA and has anxieties about returning for the help he/she needs. Our priority is to help foster a healthy readjustment back to civilian and family life through a positive, safe, outdoor experience.

Utilizing our "Three Module" program, we can focus on personal development, relating to others and life management skills.

· Module One - Personal Development: developing self-concept, per-

sonal goal setting, problem solving, decision making, dealing with anger, personal safety, time management, grooming and hygiene, alone or lonely, assertiveness, self-esteem, trust, risk taking, values, stress management, and even learning to laugh again.

· Module Two - Relating to others, communication skills, self-disclosure and feedback, accepting others, friendships, conflict resolution, hosting and attending social events, and healthy relationships.

· Module Three - Life Management Skills: budget coaching, shopping, paying bills, cooking and nutrition, maintaining comfortable living space, landlord/tenant relations, navigating the healthcare system, connecting with community resources, accessing programs, and basic computer skills.



- ★ **Motto:** "Veterans Helping Veterans"
- ★ **Mission statement:** We strive to restore our veteran's strength and independence by providing a sage outdoor experience that promotes healing and closure, as well as family integration.
- ★ Formed in May 2008
- ★ Sits on 32 acres, surrounded by 213 acres of Sokum Ridge Park, Fishing is a short distance to Marr Park's 1.2 acre pond and 5.7 acre mini-lake (shown below)
Wildlife is free range
- ★ 2015, added the "H" for Healing at HERO
- ★ Board comprised of Combat Veterans and their family members, accomplishments of the board: passing the "Care Giver Bill", writing and passing the "Iowa Injured Veteran Grant"
- ★ "Life Skills" Program
Peer-on-Peer mentoring: not counselors or therapists - Veterans who have been there and understand veterans and families are going through.
- ★ **VETERAN PROGRAMS:**
 - Hunting and fishing trips both in and outside the state of Iowa
 - Women only Veterans Weekend Retreat
 - Family Programs:
 - Easter Egg and scavenger hunt for the kids up to 10
 - Caring for horses is healing for Veterans and families
 - Family campouts and canoe trips
 - Haunted trail at Halloween
 - Spouse and significant other retreat to foster understanding of PTSD, and what are some triggers and how to deal with it.
 - Suicide Prevention:
 - Interaction with veterans with suicidal thoughts. We let them know they are not alone.
 - Suicide Support Group:
 - For families who have lost a service member or veteran to suicide



ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL OF OUR VETERANS

We cater to all of our veterans, with accessibility for all in mind. The lodge is handicap-accessible on the main level, including a walk-in shower. We are not supported by the government or any subsidy program. Our nonprofit organization is funded by people who believe in our motto; "Veterans Helping Veterans." The small fee for lodging helps cover our operating expenses and allows us to help more veterans and their families reconnect. Primitive camping is available.

"My time at English River Outfitters saved my life! One time out to English River Outfitters showed me that I have a life to live and it's worth it!! I experienced a calm environment that was so overwhelming I had to share it with others. My son and I have had a bad few years relating. One weekend out there helped us to bond back together. I would not be here today except for my time spent at English River Outfitters!!"

-SSG (IA)

"Thank you for your hospitality and attention to detail. Our weekend was much more than a deer hunt. It was a cathartic, bonding experience that I did not want to end. You gave us a weekend that provided camaraderie, HUMOR, awesome food, great hunting and the opportunity to be a part of the English River Outfitters' saga. I cannot wait to get back down there again!"

-Glen (IA)

"I am a Vietnam Vet and have been diagnosed with PTSD; as a Vietnam Vet, I am moved by this project and what it's designed for. I will always be indebted to the man working to provide our veterans a place like HERO."

-Roger (IA)