



Help Heal Veterans
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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Help Heal Veterans Dedicates Its Temple, Texas Center to Family of Hero Killed in the 2009 Fort Hood Terror Attack

Help Heal Veterans – Cahill Center honors the legacy of Michael and Joleen Cahill, parents of award-winning actor Kerry Cahill of “The Walking Dead,” in ceremony held September 22

TEMPLE, Tx., (Sept. 22, 2022) – Help Heal Veterans (HealVets) has dedicated its craft care center in Temple, Texas, in honor of Michael and Joleen Cahill. Michael Cahill lost his life during the 2009 terrorist attack at Fort Hood, Texas, that took the lives of 13 people, and Joleen Cahill was an energetic and highly regarded supporter of groups serving veterans in the Temple area, and an integral member of the committee for the memorial dedicated to those who lost their lives at Fort Hood.

The Help Heal Veterans – Cahill Center was dedicated in a ceremony September 22 attended by Kerry Cahill and Keely Vanacker, daughters of Michael and Joleen Cahill, their grandchildren, as well as Help Heal Veterans’ CEO, and Board of Directors.

Help Heal Veterans is a national non-profit organization that helps veterans and active duty military suffering the effects of combat-related injuries, both physical and psychological, heal and thrive by gaining proficiency in handicrafts. Craft therapy has been shown to be extremely effective as part of the treatment plan for persons with long-term injuries or psychological trauma.

Michael Cahill, a retired Chief Warrant Officer who was working as a civilian physician’s assistant at Fort Hood, was shot and killed in the 2009 attack when he rushed the gunman in an attempt to save the lives of others. He was awarded the Secretary of the Army Award for Valor in 2010.

He was the father of actress Kerry Cahill, who was 27 at the time of the shooting, and Keely Vanacker, who has also been active in supporting programs that serve veterans. Kerry describes herself as a proud army brat and now a Gold Star Family member —an immediate relative of a U.S. Armed Forces member who died in battle or in support of certain military activities.

“This is not just an honor for my father but for my mother as well, she was a steadfast supporter to many of his friends who went through the Vietnam War and were survivors of the Fort Hood shooting,” said Kerry Cahill. “A place for veterans to rest and create is exactly what they loved; Mom and dad will be smiling from above somewhere.”



Kerry Cahill has been a long-time ambassador for Help Heal Veterans. In 2017, Cahill designed a bracelet for Help Heal Veterans that was similar to the one her father wore every day. That bracelet can now be crafted by veterans and service members using one of the HealVets craft kits. For Kerry Cahill, the bracelet craft kit makes more than a wristband; it stands as a reminder of the sacrifices her father made.

“We’re grateful to the Cahill family for letting us name this center in honor of Michael and Joleen. Their story will inspire us at Help Heal Veterans to remember to always put first the needs of those we serve,” said Capt. Joe McClain (USN, Ret.), CEO, Help Heal Veterans. “It’s the story of a healer who dedicated his life to helping others and who ultimately sacrificed himself to protect those under his care. It is also the story of his wife, who dedicated her life to serving her community and those who served our nation. Naming our center in honor of their service to the Temple community and our nation will also help foster a healing environment for the veterans who walk through these doors.”

HealVets has operated a crafting center in Temple since 2009 to assist interested veterans and active-duty service members gain skills in the crafts of their choice. The Help Heal Veterans – Cahill Center is located at 819 S 5th St, Temple, TX 76504.

About Help Heal Veterans

Help Heal Veterans is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping injured veterans and active duty military heal and thrive through the use of craft therapy.

For 50 years, Help Heal Veterans has made a real difference in the lives of America's veterans by helping them heal from the visible and invisible wounds of war through therapeutic crafts. Founded during the Vietnam War, Heal Vets supplies craft therapy kits *free of charge* to active duty military and veterans and is the nation’s leader in using craft therapy. The therapy kits often become an integral part of the treatment plan for patients recovering from traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, or other wounds of war. Heal Vets has distributed more than 31 million kits. Heal Vets is one of the top veterans' organizations in the U.S. and is respected for using contributions wisely and effectively.

About Craft Therapy

Craft therapy is a proven and effective component of occupational therapy that addresses cognitive, neurological, and sensory motor skills by using crafts to focus the brain on cognitive performance and manual skills. Research shows that craft therapy helps treat emotional, physical, and psychological wounds of war, including PTSD, traumatic brain injuries, depression and anxiety, making it an important part of the healing process for active duty military and veterans.