



THEY PROMISED TO DEFEND.  
WE PROMISE TO SUPPORT.



Dot Sheehan, Founder/CEO of Operation Hat Trick, talks with us about the OHT mission and impact on wounded service members and veterans.

**The Mountain:** For people who are just meeting your organization for the first time, what is Operation Hat Trick?

**DOT:** Operation Hat Trick is a non-profit organization that generates awareness and support for the recovery of wounded service members and Veterans through the sale of OHT branded merchandise, proceeds of which are distributed to selected organizations that support the OHT mission, with a portion of every sale coming back to OHT.

**M:** Where did the idea for Operation Hat Trick come from?

**D:** In 2007 I was listening to a Boston radio station. The contest of the day asked this question: "What is the one thing head wounded soldiers coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan want the most?" The answer was a baseball cap that would cover wounds, swelling, burns, treatment, and bandages. I was so taken by it that I knew I had to do something. I was working at the University of New Hampshire at the time in Athletics, and at UNH we lived and died by hockey, so in the middle of the night I came up with the name Operation Hat Trick. A few months after I had this idea, the son of a UNH Professor and his wife, Nate Hardy, was killed in Iraq along with fellow Navy SEAL, Mike Koch. Both were Navy SEALs. We dedicated OHT to them. OHT went National in 2012 and today we have 269 colleges and universities, 100 high schools, 70 Minor League Baseball teams, 21 NHL teams, NASCAR and over 50 companies that have adopted OHT.

*"The day in Washington was the best I've spent in all my years as an academic administrator. It was inspiring."*

MARK HUDDLESTON,  
UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE PRESIDENT,  
after visiting wounded service members at Walter Reed  
National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, MD



Right: Operation Hat Trick visits Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

**M:** What kind of support does OHT provide for service members?

**D:** OHT fills some white space. By that I mean there is a huge gap between what is covered by benefits/insurance and the great need that wounded service members and veterans have. We fill some of that need. Things like home heating oil for a Veteran who has PTSD and cannot work; shoes for prosthetics legs; the cost of service dogs; staff that manages retreats for Veterans who need help acclimating back into their communities; adaptive equipment, etc.



*"I can only say one thing and that is **AWESOME!** I am amazed at what you have put together for wounded soldiers."*

SEAL TEAMMATE OF NATE AND MIKE

Left: Quadruple amputee Travis Mills joins his fellow service members. OHT supports the Travis Mills Foundation, an organization that is rehabbing the Elizabeth Arden property in Rome, ME as a retreat for recovering veterans and their families.

**M:** What's been one of the highlights so far in the Operation Hat Trick community?

**D:** Seeing service members and Veterans progress in their recovery thanks to our donations. Seeing High Schools celebrate Awareness Week, where students learn about the sacrifices of the military and gain an understanding of the support the military needs. Watching colleges, universities, and major league teams celebrate OHT during their Military Days, and certainly hearing first-hand from recovering service members and Veterans just what a profound impact OHT has had on them.



Left: Operation Hat Trick supports the Armed Services YMCA at the Naval Hospital in San Diego. Here is a double amputee and former patient. Right: OHT donates \$10,000 to the Naval Medical Center in San Diego





M: Was there a particular moment when you realized just how big of an impact OHT was making?

D: I actually underestimated the power of what had been created. OHT combines the love of one's school/university/team/company with the love of one's country, and that is a very powerful combination. Sometimes I still underestimate exactly what has happened with OHT, but when I saw colleges and universities make such a commitment to the program, I knew we had something very special. It's been the easiest conversation to have with anyone. Everyone can relate on some level. Also when we started to generate money and saw just what good we were doing to help fill so many needs, I knew that this was going to be a success I never, ever, imagined.

*"Valor was everywhere that day and the real heroes are the nine men who made the ultimate sacrifice so the rest of us could return home. It is their names, not mine, that I want people to know."*

STAFF SGT. RYAN PITTS

Right: Ryan Pitts, wounded veteran and Medal of Honor recipient, receives his honor from President Obama. Pitts is a University of New Hampshire, Manchester alum.



M: Is there anything students/alumni from schools that haven't adopted Operation Hat Trick can do to make their school aware of your organization, and help advocate for it?

D: We are very proactive trying to get those schools that have not adopted OHT to do so. The sky is the limit here so getting everyone on board is the goal, but a very lofty one. It's why we have partnerships with the Mountain and other licensees. They help in getting the word out, and every time a supporter buys and wears OHT gear, and uses OHT products we are increasing visibility and exposure.

M: At the end of the day, what is the one thing you hope sticks with people after learning about OHT?

D: That Operation Hat Trick is an organization that knows where every dollar goes; that we select organizations to whom we make donations very carefully; and that at the end of the day we fill even just a little bit of the growing need among the wounded military community.



Left: OHT received special treatment at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. This space is reserved for the President of the United States ordinarily. Right: Fallen heroes statue at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center where Operation Hat Trick has spent time visiting injured service members and veterans

# The Hero Collection

BY THE MOUNTAIN

