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## In age of COVID-19, can an online fundraiser for Orange County veterans still make goal?

Stand & Salute Giving Day will help seven nonprofits that serve veterans.



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Last year, when most people did not yet know the word “covid,” a one-day, an online fundraiser to help military veterans in Orange County raised \$90,445. In 2018, the same one-day online event raised \$91,395.

This year’s goal for the 24-hour Stand & Salute Giving Day, which starts Wednesday May 20, is no different — \$90,000.

But when the Stand & Salute drive kicks off — one minute past midnight — reaching that goal could be tricky. This year’s event faces the challenge of trying to reach donors during a pandemic that’s threatening health even as it wreaks financial havoc.

Seven nonprofits are working with the Orange County Community Foundation to sponsor Giving Day and bring in money that will help struggling ex-service members among an estimated 150,000 local veterans and their families.

Donations can be made until 11:59 p.m. Wednesday at the Stand & Salute landing page, [stand-and-salute-giving-day.ocnonprofitcentral.org/](https://stand-and-salute-giving-day.ocnonprofitcentral.org/). The groups working with Orange County Community Foundation are: Bob Hope USO, Goodwill of Orange County and its Tierney Center for Veterans Services, Strength in Support, Strong Families Strong Children, Support the Enlisted Project (STEP), 2-1-1 OC, and Working Wardrobes' VetNet program.

"After COVID-19 it is estimated that there will be 10 to 20 times more job applicants than open positions, making the job market even more competitive for our deserving veterans," said Jerri Rosen, founder and chief executive officer of Working Wardrobes, which assists people returning to the workforce.

In 2015, Orange County Community Foundation, which sponsors a series of virtual Giving Days for a variety of causes, released a [study](#) that highlighted the struggles many local veterans face with employment, housing, and physical and mental health issues. The foundation then launched the Orange County Veterans Initiative to harness philanthropic support for former members of the military, and it made veterans a focus for one of its Giving Day fundraisers.

Shelley Hoss, president and chief executive of Orange County Community Foundation, says the coronavirus pandemic is creating new hurdles for veterans who, pre-covid, were already facing challenges.

"The nonprofit partners have been hard at work to make sure they meet their goal, given the dire need for their services in the current environment," Hoss said. Some of those nonprofits, she notes, will seek matching gifts. They've also created collaborative videos that on Wednesday will launch on their digital platforms and on the Giving Day site.

"Five of the seven Stand & Salute organizations have obtained match opportunities, totaling \$58,000, which will be a wonderful incentive for other contributors to give," Hoss said.

In 2019, more than 241 donors gave money to Stand & Salute. And, by late Tuesday afternoon, a jump start on the 2020 edition showed that it had raised more than \$6,000.

Working Wardrobes sent emails about Stand & Salute to 46,000 existing donors, which prompted two large pledges of \$10,000 and \$6,000, said Steven Forry, chief development officer for Working Wardrobes.

The organization's goal for this year's Stand & Salute is \$25,000. "We're optimistic," Forry said.

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