



STACK UP

THRIVING THROUGH

2020

FORGING FORWARD



ANNUAL REPORT



ABOUT STACK UP

VISION

To eliminate extreme symptoms of trauma, stress, and isolation in military service members past and present.

MISSION

To fight the effects of depression, combat injuries, and post-traumatic stress by bringing veterans and civilians together through the “shared language” of gaming.

Founded in 2015 by a combat veteran who personally experienced the positive impact gaming can have, emotionally and psychologically, on veterans, Stack Up is the only charity directly supporting the military and bringing together veterans and civilian supporters through the shared love of video gaming. Stack Up programs provide support and gaming benefits to U.S., NATO, Australian, and New Zealand veterans. Learn more at StackUp.org.

2020. *What a year.*



In a year that tested the very fibers of our society through both a global pandemic and an unprecedented Presidential election, Stack Up was forced to undergo a rapid transformation to avoid being annihilated like many small businesses.

COVID knocked out two of four Stack Up pillar programs instantly: The Stacks local volunteer programs and Air Assault trips to gaming events. Some of our best Stack Up memories over the years are of bringing wide-eyed veterans to their first-ever gaming convention and blowing their minds. Although, since COVID, I'm pretty sure people would be as happy to go to a knitting convention just to be a part of something we all woefully took for granted until last year.

Fortunately, **our diversified programs gave us two strong pillar programs to lean on last year to ensure we were supporting veterans in this time of crisis: Supply Crates and the Stack Up Overwatch Program (StOP).**

We doubled down on sending our video game-filled Supply Crates out to troops in need during a time when finding gaming consoles was extremely difficult, and we reinforced our online mental health support team known as the Overwatch program in order to handle all newcomers needing a shoulder to lean on in these dark days.

In a year when people lost their jobs, closed up their businesses, lost family members, and struggled to even keep food on the table, celebrating how well Stack Up did feels particularly ghoulish. We just happened to be in an environment through online gaming where we were destined for success. Things could have easily gone the other way.

With record unemployment and out-of-control medical bills, money for donations could have dried up completely. Instead, **thanks to our team, people came together and donated in record numbers for us in support of our mission of helping veterans through gaming.**

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

FORGING FORWARD

Now in 2021, things look promising. Vaccines are going out (I now have my shots!, COVID cases are down, death tolls are dropping, and a return to whatever 2021 “normal” looks like is on the horizon. Our staff is excited to start attending events and seeing fellow Redshirts out there doing good work for veterans in crowded places again.

2021 will mark the first year Stack Up crosses the million-dollar mark in cash donations.

Took us six years to get there, but I’m comfortable calling it now. Based on how we do business and how our Influencer Relations Team managed the hundreds of streamers last year, it is inevitable.

While it is important to diversify our fundraising efforts, most of our dollars come from streamers at the \$5 and \$10 levels. I always say, “I would rather have a dollar from a million people than a million dollars from one person.” It turns out that sentence needs changing a bit: “I would rather have 1200 streamers streaming for us than a million dollars from one person.” Each one of those streamers tells two friends, and those friends tell two more friends, and next thing you know, people are coming to us asking how they can help with our awesome mission. Through an organic, grassroots process, the number of streamers helping us just keeps going up and up.

If it sounds like I’m giddy as I’m writing this, I am. In my first year of charity work, I raised \$20,000 and thought to myself, “Wow, it can’t get better than that, right?” At a gaming convention, I would be camped in a single hotel room with a dozen other wannabe games journalists, podcasters, bloggers, and enthusiasts, and I’d dream of having a staff and having to rent out multiple hotel rooms for an Air Assault, but marveled at the heart-stopping amount of money that would cost. Now, we spend more every two weeks on salary to employ almost 20 people than I made that first year. That’s, as Keanu Reeves once put it: “Breathtaking.”

So, buckle up, everyone: 2021 looks like it’s going to be a doozy.

Steve Machuga
Founder and CEO, Stack Up

VETERANS & MENTAL HEALTH

Over 1.1 million Veterans treated in a VA Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) between 2010–2011 were diagnosed with at least one of five mental illnesses—depression, PTSD, substance use disorder, anxiety, and schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs - Office of Research & Development

The RAND Center for Military Health Policy Research reported that **20% of veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan suffer from depression or PTSD**, with 19.5% of them having experienced a traumatic brain injury.

Many reserve service members who ended up deployed with the active force were **deactivated upon return and can no longer access military health care benefits**. Civilian health insurance policies do not cover all war injuries and post-service health issues.



WHY VIDEO GAMES

Virtual reality gaming, which the VA has utilized, has been shown as an **effective treatment for PTSD with certain groups of veterans**. 50% of study participants used video games to **cope with challenges associated with their military service**.

55% of the most frequent gamers say video games **help connect them with friends**.

70% of players are playing video games with others in the same room or over the internet.

Video games have even been used in therapy to **enhance the rapport between the client and counselor**.

HOW STACK UP HELPS



SUPPLY CRATES

Video game care packages for veterans and deployed troops around the world



THE STACKS

Volunteer teams building supportive, game-loving communities for veterans



STACK UP OVERWATCH PROGRAM

An initiative to provide suicide prevention and promote positive mental health



AIR ASSAULTS

V.I.P. adventures for disabled or deserving veterans at home



33K

VETERANS SUPPORTED



85

AIR ASSAULTS
OVER 33 EVENTS

211

PEER TO PEER MENTAL
HEALTH ENGAGEMENTS
THROUGH THE
OVERWATCH PROGRAM

631

SUPPLY CRATES SHIPPED

2841

DISCORD
MEMBERS

251

LOCAL STACK
EVENTS ATTENDED



794

GAME
NIGHTS
PLAYED



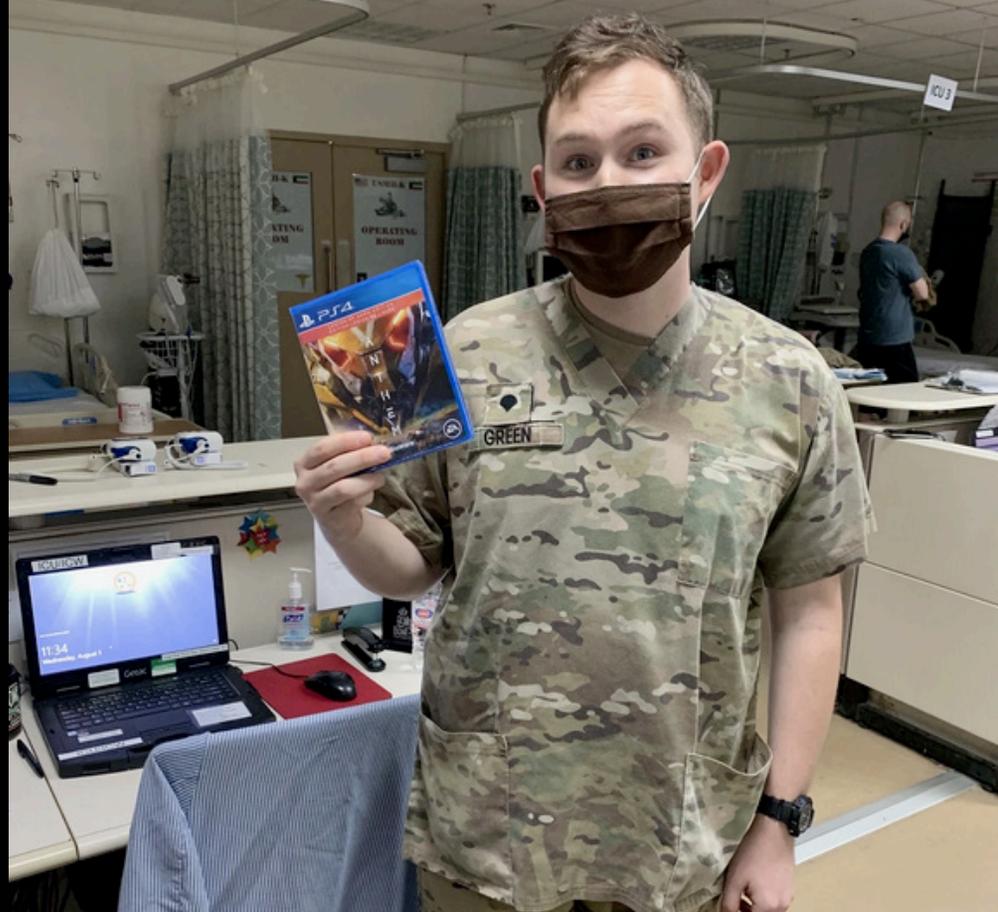
5
YEARS
OF
SERVICE

While COVID-19 halted our Air Assaults trips for veterans, **we were able to triple our provisions of Supply Crates** filled with gaming and geek gear.

Gaming gear was in high demand as it was increasingly difficult to acquire, and active-duty military units were forced to shut down or limit the capacity of their recreational areas due to COVID restrictions. Workout facilities both stateside and overseas were also affected.

At a time when they were needed the most, veterans and active-duty military personnel were left without facilities and gatherings to relieve stress.

Fortunately, we were able to up our Supply Crates game to meet the need. **Our Supply Crates shipments increased from an average of four per month to 12 per month.**



**SUPPLY
CRATES
THRIVE!**





“I’ll tell any veteran, if you’ve never gamed before, try it because your community will just open up.”

Meet Veteran Clinton Warren, one of our 2020 Supply Crate Recipients. Clinton is a retired Sergeant First Class with 23 years of service.

Clinton befriended Staff Sergeant Rodney Sparks while they were stationed in Wackernheim, Germany. They lost touch for 10 years, but met back up in Texas.

Now, as two retired servicemen, they were looking for a way to have fun together and stay in touch. They requested a Supply Crate each so they could game together.

We happily granted their request. Watch the video below to see how Clinton and Rodney find joy and connection through gaming.



▶ WATCH THE VIDEO

If ever there was an opportunity to demonstrate what Stacking Up is all about, the pandemic was it.

And our Stacks volunteers were ready and resilient.

**OUR STACKS
ARE
RESILIENT**

Mission Statement

The mission of the Connecticut Food Bank is to provide nutritious food to people in need.

We do this by supplying food products and resources to

member agencies, as well as through direct food programs and by promoting awareness about hunger.

of hunger.





A Stack is a term for a formation used in the military when an assault team forms up single file along the entrance to a room where they believe a threat is located.

For Stack Up, the “Stack” represents **a strong community of friends, family, brothers and sisters in arms, and supporters** — all coming together for the common mission of supporting veterans through video gaming.

Under Covid, the Stacks froze as COVID-19 restrictions kept them from their mission.

As restrictions eased, our resilient Stacks returned to operation.



The Stacks held their commitment to helping and volunteering in their communities in new and creative ways to meet new needs and challenges.

Stacks around the U.S. and in New Zealand got busy with food collections and distributions, community cleanup days, assisting with Meals on Wheels deliveries, and when possible, putting together veteran game nights that followed COVID-19 precautionary guidelines.

After a year that challenged the livelihoods and mental health of most of us, and especially veterans who had already been struggling, **Stack Up put out a Call to Hearts for Valentine's Day. The Stacks answered the call. And so did their kids.**

The Holloman AFB, Delco, Marysville, Rochester, and Louisville Stacks created handmade Valentine's Day cards. The Rochester Stack made digital cards.

Cards were sent to veterans, children, and healthcare workers at the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center in Philadelphia, PA., El Paso Children's Hospital, Sacramento Children's Home, and Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital.





Veterans have a suicide rate 50% higher than those who did not serve in the military.

When the pandemic caused a significant increase in the need for mental health support and virtual service, we were ready.

The Stack Up Overwatch Program (StOP, launched in 2018, provides veterans and military personnel with 24/7 online access to crisis intervention, suicide prevention, and mental health resources and assistance.

Through a private StOP room within the Discord gaming platform, visitors can communicate with our StOP Squad of trained veteran and civilian volunteers.

Each day, trained volunteers known as the StOP Squad show up to provide life-saving support to veterans or active duty service members who visit the virtual room for mental health resources, support services, therapeutic resources, financial resources, or just an understanding person to talk to or game with.

**OVERWATCH
PROGRAM
HELPING
MORE
VETERANS**

A M E R I C A N
ASSOCIATION OF SUICIDOLOGY

SUICIDE
PREVENTION
IS EVERYONE'S
BUSINESS

suicidology.org



In 2020, we reinforced our Stack Up Overwatch Program (StOP) staff by **hiring three full-time managers and increasing our volunteers from 11 to 30**. Our volunteers are trained through the PsychArmor Institute's Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention course.

Awareness and funding of StOP reached new heights in part due to our Operation Lifeboat campaign in partnership with the generous World of Warships community. **5,000+ players participated and more than \$150,000 was raised for the Overwatch Program**. World of Warships directed all players to the StOP discord site from the game launch.

MEET OUR GOLD LEVEL SUPPORTERS



GryphonAMX



GamerLoop Network



Karmakut



Forward as One



Seven Days of Valor



SagetheBard



Tokki



CleverNation



Ogr3Magi



JonSandman



FabTV



taterholic



SEE ALL 2020 SUPPORTERS ON OUR WALL OF HEROES

CALL TO ARMS



WATCH THE VIDEO

2020 SUPPORTERS

Thanks to our supporters for Stacking Up with us to create a record-breaking fundraising year for our mission.

Two fundraising highlights include the Operation Lifeboat campaign through World of Warships (featured on previous page) and Call to Arms.

Our annual streaming fundraiser, "Call to Arms," thrived in 2020! 1,166 individuals participated and 100 teams were created. Our goal was \$600,000, and they raised \$629,838...the most successful year ever!



Veterans Support Programs Expense
\$2,542,867

86%

REVENUE > \$3,056,000

EXPENSES > \$2,965,604

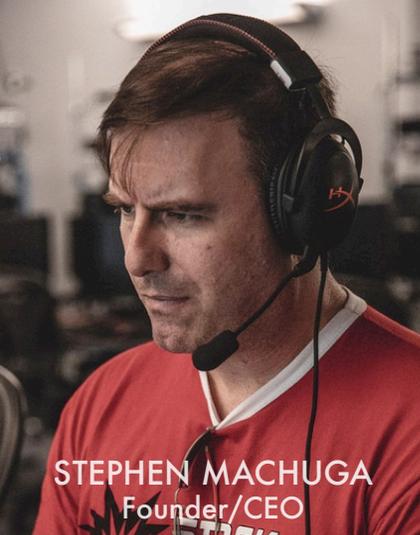
Administrative Expense
\$134,084

4%

Fundraising Expense
\$288,653

10%

2020 FINANCIALS



STEPHEN MACHUGA
Founder/CEO



BRIAN SNYDER
Director of Communications



DAVE CROUSE
Director of Veteran Services



DANIEL WISE
Event Manager



SAMANTHA SEEGRAVES
Operations Assistant



ALESHA SMITH
Influencer Relations Manager



SEAN KELLY
Influencer Relations Manager



LIZ FINNEGAN
Community Manager



REBEKAH SEALEY
Overwatch Program Manager



CHRIS KUNZ
Overwatch Program Manager



ZACHARY KENNY
Overwatch Program Manager



SAHARA MCGIRT
Social Media Manager

MEET OUR STACK UP TEAM



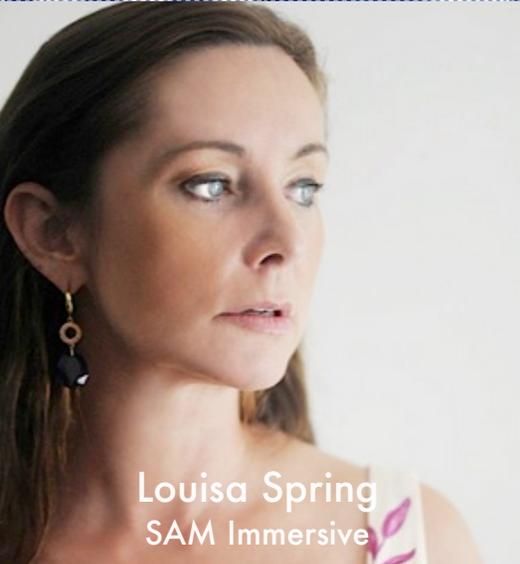
Robert Brown
Stride PR



Mike Lavigne
U.S. Army



Carlos Ramirez
Lawyer & Veteran



Louisa Spring
SAM Immersive



Evan Uselton
FFC Capital Corporation



Jimmy Whisenhunt
Twitch

MEET OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

AND OUR ADVISORY BOARD



Mat Bergendahl
Counseling & Psychology



Cherie Kisla
Kisla & Associates



SQUAD
to civilian life can be difficult for some. Mental
prevention initiative called the S
gram [StOP] provides support and re
en they need it, even if it's just
carry the individual from

SUPPLY CRATES
crates full of the latest r
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nd sending it to troops
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humanitarian missio
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recover from b
and physical tr

STACK
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SAU
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for a wee

**WE INVITE
YOU TO
STACK UP
WITH US**

DONATE

FUNDRAISE

VOLUNTEER



Visit us online at StackUp.org.