











**2020 ANNUAL REPORT** 



# Strategic Pillars OF THE COMMIT

**FOUNDATION** 



The COMMIT Foundation's mission is to help exceptional American service members and veterans transition into successful roles and careers post-service.

The COMMIT Foundation is a 501c3 non-profit organization fundamentally changing the way service members and veterans approach their transition from military service to the civilian workforce and their communities.





#### **DEAR FRIENDS OF COMMIT,**

The COMMIT Foundation had its best year yet in 2020, providing more assistance to more transitioning service members than ever before. We developed and delivered new content for our program participants, added new members to our team, and exponentially grew our development and corporate education programming.

To ensure The COMMIT Foundation continues to thrive and provide exceptional programming and materials for service members, veterans, and the businesses with whom we partner, we are measuring our work against four strategic pillars:

- T A continued focus on veterans first and always
- **Agility and innovation in our actions**
- Delivery of thought leadership
- An increase in the volume of services provided while maintaining exceptional quality

Through the lens of these strategic pillars, we are proud to share with you our annual report and team accomplishments. We selected a few stories to share as we reflect on the truly amazing men and women we are humbled and honored to walk beside as they transition out of uniform and into their next adventures.

Thank you to our amazing donors, mentors, alumni, and transitioning service members. We are honored to work with you.

With gratitude and in service,

Ame Merce Crai

Anne Meree Craig

Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer



### PILLAR 1 VETERANS FIRST AND ALWAYS

Maintain veteran needs and priorities as the compass for COMMIT

Everything COMMIT does is designed to positively impact our transitioning service members and veterans. Each transition is a unique journey, and included here are but a few examples of our amazing veterans and their stories.



### One Transitioning Veteran IJEOMA MBADIWE

Born in the United States but raised in Nigeria, Ijeoma Mbadiwe learned early in life that a keen understanding of her environment (and the players involved within it) would be crucial for success. In Nigeria, this meant being aware of the numerous ethnic groups and avoiding cultural missteps.

At 13, her family returned to the United States, and at 18, she enlisted in the United States Army. While serving on active duty, Ijeoma earned a master's degree from the School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University and a second master's degree in Strategic Intelligence at the National Intelligence University. Her academic background, coupled with what she describes as her experiences as a "third-culture kid," greatly influenced

her career as an intelligence analyst. Ijeoma transitioned from the Army after 21 years of service and participated in The COMMIT Foundation's



annual Women Veterans in Transition Workshop in October.

"The COMMIT workshop was a godsend," said Ijeoma. "Finding my next chapter is a process, and I now have this great group of women to bounce ideas off." Ijeoma is currently self-employed as a senior change management consultant/conflict analyst and resolution practitioner.



**COMMIT mentor Jurgen Heitmann** is a partner and co-founder of Liminal Collective and the director of performance and a principal at Arena Labs. Over three decades as a special operations leader, he built, led, and shaped teams at the highest levels of U.S. national security and diplomacy. Jurgen has mentored twenty COMMIT transitioning service members with a focus on developing leadership skills. "As a COMMIT mentor, I am helping others transition better than I did," he said. **"We are always in transition as we learn and grow, and we find value in the breadth of our experiences."** In 2014, Heitmann participated in a COMMIT workshop as a transitioning service member and has been part of the COMMIT family ever since.



### Cigna Helps COMMIT Highlight Challenges of Military Service on Families

Cigna was the presenting sponsor for COMMIT's virtual reception on July 16, which featured Vice Admiral Tim and Marci Szymanski from the special operations community sharing how military service impacts the physical, emotional, and mental health of not only our service members, but their families as well.



VICE ADMIRAL TIM AND MARCI SZYMANSKI

"We were excited to be a sponsor," said John Roble, Cigna President of the Mountain States. "We are mutually striving to help veterans ensure that they are properly equipped to transition to a post-service life. Cigna wanted to find the right organization to partner with—we were looking for a nonprofit organization that touched on the overall health and well-being of veterans, but also had the imagination to rethink how the community can better support veterans. The COMMIT Foundation is just that."

Several years ago, Cigna expanded the tools that they offer to veterans, and they have received numerous awards for their efforts to support and hire veterans and their spouses. "COMMIT uses positive psychology to help veterans move on in their lives," noted Roble.

At the event, Roble introduced the Honorable Jared Polis, Governor of Colorado, who thanked military service members in Colorado and throughout the United States. He also shared his appreciation for the positive impact The COMMIT Foundation has had on transitioning service members.



From Texas ranch kid to bull-rider to Navy Explosive Ordnance Technician and back—Doug Hight, retired U.S. Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer, reflects with pride on his journey and the fact that he is beginning a new chapter back in Texas with a dream job and the time to take up team-roping as a hobby.

"When I participated in the virtual COMMIT workshop, my mentor stated that I was on a 'hero's journey,' and I have taken that to heart," said Doug. "I started as a cowboy, joined the military to serve my country, and am now back in Texas to share the lessons I've learned. I have come back to where it all began."

Doug identified three key elements to the transition support he received from COMMIT. "It started with Michele (Michele Olive, Senior Director of Veteran Services) asking me in our initial phone conversation, 'What is it you want to do?" She later introduced Doug to Todd Platt, the CEO of Hillwood Investments (a Perot Company), who helped him develop connections that led to his current position as the director of veteran affairs and agriculture for Congressman Ronnie Jackson of Texas. Doug cited a conversation with COMMIT mentor Jurgen Heitmann where he was introduced to the idea of the "hero's journey." For Doug, that clarified his desire to get back to Texas where he could serve again.

"COMMIT helped me write a strong resume and introduced me to Todd, which then expanded to an extensive network where my resume ultimately ended up in front of both Ronnie Jackson and his chief of staff. I am now able to serve both the Texas agricultural community and Texas veterans," said Doug. He is in the process of relocating his wife, Sheri, and two sons to Amarillo, Texas.



### PILLAR 2 AGILITY AND INNOVATION

Remain agile and look for new and innovative ways to serve transitioning service members

The COMMIT Foundation recognizes the need to be agile and innovative. We are committed to growing revenue sources beyond donations, expanding our technical capabilities, and ensuring that our service offerings meet current transition needs. Following are a few examples of how we responded in 2020.



### Listening for Serendipity ANDREW CARTER

When Army Colonel Andrew Carter and his wife, Becky, started thinking about retiring from the military, he didn't imagine finding a job as a senior director for tactical air systems at a start-up company in the tech space. According to Andrew, he didn't

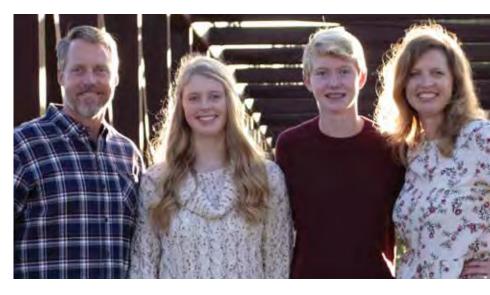
even know such a job existed when he started his transition process—a process that has been filled with serendipity. Leaving a career in military acquisition, Andrew and Becky decided that the most important factor for them was to be near family and to enroll their children in a Lutheran high school.

Andrew thought he would use his MBA to find a job in the commercial sector, but as he put it, "Nothing was working."

"Serendipity started when my friend and COMMIT board member Tom Peddicord referred me to COMMIT," said Andrew, who immediately started navigating his way through the online platform Pursue Your Purpose. "The COMMIT team, starting with Meagan (Meagan Thrift, Senior Director of Veteran Services), helped me figure out the 'Why?' of what I wanted to pursue."

Andrew was invited to the April Transition Mentoring Workshop that serendipitously was COMMIT's first virtual event. "As the first-ever virtual workshop, we had extra time to connect with team members between sessions," said Andrew. "Scott (Scott Walgren, COMMIT Chief Programs Officer) advised us to 'be interested and not interesting."

Andrew credits this advice with giving him the opportunity to excel at his interview with Anduril. Michele Olive, a COMMIT Senior Director of Veteran Services, introduced him to Anduril. "If I had not been true to myself, I wouldn't have done



as well in the interview and wouldn't have been able to lean in," said Andrew. "Anduril has a culture and mindset that is a natural fit."

"Serendipity comes when both sides listen," said Andrew. "COMMIT helps you figure out the why and the how, but then you have to be willing to take that leap and not over-analyze."

Andrew and his family have relocated to Southern California. They sold their home in four weeks, moved to a house ten minutes from family, and enrolled their kids in Becky's alma mater. Andrew is loving his new job and finds joy and purpose in mentoring a group of young people in the defense acquisition space. "I have no doubt this is God's plan," said Andrew.

#### Responding to COVID-19 with Agility and Innovation

From the onset of the pandemic, The COMMIT Foundation was poised to scale our programmatic services to meet the needs of both the transitioning military community and the business community thanks to our holistic digital platform and virtual programs. As in-person events and meetings shut down, COMMIT quickly pivoted to deliver all programs virtually while maintaining the quality, intimacy, and magic of the in-person workshops.

Additionally, COMMIT saw the opportunity to collaborate with others to influence how service members and veterans transitioned during an extremely difficult year. We partnered with Bunker Labs and PenFed and conducted informative townhall webinars. We began building programs tailored for the Naval Special Warfare community and participated in the Women's Leadership Conference of The Mission Continues, where COMMIT CEO Anne Meree Craig and COMMIT Coach Katy Stanfill led the women in a session on authentic leadership.

#### COMMIT Hosts Webinar: Hiring During COVID

COVID-19 presented a unique set of circumstances and prompted questions for those in the midst of career transitions.

In response, in June COMMIT hosted its firstever webinar to seek insight



MATT OBERHARDT Partner, Executive Talent at Andreessen Horowitz

from industry leaders surrounding hiring in the time of COVID-19. Matt Oberhardt of Andreessen Horowitz, Renee Whalen of Robert Half, and Erin Scruggs of LinkedIn spent an hour with moderator Scott Walgren, Chief Programs Officer for The COMMIT Foundation, and shared tips and strategies for how candidates could better understand and navigate the COVID-19 interviewing and hiring environment. Nearly 100 veterans participated in the discussion and posed questions to the panelists. The feedback from the participants was incredibly positive.

Transitioning service member and retired Army Colonel Martha Foss stated, "The content was 100% relevant, informative, and timely. I am grateful for the additional knowledge this hiring panel armed me with. I continue to be both honored and humbled to be a part of The COMMIT Foundation."

Advice ranged from recognizing and evaluating corporate culture in a remote environment to understanding remote work and how to highlight soft skills in order to stand out amongst other candidates. Renee Whalen stated, "Bring the confidence you currently have in your military role to the new environment."



RENEE WHALEN Managing Director of Strategic Accounts at Robert Half



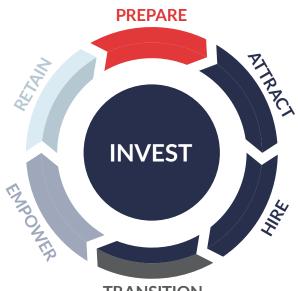
ERIN SCRUGGS Senior Director of Talent Acquisition at LinkedIn

#### COMMIT EXPANDS CORPORATE EDUCATION

COMMIT's Corporate Education objective is to amplify the investment required for employers to shift from "veteran friendly" to "veteran ready" and fully utilize and retain veteran talent.

Corporate Education, as one of COMMIT's strategic initiatives, significantly expanded its reach in 2020. Our team established partnerships and delivered corporate education programs with Johnson & Johnson, Fisery, and PayPal. We also facilitated conversations for LiveNation's Veteran Employee Resource Group and provided a military readiness workshop for talent management professionals from Andreessen Horowitz's portfolio companies. Additionally, COMMIT led five employer engagements throughout the state of Montana funded through the Montana Business Innovation Grant.

The virtual Corporate Education services offered included veteran readiness training for employers, Pursue Your Purpose online transition program for veteran employees, executive coaching, mentor program



**TRANSITION** 

development, and workforce education related to veterans and diverse employee populations.

The INVEST model was utilized as a framework for assessing organizational readiness and designing customized programs. Each section of the model showcases the specific roles employers have in reintegrating and reinvesting veteran talent into their organizations.

It has been a pleasure and honor to partner with The COMMIT Foundation. The work we have done together in order to assist Fiserv associates who are transitioning into the corporate sector after their military service is hugely important and impactful.

MEG HENDRICKS, U.S. ARMY VETERAN, HEAD OF MILITARY AND VETERAN AFFAIRS, FISERV



#### WITH GRATITUDE TO OUR SUPPORTERS

- A. James & Alice B. Clark Foundation
- AIMCO
- Andreessen Horowitz
- The Anschutz Foundation
- Apollo
- The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation
- Baltimore Community Foundation
- Boston Consulting Group
- Brown Advisory
- Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP
- The Chicago Community Trust
- Cigna
- City National Bank
- The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee
- Fisery
- George L. Ohrstrom, Jr. Foundation
- Gianforte Family Foundation
- Goldman Sachs
- Greenspring Associates
- Gula Tech

- Henry E. Niles Foundation
- Johnny Mac Soldiers Fund
- MDC/Richmond American Homes Foundation
- Moonshots Capital
- Morgan Stanley Foundation
- Morgridge Family Foundation
- Morrison & Foerster LLP
- Navy SEAL Foundation
- Onex
- Palantir
- Robert Half
- Roberts & Ryan
- Rumsfeld Foundation
- Silicon Valley Bank
- Sinclair Broadcast Group
- UMB Bank
- The Unit Foundation
- The USAA Foundation
- Wounded Warrior Project
- Yellowstone Club Community Foundation



My heart is full thinking about what an amazing and eye-opening journey this has been for me; you do a truly amazing thing for veterans, not only placing them in careers that fit their goals, values, and strengths, but you give them a compass for their entire lives, personal and professional. Considering the quality of people you bring into your program, the ripple effect will be exponential.

NOEL BULGER, U.S. MARINE CORPS VETERAN



Brown Advisory is very pleased to partner with COMMIT in helping veterans transition into meaningful roles in their next chapters. As a firm, we believe in this work. For me and our other colleagues who have been involved, the work has been inspiring. As a mentor, I'm certain that I learn as much or more from my mentees as they do from me.

CHRIS BARTLETT, COMMIT MENTOR AND BROWN ADVISORY EXECUTIVE TEAM MEMBER

### COMMIT INVESTORS AND SUPPORTERS DRIVE SUCCESS

In 2020, The COMMIT Foundation had its most successful year since our 2012 inception thanks to incredible donors and sponsors who contributed more than five million dollars. Below we are spotlighting one of our long-term investors and two new ones.

#### LONG-TERM INVESTOR

Brown Advisory has been supporting The COMMIT Foundation for more than five years. **Brown Advisory** is a private, independent investment and strategic advisory firm whose mission is to make a material and positive difference for clients by delivering a combination of first-class investment performance, strategic advice, and the highest level of service. COMMIT is grateful for this meaningful partnership that has continued to develop over the years.

#### **NEW INVESTORS**

The USAA Foundation invested in COMMIT in 2020 in support of one-on-one transition services and programs, including executive coaching, consultation with COMMIT's Directors of Veterans Services, the Pursue Your Purpose online platform, resume and interview coaching, and transition mentoring workshops.

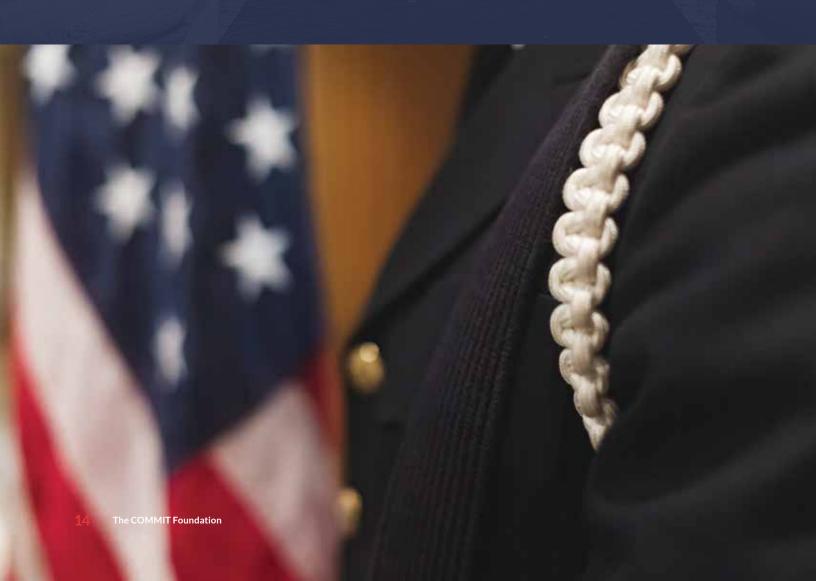
The Overwatch Fund, an affiliate fund of The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, awards grants to nonprofit organizations supporting veterans of the U.S. military in Georgia. The Overwatch Fund is led by a select group of armed forces veterans as well as their colleagues with strong personal connections to the military who currently hold positions as associates across the Blank family of businesses.



### PILLAR 3 THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Influence the military transition space by sharing best practices and creating greater collective impact

In 2020, The COMMIT Foundation furthered its reputation as a leader in veteran transitions. From being featured on the NBC *Today* show to leading community conversations about race, COMMIT continued to lean into the transition process and create opportunities for serendipity.



### AS A THOUGHT LEADER, COMMIT HOSTS WEBINAR LET'S TALK RACE

The military has long been seen as a driver of change and was among the first organizations to racially integrate. For many military leaders, diversity and inclusion was an integral part of their careers. While their experiences are all different, COMMIT wanted to encourage the members of its ecosystem to actively engage in civic discussions to enhance their communities.

COMMIT hosted a webinar in November to learn what we might glean from our experiences in the military to shape conversations about race relations in our own communities. Panelists Dr. Alvin Tillery from Northwestern University, federal mediator for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Dr. Nicole Davis, Navy veteran and Naval Safety Center Aircraft Mishap Investigator Shannon Martin, and COMMIT mentor Francis Ebong, director at X (formerly Google X), informed and inspired us to lead the social justice conversations in our communities.



DR. ALVIN TILLERY Director for the Center for the Study of Diversity and Democracy at Northwestern University



DR. NICOLE DAVIS, Federal Mediator for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



SHANNON MARTIN, Navy Veteran and Naval Safety Center Aircraft Mishap Investigator



FRANCIS EBONG, Director at X and COMMIT Mentor

COMMIT service members show up in their power and in their vulnerability. Transition is scary and I am there to hold the space for them and help them build the bridge between that chasm of leaving the military and finding their new beginning," said COMMIT Coach Sandy Travis who loves being part of a program that encourages rich discovery and exploration as well as offering down-to-earth skills.

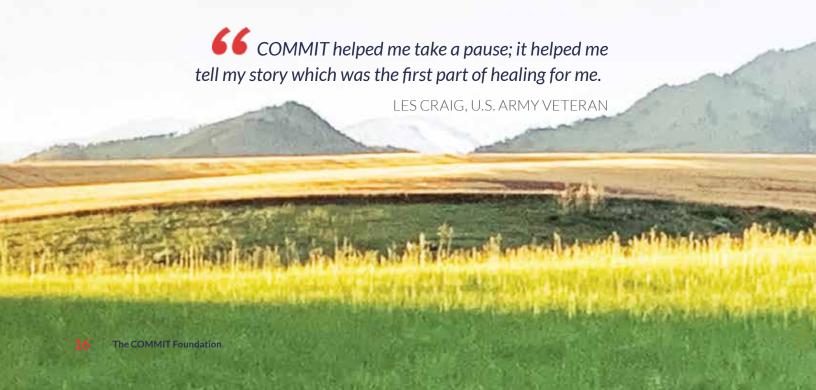
COMMIT COACH SANDY TRAVIS





### COMMIT Featured on NBC *Today* – "People Helping People"

In March, Al Roker, Jill Martin, and Craig Melvin of NBC TODAY interviewed Les and Anne Meree Craig for a segment on "People Helping People" where they shared the story and mission of The COMMIT Foundation. COMMIT saw an incredible uptick in visits to the website—one of which resulted in an incredibly generous gift from a very special woman, *Susie Sikora*.



### NBC STORY RESULTS IN GENEROUS GIFT ON BEHALF OF VETERAN

2020 was an especially challenging year for Susie Sikora of Akron, Ohio. Her brother, Steve Studer, was killed in a tragic accident outside Hardin, Montana, on March 5.

A native of Canton, Ohio, and an Eagle Scout who flew solo on his sixteenth birthday, Steve was an outdoor enthusiast, coin collector, and historian of the Civil War. He enlisted in the Army immediately after high school and served in the 7th Cavalry in Germany during the Vietnam War.

Steve then relocated to Montana where he bought 40 acres in the remote mountains. He deployed as a master sergeant in the U.S. Army Reserves during the Persian Gulf War and, according to Susie, valued the friendships he created through the military.

"Throughout his life, Steve expressed a desire to help other veterans transition from the military into civilian life," said Susie. "Steve wanted to use his 40 acres at

the base of the mountains to help veterans." Unfortunately, Steve died before launching his own programming.

Within days of Steve's death, Susie learned about The COMMIT Foundation. "I almost never have the TV on," she said. "But that day I had the TODAY show on in the background and heard Anne Meree talking about an organization that helps veterans adjust to civilian life. I knew Steve would want to support those veterans."

In honor of his military service and his desire to help other veterans, Steve's family sold his ranch and donated proceeds to The COMMIT Foundation.

"The Sikoras' generosity is incredibly inspiring," said Anne Meree Craig. "It feels so serendipitous that within days of her brother's death, Susie learned about our organization that is based out of Montana and so closely aligned with Steve's vision to help transitioning veterans."

"COMMIT aims to help service members reimagine the possibilities," said Craig, "and a gift like the one from the Sikoras goes a long way toward making that happen. We are incredibly grateful."



STEVE STUDER



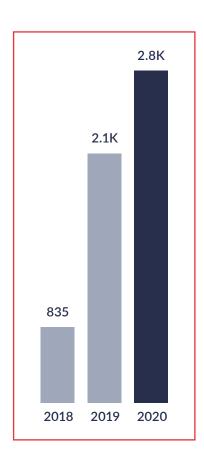
### PILLAR 4 QUALITY AT SCALE

Increase services delivered with an uncompromising focus on the COMMIT standard

The COMMIT Foundation grew exponentially in 2020, but continued to focus on ensuring that we offer quality services to each and every transitioning service member.



### 2020: Impact by the Numbers



### SERVICES PROVIDED

COMMIT's online transition platform allowed us to grow our services from 2018 to 2020 by more than 200 percent while retaining the highest of quality.

#### **PROGRAMMING**



**3,279** individual coaching



**\$482,853** spent on individual coaching sessions



HOURS
spent by
service
recipients
exploring the
transition
platform

#### **WORKSHOPS**



10

Transition Mentoring Workshops nationally



128

service members and veterans attended







75% of COMMIT participants were referred to us by a friend or fellow military service member.



### It's that Je Ne Sais Quoi NICHOLAS MUMM

During his time in the Army, Nicholas Mumm interacted with world leaders, met presidents of foreign countries, and saw the world. So it was no wonder that he approached his transition from the military with that same tactical precision—taking every class offered and pouring as much energy into transition as possible.

"The problem was I hadn't taken time to determine the values I wanted to carry forward, what I wanted to do, or who I wanted to be," said Nicholas, who initially ended up on a corporate career path that wasn't right for him. "My life was crumbling around me because my goals and values were not aligned. I bumped into a friend, Charlie Bailey, and he suggested I reach out to COMMIT."

Paired with COMMIT coach Court Whitman, Nicholas worked his way through Pursue Your Purpose and was selected to attend the February Transition Mentoring Workshop in Bozeman, Montana.

"The work with Court and COMMIT came at the right time. It allowed me to stop, pause, reflect, and understand in a deliberate way what was important to me and would lead to a value fit and make me happy," said Nicholas who is now pursuing a four-year leadership development program through Amazon Military Pathways.

The COMMIT Foundation also owes Nicholas a big thank you, as he introduced us to Reggie Mills, the newest COMMIT



Director of Veteran Services. "It's serendipity," said Nicholas, who had developed a friendship with Mills after attending a Transition Assistance Class taught by Mills at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in 2019. While attending the course, Nicholas and Troy Newman, another COMMIT service recipient, encouraged Reggie to apply to a position with The COMMIT Foundation.

"Being at the right place at the right time. Do the work and things start to happen," said Nicholas. "It takes that *je ne sais quoi* to pull it all together. Serendipity is that last mile—a person can get 95 percent of the way, and serendipity is the last five percent."

Nicholas has now moved to Denver with his wife, Jennifer, 9-year-old son, and 7-year-old daughter who are both avid hockey players and keep the family busy.

### SCHOLARSHIPS AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

In 2020, The COMMIT Foundation partnered with several organizations to provide scholarships and educational opportunities to 25 transitioning service members. These scholarships helped service members:

- Pursue certification courses for Agile Scrum
- Attain certification in EQ-i 2.0, an emotional intelligence assessment tool
- Attend Training the Street, a course to mature financial skills

The COMMIT Foundation continued granting scholarships to service members for **Stanford Ignite**, a program for post-9/11 veterans designed to bolster knowledge of innovation and entrepreneurship, and the **Dartmouth Tuck School of Business** Next Step program, which works with transitioning veterans to further gain the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in business.



## COMMIT Scholarship Recipient Phil Kornachuk, U.S. Army Veteran

Phil Kornachuk received a scholarship for EQ-i 2.0 certification and is now using the training to start up an experiential leadership development program in Bozeman, Montana. "This is pretty much a dream job. That perfect intersection of passion and talent combined with a decent salary," said Phil. "What COMMIT does makes a real difference and has a concrete impact on former service members and their families. This new career means my wife has options that were previously not open to her, and my kids have opportunities that previously weren't there," he said. "It also contributes to my sanity since being at home with seven kids between ages 12 to 16 is way harder than fighting ISIS, the Taliban, and AQ all at the same time," he jokingly added.



#### **LOOKING FORWARD**

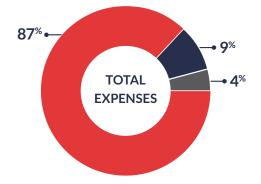
As we look forward, we are anticipating results from a new measure of metrics. "The new metrics will track changes in the three gaps COMMIT's curriculum addresses: information, imagination, and confidence," said Amy Taft, who holds a doctorate in education and serves as COMMIT's Senior Director of Education. The new metrics will also come from an annual survey that includes all participants who have ever received COMMIT services, which will help track our impact over time.

Over the years, participants have asked us to offer transition services to spouses, and we are excited to launch a pilot spouse program this fall. We are developing new content and incorporating it into our digital platforms, seminars, and workshops.

The COMMIT Foundation is also excited to welcome a **new Chief Executive** 

#### **Financials**

TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 5,217,432
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 2,794,652
Program Service Expenses	\$ 2,414,530
Fundraising Expenses	\$ 257,717
Management and General Expenses	\$ 122,405



Officer in 2021, as our CEO and co-founder Anne Meree Craig explores her next mission outside of the veteran service space. We are excited to welcome Alex Krongard and are looking forward to introducing him to all of you in the near future!

I can't thank The COMMIT Foundation enough for all you have provided in the way of transition guidance over the past few months. Thanks to the book Designing Your Life, the coaching of Sandy Travis, and the resume expertise of Scott Vedder—all services provided by COMMIT—I am more excited about retirement and looking forward to the many opportunities for employment as well as service outside of the military.



ELIZABETH SCOTT, U.S. AIR FORCE VETERAN

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COMMIT could not do all it does without the amazing community of coaches, facilitators, mentors, and partners that show up every day on behalf of the men and women that defend our nation.





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