

# CROSS THE DIVIDE

HELPING VETERANS & THEIR FAMILIES  
NAVIGATE THE CHALLENGING TERRAIN OF LIFE



DECEMBER '23 NEWSLETTER



## Greetings from the Executive Director

**Merry Christmas!** As we wrap up this year, I wanted to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude for your support of Cross The Divide in 2023. Your thoughtfulness, prayers, generosity and partnership continue to make a significant impact on the lives of military veterans & their families.

In our mid-year online newsletter, we shared some of our incredible milestones that we reached together this past year. Here are some highlights from that newsletter wherein we discussed many **new Cross The Divide (CTD) events** around the nation:

- Memorial Day Flag Relay with CTD board member and incoming president, Endel Lee (RDML, USN, Retired), across the state of Alabama.
- Trout Fishing Retreat weekend with Navy chaplain, Terry Bewley, in Arkansas.
- Guided fishing trips in Pennsylvania with Adam Korman (Journey on the Fly).
- 2nd Annual Kokanee Fishing Derby on Wallowa Lake, Oregon, orchestrated by Andy Marcum (CTD Oregon), with 36 teams and 110 people fishing.
- Horse Camping retreat with Dan Bostedt (CTD Oregon) and new partner Jeff Campbell of StirrUp Purpose (Bend, OR) in the Wallowa Mountains of Oregon.
- Father-Child Llama camping retreat for veterans in the Cascade Mountains and backpacking trip for a group of active duty US Navy Divers in the Olympic National Park with partner Chris Swan (Summit Initiative).
- Antelope hunt with Andy Marcum (CTD Oregon) for combat veteran Barry Macy.
- Backpacking trip for 1st Special Forces Group with Army chaplain, Joel Taylor, in the Olympic National Forest.

If you did not see our mid-year newsletter, I encourage you to check it out on our website: **[www.crossthedivide.us/newsletters](http://www.crossthedivide.us/newsletters)**. To receive future updates by email, please ensure we have your email address by contacting us at [info@crossthedivide.us](mailto:info@crossthedivide.us).

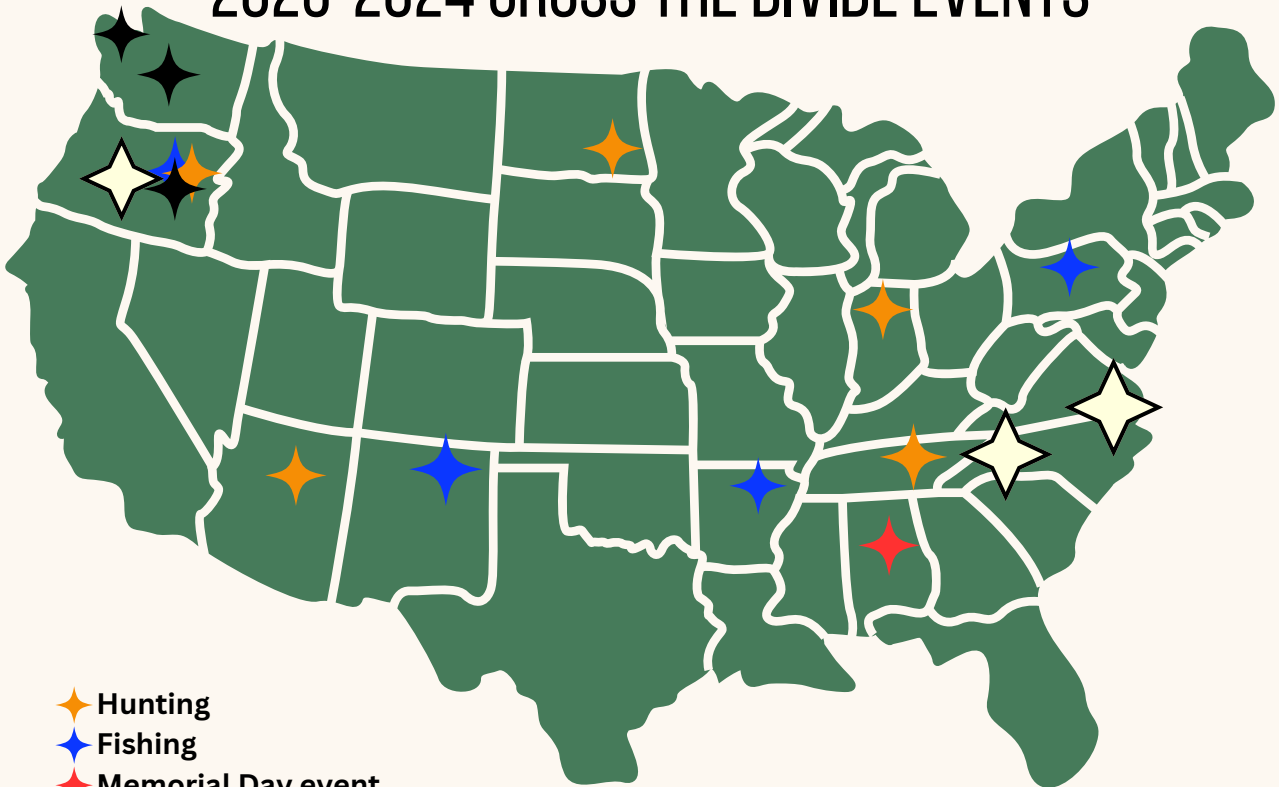
As you read more stories from the rest of 2023 and see the pictures of those impacted by our mission, please celebrate what we have been able to do together because of your personal, invested partnership. And especially during this season, let's remember that every success and every good gift is from Above. At CTD, as we invite or experience "light" in the midst of our personal darkness, that light is the person and work of Jesus. We can do nothing apart from the grace, guidance and goodness of our Creator, God & Savior.

- Emile "Mo" Moured  
CTD Executive Director

**"THE PEOPLE WHO WALK IN DARKNESS WILL SEE A GREAT LIGHT. FOR THOSE WHO LIVE IN A LAND OF DEEP DARKNESS, A LIGHT WILL SHINE. . . FOR A CHILD IS BORN TO US, A SON IS GIVEN TO US. THE GOVERNMENT WILL REST ON HIS SHOULDERS. AND HE WILL BE CALLED 'WONDERFUL COUNSELOR', 'MIGHTY GOD', 'EVERLASTING FATHER', 'PRINCE OF PEACE'."**

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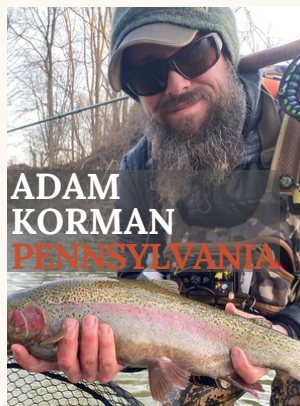
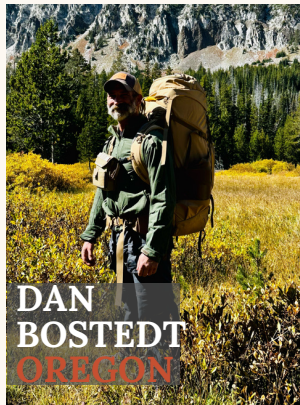
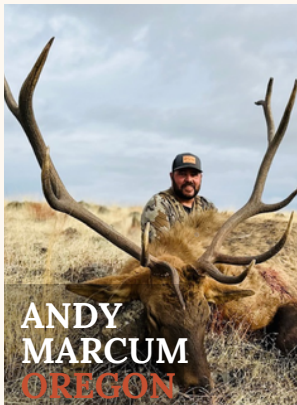
# 2023-2024 CROSS THE DIVIDE EVENTS



- ★ Hunting
- ★ Fishing
- ★ Memorial Day event
- ★ Backpacking, Llama Packing, Horse Camping, Retreats
- ★ Future events/location in 2024



Check out Cross The Divide team members on our website,  
**[www.crossthedivide.us/meet-our-team](http://www.crossthedivide.us/meet-our-team)**  
or see all their stories from this past year on our Facebook page (@crossthedivide1)





In June and September, we held our first women's retreats, "Beauties & Boots", with Stacey James and Tammy Ortung [Stonecroft Ministries], who is now on our Board of Directors and our Women's Ministry Lead. Each weekend in **Washington** and **Oregon** provided rejuvenation, reflection and relaxation as each veteran or family member experienced deep connection and transformation in the soul-nourishing backdrop of the **Olympic** (WA) and **Wallowa** (OR) mountains. In 2024, Tammy and CTD will be adding a women's retreat in **North Carolina**.

Veterans enjoyed our first 5-day deer and goose hunt with new partner, Mike Kraemer, in **North Dakota**. Mike's passion for hunting is only rivaled by his passion to be great husband, dad, and encourager of others. With over two decades of experience in ministry, Mike's heart overflows with gratitude and love for our military veterans and their families.

As this newsletter is being written, we have new hunting trips happening with long-time CTD partner, Corey Watson, in **Tennessee** and new partner, Mike Strong, in **Indiana**. Both served in the Marines Corps and continue to serve our veterans selflessly. We're blessed to have them on the team! We look forward to sharing those stories in the new year.



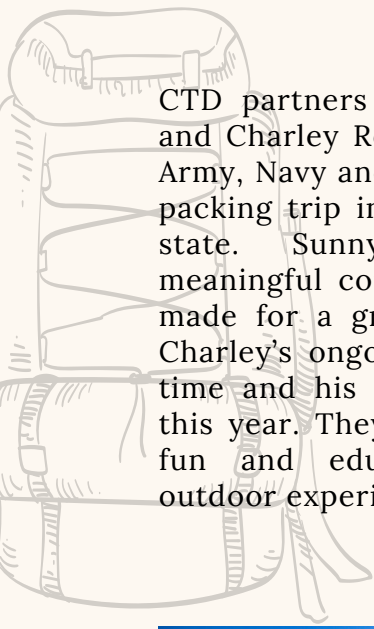
In eastern **Oregon**, Andy Marcum helped Army Veterans and long time friends Scott Canino (Ranger) and Travis Sybesma (Green Beret) seal the deal on a great bull. After a long stalk from ridge top to ridge top, Scott made a great shot on his first ever bull with his 300PRC from 375 yards!



Toshiro "Tosh" Carrington, (US Navy SEAL), joined Andy, Charles Woods, and the CTD team for a premium bull elk hunt in honor of Charles son and Navy SEAL, Ty Woods. Tosh and his family had a once-in-a-lifetime experience, together harvesting a large bull after it seemed our opportunities were gone. As with many of our field experiences, we overcame unexpected challenges and enjoyed hours of conversation, praying together, remembering Ty's legacy, and fellowshiping over many meals.

For all our hunters, these elk provide a large amount of high-quality meat for sustenance.





CTD partners Chris Swan, Dave Armstrong and Charley Rosenberry took out a group of Army, Navy and Air Force veterans on a llama packing trip in the Cascades of **Washington** state. Sunny skies, chilly evenings, meaningful conversation and friendly llamas made for a great trip. We truly appreciate Charley's ongoing, generous donation of his time and his llamas for these events again this year. They definitely add a whole other fun and educational dynamic to these outdoor experiences!



This October, CTD partnered with Aaron Bryant and Jon Hagedorn of Family Lines for an amazing father-son fly fishing trip in northern **New Mexico** and Colorado. Family Lines mission is to fight absence in fatherhood by providing opportunities for intentional presence for the restoration of the family line. As this year's trip focused on military/LE families, Mo joined military veterans in traveling to Navajo Dam, New Mexico, for five days of excellent fly fishing and some incredibly powerful campfire discussions. A big thanks to Dane and Wes LePlatt and their church small group for hosting and feeding us during the week at the Leplatt Lodge!



This past fall, CTD planned to provide a mountain lion hunt in **Arizona** for Marine and paraplegic, James Weber, as part of a "Grand Slam" series of hunts. Unfortunately, James was in a serious car accident shortly before the hunt that resulted in several injuries, including a fractured vertebrae. Undeterred, James' faith in God and unbroken spirit will have him back in the fight to complete the hunt just after the new year! **Please keep James', his health and this opportunity in your prayers.**



# Faith Renewed, Family Restored

by Navy Chief Marco Mirador, CTD backpacking participant

I had a lot of things really weighing on my mind leading up to the backpacking event with Cross The Divide. I had been experiencing some depression, anxiety, weariness, and I felt like I needed to be away from all those emotions. I kept thinking that I just needed to go somewhere else and just be in peace. But I didn't know what that was or what it looked like.

**My wife had just been diagnosed with cancer**, and I was searching for ways for her to be healed. I had just retired from the Navy, and my son was about to leave to start college. I was asking myself, "What do I need to do? What's my purpose after my retirement?" It seemed like I just needed to get away to do some deep self-examination and figure things out.

As we made the six-mile hike to our campsite, the Olympic Mountains were so beautiful. Being away from everything was so relaxing. I felt a sense of peace, being able to focus on simple tasks I could control without the stress and anxiety controlling me. I just focused on nature and God's creation. It allowed me to think back with a little more peace and clarity on the things I needed to sort out.

**"Okay, now that I'm here, what do I do next?"**

During one of our first group discussions, people shared ways in which they experienced "brokenness" in their lives. As I started listening to stories of what they've been through and the challenges that they've experienced, I resonated with the things each person shared. At the same time, I asked myself, "Why am I here? What's my real 'brokenness' that I'm here to work on?" I realized that it was about my relationship with God. Before and during my time in the military, my relationship with God was always up and down. I could never find peace within myself.

Realizing that I needed to be in right relation-

ship with Him, I decided to make a covenant with God. When I got back from the backpacking trip, I started reading **The Purpose Driven Life** by Rick Warren, and I started reading the Bible every day. I started searching for answers when I found Bible verses I didn't completely understand. Then I told my wife what I was doing, and she got interested and wanted to know more about the word of God too. Soon after, we decided that we needed to find a home church, and soon we started getting involved in a local church.

I'm in a better place now than I was before. I had to let go of some pride. I had to let go of all the things causing depression and anxiety because none of those matters to me like my relationship with God and my family. When we found out that my wife had cancer, I didn't know who to turn to. But now I believe that God was calling me during that backpacking trip to say, "**Marco, it's time for you to come to Me. I need you to come to Me and just tell me everything.**" And that was that was the beginning of a relationship with God. Since I committed to seeking Him, I started praying and reading the Bible more. And during my wife's treatment, God provided us comfort and peace. That made me realize that this is real. This is how God works. It's not about you anymore; it's about your relationship with God.

My wife and I have started learning and growing in God together. We started getting in our Bibles together every day, and that has helped turn our lives around and our family around as well.

No matter what the circumstances you have been through, keep praising God and continue to love God like Job did in the Bible. I can't go back now, because God continue to bless me. God answered my prayers. This is about a relationship with God, and that's all I ever needed.

- Marco



# HAILS AND FAREWELLS



In the military, "Hails and Farewells" are held to welcome new personnel (Hails) and bid farewell to departing members (Farewells). These events serve as opportunities to formally introduce newcomers, foster camaraderie and acknowledge the contributions of those leaving.

**Please join us in hailing and farewelling some of our CTD board members!**



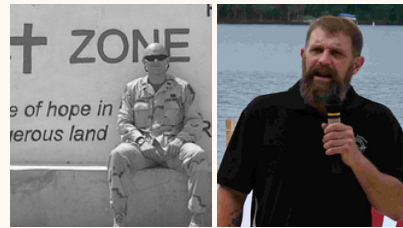
Please welcome our incoming board president, Rear Admiral Endel Lee (USN Ret.)! He is a current CTD board member and a seasoned veteran and chaplain, supporting military personnel directly and by collaborating with Christian organizations. Endel has a rich family history of military service, including his grandfather who died in the Battle of Okinawa in WWII. Endel and his wife, Kathy, met at the University of Mobile and still live in Alabama.



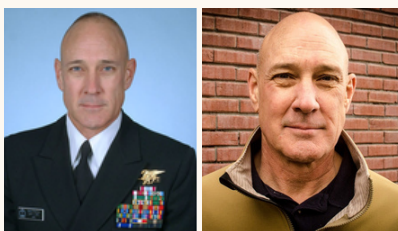
Please welcome our current secretary, Chief JaRon Wall (USN Ret.) who joined the CTD board of directors earlier this year! He spent 24 years as a Submarine Yeoman and now serves as a military spouse and government contractor. Actively involved in his church's worship team and volunteering with his family, he still relishes the tranquility of nature. JaRon & his wife Lynn (CDR, USN) dedicate their lives to serving both Christ and country.



Please welcome new director, Tammy Ortung (Lt Col, USAF Ret.) who joined the CTD board of directors in November! **Tammy will be CTD's women's ministry lead with events in the PNW and North Carolina in 2024.** A 25-year veteran, she currently balances consulting, JROTC mentoring, women's ministry and leading her Bible Study Fellowship group. She's devoted to sharing the gospel and building connections. Celebrating 30 years of marriage, Tammy & her husband, Tim, also a USAF veteran, treasure family time with 2 daughters and 5 grandkids.



Please welcome new director, Chaplain Derek Murray (LTC, USA Ret.) who joined the CTD board of directors at the start of 2023! He was ordained to the gospel ministry in 2002 and pastored before his time of military service. Still active in serving veterans, **Derek will be helping launch CTD programs and events in Virginia, North Carolina, DC, and Maryland.** He lives in Virginia with his college sweetheart & wife of 28 years, Sarah. They have 4 children and 2 grandchildren. Derek is also currently working toward a PhD in Bible Exposition.



Please join us in farewelling outgoing president, Dave Pittelkow (CAPT, SEAL, USN Ret.)! Pit provided the leadership we needed to ensure that Cross The Divide launched successfully in 2021 and grew in a healthy way to expand operations to 10 states in 2023. With his two-year term as president complete, Pit will be staying on the board as a director. We are blessed to have had his calm, steady leadership, and we are doubly blessed to have him remain on the board going forward. Hooyah, Shipmate!



Please join us in farewelling the Dynamic Duo, Jack James (CDR, SEAL, USN Ret.) and Stacey James (Lt Col, USAF Ret.)! Jack and Stacey live in Wallowa, OR, and paved the way for CTD while ensuring we had a Secretary and Treasurer during our first year underway. They are well-connected to the veteran network in eastern Oregon and continue to support CTD in many various ways, including by becoming part of CTD's new board of advisors in 2024. We are incredibly blessed by their partnership & energy!

See all of our Cross The Divide board members on our website:  
**[www.crossthedivide.us/leadership](http://www.crossthedivide.us/leadership)**

# Hope for Soul Hurricanes

by Chaplain P. Endel Lee Jr., RDML (US Navy, Ret.),  
Incoming board president, Cross The Divide

You have heard it said, “Hope is not a strategy!” But I say to you that without hope no strategy will reach its igniting point. Even the best winning strategy will fail, if not fueled by the very inclination that success is possible.

These inclinations we call “hope” are vital to human existence. Billy Graham is credited with saying, “Hope is to the soul what oxygen is to the human body.” Hope serves as an anchor to our souls and makes even the darkest projections of any future seem bearable and potentially redeemable (see Hebrews 6:16-20 & Jeremiah 29:11).

Hope can only be eclipsed by the shadow of our own despair. Yet, despair’s darkness is shattered by the slightest inclining of hope! Despair will smother hope, if given the opportunity; thus, hope must be stoked routinely with intentionality so that its embers can ignite the soul. In this dance between the extremes of hope and despair, the human soul is often wrenched and torn, beaten and battered, exhausted and drained of even the desire to live – unless hope is infused as the energizing and revitalizing ingredient for sustaining a life, granting a soul the ability to endure and even embrace the next moment, the next hour, the next day.

Hope’s significance is noted by the Apostle Paul in his writings, listing it among the top three virtues. He wrote, “Now these three remain: faith, hope and love” (1 Corinthians 13:13). Much like the middle of an Oreo cookie, hope acts like the creamy middle holding the two cookie outsides of faith and love together, forming a combination of flavors that doesn’t exist unless these

elements are tasted together. And yes, some days in life are so harsh that you need to open up this “Oreo” of virtues and lick hope from the middle first, before or until faith and love can make their contributions. Notably, because faith can only become a reality and “the proof of what is seen” (Hebrews 11:1), if first it is conceived by hope; and love can only reach its full maturation when incubated by the soothing caresses of hope.

Hope is a must for a person to survive very long. As essential as hope is, even more crucial is the source of our hope. Many often chose to draw their hope from other people, or place their hope in things or money. Hope of this kind will last only for a little while and usually is depleted quickly in the rigors of the dance described above, especially when subjected to the harsher dynamics of life’s challenges. Placing your hope in God and His eternal resources is the only way to sustain your soul in the crucibles of life and see your soul well forged for heaven’s bliss. This kind of “living hope,” hope in God, will not disappoint when we allow God to pour it into our hearts (Romans 5:5); whereas a hope in others or things are inevitably realized as the means for a false hope, an evaporating hope, or even finding a dead end.

So as the Psalmist prompts, “Hope in God!” (Psalm 33, 39, 42, 43, 62), and therein find a source of strength that can carry you through the hardest days, the darkest nights, and prepare you for any soul hurricanes. Properly pack your hope kit now, so when the seasons of hopelessness come -- you will be ready!

- Philip “Endel” Lee



“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him.  
They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream.  
It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green.  
It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

**Jeremiah 17:7-8**

**THANK YOU for your support  
of our veteran programs this year!**



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