



## **Introducing Our First Recipient of 2025**

### **#51: Marine Sergeant Andrew Hanscom of Green Bay, Wisconsin**

In 2009, having grown up in Colorado, 18 year-old Andy Hanscom turned the pain of being bullied for years into the strength he needed to redefine himself. Born on base at Camp Lejeune, and choosing to follow a long line of familial service, he set his sights on the Marine Corps. He graduated boot camp with honors and a meritorious promotion. Andy found his dreams coming to life; and after arriving at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) in Yuma, AZ, he bought his first motorcycle. The aviation mechanic went at it hard; and as the day's physical toll and war time demands weighed on him, he quickly learned that riding helped him cope.

Life threw Andy a curveball: his first mentor took his life on base and it shook him to his young core. He initially isolated himself in dismay, then joined others in sorrow and heavy drinking, only to be arrested the night of the funeral for being underage. He was busted in rank, lost respect and freedoms, including riding for three months. While he learned riding's importance to his mental health, he didn't learn his lesson in discipline and eventually sold his next bike to cover legal fees from a second episode. Having been given one last chance, Andy pulled himself together, stopped drinking and took control back in his life. He pushed to rebuild, was promoted and completed his first Military Expedition Unit (MEU) deployment. With his sights set on learning as much as he could, the Harrier Jet mechanic succeeded in advanced aviation and leadership courses and became a Martial Arts Instructor.

In September, 2012, the Taliban initiated a deadly and costly ground assault on Camp Bastion, Afghanistan. In direct response, Andy's Unit received deployment orders to replace a Unit that successfully fought back. Andy was recognized for his advanced capabilities and, as a collateral assignment to his regular duties, became a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) Team Leader. In preparing for deployment he went through additional close combat and foreign weapons training for the necessary counter surveillance and intelligence efforts he would now be supporting. In April, 2013 Andy landed at Camp Leatherneck, a Marine base neighboring the enormous Camp Bastion. Despite our nation's draw down efforts, the volatile region had a heavily embedded Taliban presence. The joint bases were attacked daily by mortars and RPG's; and Andy's off-base efforts took him into surrounding villages and terrain in search of deadly weapon caches and terrorist activity. Small arms and indirect fire weren't uncommon; and danger and high-alert living were a given. Andy moved through the threats by staying focused on their training, trusting his counterparts, and blocking out anxious thoughts while there. For his notable service in combat, he was meritoriously promoted to Sergeant while deployed, and by the General overseeing Afghanistan's operations at the time. Andy was stateside five months later, grateful to be home and ready for his next challenge. He didn't let guilt, menacing questions or difficult memories from war pervade his life...yet. He simply pushed it all behind him, giving it room to grow deep within, and focused on his future. Andy did know one thing: he needed something to help clear his mind and bought his first Harley to ease his post-deployment transition.

To avoid dealing with what he'd been through, Andy furthered a pattern of chasing achievements rather than addressing brewing struggles. The goal-driven Marine set his sights on MARSOC, the Corps' component for the U.S. Special Operations Command, responsible for recruiting, training and deploying Marines for special operations globally. He followed a demanding physical training

schedule for this specialized opportunity; and once chosen, Andy shipped his belongings to the east coast and rode his bike from Yuma, AZ to Camp Lejeune, NC for the grueling year ahead.

Training was hard; and he rode on the weekends to reset his mind and prepare for the difficult requirements ahead. In his fourth month, while in a team drill, the group dropped a log and Andy separated his shoulder and significantly tore his bicep struggling to hold it up. He fought on for three more days when his arm gave out on top of a 20 foot rope ladder, causing him to fall, and leaving him with back, knee and ankle injuries that affect him to this day. His MARSOC dream was done; and four surgeries later, so was his plan to stay in the Marine Corps.

Andy moved to Utah with a duffle bag and his bike to figure out his plan as a 24 year-old civilian. Life as a Marine was what he knew, where he thrived and where he planned to be for years to come. Depressed and at a loss, he turned to drinking to numb his pain; and he worked out to both rehab his damaged body and ignore the growing noise in his head. When his close friend and former Sergeant died, Andy sold his Harley to support his grieving widow, then bought their truck for the tough winter ahead. He further isolated himself, questioned his purpose, and argued in his mind if did enough or even was enough...and somehow pushed through life and the dark clouds that surrounded him. He floated between jobs looking for his fit, pursued an education and bought another bike to settle his mind. In 2016 he took a job drilling wells; and because he'd be traveling the country, Andy sold his bike with no idea it would be the last he'd own for years to come.

Andy finally landed a good aviation job in Arizona. While there he reconnected with his 5th grade childhood crush, married the woman of his dreams and quickly started their family. Things were lining up nicely...until Andy needed a different job, or was unfulfilled in the next, or wanted to chase more money, or couldn't deal with the transitional stress the couple faced or, worse, would learn of another Brother's suicide. His drinking worsened; and every step forward he took, internal forces would pull him back and open more dark, questioning doors in his mind. To ease the struggle, Andy found ways to rent or borrow the occasional bike and it would help him reset temporarily. But as much as he knew what he needed, getting his own bike with a young family in debt was well out of reach.

In 2020 they landed in Iowa for another job and the chance to be close to her family. Andy began traveling for work, excessively and purposefully, and it created more tension at home. He pursued advanced education, tackled Ironman triathlons and Cross Fit training to self-isolate and focus on anything but his past and current struggle. While he "looked fine and put together" to the outside world, the more he did, the more depressed and unfulfilled he became... and the more his inner world crumbled. It took their strained marriage to a near breaking point when both realized his underlying lifelong passion, and currently unmet need, was to serve his country and communities...and together they pledged to find a way.

With a renewed commitment to each other and focused purpose, Andy explored a position within the Department of Justice as a U.S. Marshal. He grew excited for the role and knew the significant salary cut would be worth it to his heart and mind. Simultaneously, Andy began counseling and participating in several Veteran programs to help address and manage his scars from service. After an almost two year process, in May, 2023, Andy finally started as a U.S. Deputy Marshal within the District of Eastern Wisconsin--Green Bay Sub Office...and he absolutely loves it. While he exercises daily for his body's needs, serves his church and loves being with his young family, there was still a hole in his heart that could only be filled with two wheels. He'd look at shops and dream online, but since their foreseeable family budget and no room for a bike purchase, he continued to borrow them from friends and co-workers who understood the healing it provided. Having owned five bikes in his seven years of riding, and describing riding's value as "a yoga mat where I went to meditate, think, plan and pray", we understood his passion and need. Hogs For Heroes believed getting a bike back in this rider's life

would help Andy continue on the good path he's carved out for himself and made him our first Recipient of 2025.

We surprised Andy with our news and watched this Marine's stunned face turn into overwhelming relief and gratitude. Although he'd been trying out different bikes along the way, we sent him out to find the model he wanted and the bike that captured his heart. He did just that, landing on a cool black 2023 Road Glide Special with a mere 1,100 miles on her, raised bars and an exhaust that was music to his ears. Our friends at Appleton Harley-Davidson helped stretch our dollars to make this sweet pairing possible and will deliver it to the 43rd Annual Northeast WI Charity Motorcycle Show in Manitowoc for us to pass his keys in front of a patriotic, motorcycle-loving group! Come on out to enjoy the cool bike show and catch his **Presentation of Keys Ceremony on Saturday, April 26, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. at the Manitowoc County Expo Center** (4921 Expo Drive, Manitowoc, WI).