



Mission Debrief



OPERATION WAKE SURF

MONTHLY UPDATE

Last month, the Operation Wake Surf Board elected to create an Advisory Board. This group of people will work together to offer ideas, direction, and feedback for future events and marketing outreach. The advisory board's current members are Ken Scribner, Wade Morrison, Ziggy Graves, and Brian Tremain.

This group of people has experience in military operations, medical knowledge, power sports, design and marketing. OWS is very excited to have this deep bench of knowledge and experience to help construct future events and outreach to serve those that continue to serve all of us. OWS is proud of the support it has received from prior heroes, partners, and sponsors.

It's with a heart of servitude that we come together to meet a need. Many collective hands working together make light work, and the work of the Advisory Board hopes to achieve and cultivate a community of support and ambassadorship.

MEET THE CREW

Hi, I am Ziggy Graves. I am a US Army Airborne Infantry Veteran who served 3 years active duty. I started out as an OWS HERO at my first event a few years back and since then I have attended many OWS events as both a HERO and a volunteer. In short, Operation Wake Surf has changed my life and showed me a new purpose of helping serve others like myself who have dedicated a portion of their life to serving our countries and communities. I am honored to be a part of the team and to be the newly designated Apparel Manager and part of the newsletter production team.



Apparel Manager
ziggy@operationwake.surf

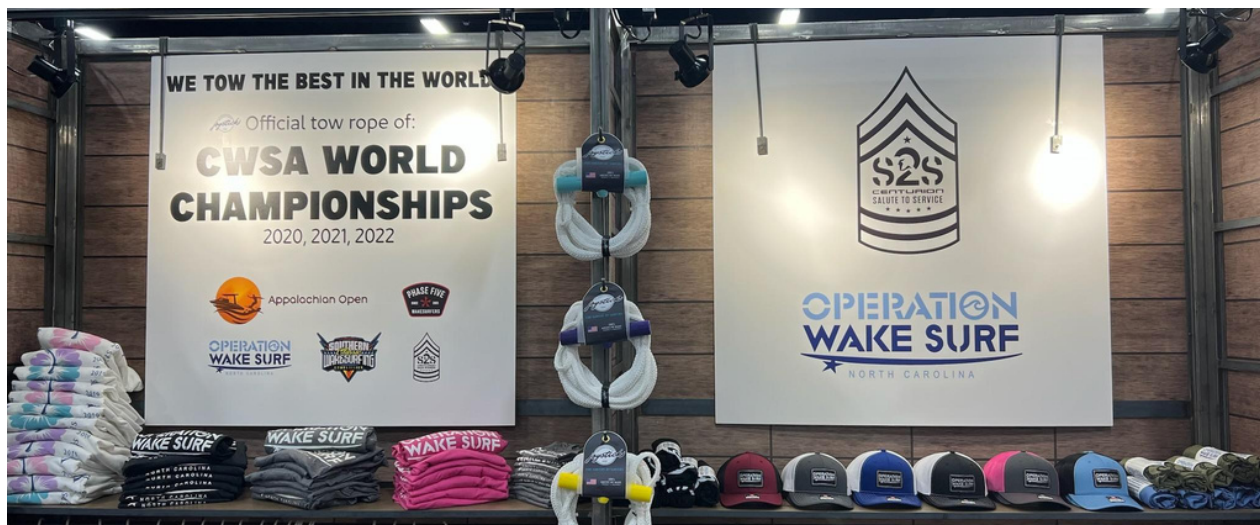


PHOTO PROVIDED BY JOYSTICK

SALUTE 2 SERVICE

NORTH CAROLINA - UTAH

Operation Wake Surf was featured at two boat shows across the country; Mid Atlantic Boat Show courtesy of Upstate Marine and the Utah Boat Show and Water Sports Expo courtesy of Joystick. OWS is there handing out gift cards to heros on location at both venues, spreading the word and serving those who serve.



UP NEXT

EVENTS & FUNDRAISERS

Mid Atlantic Boat Show Booth | Feb 10-13

Pi Day Fundraiser | March 14

S2S Peoria, AZ | March 22

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

ONLINE STORE

MERCHANDISE

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HERO SPOTLIGHT

KYLE BAKER - POLICE OFFICER

Surfing for Sanity

Here I was, June of 2021, floating in the middle of Lake Norman, at an all-time low in my life. Floating and crying at the same time, I had just experienced my first attack of survivor's guilt. Right before the attack I was smiling and having a blast, I had just crashed and burned on my first ride up on a wake board. I had been practicing all morning and I just couldn't seem to get the concept of getting up on the board as the boat pulled me through the water. But finally, I made it up, I surfed, even if just for a few hundred feet, then I crashed. I popped up out of the water with a huge smile on my face. But, within seconds I was hit by a large wave of guilt. Guilt that I was having fun for the first time since that tragic day in December when my life and the lives of many others changed forever. That guilt was a heavy burden at the time, one that made me want to just sink and end it all. Thank God for the life vest I was wearing that day because an attack like that just drains you immediately. I am proud to say it is something I have overcome but it has not been easy. There are too many people to thank individually for getting me through it, but it's worth mentioning that the Operation Wake Surf crew was a large part of that accomplishment.



During that time in the water, I was attending my first event with Operation Wake Surf. Their mission is "to provide an unforgettable and unique experience to first responders and military personnel who keep our communities and country safe" - Robby Maschhaup. Boy did they deliver on that mission statement that day! When people say God has a way of intervening in people's lives, well I can attest to that on many occasions, especially just in the past few years. The invitation alone was a unique one, but we will save that story for another day.

As I mentioned before, I was a wreck, I was in a dark place, a deep fog, and there were no real signs of light in any direction. When I was invited, I gathered little information about the event, and I committed to joining them without putting much thought into it at all. I kissed my wife goodbye and headed to the lake knowing only that I was staying for 3 days and there would be surfing involved. Little did I know the impact it would have on me.

To better understand my mental state at that time, I need to break down how I got there, but that could be a book by the time I finish, so I'll keep it as short as possible. In September 2019, I felt called to rejoin Law Enforcement after a 9-year break from it, I still can't tell you why to this day, it was just a strong overwhelming feeling of something I needed to do. Unfortunately, during the onboarding process I lost my dad to a tractor trailer accident on I-40. He was the first loss my very close family had ever experienced. Instead of grieving like I should have done, I pulled myself together and stayed strong for my mom and siblings. I kept the hiring process going and stayed focused on that.

@operation_wakesurf | updates@operationwake.surf

By July 2020 you could say stress was building on me, with losing dad, worrying about mom, COVID hitting the country, basic law enforcement training, the new job, and the final tests coming up. Then, my wife and I decided to sell our house and buy another the same weeks of the finals. I plead temporary insanity there, selling and buying is a stress all on its own. But I was finally sworn in and now I just had to get through field training, luckily field training was expedited due to my prior 7 years with Law Enforcement experience. I make it through field training with little to no issues and I'm finally back on my own, and it felt great. The stress starts to fall off a little now, I'm in my own cruiser and assigned to my permanent team by September 2020, almost 1 year after losing dad. I began to make friends on my new assigned night shift team, and we all get along and worked very well together.

It's now December 15th, 2020, and it's the night of my very first bible study with a group of officers that have become great friends to this day. My faith was new then, but that magical Testimony is a story best suited for another time. Little did I know the trials He was preparing me for just 24 Hours later.

December 16th, 2020, at 10:37 pm, "Officer Down, shots fired"; came across the radio. In an exchange of gunfire that lasted only a few minutes, I watched as one friend was killed, another was rushed to the hospital with a gunshot wound, and I took the life of another person. When I finally made it home the next morning, I hugged my wife close, and we cried together as I removed the uniform that suddenly became very heavy to wear. I felt lost that morning, more lost than I ever have. We (people in general) build a life, we become adults, we have bills, house payment, and car payments. We have cats and dogs, and we raise a family. We have picnics and cook-outs during the summer and plan vacations. We have careers where we make money to afford all that stuff and grow the life we have. But that feeling of being lost that morning felt like all of that had been snatched from me in an instance, placed in a bottle and shaken vigorously then dumped back out with no real directions on how to put it back together.

I couldn't sleep after I made it home the next morning, so I spent much of the day riding passenger in a police car, watching as we passed bridges covered with fire trucks and civilians waving Blue Line Flags. Street sides filled on every corner with crying friends, family and strangers as we followed behind EMS with the fallen officer as he was escorted from Charlotte, through Concord and back to his hometown.

Day one was finally over, full of emotions and tears. 24 hours had passed, it was now 10:30 at night on December 17th. I lay awake in bed; I still can't sleep. My mind racing through all the chaos. One of the last things I held onto that kept my mind straight was the sonogram appointment my wife and I had the next day. She was 8 weeks pregnant with our first child! I was so excited, being a dad, something I had been wanting for the past few years. I held onto that, that piece of good that was still in our lives at this point. I really do not remember sleeping that night either. Maybe I did, but the nightmares were so real it just felt like I didn't.

Our sonogram appointment wasn't until early afternoon, the candlelight vigil was around 5 that night so we were trying to mentally prepare ourselves for it all. It's now about 3 o'clock on December 18th, we found ourselves sitting on a couch in a cozy baby waiting room. I remember they had the news channel on, and I was watching as every television talked about the shooting, by now it had hit every news channel in the area. I nervously sat there waiting for my picture to show up. What would I do if it did? What if someone in the waiting room recognizes me if they do? What if they release my name? How much do they know? All these questions racing as fast as they could with no real answers. My mind would not shut off, my adrenaline was still high from the shooting. Looking back now, it was not me; it was not my normal state of mind. Now, I see clearly what was happening, but at the time I could not make any sense of it.

Having just finished the sonogram, we sat quietly while waiting on the doctor to come in. I think both of us were so exhausted at this point that it didn't even dawn on either of us that we didn't get to hear the heartbeat. The doctor came in right after, it was official, we were made aware of the miscarriage. I can only imagine what the staff thought of us as neither of us had anymore grieving to give.

If they had only known what happened the prior 36 hours, maybe they'd understand why we couldn't cry anymore. My wife and I simply look at each other lost, both wondering what each of us did to deserve the past few days. We leave, my wife drives as I stare into the abyss, we travel in complete silence, one last task to finish for the day.

We barely made it to the Candlelight Vigil on time. Seeing hundreds swarm the streets showing respect, our Chaplain and administration making their speeches. Friends, family and strangers laying memorabilia on the fallen officer's car as it faced parked at the entrance to the police department. I'm still new to the agency at that time, I only know a select few at this point, but everyone now knows me. I hug and shake hands with all my new co-workers who give me words of encouragement one after another. I'm told several times by many that I am a hero. I remember feeling angry about that for some reason. I didn't feel like one, we lost a friend and co-worker that night, it didn't feel like a victory to me. It's apparently a normal reaction from what I've learned since.

It was officially 48 hours later, and the adrenaline was finally wearing down. I was tired, physically, mentally and emotionally. I crashed and I slept for what felt like 24 hours. I don't even remember dreaming. It was a nice break from all the chaos I just had to endure. Little did I know at the time, the worst of it was far from over. Emotions like anger, guilt and weakness will soon take over as I let the devil in and enter a fog like I have never experienced before.

Over the course of 2021 and most of 2022, I fell victim to PTSD, anxiety, depression, alcoholism, self-blame, hypervigilance and much more. But as you can see by reading this, I have overcome what I pray is the worst of it. I thank God for the organizations that were there to support me. Several organizations stepped up when I needed them, and Operation Wake Surf was a large part of that. In addition, they didn't send me home empty handed after that 3-day event. In fact, they stayed in contact with me and invited me out to several of their smaller events, they took me out on private surf days and kept me active and involved. If it weren't for that balance of good days through the many bad, I honestly couldn't tell you if I'd even still be wearing the badge these days. Fortunately, I did not give up when I had the many chances to do so. I am still employed today and doing what I love. Although I will never feel like my old self again, I have become a stronger me and hope to one day soon give back to other officer's who I know will unfortunately experience the same trials one day. I have learned so much about mental illness in the wake of life's tragic moments and I've learned even more about the importance of organizations that support our first responders and military in the wake of those tragic moments. Operation Wake Surf and the Salute to Service project by Centurion Boats is truly a blessing in disguise, and I am proud to call them my true friends!

~Master Police Officer Kyle E. Baker

Romans 13:4 "For he is God's servant for your good."

[CLICK HERE](#) for the Kyle's full story

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

OPERATION WAKE SURF IS A 501.C.3 NONPROFIT
COMPANY

Whether you donate time, talent, or financial support, it allows us to
host free and unique events to honor the heroes of this great country.

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