THE MISSION CONTINUES
2018 MASS DEPLOYMENT
OPERATION WATTS IS WORTH IT
IMPACT REPORT
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WHO WE ARE:

At The Mission Continues, we empower motivated veterans to be at the center of meaningful impact in their communities, equipping these men and women with tools and resources to lead movements that inspire change. We’re part of a collective effort that empowers veterans to serve in new ways, solve tough challenges and mobilize communities to serve alongside them.

WHAT IS A MASS DEPLOYMENT?

Mass Deployment is a week-long program that mobilizes veterans from across the country to serve a community in need alongside local partners and volunteers. Through their actions, these veterans—our Crew and Ambassadors—engage in hands-on learning and leadership opportunities while having a meaningful impact on the local community. In joining forces, our veteran volunteers do more than just serve: they connect with each other, the community, and the city they are supporting. Operation Watts Is Worth It was the third annual Mass Deployment, held in the Watts community of Los Angeles.

WHY WATTS?

A community with a history older than the state of California, Watts has been called the most powerful neighborhood in Los Angeles. As with many urban areas in America, residents face daily trials related to under-resourced schools, de-population, disinvestment and under-employment. The capacity and resources of social services organizations in the area are spread thin, so those who most need assistance find it hard to access help. Through it all, Watts has maintained a unique and vibrant identity and its residents deserve a brighter future.

Now more than ever, reasons to hope abound. City officials, corporate leaders and philanthropic organizations are coming together to make investments in the neighborhood and positive progress is on the horizon. Local community groups have been actively engaged in creating a better tomorrow for themselves and the families who live there. Now, veterans are responding, too. By reporting for duty alongside The Mission Continues, residents can take part in creating solutions to address these challenges and ensure positive progress continues.
partnering from
WITHIN WATTS

Operation Watts Is Worth It, our third Mass Deployment, connected over 500 volunteers including veterans, corporate partners, and local organizations for a week of community impact in Los Angeles’s Watts community. From June 23-27, the team, led by veteran volunteers from across the country, took part in five consecutive days of high-energy, physically demanding projects. En masse, volunteer efforts resulted in a transformative change at three local schools, a public housing development and throughout city streets.

Our service in Watts has been steadily growing since 2016, and in the year leading up to Operation Watts Is Worth It we amped up our engagement in a significant way. To ensure that the impact achieved would directly benefit the community’s needs, we attended regular meetings led by city council members, community leaders and local police enforcement. Out in the neighborhoods, our Los Angeles service platoons expanded existing partnerships and planted seeds for new service projects.

By setting this vital groundwork, the Watts community had an opportunity to see us as lasting allies and partners in the ongoing work of so many dedicated organizations throughout Watts. Operation Watts Is Worth It is a culmination of all these efforts and realized by our veteran leaders. It was an honor for us to serve in Watts, a community on the rise.

“My goal as a City Impact Manager is to get community and veterans working together for the good of the community. Operation Watts is Worth It was more impactful on our Los Angeles veterans and the community than I could have ever imagined. After spending months talking to the community about The Mission Continues, it was amazing to see the community’s reaction when my words turned into action.

At the end of the week I was overcome with emotion by the number of community leaders and families that came out every day to work alongside our veterans. Watts is such a special place and I am so happy our veterans from Los Angeles and across the nation got to experience the beauty and grit that community members bring every day.”

– Behkie Aguilar, Senior City Impact Manager
Los Angeles, California
Who are our Veteran Leaders?

Veterans are the heart of all that we do. Through our programs, we provide opportunities and resources for veteran volunteers to bring about positive change, grow as individuals and develop greater connections. Equipped with these tools, veterans round out the equation by bringing their passion, work ethic and various skill sets. They are the catalyst for change serving communities in need, and in June 2018 they brought their energy to Watts.

Hundreds of civic-minded veterans from across the country applied to serve at Operation Watts Is Worth It. In total, 71 standout men and women were selected to attend the 2018 Mass Deployment. Within the group, 10 were chosen as Ambassadors—returning volunteers from a past deployment who help lead the teams of veterans. Together, these hard-charging veterans deployed as a new unit to drive positive transformation and show their support to the community of Watts.

71 Veterans from 23 States

782 Combined Years of Military Service Across All Branches

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<td>Coast Guard</td>
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<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
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<td>Multiracial</td>
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Veterans build stronger communities through their hands-on service. As a result of their actions, they also experience opportunities for connection and personal growth. The reciprocal relationship between veteran and community is part of what makes our programs so unique.

Here’s what our veteran volunteers are saying about Operation Watts Is Worth It:

98% of participants reported they believe they made an impact on the Watts community through their efforts.

96% of participants felt a sense of camaraderie.

91% of participants reported that their experience led them to better understand the connection between community service and sense of purpose.

“I have been able to stretch way beyond my comfort levels. Layers of discomfort have fallen off and I feel so much more confident in my skills and abilities.”

– Chetkeila Greene
Ambassador, Houston, TX
“Seeing these children come out with us and paint butterflies and have pride in their community—I was floored, I was speechless. This sense of connection with the community is irreplaceable.”

— Joey Whimple
Crew Member,
New York, NY

FIVE PROJECTS. FIVE DAYS. ONE COMMUNITY.

545 VOLUNTEERS

6,920 HOURS OF SERVICE

OUR WORK IN WATTS IS EQUAL TO

$170,855 WORTH OF COMMUNITY IMPACT*

“I’ve been able to give back to a community that reminds me of the one I grew up in.... The experience and the people I’ve met have been amazing, and seeing a project from start-to-finish is so rewarding.”

- Karen Hernandez,
Crew Member,
Chicago, IL

* Based on Independent Sector estimate of the value of a volunteer hour at $24.69/hour in 2018
June 23rd, Project Day One: Great Streets

The Operation:
We kicked off our first of five project days on a central corridor in the heart of Watts. Veterans, community members and Target volunteers fanned out across four blocks branching off from 103rd Street. The area is part of Mayor Eric Garcetti’s Great Streets Initiative, a city-wide program that aims to re-imagine neighborhood centers by activating streets as public spaces. Our mission: to help restore and revitalize the blocks with an overhaul of color, greenery and activities. A local mural artist guided volunteers in their painting of butterflies, wrapping block after block of cement planters which were cleared of debris and filled with sustainable plants. Within the corridor, we added sidewalk games and chess tables for all ages to engage in together. The project’s high-traffic location at Great Streets set the tone for the coming week’s service projects in the Watts community, and the beautification of a local shared space for passerby to enjoy.

Team:
122 Veterans
103 Community Volunteers
Legacy Impact Sponsor: Target

Refurbished and landscaped:
80 cement planters
Built outdoor seating, trash cans, 2 lending libraries and 2 outdoor chess tables
Painted 4 city blocks and sidewalk games
June 24th, project day two: Nickerson Gardens

The Team:
- 115 Veterans
- 76 Community Volunteers

Legacy Impact Sponsor: The Walt Disney Company

The Operation:
For project day two, we set up camp in the recreational area of Nickerson Gardens, one of four public housing developments in Watts. With over 1,000 units, the development is home to many families and youth who lack access to safe outdoor play areas. Our mission: to create more outdoor opportunities for positive community engagement and well-being. The veterans along with scores of VoluntEARS from The Walt Disney Company joined in the efforts, along with mural artists and local youth excited to help. A concrete gray skate park and handball courts were transformed with colorful murals and the grounds were landscaped with sustainable plants and walking paths. To support team activities, the softball field and blacktop received a complete overhaul. Throughout the day, children came out by the dozens to pitch in, marvel at the work and best of all, enjoy their new play spaces.

Landscaped Boys & Girls Club entrance and installed new walking trail

Tore up basketball court in preparation for resurfacing, and built outdoor seating

Painted 2 murals and public skate park
THE OPERATION:

Jordan High School has undergone an incredible renovation in the past few years. For project day three, we joined in the efforts to lend an extra group of capable hands. The school serves local youth from the neighboring four public housing developments. Our mission: veterans and community members serving together to create a positive example of civic engagement. Volunteers from Kaiser Permanente Downey Medical Center supported the service along with former players from the Los Angeles Dodgers. We built dugouts at the softball field, repainted the basketball court, installed an indoor gym and more. Students attending summer school were excited to see the mass of volunteers making a visible difference across their campus. This project is another step forward in our continued investment in Jordan High School.

THE TEAM:

107 VETERANS
52 COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS
DAILY SPONSOR: KAISER PERMANENTE DOWNNEY MEDICAL CENTER

REFURBISHED WEIGHT ROOM AND TEACHERS’ LOUNGE INCLUDING NEW EQUIPMENT / FURNITURE
BUILT 2 SETS OF BLEACHERS AND DUGOUTS
PAINTED 4 BASKETBALL COURTS
June 26th, Project Day Four: 99th Street Elementary

The Team:
110 Veterans
110 Community Volunteers
Platinum Sponsor: CarMax

The Operation:
What a difference a group of volunteers can make! Project day four was a major overhaul at 99th Street Elementary School. Joined by our partners from CarMax, we divided and conquered throughout the learning center, schoolyard and an overgrown garden. In 2008, the school entered the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools as one of their original 10 schools. Since joining the Partnership, they’ve seen an influx of returning students and community engagement. Our mission: set the stage to further the ongoing efforts by the school to foster a connection with students and their families. Among the many projects, volunteers brought a neglected garden back to life by clearing the brush, landscaping and building outdoor teaching and gardening areas. Students returning in the fall will be greeted with a beautiful new outdoor space to learn and play.

Created a Sensory Garden including outdoor classroom, rainbow river, and wishing well

Built over 21 new seating areas including tree benches and Adirondack chairs

Painted playground area including a large mural
The Operation:

Florence Griffith Joyner Elementary School serves nearly 700 students in the Watts community. Through its participation in Turnaround Arts: California, the school is making strides to support its students with an educational focus on the arts. Our final project day provided an added boost, with the help of volunteers from CarMax and the LA Galaxy, in achieving the academic goals of Florence Griffith Joyner Elementary. Our mission: to elevate the emphasis on the arts while infusing energy through service to create appealing and safe areas for students. Three outdoor classrooms were built, complete with bleacher seating and mobile chalkboards. An old classroom was transformed into a dance studio, outdoor murals elevating the arts covered the handball courts and a soccer field was painted in the schoolyard. Local youth decorated rocks for a garden built in the atrium, so they could leave a lasting impression of their individual impact on the school’s beautification.

June 27th, Project Day Five:
Florence Griffith Joyner Elementary

The Team:
111 Veterans
128 Community Volunteers
Platinum Sponsor: CarMax

Built 3 Outdoor Classrooms
RePainted 25,000 sq feet of asphalt, creating a full-sized soccer field and 4 large murals
Transformed an old classroom into a new dance studio
shout out to our
SPONSORS AND PARTNERS

OPERATION WATTS IS WORTH IT WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE SUPPORT OF OUR SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS. THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR PARTNERS IN SERVICE!

“As a veteran myself, I was especially proud to partner with The Mission Continues and Operation Watts is Worth It. All of the volunteers shared the CarMax values of teamwork, integrity and respect and it was a pleasure to roll up our sleeves together and make a difference for the youth in Watts.”

– Matt Linderman,
VP, IT Operations, CarMax

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE HOME DEPOT FOUNDATION FOR BRINGING OUT TEAM DEPOT VOLUNTEERS TO PROJECT PREP AND ALL FIVE SERVICE PROJECTS!

“As I look out into the crowd, I see so many faces. You all come from many different backgrounds and life experiences, and yet you all have at least one thing in common – your willingness to give your time to serve the community!”

– Virginia Lee,
Director of Family 
& Community Engagement,
Partnership For Los Angeles Schools
thank you for supporting
OPERATION WATTS IS WORTH IT

PLATINUM SPONSOR:

CARMAX

LEGACY IMPACT SPONSORS:

DAILY SPONSORS:

KAISER PERMANENTE

WASSERMAN FOUNDATION

The Marcus Foundation

GOLD SPONSOR:

HBO

BRONZE SPONSOR:

IN-KIND DONORS:

TOOLBank

Southwest

FOGO DE CHÃO

CARL'S JR.

BRAZILIAN STEAKHOUSE

COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

DODGERS

VolunteerLA

PartnerShip For Los Angeles Schools
MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

La Opinión

Veteranos ayudan a embellecer y revitalizar la ciudad

Cientos de voluntarios de todo el país llegan a inspirar y colaborar con las comunidades más necesitadas.

The Mission Continues Deploys Veterans To Watts Neighborhood

Published June 12, 2018 | By Api Podder

The veterans' nonprofit seeks to create ongoing improvement to strengthen Deployment, “Operation Watts is Worth It”


89.3 KPCC

Los Angeles Dodgers

June 20

Dodgers Alumni joined veterans from The Mission Continues at L.A. Jordan High School yesterday morning to overhaul some of the school’s athletic facilities. Later that day, a group of 10 veterans from The Mission Continues were recognized as the Dodgers Military Heroes of the Game on behalf of the over 70 veterans in attendance.

Also Featured On:

Los Angeles Dodgers

Florence Griffith Joyner Elementary

133 Likes

Add a comment...
#WATTSISWORTHIT

@vannammy • Follow
10th St and Watts Towers

vannammy: This is Watts up! Proud to support initiatives in our community and our neighbors on behalf of MBK by beautifying the Watts community of Watts in Los Angeles. Thank you to Betsy Berenato for initiating an important initiative to clean up blighted areas. This is leadership. #wattsisworthit

 mensaje Ahora puede ser compartido en el Grupo de Usuarios de Instagram. #WATTSISWORTHIT #WATTSISWORTHIT

191 Likes
Add a comment...

@logikkane • Follow
Los Angeles, California

logikkane: Take a second to realize how blessed you are. I volunteer because my family and friends during times of need by volunteering. People are never too busy to help us. So let’s, say it forward. United with over 100 volunteers in 100+ locations to help us clean up the Watts Towers. A day to remember to let’s let’s show #WATTSISWORTHIT

 mensaje Ahora puede ser compartido en el Grupo de Usuarios de Instagram. #WATTSISWORTHIT #WATTSISWORTHIT

109 Likes
Add a comment...

@slazjane • Follow

slazjane: Watts is worth it with help from friends at Home Depot. #wattsisworthit

 mensaje Ahora puede ser compartido en el Grupo de Usuarios de Instagram. #WATTSISWORTHIT #WATTSISWORTHIT

11 Likes
Add a comment...

@wassermanfDN

Wasserman Foundation
@WassermanfDN

.wassermanfDN installing $6k worth of new gym equipment at Jordan High. We are proud to support you & the 100+ nationwide vets renovating Watts this week. Thank you @ReganTurner @SpencerKympton @PartnershipLA @AustinLASchools

 mensaje Ahora puede ser compartido en el Grupo de Usuarios de Instagram. #WATTSISWORTHIT #WATTSISWORTHIT

353 views

video
A Mass Deployment is a long-term investment in both the community we serve and the veterans leading the charge. Operation Watts Is Worth It has come to a close, but the mission will continue in Watts and cities across the country. The dedicated veterans who answered the call to serve in Los Angeles have since returned home supplied with hands-on experience to make an impact in their communities. Back in Watts, local Los Angeles service platoons will build upon the transformations accomplished at the five project sites.

For our veteran volunteers, the collective and individual benefits of service outlast the week spent serving in Watts. Post-deployment, this new unit is challenged with additional learning opportunities to further their experience and personal growth. The deep-rooted connections developed among the team are strengthened by their ongoing involvement in a variety of our programs, including our future deployments.

So where is Mass Deployment headed next? We’re excited to share that our 2019 Mass Deployment, dubbed Operation Charm City Charge, will be in Baltimore, Maryland! Planning for the deployment is already underway, and we can’t wait to bring our veteran force to the east coast for a new set of challenges and transformations.

To learn more about The Mission Continues, our next Mass Deployment, or to make a donation, please visit www.missioncontinues.org.

For information on how to sponsor or partner with The Mission Continues, please contact Meredith Darche at mdarche@missioncontinues.org.