



HEARTS 4 HEROES USA

Founded by First Responders for First Responders!

Board of Directors

Bruce Martell - Co Founder & President

The First Responder Behind the Mission

Bruce Martell is the Founder and President of Hearts 4 Heroes USA, a California-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the mental health and wellness of first responders.

For Bruce, this mission is far more than a cause he supports. He has lived it.

A first responder with 40 years of service, Bruce has spent much of his life answering the call for others. His career has included service as a United States Marine, Deputy Sheriff, and currently as a Paramedic with AMR in Contra Costa County. Those decades on the front lines have given him a firsthand understanding of both the incredible strength of first responders and the emotional and psychological toll that can come with a lifetime of serving others.

Alongside his wife, Shelley Martell, Bruce turned that understanding into action. Together, they founded Hearts 4 Heroes USA after recognizing the growing need for meaningful mental health and wellness resources for firefighters, EMS personnel, law enforcement officers, and other frontline professionals.

When the Mission Becomes Personal

Bruce understands what it means to carry the weight of the job home.

After decades of responding to emergencies, witnessing tragedy, and being the person others relied upon during their worst moments, the cumulative impact of a career in public safety became deeply personal.

It was during those difficult moments that the extraordinary bond between Bruce and his family's beloved dog, Scooby, revealed something powerful. Scooby offered the kind of comfort that did not require an explanation or even a conversation. He was simply there.

That connection became part of the inspiration behind Hearts 4 Heroes USA.

What Bruce and Shelley experienced within their own family helped them recognize an opportunity to provide that same kind of connection and support to first responders across the country. A deeply personal experience became a mission—and that mission began growing into a movement.

From One Dog to a Paw Platoon

Driven by a desire to support those who spend their lives serving others, Bruce has helped lead Hearts 4 Heroes USA in developing meaningful programs and resources for first responders and their families.

At the center of that work is the Paw Platoon Placement Program.

Under Bruce's leadership, the program has expanded across multiple states, placing specially trained therapy dogs with first responder agencies and peer support teams. These dogs provide comfort and emotional support, assist around critical incident stress events, and have delivered thousands of hours of support to heroes on the front lines.

For Bruce, these dogs represent much more than companionship. They can create an opening when someone does not know how to ask for help, offer comfort when words fall short, and remind first responders that they do not have to carry everything alone.

A Hero Fighting for Heroes

Bruce is a passionate advocate for reducing the stigma surrounding mental health within the first responder community.

After spending four decades immersed in first responder culture, he understands that asking for help does not always come naturally to the men and women whose careers are built around being the ones others call for help.

Through strategic partnerships, fundraising initiatives, community engagement, and educational outreach, Bruce works to ensure that those who answer the call for everyone else have meaningful support available when they need it themselves.

Known for his servant leadership and unwavering commitment to public service, Bruce continues to inspire individuals, businesses, and communities to become "Heroes for Our Heroes."

His vision extends beyond simply creating awareness. It is about building lasting programs that strengthen resilience, promote wellness, support first responder families, and honor the sacrifices made every day by those serving on the front lines.

No Hero Should Face the Battle Alone

From serving his country as a Marine to serving his community as a Deputy Sheriff and Paramedic, Bruce's life has been shaped by service.

He knows the uniform. He knows the culture. And he knows that even the strongest heroes sometimes need someone—or something—to be there for them.

Through Hearts 4 Heroes USA, Bruce remains committed to building a future where every first responder knows they are valued, supported, and never expected to face life's toughest battles alone.

What began with a first responder, his family, and one extraordinary dog has become something much bigger: a mission to take care of the people who have dedicated their lives to taking care of all of us.