

KEYNOTE LUNCH: Tuesday, 3/4 at 12:00 PM

FREEDOM IS NOT FREE: A Story of Courage, Medical Innovation & Giving Back



Thomas Bowman
Former Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



Dr. Jill S. Waibel, MD
Board-Certified Dermatologist / Medical Director, Miami Dermatology and Laser Institute



Richard J. Cicero, Jr.
Veteran / Former Army Paratrooper / Instructor & Adaptive Training Advocate

TMA Florida 2025 Annual Conference
Magic in the Making: From Distress to Success

Join us for an inspiring journey of Army Sergeant Rick Cicero who lost his right arm and leg on combat deployment to Afghanistan in August 2010. Rick was the first to have two prosthetics attached to bones. This medical marvel enables him to move his arms when he thinks, just like a natural arm.

Dr. Jill Waibel and Colonel Thomas Bowman USMC Ret., former Deputy Secretary of the VA, are both co-founders of Restoring Heroes Foundation. They will shed light on the challenges confronting seriously wounded soldiers, the latest advancements in prosthetic technology, and the critical support needed for their recovery which is currently unmet by the VA.

Hear the story of incredible generosity of volunteer physicians and medical services donated through Miami's South Florida Baptist Hospital who collectively provide the life-changing medical treatments without cost to the veteran.

TMA is a community of turnaround professionals where the focus is turning difficulties into opportunities. This keynote lunch will showcase resilience, innovation, determination, restoration, and generosity of highly trained medical professionals who are making a big difference in the life of so many seriously wounded soldiers. Rick Cicero will share his powerful journey from catastrophic loss to renewal, proving that even in the face of extreme hardship, recovery is possible with the right team and the right resources—much like in the turnaround world.

Richard J. Cicero, Jr

- Rick is a former Army Paratrooper, who served active duty from 1990-1994 and National Guard from 1995-1998. He was assigned to the 7th SOS, 3rd Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division, and 173rd LRSD.

Rick was raised as a young Intel and Commo soldier in the SOF community, earning an "S" SQI in 1992. It was this background that truly created the heart and determination that helped him survive and now thrive.

After military service, Rick became a police officer and canine handler with the Hamden, CT Police Department and the Virginia State Police. Rick's credentials also include Senior Firearms Instructor (Pistol, Rifle, Shotgun, Sub-Gun, NRA Counselor), Use of Force Instructor, Defensive Tactics Instructor, Canine Trainer (Patrol and Explosives Detection), and Police Baton Instructor.

A serious knee injury ended his police career, and he was retired. Rick then went on to become a military contractor in 2008, with assignments as an instructor and an operational asset both CONUS and OCONUS.

On a deployment to Afghanistan in August 2010, Rick encountered an IED while working an IED Detection dog on a foot patrol, which resulted in the loss of his right arm (above the elbow) and right leg (above the knee). He received remarkable care, which resulted in him walking out of the hospital only 4 months and 2 weeks after his injury.

Subsequently, Rick began providing support to fellow veterans through the Veteran's Affairs system, Wounded Warrior Project, Team Hope for the Warriors, and other veteran programs. This included participating in 5K runs, conducting active duty military and police training, providing peer visits at the VA Hospital, being a patient model for the ABC boards, participating in studies with USF and DOD to improve prosthetic devices and services for disabled veterans, giving motivational speeches to various organizations, and providing direct support to veterans as needed.

Rick has also organized events including tandem parachute jumps, shooting, rappel tower, and adaptive martial arts programs. This included developing the US Army Adaptive Combatives Program and, with Honored American Veterans Afield, formed a team of predominantly combat-injured firearms instructors to travel the country teaching other injured veterans how to shoot again.

Rick has now retired after becoming the first Osseointegration patient at Walter Reed NMMC. Supporting such efforts will always remain a priority!!

Jill S. Waibel, MD

- Dr. Waibel practices as a Board-Certified Dermatologist specializing in medical dermatology, cutaneous laser surgery and cosmetic dermatology for all ages. She is based at Miami Dermatology and Laser Institute in Miami, Florida where she operates as Medical Director and Owner.

In addition to her private practice, Dr. Waibel is the Subsection Chief of Dermatology at Baptist Hospital and the Medical Director of Miami Cancer Institute's Multidisciplinary Skin Cancer Clinic. She also serves as a Clinical Voluntary Assistant Professor at the University of Miami.

Globally, Dr. Waibel is a world-recognized leader and innovator in dermatologic laser surgery. She lectures all over the world to train fellow physicians and help further the field of dermatology. In her own practice, she has over 65 laser devices for both medical and cosmetic cutaneous applications. Dr. Waibel is also active in basic science clinical trials at the University of Miami and has a robust clinical trials division, Miami Dermatology and Research where she has been involved in approximately 50 clinical trials. Her research department has a broad and continuous rotation of new pharmaceutical and medical device trials including phases 2, 3, and 4. She has also represented and advised several companies in bringing them through FDA approval.

One of Dr. Waibel's primary passion is laser innovation in the treatment of scars. She has successfully developed industry-leading procedures and techniques with lasers and adjunct therapies, received several awards for her contributions to medicine, and published numerous peer-reviewed journal articles and textbook chapters on her work. Additionally, she is on the board of the American Society of Lasers in Medicine and the Medical Advisory Board of five of the leading laser manufacturers. Recently she has also accepted a position as Medical Director of Canyon Ranch Resort and Spa.

Some of her awards and recognitions include "Person of the Week" on ABC World News Tonight in 2015 and the 2017 ASLMS Leadership, Mentorship & Public Advocacy for Women in Medical Science Award. The 2016 JDD Humanitarian Award was also given to Dr. Waibel for her work using lasers to treat patients with traumatic burn injuries. She was also given an Excellence in Medicine award by Surgeon General Koop. Following her passion for laser treatment of burn and trauma scars, Dr. Waibel lectures, collaborates with, and trains military physicians as well as does close personal work with wounded warriors and their families. She additionally created a multidisciplinary support group called Restoring Heroes to provide medical care to veterans and 9/11 survivors. Dr. Waibel currently has her home in Coral Gables with her husband and four children.

Thomas G. Bowman

- Thomas G. Bowman was nominated by President Trump and confirmed by the United States Senate to serve as The Deputy Secretary of The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs on August 3, 2017. He retired from the VA on June 15, 2018. and established TGB Strategies LLC to advice, counsel and assist on Veteran and Military issues.

Prior to being sworn in as Deputy Secretary, Mr. Bowman served as Majority Staff Director of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. From 2012 to 2014, he served as Special Assistant for Veterans Research at the University of South Florida in

Tampa, and from 2009 to 2012 he served as Senior Advisor to the Director of VA's Sunshine Healthcare Network serving Veterans in Florida, Southeastern Georgia, and the Caribbean.

Mr. Bowman's previous appointments within VA were Chief of Staff of VA, Deputy Chief of Staff of VA, Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs, Acting Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, and Executive Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs. Before joining VA in 2002, Mr. Bowman served as Senior Counsel to the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee.

Mr. Bowman was commissioned in the United States Marine Corps through the NROTC Program at the University of Texas in 1969. From 1970 through 1975, he served as a platoon commander, company commander, and battalion, regimental, and division staff officer with the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Marine Divisions in Southeast Asia, Okinawa, and the U.S. After law school, he was assigned to the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S.C., where he served as a prosecutor, defense counsel, and Law Center Director. He then served as the Marine Corps Representative and Instructor of Law at the Naval Justice School and a guest lecturer at the Naval War College, Newport, R.I., from 1983 to 1988.

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Mr. Bowman left active duty in 1988 to become an assistant district attorney in southeastern Massachusetts but was recalled to active duty during the Gulf War. Released in May 1991, he practiced law concentrating in military and Veterans issues before returning again to active duty in 1994. He retired from the Marine Corps as a colonel in October 1999, after serving as Senior Military Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs and to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

Mr. Bowman is a member of the Board of Directors for The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV); Volunteers of America (VOA) Florida; America's Warrior Partnership (AWP); and Florida Defense Support Task Force (FDSTF). On April 27, 2022. Mr. Bowman was inducted into the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame.

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