

OPERATION

2025

IRON RUCK



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

AUBURN STUDENT VETERANS ASSOCIATION
UNIV OF AL STUDENT VETERANS ASSOCIATION
OPERATION IRON RUCK FOUNDATION

OIR FIELD MANUAL 2025

**THE VETERAN POPULATION IS BATTLING
THE EPIDEMIC THAT IS VETERAN SUICIDE**

THE NATIONAL SUICIDE RATE
FOR MALE VETERANS IS

1.3 TIMES HIGHER

THAN THE CIVILIAN AVERAGE;
FOR FEMALE VETERANS IT IS

2.1 TIMES HIGHER

147 

VETERAN SUICIDES

IN ALABAMA IN 2022

**THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR VETERANS ANALYSIS &
STATISTICS ESTIMATES THAT 377,310 VETERANS
CURRENTLY LIVE IN ALABAMA. SINCE THE LAUNCH
OF OPERATION IRON RUCK, THE NUMBER OF DAILY
VETERAN SUICIDES HAS DECREASED FROM 22 TO 17.**

71%

**OF SUICIDE ATTEMPTS
HAPPEN WITHIN ONE
HOUR OF THE DECISION**

**TOP 5 AL AREAS WHERE VETERAN
SUICIDE IS MOST COMMON:**

MADISON COUNTY
MORGAN COUNTY
BIRMINGHAM METRO
WIREGRASS REGION
RIVER REGION

**OPERATION IRON RUCK IS A POWERFUL EVENT,
RAISING AWARENESS OF THE EPIDEMIC THAT IS VETERAN
SUICIDE. THE EVENT GIVES VETERANS THE OPPORTUNITY TO
CREATE COMMUNITY & CONNECT WITH OTHERS WHO HAVE
WORN OUR NATION'S CLOTH.**



WHAT THE "RUCK" IS A...?



RUCK / RUCKSACK

A RUCKSACK IS A BACKPACK USED TO
CARRY EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES, OR
ADDITIONAL WEIGHTS DURING
PHYSICAL EXERCISE

RUCKER

A "RUCKER" IS A PERSON WHO IS
"RUCKING" IN OPERATION IRON
RUCK

RUCK MARCH

"RUCKING"

"Rucking" is a challenging exercise in which military personnel march or walk while carrying a loaded rucksack. Testing endurance, physical strength & mental resilience.



Veterans carry 22 lb rucksacks & 22 nameless dog tags to honor the 22 veterans reported a day who die by suicide.





OPERATION IRON RUCK



Operation Iron Ruck (OIR) is an annual initiative led by the Auburn Student Veterans Association (ASVA) and the University of Alabama Student Veterans Association (SVA), to raise critical awareness for **veteran suicide prevention**. With Alabama ranking among the states with the highest veteran suicide rates, OIR was created to bring visibility to this epidemic, foster community engagement, and support life-saving programs for our nation's heroes.

Founded in 2018 by student veterans from both universities, OIR was born from a shared commitment to **serve beyond the uniform**. Each year, during the week of the Iron Bowl, student veterans, alumni, and ROTC cadets from Auburn and Alabama ruck side by side, **marching 151 miles** from the away team stadium to the home team. Along the way, they carry the game ball and the memories of those we've lost, forging bonds, sharing stories of strength, struggle, and resilience.

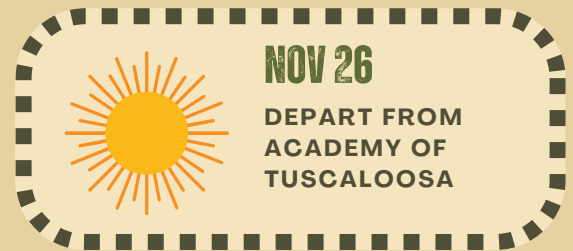
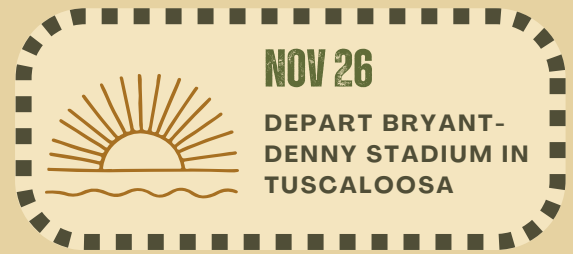
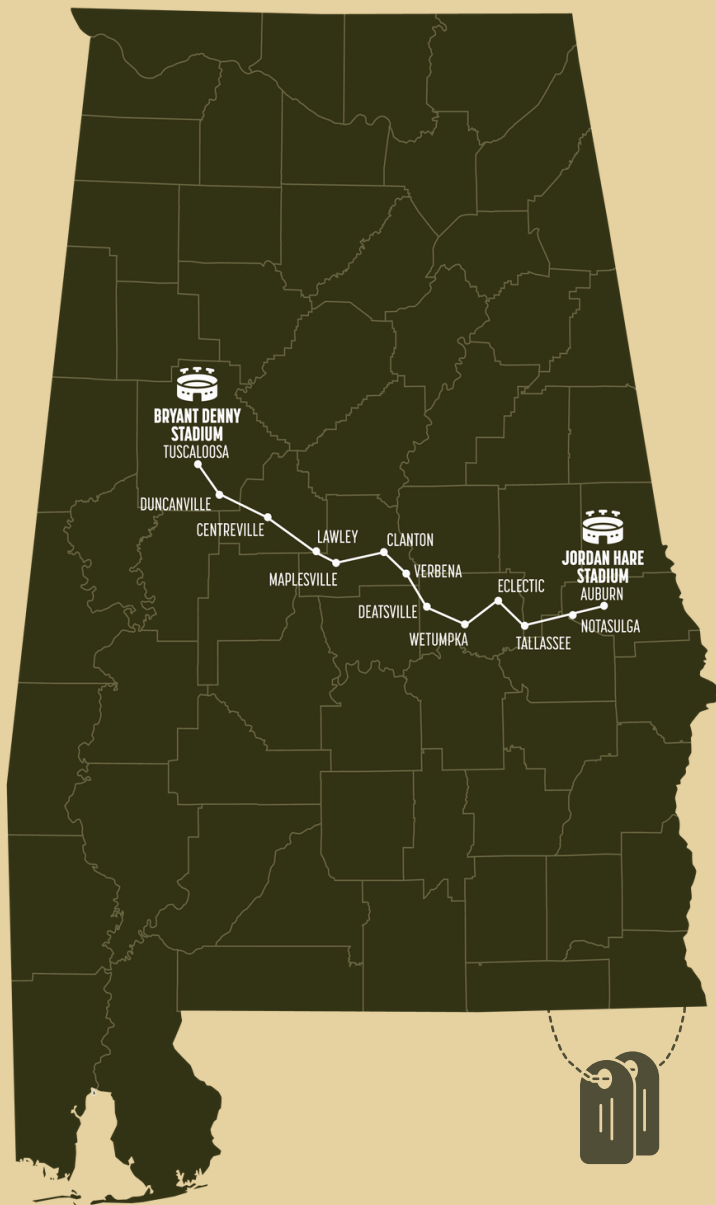
Operation Iron Ruck is more than a march - it's a **movement**. It's veterans standing shoulder to shoulder through the weight of their experiences and the literal weight of their rucksacks. It's a **healing journey** that creates connection, community, and hope. Over the years, OIR has evolved into a powerful **statewide tradition**, supported by generous sponsors, hundreds of volunteers, and an ever-growing community.

The 2025 Operation Iron Ruck promises to be the largest and most impactful yet. With your support, we will continue to **amplify awareness, reduce stigma**, and directly support veteran-focused organizations across Alabama.

Together, we are saving lives - one mile at a time.



CITIES LISTED BELOW ARE KEY STOPPING POINTS ALONG THE ROUTE



OUR EVENT ROUTE




Established in 2009 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, the Auburn Student Veterans Association (ASVA) serves as a beacon for military veterans transitioning into academia at Auburn University. Drawing strength from the principles of military culture, ASVA's mission is to bridge the gap between military service and the pursuit of higher education.

ASVA was born out of a distinct "why" - to serve as the nexus for student veterans as they navigate their new life at Auburn University. The essence of our existence revolves around two main points: fostering academic achievement and promoting integration into the Auburn community.



**ABOUT
STUDENT
VETERANS**



Established as a student-led organization committed to service and advocacy, the University of Alabama Student Veterans Association (UA SVA) exists to support military-affiliated students as they transition into academic life at the University of Alabama. Grounded in the values of military service, UA SVA's mission is to bridge the gap between service and scholarship—ensuring that veterans, dependents, and survivors have the resources, community, and support they need to succeed.



Born out of a clear purpose—to empower veterans through education—UA SVA focuses on two core goals: fostering academic excellence and strengthening the veteran voice across campus and in the broader community.



LETTER TO OUR SUPPORTERS

The Auburn Student Veterans Association (ASVA) and the University of Alabama Student Veterans Association (UASVA) were founded to serve those who've served - our nation's veterans and their families. Today, that mission has never been more urgent. Veteran suicide remains a devastating epidemic, claiming an average of 17-22 lives every single day. Tomorrow, another 22 will be lost. We refuse to accept that as the norm.

That's why we created Operation Iron Ruck.

To expand our impact and ensure the long-term sustainability of this mission, we launched the **OIR Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit** organization dedicated solely to supporting the mission of Operation Iron Ruck. The OIR Foundation enables us to raise critical funds, distribute resources year-round, and support veterans beyond the annual event through community outreach, mental health partnerships, and direct assistance programs. All contributions to the foundation are tax-deductible and go directly toward supporting veterans in need.

This year, we've set a bold goal: **raise \$75,000** to expand outreach and fund meaningful support for veterans across Alabama. Your gift helps us reach those in crisis, deliver essential care items to veterans in VA healthcare facilities, to show every veteran encountered that they are not forgotten.

We invite you to join us in this mission. Every mile walked is a step toward hope. Every dollar given is a chance to save a life.

Thank you for walking beside us—for honoring the fallen, uplifting the living, and standing with veterans in their time of need.

MADELINE GRAF
ASVA PRESIDENT

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UASVA PRESIDENT

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WE ARE PROUD TO SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS BOTH MONITARILY & THROUGH THE DISTRIBUTION OF COLLECTED ITEMS:



BILL NICHOLS STATE VETERANS HOME

The Bill Nichols State Veterans Home is a senior living community dedicated to serving eligible veterans with dignity and care. They provide expert support through existing programs while proactively addressing the evolving needs of veterans and their families.

THREE HOTS & A COT

Three Hots and A Cot is committed to serving those who have served. They offer homeless veterans a safe place to stay and the support they need to rebuild their lives and successfully transition back into civilian society.



HOUSTON PROJECT

Houston Project was created by a grieving family to help veterans and to honor their fallen son. They not only raise money for struggling veterans, but also awareness for veteran suicide, depression, PTSD, CTE and other mental health issues.

TUSKEGEE VA HOME

The Tuskegee VA Home supports homeless veterans and those at risk due to financial hardship, unemployment, addiction, mental health challenges, or reintegration after incarceration—offering stability and a path forward.



WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

WE ENCOURAGE ANYONE TO WALK THE 151-MILE AWARENESS CAMPAIGN WITH US, HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF LIMITED SPACE AND SUPPLIES, PRIORITY IS GIVEN TO STUDENT VETERANS.

JOIN US!



VAN DRIVERS

VAN DRIVERS WILL TRANSPORT AUBURN LOCALS PARTICIPATING IN THE RUCK TO TUSCALOOSA WHERE THE RUCK WILL BEGIN. VAN DRIVERS WILL ALSO MOVE RUCKERS BETWEEN THE LOCATION OF THEIR LAST COMPLETED LEG TO THE BEGINNING OF THEIR NEXT LEG ALONG THE ROUTE.

CATERING & SERVING

WE PROVIDE LUNCH AND DINNER TO OUR PARTICIPANTS ALONG THE ROUTE. WE NEED VOLUNTEERS TO SPONSOR AND SERVE MEALS FOR RUCKERS.

MISC. VOLUNTEER TASKS

VOLUNTEERS WILL ASSIST PARTICIPANTS AT STOP POINTS WHERE RUCKERS WILL BE RESTING BEFORE THEIR NEXT LEG BEGINS AND MAKE SUPPLY RUNS TO LOCAL STORES.

THANKSGIVING DINNER VOLUNTEERS

OPERATION IRON RUCK HOSTS A THANKSGIVING DINNER FOR ALL OUR PARTICIPANTS. THIS ALLOWS OUR TEAM TO BUILD CAMARADERIE AS A UNIT, NO MATTER WHAT GROUP THEY ARE IN, AND CELEBRATE TOGETHERNESS DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON. WE NEED VOLUNTEERS TO HELP HOST, AND PROVIDE THE THANKSGIVING MEAL FOR OUR PARTICIPANTS.

INTERESTED?

CONTACT US:



SIGN UP

ON OUR WEBSITE



COORDINATOR@OPERATIONIRONRUCK.COM

OPERATIONIRONRUCK.COM

HELP US SUPPORT HEROES IN NEED



WE CARRY 22 LBS OF DONATEABLE ITEMS IN OUR RUCK SACKS TO SIGNIFY THE 22 VETERANS A DAY WE LOSE TO SUICIDE. UPON COMPLETION OF THE RUCK, THESE ITEMS ARE DONATED TO AN ALABAMA STATE VETERANS HOME. YOU CAN HELP US!

EQUIPMENT

- HAND & BODY WARMERS
- INDUSTRIAL GRADE GLOW STICKS
- BASIC CLOTHING ITEMS (SHIRTS, SOCKS, UNDERGARMETS)

PORTABLE, NON-PERISHABLE

- BEEF STICKS & BEEF JERKY
- PROTEIN BARS & GROUND COFFEE
- ELECTROLYTE POWDERS & BOTTLE WATER
- SPORTS DRINKS (GATORADE, POWERADE)

FIRST AID

- ISOPROPYL ALCOHOL (FIRST AID ANTISEPTIC)
- PORTABLE FIRST AID KITS
- FIRST AID
- ASPIRIN & IBUPROFEN
- ANTIBIOTIC OINTMENT
- BLISTER BANDAGES
- STANDARD ADHESIVE BANDAGES
- MOLESKIN & MOLESKIN ADHESIVE
- GOLD BOND MEDICATED POWDER
- GOLD BOND FRICTION DEFENSE STICKS

HYGEINE ITEMS

- TOWELS
- DEODERANT
- TOOTHBRUSHES
- HAND SOAP
- SHAMPOO & CONDITIONER
- BABY WIPES
- MOUTH WASH
- TOOTHPASTE
- BODY SOAP
- FEMININE HYGEINE ITEMS

**AMAZON
WISH LIST**





OPERATION IRON RUCK 2025

OPERATION IRON RUCK (OIR) IS A POWERFUL, STUDENT-LED, MOVEMENT UNITING VETERANS & COMMUNITIES ACROSS ALABAMA, RAISING BOTH AWARENESS & SUPPORT FOR VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION. EACH YEAR, STUDENT VETERANS FROM AUBURN UNIVERSITY & UNIV. OF ALABAMA RUCK 151 MILES CARRYING THE IRON BOWL GAME BALL, AND MEMORIES OF THOSE WE'VE LOST.

SINCE 2018, OIR HAS CREATED A PLATFORM OF CAMARADERIE AND HOPE.

IN MEMORY OF ALL THOSE WE'VE LOST INCLUDING JOSH, HUNTER, AND GREG.

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

SPONSOR A LEG

\$1,000

- EACH TEAM WALKS 7 LEGS PER 151 MILE RUCK
- PERSONAL DEDICATION IN MEMORY / IN HONOR
- SPONSOR AS MANY OR AS LITTLE AS DESIRED
- LISTED ON OFFICIAL OIR TRIBUTE WALL

EVENT SPONSOR

\$2,500 - \$10,000

- SUPPORT MAJOR OPERATIONS & LOGISTICS
- THANKSGIVING MEALS
- FUEL FOR TRANSPORT
- MEDICAL SUPPORT
- POST-EVENT TAILGATE
- RECOGNITION ON OIR WEBSITE & LOGO PLACEMENT ON PROMO MATERIALS

SPONSOR A MILE

\$50

- 151 SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES
- PERSONAL DEDICATION - IN MEMORY / IN HONOR
- SPONSOR AS MANY OR AS LITTLE AS DESIRED
- LISTED ON OFFICIAL OIR TRIBUTE WALL

JOIN THE MISSION

WHY IT MATTERS: VETERAN SUICIDE CLAIMS AN AVERAGE OF 22 LIVES PER DAY. IN ALABAMA, WHERE OVER 377,000 VETERANS RESIDE, THE RISK IS EVEN GREATER. OIR DIRECTLY SUPPORTS ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THREE HOTS AND A COT, TUSKEGEE VA, HOUSTON PROJECT AND MORE, WITH SUPPLIES & FUNDS COLLECTED, MAKING AN IMMEDIATE IMPACT.

GET INVOLVED

WE NEED YOU! DONATE SUPPLIES OR VOLUNTEER AND SUPPORT (DRIVER, MEALS, FIRST AID NEEDED). LENGTHS VARY - SUPPORT A LEG OR MILE IN HONOR/MEMORY OF A LOVED ONE

CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS WELCOME!

**INTERESTED?
CONTACT US:**

COORDINATOR@OPERATIONIRONRUCK.COM



**HELP US
SUPPORT HEROES**

[HTTPS://GIVEBUTTER.COM/6AE9E6](https://givebutter.com/6AE9E6)



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