SDI SUSAN DAVIS INTERNATIONAL

Elizabeth Dole Foundation

Susan Davis International (SDI) has worked with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation (EDF) since its early years to create programs and raise the nation's awareness of America's hidden heroes—5.5 million loved ones caring for a wounded, ill or injured servicemember at home. As the Foundation's public relations agency for the past ten years, SDI has been integral to the strategy and development of EDF's defining initiatives that grew out of landmark research EDF commissioned documenting this severely underserved community.

SDI leveraged the seminal research to build public awareness and engagement through national grassroots efforts, inspire political action to support caregivers and veteran, and forge alliances with service organizations, businesses, and affinity groups with cross interests in military health and caregiving. We initially created and launched a coalition of some 300 nonprofits with linkages to the cause, enlisted White House support from the First Lady, and began developing business partnerships and programs to help meet caregiver needs, including employment opportunities working with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and member companies.

And as a result of early efforts by SDI and EDF to engage the Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA), the department is a critical partner in addressing solutions to the caregiver crisis, and the Foundation works closely with the VA on initiatives to benefit those caring for veterans.

With SDI's deep experience in branding and grassroots strategy, we recommended branding and growing EDF's small program of caregivers into a national initiative, Hidden Heroes Caregiver Fellows, with Fellows from every state advocating for legislative support and sharing their stories with local and national media. Fellows are the heart and soul of the program and EDF has relied on SDI to among other initiatives provide Fellows with media training; create communication strategies and support an annual caregiver conference co-hosted with VA; prepare materials for Fellows' meetings on Capitol Hill; and draft scripts and remarks for an annual celebratory gala with name recognition headliners.

Building on this success, SDI created and launched the Hidden Hero Cities campaign, an initiative to secure commitments from communities nationwide to help local caregivers and which has now grown to include more than 150 cities.

SDI continues to support EDF's growing number of programs created to meet newly defined and emerging needs of caregivers through regional and national media strategies that often use caregiver Fellows as the faces and voices of initiatives, helping them craft op ed pieces, prepare for media interviews, and more. SDI's continuing support also includes drafting speeches, statements, and op-eds for EDF leadership, preparing event scripts, and developing new strategies and communications campaigns for each new initiative.