

Institute for Defense Analyses Researcher Establishes Non-profit to Support Veterans, their Families, and the Community

ALEXANDRIA, VA – Paul Ketrick was out in his boat one afternoon just off of Fort Belvoir in Fairfax County with two veterans. One veteran had served in Iraq and the other in Vietnam.

Surrounded by nothing but trees and quietness, the Vietnam veteran began to reflect upon his time on patrol river boats as being in the open waters brought back vivid memories. He began to open up about the tracer fires that he witnessed at night and how terrifying it was. He went on to say that he had not been able to get on a boat since then until he got on Paul's boat. Paul listened with a concerned look on his face. The veteran smiled and said, "I am having the time of my life and I am no longer afraid of boats."

To Ketrick, a researcher staff member at the Institute for Defense Analyses, time spent fishing is one of the greatest parts of life. "The quiet, outdoors, and most of all the ability to be with friends while discussing our lives and learning from each other without the constraints of a classroom or boardroom makes all the difference," said Ketrick.

Ketrick founded Ketrick Communities, a non-profit organization that connects veterans and their families with others and helps to empower them through social activities and training. FishingCommunity.Org (FCO) is a program under Ketrick Communities that strives to bring together our veterans and the younger generation who are learning and growing into the promise of tomorrow.

FCO is focused on connecting our past and present military members and their families with local communities. "It is a big resocialization effort for both sides – participant and volunteers," Ketrick said. "Fishing is just the excuse to get everyone together."

Ketrick shared the story of a volunteer personally impacted by FCO.

A 107 year old World War II veteran attended Ketrick's events every year until she passed away. A college student volunteered at many events with his father. They spent the day laughing and talking with the World War II veteran. At the end of the day, the student got in the car with his father. With a tear in his eye, he gave his father a big hug. "What was that for?" his father asked. "Dad, I'm studying history in college and today I got the chance to spend time and talk with those who lived it. What a great gift."