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SongwritingWith:Soldiers Announces Its New SongwritingWith:Soldiers Music Initiative

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*Two Compelling New Tracks Co-Created by Veterans and Professional
Songwriters
Releasing May 23, 2025*

Nashville, TN — **SongwritingWith:Soldiers' (SW:S)** mission is to transform lives by using collaborative songwriting to build creativity, connections, and strengths. SW:S holds weekend retreats across the U.S. for veterans and their families from all conflicts. SW:S has connected with more than 5,000 veterans and military families, creating a safe and inspiring environment to share their experiences and co-create songs grounded in lived experience with professional songwriters.

For veterans to be understood, they need to be heard. It starts with providing a carefully crafted experience so they can connect to themselves and others, and where songwriters can help shape their story into song. Once the song is created, SW:S provides ways for it to be heard beyond the writing session by veterans and non-veterans alike.

SongwritingWith:Soldiers believes they are not just creating songs, but a deeper understanding of the veteran experience. **SW:S's new music program**, made possible by the generosity of The Johnson Family Fund, will thoughtfully select and produce music from the retreat field recording catalog to release on major streaming platforms, creating a deeper understanding of the veteran experience and raising civilian awareness of the challenges the military community faces. **The first two compelling new tracks will be available on all streaming platforms on May 23.**

Pre-order / Pre-save: "The Man You Used To Know" and "At Ease"

“The Man You Used To Know,” was written by veteran **Bruce Anderson**, his wife of 37 years **Lesley Anderson**, and songwriter and producer **Trent Willmon** (Cody Johnson, Granger Smith) and performed by Trent Willmon. “I appreciate anybody who serves our country,” Willmon reflects on the experience. “They are the folks that keep us free. So many times we forget that. We kind of take them for granted. Sometimes they sacrifice everything. So it’s a wonderful opportunity for somebody like me who didn’t serve, to give back and try to honor and better understand the experiences of that community.”

Penned in 2022 during a retreat in Beaver Hollow, NY, the couple dove in deep with Trent. Bruce shares that the song is “about losing part of yourself and then trying to gain that back somehow...and it’s never too late to try to get back to a good, healthy place.” Lesley reveals, “For a spouse, you have to grieve the person you used to know because when he came back I didn’t know that guy. I didn’t even like that guy. But I knew the man I married was still there.”

The other carefully selected track, **“At Ease,”** was written in a group setting at a retreat by veterans Chadrick Allen, Rhonda Chavez, Sally Griffiths, Justin Lilley, Benjamin Liotta, Carlos Gomez Perez, Robert Heathe Shumate, and Tristan Wimmer along with songwriters **James House, Will Kimbrough, Mark Nesler, and Terry Radigan**. Kimbrough’s performance is a lilting and poignant reminder to all. “‘At Ease’ is a gentle, soulful tribute to the fallen: those who succumbed to their wounds on the battlefield; those who succumbed to the wounds no one could see back home,” shares Kimbrough. “It is a true collaboration between our veterans and songwriters.”

SongwritingWith:Soldiers (SW:S) brings service members, veterans, and military families together with professional songwriters to co-create powerful songs that are grounded in lived experience, shaped by each storyteller, and created to build connection. These collaborations take place in a trusted, evidence-informed retreat program designed to foster creativity, connection, and meaningful expression.

Since 2012, SW:S has offered retreats, alumni programs, and music-based initiatives grounded in dignity, care, and respect. The process invites participants to express what often goes unsaid—through a creative partnership that honors their words and experiences.

Every song is co-written with full consent and intention. With participant permission, many of these songs are shared—through performances, playlists, and public platforms—to build understanding, strengthen community, and amplify the voices of those who serve.

This work is guided by multidisciplinary teams, including professional songwriters trained in the SongwritingWith:Soldiers’ methodology and culture. A pilot study by Harvard/Massachusetts General Hospital found that the SW:S approach may support reductions in symptoms of post-traumatic stress and depression, reinforcing the power of creative expression in trusted settings.

To date, SW:S has engaged thousands of service members, veterans, and family members across the country. The organization's work has been featured by *CBS Mornings*, *Good Morning America*, *SPIN*, *The New York Times*, and more.