



Most Interesting People 2020: Denise Gula Weller

The 70-year-old co-founder of Hearts of Patriots is dedicated to assisting veterans and their spouses with PTSD and traumatic brain injury.

Why She's Interesting: Weller might never slow down. The Ohio Dance Theatre founder kickstarted Hearts of Patriots last year. Since then, the foundation has helped more than 500 veterans and their caregivers by providing them resources and bringing awareness to PTSD and traumatic brain injuries.

Mother's Love: When Weller's Marine son-in-law Jeremy was sent to Iraq with his battalion in 2005, she realized how much service members and their spouses go through. "There were days I would hear on the news that 15 of the [battalion] were killed, and I would just watch the clock all day. I knew if I didn't hear from my daughter [Megan] by 1 p.m. or 2 p.m., that he was OK."

Four Legs: Weller and her husband Don have a five-year-old Sheltie-border collie mix named Theo that operates as a therapy dog. At least once a week, they take him to city schools, nursing homes and more to help as a form of treatment. "He's so spoiled — my husband cooks for him. Most nights he has chicken or liver."

Interesting Fact:

In November, Weller screened her documentary *Blood Stripe: A Spouse's Story*, showcasing her daughter's story through intimate interviews, dance and music.