

Milestone's John Bair 'helps the little guy' financially recover from trauma

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JOED VIERA - John Bair, founder, The Milestone Foundation.

When a lawsuit leads to a settlement offer, many individuals don't realize it could still be years before they see any money. And though there are companies that will provide advances on anticipated payments, the interest rates can be astronomical.

[John Bair](#) says that adds insult to injury, literally: For those who have suffered an injury or a trauma, many of whom have already lost other sources of income, delays in getting settlements and interest payments in the thousands of dollars can have devastating effects.

"There's zero regulatory caps, so they can charge 200% interest. You borrow \$2,500 but you pay back \$50,000," he said. "It takes a huge bite out of the recovery."

That's why Bair and his wife, Amy, created the Milestone Foundation in 2016, a nonprofit charitable foundation that offers lower-interest loans to help people get access to funds while they're waiting for settlements to be finalized.

In the six years since it was founded as the Bairs Foundation (before a rebranding this year to Milestone Foundation), more than 600 families across all 50 states have been helped, with the

foundation advancing about \$5 million in funds. And it has a 100% repayment rate among clients, who pay 13% interest.

Bair brings his background in financial planning and the structured settlements business to the effort. He is founder of Milestone, a firm that provides advising services to law firms representing plaintiffs in litigation.

“We stand up for families and we stand up for the little guy,” he said. “It’s all based on helping people process what they need, but they don’t always know what they need.”

Bair grew up in Ashland, Oregon, and met his wife (a Buffalo native) while both were studying abroad in Spain. The couple moved to Western New York after he completed 10 years in the U.S. Army.

Armed with degrees in mechanical engineering and Spanish and with experience as an Apache pilot, Bair opted out of working for a big defense contractor. Instead, on the advice of a family friend, he began a career in financial planning, first in mediation and then with his own structured settlements advising firm, Forge Consulting.

His timing was fortuitous: He started the business just before 9/11 and, later, helped change state laws that had prevented advisers and other professionals from offering financial planning advice pro bono.

“In our profession of helping people recover after the end of litigation, we were like what can we do? We came to find out it was illegal at the time based on the laws in New York state so we got the laws changed,” he said. “The whole point of doing that was to help the country heal.”

John Bair

Day job: Milestone

Community: Milestone Foundation

Self-description: Energetic

What keeps you up at night: Running out of time. There’s lots to do and when you hit 50, you realize you have to be efficient with your time, be more strategic. To accomplish more things in a shorter period of time to have an impact on a lot of people is still very exciting, and the clock’s ticking.

Who is your hero: [Leo Boyle](#), a Boston lawyer and founder of Trial Lawyers Care. He’s symbolic of the top 1% of the 1% who are as good as the day is long and not in it for the money. His DNA is all the right things.



Tracey Drury

Reporter

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