

Veterans Take Part in Canoe Regatta **Race Helps Kick-Off Duke's OceanFest**

WAIKIKI, Hawaii (August 25, 2015) – Dozens of wounded veterans raced through the waters off Waikiki Beach last Saturday. The Na Koa Wounded Warrior Canoe Regatta featured 75 teams, many of which included wounded veterans. Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) helped field more than 10 canoes manned by injured service members. The Na Koa Wounded Warrior Regatta helped kick off Duke's OceanFest, an annual festival honoring Duke Kahanamoku. Kahanamoku is credited with expanding the popularity of surfing; he is also a 5-time Olympic medalist in swimming.

The WWP Alumni program ensures injured service members stay connected with one another. It is part of the 20 free programs and services provided by WWP to help honor and empower Wounded Warriors.

WWP believes there is a distinct difference between members and Alumni. Anyone can pay membership dues to an organization and call themselves a member. The term "alumni" indicates a mutual shared experience and denotes that your place in an organization was earned. WWP Alumni have earned their place in the WWP organization and share common bonds of sacrifice. Furthermore, WWP does not ask for member dues because those who are eligible have already paid their dues on the battlefield.

WWP Alumnus Jerome Faasu never thought he would be paddling again after injuring his back, neck, shoulders, and knees while serving in the Army. "Free events like this help me engage and reconnect with the rest of my buddies I haven't seen since I left the Army in 2011," Faasu said.

WWP Alumnus Cody Snyder thought the race provided friendly competition. "As veterans, we can be awfully competitive and supportive at the same time. I feel it was a perfect balance," Snyder said.

Along with the competition, and reconnecting with old friends, the wounded service members had an opportunity to find new colleagues, who can serve as another layer of support for one another.

"The highlight of the event for me was meeting veterans that I never knew lived in my area. As veterans, we can relate to and appreciate the experiences of one another. Talking to veterans, laughing and joking is therapy in and of itself. Knowing that we are not alone in the struggle for normalcy is deeply comforting," Snyder said.

"The regatta also reminded me of the camaraderie when meeting new veterans from other branches and sharing our experiences. Great way to network for our service members," Faasu said.

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About Wounded Warrior Project

The mission of Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) is to honor and empower Wounded Warriors. WWP's purpose is to raise awareness and to enlist the public's aid for the needs of injured service members, to help injured servicemen and women aid and assist each other, and to provide unique, direct programs and services to meet their needs. WWP is a national, nonpartisan organization headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida. To get involved

and learn more, visit woundedwarriorproject.org.

<https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/2015-08-25-Veterans-Take-Part-in-Canoe-Regatta>