

## Wounded Veterans Swim with Sharks

### **Wounded Warrior Project Puts Injured Veterans in Shark Cage for Thrills and Camaraderie**

HALEIWA, Hawaii (November 30, 2015) – Several sharks with razor-sharp teeth thrashed just feet from Stephanie Smith's face, as she dove off the coast of Haleiwa recently, and she couldn't be more thrilled.

"Being able to see the sharks in their natural habitat was remarkable," Stephanie said.

Stephanie was part of a large group of injured veterans brought on the cage-diving experience by Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP). WWP sees outings like this as an opportunity for wounded veterans to form bonds with other wounded veterans. Through shared experiences, these men and women can create a lasting support structure of peers. WWP offers 20 programs and services to injured veterans who are registered with the nonprofit organization, all free of charge.

Participants in the cage dive had the opportunity to swim just below the water's surface.

"I was out of my comfort zone, yet I knew that I was safe inside the cage," Stephanie said. "To say I wasn't scared would be a lie, but I left the Wounded Warrior Project event that day feeling accomplished. I felt like I had overcome an obstacle I would never have been able to face if it wasn't for WWP."

This excursion gave many of the wounded veterans a chance to face a fear while spending time with other injured service members.

"It was refreshing to meet and socialize with other veterans, there's a sense of comfort among veterans that I haven't seen in the civilian world," Stephanie said. "Also, being a female veteran it was great to meet other female veterans."

The camaraderie of the event appeared to help put the fear of sharks behind the divers, at least for a moment.

"At one point while inside the cage submerged in the water a fellow wounded warrior pointed out a jellyfish that was inside the cage," Smith said. "We both started to freak out a little because we didn't have much room to get away from the jellyfish. After getting back on the boat, we laughed that we were probably more scared of the little jellyfish than the massive sharks that were surrounding us while we were inside the cage."

Wounded Warrior Project listens to its Alumni and adjusts programming based on the needs of injured veterans, their caregivers and families. The organization just released the findings of its 2015 annual WWP Alumni Survey. Read the results or download the executive summary at [woundedwarriorproject.org/survey](http://woundedwarriorproject.org/survey).

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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](http://woundedwarriorproject.org).

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