

## Wounded Veterans Ride the Waves in Hale Koa

### **AccesSurf and Wounded Warrior Project team up to Give Back to Injured Service Members**

HONOLULU, Feb. 24, 2016 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- Wounded veterans and their families hit the beach in

Hale Koa at a recent Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) Alumni event. WWP partnered with AccesSurf to give 40 WWP Alumni and their family members a fun day at the beach. AccesSurf is a nonprofit organization that helps those with disabilities surf and participate in water sports.

"We helped AccesSurf set up the event, and get some of the other participants squared away with the event," said Army veteran Ionatana Ala. "It was a good opportunity to give back and support the local community. WWP is relatively new to Hawaii, and it's good to see them engaging the veterans here."

WWP Alumni spent the afternoon paddle boarding, surfing, swimming, and kayaking around the water to get their blood pumping while soaking up ocean spray and sunshine. The gathering also gave injured service members and their families' the chance to create memories and bond, as well as enjoy a day of relaxation and camaraderie with other veterans.

"Many of the Alumni were able to get out there to learn how to enjoy different water sports, like kayaking and paddle boarding," said Ala. "The families were having a great time. A lot of us have fixed budgets, so Wounded Warrior Project providing us with chances to get out like this and have fun is much appreciated."

Events like this are part of the WWP Alumni program, which creates support through shared experiences and builds camaraderie by bringing injured veterans together to connect with other wounded veterans and family support members. Many wounded service members face similar challenges adjusting to their injuries and civilian life. By bonding through events, these veterans learn they are not alone and have the chance to grow closer to those around them.

"I've been to a few events now and always end up meeting other veterans from different branches of service," said Ala. "It's good to talk with them about their experiences and have fun with each other. It shows people who attend, that they're not alone. The spouses can talk to other veteran spouses, and they find they deal with some of the same issues. Everyone is at a different part of their recovery, and there are things that we can help each other with."

Assisting others is something that Ala is familiar with in his role as a WWP Peer Mentor. Peer Support is another free WWP program that is designed to help warriors develop friendships with fellow warriors who are further along in the recovery process. By becoming a peer mentor, injured service members who once were the warrior being carried have the opportunity to become the warrior who carries others.

"It's important for us to give back to each other and assist each other in the recovery process," said Ala. "Some of us can isolate, so events like this help us to get out there. It goes beyond just going to appointments and then going home. We can do this together as a team; no one has to go through it alone. These events show us that and give us the chance to integrate back into civilian life with those who know what we've all been through."

The Alumni program is one of 20 free programs and services WWP offers wounded veterans, caregivers, and



their families. Through a high-touch and interactive approach, the WWP vision is to foster the most successful, well-adjusted generation of wounded service members in our nation's history.

### **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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