

Wounded Veterans Expand Horizons on the Water

Tracking Dolphins and New Experiences Move Wounded Veterans towards Recovery

PENSACOLA, Fla., March 31, 2016 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- Wounded veterans and their families learned about local marine life and visited with friendly swimming mammals when they set sail on a dolphin cruise in Pensacola. Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) brought the families together for a relaxing Alumni program event designed to bring injured veterans together to build camaraderie and create support through shared experiences.

"We have lived along the coast but have not had many adventures, so the chance to do something alongside other WWP families with similar experiences was inviting. This was a no judgment zone where we could be ourselves," said Frank Dailey II, Air Force veteran and WWP Alumnus. "I knew some other Alumni from prior events, and this cruise allowed our wives to meet and laugh about stories we bring home; my wife said she felt welcomed by family."

Many wounded service members face similar challenges adjusting to their injuries and civilian life. By bonding through events and programs, injured service members learn they are not alone. The WWP Alumni program is one of 20 direct programs and services offered free of charge to wounded service members, their caregivers, and families.

Army veteran and WWP Alumnus Joey McBride and his family experienced his daughter's first time on a boat during the dolphin cruise. "It was the first time in a while that we all could attend a family outing," he said.

As the group of 50 gathered on the boat, the captain's numerous dolphin jokes served as icebreakers for the some of the Alumni and family members meeting for the first time.

"When it comes to some group events, people tend to stay to themselves. But before we were half-way through the cruise, people were opening up and there were all kinds of conversations taking place," Joey said. "By the time we docked, people were making plans to have dinner with the Alumni and families they just met. For me, it was good to visit with people I hadn't seen in a while."

WWP staff made their way around the boat to visit with each family about WWP programs and services available to wounded veterans, their caregivers, and family support members.

"This is something that I knew our entire family could enjoy," Frank said. "There is something special about being on the water, it is very soothing for my family and lessens the stress we live with daily. The cruise and tracking the dolphins is something my son has always wanted to do."

Frank has been actively involved with WWP throughout his recovery, having already been on a Soldier Ride® and completed a Project Odyssey®. WWP also extends support to caregivers of wounded veterans.

"My family is in a unique situation," he explained. "I am a veteran with combat deployments to Desert Storm, Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq, but I am also the father of a 22-year-old autistic son. The stress and anxiety manifests and my wife has a lot of the challenges with my son and me."

"I spent over half of my life being part of a team, and suddenly, I was alone. As a WWP Alumni I am part of a team again and through the years, WWP has been there for me and my family," Frank continued. "When my son and I both ended up in the hospital unexpectedly, my wife had to care for each of us. Afterwards, WWP invited my wife on a caregiver's retreat, which was a huge healing point for our family. She didn't realize how much pressure she was under until it was lifted for those few days. She was able to recharge from the challenges of caring for a husband and son with personal issues. I can't tell you how much that weekend meant to her and how much WWP is a part of our lives."

As an integral part of the Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) Physical Health and Wellness (PH&W) program, Soldier Ride® envisions a generation of wounded veterans well-adjusted in body, receiving the care they need to maximize rehabilitation and live active and healthy lives. Through peer support, adaptive sports, health, nutrition, and recreational activities, WWP helps injured servicemen and women achieve independence and pursue an excellent quality of life. In February 2016, WWP served 917 wounded veterans through PH&W programs. Learn more at <https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/programs/physical-health-wellness>.

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.

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