

Reindeer Loose in Alaska; Injured Veterans on the Run

ANCHORAGE, Alaska, May 4, 2016 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- Injured veterans made a mad dash through the downtown streets of Anchorage, Alaska at the 2016 Running of the Reindeer race during the world famous, 10th annual Fur Rondy festival. Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) Alumni and family support members were among more than 1,300 people who gathered from around the world to run, skip, jump, and dance with reindeer to help raise funds for Toys for Tots.

"My wife and I were excited for this event," said Aaron Velvick, U.S. Army veteran and WWP Alumnus. "She was very excited because she's from South America where she didn't get to see snow, let alone reindeer," he joked.

WWP sponsored the wounded veteran runners as part of its Alumni program, which provides long-term support and camaraderie for injured service members through sporting events, outdoor and recreational activities, and educational sessions.

During these events, WWP staff interact with attendees, informing them of the 20 free programs and services that directly impact wounded service members, their families, and caregivers.

"I found the day encouraging and supportive," said Aaron. "A lot of wounded warriors chose to live out here—off the grid and in complete isolation—because they don't think people understand them. At the run, I saw a lot of battle buddies in the same boat as me. We don't need to worry what other people think, because we understand each other. That kind of support is nice."

Aaron and his wife are two of more than 100,000 wounded veterans, caregivers, and family members who receive access to WWP's 20 programs and services. These programs help their physical rehabilitation and aid their mental and emotional recovery. As a result, they can achieve educational and employment goals, maintain independence, and stay connected with their families, communities, and each other.

"This was the first event I've been able to participate with Wounded Warrior Project," said Aaron. "I wish I could do more, but it's difficult with my wife still on active duty and my recovery." Aaron explains his injuries prevented him from physical activities prior to this event. "I just started walking around again. I got clearance to jog just weeks before the event. It was difficult with four inches of snow on the ground, but well worth it. We had a great time."

Keeping up an active lifestyle is important in the wounded veteran's recovery. WWP's Physical Health and Wellness (PH&W) program specifically focuses on this area. With year-round fitness, sporting, and exercise activities, PH&W helps the healing process by getting warriors outside and active.

In March 2016, more than 1,500 WWP Alumni, their families, and caregivers participated in PH&W events. To learn more about PH&W programs and events, please visit:

<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. The WWP 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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