

WWP News & Media: Veteran Group Outings, Charity Events, Helping Vets

## Wounded Warrior Project Joins Forces with The Fighting Irish **Injured Veterans Train with University of Notre Dame**

NOTRE DAME, Ind., Sept. 28, 2016 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- Along with the University of Notre Dame,

Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) hosted a workout and physical health and wellness seminar at the university's state-of-the-art facilities. After a brief safety demonstration by the Notre Dame trainers and a warm-up stretch to get limber, the injured warriors got down to business.

"My group started out riding stationary bikes and doing the exercise ropes you whip around," said Army veteran David Mendenhall. "We then went into the weight room and practiced good form for exercises like dead lifting. In the agility segment we used ladders to practice different footwork drills. The last part centered on beneficial stretches for the core. All in all it was a really good time."

The workout was structured as a circuit with stations focusing on exercises at varying levels of intensity, depending upon the needs and comfort levels of the warriors. WWP staff interacted with the warriors during the workout, offering instruction and encouragement where needed.

"We were constantly challenged to push ourselves and dig deeper," explained Air Force veteran Cynthia Nikolia. "The most difficult aspect of the workout for me was keeping pace. Due to my disability, I have gained weight, and I was not sure I would be able to handle the exercises. But I did, and I felt great afterward for making it through the entire two hours of the workout."

Physical activity and socializing with other veterans can help injured warriors cope with stress and depression. In a WWP survey of the wounded veterans it serves, nearly 47 percent say talking with other warriors boosts their ability to manage their mental health, and 32 percent of warriors expressed physical activity helps. WWP offers a variety of programs and services that assist veterans with mental health, physical health and wellness, career and benefits counseling, and connecting with other warriors and their communities.

WWP's physical health and wellness programs are personalized to encourage warriors, caregivers, and family members to reach physical health goals, while also aiding with mental and emotional recovery from the invisible wounds of war.

When the injured warriors finished working out, they enjoyed a healthy lunch and a guided tour of Notre Dame's football facilities, made famous by the 1993 movie "Rudy." The tour and the staff made a big impression on David and Cynthia.

"You really do feel like a VIP when you go to these events," David said. "The trainers and staff were amazing and very professional. They were also open to questions I had about my personal fitness goals, and they had answers to everything I asked."

"They cheered us on as we went through the stations," Cynthia said. "One of the most helpful things to me was when they thanked us for all we had done. That made me feel great about being a veteran, and about my service to my country. Due to my disability and a range of other conditions, I was not proud of my service when I was first discharged from the Air Force. That is starting to change."

WWP programs offer settings that provide opportunities for injured veterans to form bonds and reduce isolation, which is one of the most significant struggles wounded warriors deal with after serving their country. It can be difficult knowing how to overcome that challenge and rekindle bonds similar to those formed in the military.

One such opportunity to reduce isolation is the WWP Peer Support program. Peer support plays an important role in the recovery process as injured veterans rely upon each other's learned experiences when managing day-to-day challenges. All WWP programs and services have an aspect of this support structure, while the Peer Support program is solely dedicated to ensuring every injured veteran, family member, and caregiver encourages one another in recovery, thus embodying the WWP logo of one warrior carrying another off the battlefield.

"For various reasons, I have been kind of isolated with respect to other warriors in my area, especially with people my own age," Cynthia said. "I was glad to meet other wounded warriors like me at this event. It changed my perspective a bit; I'm not alone and there are others who are looking for that support and friendship too. I also met a warrior with a service dog and got some information from him about how he got his service dog. It's something I am looking into now."

To learn more about how WWP's programs and services are making an impact on the lives of warriors, visit: <https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/>.

### **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).

Video - [http://origin-gps.onstreammedia.com/origin/multivu\\_archive/PRNA/ENR/ND-WWP-Workout1.mp4](http://origin-gps.onstreammedia.com/origin/multivu_archive/PRNA/ENR/ND-WWP-Workout1.mp4)

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For further information: Mattison Brooks, Email: [mbrooks@woundedwarriorproject.org](mailto:mbrooks@woundedwarriorproject.org), Phone: 904-451-5590

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