

Veterans Join Wounded Warrior Project for Sneak Peek at Santa HQ

MCLEAN, Va., Dec. 6, 2016 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- Something magical is happening in McLean, and a group of Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) veterans and their families were first in line for the fun. Santa HQ officially opened in Tysons Corner Center, and military families were invited for a special sneak peek as a thank you for their service and sacrifice. As children explored the Christmas wonderland, injured veterans socialized with their service brothers and sisters and WWP staff members.

Participants were treated to a fully immersive holiday experience. Upon arrival, visitors took turns being scanned by the Naughty or Nice O'Meter to determine which of Santa's lists would bear their names. Once inside, the group was allowed to catch a glimpse of the activity at Santa's North Pole workshop, with the help of interactive electronics. To commemorate the occasion, children posed for Elfies – like selfies – with their parents. And because no trip to Santa HQ would be complete without a visit from the big guy himself, Santa Claus arrived to greet the kids and hear about their Christmas wish lists.

The holiday experience was a positive one for Army and Marine Corps veteran Michael Miedzinski, who jumped at the opportunity to visit Santa HQ with his wife and children.

"This was a great chance to do something with my family as a whole and for us to enjoy ourselves for a little while with other veterans," Michael said. "My kids said meeting Santa was the best part of the day. They had really been looking forward to seeing him this year."

While his children appreciated the meeting with Santa, Michael most enjoyed the opportunity to connect with fellow service members. Outreach activities support the long-term recovery needs of warriors by reintroducing them and their families to the unique bonds experienced during military service. Connecting with fellow veterans – in environments that accommodate physical injuries and social anxieties – diminishes feelings of social isolation. In a [WWP survey](#) of the injured warriors it serves, more than half of survey respondents (51.7 percent) talked with fellow Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation New Dawn veterans to address their mental health issues.

"It means a lot to be a part of the wounded warrior family," Michael said. "It's definitely a good group of people I can fall back on and talk to, and that helps with the normalcy. It brings back that familiar feeling I was comfortable with in the military."

WWP staff members interacted with warriors and family members during the visit, advising them of additional programs and services to assist in their recovery processes. The programs assist injured veterans with mental health, physical health and wellness, career and benefits counseling, and connecting with other warriors and their communities. Through the generosity of donors, these resources are available to warriors at no cost to them.

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

About Wounded Warrior Project

We Connect, Serve, and Empower

The mission of Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) is to honor and empower Wounded Warriors. WWP connects wounded warriors and their families to valuable resources and one another, serves them through a variety of free programs and services, and empowers them to live life on their own terms. WWP is a national, nonpartisan organization headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida. To get involved and learn more, visit woundedwarriorproject.org.

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