

## Wounded Warrior Project Releases Data from Largest Post-9/11 Veterans Study

### **Mental and Physical Health Concerns Point to a Nation Ill-Prepared for Rising Tide of Long-Term Care**

Jacksonville, Fla./Washington, DC (Sept. 10, 2013) – Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) today released the findings of its 2013 Annual Alumni Survey based on responses from nearly 14,000 Iraq and Afghanistan service members – a resounding 52% response rate. Working in conjunction with RAND and Westat research organizations for this multi-year study, WWP's data ranks as the most statistically relevant and largest sample size of service members injured or wounded since 9/11.

The survey, which has been conducted annually over the last four years, provides some of the most valid and applicable insights into this current generation of veterans, and allows WWP to track over time the needs and challenges wounded veterans are facing.

"Our nation has focused on assisting injured veterans in the current stage of their lives," said Steve Nardizzi, executive director of Wounded Warrior Project. "Wounded Warrior Project is addressing both short-term needs and the life-long challenges currently not considered by most of the predictive research available."

Many of the veterans surveyed identified as experiencing struggles with issues including mental health, physical health and wellness (weight management, sleep, etc.), as well as social challenges often related to their first concerns.

"We use findings of the annual surveys to not only refine and improve our own 19 programs and services, but to help all those working in the veterans service space," said Nardizzi. "As a nation, we need to move beyond the triage phase and address the long-term needs of this generation of injured service members."

## Survey Trends

The data bring to light three major themes impacting our wounded warriors today, and the focus of planning for future care, including:

Mental health concerns are higher than anticipated for this generation of wounded veterans:

- 75.4% of respondents have experienced post-traumatic stress disorder
- 73.9% experienced anxiety
- 68.8% experienced depression

Both visible and invisible injuries are having a compounding effect on health issues:

- 82.8% of respondents are overweight or obese
- 80.2% report not getting enough sleep to feel rested

Of the many veterans contending with multiple types of injuries, the impact on lifestyle for wounded veterans can come in a multitude of outcomes:

- 17.8% are unemployed
- Respondents say that mental health issues are the number one factor making it difficult to obtain employment (29.7%), followed by lack of education (22.1%).

# Past. Present. Future

While the feedback spotlights the past and current challenges facing our wounded veterans, it also provides an opportunity to look to the future that veterans are facing today and tomorrow.

The data demonstrate that WWP programs initiated based upon results from previous WWP Alumni surveys are making an impact.

- More than half (56.7%) of respondents said that talking with another Iraq or Afghanistan veteran is in their top five ways of coping with stress. This finding underscores the need for programs such as WWP's Peer Support program, a program aimed at engaging fellow wounded warriors and helping them develop one-to-one friendships with fellow warriors who are further along in the recovery process.

Additional programs, such as [Project Odyssey](#), [Soldier Ride](#), and [Warriors to Work](#), were created based on previous feedback from WWP alumni, and focus on mental health, physical well-being, and economic empowerment, respectively.

“WWP was founded ten years ago to support the many veterans struggling with physical and emotional injuries,” said Nardizzi. “Our Alumni Survey shows us we are identifying, reaching out to, and engaging with these service members – when they need it most and throughout their lifetimes.”

## About Wounded Warrior Project

Since 2003, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) has been meeting the growing needs of warriors, their families, and caregivers — helping them achieve their highest ambition. [Learn more](#).

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