

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

Wounded Warrior Project Alumnus to Testify before Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs **Hearing Will Focus on Mental Health Care and Suicide Prevention**

WHAT: Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) Alumnus will testify before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs about mental health care and suicide prevention

WHO: WWP Alumnus and Peer Mentor Vincent Vanata, Master Sergeant USMC (Ret.)

WHEN: Wednesday, November 19, 2014 at 10:30 am ET

WHERE: Russell Senate Office Building SR-418

Vincent "Vinny" Vanata, of Cody, Wyoming, is a veteran of the United States Marine Corps. He served nearly 22 years on active duty before retiring honorably in 2003 upon his return from Iraq. After several years of inconsistent and often ineffective mental health treatment following his retirement, he was finally diagnosed with severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and a mild traumatic brain injury (TBI). His wife Jona, also a Marine Corps veteran, is Vinny's caregiver and has played an instrumental role in his recovery. Together, they are learning how to manage his PTSD triggers and reactions to triggering events. Combined with counseling, WWP has enabled Vinny to interact with other veterans who share similar experiences. He participated in Project Odyssey, part of WWP's [Combat Stress Recovery Program](#), which brings warriors together with other combat veterans on outdoor rehabilitative retreats that promote healing. He and Jona have also become certified as Peer Mentors with WWP, assisting other veterans and their families who are struggling to receive effective mental health care.

Vinny will testify before the Committee about the struggles he has had transitioning from active duty to civilian life, and the challenges of accessing mental health care in rural Wyoming. He will also focus his statement on how programs at WWP, including the Combat Stress Recovery Program, Project Odyssey, and his role as a WWP Peer Mentor, helped save his life and the lives of other injured veterans.

WWP has seen the impact that peer mentorship can have on mental health through our [Peer Support Program](#) and Peer-Facilitated Support Groups (PFSGs), and we know that in many cases, it takes a veteran to help a veteran. The Peer Support Program helps warriors develop one-to-one friendships with Peer Mentors who are further along in the recovery process, and the PFSGs are warrior-led small groups that provide an intimate, safe environment for warriors to connect with other warriors, discuss personal challenges, and support one another throughout their recovery.

Since 2010, WWP has been using the information gathered from its Annual AlumniSurvey to refine its existing programs, develop new initiatives, and identify gaps in existing services and support. This year's data again showed that mental health conditions were among the most frequently reported health problems of Alumni: 75 percent reported experiencing PTSD, 67 percent reported depression, and 64 percent reported experiencing anxiety. Forty-three percent of Alumni reported experiencing a TBI. Overall, the survey results indicate that, for many, the effects of mental and emotional health problems can be even more serious than the effects of physical problems.

To view the full 2014 Annual Alumni Survey results, [click here](#).

About Wounded Warrior Project

Wounded Warrior Project is recognizing its ten-year anniversary, reflecting on a decade of service and reaffirming its commitment to serving injured veterans for their lifetime. The mission of Wounded Warrior Project is to honor and empower Wounded Warriors. WWP currently serves more than 59,000 warriors and nearly 8,500 family members through its 20 unique programs and services. The purpose of WWP 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 organization headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida. To get involved and learn more, visit woundedwarriorproject.org.

<https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/2014-11-19-Wounded-Warrior-Project-Alumnus-to-Testify-before-Senate-Committee-on-Veterans-Affairs>