

Supporting the Whole Family After a Warrior's Injury

Wounded Warrior Project Builds Camaraderie for Families and Caregivers of Injured Veterans

Jacksonville, Fla. (May 14, 2015) – Lee Medina smiles when she describes meeting her husband, Army Corporal David Medina, nearly six years ago. They met through friends, and even from opposite ends of the country – he was stationed in Washington state and she was in Virginia – their connection was instant. “We just knew when we started talking. We built a strong foundation by communicating with each other. We knew this was what we both wanted.”

That foundation was rattled when David was seriously injured after his Stryker ran over an improvised explosive device (IED) in Iraq in November of 2009. He sustained serious injuries from the blast, including a back injury and a traumatic brain injury (TBI), and developed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of his experience. David was honorably discharged and returned to Lee and their three children, but Lee knew something was different. “When he came home, it was obvious that the life we were going to live was not going to be the same,” says Lee. “The world is different. Life changes drastically. I didn’t know where to go or what to do. But what does a soldier do when another is injured? What do you think I’m going to do as a spouse? I’m going to carry you.”

David struggled with nightmares, loud noises, and the lingering effects of his injuries, and Lee left her full-time job to become his caregiver. When a neighbor told her about Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP), she reached out in the hopes that David might have an opportunity to connect with other warriors and get out of the house. She could never have imagined, she says, the level of support, understanding, and camaraderie that her entire family would receive. The Medinas joined Family Support, a component of WWP’s Alumni program, which helps injured veterans, family members, and caregivers learn about WWP and network, heal, and engage with one another.

“WWP recognizes the integral role that family members and caregivers play in a warrior’s successful transition and reintegration into civilian life, and we are here to support the entire family with the full range of the programs and services we offer,” says Ryan Kules, national alumni director at WWP. “When warriors serve their country, their whole family serves with them. When their warrior returns home injured, they deserve that same level of support. They deserve to know they are not alone.”

Family Support, which now serves over 11,000 caregivers and family members of injured service members, provides education on WWP programs and services, engagement and networking opportunities with peers, and respite opportunities to help alleviate the tremendous stress that a warrior’s injury places on the entire family.

“Soldiers are trained to go into battle, but caregivers aren’t trained for this and it’s horrible when the civilian world doesn’t understand what it’s like,” says Lee. “But you sit down with other caregivers, and you talk, and they get you. They know what it’s like and they share tips to make it better. We don’t feel like outcasts anymore; we feel understood.”

Lee says that David and her family love the activities in which the whole family can participate together because the camaraderie that David experiences with other injured veterans is shared with the family members and caregivers as well. “It brings the David that I knew back out...to see him smile, that’s the guy I fell in love

with, and he's still in there.”

If you or someone you know suffered an injury in connection with military service, please contact the WWP Resource Center at resourcecenter@woundedwarriorproject.org or 888.WWP.ALUM (997.2586). To learn more about Wounded Warrior Project's Alumni Program and Family Support, visit 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.

<https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/2015-05-14-Supporting-the-Whole-Family-After-a-Warrior-s-Injury>