

Injured Service Members Rediscover Active Lifestyle During Annual Adaptive Water Sports Festival Rockaway, N.Y. (July 23, 2015) — Before being injured in Afghanistan, Brandon Dodson was an avid surfer throughout his youth in San Diego. After losing both of his legs as the result of an improvised explosive device blast while on deployment in Afghanistan, Dodson was unsure if he would ever be able to surf again. Through adaptive water sports like those offered by Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP), Dodson and his fellow wounded service members can get back to catching waves and being active on the water.

In early July, Dodson and dozens of his fellow wounded service members were brought to Rockaway Beach in New York for the 11th annual Adaptive Water Sports Festival, hosted by WWP. During the four-day festival, injured service members and their families were introduced to adaptive versions of water skiing, surfing, scuba diving, and many other sports — proving that despite their injuries, they could still maintain an active lifestyle.

“It’s one of the few activities that I can do without my prosthetics,” said Dodson. “When I get out there it’s just me and the board. It’s the same movements, the same water, and the same board. It feels good.”

The event was kicked off with a parade on Wednesday, July 8, as the wounded service members and their families were escorted through the streets to the cheers of members of the Rockaway Beach and Breezy Point communities. Over the next three days, these injured service members participated in their choice of water sports, complete with adaptive equipment to accommodate all ability levels.

When he suffered a traumatic brain injury and lower body mobility injuries during his time serving in the United States Army in Iraq and Afghanistan, Pedro Rosado was unsure how he would be able to maintain an active lifestyle upon returning home. With the help of adaptive water sports, Rosado has managed to not only stay active, but also to mentor others who are seeking ways to maintain a physically active lifestyle after their injuries.

“We may not have all served together, but we all served,” says Rosado. “These events provide us with an opportunity to support each other and regain the camaraderie that may be missing after leaving the military.”

This was the 11th year that WWP worked with the Rockaway Beach community on this event. As always, the event was made possible by an outpouring of support from the New York Police Department (NYPD); Fire Department of New York (FDNY); Legends in Valor, a nonprofit organization serving civil servants; and a massive volunteer effort.

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.

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