

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

Wounded Warrior Project Releases New Data from Largest Survey of Injured Veterans

Survey Shows Need for Better Mental Health Care for Wounded Service Members

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (November 4, 2015) – More than three in four wounded veterans are dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), according to the 2015 annual Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) Alumni Survey, released nationally this morning.

More than 23,000 injured service members completed the comprehensive survey, making it the largest collection of data on this generation of injured veterans ever collected.

Since the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq started nearly 15 years ago, the Department of Defense reports more than 52,000 men and women have been physically wounded. These are just the visible wounds – such as loss of a limb, burns, and gunshot wounds -- many more are not visible, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI). It is estimated that at least 400,000 service members are dealing with PTSD, and another 320,000 are estimated to suffer from a TBI.

“Our annual survey shows that this generation of injured veterans continue to struggle with the invisible wounds of war, including PTSD and TBI, and the challenges are not getting better with time,” said Steve Nardizzi, WWP chief executive officer. “The information in this survey solidifies the need for our lifetime commitment of support to the warriors, family members, and caregivers we serve. And for as long as their challenges continue, WWP will be here.”

WWP began the annual Alumni Survey in 2010, asking just a couple thousand veterans to respond to a questionnaire about their mental and physical health, their experiences in war, the impact of being in battle zones, and their economic circumstances. The survey provides concrete data – what veterans are experiencing as they try to transition to civilian life.

The survey also shows areas where wounded veterans lives are improving. More wounded veterans surveyed have a bachelor’s degree or better in 2015, than in 2014. More injured service members are also working towards better their education level in 2015 compared to 2014.

WWP uses all of this data to ensure its 20 free programs and services are appropriately meeting the needs of the men and women who have served our nation: the men and women WWP proudly calls Alumni.

“At first, WWP helped me by putting me in contact with other warriors during events, and getting me out of the house,” said Keith Sekora, a WWP Alumnus, who suffered injuries during a combat mission in Afghanistan. “The entire time I was in the hospital, I thought I was alone.”

Keith’s injuries hit him twice as hard. He was in Afghanistan as an Air Force reservist. “I was not only medically retired from the military but from my civilian job as a police officer, too.”

Keith credits WWP with helping him transition to civilian life. He first learned of WWP after being taken from Afghanistan to a hospital in Germany. He then became involved with Soldier Ride® and Project Odyssey®, two of WWP’s lifesaving programs, focused on physical and mental well-being, offered free of charge. Keith now serves as a WWP Peer Mentor for other wounded veterans.

Year over year, the Alumni Survey shows mental health issues are becoming more prevalent in veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Of greater concern, access to quality mental health care is not keeping up with the demand. More than 1 in 3 (35%) of those surveyed say they had difficulties getting mental health care, or had put off getting mental health care, or did not get the care they needed.

To help close that gap, WWP is launching Warrior Care Network™ (WCN) in early 2016. The first-of-its-kind medical care network will connect wounded veterans and their families with world-class, personalized mental health care.

WCN represents a \$100 million investment by WWP and its academic medical center partners in the mental health of injured veterans. The four founding medical center partners are: Emory’s Veterans Program at Emory University in Atlanta; Massachusetts General Hospital Home Base Program in Boston; Operation Mend Program at UCLA Health in Los Angeles; and Road Home Program at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago.

This collaboration will help address the problem, but it is just a start. WWP uses its annual Alumni Survey to tailor its programs and services to the needs of injured veterans. Currently, WWP serves more than 80,000 wounded service members and more than 13,000 family members and caregivers.

To register someone with WWP visit woundedwarriorproject.org, email resourcecenter@woundedwarriorproject.org, or call 888.WWP.ALUM (888.997.2586).

To read the entire 2015 Alumni Survey or download the Executive Summary visit woundedwarriorproject.org/survey.

More Statistics from the 2015 Alumni Survey:

- In the two weeks prior to the survey, 4 in 10 (43.3%) had trouble falling asleep or slept too much nearly every day
- 2 in 3 (66.4%) respondents had a military experience so frightening, horrible, or upsetting, they had nightmares about it
- 3 in 4 (75.5%) thought about the experience when they did not want to
- More than 3 in 4 (76.1%) were constantly on guard, watchful, or easily startled because of their military experience
- More than half (53.6%) of respondents visited a professional to get help with issues such as stress, emotional, alcohol, drug, or family problems
- More than 1 in 3 (35%) say they had difficulty getting mental health care, or put off getting such care, or did not get the care they needed
- The unemployment rate for surveyed veterans is 16.6% in 2015, down from 19.7% in 2014 (The national unemployment average is 5.1% as of September 2015)
- More than 1 in 4 Alumni have a bachelor's degree or better (26.5% in 2015 compared to 24.5% in 2014)
- More than 2 in 3 Alumni are seeking a bachelor's degree or better (67.5% in 2015 compared to 65.6% in 2014)

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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/2015-11-04-Wounded-Warrior-Project-Releases-New-Data-from-Largest-Survey-of-Injured-Veterans>