For Caregivers of Wounded Veterans, a Wounded Warrior Project Grant Provides Rest, Relaxation, and Hope

Two-Time WWP Grant Recipient, Yellow Ribbon Fund, Will Host Four Caregiver Retreats This Year

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (September 9, 2015) – For Jessica Allen, director of the Family Caregiver Program for the Yellow Ribbon Fund, her passion for caregiver respite is both personal and professional: Jessica's husband, a 14 year Army veteran, lost both his legs above the knee from a combat injury, and she now serves as a fulltime caregiver to her husband, mom to two young girls, and works three jobs. She understands all too well how busy life can get for those taking care of others.

"We forget to pause, and we need that break," Jessica said. "When my husband was at Walter Reed, getting away for long breaks wasn't possible, but I could do a short one. I got the idea that I could get away for 72 hours. Some of my friends, other wives, and moms of veterans on the ward could get away for that long too, so we tested it out. We went to Gettysburg. We got something to eat and had some fun."

The Yellow Ribbon Fund's Family Caregiver Program is a two-time recipient of a Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) grant. The WWP Grant Program was created to bridge gaps in existing services and expand the availability of programs that provide specialized, critically needed support to this generation of wounded service members, their caregivers, and families. To date, the WWP Grant Program has provided over $10 million through 107 grants to 90 organizations like the Yellow Ribbon Fund. Because of this support from WWP, Jessica will be able to fund four veteran caregiver respite retreats this year, and the first one was held in Nashville on August 30.

The retreats provide approximately fifteen caregivers with the opportunity to participate in fun group activities, bonding time with other military caregivers, and plenty of "use-how-you-choose" time. Through this WWP grant, Yellow Ribbon Fund is able to provide for everything associated with the retreat: travel costs, hotel accommodations, food, and entertainment. "Everything except souvenirs," Jessica said with a laugh.

When asked where she would like to take the program in the future, Jessica doesn't have to think too long. She wants to provide a network for caregivers, so that they don't feel alone and abandoned. She would love to provide more respite groups and retreats if she could find a way to do it without overextending herself too much. While she does not know how yet, she believes she will find a way.

Jessica says that she is proud her family learned together that life can knock you down but it doesn't have to keep you down. You can always move forward, and it is that philosophy that guides her caregiver retreats for the spouses and moms of injured veterans. After all, she met her husband on a blind date in 2001. "We got married, had two kids, lost two legs and we are still together living happily ever after." For her and the veteran caregivers at her retreats, life is still beautiful despite the bumps along the way.

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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, about family veteran programs, visit woundedwarriorproject.org.

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