

Wounded Veterans Learn Storytelling Techniques Participants Gain Perspective Through Sharing Personal Experiences

GLEN BURNIE, Md., Feb. 19, 2016 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- Injured service members are learning techniques in improvisation and storytelling to create a monologue based on their personal story. Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) has partnered with The Theatre Lab to offer WWP Alumni an opportunity to participate in the groundbreaking Life Stories program. The wounded veterans' enthusiasm during the Life Stories program transformed their two one-night workshops into a full six-week session for WWP Alumni.

This workshop event is part of the Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) Alumni program which provides support through shared experiences. For WWP, there is a distinct difference between members and Alumni; the term Alumni itself denotes your earned place in the organization. Wounded veterans who register with WWP are Alumni and there are no dues here - those were paid by serving our nation.

The WWP Alumni program is one of 20 free programs and services and offers a wide range of activities and events throughout the year. Many wounded veterans face similar challenges adjusting to their injuries and civilian life. This event offers Alumni a chance to come together through acting, storytelling, screenwriting, directing, and by learning how to create original dramatic works using their life experiences.

"I attended the workshop to be able to tell a story and listen to stories from my fellow WWP Alumni. But it turned into something way more," said WWP Alumnus and Army veteran Dave Weiner. "It became a chance for self-reflection and to acknowledge why I feel the way I do."

WWP Alumnus and Army veteran April Harris was interested in the workshop because of her storytelling experience. "This creative art platform has been instrumental in my healing process. I've learned how to embody my story while delivering it. I often say that I 'perform to heal' and it allows me to conduct an honesty check, transforming my shame and guilt into something quite beautiful," April said.

By being part of an artistic ensemble, participants increase self-esteem, raise creative potential, and have a reduced sense of isolation. The workshop improves verbal communication skills, and WWP Alumni gain emotional satisfaction from sorting through past experiences. The benefits of this process are often life-changing.

"To me these workshops are just not about diving 20 years in the past, but into memories and the emotional attachments they carry. I want to dive deeper into why I am the way I am, or why I react to certain situations the way that I do," Dave said.

According to Theatre Lab instructor Buzz Mauro, "As is true of many of our Life Stories groups, a lot of stories are told about our veterans, and we don't hear enough from the veterans themselves. Our wounded warriors, whether dealing with post-traumatic stress or physical injuries, have made sacrifices that most of us can barely imagine. So it's a real privilege to help them discover and shape the stories they most want to tell."

For April, the play making is the best part of the workshop. "Everyone always offer disclaimers that 'I'm not an actor,' then the final product amazes them," she said.

Currently, more than 100,000 wounded service members, their family members, and caregivers receive support each year through free WWP programs and services. Most recently, WWP launched Warrior Care Network™, a \$100 million investment to battle the invisible wounds of war and reach those who might otherwise go untreated. This is a first-of-its-kind partnership between WWP and four national academic medical centers of excellence including Emory Healthcare, Massachusetts General Hospital, Rush University Medical Center, and UCLA Health to connect thousands of injured warriors with world-class care.

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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