

Wounded Veterans March in Memory of Second World War Survivors

Wounded Warrior Project Alumni Participate In Annual Bataan Memorial Death March

WHITE SANDS, N.M., March 22, 2016 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- In honor of those who fell during the Bataan Death March of 1942, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) Alumni participated in the Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands Missile Range. Marchers come to this memorial event for the personal challenge, the spirit of competition, or to foster esprit de corps in their units. Others march in honor of a family member or veteran who was in the Bataan Death March, or who was taken as a prisoner of war by the Japanese in the Philippines.

"Some of the survivors from the actual march were there," said Marcus Cole, Army veteran and WWP Alumnus. "When you think of the history and try to put it into perspective - what the original death march must've been like - there are no words. It's very hard to fathom. It was an unforgettable experience."

For the past three years, WWP has marched in honor of a fallen warrior. This year WWP marched in honor of Staff Sergeant Juan De Dios Garcia-Arana, who was killed April 30, 2005, when the Bradley fighting vehicle he captained was attacked with small-arms fire in Iraq.

"The mood was somber as we heard about his life and listened to his story," Army veteran and WWP Alumnus Henry Cordero reflected. "Yet, it was very inspiring to see my fellow veterans as this living testimony about how they have overcome adversity. These previous generations of veterans have been through so much, and they're still strong. Events like this keep you going and give perspective to life."

Leading up to the event, WWP's Physical Health and Wellness program (PH&W) worked with Alumni on a three-month training program in their local communities to conquer 26.2 miles of rough terrain. The wounded veterans also received weekly tips to prepare for the race on topics ranging from proper warm-up and cool-down routines, to nutrition, hydration, and proper footwear.

"We were well-prepared and organized. WWP staff made the event excellent," said Henry. "They made sure everyone was organized and safe. During the march itself, everyone was motivating each other and very supportive. I've been to a few events like this, but never one with such a strong team spirit. They kept us inspired and moving, and I would do it again in a heartbeat."

Alumni arrived in Las Cruces on March 18, 2016, and enjoyed a healthy cookout and meet-and-greet with other participants and WWP staff. The following morning, they picked up race packets and received a tour of The Air Defense Museum located on White Sands Missile Range. Bright and early on Sunday, Alumni began the 26.2-mile march, up and down hills and against high winds.

"It was cold when we got there, but it turned out to be a pretty great day once underway," said Marcus. "It was a difficult march. You saw people taking breaks, eating lunch, and the volunteers were there to make sure everyone was okay and staying hydrated. There were quite a few kids participating with their parents - making this a family, legacy event."

"It's more mental than anything, and there's nothing you can do to prepare for it," said Henry. "I was able to push on, because I wanted it, and because there were other veterans with me, keeping me going."

Everyone meshed so well; it was like I was among family."

Like Henry, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) Alumni know that they don't have to face the transition back to civilian life alone. Through programs like Peer Support, WWP Alumni can lean on each other and find role models, motivators, supporters, and friends among their peers. The goal of the Peer Support program is for every mentored veteran to eventually mentor another. By becoming a peer mentor, injured service members who once were the warrior being carried off the battlefield have the opportunity to become the warrior who carries others, thus embodying the WWP logo. In February 2016 alone, nearly 182 wounded veterans benefited from mentorship, support, and encouragement through the Peer Support program. To learn more about Peer Support, please visit: <http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/programs/peer-support.aspx>.

Since being founded in 2003, WWP has evolved its programs and services to meet the growing needs of the constituency it serves. Through a high-touch and interactive approach, the WWP vision is to foster the most successful, well-adjusted generation of wounded service members in our nation's history.

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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