

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

Wounded Veterans Honored during Women's Final Four

True Love for the Game Moves Wounded Veteran towards Recovery

INDIANAPOLIS, April 15, 2016 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- Cheers thundered for more than the female

collegiate round-ballers during the 2016 Women's Final Four[®] tournament when the NCAA[®] invited Wounded Warrior Project[®] (WWP) Alumni and their families to be honored during the Super Saturday celebration in downtown Indianapolis. The group of wounded veterans also enjoyed the festivities surrounding the tournament and stood to be recognized for their service during the teams' practice sessions.

WWP staff hosted more than 40 wounded veterans and their guests for breakfast and discussed each of the 20 direct programs and services available to Alumni and their families, free of charge. Events like this bring injured veterans together and encourage interaction to build camaraderie. Bonding through these programs, wounded veterans learn they are not alone.

"The day started with meeting fellow warriors for breakfast and a program brief," said WWP Alumnus Nick Bennett. "By chance, it was hosted in the UConn women's team hotel, and all the excitement buzzing around the lobby helped set the tone for the day. My family and I talked with some warriors we knew and met new WWP families, which is always one of my favorite parts of WWP events."

Afterward, the group walked together towards the team's practice courts. "I brought my dad with me for the day and we watched practices while others went to see everything going on downtown," Nick said. "My dad and I waited in line to get autographs and meet the Washington Huskies women's basketball team. After watching Kelsey Plum's Elite Eight[®] postgame interview, I wanted to thank her personally for the inspiring message on faith, overcoming obstacles, and not letting anyone tell you 'no.'"

Nick appreciated being able to share this experience with his dad. "We never know from minute to minute how our lives might change, and that tragedy can strike at a moment's notice. I treasure having this time with my dad and am so thankful to WWP and the NCAA for the opportunity."

The NCAA recognized Marine Corps veteran Nick Bennett during the first game of the Final Four. As he stood in front of thousands of fans at half-court with Anucha Browne, VP of Women's Basketball Championships, he was honored with a video tribute and presented a tournament ball signed by all Final Four tournament coaches.

"I have a military room in my home; which honors my family who served, friends I lost, and my own military service honors, including my Purple Heart and award certificate," Nick said. "This ball will rest in an enclosed display case, safe and sound, in my military room."

Nick is an avid women's college basketball fan and he's dreamed for years of attending a Women's Final Four tournament. "I can now cross this off my bucket list," he said. "And being honored during the game is something I will cherish forever."

"It was humbling and an honor to represent the Alumni and staff who make Wounded Warrior Project the great organization it is," Nick said. "There are friends and family I don't talk with anymore because of my post-traumatic stress disorder. And having complete strangers cheering, clapping, and shaking my hand as I left the

court helped heal some demons I carry."

The UConn ladies accomplished the unthinkable in 2016, repeating as champions for the fourth year in a row. Nick commented, "I have a love-hate relationship with UConn - as a sports fan, I admire and respect what they accomplished, but my heart and soul will always beat for the Fighting Irish."

"My experience with WWP has been incredible and I thank the NCAA and WWP for letting me and my family be a small part of this historical Final Four event," Nick said. "I usually wear earplugs at these type of events because of the loudness, and I tend to jump when the school band starts. What was magical about this night is I never used my earplugs. For the first time at a major event, I was into the game and fully engaged with my family; not worried about anyone trying to kill me, or wondering what that noise was."

"Wounded Warrior Project empowered me to finally be the husband, son, and friend that I have longed to be for over 11 years," said Nick. "It was the greatest time of our family's life, from the pre-game event to the final buzzer."

About Wounded Warrior Project

The mission of Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) is to honor and empower Wounded Warriors. The WWP 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.

Video - http://origin-gps.onstreammedia.com/origin/multivu_archive/PRNA/ENR/NickBennettNCAA.mp4

Photo - <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20160414/355439>

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<https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/2016-04-15-Wounded-Veterans-Honored-during-Womens-Final-Four>