

Wounded Veterans Ride the Rapids at the Hudson River Gorge

LAKE LUZERNE-HADLEY, N.Y., April 29, 2016 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- Rushing water and spray greeted a group of injured service members and their families as they braved the rapids of the Hudson River Gorge.

Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) hosted the event as part of its Alumni program, which brings wounded veterans together to bond through camaraderie at welcoming events, free of charge. The demand for teamwork and communication on the journey down river gave participants the perfect opportunity to deepen their bonds and build trust.

"A group of strangers came together to get through a difficult task," said Richard Torres, Air Force veteran, and WWP Alumnus. "Reminds me of when I first was in the military. We had a great group in the boat, and everyone was extremely supportive. Thankfully, no one from our boat ended up in the water."

After being fitted for wetsuits, the group received a safety brief before setting out on five rafts for the four-mile journey. Richard, who last went whitewater rafting as a kid, said he brought his son along to share the excitement he experienced 28 years ago. He held back from his son the one special detail that comes with riding in the front of the raft.

"Those who sit at the front of the boat usually get the worst of it," Richard joked. "My son got soaked within minutes of starting, and it was a cold one that day. We had so much adrenaline pumping through us in those rapids, though; I don't think any of us felt the cold until we stopped for lunch! Even when we stopped, everyone was laughing and smiling from the thrilling experience."

Many wounded service members face similar challenges adjusting to their injuries and civilian life. The WWP Alumni program creates support through shared experiences: by bonding through events and programs, wounded veterans learn they are not alone. The WWP Alumni program is one of 20 direct programs and services offered free of charge to wounded service members, their caregivers, and families.

After the rafts had landed, Richard and his son returned to the bus, a bit chilled and wet, but ultimately happy.

"We were laughing and joking about the trip, mainly at my son's expense, since he got the worst of the water sitting at the front," said Richard. "I was just glad to spend the day with a great group of people, and with my son. WWP events keep me away from the dark side of life. After activities, I feel so accomplished -- even if I am sore, it is a good pain. Sometimes you need to challenge and push yourself, just like anything else in life. I am motivated to push myself at events like this."

WWP understands that nature can speak to everyone in different ways, whether through relaxation or exhilaration. That's why WWP offers Project Odyssey®, which helps injured service members enjoy outdoor and recreational activities, find their inner strength, and have the courage to continue their journey towards recovery. With its name derived from Homer's epic poem about overcoming adversity and finding the way home, Project Odyssey helps wounded veterans overcome combat stress through outdoor, rehabilitative retreats that encourage a connection with nature, their peers, staff, and trained counselors. Activities include horseback riding, canoeing, whitewater rafting, kayaking, rock climbing, a high ropes course, fishing, skeet shooting, sled hockey, and skiing at retreats held in various locations across the country.

In March 2016, 215 WWP Alumni used the great outdoors to begin their road to healing through Project Odyssey. To find out more about WWP's programs and services, please visit <https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/programs>.

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.

Photo - <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20160429/361673>

Logo - <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20160405/351619LOGO>

SOURCE Wounded Warrior Project

For further information: Mattison Brooks, Email: mbrooks@woundedwarriorproject.org, Phone: 904-451-5590

Additional assets available online: [Photos \(2\)](#)

<https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/2016-04-29-Wounded-Veterans-Ride-the-Rapids-at-the-Hudson-River-Gorge>