

Wounded Veterans Experience Training at "The Rock"

NEW YORK, May 19, 2016 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- An 18-week training program for the New York Fire Department's (FDNY) probationary firefighters was cut into five heart-pounding simulated teaching scenarios for wounded military veterans and their guests at the Fire Academy on Randalls Island, also known as "The Rock." The event was a joint effort between the FDNY and Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) to honor and empower Wounded Warriors.

"I've always had an interest in the fire department," said U.S. Army wounded veteran and WWP Alumnus Ethan Newago. His eight-year military career, which included two combat deployments between 2009 and 2012 to Iraq and Afghanistan, is a reflection of his call to service – a common bond between military and firefighting veterans. "I never knew the FDNY trained for situations like subway disasters and home-made explosives."

WWP participated in the venture as part of its Alumni program, which provides activities that are not only fun and educational, but also therapeutic by helping reintroduce injured veterans and their families to the crucial social bonds they experience during military service – relationships rarely duplicated in the civilian world.

"I look for any excuse to see other WWP Alumni," said Ethan, highlighting the important role peer support plays in his recovery process. WWP's Peer Support program was created with the goal of every wounded veteran and family support member supporting his or her fellow group members in recovery. As the concept grows in popularity, more WWP Peer Support Groups are formed across the nation. In 2016, more than 230 injured veterans attended at least one of these meetings in their communities.

<https://goo.gl/balcGO>

At program activities, WWP staff are able to closely interact with attendees and advise them of additional services that can assist their recovery, providing Alumni with more personalized therapeutic outlets. Thanks to generous donors, Ethan has been able to participate in multiple recovery-based activities that help wounded veterans transition to life after injury.

"WWP helped me get my open-water scuba diving certification from PADI [Professional Association of Diving Instructors]," said Ethan. "I spent a weekend in upstate New York learning everything about diving, from safety to fun." As his participation grows with each event, Ethan is able to repurpose his military discipline into a personal remedy – one that includes pride, optimism, and excitement with each barrier overcome and achievement earned.

At the Fire Academy, Ethan shifted his focus from fighting the realities of his recovery to fighting simulated vehicle and building fires. It was a much needed break from daily stressors and precious time spent with peers, experiencing the service of New York's firefighters. "The Rock was amazing," said Ethan. "I have a new respect for the FDNY." Ethan is one of more than 100,000 injured veterans who benefit from life-changing programs that focus on helping our nation's heroes achieve the life they earned and deserve.

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.

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