

Veterans, Guests Explore Artistic Sides with Wounded Warrior Project

OCALA, Fla., Sept. 9, 2016 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- White canvases transformed into moonlit skies filled with stars and fireflies during a recent Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) program event. In Ocala, Florida, painting instructors exposed injured veterans and guests to the world of amateur painting as the social gathering helped get them engaged with their service brothers and sisters.

As participants arrived, they were fitted with painters' smocks and seated at their easels. After a few icebreaking art exercises, the painting instructor explained that the warriors would create their masterpieces in tandem with their partners, with two canvases becoming one whole image when put together.

Fun activities like this support the long-term recovery needs of warriors with a special type of therapy: reintroducing injured veterans and their families to the unique bonds experienced during military service. Rarely duplicated in the civilian world, these relationships act as a secure bedrock that paves the road to recovery.

"The group interaction is always the best part," said veteran Steven Kelley. "It's nice to try something new and creative, especially in a group setting where everyone has had similar experiences. I think it's great social networking."

Wounded warriors also got a chance to spend quality time with the guests they brought to the outing. Marine veteran Bohanan Benton chose to spend the evening bonding with his daughter for her 17th birthday. His wife, Navy veteran Rebecca, said it was a great opportunity for a teenaged daughter of two wounded warriors.

"We both served, so we have missed out on opportunities to bond with our children due to deployments and field operations during their younger years," Rebecca said. "Now we are trying to connect with our children as teenagers – in ways that are also comfortable to accommodate our injuries and social anxieties."

Rebecca said her husband chose to bring their middle child because he had struggled to bond with her over the years. The relaxed and social atmosphere helped the pair to break down walls and build up new memories.

"Not only did they get to do an activity that was engaging and that they can remember together forever, but my husband was able to do it in an environment with other warriors where he could continue to build his social support system," she said. "It was a win-win all around. My daughter felt special, my husband felt important, and I felt happiness."

WWP staff closely interacted with the painters, advising them of additional services to assist their recovery. Like WWP outreach gatherings, these program resources are available through the generosity of donors. Their support ensures all WWP programs and services continue to be offered to wounded warriors free of charge.

"WWP has been amazing through our transition process, engaging with us and making us feel accepted and normal," Rebecca said. "It has been my family's rock for the past year, and we couldn't be more thankful."

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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