

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

Veterans Tour Lambeau Field with Wounded Warrior Project

GREEN BAY, Wis., Sept. 22, 2016 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- Go Pack Go! Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) recently hosted a group of injured veterans – and diehard football fans – for an afternoon of living sports history at Green Bay's famous Lambeau Field, home of the Green Bay Packers.

"I was so excited when I learned about this opportunity," said Marine veteran Gregory Kolaske. "I was born in Wisconsin, and I bleed green and gold. This stadium is as legendary as the team that plays there."

Tour guides led the group through the stadium while sharing the history of both the venue and the team that has played on its field. Wounded warriors toured one of the stadium's largest VIP suites and marveled at the view of the field below. Downstairs, participants were given the ultimate fan experience as they walked through the players' tunnel onto the field as game day fanfare blared through the speakers.

WWP program activities are designed to support the long-term recovery needs of injured warriors by reintroducing them to the unique bonds experienced during military service. Shared experiences help address a major issue wounded veterans deal with upon their return to civilian life: isolation and a lack of fellowship with their military comrades.

It was this desire for camaraderie that motivated Air Force veteran Carla Stephany to take part.

"I just moved, so I've been having a hard time," she said. "I really missed my veteran brothers and sisters, and I knew I needed to get out and meet new people. I liked everything about the event, especially being on the field yelling 'Go Pack, Go!'"

"When I'm around other wounded veterans, it's a reminder I'm not alone," said Army National Guard veteran Jacob Heytens. "I still struggle with emotions and with asking for help. When I'm around other warriors, it's almost like a release."

One such opportunity to reduce isolation is the WWP Peer Support program. Peer support plays an important role in the recovery process as wounded warriors rely upon each other's learned experiences when managing day-to-day challenges. All WWP programs and services have an aspect of this support structure, while the Peer Support program is solely dedicated to ensuring every injured veteran, family member, and caregiver encourages one another in recovery, thus embodying the WWP logo of one warrior carrying another off the battlefield.

"My grandfather was a huge Packers fan, and we watched the games together every Sunday up until he passed away in 2014," Jacob recalled. "When I was home on leave from Iraq in 2011, I took my grandpa there for a game. That was the last time he made it to Lambeau, and I hadn't been back since. I was hesitant to go, but my fiancée encouraged me."

Activities that include socializing with other veterans can help injured warriors cope with stress and depression. In a WWP survey of the wounded veterans it serves, nearly 47 percent say talking with other warriors boosts their ability to manage their mental health.

Jacob – whose tour of Lambeau Field was his first-ever WWP outing – said he was hard-pressed to choose which part of the day he liked best.

"It's probably a tie between being in the players' tunnel and seeing the seats I sat in with my grandfather," he said. "Being down by the field was great, and meeting other warriors made the trip a million times more enjoyable. Ever since I've returned home, I feel awkward around people – but around other injured veterans I feel a lot better and not so out of place."

WWP staff members closely interacted with attendees during the event, advising them of additional services to assist in their recovery. Generous donors make it possible for wounded veterans to benefit from outreach activities and program resources at no cost to them.

While the experience held different meanings for each participant, there was one aspect of the outing they all wish could have gone differently.

"We were given a no-go on doing the Lambeau Leap by the tour guides," Gregory said.

The Lambeau Leap is a tradition among some Packers players, in which they jump into the end zone stands after scoring a touchdown.

"I totally wanted to do one, but I don't think anybody got the chance," Carla said. "I mean, how could you not want to?"

"They specifically told us not to do it," Jacob said. "Had I been on my own I might have tried it – but I couldn't make my group look bad."

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.

Photo - <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20160921/410410>

Photo - <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20160921/410411>

SOURCE Wounded Warrior Project

For further information: Mattison Brooks - Public Relations Specialist, Email: mbrooks@woundedwarriorproject.org, Phone: 904-646-6897

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

<https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/2016-09-22-Veterans-Tour-Lambeau-Field-with-Wounded-Warrior-Project>