

Wounded Warrior Project Connects Veteran Families at Keystone State Park

DERRY, Pa., Oct. 3, 2016 [/PRNewswire-USNewswire/](#) -- As the sun sets on the summer season, lovers of the outdoors are flocking to state parks and other areas to enjoy natural landscapes before cooler temperatures set in. Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) recently gave injured veterans and their families an opportunity to enjoy a day on the water at Keystone State Park.

Kayaks, paddleboards, and paddle boats were provided through a partnership with Heroes on the Water, which helps the nation's wounded warriors unwind by enjoying outdoor activities. Participants enjoyed connecting with each other while swimming, fishing, and playing various beach games along the shore.

In a WWP survey of the injured warriors it serves, nearly 47 percent say talking with other warriors boosts their ability to manage their mental health, and 32 percent expressed physical activity helps them cope with stress and depression. WWP program gatherings like this are designed to help wounded veterans manage and improve their mental health through physical activity and socializing with fellow warriors.

"Time on the lake and fishing is very relaxing," said Army Reserve veteran Simone Washington. "It helps me deal with my anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. Getting out of the house and active with WWP allows me to try new things and build more confidence in my abilities."

Simone was so carefree in the serene environment that she managed to catch the largest fish that day. She said she felt lucky, since there were more experienced fishermen there.

"I normally don't catch anything – or only small fish – but never a bass that large. It made me feel like I accomplished something, and I felt pure joy. I am so grateful to WWP for hosting this outing."

Bonding with other wounded veterans was another important aspect of the program event. Isolation is one of the most significant struggles wounded warriors deal with after serving their country. It can be difficult knowing how to overcome that challenge and rekindle bonds similar to those formed in the military.

WWP programs offer settings that provide opportunities for warriors to recreate those bonds, and are personalized to encourage warriors, caregivers, and family members to reach educational and employment goals, while supporting mental, emotional, and physical recovery.

"After 28 years serving, it's hard to find people in the civilian world who understand what I am dealing with," Simone said. "I look forward to these program events because they bring together veterans from different eras, and we all have one connection – military duty and the hardships of deployments and their repercussions."

There is even the opportunity to start new life-long friendships and connections between families.

"My wife and I met a family from West Virginia, and their daughter bonded with our girls instantly," said Matt Inscho, a retired Army veteran. "It was refreshing to meet another family with the same types of issues as us and be able to connect so quickly."

It was Matt's first time attending a program gathering with WWP, and he said his whole family really enjoyed it. "Events like this are what I signed up for," he said. "I can't wait for the next one."

"I started talking to fellow wounded warrior Matt and his family, and I realized we had similar interests and our wives had a lot in common, too," said retired Army veteran PJ Winstead. "Our daughter watched their little one so Matt, his wife, son, and oldest daughter could go out and kayak and enjoy themselves."

PJ explained it brings so much joy to his heart to see his family with smiles on their faces, having a good time with other families.

"I know my family and I are always safe with our military brothers and sisters," he said. "Times are hard and money is tight, but I'm glad WWP hosts functions for us that don't cost us anything. I'm able to forget my worries and see my family having fun."

Thanks to generous donors, WWP programs are offered free of charge for a lifetime, and they are designed to ease the burdens on warriors, their caregivers, and families, by aiding in the recovery process and smoothing the transition into civilian life.

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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