

# Wounded Warrior Project Helps Couples Heal During Rehabilitative Mental Health Journey

ASHEVILLE, N.C., Dec. 5, 2016 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- When an injured service member returns from deployment, the adjustment period can be difficult. As a veteran acclimates to the new normal of life outside a war zone – and the challenges of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and physical injuries – personal relationships are often tested. This is especially true of the relationships between warriors and their spouses.

To help a group of these military couples receive a new healing perspective, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) recently hosted [Project Odyssey®](#), a multi-day mental health workshop. The rehabilitative and therapeutic adventure – designed to help warriors cope with their invisible wounds – gave the couples a chance to connect with nature, each other, and WWP staff members, who informed them of various free programs and services to assist in their recovery processes. Through the generosity of donors, these programs and resources are offered to injured veterans and their families free of charge.

Nine couples arrived in Asheville, North Carolina, for the program. There they tackled a variety of challenging indoor and outdoor activities like zip lining and classes on painting and pottery. By working through different obstacles in settings designed to accommodate physical injuries and social anxieties, injured veterans and their significant others developed tools to assist with communication and teamwork. They were able to hone these skills alongside fellow veteran couples with similar backgrounds.

"Zip lining was a great experience for me and my wounded warrior because it challenged us to face our fears, took us out of our comfort zones, and helped us motivate each other to get through it," said Angel Brown, whose husband served in the Army. "Before this experience, communication and motivation had been lacking from both of us, so it was definitely beneficial."

While Angel and her husband participated in other WWP events in the past, she said they were particularly interested in this workshop, which seemed to be designed to assist with the exact issues they were facing.

"We wanted to get involved because it focused on couples who are battling with PTSD and TBI," she said. "Since my warrior has both, I felt it would benefit us to have the chance to speak and listen to other couples that we can relate to."

One of the couples they met at the workshop were Marine veteran Stephen Mundell and his wife, Callie. According to Stephen, the trip was part of his journey to improve his relationship with his wife and their family.

"We had a bunch of great experiences there," he said. "The most beneficial was learning to talk face-to-face with my wife – and to actually listen to what she was saying. It helped us to get out of our comfort zones and reminded us that your spouse is always there to support you – that you're not alone."

Exposure to combat and operational trauma affects service members and their families spiritually, psychologically, biologically, and socially. Although challenging, WWP's rehabilitative multi-day mental

health workshops provide safe, private environments for couples to express themselves. This opportunity to connect with one another reduces isolation and helps the healing process.

Outdoor activities and socializing can help injured warriors cope with stress and emotional concerns. In a [WWP survey](#) of the injured warriors it serves, more than half of survey respondents (51.7 percent) talked with fellow Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation New Dawn veterans to address their mental health issues, and 29.6 percent expressed physical activity helps.

While Angel and her husband sought assistance at the workshop for their issues as a couple, she said the experience was greatly beneficial to her as an individual as well.

"I came to the gathering extremely depressed and unmotivated," she said. "Having the chance to see that I wasn't alone in my darkness helped me overcome my own battle. It healed me enough to open my eyes and see how much it had been affecting our relationship."

Angel said she hopes other wounded warrior couples who are going through similar experiences might consider reaching out to WWP.

"Things like this help educate us and give us a better understanding about life as wounded warrior families," she said. "Also, it shows us we are not alone and will not be forgotten."

To learn more about how WWP's programs and services are making an impact on the lives of wounded warriors, visit <http://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/>. To find photos from this event, click on multimedia, then images, then the mental health section.

### **About Wounded Warrior Project We Connect, Serve, and Empower**


The mission of Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) is to honor and empower Wounded Warriors. WWP connects wounded warriors and their families to valuable resources and one another, serves them through a variety of free programs and services, and empowers them to live life on their own terms. WWP is a national, nonpartisan organization headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida. To get involved and learn more, visit [woundedwarriorproject.org](http://woundedwarriorproject.org).

Photo - <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20161205/445474>

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