

Wounded Warrior Thankful For Support Services

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., Dec. 5, 2016 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- For Marine Corps wounded warrior Jesse Bergeron, there is plenty to be thankful for this holiday season. Jesse was in his early 20s when he left for his second deployment. Like many veterans before his time, Jesse wanted to wear a military uniform since he was very young. He also knew the life of a warrior can often require the ultimate sacrifice.

"There's no way to describe what it sounds like and what it feels like," he said, recalling the improvised explosive device attack that claimed the life of his corpsman, Doc Kent, during a routine reconnaissance mission in Fallujah, Iraq in 2005.

It's not something Jesse likes to talk about. Trying to save a life – but losing. Having to put on a brave face while trying to find the words to tell the rest of the team they lost that fight. It's harder still to push ahead so quickly to face the next battle.

"And then you move on, even though you don't want to," Jesse said. "The job requires it. You can't grieve or decompress. There's another mission, another fight to fight, another life to save."

Only this time – two weeks after losing his friend – Jesse learned the next life he would be fighting to save would be that of his prematurely born son, who contracted necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC). Jesse was ordered to return and remain stateside to be with his family.

While he struggled internally with whether his family at home or military family should come first, the choice wasn't his to make. Jesse was stripped from active combat, became a Marine Corps recruiter, and was forced to deal with the reality of losing his son to NEC.

The isolation set in as his untreated post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) began to choke his life.

"Before I got involved with Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP), I was angry all the time. I was just spinning my wheels, not ever wanting to do anything with anyone. This organization helped change that attitude in me, and I credit the warrior-to-warrior support model for being a big part of that change."

The warrior support that plays a critical role on the battlefield has the same function in recovery at home. When warriors stumble, fall, or become injured, it's the warrior marching next to them who will pick them up and carry them on their shoulder. Jesse is thankful that WWP programs offer settings that accommodate injuries and social anxieties and provide opportunities for warriors to rekindle bonds similar to those formed in the military.

"When I help another warrior, that warrior is helping me," Jesse said. "It's a huge honor to walk with them in their walks, struggle with them in their struggles, to have their backs." That's why Jesse encourages every wounded warrior to get involved with WWP.

"They gave me a break I didn't know I needed. For the first time since I returned from Iraq, I was afforded the opportunity to take a hard look at myself and put myself first, while also meeting others warriors like me who are coping with their own recoveries. That's only one small thing – and that one small thing changed my life."

Jesse joins ranks with other veterans this holiday season to give thanks to the generous donors who support

WWP as it connects warriors to each other and their communities, serves them with free programs and resources to aid their healing, and empowers them to embody the WWP logo by carrying one another along a path toward recovery.

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.

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