

Warriors Get Their Motors Running with Wounded Warrior Project and Harley-Davidson

KANSAS CITY, Kan., Dec. 7, 2016 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- For many warriors, the experiences they had in the military were some of the best of their lives – filled with fellowship, meaning, and direction. To help wounded veterans connect with others who have similar military backgrounds, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) hosted a motorcycle riding event in the Kansas City area.

One of the participants, Army veteran Ismael Alvarez, had attended WWP gatherings before – but nothing quite like this. A warrior he met at an event hosted by another veterans service organization pointed him toward WWP and its unique approach to empowering warriors to live life on their own terms.

"A motorcycle ride for wounded veterans, as a way to help me, wasn't something I expected to see," Ismael explained. "Right from the start, the staff was helpful and eager to make us feel right at home. That feeling was true at the first event I went to, and it was true at this event."

After a quick safety briefing at the dealership, the warriors hit the road. The ride took participants and WWP staff from Worth Harley-Davidson® in North Kansas City to Loess Hills Harley-Davidson in Pacific Junction, Iowa. On the way, the fledgling motorcycle gang stopped to pick up a few other warriors in Rock Port, Missouri. In Loess Hills, there was a poker run to benefit breast cancer awareness, where the riders got to listen to live music, talk about bikes, and learn more about the WWP programs.

Ismael was already familiar with [Project Odyssey®](#), a WWP mental health program that takes warriors on a challenging and restorative multi-day adventure in the wilderness where they can heal their bodies and minds. This rehabilitative mental health workshop provides a safe, private environment for warriors to express themselves and discuss their combat action. By the end, injured veterans share lessons learned from the activities that impacted their personal struggles most and set achievable goals for their recoveries.

"I'm looking into trying a couples Project Odyssey so my wife can benefit from the same experiences I had, and we can heal together," Ismael said. "That gathering was big for me, but day-to-day, I've found another way to help myself. As soon as I learned to walk again after my combat injuries, I took a motorcycle course. I have loved riding ever since. It is an amazing way to relax – and just feel at peace again. It's just me, the wind, and the feeling of complete bliss."

When the ride was over, Ismael and others exchanged numbers to stay in touch and have riding buddies for future adventures on the road. Reflecting on the day, Ismael mentioned the ride was long, but that was not the part of the day that challenged him most.

"Sometimes, just leaving the house is a journey in and of itself," Ismael said. "It's hard getting out there, meeting everyone, accepting I wasn't going to know people other than the staff. But the relaxed atmosphere and the other riders made me feel at ease. It's showed me we are all nervous at first. I would tell other warriors not to put it off. Don't stay home and isolate yourself; there are good people at these events. Going to these gatherings helped me, and they can help you too."

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.


**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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