

Wounded Warrior Project Looks Ahead to 2017



JACKSONVILLE, Fla., Dec. 28, 2016 [/PRNewswire-USNewswire/](#) -- As we near 2017, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) prepares to surpass 100,000 registered warriors – men and women who sacrificed for our country, and who now need our support. Wounded Warrior Project's mission is to honor and empower our nation's wounded warriors, families, and caregivers, and we accomplish it through a connect, serve, and empower model of program delivery.

In 2016, WWP refocused its efforts on connecting warriors with their peers and communities while delivering life-saving programs and services to injured veterans, their caregivers, and families. The veterans' charity served nearly 95,000 warriors and nearly 21,000 family members – providing mental and physical health and wellness services, career and benefits counseling, and critical support for the most severely injured. WWP empowers warriors to live life on their terms and mentor other veterans to do the same.

"When warriors first come to us, they often need the support of those around them," said WWP CEO Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington. "In time, they become the warrior carrying other veterans who are working toward recovery, just as the WWP logo symbolizes."

Linnington joined [WWP as CEO](#) in July to spearhead a reshaping of the organization and increasing focus on programs and services that warriors benefit the most from, especially those focused on mental health care.

Successes in the 2016 fiscal year include:

- More than 66,000 warriors and family members served through [connection events](#)
- More than 1,600 warriors connected with peers and their communities through [Soldier Ride®](#)
- Nearly 17,000 warriors and family members served through [physical health and wellness](#) events
- WWP delivered nearly 1,300 backpacks and transition care packs to warriors
- More than 55,000 served through phone calls and emails to WWP's [Resource Center](#)
- WWP helped empower warriors with \$80 million secured in [benefits](#) assets – benefits they earned
- WWP welcomed [four new board members](#)

WWP surveyed warriors who participated in events, and more than 94 percent said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the events they attended. Through sports outings, craft-making gatherings, educational sessions, volunteer opportunities, and community service events, WWP introduces warriors to their peers, their communities, and additional WWP programs and services from which they benefit. These events provide safe, enjoyable forums for warriors to bond with one another – in settings that accommodate physical

injuries and social anxieties. Many post-9/11 veterans are isolated and reluctant to seek help, as it can be difficult knowing how to overcome that challenge and rekindle bonds similar to those formed in the military. All of WWP's engagement events encourage warriors to get out of the house and are essential for WWP to familiarize itself with warriors' critical needs, including financial assistance or substance abuse. If not properly addressed, seclusion can lead to more serious consequences including self-medicating through drugs and alcohol, obesity, deterioration of relationships, and even suicide.

More than 2,600 warriors and family members took part in WWP's multi-day outdoor mental health workshops ([Project Odyssey[®]](#)) in 2016. These gatherings provide valuable coping mechanisms to manage combat stress and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They also lead to important follow-up care that can keep warriors on the right path – and even identify other methods for recovery. A survey of program attendees found more than 97 percent would seek out or continue mental health support following their experience.

One option is [Warrior Care Network[®]](#), which launched in 2016. In the innovative approach to mental health care, WWP partners with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and four top academic medical centers (Emory Healthcare Veterans Program in Atlanta; Rush University Medical Center's Road Home in Chicago; UCLA Health's Operation Mend in Los Angeles; and Home Base, a Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital Program in Boston and South Florida). Warriors enroll in an intense two-to-three-week outpatient program designed to provide new treatment and coping skills for PTSD. In 2017, Warrior Care Network will serve more than 1,000 patients.

[Warriors to Work[®]](#) helped more than 2,800 veterans and their families find meaningful employment in 2016, empowering them with \$95 million in economic impact.

More than 1,000 individuals are enrolled and active in WWP's [Independence Program](#) (602 warriors and 488 caregivers). The program serves veterans who rely on their family or caregiver for in-home care, because of a moderate to severe brain injury, spinal cord injury, or other neurological condition. Many of these men and women face the risk of institutionalization if not for the care of their loved ones.

WWP's [Policy and Government Affairs](#) is focused on improving the quality of life for all wounded veterans. In 2016, WWP and a coalition of partners helped convince Congress to approve reproductive services for veterans who lost the ability to naturally conceive because of service-connected injuries. In 2017, WWP will work with VA to ensure this law is implemented swiftly and properly. WWP will also work to address the

fact that the most seriously injured warriors are often unfairly forced to pay more than other military retirees for their health insurance. Currently, warriors who are so seriously injured they cannot work are often forced to pay nearly 400 percent more in premiums each year. These families – often on a fixed income – are the least equipped to handle the higher prices.

To learn more about WWP programs, read warrior stories, and see photos and videos, visit newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org.

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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