

Going the Distance with Wounded Warrior Project  
**Veterans Share Highlights from 2016 Soldier Rides**

**Still Rollin': Soldier Ride® continues to honor and empower Wounded Warriors coast to coast.  
Watch as veterans share why the ride is meaningful.**

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., Dec. 30, 2016 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- In 2016, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) Soldier Ride® journeyed coast to coast with bicycles and equipment to serve warriors in 22 cities. Over 1,600 wounded warriors and family members pedaled over 1,300 miles, experiencing everything Soldier Ride offers.

For some, attending this event was the first time they ventured out of their homes to connect with fellow veterans and the community. For others, it was the next step in an ongoing journey toward recovery by getting physically active again. Soldier Ride accommodates physical injuries and social anxieties by giving all participants custom-fitted bikes and adaptive equipment to make the ride as comfortable as possible.

Every city that hosted Soldier Ride had its own unique stops, supporters, and landmark events. Equally, every warrior made his or her own memories from days spent riding bicycles alongside fellow wounded service members. There were chances for reflection when Soldier Ride staff hung up the bikes, helmets, and equipment after the rides. Like many wounded warriors who participated in Soldier Ride before them, more than a few discovered it wasn't just an ordinary cycling event. Some realized this during the rides, and others, long after it ended. Over the course of the year, several wounded warriors shared what Soldier Ride means to them:

*Eric Franklin, U.S. Army veteran:* "Being able to exercise is a big stress reliever for me and other wounded warriors. It's exciting to be out of the military and still have that same camaraderie we had while serving. It gave me a chance to be around those who have the same background and experiences as me and face some of the challenges we endure – together."

*Durrant Spencer, U.S. Navy veteran:* "I've seen Wounded Warrior Project change lives, and I've seen how it has improved my marriage. I see what it does. I see the changes it makes – it has done it in my life, it's done it in my friends' lives, and it can do it in the next warrior's life. This ride meant the world to me, and it's something I won't ever forget."

*Richard Diaz, U.S. Army veteran:* "Before I came out here for Soldier Ride, I got some news about my health that was a bit scary. Honestly, I wasn't sure I was going to come out. But I'm glad I changed my mind and went ahead with it because this has been one of the most challenging, impactful things I've ever done. It's changing my life."

*David Reid, U.S. Army veteran:* "I came out here not knowing what to expect from Soldier Ride. I've always taken my physical health seriously, so I looked forward to an event that was going to challenge me. I didn't expect to meet an amazing group of guys, whom I've enjoyed staying in touch with since the ride ended. I'm grateful Wounded Warrior Project gave me that opportunity."

*Frank Poupart, U.S. Army veteran:* "To those who support Wounded Warrior Project and allow me and my brothers and sisters to participate in programs like Soldier Ride – from the bottom of my heart – thank you very much. It has helped me cope with my combat stress and given me a new lease on life."

"As we look ahead to 2017 when Soldier Ride returns to America's roads and cities, I have great hope for our warriors and the nation they served and sacrificed for," said WWP CEO Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington. "Our staff works hard to ensure our warriors are empowered to live life on their own terms, mentor fellow veterans and service members, and embody the Wounded Warrior Project logo by carrying one another along a path toward recovery. That spirit of support is in our communities, too. We witness it every time we see families, civil servants, and businesses lining the streets to cheer on these warriors as they ride. The riders, proud and resilient, give hope to those around them. I'm so proud of each of our warriors for their accomplishments in 2016, and I am eager to see what they will accomplish next year."

## **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).

SOURCE Wounded Warrior Project

For further information: Mattison Brooks - Public Relations Specialist, Email: [mbrooks@woundedwarriorproject.org](mailto:mbrooks@woundedwarriorproject.org), Phone: 904.451.5590

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