

On the Trail to a New Life: Chad Prichard Finds Peace, Stability Through Wounded Warrior Project
DENVER, Jan. 6, 2017 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- Chad Prichard's journey to a new life was not easy every step of the way, but he never lost the will to fight. He credits Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) for giving him the tools needed to stay the course and empowering him to overcome any barriers he encountered.

Chad began his Army career in 1995 as a reserve soldier with the 179th Transportation Company out of Belton, Missouri. When 9/11 rocked the nation, his unit was called to prepare for deployment. He deployed to Iraq in 2002 – not as a heavy vehicle operator, but as a trained civil affairs specialist with the 418th Civil Affairs Battalion.

Within a week after coming home, he found himself separated from his wife, facing bankruptcy, and angry. Not knowing where to turn, he dealt with his issues on his own.

"I went on a long stint of self-medication with drugs and alcohol," he said. "I was doing anything I could to deal with the traumas of war. Long story short, I did that for about eight years, and it got really, really bad."

Chad's physical and mental health began to diminish. At his lowest point, he was diagnosed with chemically induced schizophrenia. His connections with the people around him declined along with his health.

"I was doing it all wrong," he said. "I was losing relationships; I couldn't keep a job or maintain friendships – just the whole nine yards."

At the end of 2012, Chad finally realized nothing would change for the better if he continued down his dark path. He began reaching out to every veterans service organization he could think of. Through Team Red, White & Blue, he rediscovered the joys of physical fitness and found a new love for long-distance trail running. Still, he felt there was a piece missing from the puzzle.

"You can't go out and run and not understand how to deal with the mental problems you have," he said. "You have to be able to handle both the physical and mental challenges."

When Chad reached out to WWP, he found himself most interested in the multi-day rehabilitative mental health workshops. After learning about the opportunity, Chad said he felt he was at a point in his recovery where he would significantly benefit from what the experience had to offer.

"I was willing to do whatever it took to find that peace and not ruin any more relationships," he said. "I was at a breaking point in my life, and I was open-minded to the chance to heal."

When he arrived, he found himself face-to-face with 12 warriors, all looking for that same peace of mind. Through communication – and through team-building outdoor activities like high ropes courses, kayaking, and white-water rafting – each participant was pushed to come out of his comfort zone.

"The cool part about the mental health workshop was how it gave us so many different tools," Chad said. "We were taught to use teamwork: to tackle challenges using a group of skill sets instead of just your own. It really helped me focus on my issues."

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.

"The friends I made while I was there are amazing," Chad said. "It's good to know we're not alone in this fight. That in itself is another tool."

Since the workshop, Chad said life has been good.

"Financially, I'm better off than I ever have been," he said. "I'm still working with Wounded Warrior Project, and they're helping me with my budget and my finances. I have a stable home, my bills are all paid, and I am paying my child support – all things that used to be problems."

Chad still works hard to employ the tools given to him at the WWP workshop – and he said the organization continues to make sure he does.

"The Wounded Warrior Project staff are constantly following up and checking to see that I'm OK and still doing well," he said. "It's good to know they don't just give us all these tools and then that's it. They actually care about our progression and want to know if there is anything else they can do to help that transition."

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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