

## Warrior Couple Finds New Way of Life Together



ORLANDO, Fla., Jan. 10, 2017 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- Rebecca Benton's first Naval duty station was at Camp Pendleton, California, where she served in the medical field as a Fleet Marine Force (FMF) Corpsman after enduring the same training program as her U.S. Marine counterparts, which allows Navy sailors to work in partnership with Marines. "I knew that was where I belonged," Rebecca said. "I served 11 years with the Marines – a brotherhood like no other."

During that time, Rebecca married an infantry Marine, and they soon added three children to their family. The responsibilities weighing on dual-service couples can be intimidating. The two began shuffling field duty schedules and deployments – and missing birthdays, anniversaries, and other family celebrations.

"When 9/11 came, they wanted to send both of us overseas," Rebecca explained. "Trying to explain to your 5-year-old child why dad was gone for so long, whether or not he was coming home, and then – to top that off – explaining why you were leaving them too ... that was tough."

It was a difficult time, but not as challenging as what was to come when they hung up their boots and transitioned into the civilian world together.

"Trying to work on my anxieties, deal with my husband's post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury, and manage my family can become overwhelming at times," Rebecca said. "Depression set in, and I began to question my purpose in life, my role as a wife and mother, and began to lose my sense of identity."

Rebecca also came face-to-face with a very real issue veterans encounter when separating from the military. No longer an active-duty FMF corpsman, Rebecca was stuck with limited resources in a desolate part of Oklahoma that is a two-hour drive from the nearest Veterans Administration hospital. And even with a master's degree, Rebecca struggled to find adequate employment in the civilian world.

In June 2015, Rebecca and her family moved from Oklahoma to Orlando, Florida. The family was determined to take control of the recovery process and transition to a new normal in the civilian world.

"Nine years after my military service, I turned to Wounded Warrior Project® for help finding employment through the [Warriors to Work®](#) program. They helped me rebuild my resume, and in two months, I landed an amazing job. I immediately applied for my first family activity with the organization."

Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) family- and warrior-focused events like the one Rebecca and her family participated in are part of connection opportunities, which create support through shared experiences and build camaraderie by connecting injured veterans to one another and warrior families. Many wounded service members face similar challenges adjusting to their injuries and civilian life. By bonding through WWP gatherings, veterans learn they are not alone and have the chance to grow closer to those around them. These opportunities also provide warriors a chance to learn about other free, life-saving programs and services that

aid in the recovery process.

Rebecca's and her husband's momentum with WWP continued to grow. The couple found out about WWP's [multi-day mental health workshops](#) for individual warriors and couples and knew they wanted to get involved. These gatherings provide safe, private environments for warriors to express themselves and share their combat experiences – with laughter and tears. At the end of the rehabilitative workshops, warriors share lessons learned from the activities that impacted their personal struggles most and set achievable goals for their recoveries.

"The mental health workshop for couples gave us an opportunity to build our support network with other couples that have experienced the same things my husband and I had been through. Little did we know, it would be life-changing. As dual-service warriors, it has been especially difficult in many ways to build bonds at home with each other and continue to acclimate to civilian ways of life."

The workshop incorporates the WWP [Peer Support](#) program. Warrior-to-warrior support plays an important role in the recovery process for veterans dealing with the invisible wounds of war as they rely upon one another's learned experiences when managing day-to-day challenges. This special type of therapy reintroduces injured warriors to the unique bonds experienced during military service. Rarely duplicated in the civilian world, these relationships act as a secure bedrock that paves the road to recovery.

"WWP has provided me the opportunity to learn to be one with myself and my surroundings – to learn to be more in tune with my body's needs by re-energizing and reinvigorating my spirit through adventures and challenges, all with the help and support of other warriors like me and my husband," Rebecca said. "By decreasing outside noise, clutter, and distraction, I have been able to truly identify what my internal needs are to better myself – so that I can help others. I am learning to surrender to the idea that I am not alone and others can help me. I have learned to be more flexible in everyday life. I accept those forces that are out of my control and add anxiety and stress – two key components that set my mind, body, and soul off balance."

With the help of WWP, Rebecca has been able to reduce her feelings of fear and isolation while building trust in others and her natural environment, which she calls the civilian world. "By learning other ways to control my mind, I am able to change my negative feelings into more positive ones without the aid of pills and medication."

At the end of the day, wounded warriors want to figure out how to be in control of their own recoveries. And when they do, they want to be ready to turn to the warrior behind them to help them, thus embodying the WWP logo of one warrior carrying another warrior off the battlefield.

"My hope is that – through WWP – I can pass my experience on to other veterans as a way to bond with comrades outside of the typical military structure and build a positive support network with others who have the same interests. WWP has been a way to convert our tradition of having a battle buddy in combat to one in everyday life, empowering us to continue with the sense of camaraderie and trust."

### **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: Vesta Anderson - Public Relations, Email: [vanderson@woundedwarriorproject.org](mailto:vanderson@woundedwarriorproject.org), Phone: 904-570-0771

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<https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/2017-01-10-Warrior-Couple-Finds-New-Way-of-Life-Together>