WWP News & Media: Veteran Group Outings, Charity Events, Helping Vets

For the Birds: Wounded Warrior Project Veterans Empowered at Falconry Event

ALPINE, Calif., May 5, 2017 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Jennifer Olsen stepped from her comfort zone recently, leaving her service dog behind to stand atop a mountain and stare into the eyes of remarkable birds of prey.

All along, she felt empowered – and certainly at ease – with Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) veterans as they learned about the 4,000-year-old sport of falconry.

"I doubt I ever would have been able to do this in the past," Jennifer said. I will never forget us being in a circle and having a hawk fly to our glove. I'm happy this got me out of my comfort zone."

The Army veteran left her dog behind because guides thought it would scare the birds. Holding hawks and raptors, while sharing the experience with other veterans, prompted Jennifer to gladly admit: "I would love to do this again."

WWP program events like this give wounded warriors an opportunity to experience firsthand what is possible at social gatherings that get them out of the house. Connecting with fellow veterans in an outdoor environment can improve their outlook and mental health. In a WWP survey of the injured warriors it serves, more than half of survey respondents (51.7 percent) talked with fellow veterans to address their mental health issues.

Air Force veteran Eric Pearson called the gathering "one of the greatest experiences of my life."

The group carpooled to the mountaintop. Eric said the ride stirred memories and created lasting connections since it mirrored the camaraderie from their service.

"In some ways, we got a little of our innocence and spirit back," he said.

While powerful, the birds only weighed two pounds.

"They are absolutely majestic when they are perched," Eric said. "When they fly at you, they're a live missile, intimidating and beautiful."

All participants quickly learned to make eye contact since the birds have remarkable vision.

"They could read a book from two miles away – if they could read," Army veteran Robert Ross said.

To learn and see more about how WWP's programs and services connect, serve, and empower wounded warriors, visit https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/.

About Wounded Warrior Project

Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) connects, serves, and empowers wounded warriors.

SOURCE Wounded Warrior Project

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