

Wounded Veterans Forge New Roads to Recovery During Soldier Ride Jacksonville

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., Feb. 15, 2018 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) headquarters hosted Soldier Ride® recently, giving warriors from all over the East coast a chance to enjoy three days of adaptive, rehabilitative cycling. For 15 years, this program has traveled the country, connecting groups of local wounded veterans to ride together as units, just like in their military service.

Michael Vouros, a wounded Air Force veteran, had only attended one WWP event before Soldier Ride Jacksonville. Project Odyssey®, an outdoor rehabilitative mental health workshop, changed his world completely.

"I had my doubts at first, with it being my first event with Wounded Warrior Project," Michael said. "Project Odyssey totally exceeded my expectations. The white-water rafting, rock climbing, and ropes course really made me step outside my comfort zone. I had some great talks – a lot of people are in the same boat. You can really connect with people on those terms."

During Soldier Ride, the local Jacksonville community rallied around these cycling wounded veterans. Sign-holding volunteers, Jaguars cheerleaders, a marching band, and local WWP staff came out to cheer on the riders and hand out waters and snacks at the ride's halfway point.

"The community involvement was incredible," said Alice Alicea, a Navy veteran. "To truly do what we do and have people appreciate it means a lot. It can bring you to tears."

WWP works hard to ensure the warriors its serves can thrive in the civilian world – but the greatest strength of the organization rests with the warriors themselves. Rediscovering or expanding a sense of camaraderie among fellow warriors is as important to the Soldier Ride experience as the rides themselves.

"I was always afraid to do Wounded Warrior Project events because I didn't have a physical injury," Michael said. "I felt embarrassed to attend. But on this ride, I was around other vets, doing cool stuff that I wouldn't normally do. When I'm isolated, I'm not normally this active. Getting out with others and doing stuff like this – I haven't been on a bike in a long time – but the camaraderie on this ride was incredible."

To read the rest of this article, visit <http://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/highlights?item=30933>.

About Wounded Warrior Project

Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) connects, serves, and empowers wounded warriors. Read more at <http://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/about-us>.

SOURCE Wounded Warrior Project

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