

## Wounded Warriors Find Balance and Joy at Surf Camp

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va., Sept. 22, 2018 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- Air Force veteran Joel Bowman had never surfed before. He never thought he could catch the waves until a surf camp organized by Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) – where he was the last man out of the water.

"I could not have imagined myself surfing," Joel said. "I ended up riding waves all the way to the sand consistently. I was moved almost to tears because I never imagined that I could do this."

Joel, who retired after 15 years of service, has vertigo from a [traumatic brain injury and deals with post-traumatic stress](#).

"The whole time I was in the water, I felt safe with my comrades, and nothing triggered my vertigo. I was the last one out of the water, and I was surfing with the locals by the end of the day."

WWP works with local outfitter Virginia Beach Surf Sessions to offer all-day surf, kayak, and paddleboard camps during the summer months. This year's warm weather gave warriors and their family members a chance to try the swells from May to October.

"I enjoyed the [physical activity](#) and learning how to surf," said Orlando Merino, who retired from the Army and is a single dad of three. "While out there, my mind was taken off everything – the waves were calming."

Orlando had tried surfing at another WWP event, but a hurricane off the coast forced the day's events to end early. They went paddleboarding instead.

"I still had a great time."

Surfing and socializing with other veterans can help injured warriors cope with stress and emotional concerns while remaining physically active.

"I'm training daily so I can make the most of the next surf camp," Joel said. "I had only boogie-boarded before, and I didn't think there was any way I would be able to ride waves. Now I don't think I can go back to boogie-boarding."

To learn more about how WWP connects warriors to build strength through community, visit <https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/programs/alumni>.

### About Wounded Warrior Project

Since 2003, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) has been meeting the growing needs of warriors, their families, and caregivers – helping them achieve their highest ambition. Learn more: <http://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/about-us>.

SOURCE Wounded Warrior Project

Additional assets available online: [Video \(1\)](#)

<https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/2018-09-22-Wounded-Warriors-Find-Balance-and-Joy-at-Surf-Camp>