

Wounded Warrior Project Brings Dolphins to Veterans



Wounded Warrior Project worked with Dolphin Research Center to connect veterans with dolphins virtually.

MARATHON, Fla., May 1, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- Wounded warrior Tonya Cook spent part of her day training dolphins. The 20-year Navy veteran learned about [eating habits](#), how dolphins play with one another, and how fast they swim. She did so with more than a dozen other veteran families, all without leaving her living room.

"It's new; I actually like it," Tonya said. "For me, the dolphin experience was really awesome."

Tonya loves dolphins, so she jumped at the opportunity to interact virtually with dolphins and trainers from Dolphin Research Center. Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) connected these families with this opportunity recently. It is one of the many ways the [veterans charity](#) has adjusted to social distancing guidelines to keep warriors and families engaged in their homes, but [away from isolation](#).

"I think this has been a wonderful thing they have connected to," said Joan Mehew, director of [Special Needs at Dolphin Research Center](#). "It was educational, it was fun, but it was also calming, on top of everything that we are going through."

"I've never swam with the dolphins or had any interaction like that, and it was wonderful," said Honor Andruzzi, a Navy veteran. "I got to share it with my daughter, who wants to be a marine biologist."

Most of the animals at Dolphin Research Center were born at the facility. Several were rescued and after their rehabilitation were determined to be unable to live on their own in the wild. Those survival stories provide a unique connection for wounded veterans and warriors.

"As a veteran, as a warrior, involved with [Wounded Warrior Project](#) and with my fellow warriors," Honor said, "we are looked at as broken. With the dolphins we saw today, that they're doing what every other dolphin is doing, they just look different."

"To see them swimming and flipping, we can relate to everyday life, because that's how we live. Don't count us out; we're going to kick some butt no matter what."

"It lifted my spirit," Honor said. "I know it lifted Tonya's and other warriors and their families."

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.](#)

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

<https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/2020-05-01-Wounded-Warrior-Project-Brings-Dolphins-to-Veterans>