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

Wounded Warrior Project Honors Volunteer Leaders

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., May 10, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- One veteran stepped forward when no one else would fill a void, another aimed to make a difference, and a third wanted to see warriors in his community give back more.

All stepped forward for the right reasons. All are now being honored as volunteer Peer Support Group Leaders of the Year — a first-time recognition from Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP).

WWP selected five regional winners and notified them on Zoom video conference calls. One of the winners, Army veteran Melvin Gatewood, received the unexpected news from a mystery celebrity. Thanks to WWP's partnership with AQUAhydrate®, actor and producer Mark Wahlberg surprised Melvin on Zoom.

"Based on your leadership, dedication, and impact within your community and to fellow Wounded Warrior Project warriors, you've been selected as the inaugural Rusty Baggett Peer Leader of the Year award recipient. Congratulations!" Mark said.

"Thank you, thank you very much," Melvin said. "It's natural for me to be compassionate and natural for me to want to help people. People ask me, 'Melvin, what do you want to do?' I tell them I just want to help people."

The national award is named after an Army veteran and former WWP staff member.Rusty Baggett was one of the first WWP Peer Support Group leaders before getting hired to work directly with warriors. Rusty passed away last year.

Learn how peer support empowers female warriors.

WWP staff nominated Peer Leader volunteers from across the country and then selected one national and five regional winners:

- East region: Melvin Gatewood*
- Mid-Atlantic region: Aaron Brooks
- North Central region: Sergio Alfaro
- South Central region: Kevin Bowden
- West region: Chris Carver

* National Winner

There are more than 100 WWP Peer Support Groups around the country. Group leaders plan monthly gatherings, either in person or via video calls, to connect veterans and provide support. The events help strengthen bonds between veterans while improving communities.

"It brings out a sense of purpose in my life that I lost many years ago," saidKevin Bowden, South Central region winner.

"It does something for your own recovery to help others," saidChris Carver, West region winner.

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.

SOURCE Wounded Warrior Project

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Additional assets available online: Video (1)

https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/2021-05-10-Wounded-Warrior-Project-Honors-Volunteer-Leaders