Wounded Warrior Project Recognizes Veteran Leaders

Peer Leader of the Year Honored for Creating Opportunities for Other Veterans

CHARLOTTE, N.C. , June 2, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- Army veteran Dana Hutson's peer support group for other wounded veterans extends well beyond its North Carolina home. Dana sees veterans as far away as Kuwait joining her and other veterans regularly during online teleconferences to talk through the challenges they may face and provide support.

It is just one way Dana gives back to other veterans. She takes every opportunity to serve fellow wounded warriors. She hosts other veterans at events as a warrior leader, helps head a Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) peer support group that meets in person and online, and serves as a peer mentor during mental health workshops run by WWP. Dana also leads suicide prevention training for other veterans and first responders. She recently joined other warriors in Washington, DC, to advocate for better legislative support for veterans.

WWP CEO Lt. Gen. (Ret). Mike Linnington recently surprised her via another teleconference – this time to thank her and recognize her contributions.

"You are truly living the Wounded Warrior Project logo," Mike said. "Your support for fellow veterans is inspirational. It gives me great pride to let you know you are Wounded Warrior Project's Rusty Baggett Peer Leader of the Year."

WWP created the Rusty Baggett Peer Leader of the Year Awards to recognize wounded veterans for outstanding achievements leading fellow veterans. Wounded veterans like Dana go through training to be volunteer leaders.

Dana was surprised by the honor but gathered herself to explain why she is so involved.

"It fills my cup and overflows it," Dana said. "I found serving other veterans helps me with my own feelings and keeps me motivated on days when I don't want to be motivated."

WWP selected four regional winners and one national winner for the award. These winners lead many events, such as annual fishing outings, and art appreciation, and go above and beyond to support other wounded veterans. The 2023 honorees are:

National Winner and Northeast regional winner: Dana Hutson
Southeast regional winner: Jody Jones
Central regional winner: Caleb Emerson
West regional winner: Melannie Lovercheck

The award is named after Rusty Baggett, a veteran and former staff member at WWP. Rusty was one of the first Peer Support Group leaders for WWP before working directly with warriors as a teammate of the organization. He passed away in 2020.

There are more than 100 WWP Peer Support Groups around the country. Leaders of these groups plan monthly gatherings, either in person or via teleconference, to connect veterans and provide support. The events help strengthen bonds between veterans while improving communities. WWP provides many ways for veterans to volunteer with the organization, including leading warrior events, telling their stories of service and recovery, and/or advocating with WWP's government relations team. WWP empowers hundreds of veterans every year through these opportunities.

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)

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