

Veteran Heals Mind and Body Through Wounded Warrior Project Adaptive Cycling

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., Jan. 3, 2024 /PRNewswire/ -- Life took a drastic turn for U.S. Army veteran Mark Lalli during a training exercise in Italy. His team's helicopter spun uncontrollably for several hundred feet before crashing. Of the 11 soldiers onboard, only five survived. Mark, though fortunate, suffered a severe traumatic brain injury (TBI), mild paralysis, and over two dozen broken bones. His unexpected path to healing came through adaptive cycling with [Wounded Warrior Project® \(WWP\) Soldier Ride®](#). For 20 years, this nationally recognized program has offered veterans and their families over 17,000 healing opportunities.

Experience the interactive Multimedia News Release here: <https://www.multivu.com/players/English/9198751-wounded-warrior-project-soldier-ride-for-veterans/>

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"I first met Wounded Warrior Project when an outreach coordinator came to visit me in the hospital, and he was an amputee," Mark shared. "He showed me that it's not the end. He inspired me to believe that anything is still possible. There is life to be lived, even if you're confined to a wheelchair."

Since then, Mark has not let his disabilities define him. He spent over 30 months in rehab relearning everything, from brushing his teeth to tying his shoes and moving around in his wheelchair. Mark never thought his life would be the same again until he was gifted a handcycle to work on his strength and conditioning. That is when his true healing began.

"I remember taking my bike for a ride, and things haven't been the same since," Mark said. "That's what's kept me going physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually. That's been the best healing."

"Being on Soldier Ride brings back the camaraderie and tribe mentality that we had in the military," recalled Mark (front row, fourth from left). "It's how the environment and being together helps each of us bring out the best in one another. It has helped me reignite my drive and has helped me work harder at being the best father, husband, and friend I can be to those around me."

Soldier Ride Provides Physical and Mental Healing

The handcycle symbolized Mark's freedom and mental resilience. Both were missing in his life after his injuries, but Soldier Ride helped fill the void. The multi-day adaptive cycling event empowers warriors by increasing skills, building confidence in achieving goals, and connecting with their communities and each other.

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Rediscovering a sense of camaraderie among fellow warriors is as important to the Soldier Ride experience as the ride itself. The likelihood of experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms is 57% lower among



warriors who maintain social support from military friends, according to [WWP's 2022 Annual Warrior Survey](#).

Catch WWP Soldier Ride in cities like Miami, Washington, DC, Chicago, and New York.

A Veteran's Mission to Give Back

Through movement and connection, Mark regained his sense of purpose and found a new passion in helping other veterans feel the same.

"Just because I can't walk doesn't mean I can't enjoy life," Mark explained. "For the longest time, I felt alone with my story, alone with my struggles, until I met more warriors and made connections with them. We all share a loss of the way things were. We are not alone. We can still do all the things we love, and there are people out there who want to help us."

Wounded Warrior Project is celebrating 20 years of Soldier Ride connecting warriors and their communities, creating a stronger support system that helps warriors like Mark heal in mind, body, and spirit through movement. Since 2004, Soldier Ride has evolved from a lone rider on a mission to a program that serves approximately 2,000 warriors annually. It is more than cycling. It's a life-changing experience.

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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<https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/2024-01-03-Veteran-Heals-Mind-and-Body-Through-Wounded-Warrior-Project-Adaptive-Cycling>