

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

An Injured Marine Veteran Makes Debut at Grand Ole Opry

A Wounded Warrior Makes His Way from Doorman at The Bluebird Café to the Opry Stage

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (June 3, 2024) -- U.S. Marine Corps [veteran Sal Gonzalez](#) made his Grand Ole Opry debut alongside some of country music's biggest stars as part of the Opry's Salute the Troops celebration for Memorial Day. Sal, who also serves as a spokesperson for Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP), survived an improved explosive device attack while serving in Iraq before starting his country music career.

"I never would have thought I would be on stage at the Grand Ole Opry," Sal said. "Not that I doubted myself, just that I actually had to relearn to walk before I could make it out there with my guitar."

Sal connected with WWP™ while still in the hospital recovering from the explosion. When he finally left the hospital, he engaged with the organization and learned from WWP that his love of music could be a powerful tool in his recovery.

Learn about [Sal's journey to healing](#).

"Sharing my story and emotions is very helpful. Whether it is through song on stage or for Wounded Warrior Project telling what I have experienced to a group of supporters, it all helps me work through what I am dealing with."

Sal found his professional calling in music while working at the famous Bluebird Café in Nashville.

"I watched a show at Bluebird and got a chance to hear famous songwriters perform," Sal said. "I was later able to get a job as a doorman, which allowed me the opportunity to listen to not only amazing songs but to hear the motivation behind the music."

Songwriting became a form of therapy for Sal, but he doesn't just share his story through song. Sal also travels the country as a WWP spokesperson, talking about the challenges he has faced as a wounded veteran. Through his role, he shares how WWP has been integral in his healing.

"Songwriting helps me transform struggles into something others can understand," Sal said. "I can play it for them and say, 'Listen, it's hard for me to talk about what I'm going through, but here's how it feels.'"

WWP helped Sal focus on his challenges and find ways to overcome them. That concept also helps Sal on stage. He focuses on the task, performing and entertaining, and lets the nerves melt away.

[Watch Sal perform his original song *Heroes*.](#)

“My career began taking off when I started being of service to others, which I was able to do through Wounded Warrior Project,” Sal said. “As a result of playing small charity shows around Nashville, I started to play larger stages like *America’s Got Talent*, USO tours, and more. You start out helping and end up helping yourself out, too.”.

Just days before Memorial Day, Sal had the honor of playing on the same stage that helped launch the careers of countless country music stars.

Sal strummed the guitar and sang about Heroes, when a nation remembered its fallen heroes.

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 how the organization supports veterans](#) and service members.

SOURCE Wounded Warrior Project

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<https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/2024-06-03-An-Injured-Marine-Veteran-Makes-Debut-at-Grand-Ole-Opry>