Dear Alumni,

Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) has achieved success as an organization that operates a growing body of direct-service programs to help Wounded Warriors thrive physically, psychologically, and economically, and as a leader in fostering that goal through policy development. WWP has always advocated strong and innovative policy initiatives, and that will continue this year. Informed directly by the experience of Wounded Warriors, WWP is focusing on four key objectives in 2012:

• Closing gaps and eliminating barriers to improved mental health of warriors, their families, and caregivers
• Fostering the economic empowerment of Wounded Warriors by eliminating educational and employment barriers
• Helping ensure optimal, long-term rehabilitative care for severely Wounded Warriors, and needed support for their caregivers
• Improving the effectiveness of programs that were established to help Wounded Warriors and their families transition from active duty to successful community reintegration

The four stories contained within the Policy Agenda section of this magazine underscore the importance of these objectives through the real-life trials of Wounded Warriors, their family members, and caregivers. These initiatives, when successfully employed, will impact us all and their reach will be felt for decades, as the transition and recovery process is often one with life-long ramifications.

I hope you will do more than just read these stories. Please take some time to familiarize yourself with the 2012 Policy Agenda and let us know how our policy development can positively impact the rest of your life! Email your thoughts to editor@woundedwarriorproject.org.

Sincerely,

Steve Nardizzi
Executive Director, Wounded Warrior Project™
A. Wounded Warrior Robert Crutcher shares a high-five with Florida Gov. Rick Scott during a Believe in Heroes® 8K race. B. Andrew Wilson and other Wounded Warriors enjoyed a private tour at Jungle Island, an animal park in Miami, Florida. C. Cohort 6 from Jacksonville TRACK graduation. D. Brothers Erik and Devin Schel, both Wounded Warriors, received tremendous support as they participated in Soldier Ride Phoenix, Arizona. U-Haul presented them with the custom tandem recumbent bike. E. President Barack Obama with Wounded Warriors Jeremy Richmond, Alex Guzman, and Mike Green aboard the USS Carl Vinson, which served as an NCAA basketball court for the inaugural Carrier Classic in Coronado, California.

F. Joseph Miller thanks Quilts of Valor quilt-maker Diane Provost after she presented him with his own quilt. G. Wounded Warriors Chad Brumpton (left) and Brian Sellers, both Marines, returned to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in January to thank the staff for the outstanding care they received there following their injuries. H. Acosta Sales & Marketing executive chairman Gary Chartrand, presents Steve Nardizzi, Wounded Warrior Project executive director, with a $3.5 million check from the Believe in Heroes fundraising campaign. I. Wounded Warrior Project National Campaign Team member Tom Marcum received his Purple Heart in January, back-dated to 2006.
1. What is eBenefits?

eBenefits, a joint project between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD), is a one-stop shop for benefits-related information for all service members, their families, and caregivers.

Registration for an eBenefits account is free. As the site continues to develop, the VA intends to add greater access to benefits-related information and resources.


2. Click the Basic Account link on the left.

3. Follow the online instructions.

4. Once you get your Basic account, you can upgrade to a Premium account by following the instructions listed on the eBenefits webpage.

2. What is the difference between Basic and Premium eBenefits accounts?

A Basic Account is simpler to obtain, but provides limited access to eBenefits features. You can apply for a Basic Account online without having your identity verified in person. This account lets you customize the eBenefits site and access information you enter into eBenefits yourself, such as your email address, state, and whether you are interested in military members, remains in its original presentation box.

Mike intends to display his Purple Heart in a shadow box along with his other awards and effects — Combat Action Ribbon, Joint Meritorious Unit Award, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Expert Rifle Badge, and dog tags, to name a few.

He may also showcase a pair of hand-written notes from General R.A. Huck — who called him a “Warrior Leader” — and Colonel S.W. Davis — who wrote “Thank you for your service Devil Dog.”

Until then Mike will continue working his dream job in the investment field and spending time with his wife and daughters. His goal is to make sure he creates a better life for his children.

Mike knows it’s a great day to be alive.

Mike Heller — It’s a Great Day to be Alive

Mike Heller’s favorite song is Travis Tritt’s version of “It’s A Great Day To Be Alive.” Perhaps that’s because those lyrics hold deeper meaning for the Purple Heart recipient. Mike, who was Joey’s squad leader, incessantly asked himself the same question: “What could I have done to change things so Joey could live?”

His team leader and friend, Joey Trembley, was not as fortunate. Joey, who was Mike’s squad leader, innocently asked himself the same question: “What could I have done to change things so Joey could live?”

The answer took time for Mike to realize. He attended a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) program and re-evaluated the scenario many times before understanding there was absolutely nothing more he could have done.

The Purple Heart ceremony that followed several months after the explosion was one of mixed emotions for Mike.

There’s some hard times in the neighborhood. But why can’t every day be just this good?

“It’s one of those instances in your life where it’s the best and worst day of your life,” Mike said. “The best because you are alive, but the worst because you lost Marines; you lost friends.”

On April 26, 2005 the Humvee Mike and his fellow Marines were riding in struck a landmine in Hit, Iraq. Mike was violently thrown 5 feet in the air before crashing down hard in the vehicle. He spent nearly four weeks in Iraq recovering from shrapnel wounds, bulging discs, contusions, and a concussion.

His team leader and friend, Joey Trembley, was not as fortunate. Mike, who was Joey’s squad leader, innocently asked himself the same question: “What could I have done to change things so Joey could live?”

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There’s some hard times in the neighborhood. But why can’t every day be just this good?

“It’s one of those instances in your life where it’s the best and worst day of your life,” Mike said. “The best because you are alive, but the worst because you lost Marines; you lost friends.”

Today, Mike’s Purple Heart is tucked neatly away in his nightstand. The United States military decoration, originally established by George Washington and the oldest award still given to military members, remains in its original presentation box.

“It’s a reminder of that day and all the events that took place; the guys I served with,” Mike said. “Unfortunately we lost a Marine due to the explosion. It reminds me of him.”

Mike intends to display his Purple Heart in a shadow box along with his other awards and effects — Combat Action Ribbon, Joint Meritorious Unit Award, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Expert Rifle Badge, and dog tags, to name a few.

He may also showcase a pair of hand-written notes from General R.A. Huck — who called him a “Warrior Leader” — and Colonel S.W. Davis — who wrote “Thank you for your service Devil Dog.”

Until then Mike will continue working his dream job in the investment field and spending time with his wife and daughters. His goal is to make sure he creates a better life for his children.

Mike knows it’s a great day to be alive.

3. How do I sign up for my Veterans Advantage card?

All Alumni are eligible for a free membership with Veterans Advantage, which provides discounts on a wide variety of services and products. Upon your verification as a Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) Alumni, a Veterans Advantage membership card and introductory letter will be mailed to you. Your Veterans Advantage membership remains active as long as your contact information is updated annually with WWP.

4. Does WWP provide Wounded Warriors with moving assistance?

WWP has a partnership with U-Haul to provide moving assistance to registered WWP Alumni. U-Haul provides a voucher for up to $400 for truck rental, moving supplies, and equipment. If storage is needed Alumni will receive a voucher for up to $300 for moving expenses and up to six months of free U-Haul storage. Alumni must complete a U-Haul request form, and U-Haul requires at least two weeks notification before the move in order to process the request. Alumni wishing to receive assistance may contact the WWP Resource Center via phone at 1-888-997-2586.

5. Why did the WWP program registration process change?

The WWP program registration and verification process was simplified for the Transition Training Academy™ and Soldier Ride™ programs. Now, you can simply use the login and password information that was provided to you for WWP Connect™ to access the new program login page.

If you currently have the WWP Accounts login page bookmarked or saved as a favorite, the link will no longer be active and you will automatically be redirected to the new program login page.

If you do not know your WWP Connect login information, please contact connectadmin@woundedwarriorproject.org.
As a child, William Thomas appeared in TV commercials for Chef Boyardee, Dr. Pepper, and Crest. But it wasn’t the flickering images of Hollywood that inspired William’s dream for his life; it was years of watching footage of the Vietnam War on the evening newscast. After graduating from high school and during his first semester in college, William met an Air Force recruiter and joined the military in 1977. William served in Saudi Arabia in 2002 and was deployed again in 2007 to Iraq. He retired in 2010. “I have no regrets. In fact, one of my proudest accomplishments is finishing my military career as a Master Sergeant with the 108th Air Refueling Wing, Security Forces Squadron.” However, there’s one experience in Iraq William wishes he could forget. “We were out searching for weapons — me, a K-9 handler, and another individual assigned to our unit. We entered a building, and soon the dog alerted to an electrical panel. As I turned my head to see what the dog had alerted to, I see this big flash, and I watched the canine handler thrown about 20 feet. He landed near me, and his body was smoking.” This wasn’t Hollywood. This was real life and death. “I was able to gather my senses, grab him, and yell out that we had a man down. We carried him out, and medics were able to revive him — but the dog was killed in action.” Three years have come and gone since that event, but William says he still deals with flashbacks and nightmares. Seeking help, he participated in the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) program at the Lyons Veterans Affairs Hospital in New Jersey. William admits it took a long time for him to accept his PTSD diagnosis, even when he experienced panic attacks in public. “At first, I swept the idea away. I’m Superman. I was in the military. There’s no such thing as weakness in my world. But there comes a time when you can’t lie to yourself anymore. I knew I was broken. I faced myself — and I didn’t know who I was.” That’s when one of William’s buddies introduced him to Wounded Warrior Project (WWP). “WWP had such a profound effect on me,” says William. “I could communicate with other warriors about our traumas and how it affected us. It was an opportunity to talk to people who know exactly what I’m talking about — those who were directly involved in some of the same things that I’ve experienced.” He now confesses how he often locked his range of emotions inside, and it’s that kind of self-recognition that William hopes to help other warriors achieve. “WWP took me in and adopted me as one of their own. There’s such an easy to talking to these folks because you don’t have to be shameful. You don’t have to hide anything. You can let the emotions flow. And with my past experiences, I feel like I can help people find the direction that’s right for them.” To that end, William says he understands how the recovery process is often a lonely road. “The journey hasn’t been just mine. My family endured the dark side of my PTSD; yet, they’ve been so very supportive. I’m blessed to have them by my side. My mother raised me to be respectful and help others. Her strong drive is always with me.”
UP AND ACTIVE: Preparing for Soldier Ride

Participating in Soldier Ride® is an engaging way to have a great time with fellow warriors and make some new friends along the way. But if you want to keep up with your buddies you need to be in shape. This article will assist you in preparing physically so you can make the most of your Soldier Ride experience.

NUTRITION
The best eating plan for a cyclist is one that includes plenty of low-fat, high-carbohydrate foods to provide energy and fluids to offer hydration. When you eat is almost as important as what you eat, so:

* **Proper Warm-up**
  - A proper warm up should be at least 7-10 minutes in length and should be done for the entire body. Each movement should be done for 20-30 seconds. Some examples of stretching include shoulder shrugs, calf stretches, quadriceps stretch, wrist flexion and extension, hip flexor stretch, lower back bend, shoulder raises, trunk twists, arm circles, arm hugs.

  **Online:** Visit woundedwarriorproject.org/aar-exclusive.aspx to get a day-by-day breakdown of training exercises that should begin at least six weeks in advance of Soldier Ride participation.

* Start the night before your ride with a high-carb meal. Plan on eating fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grain cereals and breads, rice, and pasta to get your fill of carbohydrates. Balance your diet with lean protein and a small amount of fat.

  - Likewise you should also make sure to drink plenty of water the day before your ride. Stay hydrated by drinking at least 8-12 ounces of fluid immediately before a ride, another 8 ounces every half hour during a ride, and enough when you’re finished to gradually replenish those lost fluids after a ride.

* 1-2 hours before your ride, fuel up with a light, high-carbohydrate meal such as whole grain cereal, fresh fruit, and whole grain toast.

  - If your ride is longer than 60 minutes, you should refuel with something that has 30-40 grams of carbohydrates (sports drink or energy bar) every 30-45 minutes after the first hour of riding. Also replenish your body with a high-carbohydrate snack or meal within 60 minutes of a lengthy ride.

FARFALLE
with Asparagus, Shiitakes, and Spring Peas

Are you prepared to eat well – both figuratively and literally? This edition of Boot Camp Kitchen presents a delicious and nutritious bowtie pasta (farfalle) recipe that will leave your family and friends looking for the house chef!

Fresh peas signify the arrival of spring, and this dish takes advantage of three varieties.

**Makes 4 Servings**

- 1 1/2 lb asparagus, peeled and trimmed
- 1 1/2 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper, as needed
- 1/2 cup snow peas
- 1/2 cup sugar snap peas
- 1 cup frozen green peas
- 1 cup dried bowtie pasta
- 1/2 tbsp butter
- 1 1/2 cups sliced shiitakes
- 1 1/2 tbsp minced shallots
- 1 1/2 tbsp chopped marjoram
- 1 bunch scallions, thinly sliced
- Parmesan, shaved

Preheat broiler. Toss asparagus with the oil and 1 teaspoon of salt. Place in a baking pan under the broiler for 8 minutes, until tender. Slice asparagus into 1-inch pieces.

Cook each type of pea separately in boiling salted water until almost tender, about 2 minutes each. Remove from water and reserve. Cook the pasta in boiling salted water until tender, 10 to 12 minutes. Drain.

Heat butter in a saucepan until it begins to turn brown. Add shiitakes and shallots; sauté until slightly brown. Add the asparagus, peas, marjoram, pepper, and 1 teaspoon of salt. Heat the vegetables thoroughly.

Toss pasta with the vegetables and scallions. Top with the Parmesan and serve.

Source: The Culinary Institute of America Cookbook

Information printed with permission from The Culinary Institute of America.
MAKING WOUNDED WARRIOR WELL-BEING A NATIONAL PRIORITY
**FIRST LIEUTENANT**
**DONNA BACHLER**

**THE MIND IS A BATTLEFIELD**

Donna Bachler’s brother was a veteran who struggled with severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

“Darrin took his own life rather than struggle to seek help in the VA system as it existed,” says Donna. “He fought a stigma of doubt over his condition.”

Donna, herself an Army veteran, knows firsthand what Darrin and so many other veterans wrestle with as they battle PTSD. She experiences it herself every day.

“Like my brother crying for help,” she says, “some would rather die than deal with PTSD.”

The numbers are staggering: the Army alone reported 242 suspected suicides in 2009 and 385 in 2010. Through November 2011, there were 260 suspected Army suicides among active-duty and reserve soldiers.

“You can’t see PTSD, but it’s always there,” says Donna. “I fight it the best I can, but I’m always on guard in a crowded environment, always hyper-vigilant, always uncomfortable of the unknown.”

With her mind racing, never really relaxing, Donna suffers from crippling sleep deprivation.

She has gone through numerous sleep studies. In one of these studies, of the six hours she was required to stay in the bed, she “slept” for 90 minutes. In that period of time, she woke up 207 times.

“The tell it takes on your mind and body is incalculable,” Donna says. “There comes a point when you simply pass out from exhaustion.”

Her VA doctor’s solution for Donna: pills. Donna relieves only more than a half dozen medications she was prescribed, none of them working for her. “They’re just band-aids for the symptoms, and they never address the real underlying problem.”

**While Vet Center counselors or VA talk therapy has helped some warriors, Donna lost confidence in the VA. She got treatment in the community through TRICARE, but particularly credits a trained psychiatric service dog for her improved well-being.**

“Grapefruit is my litmus to the outside world,” she said. “Some days I wouldn’t be able to leave the house without him. He’s trained to be at my stress level, helps create distance between us and people out in public, checks behind us, and simply helps calm me.”

And it’s working. Donna now takes only half the prescription medicine she took before, and while still not sleeping a full night, she does get in some rest.

And she can’t help wondering: What if Darrin had had access to a helper? Or the hundreds of men and women who took their own lives this year — could they still be alive?

“Community integration programs need to be a focus at the VA and need to be expanded. Support for spouses dealing with a warrior’s issues needs to be addressed. I know my husband wants to help me, but he has no idea how. I can’t help him either.”

“Community integration programs need to be a focus at the VA and need to be expanded. Support for spouses dealing with a warrior’s issues needs to be addressed. I know my husband wants to help me, but he has no idea how. I can’t help him either.”

Donna is dedicated to working with Wounded Warrior Project on behalf of all Wounded Soldiers to ensure they get the mental health services they need. She sums it all up with this question: How many more will suffer and possibly be driven to taking drastic measures before real change is made?

**SERGEANT ADAM WIDNER**

**DESERVES TO BE ECONOMICALLY EMPowered**

Sergeant Adam Widner had just finished nine months of personal-security detail in Afghanistan, where he was constantly on alert for those seeking to harm or kill him and others.

When he returned stateside in 2009, Adam was withdrawn socially, very hyper-vigilant, and suffered insomnia. He had significant hurdles to clear while transitioning back into civilian life and into a crowded college campus after exiting the battlefield.

His unsuccessful search for a veteran-friendly school nearly ended his college career before it began. Thankfully Kent State University (KSU) took Adam’s call.

“Had Kent State not answered the phone, I probably wouldn’t have looked any further into college,” Adam said. “There are only so many times you are going to get that door shut in your face and keep trying.”

That initial warm reception from KSU wasn’t a fluke; instead it was a sign of things to come. The university’s Center for Veteran Education and Research (CVER) offered vet students a training program at no cost, which would formally open in January 2010, offer veterans-only orientation courses.

Adam graduated cum laude in August 2011, earning a bachelor’s degree in political science, communications, geography, and non-profit management.

“Anyone could have walked in there with nothing but negativity on their shoulders, and they would have walked out feeling good about themselves and their service,” said Adam, noting how important it was to be integrated into the student population through a mix of online courses, veterans-only courses, and mixed-population courses.

Personal understanding is exactly what veterans like Adam need when seeking higher education. The school at KSU recognized Adam’s behaviors — being socially withdrawn and hyper-vigilant — and continually made the effort to connect Adam with other veterans and to engage him in veteran activities. That persistence paid off when Adam agreed to be introduced to Joe Gross, an area outreach coordinator for Wounded Warrior Project (WWP).

“Joe saved my life,” Adam said. “He got me all the help I could ask for. He got me into the vet center and talked me into going to the VA. I very much owe my life to Joe. Joe got me out of my house.”

By getting out of his house and engaged with others, Adam also got involved with the Kent State Vets Club, which was in its infancy.

“When I got the help with WWP and got affiliated with the student veterans’ organization on campus, I really opened up,” Adam said. “The Kent State Vets Club makes sure there is a camaraderie outside of class, so when you get in class you aren’t separated from the general population. They want veterans to be a part of their community.”

Adam said as he became more and more comfortable on campus, his grades began to improve accordingly: “I started raising my hand in class.”

Adam graduated cum laude in August 2011, earning a bachelor’s degree in general studies with concentrations in political science, communications, geography, and non-profit management.

“The only reason I really succeeded in the end was that Kent State resembled the selfless service that I found in the military,” Adam said.
SHANE PARSONS
THE QUEST FOR INDEPENDENCE

Cindy Parsons gets a visible lump in her throat as she thinks about the future.

“What’s going to happen to my son?” she asks to anyone willing to listen. “What’s going to happen to Shane? That’s my biggest fear. What happens to Shane when something happens to me.”

Cindy is the primary caregiver for her son, Shane, who sacrificed both his legs and suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI) while serving in Iraq. She knows Shane needs continual, long-term rehabilitative care, and without her around, Shane’s future becomes a very scary prospect.

Cindy said families are all too often told by the VA that it can no longer provide a particular service because the veteran is not making significant progress. In February Cindy was told that Shane’s ongoing speech therapy would not continue because Shane had met his limit.

“Devastation would be putting it mildly,” Cindy said of families receiving that news.

She knows firsthand that the rehabilitation process is a lifelong road best traveled with patience. The TBI Shane incurred from the roadside bomb attack in Baghdad in 2006 left him with an array of cognitive and physical challenges.

Five years of learning how to read again are paying off, albeit slowly. Shane now has the ability to read at the first-grade level, locate exit signs and fire-safety instructions in buildings, and distinguish between green lights and red lights to safely cross a street.

Cindy, who lost her husband to brain cancer when Shane was only six months old, recalls her son being independent at a young age.

“He was so desperate to be independent,” Cindy said. “He was probably four years old, and he used to say, ‘Let me do it, Mom. Let me do it, Mom.’”

Years later he found himself doing more and more through football and wrestling in junior high and high school. He would have made a great coach, Cindy says, and one day he wanted to work in law enforcement.

Those dreams haven’t ended, because Shane has been getting the rehabilitative care he deserves. The dreams are, however, now on hold.

“He feels very independent when he can carry some money in his pocket, count it, and pay for a pack of gum on his own, knowing he isn’t short-changed,” Cindy said.

She recalled a recent proud evening when Shane wanted to order pizza, meet the delivery person at the door, and provide him with the correct change. It “made him feel very independent and in control,” she said.

Those accommodations and feelings are only possible through time and with dedicated “veteran-centered” attention that allows for ongoing rehabilitative care. Through the individualized plans and services, it is possible to foster independent living skills and social interaction among veterans, allowing them to participate in meaningful community settings.

“Shane is a perfect example that rehabilitation works, and it has changed his life and my life,” Cindy says.

SPECIALIST STEVEN BOHN
STILL TOO MANY CRACKS IN THE SYSTEM

After a decade of war, the expectation is our wounded will make a “seamless transition” from military service programs to receipt of needed VA services and benefits. But Army Specialist Steve Bohn’s experience shows the transition from active duty to retired status can still be a complex process for many of our Wounded Warriors.

Steve was injured in Afghanistan in November 2008, when a suicide bomber drove a dump truck packed with 2,000 pounds of explosives into his outfit. He suffered severe spinal and internal injuries. Last year, at a Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing, he described what happened next:

• Flown from Germany’s Landstuhl Regional Medical Center to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, instead of being taken directly to Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC), where he would finally undergo two major surgeries on his spine and internal organs.
• Transferred to New England’s VA Boston Healthcare System West Roxbury Campus, only to have the brass at Fort Campbell threaten to classify him AWOL, because they never got the word.
• Assigned only a 30-percent disability rating for his spinal injuries and 10 percent for his neck injuries by the Medical Evaluation Board — without even taking into account any of his internal injuries.
• Inexplicably — and much to the dismay of the committee members — a below-the-knee amputee testifying alongside Steve shared the same “temporary” medical classification.

“Like they expect his leg to grow back,” says Steve. “That’s more than ridiculous. That’s insulting.”

Steve’s struggles went on and on: compensation and pension examinations backlogged, VA adjudication postponed because of cancelled medical exams. And during all that time, Steve still hadn’t been assigned a VA primary-care doctor.

When warriors like Steve can’t get anyone at the VA to discuss treatment options with him, when the red tape of bureaucracy blankets him in frustration, when it takes months and months to adjudicate his claim, when he must go through surgery alone because WRAMC can’t be flexible in reimbursing a family member’s travel expenses, and when his spinal injury is classified as “temporary,” it’s clear there are still too many seams in “seamless transition.”

Steve did get help from Wounded Warrior Project (WWP). “I’m now lucky to have Linda Perry, my outreach coordinator at WWP, serve as my advocate to help me with my claims,” he says. “I can call her my guardian angel, my second mother. She and her team have helped smooth the rocky journey as I transitioned from active duty to veteran status.”

Now, Steve says, things get done. If he has a question or concern, he knows whom to call — Linda.

“Whenever I was in the army I felt no one cared about me. WWP helped me realize I was wrong about that, and now my passion is to help other Wounded Warriors out there who also feel alone. Warriors are still injured. Life must still be lived.”

On Online Visit woundedwarriorproject.org/sar-exclusive.aspx to read the full story as well as the WWP 2012 Policy Agenda.
Make Your Voice Count

You should have recently received an email about participating in the annual Alumni Survey. Your participation in this process is critical in collecting information about transitional needs and successes for your fellow warriors.

Plus your opinions will earn you some cool WWP gear – a Survival Straps key chain and luggage tag (pictured).

If you have not already completed the survey please take the time to do so by April 10, 2012. Your experiences will give Alumni a collective voice and help WWP make programmatic refinements, determine additional program offerings, and help pinpoint new, innovative ways we can better serve Wounded Warriors and their families.

If you have already completed the survey please encourage other Wounded Warriors to do the same and help WWP be as effective as possible.

Please do not hesitate to contact the WWP survey team by phone at 904.405.1148, or via email at survey@woundedwarriorproject.org, if you have any questions.

Wounded Warrior Project is simplifying its program registration and verification process.

A new login system to access registration pages for Transition Training Academy™ and Soldier Ride™ is now active. You can simply use the login and password information provided to you for WWP Connect™ to access the new Program login page.

If you do not know your WWP Connect login information, please contact connectadmin@woundedwarriorproject.org.

If you have any questions about the new program registration process, please contact resourcecenter@woundedwarriorproject.org or 888.WWP.ALUM (997.2586).

WARRIORS ARE USED TO CHALLENGES . . . IN FACT, THEY THRIVE ON THEM. BUT THIS WAS UNUSUAL.

The struggles that my family has endured because of my injuries has been extremely difficult, demoralizing, and often embarrassing,” says William. “I want to be there for my family, and I am fighting injuries I can’t always see.”

So in his essay, William chose to paint a picture that Polaris could see. Here’s an excerpt:

“A trip out to the sand dunes is chilling, but the runny noses and sand-covered faces of the children give no hint of the fleeting chill. The sun slants to the white of winter as we turn to different trails that lead out to one of my favorite ice fishing lakes. All good leather, and now under the Polaris, hot chocolate is hard, the soft rumble of the starting engine sends a quick chill of warmth down our spine as we shake off some adrenaline and plot along our favorite trail. Getting to this lake without error on such a reliable machine, we enjoy a great day in the great outdoors.”

The judges were impressed. And now, as a winner of his new RZR, William will be able to live his dream all year round.

TAMMY PERSING

Tammy describes herself as a “disabled veteran who deals with anxiety issues that prevent me from joining my family in adventures, like rafting, boating, flying, or anything that is daring.”

She dove into that battle in her winning essay, which included these personal insights:

“To have the opportunity to operate a vehicle with safety roll-over protection, I would be able to tell those and show my family that I am the cool, go-get-em gal I was in the service. I believe the Polaris RZR XP 4 900 will help me to win the battles I deal with today. I would give my family the opportunity to have side fun. I am always fearful that my boys will be hurt or broken. I would be able to relax a little more knowing that they can have more fun, yet having the times of their lives.”

As a winner, Tammy says she’s looking forward to every smile, every laugh, and every little more knowing that my boys were safe, yet having the times of their lives.

GAYVIN GOODWIN

After being injured in combat in Afghanistan, and later, he battles post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), he poured out his compelling story – which included this passage:

“I would use the RZR to feel like a Warrior again. I would be able to abandon the days that PTSD causes. I would be able to take my girls to places that I can no longer hike. I could be a proud warrior at the top of Mount Washington instead of the broke down Soldier at the bottom of the hill that everyone nervously smiles at while they walk briskly by. The RZR would allow me freedom.”

WINNING WARRIORS RUNNING WILD

WINNERS EMERGED.

When the dust cleared, three winners emerged.

The prize? A 2012 Polaris RANGER RZR XP 4 900 all-terrain vehicle.

When the dust cleared, three winners emerged.

Gavin Goodwin

Gavin was injured in combat in Afghanistan, and now, he battles post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

“RUNNING WILD

When Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) and Polaris Industries, Inc. teamed up to challenge Alumni to an essay writing contest, participants took it to heart.

The prize? A 2012 Polaris RANGER RZR XP 4 900 all-terrain vehicle.

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Believe in Yourself

“Impossible. It will never happen.”

Seven years ago that was my mindset regarding the possibility of one day earning my college degree. I simply believed that lifelong ambition was out of reach. After all, my time was being consumed with the need to learn how to speak, feed myself, and walk again. My life hung by a thinning thread on Sept. 17, 2004 when the military unit I was riding in hit an improvised explosive device. The last thing I recall was making eye contact with a man and getting an uneasy feeling.

What came next was a long road lined with pain, helplessness, shadowy figures, intensive months of therapy, and frustration. Thanks to the support of my fellow service members, family, doctors, medical advancements, and my Segway, I was able to overcome or cope with many of the physical injuries caused by the blast. The mental and emotional ones were a very different story. My self-confidence was shattered. Thankfully Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) was there to help me reassemble the pieces through its warrior-focused programs.

I first attended a peer mentoring session in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico with other veterans. The experience was far better than just meeting with counselors. I found people who had lived the same things as myself. I found people I could confide in.

I later attended a Project Odyssey where I had my doubts about taking on the river raft course. I struggled to get in and go down river, but once I did and could look back and see what I had accomplished, I knew I could do more.

WWP helped give me the tools to regain my self-confidence through these programs. For 1 ½ years I made the two-hour drive each way from my hometown of Mission, Texas to Texas A&M University-Kingsville in Kingsville, Texas because I had a dream. I would stay in my travel trailer all week long and only come home on weekends, as gas, food, and other expenses were taking a toll on our lives. For 18 months I ate, did my homework, slept, and studied in that trailer, never taking any time off. In doing this it felt like I was deployed again. I once more had to leave my wife and sons behind. All of us made one more sacrifice of being away from each other in order to obtain this degree. It shows with a lot of determination and one’s heart, mind, and soul put into it, one can accomplish any dream.

I remember going to dinner with my wife after graduation. We were holding hands and I said, ‘We did it.’ She said, ‘Yes we did.’

I later went to visit my father, who is in a nursing home, to show him my degree. I followed in his shoes – and that of my brother, sister, and uncle – in serving our country.

It was very emotional to listen to my dad tell the nurses when I arrived, ‘This is the one I told you got the college degree.’ Today, my college diploma is displayed with pride in my home. The road to getting it was a long one, beginning with the determination of brothers and sisters in arms to get me medical help and doctors doing their best to keep me alive, through to my wife’s dedication to regain the man she had married, the answer of innumerable prayers, and my willingness to reach a life-long dream.

I have donated a second copy of my college diploma to the Sacrifice Center at WWP headquarters in Jacksonville, Fla. in hopes it helps motivate others to follow their dreams.

“If you plant a seed and you water and nurture it, it will grow. It is the same thing with your mind. You will be surprised how far you will go if you only believe in yourself.”

— Sgt. David Guzman (Ret.)
NORTH REGION

April
Bethesda Cycling Program
BNMC, MD

April 1
Scuba Certification (Adaptive) runs every Sunday
Freehold, NJ

April 4 & 4
Aqua Class and Water Aerobics
McClean, VA

April 5
Shooting
Whitehall, PA

April 5
Under Armour Workout Program
Baltimore, MD

April 6
Military Wellness Program (in-patient PTSD)
Queens, NY

April 17-22
Soldier Ride
Washington, DC

May 3-6
Project Odyssey
Washington, DC (TBD)

May 3
Ski trip
Whitehall, PA

May 14-18
Project Odyssey
The Forks, NY

May 20-22
Soldier Ride Race Across America–Oceanside, CA
to Annapolis, MD

WEST REGION

April 1
Turkey Hunting
Eugene, OR

April 1
Ampsurf
La Jolla, CA

April 2
San Diego, CA

April 4-5 (TBD)
WWP Bike Clinic
Fort Lewis, WA

April 6
Cycling Club
San Diego, CA

May 1
Hiking Mount Whitney
Lone Pine, CA

May 1
Batting Practice with the Padres
San Diego, CA

May 1
Driggs, ID

May 5-6
Bloomsday Race Weekend
Spokane, WA

June 12
Project Odyssey
Suncadia, Roslyn, WA

June 9-10
Tough Mudder CO

March 25-29
Project Odyssey
Tahoe, NV

SOUTH REGION

April 1
SEEK Weekend (warrior and caregiver)
Birmingham, AL

April 1
Adaptive Kayaking
Jacksonville, FL

April 1
Kayak Fishing w/Irish Water Dogs
Amelia Island, FL

April 1
Sled Hockey
Tampa, FL

April 2-3
BARRY UNIVERSITY BUCANEER INVITATIONAL
Miami Beach, FL

April 12-15
Project Odyssey
Carolina Beach, NC

April 19-22
Mid-Atlantic Alumni Summit
Charlotte, NC

April 27-29
Heavy Shot
Turkey Hunt
East Tennessee

April 22-26
Project Odyssey
Key West, FL

May 3
Camp C.O.P.E
Hunt, TX

May 12
Project Odyssey
Jordan Ranch, Schulenberg, TX

May 14-18
National Park Ride
Brevard, NC

June 24-27
Society for Human Resources Conference
Atlanta, GA

MAY 30
Courage Awards and Benefit Dinner
New York, NY

June 6-10
Alumni Summit Great Lakes – Lake Geneva, WI

June 11
Soldier Ride Weekend
Waterloo, WI

June 14-17
Soldier Ride Chicago
Bromley, VT

June 16-18
Project Odyssey
Bromley, VT

June 21-24
Benefits Educational Seminars – Chicago, IL

MAY 25-27
Project Odyssey
Hambachtal, Germany

INTERNATIONAL

MULTIPLE REGIONS

June 11-30
Soldier Ride Race Across America – Oceanside, CA
to Annapolis, MD

April 2-June 8
Introduction to Computer Technology Classes Locations:
Fort Sam Houston
Fort Bragg
Fort Carson
32 Street Naval Base
Bethesda NMC
Fort Belvoir
April 2-July 27
Introduction to Computer Maintenance and Repair Locations:
Fort Sam Houston
Fort Bragg
Fort Carson
32 Street Naval Base
Bethesda NMC
Fort Belvoir

April 2-June 8
Introduction to Computer Security Location:
Fort Bragg

April 2-June 8
Introduction to Computer Networking Location:
Fort Bragg
Tough Mudder Tampa featured a team from Wounded Warrior Project that included WWP CEO Steve Nardizzi (fourth from right).

IN THE NEXT ISSUE: Summertime Fun