

# AFTER ACTION

report



## PEAK PERFORMANCE

Bryan Wagner  
poses atop Mount  
Kilimanjaro for  
Believe in heroes™



Photo courtesy of dan mores/man doses



# AFTER ACTION report

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## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



*"We are what we believe we are."*

Those seven simple words, attributed to imaginative author C.S. Lewis, sum up exactly how influential the mind can be. This issue of After Action Report presents a number of stories that exemplify the power of self-expectation.

Take Team Hard Target, for example. The group of warriors and NFL stars came together to tackle Mount Kilimanjaro. Their goal was to raise awareness for wounded warriors and, despite seemingly overwhelming circumstances at times, they believed in themselves and their teammates, forged ahead, and accomplished their mission.

Atlanta Braves pitcher Scott Linebrink has a mission of his own – to personally acknowledge America's servicemen and women for their sacrifices in the line of duty. He's created a model program that says thank you to warriors one at a time.

Saying 'thank you' is also central to the International Support program at Wounded Warrior Project (WWP). That program, through videos, posters, and appreciation luncheons, gives thanks to the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (LRMC) staff in Germany.

Every day the medical staff sees warriors whose health is at its worst, yet they never waiver in their belief in the resiliency of the human spirit. WWP shares warrior success stories and thank you messages with the LRMC staff so they know the work they perform is critically important to warriors and their families.

One surgeon, Dr. Christina Hahn, said seeing these stories of recovery "heals my soul and energizes me to work harder."

Her belief in her job drives her to work harder, and as a result the impact she has on warriors' lives is even greater. That ideal makes WWP what it is today.

Believe in yourself. Believe in others. Then watch the greatness that follows.

Sincerely,

Steve Nardizzi  
Executive Director, Wounded Warrior Project™

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## IN THE COMMUNITY



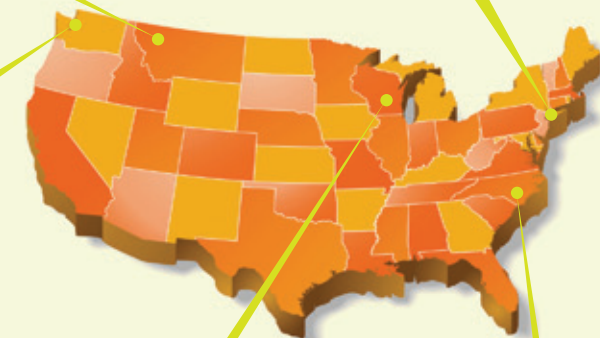
The Whitefish, Montana Caregiver Retreat provided fresh air and new friendships to 23 male caregivers.



Sopranos star Dan Grimaldi, 30 Rock's Judah Friedlander, and WWE/TNA star Mick Foley enjoyed some laughs with warriors at The Broadway Comedy Club in New York City.



The Wounded Warrior Project Seattle office opens September 15. The physical address of the office is 2223 Alaskan Way, Suite 220, Seattle, Washington 98121.



Several warriors took turns carrying the WWP flag as they competed in the Merrimac, Wisconsin Tough Mudder event.



Fayetteville, North Carolina will be home to the newest Wounded Warrior Project office in October. Be sure to check out WWP Connect™ for the latest opening details.

# WMPROFILE:

## DERON SANTINY

If you've ever had a swollen foot ... or sprained your elbow ... or bruised your knee ...

Imagine if those injuries were to your brain. Imagine the violent transfer of energy through your brain's 100 billion neurons, damaging the delicate structure, with no way to release the pressure.

Staff Sergeant Deron Santiny doesn't need to imagine. He lived it.

"It was April 5, 2005. We were on patrol, traveling south of Baghdad, with four vehicles in our convoy. Suddenly, about 10 feet behind me, there was an explosion."

The improvised explosive device (IED) tossed Deron, the turret gunner on the Humvee, around like a rag doll. Slammed unconscious, he was thrown down into the turret.

"We had training in basic first aid, so we all took care of each other. I wasn't knocked out for long, but when I woke up it felt like my head just exploded. Mine was the onset of a severe concussion, whiplash, ringing in the ears, headache. It wasn't until later when doctors discovered I had a neck injury."

That "discovery" took weeks – but not before Deron went back out on missions.

"I continued to have severe headaches and light sensitivity. I just kept

going to the doctor and let them evaluate and document everything because it was becoming unbearable."

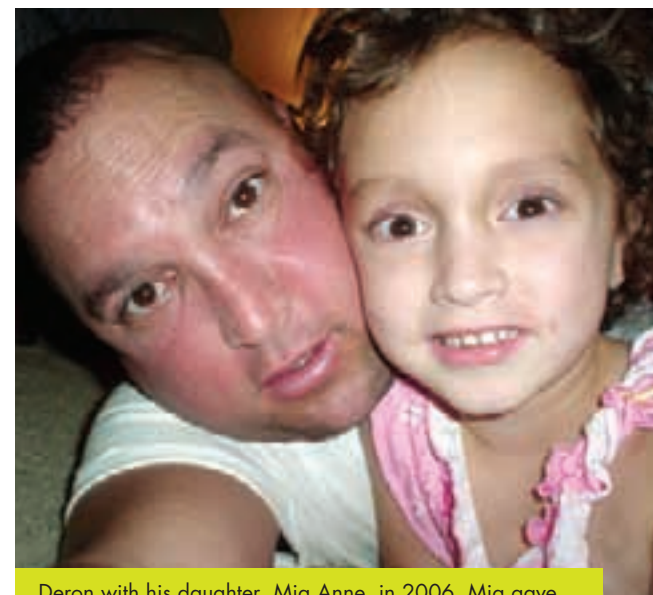
Finally, an MRI revealed damage to Deron's spine. The Army sent him back to the United States for surgery. Doctors at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas diagnosed Deron with a traumatic brain injury (TBI) in December 2006.

"I've had a total of seven cerebral surgeries since the injury incident, and I've had probably close to a hundred procedures to my head and spine. I was in the hospital off and on for 16 months."

Like a lot of soldiers, Deron says he doesn't complain because he's still alive. He respects that others have suffered what he considers a much worse fate.

In addition to TBI, Deron struggles with nightmares and other issues from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He still endures headaches, light sensitivity, and trouble with cognitive functions. And although Deron sometimes has difficulty with short-term memory, there is one particular event he says he'll never forget.

"I had been gone for almost a year," Deron says, remembering the first time he came home. "At the airport, my kids weren't allowed past security because they were too young to have ID cards.



Deron with his daughter, Mia Anne, in 2006. Mia gave her dad a hero's welcome when he returned home.

My wife met me at the gate. As we walked the hallway to security, my little girl saw me and took off running toward me. The guard tried to grab her, but just like a little running back, she juked him, shrugged him off, and kept going. Nothing was going to stop her. She jumped into my arms, and we were all crying, and she just kept saying 'I love you, daddy' over and over."

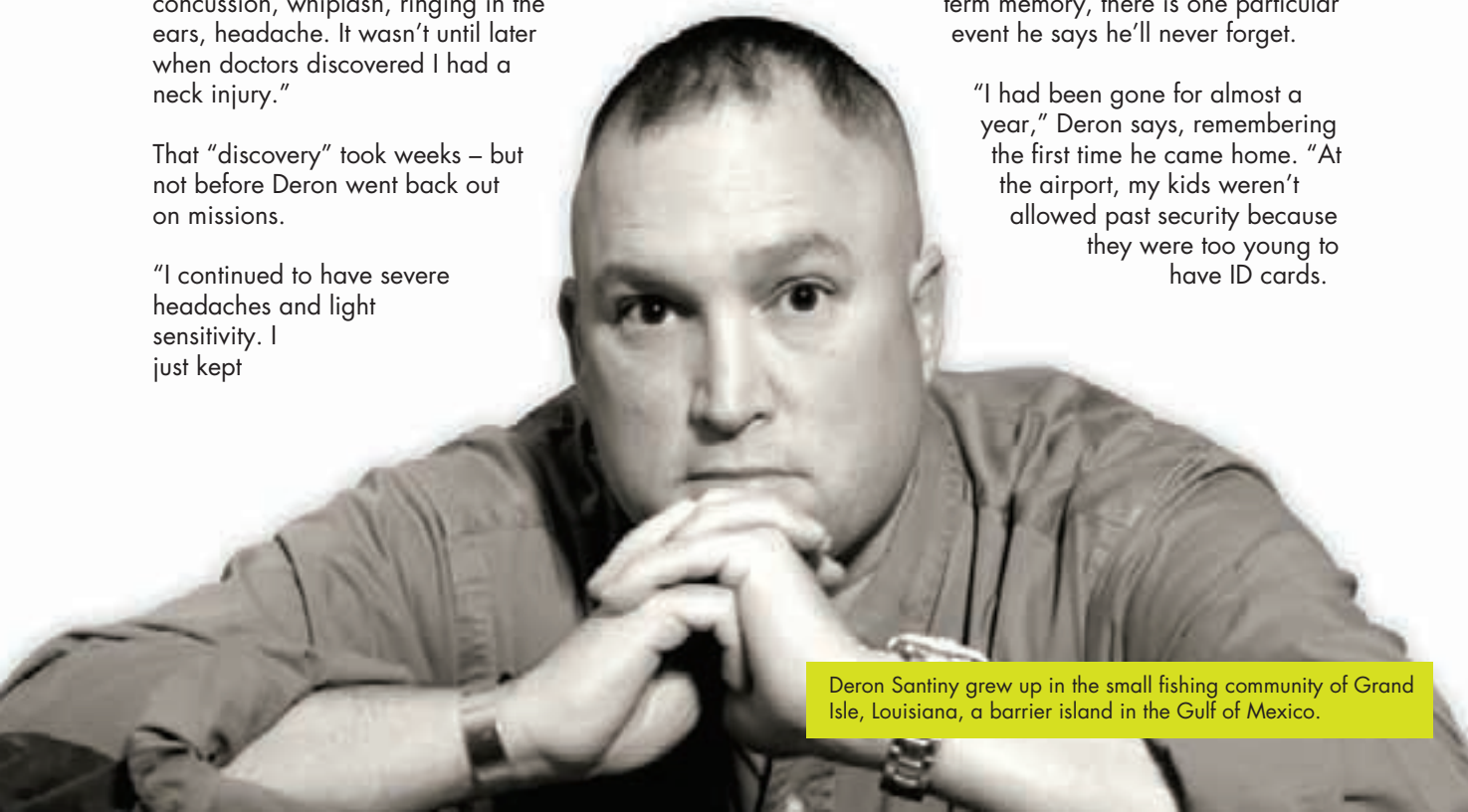
Even for a Purple Heart recipient like Deron, nothing beats the feeling of being a hero to his children.

But he says he often spends time thinking about friends he lost in combat and how they sacrificed themselves for their country.

"I am inspired by Vietnam vets who paved the way for soldiers like myself so that we're not ignored and mistreated like so many of them were when they returned from war."

He says that's why he acknowledges his Alive Day with a prayer.

"I give thanks for being alive, and I pay tribute to all the patriots who made things possible for my family and me to enjoy."



Deron Santiny grew up in the small fishing community of Grand Isle, Louisiana, a barrier island in the Gulf of Mexico.

## Q&A

What was your favorite childhood television program?  
*Gilligan's Island and F Troop*

Which bad habits, if any, drive you crazy?  
*When someone talks during the National Anthem or refuses to stand and remove their hat.*

What do you miss most about the military?  
*My friends. I loved being an infantry soldier and I enjoyed being a leader to young soldiers.*

What do you miss least about the military?  
*Early morning PT.*

You're given \$1 million, what do you spend it on?  
*I would gather as many homeless veterans as I can and find a place for them to live and clean up, eat as much food as they want, and have a place to sleep other than the streets.*

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you live?  
*I wouldn't want to live anywhere but the United States. I have been to a lot of countries in the world and have yet to find one as good as the U.S. If I had to choose a state it would be Hawaii due to the great weather year 'round.*

What's your favorite song of all time?  
*"Alive" by Pearl Jam. I kind of claim it as a theme song after being injured.*

What would be your dream job?  
*Professional sports agent with top players as my clients.*

Who inspired you most during your recovery and rehabilitation?  
*A Marine named Merlin German. He was given a 3% chance of surviving and he did it.*

What is your favorite quote?  
*It only hurts 'til you pass out!*



# TOP 10 LIST

Top 10 reasons to check out the redesigned Wounded Warrior Project website.

## OVERALL

It's new, and it's definitely improved! Great visuals and plenty of bright color are sure to grab your attention. The content is so rich the hardest part may be figuring out what you want to click first!

## WARRIORS

Go ahead and click (you know you want to). This section is all about you – the warriors – and you can get started with WWP by checking out this informational page.

## FEATURED CAMPAIGN

Consider this the lead news item! Click me to stay current on WWP hot topics and cause-marketing campaigns.

## LATEST NEWS

EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT! Stay up-to-date with articles about WWP in the news.

## MY STORY

Inspiration is in every click! Read personal, compelling warrior stories of service, sacrifice, and success as they adjust to life after injury.

## PROGRAMS

No coupon required! If you incurred a service-connected wound, injury, or illness on or after September 11, 2001, you've already earned the right to participate in the free programs offered by WWP. Find a program that's right for you.

## MEDIA ROOM

You'll find warrior news, WWP news, press releases, photos, and past issues of After Action Report right here. Papparazzi not included!

## SEARCH

It's like GPS for the website! The new search feature enables you to quickly find exactly what you're looking for.

## AT A GLANCE

Wow, that's impressive! Take a quick look here to see exactly how impactful each of the WWP program areas are for wounded warriors.

## WWP INITIATIVES

Take the shortcut! Consider this a quick link to TRACK™, Soldier Ride™, and Believe in heroes™, where you can easily access information about these three WWP initiatives.



# WARRIORS TO WORK: DELIVERING HOPE

**N**ormita Nowlin has joked about throwing her husband's Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) jacket in the trash.

Her husband, LaMont, has literally worn it to pieces while essentially serving as a 24-hour-a-day human billboard for the organization that "delivered hope."

"Before, I felt desperate," LaMont said. "Now, desperate is out of my system. It's not survival mode. It's hope for a future and not just a struggle for existence."

LaMont had finished his eight-year service commitment with the Navy in July 2009 after injuring his back and shoulder in Kuwait. He found himself facing the difficult transition back into the civilian workforce.

"I would sleep with the internet," LaMont said, referring to his 18-month-long job search that regularly ended in disappointment.

It was online that LaMont came upon the Wounded Warrior Project Warriors to Work™ program, which is designed specifically for warriors re-integrating themselves into civilian jobs.

"Wounded Warrior Project was like that father, mother, or coach," said LaMont, who used his Chapter 31 benefits to get a bachelor's degree in communications while job hunting. "No one else has ever given me that kind of support."

LaMont received resume assistance, interview tips, and was ultimately matched with the hiring needs of the Food and Drug Administration Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) where he works as an administrative support assistant.

"We felt if we could provide job opportunities for our wounded and disabled veterans to transition from a military career to a civilian career, we would, in some small way, be supporting and honoring them," said Dr. Steven D. Vaughn, CVM director. "We are absolutely delighted with how this is working out and we hope others will see and copy this opportunity."

LaMont's Navy duties included working as a U.S. Customs Borders Clearance Agent in Kuwait where his unit was tasked with security, administration,

operational support, and logistics support. Those skills aligned well with the CVM's needs and LaMont worked with the Warriors to Work staff to gain employment. It's a win-win situation for both the warrior and the employer.

More than 100 wounded veterans have been placed into civilian careers through Warriors to Work in less than one year.

"Returning wounded warriors exemplify values critically important to corporate environments like integrity, honor, competitive spirit, and commitment," said WWP Executive Director Steve Nardizzi.

LaMont, a husband and father, spent two years living in a one-bedroom apartment with his wife and two small daughters. Uncertainty was the only certainty at times. Choosing between having a roof over his family's head or having food for their mouths was a reality.

Now it's a memory.

"Warriors to Work has changed my life," LaMont said. "I wake up happy. I go to sleep looking forward to working. I have hope."

He also knows his wife would never seriously consider tossing the jacket that signifies so much to his family.



LaMont Nowlin with his co-workers at CVM (standing, left to right) Dr. Bernadette M. Dunham, Lamont, Michael Miedzinski, Dr. Steven Vaughn. Seated (left to right) are Shannon Bradbury and Charis Miller.



# PARALLEL JOURNEYS

*Bethesda, Maryland. Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. A wounded warrior, recovering from above the knee amputation, begins the arduous process of learning to walk again.*

*His mission is this : Take 10 steps. Even one seems impossible.*

*Halfway around the world, a team of wounded warriors embark on another mission ...*

Tanzania, Africa. The weather is so rainy, nasty, and slippery you can almost write your name with your finger in the moisture of the air.

It's a day most people take cover and wait out.

But a team from Wounded Warrior Project begins their 19,000-foot climb to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro – the fourth highest summit in the world.

It's no ordinary mountain, no ordinary mission, and no ordinary group of warriors. Two have prosthetic legs, one is missing an eye, and another struggles daily from traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Accompanying them are two NFL veterans, Tedy Bruschi and Chad Lewis, and legendary NFL head coach Jeff Fisher.

Their mission: Raise awareness for the Wounded Warrior Project Believe in heroes™ campaign to help educate the public on the challenges facing this generation of wounded American heroes.

The trek is five brutal days up the mountain, two days back down.

As Bryan Wagner's prosthetic leg sinks deep into the muck and slosh of the mountain's base, rain pelting

his face, he laments the rain gear he left home. Mike Wilson would have thought the same thing, if he'd had time to think. But he didn't. He was too busy vomiting.

"I got sick before we even arrived in Africa," says Mike. "But warriors in Iraq and Afghanistan get sick all the time, too, and they still go out on their mission. I made a commitment to this journey, and I was hell-bent on keeping it."

It's that same kind of defiance which got Mike through the ordeal of an improvised explosive device (IED) hurdling a wave of heat, shrapnel, and havoc through his convoy in Afghanistan.

But as Mike would soon learn in the coming days, the vomiting attacks will not cease.

## *Leaps of Faith*

Nancy Schiliro's mind is on another warrior ... her grandfather.

She sees him in her memory, sitting in his room at a nursing home, Alzheimer's slowly pilfering his memory.



*Nancy Schiliro's grandfather, John Mascia, served as her inspiration as she ascended Mount Kilimanjaro.*

*Sunrise as seen from the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro. "The most magical sunrise I have ever seen in my life, and I anticipate I will never see another that will rival it." – Tedy Bruschi*



Photo courtesy of dan mores/man doses

"On a good day, he tells me how proud he is of me," says Nancy. "On a bad day, he doesn't know who I am. My whole life I've wanted to retrace his steps. He fought in World War II, traveled all over the world, and even went to Mount Kilimanjaro. His spirit is the extra boost I need to make it."

She'll need it. The adventure is through sparse trees, steep ridges, rocky slopes, bushlands, rainforest, and glacier terrain. What's worse, Nancy has her own disadvantage to overcome. She lost her right eye in a mortar explosion in Iraq.

"I have no depth perception. Every step I take on the mountain is literally a leap of faith. But there is purpose in my steps. I don't want any warrior to experience what I went through."

What she "went through" was three years of depression after being fitted with a prosthetic eye.

"I went into isolation," she recalls. "I stayed by myself. I didn't want anyone to look at me. I wanted my eye back, and I was mad at the world. Now I realize those were three years thrown away, and I'll never get them

back. I want to help other warriors know that moving on with your life is making it to the top – no matter where you stop."

***Back at Walter Reed, the warrior relearning to walk makes that impossible first step.***

***Nine more to go.***

As Ben Lunak and Bryan look up at the mountain that goes past the clouds, Ben asks, "How in the world are we ever going to do this?"

Bryan's reply is straightforward and filled with the sardonic humor he loves: "We'll both simply put one prosthetic leg in front of the other."

Without Bryan's gift of keeping everyone laughing, the freezing rain could have easily choked the mood – casting a tense spell over their endeavor. But his sense of wit was bigger than Kilimanjaro.

"You can't let something like losing a limb stand in your way of achieving awesomeness," says Bryan.





Photo courtesy of dan mores/man doses

*Ben Lusak and Bryan Wagner enjoy a lighter moment during their journey.*

The Tanzanian guides, some of whom had climbed the great mountain more than 500 times, were so in awe of Bryan's strength of will, they nicknamed him "Tembo" – Swahili for elephant.

In that spirit, Bryan led the group's first steps with these words: "Let's do this thing."

But almost immediately Ben knew something was wrong.

"I had a brand new socket on my prosthetic leg that I had just got two days earlier," says Ben. "It wasn't broken in yet, and all the kinks hadn't been worked out. On day one, I was just hoping it didn't get worse. By day three, I was worried. Every step was pain."

But he kept moving forward.

As did the other team members. Mike's sickness simply would not go away, and he continued to throw up throughout the climb. Nancy admits there were several moments when she thought about quitting. But they kept moving forward.

*Back at Walter Reed, the warrior falls down on step five.*

*And gets back up.*

Overcoming adversity is no stranger to NFL great Tedy Bruschi. Tedy played in five of the New England Patriots' six Super Bowl appearances. After suffering a stroke in February 2005, he endured months of rehabilitation and ultimately returned to the lineup – earning the NFL's Comeback Player of the Year award.

Each warrior team member – Mike, Nancy, Ben, and Bryan – credit Tedy as their inspirational leader.

But Tedy says he was more in awe of them.

"Climbing Kilimanjaro is most memorable to me because of these service members who have sacrificed so much for our country," says Tedy. "These men and women are beyond inspiring."

Chad Lewis, a member of the Super Bowl XXXIV-winning St. Louis Rams, echoed Bruschi's sentiments.

"The air is so thin we're oxygen deprived," says Chad. "But climbing step by step with these warriors is amazing, absolutely incredible."

They're joined by Jeff Fisher, who coached the Tennessee Titans for 16 seasons.

"(Jeff's) motivational speeches throughout the climb made us all really want to climb that mountain," says Nancy.

But as Jeff and the rest of the team continued on through the snow, they stopped to allow Nancy a break. The rain and snow had gotten to her toes.

"I walked over to Nancy and told her we needed to change her socks," says Tedy. "She gave me the typical, 'No, I'll be all right' answer, and that's when I treated her like a defensive lineman. I put it to her in a way where she was going to sit down and I was going to change her socks whether she liked it or not. She agreed, sat down, and Jeff Fisher and I proceeded to take Nancy's shoes and socks off and give her dry liners and wool socks. Her mood immediately changed. It's amazing what warm toes can do."

*At Walter Reed, the warrior walking again for the first time takes step 8 toward the goal of 10 steps. But today, it's not meant to be.*

*And doctors escort the warrior back to his room. He'll try again tomorrow.*

Mike endured a sickness that would have kept most people in bed for weeks. He wasn't going to stop. But it

became apparent to everyone that his body could not continue. The team agreed – as emotionally difficult as it was – to insist Mike turn back for his own safety.

It was only six hours before the scheduled summit.

"On this climb I was pushed to the edge of physical ability to showcase that it's OK for warriors to seek help for the repercussions of war," says Mike. "Admitting that fact may push them to the edge of their pride as it did me, but we need to remember there is a huge support system out there we can rely on."

Ben had also pushed his body beyond its limit. With the socket of his amputated leg swollen, scraping the bone, Ben pushed on – painful step after painful step – until the team convinced him continuing wouldn't be smart.

"There's a fine line between being a hard-ass and a dumb-ass," says Bryan. "Sometimes you have to admit that tomorrow is another day."

Ben reluctantly agreed. With the support of his team, Ben sat on a rock, removed his prosthetic leg, and handed it to Tedy.

"Take a part of me to the summit," Ben told Tedy. "I want to be there with you guys."

Tedy replied, "Anything for a fellow kaka ('brother' in Swahili)."

Onward the team climbed. It was getting more and more difficult, even for an athlete like Tedy.

"I think being on my hands and knees had intensified my already pounding headache. I had been carrying Ben's prosthetic leg for the past day and a half up the mountain. We all wanted Ben to be represented. I looked to Chad Lewis and said, 'Chad, I need some help. Can you help me lighten my load and carry Ben's

leg to the top? Chad didn't even hesitate and carried Ben's leg the rest of the way."

Summit day. The team had been climbing since midnight. Nancy tells Bryan she isn't so sure she can continue.

"I don't think I can either," replied Bryan. "But we have to. We're going to do this together."

The team finished the final 50 yards together, reaching the summit and embracing 19,341 feet in the sky. The magical sunrise that followed will never be rivaled.

The climb was symbolic of the journey each wounded warrior takes when they leave the battlefield injured and begins to reintegrate into society. Each warrior put his or her body on the line so the team could accomplish an amazing feat and continue to raise awareness of the sacrifices made by this generation of wounded warriors.

And for Ben, his personal experience was even more symbolic.

"This year my leg made it to the summit," says Ben. "I'm going back next year, and the rest of me will make it, too."

Mike will join him.

"You never fail, unless you give up," says Mike. "That's why I'm going back. And that's why every wounded warrior must never quit. Tomorrow you take a step. The next day you take two steps. Even if you fall down, you get up. You'll make it, and you'll help others make it, too."

*A new day dawns at Walter Reed. Success follows the sunrise.*

*Team Hard Target before beginning the climb up Mount Kilimanjaro.*



Photo courtesy of dan mores/man doses



# THANK YOU: MEDICINE FOR THE SOUL

HELP WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT SAY THANK YOU! IF YOU WERE TREATED IN GERMANY AFTER BEING INJURED IN IRAQ OR AFGHANISTAN AND WANT TO EXPRESS YOUR APPRECIATION TO THE MEDICAL STAFF, PLEASE EMAIL YOUR STORY TO [EDITOR@WOUNDEDWARRIORPROJECT.ORG](mailto:EDITOR@WOUNDEDWARRIORPROJECT.ORG).

The reality for medical personnel at Germany's Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (LRMC) is shifts are long, the environment is fast-paced, and a 'thank you' can be few and far between.

Operated by the Army, LRMC is the largest military hospital outside the United States and, depending upon severity of injuries, is the first stop for wounded warriors once they have been stabilized at field hospitals in Iraq and Afghanistan. The wounds of war can be devastating and wear on even the most seasoned medical professional.

"It's emotional and it tears at my heart each day," says Major Kenny L. Harryman, who has been a military operating room nurse for 18 years. "It's sad to see these young men and women injured, but when one of my fellow servicemen or women pass away due to their injuries it's heartbreaking."

Communicating with friends and family of the wounded can be especially difficult on the medical staff.

"I always end up breaking down," says Major Christina D. Hahn, a general surgeon at LRMC. "I don't think in three years I have ever been able to get through everything I need to tell them without tearing up."

The staff's contact with wounded warriors typically begins and ends when the health and psychological outlook of their patients is at its worst. They typically never get to see those they treated living their new lives to the fullest.

"We need to see that," says Major Hahn. "It reminds us of why we wanted to do this job, why we work the long hours, and the amazing opportunity God has given us to take care of these men and women in uniform."

Added Major Harryman: "I wonder every day what happens to the patients. What is their life like now and how have they adapted?"

Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) helps answer that question through its International Support program. WWP created an inspirational series of posters and videos that share warrior success stories and offer a special thank you to the LRMC staff. Additionally, luncheons are held twice a year that include visits from wounded warriors who were patients at LRMC. The program helps fight compassion fatigue and reinforces the resilient nature of the medical staff. It's a simple way to share thanks and encouragement, and provide a measure of relief for those giving so much of themselves on behalf of wounded warriors.

"Hearing their stories of perseverance and recovery and knowing you have made a small difference in their lives along the way," says Major Hahn, "it makes me proud to be an Army surgeon in this organization."

First Lieutenant Kate Smutok, an ICU nurse, shares that sense of pride. "The best part of my job is when I know I made a wounded warrior's stay better, whether they even remember it or not. It could be anything from giving him his first Gatorade in three months or being there to hold his hand when he wakes up." In return, warriors often describe the doctors, nurses, and staff in glowing,



Photo courtesy Phillip Jones

Major Kenny Harryman proudly calls Louisville, Kentucky home. She was recently honored by Bellarmine College as a Distinguished Alumni after she received her Bronze Star.

heroic terms. The program is making a genuine impact, though the staff bristles at the suggestion they are heroes.

"The warriors are the true heroes," Major Harryman says. "They are not just doing their job, but protecting our freedom."

The posters produced by WWP are hung in the breakroom and throughout LRMC as a reminder of the difference the medical staff is making in the lives of so many warriors. The videos are often viewed in group sessions.

"When you do see stories in regards to your previous patients it gives you a sense of pride and relief they were able to adapt and overcome," First Lieutenant Smutok says.

Those feelings are shared by hundreds of LRMC staff, says Major Harryman. "The videos and posters mean so much to those of us who care for the wounded warriors. It gives us peace of mind that we did help, and those servicemen and women go on to live productive lives."

"What sticks in my mind are the wounded warriors who have come back and talked with the operating room personnel. It is so inspiring to hear their stories and to see their enthusiasm for life after what they have been through. It is so rewarding and fills me with joy and satisfaction."

During the 2011 European Regional Medical Command Medical-Surgical Conference earlier this year in Garmisch, Germany several wounded warriors shared their stories and gratitude in person, and in the process helped heal the medical staff.

"They played their videos for an auditorium full of nurses and doctors and spoke about their injuries and their recoveries," says Major Hahn. "There wasn't a dry eye in that place and they were given a standing ovation. So many people came up to me and told me how important that was for them."

"I see the resiliency of the human spirit, and the spectacular teamwork of military medicine as a whole system. Seeing these amazing men and women recover from such devastating injuries ... I guess it heals my soul and energizes me to work harder."



Photo courtesy Phillip Jones

First Lieutenant Kate Smutok stands next to one of the 'Thank You' posters that help rejuvenate the spirits of the medical staff at LRMC.



Photo courtesy Phillip Jones

Dr. Christina Hahn grew up in a small farming town near Sunbury, Ohio dreaming of being a Dallas Cowboys cheerleader. Today she's helping wounded warriors keep their dreams alive instead.



# LIFE IN HD:

## The Shilo Harris Story



Shilo Harris stands in the vast Texas field savoring the landscape's finer points.

He looks respectfully at the American flag waving proudly in the breeze, taking particular note of its vibrant colors. The detail in the purple and yellow flowers dotting the ground is vivid. Even the fleeting wisps of clouds and the grazing cows in the distance can't escape his notice.

One tends to relish even the most common views when he's nearly had his eyes burned out.

"I'm living life in HD," Shilo said. "That's honestly how I see life – it's high definition to me. I see a sunrise and it means that much more to me because I can actually see it."

The man who grew up in the tiny town of McCamey, Texas working at a bait and tackle shop was a pair

of sunglasses away from having his last glimpse of the world explode in a fireball near Baghdad, Iraq.

"Fortunately my eyes were saved by my protective gear," the Army staff sergeant said of the explosion that left him without ears, a portion of his nose, and third-degree burns on his head, face, and 35 percent of his body.

Shilo's 'protective gear' was no classified, military issue eyewear. He was sporting a pair of Oakley carbon fiber M Frame glasses his wife purchased for him prior to his first deployment in 2004.

"My dad actually made fun of me for those Oakley's because they were \$300 with the carbon fiber frames and the nice lenses," Shilo recalled.

What happened on February 19, 2007 was no laughing matter. Shilo's platoon was conducting route clearance in



The aftermath of the IED that struck Shilo's vehicle makes his survival even more miraculous. "I don't believe in luck," Shilo says. "I'm a blessed man."

Iraq when his truck was struck by an improvised explosive device (IED). The blast killed three soldiers, and wounded the driver and Shilo.

The only part of Shilo's face untouched by the blazing heat and flames were those areas protected by his \$300 glasses – eyelids and eyes, bridge of his nose, and the skin surrounding his eyes directly behind the lenses.

"Every time I look in the mirror I have a constant reminder of my eyes being saved," Shilo said. "I can actually see what was preserved through the glasses."

Initially Shilo didn't even know his face had been burned. He was in a coma for 48 days after the IED detonated, and he would spend nearly two years in recovery at the burn unit at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas.

He remembers distinctly the moment he realized the glasses his wife bought him saved his eyes. He was still heavily medicated and had not yet seen himself, so he was unaware his face had been burned.

His wife, Kathreyn, was at his side when he asked her what he looked like. She offered to take a photo.

"I cried a little bit when I saw the photo," Shilo recalled, "but I always try to find the bright side of it and I said, 'Well, I can still see.'"

He would be able to watch his five children smile and laugh and reach out to put their arms around his neck. Shilo could indeed still see his loving wife.

"You have beautiful eyes and I am glad you still have them," Kathreyn said as she stood bedside

and looked into the same hazel eyes she did six years prior when she said "I do."

That's when Shilo told Kathreyn it was the glasses she bought and shipped to him that were responsible for saving his eyes.

"She started crying," Shilo said.

When Shilo's father saw his son's eyes and realized those \$300 glasses saved his sight, he reconsidered his stance on their price tag.

"I'll never tell you how to spend your money again," he said.

Shilo didn't hesitate to purchase another pair.

"They're like a security blanket," Shilo said. "Any time I go hunting I wear those glasses."

And you know he sees in HD.

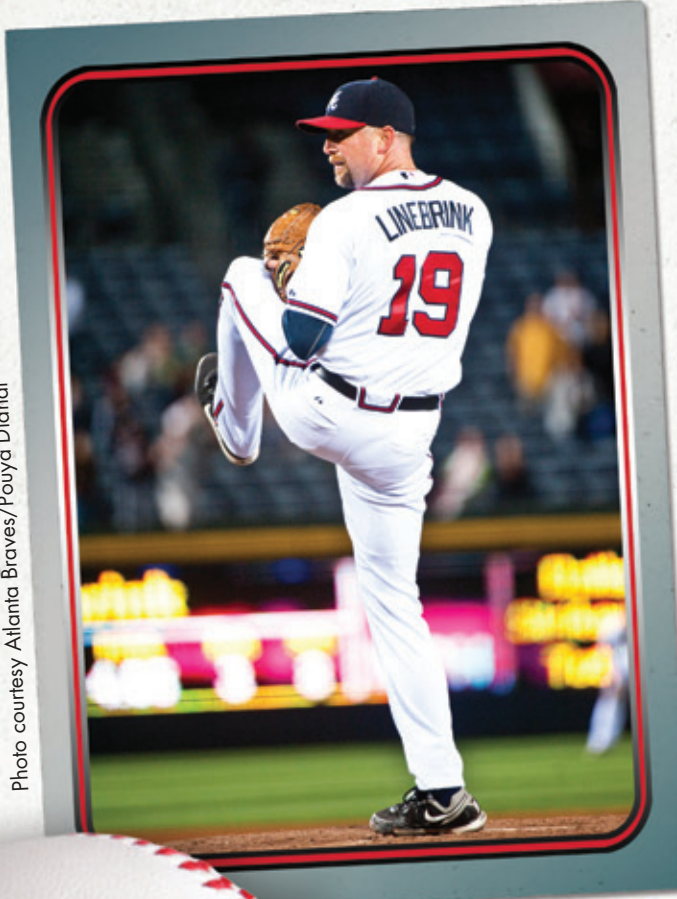


Shilo has enjoyed watching his family grow. Pictured from left to right (back row) are Joshua, Shilo, Kathreyn, and Glen, and (front row) Elizabeth, Nicolas, and Albert.



# SCOTT'S HEROES

Photo courtesy Atlanta Braves/Pouya Dianat



*Scott Linebrink began saying 'thank you' to military personnel while playing in San Diego, and he continues that commitment today with the Atlanta Braves. "We wear uniforms," Scott said, "but that's where the similarity stops. They put their lives on the line every day."*

Forgive Atlanta Braves pitcher Scott Linebrink if he can't rattle off a statistic he's quietly been compiling since 2008. He's far more interested in the names and the stories than he is the numbers.

Four years ago the Austin, Texas native started Scott's Heroes, a program where he invites one veteran and his or her family to the ballpark as his personal guest and treats them like family.

"I want it to be more than these guys come out, shake a hand, and move on," said Scott, who figures he's played host to 25-30 families to date. "I am more and more in awe of the jobs they do and I am interested in hearing their stories."

One story Scott won't forget is that of Frank Barroqueiro, who attended a Braves game in June 2011 with his wife Bethany and son Hayden. Frank, an infantry company commander with the Army's 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, was shot through the right forearm in 2009 during a firefight in Afghanistan.

Scott asked Bethany how she found out her husband was wounded. Frank and Bethany looked at each other and shared a smile. Scott knew he was in for a story.

Frank called his wife from Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (LRMC) in Germany to tell her the news. Before he did, however, he first asked Bethany how she was doing, and Bethany began telling her husband she had a bad day.

Frank's doctors prompted him to go ahead and tell his wife he had been hit. Frank whispered back to the doctors he couldn't tell her because she was having a bad day.

"All of a sudden I hear a lot of people laughing in the background," said Bethany, who began suspecting something was up.

"My doctor let the cat out of the bag I guess," Frank said. "Technically he saved my life too, so I can't begrudge him."

Frank finally admitted to his wife: "I kind of got myself shot."

## Service Through Sport

Scott's interest in hosting servicemen and women during baseball games has its roots in World War II. Both of his grandfathers served then, and they are whom Scott thinks about each game as the National Anthem is played.

Scott also came close to wearing a military uniform instead of a baseball one. After high school Scott met with a recruiter before ultimately deciding to go to college and play baseball.

"Had life taken a couple of different twists and turns it could have been me in a military career," Scott said.

Scott is keenly aware of the sacrifices made by those in the military. As he travels the country playing baseball he also coordinates hospital visits where he and a few teammates drop in to brighten the day for recovering warriors.

"I've seen the benefit of [visiting a] hospital room," Scott said. "I've had nurses tell me that's the first time [their patient] had smiled in a few months."

## Hometown Heroes

Scott has spoken to other general managers about having something similar to Scott's Heroes in every Major League Baseball city. Ideally, a player from each team would put his name and heart into their own Heroes program.

Scott's efforts in Atlanta have not gone unappreciated by Wounded Warrior Project alumni like Joe Merritt. Joe, who grew up going to Braves games with his grandparents in the mid 1970s, was Scott's guest in May 2011.



Photo courtesy Atlanta Braves/Pouya Dianat

Scott Linebrink on Turner Field with Frank Barroqueiro, his wife, Bethany, and son, Hayden.

"For me it was very humbling to be amongst people who are worth millions of dollars playing baseball and they were saying thank you to me for my service," said Joe, who attended the game with his wife, Sonya, and daughter, Danielle. "Scott is a remarkably humble person. The fact that somebody in a professional sport would stop long enough to do this, especially with his schedule, it shows how much he really cares."

Joe, a veteran of the war in Iraq who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and a traumatic brain injury (TBI), wanted to make sure Scott knew exactly how much his generosity meant.

He took his 218th Brigade South Carolina National Guard patch off his uniform and presented it to Scott.

"That means a lot," Scott said. "He shared a personal artifact with me. It's part of his identity. To me it's like giving the logo off my hat or the patch off the sleeves of my uniform."

The Braves uniform is one Joe thinks highly of as well.

"The Braves embody the country," Joe said. "Just like the New England Patriots and the Dallas Cowboys, the Atlanta Braves are America's team. I grew up believing that."

Scott Linebrink believes the men and women of the military are America's team. They are the ones responsible for making this country No. 1.

That's a number worth remembering.



# TECH TALK

## PTSD? There's an app for that

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) doesn't only manifest itself at home, so having help at your fingertips – regardless of your location – is a convenient tool.

At least a dozen different smartphone apps are now available, including **Tactical Breather**, **T2 Mood Tracker**, **Breathe2Relax**, and **PTSD Coach**. Each of these four apps was developed by the Department of Defense or the Department of Veterans Affairs and can be downloaded for free.

**Tactical Breather** (iPhone): Helps users gain control over heart rate, emotions, concentration, and other physiological and psychological responses during stressful situations.



**Breathe2Relax** (iPhone or Android): Customize the app with personal images and music to help with breathing exercises, which decreases the body's fight-or-flight stress response and helps stabilize moods, control anger, and manage stress.



**T2 Mood Tracker** (iPhone or Android): Users self-monitor, track, and reference their emotional experiences over a period of days, weeks, and months.



**PTSD Coach** (iPhone or Android): This app's key features are self-assessment, symptom management, PTSD education, and support. Users can populate the phone with personal sources of emotional support, and link to treatment programs.



Don't forget you can always check out Restore™, an anonymous WWP website that helps you deal with PTSD, by visiting [connect.woundedwarriorproject.org](http://connect.woundedwarriorproject.org).

## FREEZE FRAME



Wounded Warrior Project alumni and San Antonio TRACK student Jesus Archuleta met Eva Longoria during her book signing tour. The award-winning actress took a moment to pose for a photo while holding the WWP logo.



**WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT™**

**A L U M N I**

### Enter to Win

Submit a photo of yourself showcasing the WWP logo or wearing WWP logo apparel. The most interesting pictures will be featured in our electronic newsletter and in the After Action Report. At the end of the year, alumni will vote for the best picture to win. Good Luck!

Submit your photos to [alumni@woundedwarriorproject.org](mailto:alumni@woundedwarriorproject.org)

# LASIKPLUS

## Enhancing Warrior Quality of Life

If seeing is believing, LasikPlus has a lot of heroes believing.

Since December 2009 LasikPlus has provided complimentary laser vision correction surgery to more than 135 Wounded Warrior Project alumni, their spouse, or caregiver.

"With two major military operations in play, more and more United States servicemen and women are coming home with life-changing injuries," said David L. Thomas, chief operating officer of LasikPlus and a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point. "What many don't realize is that even simple daily tasks such as putting on glasses or contact lenses are virtually impossible due to a wide range of injuries for thousands of our heroes. LasikPlus is doing our part to help these men and women alleviate one daily burden while enhancing quality of life."

The impact LasikPlus has had on those receiving the free surgery goes far beyond the gift of improved sight.

"You stepped up to the plate when no one else did and offered your time, services, and experience while asking for nothing in return," said Michael J. Schuch, a now-retired member of the United States Army's 6th Special Forces Group. "In doing so not only did you set yourself apart from the vast majority that chooses to go through life not caring about others, but you showed other wounded soldiers and myself that, even in our darkest moments, we are not alone and someone still has our backs."

LasikPlus has offices in 26 states to provide convenient care to warriors, spouses, or caregivers.

Please contact the Wounded Warrior Project Resource Center if you are interested in receiving free laser vision correction surgery from LasikPlus. The Resource Center can be reached via phone by calling 888.WWP.ALUM (997.2586) or via email at [resourcecenter@woundedwarriorproject.org](mailto:resourcecenter@woundedwarriorproject.org).

# Believe in heroes.™

Believe in heroes™ is putting the veteran back in Veterans Day™ by highlighting the sacrifices, challenges, and triumphs experienced by this generation of warriors.

Wounded Warrior Project has united a number of efforts around this central theme, including:

- Grocery: Acosta Sales and Marketing and NewsAmerica will distribute a coupon book to 60 million homes on Nov. 6, 2011. More than 50 companies are participating in Believe in heroes.
- Under Armour is launching a Believe in heroes clothing line that will be sold at major sporting good retailers, including Dick's, Bass Pro Shop, Academy, and others from September 11 – November 11.
- PARADE Magazine will have a special veterans theme and will feature WWP and the Believe in heroes campaign.

For more information on all Believe in heroes initiatives, visit [believeinheroes.org](http://believeinheroes.org).





# THE FINAL COUNTDOWN



Wounded warriors Robert Tucker, Chris Gordon, Andrew Coughlan, Alex Somerson, and James Zelenka attended NASA's final shuttle launch as Atlantis lifted off at Kennedy Space Center July 8, 2011.