



AFTER ACTION

2012 VOLUME 7

REPORT

INSPIRED LIVING

INTO THE FIRE

ONCE A WARRIOR



WOUNDED WARRIOR
PROJECT®

WOUNDEDWARRIORPROJECT.ORG

CHOOSE THE INSPIRED LIFE

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ON THE COVER: Jeff and Katie Adams pose with the 1965 Shelby Cobra replica Jeff built over the span of nearly four years. Photo by Ricky Savi.



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Dear Alumnus,

Recently I was reminded of a quote credited to the great American poet and essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson:

No great man ever complains of want of opportunity.

How many great individuals do you know who are sitting around waiting for opportunity? Instead they are likely hard at work creating opportunity through their own dedication and effort.

That truth is well exemplified by Jeff Adams, the subject of our cover story. Since sacrificing his leg in Iraq in 2004, Jeff has graduated with a mechanical engineering degree from Louisiana State University, become a certified adaptive ski instructor, and worked as an engineer for Boeing and Redstone Arsenal. He also built a showstopping replica of a 1965 Shelby Cobra.

“If you can do something about your life, do it,” Jeff told his graduating class at LSU. “If you can't do things the same way you used to, learn to do them differently.”

Jeff is definitely living an inspired life, and just as importantly he is encouraging others to do the same.

If you've been waiting for the right time to participate in a WWP program, holding out for the perfect opportunity, let right now be that time.

Take advantage of what WWP offers – maybe it is a couples retreat or an alumni event – and make an inspired choice.

Lastly I want to draw attention to the special guest column on page 18 by Dr. Charles W. Hoge. He outlines key principles that help warriors navigate their path to a successful home-front transition. Many have found his expertise helpful and WWP is pleased to share some of that information with you.

Sincerely,

Steve Nardizzi
Executive Director, Wounded Warrior Project™ (WWP)

NEWS AND NOTES ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

VISIT RESTOREWARRIORS.ORG
WWP made a concerted effort to raise mental health awareness during National Suicide Prevention Month in September. We know mental health issues are not confined to a single time frame, so we encourage you to visit restorewarriors.org any time you need help, assistance, or information.



NEW WWP OFFICES TO SERVE YOU
WWP recently opened a regional office in Nashville, Tennessee, and will open three more in the last quarter of 2012 – in Colorado Springs, Colorado; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Atlanta, Georgia – to help meet the needs of warriors where they live.

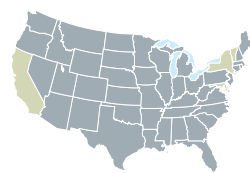


IN THE COMMUNITY



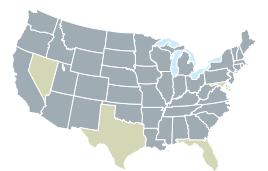
A
B
C
D

A. Soldier Ride™ New York got underway with tremendous community support. **B.** More than two dozen warriors attended a Peer Mentoring training session earlier this year in California. The group took a break to visit the San Diego Zoo. **C.** House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee Chairwoman Ann Marie Buerkle (front row, tan jacket) spent some time with warriors, caregivers, and Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) staff members during Capitol Hill Day in Washington, D.C. as they met with members of Congress and Congressional staffers on issues surrounding mental health and traumatic brain injury rehabilitation. **D.** Team WWP took a minute to pose for a photo before getting dirty in Tough Mudder New England.



E
F
G
H

E. The San Antonio, Texas TRACK™ program graduated its second cohort this summer. **F.** Cohort 7 graduated from TRACK in Jacksonville, Florida, in late July. **G.** WWP had a strong presence during the Windy 25 Memorial 5K race in Las Vegas, Nevada. A team of warriors ran the race and the alumni team staffed a booth during the event. **H.** The Under Armour staff listens to a Wounded Warrior share his story and thank Under Armour for its support during UA Freedom Day in Baltimore, Maryland.



Asked & Answered



1. I would like to become more involved in recreational activities again. What should I do?

Contact the Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) Resource Center, which will notify the Physical Health and Wellness program staff to provide information on recreation, adaptive sports programs, and overall strategies to help you remain physically engaged while adjusting to life after injury. Specific programs include adaptive sports and secondary rehabilitation. The Resource Center staff can also provide information on Soldier Ride. The Resource Center can be reached via phone Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. until 8 p.m. EST at **888.997.2586** or via email at resourcecenter@woundedwarriorproject.org.

2. Does WWP offer employment assistance?

Yes, WWP's Warriors to Work™ program helps Wounded Warriors transition back into the civilian workforce by providing career counseling services and job placement assistance. The website is powered by CareerBuilder.com technology – the nation's largest online job site – to bring warriors, caregivers, and employers the most up-to-date job search and employee matching capabilities. Get started by going to wtow.woundedwarriorproject.org.

3. What is the Physical Disability Board of Review (PDBR)?

The PDBR was implemented by the Department of Defense (DoD) to ensure service members who received a Physical Evaluation Board (PEB), and were permanently medically separated receiving disability severance pay, were evaluated correctly under DoD laws.

4. How do I qualify for review from the PDBR?

A warrior must have been medically separated from active duty between September 11, 2001, and December 31, 2009. The warrior must have also received severance pay of 0%, 10%, or 20% from the PEB.

5. How do I apply for this review?

The application process is non-adversarial and the warrior only needs to fill out a DDF 294 and VAF 3288. It is recommended, however, that PEB records, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) rating decisions, and pertinent medical records be provided with the application to shorten processing times.

The applications may be obtained online at:

DDF 294: <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/infomgt/forms/efoms/dd0294.pdf>

VAF 3288: http://www.va.gov/vaforms/form_detail.asp?FormNo=3288

If you need additional assistance, the Resource Center can help get you in touch with WWP's Benefits Service team. The Resource Center can be reached via phone Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. until 8 p.m. EST at **888.997.2586** or via email at resourcecenter@woundedwarriorproject.org.



A Lesson in Life

Luke Wilson gladly professes he must have been a good instructor. His teachings saved his life, and as a result, he felt like sharing his Purple Heart ceremony.

During training prior to being deployed with the Oregon National Guard in early 2004, the Army sergeant helped teach a Combat Lifesaver Class on how to properly care for the injured. Cut to the night of April 8, 2004, in Iraq when a rocket-propelled grenade tore through Luke's vehicle as it crossed a bridge over the Euphrates River.

Following a flash of bright, white light and in the middle of returning fire, Luke realized his left leg was no longer in place. But he stayed low and kept firing. He was having a hard time convincing his two closest friends his leg from the knee down was virtually gone. Losing five pints of blood was one sign. Passing out was another. Those friends, Army Specialist Stephen Baldwin and Private First Class Andreas Molero – both participants in the training class with the Oregon National Guard – acted.

"They applied a tourniquet – using a belt and bayonet sheath," Luke recalled. "Another 30 seconds or a minute without that, and I would have died."

Luke's leg was soon amputated above the knee. He spent nearly a year undergoing a dozen surgeries and recovering at Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) in Washington, D.C.

When Luke was informed someone he didn't know would present his Purple Heart at WRAMC, he opted to wait until



LUKE WILSON (center) stands with **ANDREAS MOLERO** and **STEPHEN BALDWIN**, the two men he credits with saving his life. Luke is wearing a makeshift uniform as he was asked to stand in with the battalion during the demobilization ceremony.

he returned home to Hermiston, Oregon. He could then share the day with Stephen, Andreas, and Brig. Gen. Douglas A. Pritt, who cared for Luke's family during his recovery.

"I knew they were going to be at the Purple Heart ceremony," Luke said of the men who saved his life. That knowledge only added to his excitement for the November 11, 2005, ceremony in Portland, Oregon. "I was really looking forward to it."

From the work desk in his living room, Luke can clearly see the Purple Heart mounted in a picture frame with various photos and Army coins on his "I Love Me" wall.

"I always thought it was a very coveted, honorable, and prestigious award," said Luke, who received the award from the brigadier general. "The day I got the Purple Heart will live with me forever."

Luke was so concerned with the plight of veterans he took a job as a transition assistance advisor, working with veterans to ease their transition home. Recently, he helped with a deceased 70-year-old veteran's burial plans after he underwent financial difficulty.

Luke still relishes hunting and fishing in rural, eastern Oregon and celebrates having a family of six children with wife Tonya. This fall, he will leave the military support post to pursue a degree in civil engineering at Washington State University's Tri-Cities campus. He also hopes to earn an internship at Ground Zero in New York following a visit there last year so he can "complete the circle of a wounded soldier working for a construction company *right there*."



MARK LALLI:

“LET THE MEMORY OF THOSE WE’VE LOST MOTIVATE YOU.”

There is a gleam in his eye every time Mark Lalli thinks of both of his grandfathers.

“They served in World War II,” Mark says. “It was my dream to follow in their footsteps. I always wanted to be G.I. Joe. It looked like fun, and I wanted to go play Army.”

Mark says there is a legacy of military service in his family that goes all the way back to the American Revolution. Mark’s turn came in November 2002 when he joined the Army a week after his 17th birthday.

“September 11 motivated me to do whatever I could to serve and protect my country.”

That’s exactly what Mark did – serving in Iraq. As a UH-60 crew chief, he would make sure everything was good to go for the aircrafts to complete their missions.

He also flew missions as a door gunner.

It was on someone else’s aircraft Mark experienced a life-changing event.

“I was on a joint training exercise with the U.S. Air Force on November 8, 2007. Our aircraft had an unrecoverable malfunction. We had 11 souls on board, but only five survived. I was one of the lucky ones. I suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI) as well as over two dozen broken bones. I suffer from short-term memory loss and some paralysis.”

The aircraft spun for several hundred feet before crashing to the ground.

“My first thoughts were to do everything I could to help everyone in the back of the aircraft. I was trying to

calm them all while we were spinning, because there is a point of no return. I was knocked unconscious, and I woke up from a coma a month and a half later.”

Mark’s next moment of consciousness came at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. He was there for about two weeks and then transferred to James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital in Tampa, Florida – where he rehabbed for 19 months.

“Rehab was painful,” says Mark. “And there were times I wanted to quit. But I believe I owe it to those six warriors who died in the crash. I was given a chance to live, and I live in their honor.”

It was in Tampa where Mark met an outreach coordinator from Wounded Warrior Project (WWP).

“There was another warrior with WWP who I met who was dealt a bad hand; he was an amputee. But he showed me that it’s not the end. He inspired me that anything is still possible. There is life, even when you’re confined to a wheelchair. WWP helped me with VA claims, taking me on hunting trips and, quite frankly, just helped me clear my head.”

It’s that support Mark receives from the men and women of WWP that makes him feel like he’s with his squad again.

“The camaraderie with other warriors helps you share experiences – bounce things off each other, what has helped you, and what has helped them.”

Now Mark is passionate about shaking off the stereotypes branded on Wounded Warriors.

“Warriors are active members of society,” he says. “Take each day as it comes. Find out what works for you and go with it, and simply stay away from what doesn’t work for you. Every day is an Alive Day™. Keep your minds on those we have lost, and let their memory motivate you.”

Those memories have certainly motivated Mark. When people tell him that he can’t do something, it only gives him more drive to work harder.

“I’m getting to the point where I’m independent again, and my goals for the future are to raise a family and be the best person I can be in every aspect of life.”

Q: What is your favorite song?

A: “Simple Man” by Lynyrd Skynyrd

Q: What is one thing not many people know about you?

A: I tend to be shy when I first meet people, but when I get to know them more I open up.

Q: What is your favorite quote?

A: “Tomorrow is the most important thing in life. Comes into us at midnight very clean. It’s perfect when it arrives and it puts itself in our hands. It hopes we’ve learned something from yesterday.”
— John Wayne

Q: What is your favorite hobby?

A: Trap and skeet shooting.

Q: If you could be any movie character, who would you be and why?

A: Rooster Cogburn. He was hired by a girl to avenge a murder, and along the way they both learned about the world from each other.

Prioritize Time to Live Healthier

Hippocrates – or is it Hercules? – is often called the father of modern medicine. Yep, it's definitely Hippocrates (c.460-370 BC) who wrote "... all parts of the body which have a function ... and exercised ... become thereby healthy, well developed ... but if unused become liable to disease, defective in growth and age quickly."

While you may not be a philosopher or historian – and you surely don't want to get on the bench press next to Hercules – you should note the great Greek physician Hippocrates recognized regimented exercise could lead to a healthier and more active lifestyle. And that was more than 2,400 years ago!

So if you're suffering from a case of the I-had-the-best-intentions-to-exercise-this-year-but-now-what-can-I-do syndrome, take note. Don't let what you can't do interfere with what you can do.

There are 168 hours in a week. Generally, after a laborious day at work or school, one can be left

uninspired and without motivation to exercise. How many of the 168 hours are you dedicating to a healthy and active lifestyle? How many of those hours are spent on the couch flipping channels on the television?

What's in it for you? For starters, you'll look better in the mirror each morning when you get up. If that isn't enough, consider the potential to live a longer, healthier life.

A constructive way to deal with the demands of the day, relieve stress, and feel better about oneself is to engage in exercise. One can reduce the risk for type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and osteoporosis by engaging in 30 or more minutes of moderate-intensity, physical activity most days of the week.

Funny, you may have heard about an ancient Greek physician who uttered a similar statement. He lived to be about 90 years old – more than twice the estimated life expectancy during that period in history.



PIZZA: HOT OFF THE GRILL

Take your next tailgating party up a notch. Our easy grilled pizza is sure to be a hit. Make the dough ahead of time and have all your ingredients chopped and ready to go so all you have to do is grill and assemble the pizza on game day. If making individual pizzas, have your friends create their own.

MAKES ONE 12-INCH PIZZA OR 4 INDIVIDUAL PIZZAS

2½ teaspoons active dry yeast
2 cups warm water
3½ cups all-purpose flour
1 cup semolina flour, plus extra for dusting
1 tablespoon salt
¼ cup olive oil
1½ cups prepared tomato sauce
2 cups grated mozzarella
¼ cup sautéed diced onions
2 tablespoons fresh basil, sliced thinly

1. Combine yeast and water in a bowl and stir to dissolve. Let the mixture sit until a thick foam forms.
2. Add the flours and salt to the yeast and stir by hand, or mix on medium speed in an electric mixer using the dough hook attachment, until the dough is smooth and elastic, about 5 minutes.
3. Transfer dough to a lightly oiled bowl. Cover with a clean kitchen towel and let rest at room temperature until doubled in size, about 1½ hours. Gently fold dough over and let it rise for another 45 minutes. The dough is ready for use now or can be covered and refrigerated for up to 2 days.
4. Preheat a gas grill to high. If using a charcoal grill, build a fire and let it burn down until the coals are glowing red with a moderate coating of white ash. Spread the coals in an even bed. Clean the cooking grate.
5. Roll or stretch the dough into a 12-inch round. If preparing individual pizzas, divide dough into four pieces and stretch into rounds. Lay the dough round/s on a lightly floured surface. Brush olive oil over the entire dough round/s.
6. Place dough directly on grill with the oiled side face-down. Brush dough with remaining olive oil. Grill until dough is marked and puffs slightly, 3 to 4 minutes. Flip over with tongs and top with tomato sauce, cheese, and onions. Cover grill. Cook until crust is golden and cheese is melted, about 2 to 3 minutes. Remove pizza from grill and sprinkle with basil.

Source: The CIA cookbook *Grilling*



The Culinary Institute of America (CIA) is a program provider for WWF. For more information on the CIA, visit ciachef.edu.



INSPIRED LIVING

ONE WAY

THIS IS THE STORY OF A MAN WHO SHOULDN'T BE ALIVE, BUT IS; WHO SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO WALK, BUT DOES; WHO SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO DRIVE A CAR, BUT CAN — ONE HE BUILT HIMSELF.

It's not that Jeff Adams is invincible. He isn't. He simply refuses to accept certain words in life — words like “can't,” “quit,” and “regret.”

He believes in cause and effect ... actions and consequences ... and the power of thought, choices, and attitude.

“You can become trapped in a poisonous attitude if you allow it,” says Jeff. “You can sit in a corner, look out the window, and brood over what should've been, could've been, and ought to be. But you'll be increasingly self-absorbed, far removed from the truth, and lost in a make-believe world of negativity.”

It's 2008, and Jeff stands with the help of a cane. He's easing some of the pressure off his prosthetic leg, which goes all the way up to his hip.

Sprawled out before him in his garage are 56 large boxes and the 400-pound bare chassis of a replica 1965 AC Cobra. This isn't a toy model. It's a real car. And in Jeff's hand is a 2½-inch thick, 600-plus page assembly manual, telling him how to put together all 10,622 parts — from the headlights to the drive train to the smallest taillight and everything in between.

This is going to be more than a hobby. It's going to be the next three and a half years of Jeff's life. So he picks up a wrench and gets to work.

There is plenty of alone time for Jeff to think as he works on the suspension. And his thoughts take him back to his childhood.

Jeff grew up in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He loved the outdoors, and year after year his parents took him and his brothers to Boy Scouts, where he earned the rank of Eagle Scout.

“I enjoyed camping and playing G.I. Joe,” says Jeff. “So becoming an Eagle Scout was just a natural progression because I wanted to take it all the way through.”

That progression led Jeff to develop a desire to serve his country. So in 1998, a year after graduating from high school, Jeff joined the Louisiana Army National Guard. He laughs and says he felt they could learn a thing or two from the Scouts.

“We'd go out on a training exercise and I thought, man, they camp pretty stupid here. They have all this equipment. All you really need is a poncho and a little string. Why make it so hard?”

It was a good life that suited Jeff's temperament. He had a natural ability to adapt. One weekend a month he drilled with the National Guard. The rest of the time he focused on earning his mechanical engineering degree from Louisiana State University (LSU).

That is, when he wasn't focused on a young coed named Katie.

“We were both at LSU at the same time, and we met at a pool hall off campus,” says Katie. “It was in 2001, just shortly after 9/11. Knowing he was in the National Guard, I told him he'd better knock on wood.” She then smiles and pauses before adding: “Obviously, he didn't do it.”

Jeff doesn't like to dwell on his injury. More than 97 percent of his left leg is gone, but today he does nothing differently on his prosthetic than he would have on his own leg.

“I lost my leg in the line of duty. What's the big deal?”

What's really bothering Jeff is the electrical wiring of the Cobra, causing him to spout off a few choice cuss words. If it's not a problem with the fuel tank or brake lines, it's the engine and transmission. But wire

after wire, it's starting to come together.

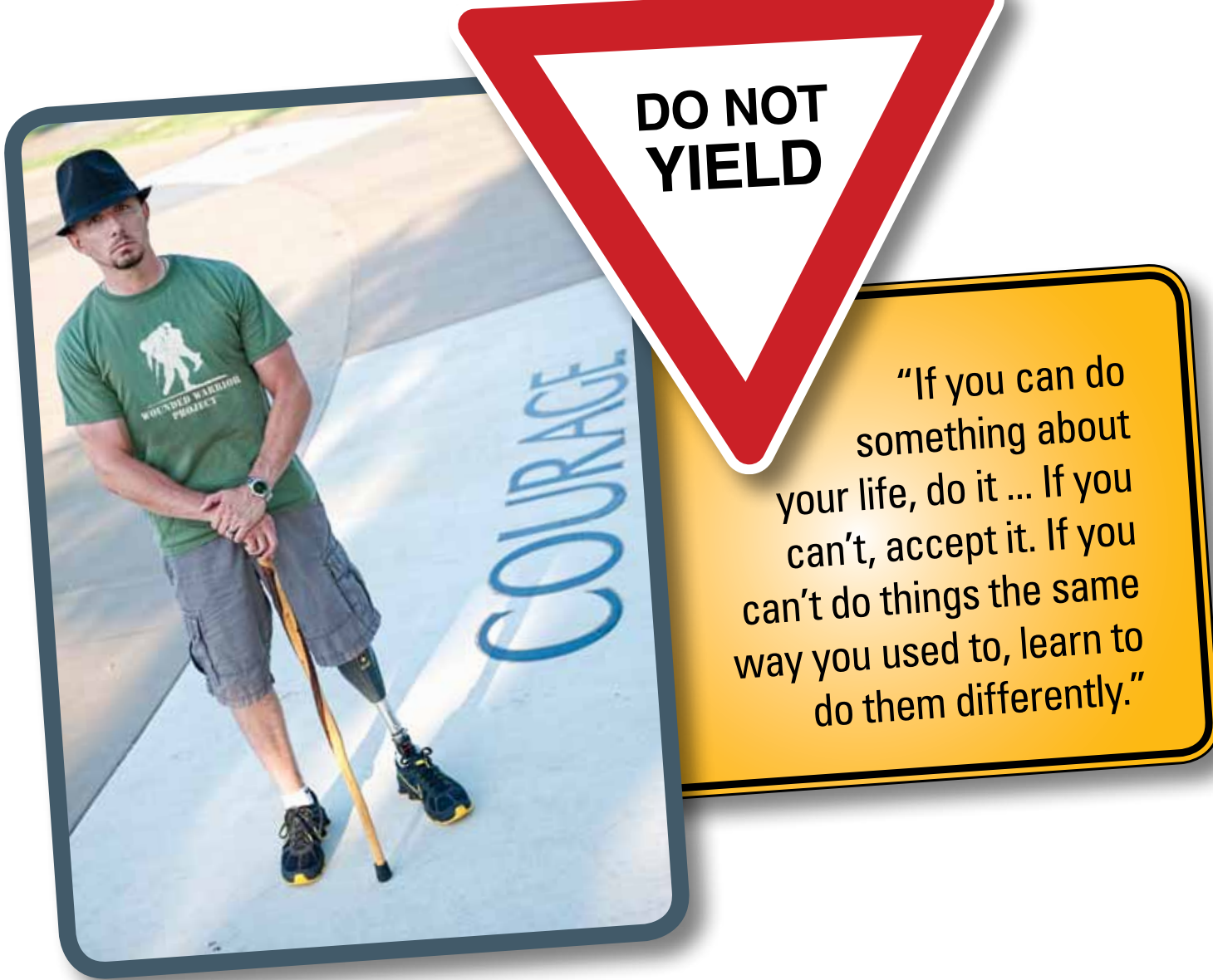
Jeff has the ignition switch in his hand, holds his breath, and turns the key. As Jeff's friend Erik adjusts the throttle, the Cobra roars, sounding like the four horsemen of the apocalypse thundering through the garage.

It's a moment Jeff savors, and he understands how lucky he is to be alive to experience it.

Back in 2004, Jeff had constructed a wave of momentum toward his future. He was just four credit hours away from earning his degree. But then his unit got the call. Jeff and his fellow Guardsmen were mobilized and put through a five-month training regimen at Fort Hood, Texas, and at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, California.

To Jeff, attitude is everything. He feels you live life, it doesn't live you. But there is a reality to war: the enemy is trying to kill you.

In Iraq, Jeff was the platoon leader of a combat engineer unit. They called themselves “infaneers” — infantry with demolition. Combat engineers lay minefields, wire obstacles, and dig ditches — anything to prevent the enemy from getting closer. They also destroyed



obstacles set by the enemy, so his unit was always among the first targeted by them.

On November 7, 2004, Jeff was being watched as he investigated a possible improvised explosive device (IED). As Jeff remembers it: “We were looking at it through binoculars from 300 yards away, searching for wires.”

But it was just a decoy. That’s when the enemy detonated the real IED, 10 feet away from Jeff. How it didn’t kill him, only God knows.

“I found myself sitting on the ground, missing a leg. My first thought was it looks just like it does in movies like *Saving Private Ryan*. My second thought was, ‘Why don’t I get back in the vehicle before I get shot like Forrest Gump?’ Then my third thought was, ‘Dude, why are you thinking about movies? You have no leg!’”

Katie says she’ll never forget the day she got the news.

“You go into survival mode,” she recalls. “This is what was in front of us ... so just go. His mother told me about the injury on Sunday and by Wednesday we were waiting at the intensive care unit at Walter Reed Army

Medical Center. There were nearly 30 surgeries — one every other day — over the next couple months.”

Jeff’s last surgery was in June 2005. In December 2005, he finally completed those last four credit hours at LSU and was invited to give the commencement address to his graduating class. He walked across the stage on crutches, stood at the podium, and looked out at the crowd.

“If you can do something about your life, do it,” he told them. “If you can’t, accept it. If you can’t do things the same way you used to, learn to do them differently. If you’ve lost something, search for it. If you can’t find it, crying about it won’t make it come back. And, most importantly, don’t ever forget the inspiration of those who died so you could live.”

Although Jeff was as serious as can be — and his inspiring speech moved many of his classmates to tears — he couldn’t help but inwardly laugh at himself.

“The entire time I’m standing there,” Jeff recalls, “I can feel my left leg. Not the prosthetic, but the missing leg. It’s the classic phantom limb sensation — like my leg is asleep. I can even feel the tingling in my missing toes. I couldn’t wait to get offstage and scratch them.

Yes, my leg is gone, but it’s always there.”

Jeff accomplished a lot after coming back from his injury. He’s completed a marathon and learned how to snow ski. He even became a certified snow ski instructor and teaches other injured service members. He’s worked as an engineer with Boeing and recently accepted a position as a test engineer for Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama.

But right now, he’s focused on one thing ... the Cobra. He’s bonded the fiberglass body into place ... added the doors ... mounted the 438 horsepower Ford 392 engine ... fitted the roll bar, windscreen, fuel cap, exhaust, and lights ... set up the wheels, tires, seats, dash, and gauges ... finished the interior ... and painted the body.

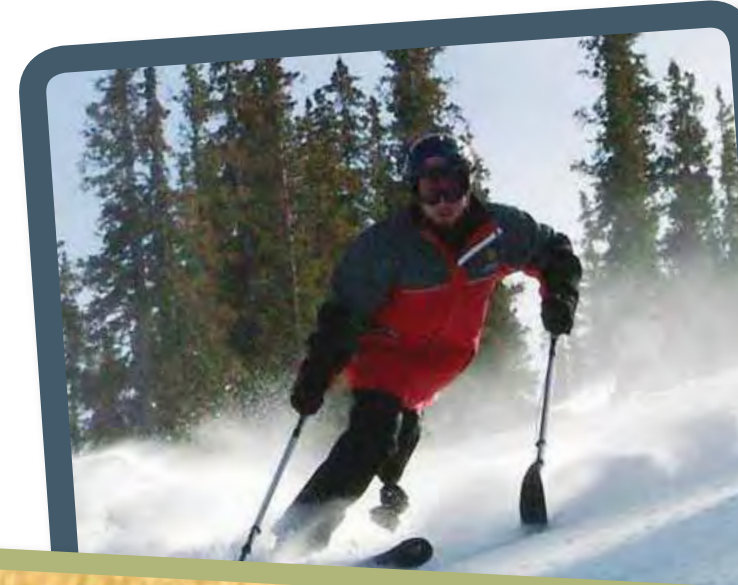
Now is the moment of destiny. Jeff takes Katie for her first ride in their new sports car.

“I’m in the Cobra and my heart is pounding,” Jeff says. “For nearly four years — sometimes 10 minutes a day, sometimes 10 hours a day — I worked on it. And I was inspired by a lot of things, but mostly by my hero: my wife Katie.”

However, Katie doesn’t see it that way. She jokes that her assistance in Jeff’s healing process is helping him with his balance when she steals his crutches. It’s a

healthy and loving attitude toward each other — and their fellow warriors — that inspires Jeff and Katie to appreciate life.

“Warriors have a different perspective,” says Jeff. “The guy in the bed next to me at Walter Reed lost both legs. The guy next to him lost his eyes. Down the line there are warriors with traumatic brain injury or burns over their entire body. And that empty bed — that’s the guy who never made it back. These are the warriors who inspire me, because they sacrificed so much.”



ONLINE: Watch video of Jeff firing up the Cobra engine for the very first time in his garage by visiting woundedwarriorproject.org/aar-exclusive.aspx.

INTO THE FIRE



Talk about jumping out of the frying pan.

Americans were transfixed this summer as forest fires in Colorado forced over 32,000 people to evacuate their homes. There, in the middle of it, was smokejumper Brian Schwitters – a former Marine, a veteran of fierce fighting in the battle of Fallujah, a Wounded Warrior with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) – jumping into the fire.

“Work is a relief,” says Brian, “it’s like in Fallujah, I have to be up, I have to be on.” He says he actually finds peace in the pressure-cooker world of a smokejumper where he is constantly required to “process information” and “make critical decisions.”

It was on one of those fire lines in his native Montana that Brian and his wife, Ameer, first met in the summer of 2003. After their improbable beginning Ameer noticed Brian was, well, really cheerful. “He was one of those people who was almost annoyingly happy,” she says.

Ameer knew Brian was a Marine reservist. So it was no surprise that as the fighting in Iraq grew more intense, Brian’s unit would likely be called up.

But neither was ready for how soon.

They were married in August 2004. Two weeks later Brian was on the ground in Iraq. “It was a shock, definitely something I didn’t have on my radar,” says Ameer. “It was almost surreal.”

Three months later the young bride was in a restaurant with a friend when the phone rang. Brian was calling from Fallujah. “I remember hearing bombs going off in the background. And gunfire,” Ameer says. “I feared for my husband’s life. That was the end of my night, right there.”

In an effort to keep her mind off what her husband was going through, Ameer poured herself into her studies, working on her master’s degree in public health (she earned her Ph.D. in medical anthropology earlier this year).

The couple’s whirlwind didn’t let up.

A year after he was deployed, Brian was back home. He and Ameer finally went on their honeymoon in Alaska; they visited friends in Arizona; Ameer had an internship in West Virginia. “It was non-stop,” says Ameer. “I didn’t notice any difference in Brian.”

Then in the summer of 2005 her father was diagnosed with cancer. Two months later he was gone. That was when Ameer says she noticed something was wrong with Brian. The upbeat, caring man she fell in love with had no empathy for what she was going through.

“There was no personal connection to the death,” she said. “It was just, he died, that happens.”

It was then Ameer began to notice Brian was jumpy and irritable. She also realized he had lost the

irrepressible cheerfulness that was so much a part of him when they first met.

Brian noticed it, too.

“I definitely saw death as something different after Iraq than before. For me, it was no big deal. Before I left I was the happiest guy in the world. I don’t have that happiness and joy that I used to.”

Months passed. New Year’s Eve came and went. Then another. And winter settled on the marriage of Ameer and Brian. They tried counseling. They tried to work it out on their own.

In January of 2008, Ameer was through. She left and Brian was alone.

“Even (compared to) Iraq, my wife leaving me was the most devastating thing in my life,” says Brian. “When she left it was, by far, the toughest thing I’ve ever lived through.”

After their separation Ameer found Wounded Warrior Project (WWP). She went to a family support retreat where she met other women who were going through strikingly similar things she was experiencing with

Brian. She convinced Brian to join her at a WWP Project Odyssey™ for couples.

“It showed me I’m not alone,” says Brian. “It opened up my eyes to the wealth of information and benefits at WWP and all the resources available to individuals.”

Among those resources are outdoor retreats, peer support, and other unique programs tailored to Wounded Warriors living with combat stress, and their family members.

For Ameer and Brian, who celebrated their eighth anniversary in August, WWP helped save their marriage. “I now know I have people I can call,” says Brian. The same is true for Ameer: “Meeting all these women who knew what I was going through was just fantastic. We still keep in touch.”

As surely as forestry officials are predicting one of the most severe fire seasons will continue, so too is Brian Schwitters sure to return to the work he loves – out of the frying pan and into the fire. Always knowing WWP is there to help.

Brawny Celebrates Strength of Wounded Warriors



Wounded Warriors, in many cases, are living stronger, more active lifestyles than before their injuries. This inspiring fact is not lost on the makers of Brawny® paper towels.

Georgia-Pacific, Brawny's parent company, launched a national campaign that runs through the remainder of 2012 to celebrate the strength Wounded Warriors exhibit

and to empower the American public to support them during their recovery and transition back into civilian life.

Brawny is donating \$250,000 to Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) and will donate \$1 up to an additional \$250,000 for every individual who, between now and December 31, 2012:

- Shares a "Thank You" note on the Brawny Towels Facebook page,
- "Likes" Brawny Towels on Facebook, or
- Texts THANKS to 272969

Samaritan Lodge Offers Spiritual Healing



Photo courtesy operationhealourpatriots.org

For more than 40 years Samaritan's Purse – a nondenominational evangelical Christian organization – has provided both physical and spiritual healing through Biblical teachings to those needing a chance to rebuild their lives.

Among those Samaritan's Purse ministers to are America's wounded service members. Samaritan's Lodge Alaska provides service members and their spouses a weeklong retreat to receive daily devotions and marriage resiliency workshops from a staff chaplain.

This course offers couples time away from daily pressures and distractions to study the primary dynamics that impact marriage. The workshop concludes with a worship service, which affirms and celebrates the couples' relationship with God and one another.

For more information, visit operationhealourpatriots.org.

Editor's Note: WWP periodically shares information on other organizations that support wounded service members.

Stay Connected to WWP

Have you moved recently? Updated your email address? Have a new mobile phone?

If you have any new contact details WWP is making it easier to stay connected and keep in touch. You can now log on to woundedwarriorproject.org/connect/LoginNew.aspx and update your information in the WWP database to help us better serve you.



Day of Service Hits Home for Wounded Warrior



Volunteers from the San Diego Outpost help organize and clean around the Dobbins household.

Pride serves as the basis for all things military. Pride in your country, pride in providing safety for the citizens of the United States, and pride in a job well done. For the family of Navy Reserve Petty Officer Second Class John Dobbins in Chula Vista, California, the simple enjoyment of a well-kept home made all beam with pride.

"They were just so grateful and you could physically see a difference afterward," said Sandi Pierz, a San Diego, California, volunteer Outpost leader and a key cog in the debut of the Wounded Warrior Project™ (WWP) Day of Service initiative with the Dobbins family. "It was like they won \$1 million. They could sit in their rooms and go into their garage and find things. It gave them peace of mind. It was a catalyst for them to feel like they could go out and be a part of the community. It was a win-win all around. The volunteers were just as moved. I want to do this on a regular basis."

The WWP Day of Service sends volunteers to the homes of injured service members to help complete tasks and chores they are otherwise unable to perform. San Diego was the first market to try the concept that will be a model for WWP to expand nationally, with a goal of providing a Day of Service in five Outpost cities in 2013.

Because of health issues, the Dobbins family, including their 18-year-old daughter, couldn't maintain the house. So a team of 14 volunteers came in and boxed materials, scrubbed, cleaned, and reshaped the interior, along with

grass mowing, weed pulling, and bush trimming. A broken garage door was fixed. One room was transformed into a sitting room with some on-the-job brainstorming and small touches like pictures hung in new places. A couple volunteers stay in touch with the Dobbins family to see if they have further needs.

"It was more than we even set out to do," said Sandi, who was on site in Chula Vista. "The next day, a couple volunteers even came back on their own to help – one putting a welcome mat at the front door. This is the epitome for what you're supposed to be doing for the military."



John Dobbins gets some assistance with organizing the tools in his garage from a San Diego Outpost volunteer.



ONLINE: See exclusive photos from the Day of Service by visiting woundedwarriorproject.org/aar-exclusive.aspx.

ONCE A WARRIOR— ALWAYS A WARRIOR

LANDNAV SKILLS FOR THE POSTWAR TRANSITION

Generations of veterans have faced challenges transitioning home from combat deployments, yet there remains insufficient understanding of how to navigate a successful transition and what this really means. The time needed to fully reconnect with loved ones, dial down the physical effects of combat (adrenaline, sleep problems, anger, hypervigilance, etc.), and learn to live with difficult experiences, including physical injuries or the loss of team members, is very individual. Combat veterans and family members often find it much more challenging than expected. Whatever time is necessary, a successful transition may be best defined as the ability to integrate difficult memories or experiences into who the individual is now, and enjoy productive employment, personal growth, meaningful relationships, and joy in life.

What are some key skills for a successful transition? The first is to recognize professional warriors don't stop being warriors when they return home. Military

service (training, deployments) changes how the body responds. Reactions many combat veterans experience when they come home, such as hypervigilance, sleep disturbance, intolerance of mistakes, guilt, should've/would've/could'ves, numbing of emotions, or anger, have their roots in adaptive military skills, such as situational awareness, ability to function on limited sleep, accountability/responsibility, after-action reviews, emotional control, and the ability to direct anger in a highly focused manner to accomplish the mission. All of these skills are double edged; they have both beneficial and potentially negative effects in the home environment.

Although each warrior has to find his own path to a successful transition, there are core principles that may facilitate this process. In my book, *Once a Warrior — Always a Warrior*, I co-opted "LANDNAV" to represent skills needed for navigating the treacherous home-front terrain. Here are a few highlights:

Life Survival Skills – Warrior Reflexes and Sleep. Core principles in dialing down combat-related physiological reactivity include aerobic exercise, a healthy diet, improving flexibility through stretching or yoga, and good sleep "hygiene." Examples of sleep hygiene principles include creating a routine that permits eight hours of sleep (the amount most people need to feel fully rested), avoiding video games before bed, using "white noise" (e.g., a fan), limiting caffeine (especially within six hours of sleep), leaving the bedroom if you wake in the middle of the night and can't get back to sleep within 30 minutes, doing something relaxing at that time until you get tired again (e.g., reading), and understanding how alcohol interferes with sleep and the ability to dial down combat reflexes.

Attend to and Modulate Your Reactions. These skills involve learning to recognize combat-related physical, emotional, and thinking reactions, and creating space between reactions and behaviors that might have negative consequences. Deep breathing and mindfulness are two powerful skills that, with practice, can help. A key thinking skill is to monitor how often you say to yourself "should have," "would have," "could have," "what-if," and similar phrases, and pick them off whenever you spot them (like pop-up targets). These statements are ways we express regret, criticism, judgment, blame, or unrealistic expectations, and may be linked to guilt or depression. They refer to things that happened in the past that can't be changed but give us an illusion of control.

Narrate Your Story. It's natural for warriors not to want to talk about things that happened in combat, but probably the single most helpful thing in a successful transition is finding a way to talk through the most difficult or painful experiences with someone you trust.

Deal with Stressful Situations, Stupid Stuff, People, and Anger. One skill here is to retrain your body to not react as strongly to triggers (e.g., people, crowds, lines) through facing situations directly, and gradually building up to greater levels of contact, much like an allergy doctor does by giving injections with gradually increasing doses of whatever a person is allergic to. Dealing with anger involves learning to express it in healthy ways; keeping the frequency low, the intensity mild, and the duration short; and tuning into whatever other emotions might lie underneath.

Another core skill is asking yourself questions like, "How much control do I really have in this situation?", "Is there any option that doesn't have a downside?" (generally the answer will be "No."), and "How much does this really matter?" Accepting life is full of catch-22s and other no-win situations can be a little disorienting at first, but gets easier over time.

Navigating the Mental Health Care System (if needed). The key here is to overcome stigmatizing perceptions and not give up if you encounter problems, roadblocks, or professionals who seem to not have the sensitivity or experience to fully assist. There are treatment options available through many different sources, and the important thing is to advocate for yourself and stick with it until you find a treatment formula that works best for you. One size does not fit all, and it's worth exploring the range of available options.

Acceptance: Living and Coping with Major Losses. This is the toughest part of transition. Life often involves coming to terms with and accepting losses we would rather not have to come to terms with and accept. One key to this is noticing the differences between more fluid primary emotions that don't involve thought (e.g., grief, fear, anger) and complex emotions people can get stuck in that involve thought (e.g., guilt, depression, rage). If grief is present, probably the most important thing is to find a way to express it and not lock it up. Locking it up makes it more likely it will get channeled into risky or self-destructive behaviors. Letting go of unanswerable questions (e.g., "Why?") and forgiving yourself if there is guilt or self-blame (illusion of control again) is an important part of this process.

Vision, Voice, Village, Joie de Vivre, and Victory. Warriors and their loved ones deserve to be happy and enjoy life, and the last chapter of the book uses five words to invite reflection and thinking beyond the limits of what one does on an everyday basis. Life is in many ways senseless, meaningless, and random, and in other ways magnificent, awe-inspiring, and filled with mystery and wonder. Warriors have experienced the depths of what life has to offer, and have a great deal to give to the world.

Charles W. Hoge, M.D., Colonel (Ret.), U.S. Army is the author of *Once a Warrior – Always a Warrior: Navigating the Transition from Combat to Home: Including Combat Stress, PTSD, and mTBI* (Lyons Press, Guilford, Connecticut 2010). For more information visit onceawarrior.com or send comments to hoge@onceawarrior.com.



WEST REGION

September 13-16, **Soldier Ride Seattle**
C: mspeicherharris@woundedwarriorproject.org

September 27-30, **Teton Valley Fly Fishing/Golf**
Driggs, Idaho
C: ppace@woundedwarriorproject.org

September 28-October 1, **Female Spouse Family Support Retreat**
Park City, Utah
C: rf Fuller@woundedwarriorproject.org

October 1, **Flying X Ranch Hunt**
Wheatland, Wyoming
C: jsinchak@woundedwarriorproject.org

October 7, **Seattle Sounders Soccer Game**
Seattle, Washington
C: jsinchak@woundedwarriorproject.org

October 18-21, **Soldier Ride Phoenix**
C: mspeicherharris@woundedwarriorproject.org

CENTRAL REGION

September 24, **Forest Hills Country Club Golf**
Chesterfield, Missouri
C: aschmit@woundedwarriorproject.org

September 25, **Hunting Club Shoot**
Victoria, Minnesota
C: lgoldstein@woundedwarriorproject.org

October 12-15, **Horicon Goose Hunt**
Waupun, Wisconsin
C: aschmit@woundedwarriorproject.org

October 14-18, **Female Spouse Family Support Retreat**
Katy, Texas
C: nnevins@woundedwarriorproject.org

October 18-22, **Alumni Summit Gulf Coast**
Houston, Texas
C: jboerstler@woundedwarriorproject.org

October 20, **Walnut Springs Hunting Trip**
Walnut Springs, Texas
C: jboerstler@woundedwarriorproject.org

November 7, **Hunting with Rancho Rasante Real LLC**
Bracketville, Texas
C: apowers@woundedwarriorproject.org

November 9, **Wild Pheasant Hunt**
De Smet, South Dakota
C: lgoldstein@woundedwarriorproject.org

November 9, **Leap of Heroes Skydive San Marcos**
San Marcos, Texas
C: bneuman@woundedwarriorproject.org

November 15-18, **Soldier Ride San Antonio**
C: mspeicherharris@woundedwarriorproject.org

EAST REGION

September 20-23, **Soldier Ride Boston**
C: mspeicherharris@woundedwarriorproject.org

September 30, **Stephen Siller Run**
Brooklyn, New York
C: tntellas@woundedwarriorproject.org

October 6, **Montauk "Hook & Slice" Fishing and Golf Tournament**
Montauk, New York
C: tntellas@woundedwarriorproject.org

October 19-22, **Family Support Writing Workshop**
New York, New York
C: mkacer@woundedwarriorproject.org

November 1-4, **Soldier Ride Nashville**
C: mspeicherharris@woundedwarriorproject.org

November 2-5, **Mother's Family Support Retreat**
Nashville, Tennessee
C: cholte@woundedwarriorproject.org

November 11, **Veterans Day Parade**
New York, New York
C: tntellas@woundedwarriorproject.org

December 7-10, **Female Spouse Family Support Retreat**
Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida
C: sknab@woundedwarriorproject.org

RECURRING EAST REGION EVENTS

New York Mets Welcome Back Veterans at Citi Field
September 7-9 (vs. Atlanta Braves)
September 10-12 (vs. Washington Nationals)
September 17-19 (vs. Philadelphia Phillies)
September 21-23 (vs. Miami Marlins)
September 24-27 (vs. Pittsburgh Pirates)
C: tntellas@woundedwarriorproject.org



★ Current offices:

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Fayetteville, North Carolina 910.487.0116	Phoenix, Arizona 480.946.0663	Washington, DC 202.558.4301
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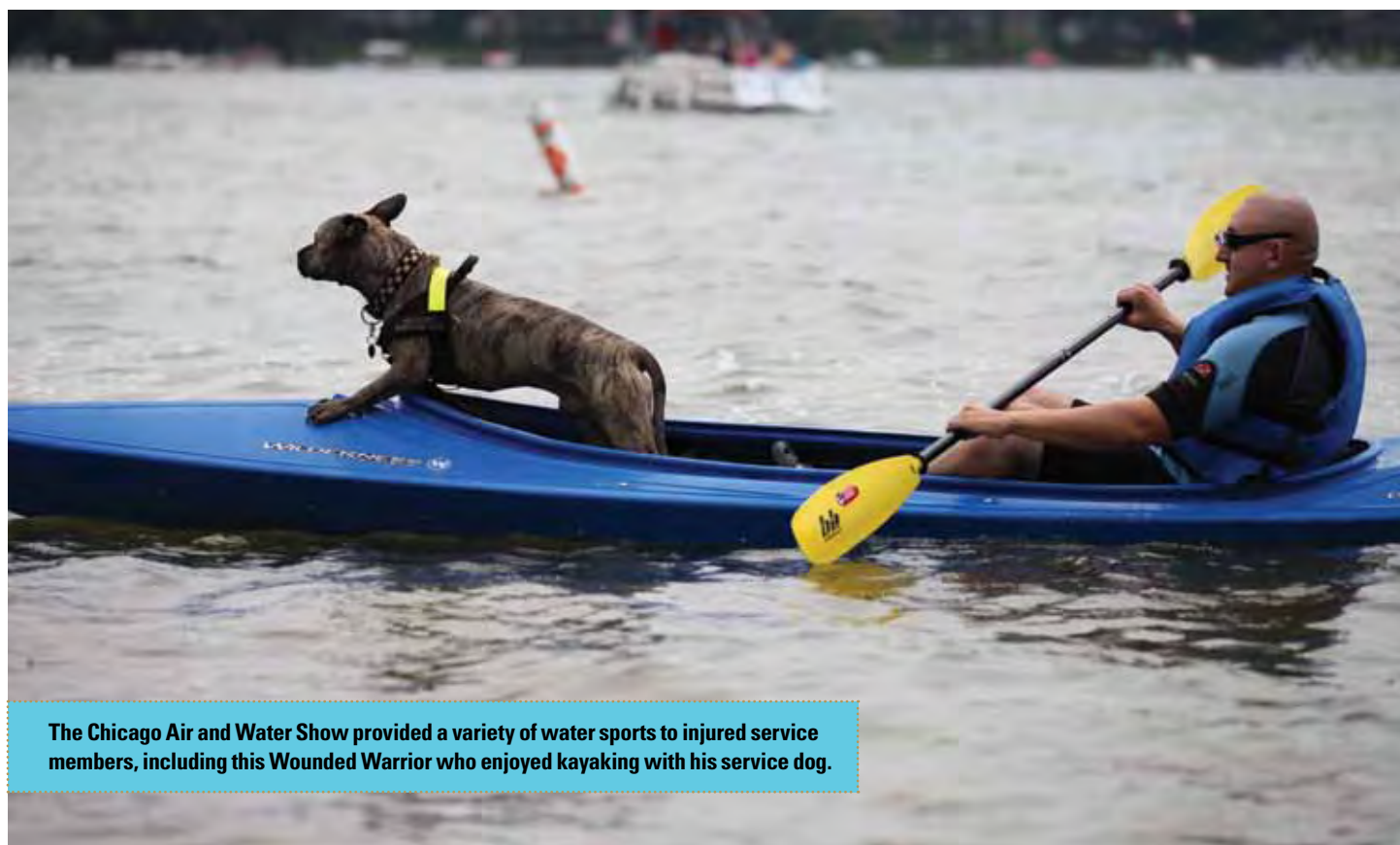
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Please note event dates and availability are subject to change. Check with the appropriate event contact (C) for updated availability and dates.

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PARTING SHOT ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



The Chicago Air and Water Show provided a variety of water sports to injured service members, including this Wounded Warrior who enjoyed kayaking with his service dog.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE: DEDICATED TO SERVICE