

GRAND CANYON WARRIORS

HELP A WOUNDED VETERAN ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY!

Brave Americans in the prime of their lives, physically strong and mentally tough, left their homes and answered the call to duty. Far too many of them have returned home from combat physically disabled and mentally scarred. These “Wounded Warriors” face a long and sometimes lonely period of recovery and readjustment. As they heal and learn to cope with their disabilities they need our support and reassurance and the Grand Canyon River Runners Association (GCRRA) knows the perfect way to provide it.

We are sponsoring our second Grand Canyon-Colorado River Rafting Trip for 24 U.S. Marine Corps wounded veterans. This 10-day river adventure includes transportation to Flagstaff, AZ, and pre-trip and post-trip meals, lodging and transportation. Our 2015 trip was a life-changing experience. Help us make this second trip possible.

This trip is *NOT* a float down the river. This trip is about being alive, being active, and abandoning limitations.



These brief quotes summarize our 2015 trip:

The Republic (Phoenix, Arizona)

“For the organizers, the important thing about the trip was to provide a setting where the vets could enjoy the camaraderie without feeling like they were the objects of someone’s good deeds. “This can be a life changing trip... they’re going to come back feeling like they can do a lot of things, probably more than they realize.... they’re going to come back with amazing stories.” “

GCRRA Board Member Bob McConnell:

“...they met up with a trip made up of Hopi elders who were taking some of their young “warriors” to visit and learn about some of the tribe’s sacred places and learn their significance and meaning. The tribal elder, after learning who these Marines were, stood on the front of the

boat and talked to them for 15-20 minutes... about the spirituality of the Canyon, how the Hopi come into the Canyon to leave what is bad behind and to fill themselves with what is good in this life. That talk still has a deep impact on the men and added immeasurably to their trip. One of the Marines has worn a KIA (Killed in Action) bracelet upon which were the names of his three buddies from his unit who were killed defending our country. He wore it always. In one of the powerful Colorado rapids he lost his bracelet – gone. Later he said that he was going to have to take it off at some point, and there could be no better place to leave it than in this sacred wilderness. Immense healing took place!”

A Grand Canyon Warrior:

“Mentally wise, I think this trip could definitely do some healing. I know it helped me to deal ... There was a point on a hike where I just started tearing up because I knew my brothers who aren’t with us anymore would have loved the trip....”

Jon Harned, Lead Guide:

“I will never forget our last night on the river together... We were regretting that the trip was ending. Some guys were singing at the top of their lungs into the canyon night. Others were crying as they shared the gruesome realities of things they had experienced. No one was untouched. The Grand Canyon has this effect on people. It opens us up like a can opener. Our heads, hearts and souls are open and exposed

A Warrior’s Mother:

“America needs more of these types of non-medical interventions with huge results such as what I am hearing and seeing with my own eyes. My heart knew this would be great, but never did I imagine just how incredible this would be for them... We need to get the veteran suicide rates down, and I know of no other project that has had such an incredible impact with 100% of donations going directly towards our vets who need us.”



Why this trip worked so well:

We created a group that did not know one another, but who bonded almost immediately because they ALL had a common background as Marines and a shared combat experience. Then, we reinforced that bond. We provided a day packed full of activities that made these men pull together and we assigned them to work details in camp each night/morning, nothing difficult, but all essential.

After-dark group discussions really helped our veterans deal with their demons. We provided the opportunity, then we left them alone and let them determine the topic each night. No rules, no agenda, no well-meaning donors, no professionally trained psychologist watching, listening, and moderating. When they were together at night, in a group they felt comfortable with, they opened up and the discussions were really intense. Topics included depression, guilt, suicide, inability to adjust at home, and inability to have normal relations with family, friends, and acquaintances.

Two factors were of immeasurable importance to our success and we are working to make sure that our next trip includes both of them.

First, the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment really worked hard to get us the right people. There were three criteria for selecting passengers. One, passengers had to be physically and mentally able to do a 10-day wilderness trip. Two, they had to be Marines who deserved this trip, guys who were combat injured. Three, and most important, they had to be a person who would benefit from the experience. Physical wounds heal, but mental issues linger, and most of our vets suffered from PTSD. These are the guys we really helped.

The second success factor was the result of our meeting with a group of Hopi Indians who were on their annual pilgrimage to sacred sites in the canyon. When the Hopi learned who our passengers were their priest boarded our boat to explain why the canyon is sacred and why they visit. It was as if we had written a script for the Hopi priest, telling him why we wanted to bring our warriors to the canyon. His message resonated with our Marines and we had a truly spiritual encounter that stayed with us. Time and time again guys talked about "releasing demons" and bring "reborn." It was the Hopi message.



We have heard some interesting comments:

Veterans have told us, "When you are discharged from the Corps you go into the VA system and all they do is give you pills. They should stop buying meds and send us on trips like this. This is the first time I have been able to sleep in years."

The Wounded Warrior Regiment contacts participants after each trip to get an assessment of what the trip was like. The first Marine they called pretty much summed it up, "Sir, it was frigging epic!"

Here is how you can help in 2016:

GCRRA has booked a trip for August with this year's river outfitter, Arizona Raft Adventures. Including travel expenses, the trip will cost \$4,000 per Wounded Warrior.

Donate on-line at:

www.gcriverrunners.org

Or mail a check to:

**GCRRA Grand Canyon Warriors Trip
P.O. Box 20013
Sedona, AZ 86341-20013**

100% of all donations will go towards trip costs. GCRRA is a 501c3 (EIN 71-0972946) and all donations are fully tax-deductible. Our fundraising effort is not affiliated with any other charitable organization using the name "Wounded Warrior."

For additional information, contact Hank Detering: HankD461@aol.com, 610-869-3631.

Thank you, and Semper Fi!