

Wounded Warriors in Action: Fly Fishing for Musky in Wisconsin

By John Bircher, MOPH Public Relations

What could be better than drifting down the Chippewa River on a warm, cloudless day; casting your fly into the cold, clear, spring fed waters in search of the ultimate fresh-water game fish, the Wisconsin Musky? Well, according to the eight Purple Heart recipients who participated in the 2011 Wounded Warriors in Action (WWIA) Summer Musky Classic, “it just doesn’t get any better than this, especially when you’re fishing with other wounded warriors.”



Adam Frahm and Matt Martinez



Tyson Scott and Adam Neville

The brainchild of John McDaniel, a retired US Army Lieutenant Colonel, Ranger, and a selfless and dedicated American Patriot, the Musky fly fishing adventure is but one of a myriad of world-class outdoor hunting and fishing sporting opportunities provided throughout the United States by WWIA, and tailored specifically for our nation’s combat wounded heroes. Established in 2007, the Wounded Warriors in Action Foundation (WWIA) is a national 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, headquartered in Apollo Beach Florida, and dedicated to serving our nation's combat wounded, Purple Heart recipients. Other WWIA events include hunts for wild boars, elk, alligators, ducks, deer, and turkey and fishing for bass, tarpon, and salmon, to name but a few.



“The WWIA Crew” outside the Sawmill Saloon

For this particular event, on June 23-24, McDaniel and his two WWIA associates, Tim Spence and Jake Whipkey (both OIF/OEF Purple Heart recipients), six other wounded warriors from around the country, Ranger Tom Schenk from Chippewa Custom Rods, and Brad Bohen and his crew of guides from Musky Country Outfitters, all converged on the Lenroot Lodge and Sawmill Saloon in Seeley, Wisconsin for two days of fun, fishing, fellowship, and tall-tale swapping. Making up the group of OIF/OEF wounded warriors were Adam Neville, Matt Martinez, Adam Frahm, Tyson Scott, and Lyle Spurgeon. Bringing up the rear, and representing the Military Order of the Purple Heart Service Foundation (MOPHSF), was John Bircher, a Vietnam era Purple Heart recipient.



Tim Spence and Jason Stewart with Musky



Guide Brad Bohen and John McDaniel

When asked why he is so committed to WWIA, McDaniel said, “I see a crucial need for mental and spiritual healing in the combat wounded veteran population, and I’ve seen how sporting activities in the great outdoors can meet this need.” WWIA connects Purple Heart recipients with American sportsmen, to provide world-class sporting events. WWIA has served over 100 Purple Heart recipients to date. “These sportsmen feel compelled to give back to these service members who have given so much,” said McDaniel, an avid sportsman himself.



Lunch Break on the Chippewa River



Lyle Spurgeon, Tim Spence and Jason Stewart

In early 2011, the MOPHSF provided a generous grant to WWIA to support their operations. At the time, MOPHSF Board President Jim Blaylock stated, "WWIA's mission to bring together combat wounded warriors to participate in outdoor activities and experience the camaraderie of Purple Heart recipients is a cause we encourage and are honored to be part of." MOPH National Commander Clayton Jones added, “The MOPH is proud to support the programs offered by the Wounded Warriors in Action, like the Musky fishing tournament, because they not only honor the service and sacrifice of our wounded service members, but they provide an opportunity for them to experience the wonderful outdoor activities in this great land that they might not otherwise be able to enjoy.”

The WWIA Summer Musky Classic is also made possible thanks to the support of Musky Country Outfitters, a fly fishing guide service from northern Wisconsin. Musky Country Outfitters is dedicated to offering anglers the chance to experience the vast resources of the north woods under the guidance of seasoned professionals. Tom Schenk, a close friend and former Ranger with McDaniel, now makes custom fly rods and also helps guide the wounded warriors.

For further information about WWIA or to apply to participate in upcoming events, see: www.woundedwarriorsinaction.org or call John McDaniel at 888-308-WWIA (9942)

For information about the MOPHSF, see www.mophsf.org or call Tempie Thompson at 703-635-3531
For information about the MOPH, see www.purpleheart.org or call John Bircher at 352-753-5535

For information about Musky Country Outfitters or to book your own trip, see: www.muskycountryoutfitters.com or call Brad Bohlen at 715-558-2937

For information about the Lenroot Lodge, Sawmill Saloon or Moose Lips Java Joint, see: www.seeleywis.com or call Cindy Ferraro at 715-634-7007