

Wounded Warriors In Action Foundation has support in Phelps, says Lyle Spurgeon

BY SHARON GIFFORD
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-REVIEW

The Wounded Warriors In Action Foundation (WWIA) was established by John McDaniel in 2007, who set up corporate headquarters in Apollo Beach, Fla. A retired Army officer, he said his service to the American nation was not yet finished. WWIA, a 501(c) organization, assists more than 100 Purple Heart veterans with recovery by providing various outdoor sporting opportunities at no cost.

Combat wounded veterans who have been given a Purple Heart receive numerous opportunities through WWIA, according to the foundation's website, including first-rate sporting activities like hunting elk in Washington, hunting pheasant in South Dakota and wreck fishing off the coast of New Jersey.

"The foundation is now growing by leaps and bounds, thanks to the generous support of the Military Order of the Purple Heart Service Foundation, devoted federal employees in the Combined Federal Campaign and concerned patriots," reads the website.

Purple Heart recipients participating in WWIA events can connect with other service members who have been through similar experiences.

"These events can also help to ease the debilitating effects of posttraumatic stress disorder, facilitate warriors' adjustments to life back home and foster a sense of self-reliance," according to the website.

The situation is that the country has been at war for more than nine years. As of May 27, 2011, the combined number of wounded warriors from Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation New Dawn was 43,643. These men and women are our nation's most-treasured asset. Americans want to help but are unsure how. The WWIA provides them an opportunity to make a difference in our heroes' lives.

Lyle (Scott) Spurgeon of Phelps, an associate of WWIA and a Purple Heart recipient, said he has long realized the therapeutic nature of the outdoors.

"I grew up in northern Wisconsin, where the forests, lakes and streams were right out my back door, and where hunting and fishing are a way of life," he said.

Spurgeon was wounded by a rocket-propelled grenade during deployment to Afghanistan Oct. 1, 2009.

"Although my wife and family have been the main focus for my recovery, hunting and fishing have been my therapy," said Spurgeon. "My love of the outdoors has helped to get me back to what is now a normal life."

On that very same night, Sgt. Ryan Adams of Rhinelander made the greatest sacrifice of all, according to Spurgeon.

"He gave his life so that others could continue to enjoy these things," he said. "It is my hope that through the WWIA I will have the opportunity to pass on what little knowledge of hunting and fishing I have and hopefully help fellow wounded warriors back to a normal life."

In February of this year, Holiday Lodge in Phelps hosted a WWIA fundraiser event, which was coordinated by Lyle and Karen Spurgeon, along with Robin and Debbie Vold, all of Phelps.

"Because of the awesome crowd and generosity of raffle prizes and certificates from local community businesses and individuals, we sent a check for \$7,500 to the WWIA," said Vold. "Everyone opened up their hearts and supported our wounded heroes."

Forty-eight prizes and 78 gift certificates were donated. All proceeds went toward providing six Purple Heart recipients, located throughout the states, an all-expenses-paid two-day and three-night fishing event in Phelps with local fishing guides. Excess



Scott Spurgeon helped bring the Wounded Warriors In Action Foundation (WWIA) to the Phelps area. A recipient of the Purple Heart award, Spurgeon is a northern Wisconsin native who describes himself as an outdoor enthusiast. One of the core goals of WWIA is to provide outdoor sporting opportunities to veterans at no cost. —Photo By Sharon Gifford

funds were donated to the WWIA to help support other events.

The Phelps fundraiser event was to date the most profitable event put on for the WWIA. Local Purple Heart recipients who

attended the event included Scott Spurgeon, U.S. Army, Afghanistan; Albert Miletus, U.S. Marine Corps, Vietnam; Tom Miles, U.S. Air Force, Vietnam; and Matt Tenneson, U.S. Army, Afghanistan.

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