



AUGUSTA WARRIOR PROJECT

***CONNECT, EDUCATE, ADVOCATE, AND
COLLABORATE***

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Introduction

The Augusta Warrior Project “AWP” is a comprehensive source of advocacy and resources for Warriors (past or present military). The AWP bridges the gap between Warriors and life-changing resources by providing them access to state and federal education benefits, local employment opportunities, housing, job training, college resources, health care, and community services.

The AWP has a regional focus, but a national impact. The community we serve encompasses 13 counties in two states – Georgia and South Carolina. Augusta is home to one of the largest Army installations in the United States. The largest Department of Defense medical center in the Southeast is also located in Augusta, and is home to a Veterans Affairs medical center with the only DoD active duty rehabilitation unit in a VA facility. The greater Augusta area is also home to the largest VA spinal cord rehabilitation unit in the United States, and Georgia Health Sciences University – considered one of the best academic health centers in the nation.

The AWP is built on a strong foundation of information flow and community thought leadership that fosters improvements in Warrior care. The model of the AWP is centered on mentorship and networking. Warriors do not always experience a single challenge at a time. So, the AWP develops relationships, identifies shared goals with partner organizations, and works with stakeholders within the community to develop a comprehensive approach that improves the lives of Warriors and their families.

The AWP is a local, 501 c (3) non-profit organization and is 100 % committed to the continued development of its model of successful community Warrior care in the greater Augusta area. The Augusta Warrior Project is not affiliated with The Wounded Warrior Project of Jacksonville, Florida. However, the Wounded Warrior Project does provide resources that help make the AWP’s model of Warrior care the gold standard for other communities across the nation to emulate.



Eisenhower Army Medical Center at Fort Gordon

Home of the Fortitude Center – the Army's only inpatient treatment center for post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, and substance abuse.

Problem Statement

There are approximately 66,000 Warriors (27,000 under the age of 45) in the greater Augusta area of Georgia and South Carolina. Less than half of our Warrior population currently receives the benefits and services that they have earned through years of service due to their inability to navigate and understand the resources available. We need to create awareness among Warriors and give them the specialized holistic support they so rightly deserve.

Previous Options

Warriors were burdened with having to find specialized assistance themselves. With the abundance of government and non-government Warrior-focused agencies with a wide variety of services, they were often overwhelmed and unsure where to turn for assistance.

Solution

The AWP recognizes the interdependency of housing, employment, health care, child care, education, training, and personal relationships as a key component for successful Warrior reintegration upon completion of service. Unfortunately, many services available to reintegrate Warriors back into society are under-utilized due to a lack of guidance, awareness, and access.





Wounded Warrior on a dive

outing in Key West

Vision

Our vision is to connect, educate, advocate, and collaborate for the benefit of Warriors on local, state, and national levels.

Connect

The goal is to develop a model to connect Warriors to an extensive network of resources through a variety of channels, such as the AWP website, social media, and local grass roots efforts. The AWP's connection efforts have created a buzz within the Warrior community, and as a result, AWP membership is increasing at a rapid pace. This increased connection with Warriors is important because our nation must first know who they are, where they are, and what they need to facilitate successful results.

Educate

Once a Warrior is connected to AWP, we educate them in a variety of different ways on the services and opportunities specific to his or her needs. Our expertise in accessing benefits, such as housing and healthcare, is shared with Warriors and their families so they can make informed life decisions that improve their quality of life. The application process for higher-education benefits, such as the G.I. Bill, is streamlined through our advocacy programs.

Advocate

The core of the AWP's identity is Warrior advocacy. On the local level, we are currently partnering with organizations like the CSRA Economic Opportunity Authority (EOA) and Goodwill to assist Warriors in areas of need, such as housing, training, and employment. Nationally, the AWP provides a voice for Warriors all the way up to Capitol Hill. The AWP increases information flow between all of its partners to create one cohesive advocacy network.

Collaborate

The AWP develops strong community relationships and manages information flow between local and national businesses, non-profit organizations, and governmental agencies. We keep the lines of communication open on all levels and harness ideas and innovations with our partners to develop a smarter approach to Warrior care. An example of this is the AWP's "Transition Round Table" where leaders from the Army, Department of Labor, Veterans Affairs, and community organizations come together to develop solutions for Warriors and their families. The AWP also formed a Medical Research Consortium, which serves as a networking platform for medical researchers from the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center,



Eisenhower Army Medical Center, University Health Care System, Georgia Health Sciences University, and Savannah River National Laboratory.



New Fisher House at the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center

Augusta is privileged to have not one, but two Fisher Houses – a “home away from home” for families of hospitalized Wounded Warriors.

Success Stories

Our close relationship with some of the Augusta area’s largest employers (e.g., Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, Club Car, DoD contractors, the Georgia Department of Labor, and Goodwill) enables us to find and fill jobs that specifically request Warrior candidates. For example, AWP’s local Veterans Curation Project (VCP) was created in conjunction with the Army Corps of Engineers to provide Iraq and Afghanistan Warriors employment and training while transitioning out of active duty and into successful Veteran status. As a result, 95% of the 42 participants to date are enrolled in college or are employed full-time with a local business. Through our local connections we were able to find employment for a Warrior named William, who had been out of work for months. Our partnership with Goodwill enabled us to find him a steady job.

“My job search was going nowhere fast. I applied to several positions that I was qualified for, but never got a response. I am so thankful for the Augusta Warrior Project for putting me in front of the right people. It feels great to be back on my feet again.” – William S.



Gary Sinise – Spokesperson for the Augusta Warrior Project

The AWP's national model for Warrior advocacy is one of the main reasons The Department of Veterans Affairs recently awarded the AWP and its partners a \$900,000 Supportive Services for Veterans and Families (SSVF) grant that is focused on keeping low-income Veterans in permanent housing. The grant is a partnership between the Augusta-based Central Savannah River Area Economic Opportunity Authority (EOA) and Goodwill. The AWP works in tandem with the EOA and Goodwill to put a roof over the head of any Warrior that has fallen on hard times. Obtaining the VA's "seal of approval" further validates the AWP's community-based model for Warrior care as the right framework for the rest of the nation to follow.

George is an example; a homeless Warrior with no one else to turn to, he not only found refuge thanks to the AWP, but also an education, and job placement giving him future security.

"I'm not sure where I would be today without the Augusta Warrior Project. They carried me through what was probably the most difficult time of my life. Thanks to AWP, I now have a safe place to live and am working toward a certificate in law enforcement." — George M.

AWP works hard to insure that Warriors take full advantage of G.I. Bill benefits they have earned. AWP's Veterans Education Coordinator offers guidance and advice to Warriors who desire a higher education.

"The AWP went to bat for me when my VA Work-Study Program application was denied. They knew who to contact at the VA to make sure my application was approved. Thanks to the AWP, I am pursuing my life-long dream of a college education." — Sue A.



Through social programs,
understands, and motivates Warriors in need.

the AWP connects with,

“Everyone told me I didn’t have any benefits, until the Augusta Warrior Project proved them wrong. They gave me the opportunity to hunt with and meet other Veterans. That’s when they told me I was eligible for G.I. Bill benefits. I am now enrolled at a local university.” — Will W.



Veteran Mobility-Impaired Hunt at the Savannah River Site

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions is a strategic partner of the AWP. Their financial support and intellectual contributions to the AWP model of Warrior care have proved to be invaluable.

Other major accomplishments in the last 60 days include:

- Spearheaded the coordination and construction of a second Fisher House, a temporary “home away from home” for out-of-town families of hospitalized Warriors, at the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center.
- Developed a Wounded Warrior Medical Research Symposium – a forum where community leaders, medical experts, and organizations share information on the latest innovations in Warrior care.
- Invited Wounded Warriors to take part in the Savannah River Nuclear Site’s Mobility Impaired Hunt – physically disabled Warriors get the opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors and bond with fellow Service Members.
- Coordinated housing, health care, training, employment, and benefits for low-income Veteran families at risk of losing their homes.



- Connected wireless internet at both Fisher House locations (Fort Gordon and the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center) in order to immediately improve patient rehabilitation and support to families.



Wounded Warrior at Augusta Charlie Norwood Veterans Affairs Medical Center – Active Duty Rehabilitation Unit

Funding from supporters has sparked the AWP's campaign to attract Wounded Warriors to the Augusta area from overcrowded military medical centers, such as Walter Reed in Bethesda, MD. Low housing costs, two Fisher Houses, and two excellent military hospitals make Augusta an attractive option for Warrior care.

The AWP found a deep and widespread desire in the community to assist and contribute to the well-being of our nation's Warriors and their families. The AWP's model of harnessing information flow and "thought leadership" with its partners in order to effectively connect, educate, advocate, and collaborate for the benefit of Warriors should be replicated from coast to coast.

Previous 12-Month Financial (from 1 Nov 2010):

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|---|------------------|
| Assets: | \$469,000 |
| Liabilities: | \$0 |
| Annual Operating Expenses: (16% of assets) | \$76,000 |
| Annual Major Program Expenses: | \$120,000 |



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|---|-----------------|
| Augusta VA Fisher House | \$36,000 |
| Augusta VA Marriage Retreats | \$5,000 |
| Supportive Services To Veterans | \$57,000 |
| Tragedy Assistance Program For Survivors | \$12,000 |
| Support to Warrior Transition Battalion | \$10,000 |

Representative Merit Donors:

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| Savannah River Nuclear Solutions | \$50,000 |
| Musical Group KISS | \$50,000 |
| Bell Industries | \$10,000 |
| University Health Services Inc. | \$10,000 |
| Wounded Warrior Project of Jacksonville | \$10,000 |

Summary

Creating awareness, finding Warriors in need of assistance, and developing a smarter approach in gaining access to community support and goodwill are our main objectives. Our desire is to give every Warrior the means to be a productive member of society. This is achieved through our extensive network of resources and years of expertise in Warrior care. The AWP's model of Warrior care and support can be replicated throughout the nation by effectively utilizing local and national resources that are otherwise unobtainable through Washington, DC.



Major supporters like KISS and Savannah River Nuclear Solutions contributions enabled the Augusta Warrior Project to go the extra mile for our Warriors