



## Serving Those Who Served Us

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The news is good! Our troops are home from Iraq and we all are looking forward to having family members and friends back with us again. North Carolina is home to several military bases and most of us know someone who is serving now or has recently served. You may know someone through your work – he volunteered as a youth coach or played on an adult ball team. She may have taken classes at your recreation center or served on a community action board. Let's welcome them home with a hearty "Thank you for your service".

As with any war, this one brought casualties and injuries. We have all read about them and maybe you know first hand the heartache, pain and suffering war injuries can cause. Many injuries you can not even see but they are there. Being home with family and friends helps. But there is more we can do.

We know recreational activities can improve health, brighten an outlook and relieve stress. Wounded Warriors need all we can offer to help them return to a normal and happy life. Not only do the soldiers benefit from the programs we offer, but so do their families. Here are some examples of how your department can provide for a Wounded Warrior or any returning service man/woman.

- Form a Paralympic Sport Club and host events
- If you live near a military installation partner with MWR or WTU to provide programming or special events
- Design specific programs through your TR division or adapt programs to the soldier-participant; include family members as much as possible
- Form a league combining able/disabled players on the same team
- Offer Welcome Home events such as thank you dinners for soldiers and their families or an article in your activity guide
- Recognize active duty and/or retired servicemen and women at your events, especially those who participate, volunteer for your department or who have children/spouses in your programs
- Apply for grants such as NRPA's "Return and Restore" grant to begin programs, purchase equipment or pay for staffing
- Partner with local associations such as Paralyzed Veterans of America or Disabled American Veterans

Many of you have already done these and more. The NCRPA Marketing Committee would love to hear stories of how your department has "served those who served us". Send stories and pictures to [info@ncrpa.net](mailto:info@ncrpa.net)



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