



*“Ensuring excellence and changing lives through equine-assisted activities and therapies”*

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**Denver**—PATH Intl. Proudly Announces Nationwide Partnership With Wounded Warrior Project

Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) Intl.™, a leader in equine-assisted activities and therapies (EAAT), has partnered with Wounded Warrior Project™ (WWP) to provide EAAT for WWP alumni. WWP has made a significant gift of a \$200,000 grant to PATH Intl. for the purpose of awarding scholarships for EAAT to WWP alumni who have expressed an interest in therapeutic horsemanship.

PATH Intl. has long been a leader in offering EAAT to military veterans and from the start has recognized the tremendous sacrifice that brings many of these men and women to PATH Intl. centers. “Our service personnel have fought to preserve our freedom, and, for many, at a very dear cost,” said Paul Spiers, past president of PATH Intl. (then NARHA). “We must be certain that if our wounded service personnel and veterans need and want this kind of help, they will get the best PATH Intl. has to offer.”

Now, thanks to the scholarship grant from WWP, Wounded Warrior Project alumni will receive the assistance they need and desire at no cost to them.

**About the Selection Process**

In early 2012, WWP sent an electronic broadcast to 1,834 of its alumni, defined as Wounded Warriors who had incurred service-connected injuries on or after September 11, 2001. The initial broadcast focused on regions identified by WWP as needing activities for local WWP alumni. Local alumni interested in participating in EAAT returned an expression of interest to WWP. WWP matched those alumni from 11 states with PATH Intl. Premier Accredited Centers (PACs) that offer services to veterans.

PATH Intl. then contacted the PACs to determine their capacity for accepting new participants. The Wounded Warrior alum is eligible for up to 10 classes, with the scholarship funds being dispersed directly to the center.

The PATH Intl. Premier Accredited Center program is a voluntary, peer reviewed process by which PATH Intl. centers demonstrate excellence in providing quality EAAT and that they have met established industry standards for the safety of all concerned. By partnering with PATH Intl. PACs, WWP can be assured that the Warriors are receiving care and instruction from the best that PATH Intl. has to offer.

**About PATH Intl.**

PATH Intl., formerly NARHA, was formed in 1969 to promote equine-assisted activities and therapies for individuals with special needs. Throughout the world, hundreds of thousands of

individuals with and without special needs experience the rewarding benefits of EAAT. A physical, cognitive or emotional special need does not limit a person from interacting with horses. In fact, such interactions can prove highly rewarding. With more than 3,700 certified instructors, 6,000 therapy horses, 43,000 volunteers and 800 member centers around the globe, almost 48,000 children and adults find a sense of strength and independence through involvement with horses.

Though PATH Intl. began with a focus on horseback riding as a form of physical and mental therapy, the organization and its dedicated members have since developed a multitude of different equine-related activities for therapeutic purposes. Besides horseback riding, EAAT also includes therapeutic carriage driving; interactive vaulting, which is similar to gymnastics on horseback; equine-facilitated learning and mental health, which partner with the horse in cognitive and behavioral therapy, usually with the participation of a licensed therapist; ground work and stable management; and PATH Intl. Equine Services for Heroes, which uses a variety of EAAT disciplines specifically to help war veterans and military personnel.

Ryan Ohrmundt, the 2011 PATH Intl. Equine Services for Heroes award winner, exemplifies what can be accomplished through the power of the horse to change lives. When Ryan, an Army serviceman, first came to a PATH Intl. center, he was suffering severe post-traumatic stress disorder when he returned home from war. His anxiety interfered with his life so intensely that he had to quit his job and find one less intense. Ryan uses therapeutic horsemanship as a detachment to clear his mind and reduce his anxiety levels. "I enjoy riding," he says, "because I don't associate it to anything else in my life. It is the one time I am truly at peace."

[Click here](#) to learn more about PATH Intl. and how the power of the horse changes lives.

#### **About WWP**

The mission of Wounded Warrior Project™ (WWP) is to honor and empower wounded warriors. WWP's purpose is to raise awareness and to enlist the public's aid for the needs of injured service members, to help injured servicemen and women aid and assist each other, and to provide unique, direct programs and services to meet their needs.

WWP is the hand extended to encourage warriors as they adjust to their new normal and achieve new triumphs. Offering a variety of programs and services, WWP is equipped to serve injured servicemen and women with every type of injury - from the physical to the invisible wounds of war.

Tens of thousands of Wounded Warriors and caregivers receive support each year through WWP programs designed to nurture the mind and body and encourage economic empowerment and engagement. To learn more about WWP, [click here](#) to see how it influences the innovative programs and services offered to Wounded Warriors.

Wounded Warrior Project alumni have already expressed their gratitude and desire to continue this partnership with PATH Intl. In his evaluation of the pilot program held at Heartland Equine Therapeutic Riding Academy (HETRA), a PATH Intl. Premier Accredited Center in Valley, NE, Warrior Ben Wormington acknowledged the benefit of this partnership. "My anxiety can be a huge barrier to success," he said. "The employees and horses keep me focused on maintaining a calm sense of assertiveness and control without feeling overwhelmed. I look forward to every Thursday when I drive to HETRA and spend time with the staff, their horses and their instructors. Please continue funding this program."

Another Warrior, Traccy Ulanski, put it succinctly: "It has been a wonderful experience."

For more information about the partnership between PATH Intl. and WWP or about PATH Intl. Equine Services for Heroes, please contact [Jeff Kelling](#).

