

COMMUNITY

Navarre waters provide healing current for veterans

Healing and HOW

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Some call it fishing but the Emerald Coast Heroes on the Water (HOW) call it healing. A group of 25 volunteers met early Saturday morning to take nearly 25 veterans on the healing waters of the Intracoastal Waterway adjacent to Navarre Park. One of the veteran anglers was Chuck Tingle who joined the group fishing for the first time in May 2013 in Navarre Park and completed what he believed to be his sixth fishing trip with HOW Saturday. "It takes you out of the daily grind and I enjoy the camaraderie," said Tingle. He spent 24 years in the Air Force in command and control and was stationed locally from 1987-89, and he knew he wanted to retire to the area.



Unbehagen



Photos by Sandi Kemp

While in stationed in Arizona, Tingle became paralyzed from an autoimmune disease that affected his spine. Tingle retired in 2009 and found his way back to the area, lives in Fort Walton Beach and works as a contractor at Eglin Air Force Base. "I keep an eye on the schedule because I really look forward to these, it is like an escape," said Tingle. He also just likes to hang out with the volunteers of HOW. "This is a great group of people, and they are a great outreach to those that are injured with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury)," said Tingle. "I really have fought depression, but now I have something to look forward to," said Tingle.

HOW takes veterans fishing about once a month but the program is also found at Twelve Oaks Rehabilitation Center in Navarre on a weekly basis. Twelve Oaks receives many patients with PTSD and TBD, and HOW volunteers Craig "Red" Shelton and his wife Patty are employees at Twelve Oaks. The equipment that is used for the program is owned by HOW, which also provides the insurance. The program at Twelve Oaks is the only one of its kind in and has garnered national attention. "We are going to be having a three-star (general) join us soon on the water to check us out, and no one is going to know who he is," said Shelton.

Kristen Unbehagen was a participant in 2011 and later became a volunteer with the Emerald Coast chapter of HOW. "This program literally saved my life," said Unbehagen.



Submitted photo

Paddlers line up for a group shot at the end of the day. Above, Chuck Tingle paddling out.

Unbehagen was recognized at the event Saturday with a brand new Native Watercraft kayak as one of only three that were recognized out of 50 Heroes on the Water chapters nationwide. "I knew how (Heroes on the Water) helped me, and I wanted to help," said Unbehagen.

Frank Dailey is a volunteer and leader with the Emerald Coast Chapter of Heroes on the Water and has been with the organization since it formed in 2010. "This isn't about us, it is about the person on our left and right," said Dailey as he addressed the volunteers and participants as the day on the healing waters of Navarre wrapped up with a lunch provided by VFW 11367.



About

Is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Heroes on the Water (HOW) serves all military personnel who have been wounded, injured or disabled.

Mission

Heroes on the Water's mission is to help wounded warriors relax, rehabilitate and reintegrate into society through kayak fishing and the outdoors. Over the past three years of taking a few thousand men and women of all branches of the armed services out kayak fishing, we have learned first-hand the 'triple therapy' of kayak fishing — physical with paddling and fishing, occupational in learning new skills and a sport they can do for life, and mental in the relaxation and freedom out on the water.

General Information

All Heroes on the Water activities are 100% dependent on your tax deductible financial donations, as directed in the provisions of Section 501(c)3 of the IRS code. We are actively seeking donations of both cash and materials to fund this program, plus we're always looking for licensed guides, property managers and camp supervisors who would like to donate the use of their facilities for our trips. If you are interested in contributing or becoming a volunteer for the Emerald Coast Chapter, please send your questions to Emeraldcoast@heroesonthewater.org

Previous articles regarding the Emerald Coast Chapter of Heroes on the Water can be found at www.navarrepress.com/HOW



Submitted photo

Rob Vickers and his service dog and Chuck Tingle wait for the safety briefing before going out on the water. Frank Dailey, far left is being expressive.

