

Becoming Unstoppable: Catching Up with Warrior Reunion Foundation

Transcript

00:00:15:02 - 00:00:35:01

ALEX ADKINS:

I don't want to undersell it, to be face-to-face with individuals that you were in combat with decades prior. And many of whom have not seen each other or talked to each other since then, is an incredibly powerful thing.

00:00:35:03 - 00:00:57:13

BART COLE:

The first reunion that we did as a foundation was actually with one of my units, and it was one of the units that I served with when I was in the Marine Corps Reserve. And it was, pretty, pretty touching experience. We've been able to grow and expand, with our reunion programs. We were doing 8 to 10, and then we got into last year, I think we did 25. This year we're looking at 27.

00:00:57:15 - 00:01:32:07

MELISSA KETCHEL:

When I got the invite to go to the reunion, I was terrified. I didn't really want to go. I'm going to be really honest. I was not sure what to expect. But when we got there, there was a memorial service for all of those that were fallen. I had heard stories about my brother that I had never heard before, and I'm pretty connected within the veteran in military community with his guys. But it was really nice that there was unique experiences, and then just being able to watch them interact with each other was something I wasn't used to. Just watching their bonds reconnect and form with each other. That was an amazingly transformative experience for me as well.

00:01:32:09 - 00:01:51:05

BART COLE:

I've seen with a lot of the Gold Star family retreats, the impact when it comes to the Gold Star families that have lost their loved one. I can't take them back to Iraq or Afghanistan at this point, but what I can do is take them to where they trained at and where they lived at, where they ate at. Their friends can show them where they used to live at on base.

00:01:51:07 - 00:02:35:19

JAMES FERGUSON:

Thanks to the support that we received from the Purple Paladin program, you know, we were able to build on the mission, and the impact that we have in the community, I think. I mean, the most important thing, again, is just the additional reunions that we were able to do. So, you know, for us, every dollar that we get goes into that mission and goes towards providing reunions for veterans to the fact that we were able to take that support and do more reunions this year means that more veterans were reconnected with their brothers and sisters in arms. Their peer support networks were strengthened. They won't be alone the next time they go through something difficult. But I think beyond that too, what was really cool about it was the fact that the Grant Thornton community really stepped up to start attending our events, and that's something that we're hoping to build on.

00:02:35:21 - 00:02:49:22

BART COLE:

Next year, I want to be able to provide reunions to continuously get better. So my intent is very long term, is for this foundation to still be around to serve the next combat veterans that come through.