

Wounded veterans empowered by ski week

Man who lived in Yard House ceiling sentenced. 9NEWS at 6 p.m. 03/03/15.

Melissa Blasius, KUSA 5:21 p.m. MDT March 10, 2015



(Photo: Aurelie Slegers)

686CONNECT 9TWEETLINKEDIN 2COMMENTEMAILMORE

KUSA - Veterans who returned from war injured or feeling isolated gained healing and health during the Disabled Veterans Adventure Ski Camp in Telluride last week.

The camp is part of the Telluride Adaptive Sports Program. TASP hosts events for 100 disabled veterans yearly. They enjoy winter and summer activities at the world-class resort at no charge. Specially-trained staff assist veterans with modified equipment, allowing them to enjoy outdoor activities regardless of their disabilities.

"There is something about this mountain that is super healing," said Army veteran Joe Fox of Colorado Springs. Fox sustained a Traumatic Brain Injury while serving in Iraq. He learned about TASP through his local Vet Center where he got treatment for PTSD. He says he spent most of his time on the couch before joining the ski program several years ago.

"I think the TASP has saved my life, and [it] helps keep me focused and moving in the right direction," Fox said. Fox says he decided to enroll in college after the first ski trip.



Wounded veterans had the chance to do snow sports in Telluride (Photo: Aurelie Slegers)

This year, Fox is learning to snowboard so he can spend more quality time outdoors with his sons.

"All those things people said I couldn't do, I'm doing," Fox said.

The veterans also swap stories and socialize during après-ski functions.

Jessica Astorga, a 37-year-old Air Force veteran from Ohio, is skiing for the first time this week. She says the week-long camp is "healing," and she describes it as a "confidence booster."

Astorga served as a nurse in Iraq and Afghanistan, and she is diagnosed with depression. She found the TASP through an internet search. Astorga says she arrived in Telluride without knowing anyone in the group, but she is leaving with "a bond like a family bond."



Wounded veterans had the chance to do snow sports in Telluride (Photo: Aurelie Slegers)

"You connect whether you know them or didn't know them," Astorga said. "Their stories have helped me."

"These guys don't know each other before they got here," said Brice Jones, a Sonoma Winemaker and Vietnam veteran who helps sponsor the ski event. "They get back to where the brotherhood is part of their life again," he added.

(KUSA-TV © 2015 Multimedia Holdings Corporation)