



Will's Hope Summary of Programs for Veterans Rev 12

As of: 9 Dec 2022

Subject: 2023 Will's Hope Programs for Veterans

If you are a veteran, love the outdoors and are looking for a challenge and being stretched in a good way Will's Hope is a program that may interest you. Will's Hope offers opportunities for bonding with fellow veterans and learning about nature and Native Americans. As a natural byproduct of the experience veterans that have attended Will's Hope have described the significant self-healing opportunities that the program presents.

Summary

Veterans have many strengths & capabilities that can be overlooked by society. This can lead some veterans to under appreciate their value to society. Will's Hope is an opportunity to help them frame their life experiences & see their situation in a positive manner while helping energize them for the future.

Vision

Serve veterans & others (e.g., active-duty personnel, law enforcement, public safety, healthcare) with conditions such as mild PTSD, mild depression & TBI; & other similar conditions. Provide a world class outdoor educational program that captures their interest & allows them to recharge while immersed in a stimulating program that highlights positivity. Will's Hope provides an opportunity for each participant to strengthen themselves & show them their value to their family, community & humanity.

Mission

Provide veterans and other qualified persons a supportive atmosphere & opportunities to see their situation in a more positive way while using the outdoors, nature, & Native Americans as mechanisms for self-enabling & self-discovery of interests & strengths. Other mission objectives include but are not limited to:

- Uniqueness is a strength and is to be shared,
- Recognize the uniqueness of each individual and the importance of their uniqueness to humanity,
- Reinforce the importance of each individual,
- Show participants the good in the world & the good in themselves,
- Use positivity as a tool to improve relationships,
- Improve or foster the development of passions,
- Enhance communication skills, resiliency of spirit and group dynamics,
- Strengthening individual participants also strengthens the participant's family,
- Promote & expand individual growth & self-healing,
- Provide multiple opportunities for each veteran to assess and choose those that are most beneficial to them as an individual,
- Provide the setting for bonding and friendship to thrive,
- If applicable, promote improvement of self-confidence & self-esteem,

Concept of Operation

Use the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) as the venue for a diverse outdoor educational immersion program. Programs run approximately 10 - 14 days. Each participant actively participates in a variety of outdoor individual & group activities. On average group size is 5-9 participants or less. Dedicated instructors & volunteers are subject matter experts & oversee activities, logistics & operations.

Eligibility

- Veteran or person from other qualifying groups that have a disability – the disability may or may not be diagnosed,
- Wants to attend, learn, participate in all activities and are willing to help themselves,
- Are positive & stable,
- Are respectful & considerate of others (e.g., instructors, guides, program leaders and others),
- Are able to focus on program activities, without external distractions, and use their phone when it does not conflict with group activities (e.g., in the evening during down time)
- Are able to follow instructions,
- **Use appropriate language & appropriate behavior** at all times,
- Are courteous, truthful & honest,
- Can work together as a small team or group,
- Are willing to share their observations and thoughts with the group,
- Listens more than talking,
- Track record of good behavior,
- Share responsibility for common housekeeping tasks and meals,
- Are able to hike up to 3 miles with a 600-foot elevation gain, *
- Complete a pre-application and an application and disclose any information pertinent to their participation in the program,
- Self-certify that Will's Hope Programs will help them with their diagnosed or not diagnosed disability,
- Will's Hope acceptance of the application

* This requirement may be waived based on an individual's specific situation

Will's Hope is a non-smoking program (including chewing tobacco, smoking marijuana and vaping). Non-prescribed harmful drugs & Over the Counter harmful drugs are not allowed. Prescribed medications must be in a container with a prescription attached. Weapons, ammunition, knives & other similar items are not allowed. No alcohol in any form. Will's Hope is not a therapeutic, medical or a program for someone in crisis. Will's Hope is a voluntary program and is not connected with any government program. If you smoke, we ask that you go on a smoking cessation program so by the time of the program (May-July) you do not smoke on the program.

In 2023 there are two veteran programs. Please see the website (www.willshopeopportunities.org) and click on the "Click here Veterans" button at the top of the page for specific dates or see below. There is one program for women veterans and one program for men veterans. For each program we are able to accommodate 5-9 veterans. During the program each veteran does a presentation on a topic relevant to the GYE as well as talking about their experience at the end of the program (Reflections). In addition to the "Click here Veterans" button at the top of each web page you can find photos from 2021 and 2022 veterans' programs by clicking on the "Veterans" tab at the bottom of each web page.

Major Activities

Participants can anticipate being busy throughout the entire period. All activities take place in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Major activities may include many of the following and other activities:

- Wildlife observation and viewing led by a professional wildlife guide using binoculars and spotting scopes,
- An introduction to regional geology, the "Yellowstone Hot Spot" and volcanic activity,
- Native American culture and philosophies that are applicable to today's world and relevant for veterans,
- Visits to important Native American cultural sites,
- Fly fishing led by a professional guide,
- US Forest Service demonstration and possibly a field exercise,
- Horse ride in the Beartooth/Absaroka Wilderness
- Wildlife track identification in the field and casting tracks (this will depend on weather, river flows and time available),
- Hiking through steeply wooded terrain nearly untouched by humans,
- Practical exercise(s),
- Understanding Old Faithful,
- Insight into the fragile balance of nature by learning about keystone species,
- Insight into the challenges facing the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem,
- Field seminars and site visits to view the physical damage from the 2022 flooding,
- Participant presentations, and
- Reflections

Cost: The cost for each participant in the 2023 programs is \$400 for 1st time attendees and \$800 for returning veterans. The actual cost of the program is approximately \$5,000 per person and the portion above \$400/\$800 is covered by Will's Hope. The veteran is responsible for at least \$200 of the fee even if they have a sponsoring organization that is helping to cover the fee. For example, if a sponsoring organization covers \$200 or more of the fee for a 1st time attendee the 1st time veteran is responsible for \$200. Similarly for returning veterans they must contribute \$200 if a sponsoring organization covers the \$600 for a total of \$800. If the veteran has no sponsoring organization, they are liable for the entire fee. Limited funds may be available to help qualifying veterans with no sponsoring organization.

Application: If you are interested in attending the 2023 programs, please let us know so that we can discuss your potential participation and the program prior to giving you a pre-application to complete. **We will release applications only after the individual has completed the pre-application and the pre-application is acceptable to Will's Hope. The application process involves multiple interviews.** If you are interested it is important to get on our radar as soon as possible because there are deadlines and we will be working on a first come first serve basis. We may also request a letter of recommendation from a doctor, counselor, pastor, VA, DAV, service agency or other organizations/professionals that are acceptable to Will's Hope.

Standards: Please visit the Will's Hope website www.willshopeopportunities.org and click on the "Click here Veterans" button at the top of the page. This takes you to the "Veterans Program" page. On the "Veterans' Program" page look at "Expectations of Veterans, Staff and Self-Assessment" pdf document at the bottom of the page. Please review this document as this outlines the behavior and environment pertinent to Will's Hope programs. In summary, we are looking for similar standards from veterans that we require from regular Will's Hope Program mentors & staff.

Pre-Applications are due 16 Jan 2023 or until all slots are filled. Once we have filled the available slots, we will place any additional veterans on a wait list.

16 Jan 2023 – Veteran Pre-Applications due

21 or 28 Jan 2023 – Choose a day and this is a mandatory hike at Cheyenne Mountain State Park

28 Feb 2023 – Applications (less medical forms) and Fees are due **

18 March 2023 – Mandatory Orientation (medical forms are due) ***

21 May to 3 June 2023 – Women Veterans' Program

13 June to 25 June 2023 – Men Veterans' Program

** The application packet will contain detailed information about the program such as clothing to bring, schedule, and other details.

*** The orientation will discuss all details related to the program such as food, what to bring, travel arrangements, emergency procedures, etc. and have pictures of lodging, major activities & so forth.

More Info: Contact Mark Squire at 719-210-5625 or willshopeinfo@gmail.com