

PUBLICATION

In the Community: Wounded Warrior Project

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Each year the Firm adopts one nationwide organization to support through an awareness and fundraising campaign. In 2014, Baker Donelson's employees chose to support the Wounded Warrior Project, an organization that serves veterans and service members who incurred a physical or mental injury, illness or wound during their military service on or after September 11, 2001, and their families. Its tagline is "The Greatest Casualty is Being Forgotten." Baker Donelson's employees donated more than \$22,000 to the organization and held dozens of awareness and volunteer events.

Our kickoff event was a special Firm lunch for which Wounded Warrior and *America's Got Talent* contestant Sal Gonzales visited our Nashville office and spoke via videoconference to our offices across the Firm. He was hit by an IED while serving in Iraq and eventually had his leg amputated. He told our attendees that all hope was nearly lost until he became involved with the Wounded Warrior Project. After being connected to all of the resources he needed – medical, mental health, career and more – he is now a successful singer/songwriter living his dream in Nashville, thanks, in part, to organizations and donors like the employees of Baker Donelson.

Throughout the year, various fundraisers were held, both inside and outside of the Firm. A Young Lawyers' event in Memphis raised funds for Baker Donelson's efforts for the organization. The Tallahassee office sponsored a local golf tournament benefitting Wounded Warrior Project and entered two teams. In New Orleans, Steve Griffith, Mimi Koch, and Erin Pelleteri arranged for 100 percent of the registration fees from the Firm's annual labor and employment seminar to go to the Wounded Warrior Project.

Inside the Firm, our employees worked hard to host fun and engaging events to raise awareness of and funds for the organization, including Veteran's Day lunches, jeans days and even a cutest pet photo contest. One Firm favorite was lemonade stands manned by children of our employees during our annual *Take Your Sons and Daughters to Work Day*. The children learned about corporate philanthropy while helping raise money for the Wounded Warrior Project's mission.

Most recently, a Baker Donelson team including Nashville shareholder Martha Boyd ran in the Wounded Warrior 8k in Nashville. Just before the run, wounded army veteran Erick Millette wrote the runners a heartfelt, two-page letter. "[Wounded Warrior] let me know I was not alone, not forgotten ... they not only impacted my life, they saved my life. How were they able to do that? Because of amazing people like you. Your dedication to this generation of injured service members is helping Wounded Warrior Project honor and empower wounded warriors across this great nation."

Our campaign for the Wounded Warrior Project ends in January 2015, after which employees will begin a campaign for the 2015 organization of the year. But it is clear that the goal of adopting a firm-wide organization each year – to expose employees to organizations and causes in the hopes of building awareness and support beyond our yearlong commitment – was met. A common sentiment we hear is summed up well by one employee in our Jackson office: "This project has stirred up patriotism in my heart and made me more thankful than ever for all those who serve and have served this great nation through our armed forces."