

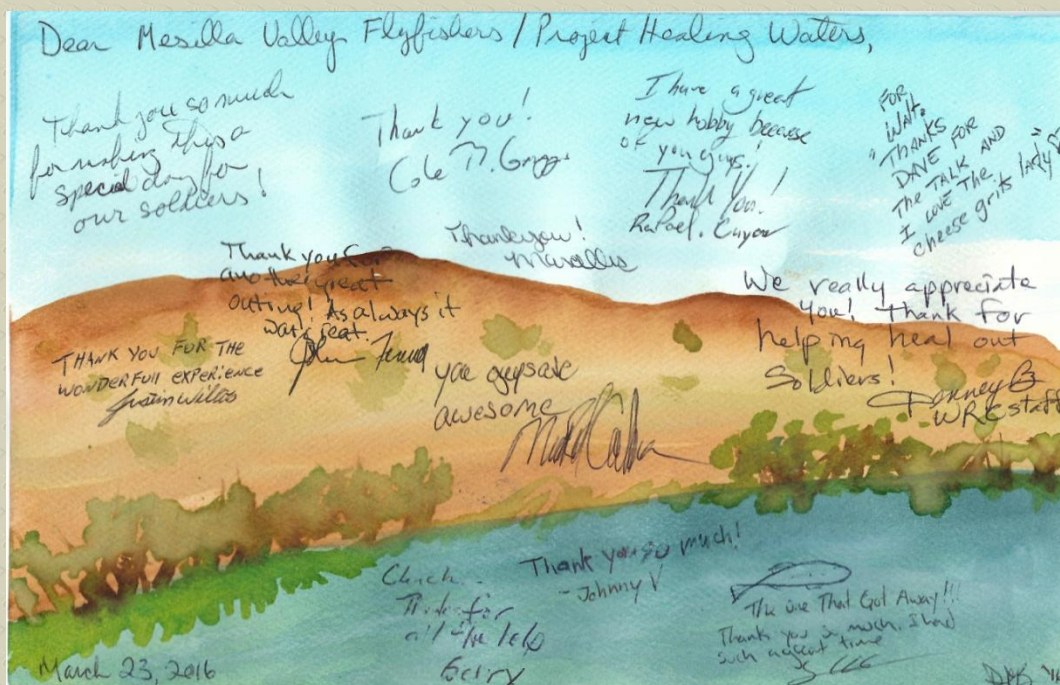
Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing

Mesilla Valley Fly Fishers, Inc. (MVFF) has been supporting Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing (PHWFF) since at least 2009 and during this time has introduced many veterans to the joys of fly fishing as well as fly tying, rod building and simply of being outdoors.

PHWFF is a unique national program built upon community based non-profit volunteerism dedicated to the physical and psychological rehabilitation of active duty military personnel and veterans. Participants are introduced to the therapeutic benefits of fly tying, casting, rod building and fly fishing. The two MVFF programs (Las Cruces and El Paso) are among the nearly 200 such programs around the country; there are only three in New Mexico and six in Texas. The activities emphasized in our PHWFF programs are not only central to the club's stated mission, but they are a meaningful way to give back to service men and women who have given so much to our country.

Project Healing Waters is enormously successful, as indicated by the responses of many of the participants. One statement included in the PHWFF media materials includes the following statement:

Being outdoors with nature and with PHWFF volunteers somehow eased the physical pain and brought peace to my mental being. For the first time, my days were not dark; somehow there was a light at the end of the tunnel. [SFC, USA]



The responses to our own local program, such as the fly fishing trips to the club lease on the Rio Peñasco have been enthusiastic as well, as indicated by comments received on a hand painted, hand lettered thank you card from 2016:

*I have a great new hobby because of you guys. Thank you!
We really appreciate you! Thanks for helping heal our soldiers!
Thank you so much for your generosity, hospitality and friendliness during our trip.
The food was phenomenal! Had a blast fishing.
[Warrior Resilience Center group]*

If you haven't already done so, visit the national PHWFF website to learn more about the program, and especially to view the videos that provide compelling evidence of the positive impact of Project Healing Waters on the lives of real people (www.projecthealingwaters.org/video-gallery/).

Ron Bellerose has been a real champion as the MVFF Project Lead for 2 PHWFF programs, through the Las Cruces Vet Center, and William Beaumont AMC in El Paso. The Las Cruces program is one of only three in New Mexico, the others being located in Taos and Albuquerque. There are only 6 programs in all of Texas, and the next closest one is in Amarillo, 440 miles away. So, for southern New Mexico and most of far west Texas, the MVFF programs are the only opportunities our soldiers and vets have to participate in PHWFF.

For more information contact Ron Bellerose (575-680-5516), flyfishnh@hotmail.com). Hopefully, you will seriously consider volunteering your time to help out. This is a very important program and one from which you will get an immense sense of satisfaction.

Warrior Resilience Center Group – 2014
Outing to fish the Rio Peñasco



