

Norwell business donates \$10,500 to Wounded Warrior Project

By Matthew J. Gill
[GateHouse News Service](#)



The Perry family: Dan, Gina and baby Madelynn.

Norwell —

In February of 2006, Dan Perry was stationed in Iraq, somewhere west of the city of Ramadi.

A mortar operator in the U.S. Army's First of the 506th with the 101st Airborne, Dan was holed up in a bunker by a railroad track. There was gunfire outside, and then some heavy-duty ammunition slammed the bunker, causing it to explode.

Dan barely survived.

He was alive, but severely injured.

He suffered a traumatic brain injury, as well as numerous broken bones, hearing damage and eye damage.

"Pretty much everything," his mother Linda Perry said, describing her son's ailments.

Situations like that, where a person sustains injuries to more than one system in the body at the same time, is known as "poly-trauma," Linda said.

"[Dan] was not expected to survive," she added.

Four years after the explosion, however, Dan is newly married, and even more recently, he and his wife Gina are parents to a baby girl, Madelynn.

He lives in Belchertown, Mass., he works with a local handyman and he takes one class per semester at Asnuntuck College in Connecticut.

He's 24 years old.

"He's a high functioning brain injury patient," his mother said this week.

And his recovery?

"It's been extraordinary."

This weekend, Dan Perry will travel to Rhode Island to hit the first ball in a golf tournament fundraiser for Wounded Warrior Project, a program his mother said has been instrumental to her son's recovery.

"Wounded Warrior Project is a veterans assistance organization that is designed for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who were injured at war," Linda said. "The [organization's] mission is to honor and empower wounded warriors. And that is what they do. They honor and empower them to be all that they can be."

The organization is based in Jacksonville, Fla., and has outreach sites in New York City, San Antonio, Chicago and San Diego. They have representatives at major military treatment facilities, including Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base. They also have an office in Washington D.C. that focuses on legislation on behalf of America's wounded warriors.

The Perry family first learned of the organization at Walter Reed, when R.J. Meade and Heath Calhoun from the Wounded Warrior Project walked into the room a few months after Dan's injury.

They had a backpack with them.

It was loaded with stuff for Dan — some clothes, toiletries and other sundries. According to Linda, when a soldier is brought to some military hospitals following an injury, all he or she might have in their possession is the hospital gown on their back.

Meade and Calhoun, a double amputee from the War in Iraq, spoke with the Perry family for 1-1/2 hours that day about some of the issues Dan would face, and some of the services the Wounded Warrior Project would provide for both Dan, and for his family.

"When they came into our room, we were completely overwhelmed," Linda said. "My husband [Timothy] and I feel Dan would not be where he is today without the Wounded Warrior Project. We've been very, very blessed."

There were many politicians and others who visited Walter Reed during Dan's stay there, Linda said, but it was Meade and Calhoun who were there whenever the Perry family needed someone.

Wounded Warrior Project offers benefit services for wounded veterans, including two schools that are specifically set up for wounded vets. There, veterans are taught computer literacy, and other programs.

Sometimes, the wounded veterans can't fit into a normal college atmosphere, Linda said.

They also have a Warriors to Work program, in which they can help the veterans improve various job and interview skills.

"It's about showing them that they can do things even though they have disabilities," Linda said.

Support from a Norwell company

Advanced Mortgage Services, a company on Washington Street in Norwell, hosted a golf fundraiser for Wounded Warrior Project in the fall. When all the proceeds for the event were tallied, the company wrote out a check for \$10,500, which they presented to Wounded Warrior representatives on March 16.

Stacey Jordan of Advanced Mortgage Services said a number of the staff at the company have family members or friends who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, and some have been wounded in the fighting.

“Often they need a lot of emotional support,” Jordan said, and Wounded Warrior Project helps them deal with both physical and emotional issues.

Jordan said Wounded Warrior Project is a good organization that does good work, helping wounded veterans transition back into society upon their return and recovery.

“It was an easy choice to donate the money,” she said.

Advanced Mortgage Services, which is owned by Hingham residents Brian and Michele Comer, hosted the tourney at Southers Marsh golf course in Plymouth last fall.

“It was a really fun time,” Jordan said. The original goal for the event was to raise \$5,000, but 85 golfers took part and they were able to double their planned donation.

“I was shocked, and pleasantly pleased,” Jordan said.

Advanced Mortgage Services is planning a second golf tourney for Wounded Warrior Project, and it’s to be held Friday, Sept. 10.

Piecing things together

When Dan Perry was married, Linda said a lot of the guys he had served with in Iraq, including the guys who saved him from the bunker, shared details with her family about what had actually happened that day.

Dan, of course, does not remember.

“Our son doesn’t remember anything [about the explosion],” Linda said. “He doesn’t remember two weeks before the explosion, and a good two to three months after the accident.”

“He’ll tell you he remembers it,” she said, “but that’s just his traumatic brain injury.”

Linda said that kind of behavior — when someone with a brain injury cannot remember something that happened, but they talk about it and perhaps make things up about it — is known as confabulation.

“What he was doing, for him, was filling in the gaps that he couldn’t remember,” she said. “The doctor said that’s his way of dealing with the fact that he can’t remember.”

Today, Linda and her husband live in Connecticut, Dan lives in Belchertown, and another son also lives in New England.

The family's originally from California.

Dan was born in a small town out there, and according to his mom he always wanted to join the military. He went to Army basic training three weeks after graduating from high school, she said.

He wanted to be a bomb specialist.

For more information about Wounded Warrior Project, check out the website:
<http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org>.