



## ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

### About the Organization:

The USA Patriots (formerly known as the Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team) has been a registered nonprofit since 2011 after the need for athletic rehabilitation options for our wounded warriors had begun to rise. Through the sport of slow pitch softball, the organization has grown in significant ways by providing athletic programming, youth programming initiatives to teach the abilities of adaptive sport by our veterans, and to engage our veterans in communities to show off the abilities they now have as post-trauma athletes.

The Mission of the USA Patriots is to bring athletic and like-minded veteran amputees together to promote the benefits of inclusive sport and therapeutic recreational activities, to inspire and motivate communities of people, to support children with physical challenges, and to operate as a vehicle that offers national opportunities for continued service to our country.

Likewise, we established a vision to move our vehicle forward. With all of our programs and goals in mind, it is our hope that the USA Patriots will take action as a leading veteran-centric athletic team that serves beyond the uniform by empowering, inspiring, and investing in communities across America with the belief that achievement is not without sacrifice.

### Our History:

The organization started with one week of spring training to veterans who were just learning to walk at Walter Reed hospital. After the week was over, it was clear that the ability to use softball to heal these veterans in both a physical and emotional capacity was significant enough to establish a constant program in support of these opportunities. The team was then established in 2011 and took off quite well. After a great deal of success as a team, the veterans came together asking how they could give back to the communities who supported their 3 year journey to health. It seemed most natural to give back to the amputee community to use their service to show that life without limbs can be limitless. Soon, a kids camp was established. This camp is funded by the team who now has the opportunity to not only be a player, but to use their military leadership skills to become coaches for young children who also may think that their limb loss will limit their athletic opportunities in life. This program has been a successful way of giving leadership skills to our veterans, while also directly impacting a community of people they are most connected to. The team has continued to grow since this program addition, and we are now in a place where we are able to provide multiple streams of programming: 1. Team (softball), 2. Adaptive Skills Training through Spring Training Week, 3. Kids Camp and Leadership/Coaching and sharing Adaptive Sport Techniques, and 4. Educating Communities in the areas of Adaptive Sport and Prosthetic Care.

## **PARTICIPATION DETAILS**

### **Demographics that best fit the members of the military community we serve:**

Veterans  
Active Duty  
Men and Women  
Children  
Family Programs

### **What injuries or illnesses our service members typically present:**

Traumatic Brain Injury  
Post Traumatic Stress  
Spinal Injuries  
Amputations  
Substance Abuse  
Other Psychological Issues

### **What other populations we serve?:**

Amputee Children

## **PROGRAM DETAILS**

### **Primary services through your program:**

Adaptive sports in both a team setting and a technical/learning setting as well as opportunities for leadership development, and health and wellness promotion.

### **Support services we provide:**

We send athletes to a specific prosthetist who helps them build legs for capabilities beyond what the VA is willing to provide to them so they can be more athletic.

### **Overview of our program design:**

Our program serves in a few capacities:

1. Team: We travel with athletes giving them opportunities to play the sport of softball while also being part of a team setting once again. This aids their physical and emotional wellbeing and supports their abilities to work collectively and in a more social setting which increases the emotional intelligence of the veteran and serves as a form of therapy for intellectual limitations caused by PTSD or TBI.
2. Spring Training - Adaptive Sills Training: This is a week long opportunity to bring the entire roster together for a refresher on skills and adaptive techniques. We have grown this program in terms of length of time as well as offerings. We have softball professionals on site, along with a Physical Therapist who works specifically with the amputee population. We have also begun to incorporate

services by individuals who are professionals with the DAV and the VA to ensure our athletes are getting their medical needs met properly. I would like to incorporate more mental health wellness opportunities here in the future. This program is serving as a "check in" on the physical and emotional state of our players as individuals.

3. Kids Camp - Leadership/Coaching: Kids Camp is a program that we host for outside the veteran population and focuses specifically on children with limb loss. While we do have preference for children of veterans, this opportunity is open to any child in the amputee community. This program benefits our veterans by giving them the opportunity to serve in a leadership capacity which gives them confidence and the ability to work on their interactions with others. This also is an opportunity for our athletes to become coaches and to teach adaptive techniques to children who may have the same limitations they do. They are able to physically and emotionally coach these children who may feel that an amputee cannot play sports.

4. Education and Community: During our travels, it is a priority of this organization to work with communities on educating them on the abilities and needs of wounded veterans, specifically those with traumatic loss. We educate schools, corporate offices, and other new amputees in VAs and hospitals across the country about the abilities of an amputee. We also provide this education to our new athletes and have provided a great deal of resources to our athletes on upgrading their prosthetics to be more adaptive for an athletic setting.

### **Meet A Patriot: Jeff Hackett**

Jeff was a few years out of his accident where he had stepped on a weighted plate that blew him and his team up in Iraq. He traumatically lost his right leg and his right arm was severed and hanging there. His right leg was also shattered. Jeff wasn't supposed to even make it, let alone have 3 of his limbs left, but thanks to the fast work of the medical team he was able to have rods and pins keep his right leg in tact, and the flesh and skin from his left leg repaired his left arm enough that he could keep that too. However, he lost his left leg on the spot rendering him and above the knee amputee. After his extended stay at Walter Reed he was able to go back home, but in doing so Jeff had fallen into a deep depression. He realized his life was not the same. He lost his job which he loved so much and had been a part of for 12 years, and he was now facing a new way of moving around. So he sat on his couch letting himself go. Jeff was at nearly 300 lbs, not interacting with his family that was living the same life they were used to, and not having a job, passion, or purpose anymore. It was then that Jeff found the poster for our organization in his local VA. Fast forward three years... Jeff is now a thriving member of this team. He has lost over 120 lbs. He spends every day working on his softball techniques and skills and has since taught his daughters the sport and they are now on their middle and high school softball teams. He travels with his new brothers of this team to every event we have. He even started his own photography business after realizing he has a passion for photographing this team and his daughters playing the sport he loves! His medication has changed as he is now relying on sports and fitness to play a bigger role in his recovery process and he is able to tell his story to communities without flashing back to his PTSD of what happened the day he stepped on that plate in Iraq.

What we do as an organization may be labeled softball, but what we provide is a holistic approach to providing physical and emotional benefits to these veterans that deeply impact their lives and the lives of those around them.