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Contact Ryan Luchau: ryan.luchau@impactmontana.org; 406-431-6530; <https://impactmontana.org>

IMPACT MONTANA WELLNESS PROGRAM HELPS VETS, FAMILIES CHANGE LIVES

HELENA, MONTANA—A triple amputee, Tomy Parker of Ronan lost both legs and the fingers on his left hand to an IED explosion in Sangin, Afghanistan, in 2010. After returning home, the Marine Corps veteran faced physical and emotional trauma, painkiller addiction, and ultimately, incarceration. More than 2 years sober now and an endurance racer, Parker runs 10 miles each weekday, training for marathons in an all-terrain wheelchair provided by Impact Montana.

“Impact Montana is an incredible nonprofit,” Parker says. “It’s one of the few that gets down to brass tacks in giving veterans and their families the help they need.” Now a board member, Parker does veteran outreach for the organization and inspires others through public speaking engagements.

Impact Montana promotes holistic wellness to active U.S. service members, veterans, and their families through physical, financial, social, career, spiritual, and family support. The organization partners with fitness and holistic health centers in Montana to provide free or discounted services to vets. Partners include Helena’s Crossroads, Fuel Fitness, Capital City Health Club, and Dynamic Health Technologies, as well as facilities in Butte, Bozeman, Kalispell, and Billings.

Board President Ryan Luchau also served in Afghanistan. He managed his own recovery process for chronic pain and fatigue through a combination of physical wellness, spiritual, and natural healing therapies before founding Impact Montana to help others. His long-term goals are to create a statewide network of health clubs to improve physical fitness, and peer-to-peer connections to foster social wellness. Short term, Luchau says, “We’re developing a community leadership program to increase outreach and partnerships across the state.”

Impact Montana is holding a series of events this summer to raise funds and awareness. The annual Montana Warrior Challenge, a team event simulating physical military challenges, is slated Saturday, August 21, in Helena. Upcoming Warrior Runs are in Missoula August 7, Bozeman August 28, and the Flathead Valley September 4. Great Falls and Dillon dates are being set.

A Gold Star wife, Chantelle Russell lost her husband to Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2006. She values Impact Montana’s mission. “When your spouse or parent serves in the military, you serve with them. There really weren’t any organizations to help families like mine in Montana; that is why I am grateful for Impact Montana,” Russell says. Now the physical wellness coordinator for Impact Montana, Russell takes advantage of the program herself. “I’ve seen lives changed. The isolation of PTS survivors goes down immensely.”

Impact Montana is supported by numerous organizations, including the Schwab Foundation, Town Pump Community Foundation, Gianforte Family Foundation, Boeing, BNSF, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana, as well as individual donors.

The nonprofit seeks event participants, community leaders, partners, and advocates. To learn more, contact Impact Montana at impactmontanateam@gmail.com or 406-461-5487.