



**NO BARRIERS**

**WHAT'S WITHIN YOU'S STRONGER THAN WHAT'S IN YOUR WAY**



## What barriers do you face?

This question lies at the heart of our organization. Whether it be in our personal lives or at work or in our communities, we all face challenges. And we believe that what defines us is not what these are, but how we choose to respond. No Barriers empowers people of all walks of life and abilities to overcome obstacles, live a life of purpose, and give back to the world - all based on our groundbreaking curriculum, the *No Barriers Life™*

### OUR PARTNERSHIPS FOCUS ON:

#### BUILDING COMMUNITY

We unite people behind the shared purpose of breaking through barriers. Be it engaging with our audience or engaging your employees, our work brings people together and encourages meaningful conversation that ignites change, long-term.

#### INSPIRING THROUGH UNIQUE CONTENT

Seeing is believing, and the stories of our participants are second to none. The deeply personal accounts of how they have tackled life's challenges empowers others to think, do and live differently. Our storytelling is about creating a movement, not just a campaign.

#### SERVING THROUGH LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCES

Our programs are rooted in bringing the No Barriers mindset to life, in environments that lead to significant transformation. We host targeted events for Warriors, Youth, Women and people with different abilities as well as Corporate Leadership sessions.

**90%**

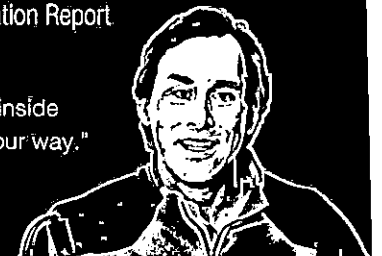
of people are more loyal, trusting and supportive of companies that support issues important to them. – 2015 Cone Global CSR Study

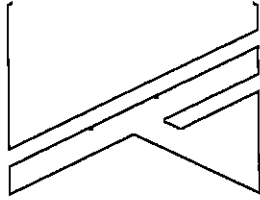
**95%**

of No Barriers participants say their lives were forever changed. – 2016 Duerden and Lundberg No Barriers Evaluation Report

"My life's journey has been to help others tap into the light inside of each of us that craves purpose, despite the barriers in our way."

– Erik Weihenmayer, First blind man to climb Mt. Everest,  
No Barriers Co-Founder





# NO BARRIERS YOUTH



# DISCOVER WHAT'S POSSIBLE

**Join a No Barriers Youth program to find out what's possible  
and be inspired to give your absolute best to the world.**

- Explore environmental and equity issues
- Develop a sense of purpose and confidence
- Grow and innovate through challenges
- Connect with other people and the earth
- Give back as a leader who serves
- Have fun on a grand adventure!

**NO BARRIERS YOUTH • 970-484-3633 • NOBARRIERSYOUTH.ORG**

## CHINA

You'll deepen your understanding of the connections between the U.S. and China, and of how the Chinese people have faced adversity throughout their history to become a rising world power.



# INTERNATIONAL & DOMESTIC DESTINATIONS

## ALASKA

With a native population whose cultural history and lives are uniquely tied to the land, you'll examine how resource consumption, rising seas, and a changing climate affect Alaska's ecosystems and people.



## PERU: AMAZON

Few places on Earth can rival the rich diversity of the Amazon rainforest, where you are invited to reach out of your comfort zone to do hands-on science and experience indigenous ways of life.

## PERU: HIGHLANDS

Ponder your place in the world and challenge yourself as a leader exploring the rich Inca culture. You'll feel the spirit of the Andes and experience a night sky darker than any you've ever seen.



## U.S. SOUTHWEST

While it may seem close to home, this area has immense potential to radically transform your relationship with yourself, others and your planet through rich cultural and natural history.

## COSTA RICA

Whether in the cloud forest canopy or on tropical beaches, you'll experience tropical ecology, sustainable agriculture, and how to elevate others and the earth as a leader who serves.



# PROGRAMS FOR GROUPS

As an educator or youth group leader, you can organize an expedition program for a group of youth that you bring together. In exchange for your coordination of the program for your group, your travel is free of charge. Groups typically must meet a minimum of at least 10 youth.

## GET INVOLVED

Due to the generous support of individuals, foundations and corporate partners, No Barriers Youth is able to provide scholarships to youth who otherwise could not participate in our expedition programs. To learn more about how you can get involved, please contact our Chief Development Officer, Cindy Bean at [cindy@nobarriersusa.org](mailto:cindy@nobarriersusa.org)

## LEARNING AFAR

Developed in partnership with AFAR Media, Learning AFAR is our nationally recognized program that provides scholarship support to underserved populations. Once funding is secured for a Learning AFAR program in a particular market, schools in that area are invited to apply.



# PROGRAMS FOR INDIVIDUALS

As an individual high school student, we offer several programs you can apply to. Scholarship funding may be available.



## CLIMATE CHANGE

Explore the topic of climate change in some of our planet's most dramatic ecosystems in Alaska and the Peruvian Amazon. Any individual youth may apply.



## GIRL SCOUTS

Discover, connect and take action while building leadership skills, enhancing self-awareness and fulfilling service commitments in a variety of destinations. Non-Girl Scouts are also encouraged to apply.



## LEADING THE WAY

Join a team of youth with diverse abilities on an incredible adventure in places like the Grand Canyon and Peru. Developed in partnership with world-renowned blind adventurer and No Barriers board member Erik Weihenmayer. Grand Canyon programming is possible through our partnership with the National Park Service. Scholarships are available.



## CHILDREN OF THE FALLEN

Unite with other children of fallen service members to raft the San Juan River and experience the riches of the desert in the U.S. Southwest. Offered in partnership with the Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation. Scholarships are available.



## LEARNING AFAR

for Youth in Foster Care

This new program provides a transformational and supportive experience for youth in the foster care system to travel to the U.S. Southwest. Scholarships are currently available for youth in Southwest Florida.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

# VFW

FEBRUARY 2017

WWW.VFW.ORG

RECKLESS: NOT  
JUST A HORSE BUT A  
**MARINE**

**outdoor**  
challenge provides  
**inner**  
strength

Purple Heart vets  
bag antelope in  
'Big Sky' country

**PLUS...**  
NEW STUDY  
EXPLORES  
CAUSES OF  
MILITARY  
DIVORCES



PHOTOS BY DIDRIK JOHNSKY/NO BARRIERS USA

# THE 'NO BARRIERS' LIFE

BY KELLY GIBSON

THROUGH AN INTENSIVE OUTDOOR CURRICULUM, DISABLED VETERANS CHALLENGE THEIR BODIES, MINDS AND SPIRITS. FOR SOME, THE PROGRAM HELPS THEM LEARN OUTDOOR SURVIVAL SKILLS. FOR MOST, NO BARRIERS WARRIORS, BASED IN COLORADO, HELPS THEM FIND PEACE AND HEALING AFTER LIVING THROUGH WAR.



Veterans participate in a No Barriers Warriors expedition in Colorado. No Barriers is designed to give wounded veterans an outdoor experiential learning curriculum.

**E**ric Donoho believes in fate. He says all choices led him to where he is now for a reason. Participating in *No Barriers Warriors* outdoor curriculum for disabled veterans changed his narrative for good.

Donoho joined the Army later than most. He reached out to a local Army recruiter in 2004 at 26 years old. He said it was something he had thought about doing since he was 18, but his father, who served as a Ranger in Vietnam, encouraged him to go to college.

"I'd like to say it was a noble calling," Donoho said. "But we were at war. I was 26, not married. I wasn't happy with life or what I was doing, and it just was something that would allow me to challenge myself in a way I'd never been challenged."

Donoho said he was excited to see what he was made of. It was on the plane from Atlanta to his first duty station at Ft. Richardson, Alaska, where he met his wife. "Fate," he said.

Donoho served as a radio telephone operator with C Co., 3rd Bn., 509th Inf. Regt., and deployed to Iraq in October 2006. He was part of a scout sniper platoon at Forward Operating Base Kalsu. Before Donoho stepped foot in Iraq, he received word that his wife had miscarried their son, David, at seven months, and he had to return to the United States. He immediately shipped back to Iraq

after his son's funeral.

On his first night back while on his first patrol, Donoho and his fellow soldiers encountered an improvised explosive device (IED).

"Having that trauma of losing my first son and then showing up and getting blown up right away, I realized that I had to be OK with death," Donoho said.

Donoho, a member of Post 9981 in Anchorage, Alaska, described his experience as typical for any infantryman. He was "blown up" three times during his deployment. It was after the second blast he started getting migraines.

When Donoho returned home from Iraq in November 2007, he was diagnosed with traumatic brain injury. He wasn't ready to acknowledge that he also had typical symptoms of PTSD.

"It was always present," Donoho said. "I had trouble tracking. I was moody. [In war], you can be scared about dying, but at that end, are you going to be able to do the right thing when the time comes? I was afraid I wouldn't be able to. I decided I needed to come to grips that I was going to die. Life in Iraq, every day, I woke up and thought, 'Today is the day that I die.' Accepting that idea in the morning made it easier to make the most out of my downtime. If I actually cared about living then I wouldn't be able to do my job. You live that way for a long enough period then it becomes your outlook on life."

Indeed, trauma and death followed Donoho home. In 2009, his wife was diagnosed with a rare form of breast cancer. The couple also suffered seven miscarriages. Several of Donoho's military friends committed suicide when they returned from war.

"It really reinforced how I had been living for a long time," Donoho said. "I was just reacting to the situation, not really thinking about where I was."

Donoho and his wife had a daughter in 2010, and a son in 2014. But their marriage was falling apart. Divorce seemed imminent.

"I realized it wasn't just that I've experienced war, but it was also that I've lost my faith in humanity," Donoho said. "I had two choices: make changes or die. Even if my wife left me, if I didn't make changes then I might as well shoot myself. That's kind of the way it stood for a few months."

It was the suicide of a mentor that really pushed Donoho to focus on living.

"This gentleman, he was part of every adult thing that I did in my life," Donoho said. "At that point, I realized that I don't want my friends getting that phone call. I don't want my kids to grow up without me. So I was committed to change on that day."

That was the day he applied for *No Barriers Warriors*.

*No Barriers Warriors* is specifically designed for wounded veterans. Donoho

said he had followed the program for some time, but didn't think it was for him until he accepted that his mental wound was severe.

"The bomb blast twisted my brain up," Donoho said. "I needed to figure out a way to remap all those connections that weren't working properly."

### SKILL SETS VS. MINDSETS

*No Barriers Warriors* evolved out of the existing program, *No Barriers USA*, an outdoor experiential learning curriculum for people with disabilities. The organization was co-founded by Erik Weihenmayer, the first blind person to summit Mt. Everest. In 2011, on the 10th anniversary of Weihenmayer's climb, he and a group of wounded Iraq and Afghanistan veterans summited Mt. Lobuche in the Himalayas. *No Barriers USA* officially added a veteran-centric extension to its organization in 2012.

Participants take part in a four-day excursion backpacking and climbing in austere conditions, free of charge. The curriculum, which accompanies the high-adventure trip, teaches the mantra, "What's within you is stronger than what's in your way," encouraging participants to overcome life's hurdles.

"We have a saying," said John Toth, *No Barriers Warriors* executive director, "It's not about skill sets, it's about mindsets. When participants come to Colorado, we teach them how to use tools, but really we're trying to change their mindset. Veterans need to be reminded of the strength they have in them."

Toth, in a way, was saved by the "No Barriers life." The Army veteran retired in 2011. By 2013, he had been unemployed for 15 months. He heard about an opening with *No Barriers Warriors*, and it was a perfect fit.

"*No Barriers Warriors* gives me the opportunity to impact people's lives," said Toth, a member at Post 1 in Denver. "Veterans struggling with PTSD or substance abuse... I've been there. They can be obstacles you feel like you can't overcome. On month nine or 10 of unemployment, I needed someone to show me that I could still do it."

In 2016, *No Barriers Warriors* coordinated 12 expeditions and served 125 veterans. According to Toth, *No Barriers*

*Warriors* hopes to provide 17 expeditions to 180 veterans in 2017.

### FINDING SUPPORT

Donoho was selected for the Wind River Range excursion in the spring of 2016. The 100-mile slice of the Rocky Mountains is located in western Wyoming and includes granite faces popular with rock climbers. This was Donoho's chance to get out of his box.

For him, PTSD dictated a need to control his surroundings. He had "boxes" for every situation — a plan for being at home, a plan for running errands. Donoho maintained situational expectations and constant vigilance. But *No Barriers Warriors* threw any plan he could have made out the window. He wouldn't have his cell phone to reach family. He was meeting and surviving with 12 people he didn't know.

"When we talk about expectations, I was just trying to get over whether I was going to be able to do this," Donoho said.

As the saying goes, even the best-laid plans go to waste. Donoho's trip to Wyoming was canceled due to a late-spring snowstorm. *No Barriers Warriors* moved the location to the Gila wilderness, part of New Mexico's Gila National Forest in the southwestern part of the state.

This was Donoho's first challenge.

"I wanted to quit," he said. "I didn't want to go back to the desert. Been there, done that."

With his wife's encouragement, Donoho got on the plane, and within hours of landing, he said, he was laughing again.

"It was the first time in seven years I was talking and laughing," Donoho said. "Genuinely having fun and enjoying camaraderie. I wasn't the only one who thinks the way I think. It was amazing."

Beyond camaraderie, Donoho said he learned to react to the world differently.

"War is black and white," Donoho said. "You don't have to think about it. But the civilian world is all grey. You get to choose your response. Instead of flying off the handle if I feel the urge, I walk out until I can think about what I want to say or do."

Donoho and Toth both cite the importance of extensive follow-up veterans receive after the trip.

The program is set up in three phases:

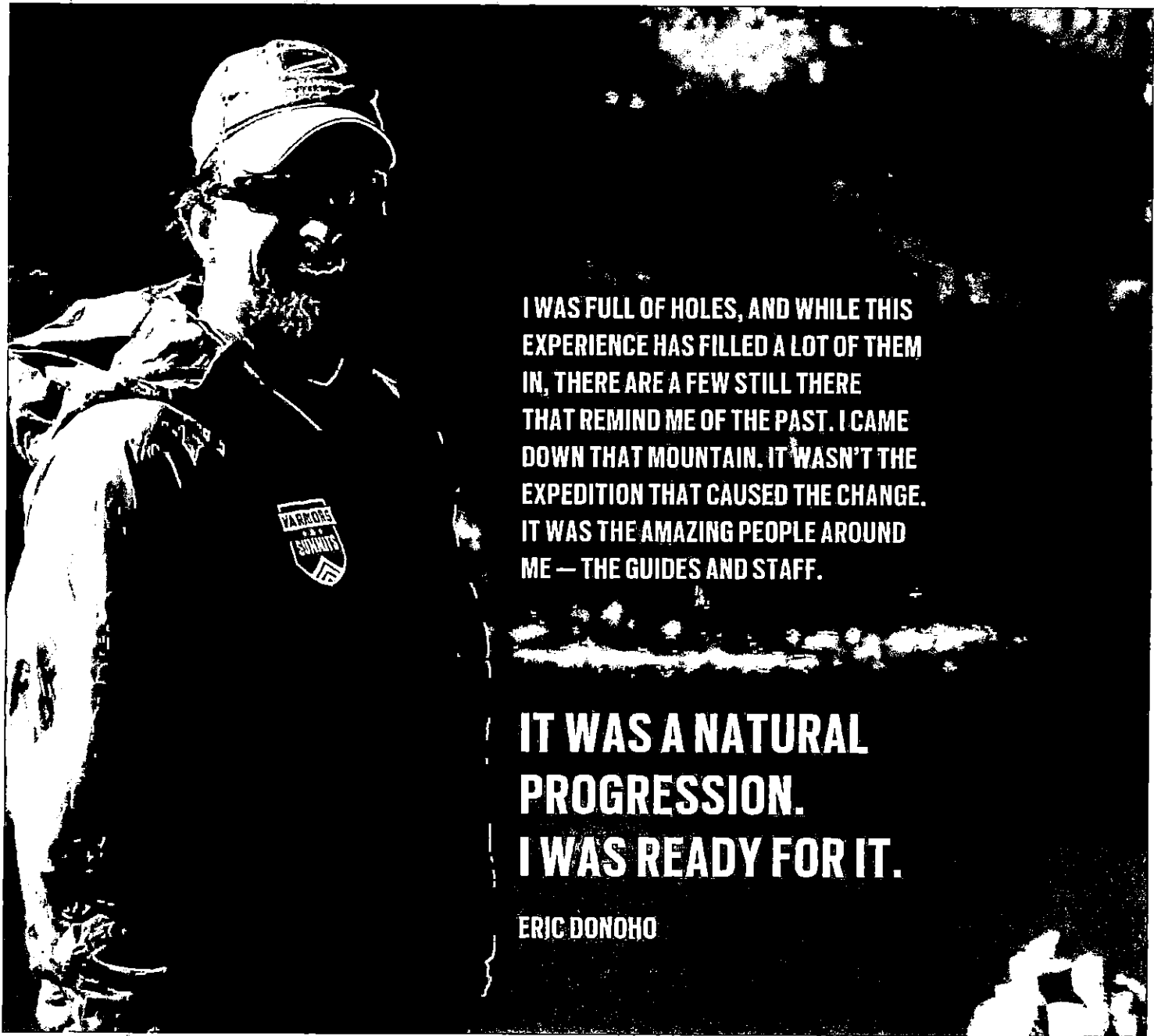
Eric Donoho at Kelly Lake in Colorado State Forest State Park in August during the *Warriors to Summits* training. An Iraq veteran, Donoho has been involved with *No Barriers Warriors* since 2014. He credits the staff and expedition guides for helping him out of the dark place he was in due to his PTSD.



es: before, during and after the excursion. Veterans prepare for the excursion and learn the "no barriers life," then they practice it all together outdoors, developing strong, lasting relationships, which Toth calls a "rope team." The final phase includes following up after the veteran returns home.

Veterans make a pledge — some goal a participant has always wanted to make — and find actionable ways to follow through. *No Barriers Warriors* gives them support to complete their self-driven mission as long as they need.

"I have a team behind me that wants to help me write that next chapter and vice versa," Donoho said.



**I WAS FULL OF HOLES, AND WHILE THIS EXPERIENCE HAS FILLED A LOT OF THEM IN, THERE ARE A FEW STILL THERE THAT REMIND ME OF THE PAST. I CAME DOWN THAT MOUNTAIN. IT WASN'T THE EXPEDITION THAT CAUSED THE CHANGE. IT WAS THE AMAZING PEOPLE AROUND ME — THE GUIDES AND STAFF.**

**IT WAS A NATURAL PROGRESSION. I WAS READY FOR IT.**

**ERIC DONOHO**

### **'I WAS FULL OF HOLES'**

After the first trip, Donoho experienced a post-program low. Toth personally reached out.

"We want it to be a difficult experience," Toth said. "We don't want them to go on an expedition and lose that connection. The final phase is making sure the boost doesn't fade."

Donoho opened up to Toth about his post-expedition struggles.

"It took me a couple of minutes to tell him the truth that I was embarrassed I wasn't doing well," Donoho said. "[Toth] said, 'Look man, change isn't going to happen overnight.' I realized I've got a

lot of work to do. I have a long climb up."

Donoho was chosen to participate in No Barriers Warriors' alumni climb in the San Juan mountain range of the Rockies in October 2016.

Because of injury and weather, Donoho was one of only three participants to reach the summit of Mt. Sneffels. This was the point of transcendence for him.

"I was full of holes, and while this experience has filled a lot of them in, there are a few still there that remind me of the past," Donoho said. "I came down that mountain. It wasn't the expedition that caused the change. It was the amaz-

ing people around me — the guides and staff. It was a natural progression. I was ready for it."

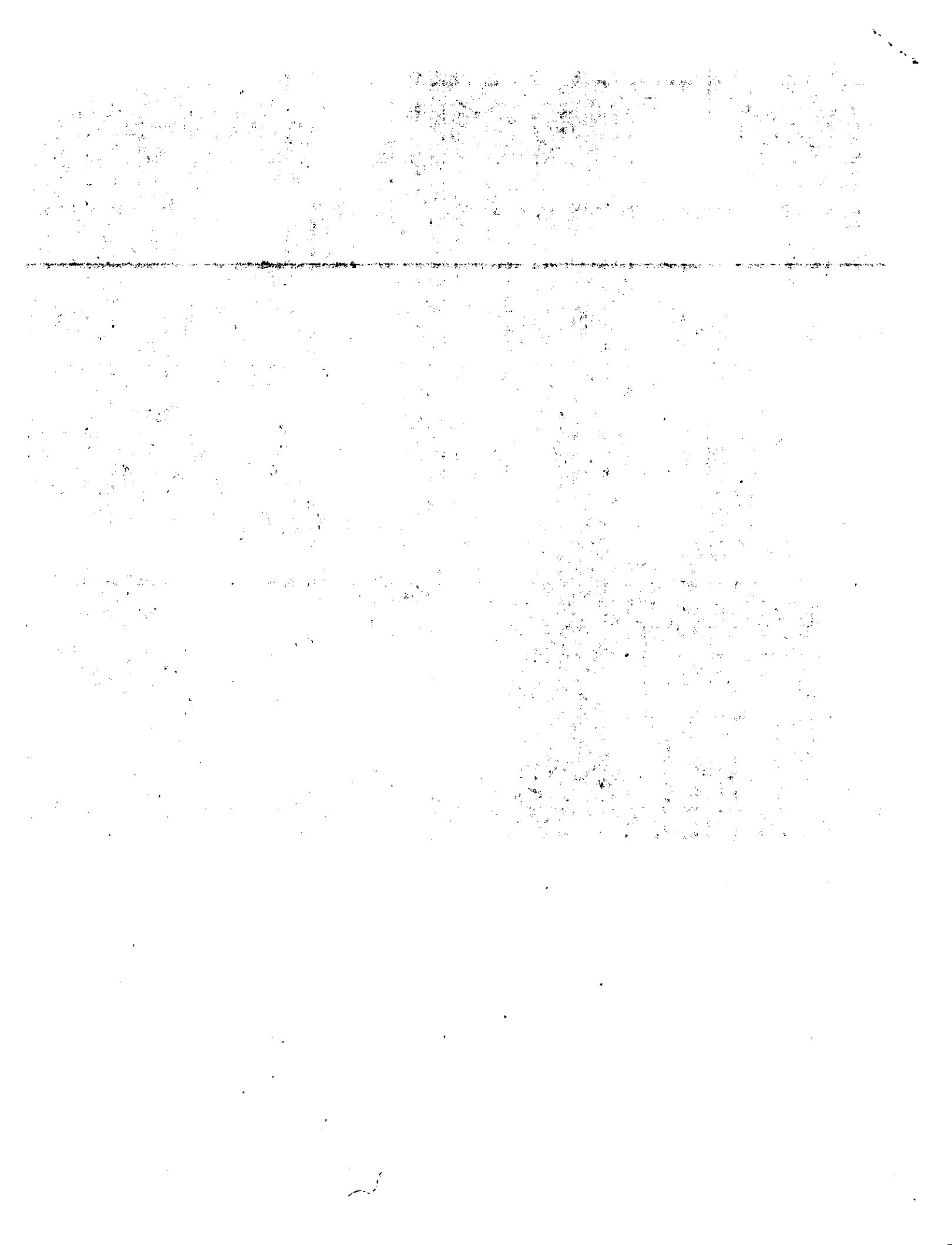
An amateur photographer, Donoho made a goal to place his work in an art show. In October, he met that goal.

"It takes some effort, and you do need that little bit of a shove," Toth said. "Sometimes you just need someone to encourage you and say, 'You can do it, just keep going.'"

For more information about No Barriers Warriors, or to nominate a veteran for an excursion, visit [www.nobarrierswarriors.org/vfw](http://www.nobarrierswarriors.org/vfw).

EMAIL [magazine@vfw.org](mailto:magazine@vfw.org)







**WHAT'S WITHIN YOU  
IS STRONGER THAN  
WHAT'S IN YOUR W**



**We transform the lives  
of veterans with disabilities.**

No Barriers Warriors improves the lives of veterans with disabilities through transformative, curriculum-based expeditions in challenging outdoor environments.



**NO BARRIERS  
WARRIORS**

**APPLY OR NOMINATE TODAY: [NoBarriersWarriors.org](http://NoBarriersWarriors.org)»**




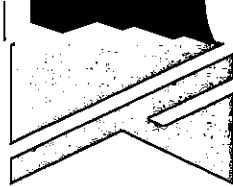
97%

**of participants would recommend  
this program to a friend or colleague**

*\*2016 Duerden & Lundberg No Barriers Report*

Each No Barriers Warriors expedition is designed to push veterans mentally and physically in some of nature's most incredible wilderness settings. We create a safe space and encourage them to reflect on their past, recognize where they are in the present and then look with positivity to the future. The experience serves as a catalyst for change as veterans stretch their boundaries, innovate through adversity, and build lifelong rope teams. Through generous support, our experiences are offered at no cost to our veterans. Contact us at 970-484-3633 ext. 319 or email [cindy@nobarriersusa.org](mailto:cindy@nobarriersusa.org) for more information about how you can support this important work.

No Barriers Warriors welcomes veterans with disabilities to attend the Warriors Track at the 2018 No Barriers Summit: New York City — a premiere immersive event that brings together people of all backgrounds and abilities who are transcending barriers to unleash their fullest potential and live a life of purpose. Featuring inspirational storytelling, curriculum to live by, authentic experiences and connection with others, the No Barriers Summit: NYC is packaged in a two-day event that feels like an outdoor festival and has the energy of a live concert! Visit [NoBarriersSummit.org](http://NoBarriersSummit.org) for more information about attending this one-of-a-kind inclusive and accessible event.



**YOUR NEXT STEP  
COULD CHANGE  
YOUR LIFE**

 **NO BARRIERS WARRIORS**

**2018 EXPEDITIONS**

## **FIVE-DAY BASECAMP EXPEDITIONS**

Our five-day basecamp expeditions are multi-discipline opportunities based out of our “one-step-from-wilderness” camp in the Red Feather Lakes region of Northern Colorado. Together, your team will experience the No Barriers Life while white-water rafting the Poudre River, climbing on local rock formations, and trekking through the Colorado backcountry. While at our rural camp, you will cook together, rest up from each day’s challenge, and spend time with your fellow veterans.

## **FIVE-DAY BACKCOUNTRY EXPEDITIONS**

Our five-day backcountry expeditions occur in some of Colorado’s most beautiful wilderness settings. The team will gather at our rural basecamp to receive gear, sort team food and equipment, and get to know one another. First thing the next morning the team will head to the backcountry and trek to an alpine lake, establish a base camp, and attempt to summit one of the local peaks. This is a difficult level opportunity so you definitely need to be physically fit and put in the training prior to arrival. The team will cover 15 miles over three days at elevation, bonding as a team and overcoming physical and personal barriers.

## **SEVEN-DAY BACKCOUNTRY EXPEDITIONS**

Our seven-day backcountry expeditions are set in remote wilderness areas of Colorado, Wyoming and New Mexico. Participants spend 5 days in the backcountry trekking at elevations ranging from 5,700 to 13,000 feet. Teams will cover between 20 and 40 miles depending on the location and elevation. This is a difficult level opportunity that requires higher levels of physical fitness, so start training now. All experiences are designed to push participants to their physical limits and encourage team camaraderie.

## **WARRIORS TRACK AT THE NO BARRIERS SUMMIT: NYC**

No Barriers Warriors welcomes veterans with disabilities to attend the Warriors Track at the 2018 No Barriers Summit: New York City — a premiere immersive event that brings together people of all backgrounds and abilities who are transcending barriers to unleash their fullest potential and live a life of purpose. The No Barriers Summit: NYC provides inspirational storytelling, curriculum to live by, authentic experiences and connection to others — all packaged in a two-day event that feels like an outdoor festival and has the energy of a live concert! No Barriers is an inclusive community and the entire event is accessible. When you get here, everything changes. And when you leave, nothing is ever the same.



**APPLY OR NOMINATE TODAY | [NoBarriersWarriors.org](http://NoBarriersWarriors.org)**

*No Barriers Warriors improves the lives of veterans with disabilities through transformative experiences in challenging environments, catalyzing change by challenging the way veterans think about themselves, their barriers, and their future. These expeditions introduce participants to the No Barriers Life curriculum, providing opportunities to grow, stretch boundaries, and build lifelong rope teams. Through generous support, our experiences are offered at no cost to our veterans. Contact us at 970-484-3633 ext. 319 or email [cindy@nobarriersusa.org](mailto:cindy@nobarriersusa.org) for more information about how you can support this important work.*

*If you have questions, or wish to apply or nominate a veteran, visit [NoBarriersWarriors.org](http://NoBarriersWarriors.org) or email [warriors@nobarriersusa.org](mailto:warriors@nobarriersusa.org)*

