

Team River Runner Hosts Kayak Clinic for Visually Impaired Veterans and Veteran Guides in Key Largo



Key Largo, FL

Photos from Team River Runner OuttaSight Clinics in prior years.

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Key Largo, Florida – Starting June 6, Team River Runner USA (TRR) will be hosting a week long OuttaSight Clinic in Key Largo to introduce Veterans with visual impairment to coastal kayaking and to train sighted, disabled Veterans as guides. Seven Veterans will be traveling from Idaho, North Carolina, Alabama and Florida to attend this clinic. The OuttaSight Clinic is seeking donations to sponsor the expenses for each of these Veterans to participate in this training. Team River Runner will be posting interviews and updates from the OuttaSight Clinic daily on Facebook and Instagram.

“It is incredibly inspiring to watch our Veterans face this challenge head on,” says Joe Mornini, Executive Director of Team River Runner USA. “Coastal kayaking is a new challenge for our visually impaired Veterans and this is a new way to go about it for our Veteran Guides in training. They are ready for the adventure and we want to do everything we can to support them!”

TRR is a pioneer in developing guide training and paddler instruction for Veterans with visual impairment. TRR's OuttaSight program runs clinics that introduce visually-impaired Veterans to the independence and freedom provided through kayaking. Utilizing well-trained and qualified guides, week-long progressive, intensive training programs enable Veterans who have never kayaked to become proficient in either flatwater, coastal, or basic whitewater kayaking skills. Efforts are made to connect these Veterans to paddling resources in their community so that they can continue to experience the benefits of kayaking when they return home.

The seven Veterans who are participating this year include:

- Tonya Butler - Veteran/Guide - Mobile, AL
- Dayne Law - Veteran/Guide - Boise, ID
- Horace McDonald - Veteran/Guide - Asheville, NC
- David Malinowski - Veteran VI participant - Tampa, FL
- George Stokes - Veteran VI participant - Port St. Lucie, FL
- Christina Hilt - Veteran participant - Mobile, AL
- Charmie Scott - Veteran participant, Mobile, AL

"It's more than just kayaking for me," says Rick Cassidy, a TRR OuttaSight paddler who attended previous clinics. "It is an opportunity to meet and hang out with other visually impaired veterans, like myself, who have a sense of adventure."

Team River Runner believes that every wounded and disabled veteran deserves the opportunity to embrace new challenges, invoke leadership and promote camaraderie. Team River Runner provides an outlet to fulfill these beliefs – inviting wounded and disabled war veterans and their families to participate in adaptive paddling programs as a means to find health, healing, community purpose and new challenges. Established in 2004 at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, TRR is a 501(C)3 nonprofit with more than 60 chapters in 35 states. The organization is donation and grant supported, and all local sites are staffed and run by volunteers, many of whom are Veterans who started as participants in our programs. Our volunteers are supported by a small national staff and a Board of Directors. Donations to Team River Runner are tax-deductible.

Team River Runner is the pioneer in developing guide training and paddler instruction for Veterans with visual impairment. Adaptive kayaking uses the inherent opportunity of pursuing physical challenges in nature to provide rehabilitation for both physical and psychological injuries. Kayaking offers physical benefits like flexibility, balance, and small motor skills and requires cognitive skills like planning, initiation, concentration, attention, communication, and sequencing of complex tasks. Kayaking improves mood and confidence while also providing social and family re-integration, a sense of purpose and leadership opportunities. Most importantly, kayaking serves as both physical and mental therapy while delivering adventure and fun!

June 2021 marks the resumption of our OuttaSight training program after the Covid 2020 shutdown. The clinic provides Veterans with instruction, gear, facilities and venues, and covers other direct costs of training. While TRR does utilize grant funding to cover some of these costs, grant funding for travel, lodging, and food is limited. These indirect costs often total \$1500 per Veteran and come from private donations. We are seeking sponsors for each of our Veterans for this year's training.

To donate to the Key Largo OuttaSight Clinic, go to:

app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/TeamRiverRunner/keylargoclinic.html

WEB RESOURCES

Team River Runner, USA: www.teamriverrunner.org

TRR Key Largo OuttaSight Clinic: www.teamriverrunner.org/outtasight-clinic-key-largo/

TRR Key Largo Donation Link: app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/TeamRiverRunner/keylargoclinic.html

Facebook: www.facebook.com/TRRUSA/

Instagram: www.instagram.com/teamriverrunner/

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