



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Sept. 20, 2021  
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**Area Golf Pros to Help Veterans with Disabilities and First Responders Improve Mental Health**  
***Next 18 To Host Free Golf Camps & Provide Holistic Lifestyle Resource Training***

**MILWAUKEE, Wis.** – While it's estimated that 11 million Americans suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or trauma, a staggering 22 military veterans die by suicide every day. Both firefighters and police officers are more likely to die by suicide than in the line of duty. Service members and first responders may be exposed to life-changing events such as combat or other distressing situations, which can lead to PTSD. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, between 11-20% of veterans who served in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom have PTSD in a given year. In addition, about 12% of Gulf War veterans have PTSD in a given year while 30% of Vietnam War veterans have had PTSD in their lifetime. It is also estimated that 18-24% of dispatchers and 35% of police officers suffer from PTSD, according to the National Alliance on Mental Health.

To help make a difference and improve mental health, [Next 18](#) pairs golf camps with mental health resources. Next 18 is offering two free golf camps to veterans with disabilities and first responders at Fire Ridge Golf Course in Grafton, Wis., Sept. 28 – Oct.1 and Oct. 12 -15, with more planned in the future as the program grows.

The four-day camps will include daily golf lessons from local professionals followed by playing 18 holes on the course each day. After each day of golfing, staff will provide participants holistic mental health training focused on living a healthier life, including meditation, breathwork, resiliency training, mindfulness and sleep habits training.

Founded by U.S. Army Veteran Matt McDonell, Next 18 is dedicated to using the sport of golf to not only provide a healthy and fun form of recreation, but also to introduce transformational mental health resources and holistic life training to veterans with disabilities and first responders.

“COVID-19, the situation in Afghanistan and the anniversary of 9/11 have taken a toll on many Veterans. While Veterans have been calling for help for decades regarding mental health, I am hopeful that our camps will help address the mental health needs and provide a more holistic approach to life,” said Matt McDonell, Next 18 Executive Director and founder. “There are many benefits to participating and many of the lessons being shared have made a substantial difference in my own life and of those around me. I want to help bridge the gap between civilians and Veterans so they can be there for each other. There is strength in seeking help.”

[Veterans with disabilities or first responder interested in attending one of the camps may apply online here.](#)

# NEXT 18

## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

Who: Area Golf Pros to Help Veterans with Disabilities and First Responders Address Mental Illness

What: Meet & greet campers and Next 18 staff

Where: Fire Ridge Golf Course, 2241 County Hwy W, Grafton, WI 53024

When: Sept. 29, 2021

Note: All media should meet at driving range, designated by signage. Staff and campers will be available from 10:00 – 11:00 (golf lessons will be going on) and 4:00 – 5:30 pm (moral injury training)



## **ABOUT**

Matt McDonell, Next 18 Founder and Executive Director, served in the U.S. Army as an Airborne Infantryman with the 173rd Airborne Brigade stationed in Germany. Matt deployed to Afghanistan in a combat role from 2012 -2013. Since medically retiring from the military in 2015, Matt owned and operated a successful lawn and snow removal company staffed by Veterans, received his MBA from Cardinal Stritch University, and is currently studying to become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker at Concordia

University. An avid golfer and former varsity golf captain at Germantown High School, Matt lives in Fox Point with his German Shepherd service dog, Loki. [Learn more about Next 18 here.](#)

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