



***Fish Out of Water* Honors Returning Soldiers With Look at Life After Injury & PTSD**
Short Film Released by *explore* for Veterans Day

- **Over 300,000 Iraq & Afghanistan war veterans currently suffer from PTSD or major depression.**
- **Another 320,000 suffer from some form of traumatic brain injury - physical brain damage.**
- **The number of returning veterans suffering severe mental depression or attempting suicide steadily increases, year after year.**

Los Angeles, CA - (Monday, Nov. 9, 2009) - Christian Ellis, Sgt., Marines Machine Gunner, knows that lives are changed by moments. A roadside bomb explosion beneath his vehicle in Iraq snapped his lumbar spine in a split-second; comrades died in the blink of an eye; and in the space of a few short minutes he presents an exceptionally moving account of how different life can be when a soldier returns home, changing the viewer's awareness forever.

Ellis and a handful of wounded veterans are the focus of *Fish Out of Water*: a 19-minute short film released by *explore* (a division of the Annenberg Foundation) in tribute to our country's servicemen and women this Veterans Day. The film also honors the families and non-profit organizations who are helping them cope with the challenges of physical injury and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). To view the film: explore.org.

Fish Out of Water takes the viewer on a tour of determination, humor, sadness and liberation from injury that wounded warrior programs like the featured Sun Valley Adaptive Sports fly-fishing program offer returning soldiers and their families who are searching for a new normal.

The film sheds light on PTSD, the depth of human courage required to deal with it, and the ever-growing numbers who are returning home to battle it.

Accustomed to active, often highly athletic lives, many injured servicemen and women return home unable to do so many of the activities they formerly enjoyed. Adaptive sports programs provide them with the support and opportunity to get back into life while working through therapy and the therapeutic power of nature and outdoor activities like fly-fishing.

"I'm not going to lie, life right now is very hard," says Ellis. "I can't do things that I wish I could do. But in reality (this fly-fishing) made me feel normal again."

In a voice as gentle as the slow-moving river he fishes at, Ellis candidly discusses precisely how difficult life is now and why moments like these - peacefully fishing in the company of soldiers just like himself - are so important.

"When you return to civilian life you have friends, but you don't have comrades. You feel lonely because there's no-one else that you can talk to and share your stories and feel like they've been there.

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"You take all of what you've seen, all of what you feel.... and it comes at such a force and intensity that sometimes you're not able to handle it. I've been to hospital many times, more so than for my back, because I'm having too many dark moments. It's embarrassing to say that, but if it can help people understand what we go through, then I'm all about saying it. I can't tell you how many times I've tried to, you know, end it all. Just to get away."

Tom Iselin, the Executive Director of Sun Valley Adaptive Sports, explains why it's important that returned soldiers be provided with the time and safe space to decompress: "I really think that if you can put someone in a situation like this and allow them to slow down...pretty soon time starts to pass and you fall into a cycle where you're not pressed by time. Time just goes by and I think that's another healing property. Where we're not trapped by time, we can be freed by time."

Charles Annenberg Weingarten, Director of Fish Out of Water, wanted to produce the film to both honor returning soldiers and to foster understanding among those in the communities they come home to.

"I don't think there is a more courageous group of people than the people in uniform for our country," says Charles. "People who are ready and willing to sacrifice their very lives for you and me."

Through stories both educational and inspirational, **explore** creates a portal into the soul of humanity. explore.org, the online portal for **explore**, is a community destination where people share thoughts, view and email films and photographs and embed their favorites on blogs and social networking sites.

The mission of **explore** and the films it produces is to champion the selfless acts of others. Never stop learning. Come **explore**.

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES:

Christian Ellis, Sgt., Marine Machine Gunner

Charles Annenberg Weingarten, [explore](http://explore.org) Director.

Tom Iselin, Executive Director, [Sun Valley Adaptive Sports Program](http://SunValleyAdaptiveSports.org)

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