

# FAQ for New TRR Chapter Inquiries



If you'd like to give something back to the military veterans who have served our country and assist disabled members of your community, please consider starting a Team River Runner (TRR) chapter. TRR provides an opportunity for individuals to heal from profound psychological and physical wounds by exploring the challenges and adventures of kayaking and other paddle sports. Know that your chapter will subtly and quietly change the lives of those you come in contact with, on and off the water, for the rest of their lives. This includes you and every volunteer you recruit.

## **What is the TRR mission?**

*Health and Healing Through Paddlesports.*

## **What kind of disabilities does TRR work with?**

Our definition of a disability covers a wide range and can vary from invisible injuries like PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder), TBI (traumatic brain injury), VI (visual impairment) and arthritis to SCI (spinal cord injury), amputation, burn/nerve damage and blindness. This can also include a veteran who is simply going through a rough patch of life. Beyond discretely learning the safety implications of a disability or medications, we rarely drill into details. We do lend a non-judgemental ear to listen if a person wants to talk but we do not probe. Quite simply, TRR is a group of caring people with adaptive kayak training and equipment who recognize the therapeutic benefit of getting someone on the water for a day of adventure and fun.

## **What about individuals with severe disabilities?**

The bar on who you accept for participation is up to you and may be dependent on your experience with certain disabilities. This may also be dependent on the style of paddlesport instruction you offer, ie; whitewater vs recreational. We have found that persons with disabilities can be valuable instructors as they can relate first-hand to relearning and adapting skills with those who are just starting recovery. TRR does have an essential eligibility requirement regarding minimal skills for safety.

## **What is the level of commitment to become a TRR chapter?**

A startup can operate as a satellite of an existing chapter for a limited time with event planning paced to comfort-level provided it follows TRR operational and safety standards. This helps the new leadership learn the ropes, acquire gear and establish connections with local VA and disability groups. It also provides an opportunity to do fundraising before running as a full chapter and purchasing additional boats and gear. On becoming a full chapter, the new leader must be approved by the TRR board of directors, be able to provide secure storage of TRR boats/gear, sign an agreement to follow safety and instructional methods and agree to a goal of conducting 24 events per year. An event can be a two-hour pool session or a full day lake or river trip.

## **What is the relationship between Team River Runner and Wounded Warrior Project?**

No direct connection. We are different non-profit organizations but sometimes collaborate on common goals.

## **Is TRR only for wounded warriors?**

No. Our founding mission and primary outreach is directed toward veterans with disabilities however, we also value participation of non-disabled veterans and civilians with disabilities. TRR receives grants and funding from the Veterans Administration and various veteran-interest groups so we strive to honor those contributions. However, as long as a chapter has sufficient boats, gear and instructors, we welcome non-veteran individuals with disabilities to learn, participate and contribute.

### **How does TRR differ from a public paddling club?**

Individuals dealing with injury or disability can be withdrawn and hesitant about venturing into a public environment. As well, many former military and first-responders miss the team support and camaraderie they experienced during their service. To build an environment that fosters participation for these individuals, our standards for operation and volunteers may differ from a public club environment. We must assure that each volunteer understands our mission, is sensitive to the difficulties and issues of challenged veterans and is willing to learn adaptive kayaking methods. Overall, you will find local paddling clubs to be supportive partners. It becomes a win / win for both organizations when TRR is able to draw on the collective expertise and resources of a local paddling club and the club receives positive recognition for supporting TRR and a gateway for new club members.

### **Will TRR provide us with funding and boats/gear?**

Like learning kayak skills, developing a chapter is a progression. TRR typically provides a small budget and a few boats with gear with an understanding that your chapter is expected to self-fund and operate in the black within two years. With a combination of national and regional TRR coaching, assistance and training a new chapter acquires skill on kayak instruction, publicity, funding and outreach.

### **Will TRR provide us with adaptive paddlesport training?**

Yes, each year TRR holds a series of national and regional clinics including a week-long adaptive conference covering chapter operations, kayaking skills and adaptive instruction techniques. Each chapter is permitted to send people for training, bonding and fun without charge.

### **What is the range of trips/training that TRR offers?**

As incentive for new and existing paddlers to develop their skills there are national and international trips and training offered - usually at little or no charge to the participant. Some trips are geared toward leadership, ACA instructor certification, adaptive endorsement or are specific to certain types of disability like visual impairment. Destination examples of trips are: Grand Canyon, St. John USVI, Key Largo, Costa Rica, Montana, Utah and more. Frequency of participation in chapter events, severity of disability and progression in skills are factored into acceptance for trips. Priority is given to veterans with disabilities but invested volunteers are also eligible.

### **How do we let veterans and individuals with disabilities in our area know our TRR chapter exists?**

You build contacts with VA therapists and transition coordinators as well as area veteran groups and local news media. Setting up a social media page and updating it with announcement of events and photos from events helps get the word out. Also, inviting local newspaper or TV outlets to do a story works well for both outreach and donations. Like starting a business, it takes effort, patience and time to get rolling.

### **How does a TRR chapter operate financially?**

There is some light record-keeping and we ask each chapter to designate someone to serve as Site Secretary. Since TRR USA is a 501-3(c) non profit, all financial expenses and donations must process through the national office. For example, if you receive a donation for your chapter of \$100, it must be in the name of Team River Runner with a notation to your chapter then sent to the TRR USA home office. 90% of the donation is earmarked for your chapters use while 10% is held to cover national operational expenses. You are then able to make TRR approved purchases such as boats, PFDS, paddles, equipment.

### **What style of paddling instruction and trips would be expected of our chapter?**

That is up to you and your core of volunteers. Some chapters are 100% flatwater, others are 100% whitewater and many are a mix of both. Our priority is simply to get "butts in boats" using whatever methods work.

### **Is TRR insured?**

Yes. TRR is a chapter of and is insured through Disabled Sports USA. If your new chapter acquires use of a facility such as a community pool or YMCA, they often require a certificate of insurance which DSUSA provides. As a requirement, every TRR participant must sign a DSUSA liability waiver as well as a media release waiver.

### **Where does TRR USA receive funds?**

Funding comes from individuals, corporations and grants from philanthropy groups as well as the Veterans Administration. As a requirement of most grants, TRR USA and chapters are required to report the participants that we serve. To supplement national funding, chapters are encouraged to hold fundraisers and solicit donations from local community individuals, organizations or corporations.

### **How Do We Get Started?**

- Explore our national and local TRR websites:  
TRR USA (national) website: <http://www.teamriverrunner.org/>  
TRR Southeast Pennsylvania Chapter website: <http://TRRSoutheastPA.org>
- Come out to a TRR event or session near you.
- Contact me for more information.

Thanks for considering Team River Runner!

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Health and Healing through Paddlesports



TRR Adaptive Conference - ASCI Whitewater Course, McHenry, MD - June, 2015