

Interested in starting a chapter?

Starting a chapter in your area is a wonderful and rewarding experience. There are some things to consider before doing so and this is what we've learned:

The requirements for opening a new site are easy; service members/vets (participants) who want to paddle, a pool to teach basics in, a good group of volunteers (some of which need to be experienced boaters), someone willing to run/execute the program and the support of a local VA hospital/clinic or WTU/WTB Commander or Department of Defense hospital.

TRR strives for ongoing activity for participants, preferably pool sessions once a week, with ocean, river or lake outings when weather conditions permit. TRR has found we help participants the best by offering weekly sessions. It gives participants something to look forward to, to be motivated about and goals to strive towards. So a pool comes in handy. **Got a local pool?** Local universities often offer their pools, as do community pools. Pools on DoD bases or at the VA are generally a first choice.

The most important requirement is to **have a concentration of vets or wounded service members to help**. Most of our sites are located near VA hospitals and we approach them with our program and get them to refer patients to us. Is there a VA hospital/clinic near you? If unsure, go to the VA website and check out locations. Is there a WTU/WTB nearby? Perhaps the MWR outdoor recreation department can facilitate the program. Is there no VA or DoD in the area, but there IS a group of veterans co-located? They might be your target audience!

A core of good volunteers is essential, and at least 6-8 is helpful. Having someone qualified as an American Canoe Association instructor is a plus. Not having one is not a show stopper but TRR does want an experienced boater well versed in safety practices.

These are the basic requirements. Generally the site leader who runs the program will expend 3-4 hours a week on the program. TRR is experienced in overcoming the challenges of opening a new site. We'll provide the guidance from a national program, offer liability insurance, offer the opportunity to take vets and volunteers on national paid for trips, and arrange for, sometimes pay for the equipment. It really isn't that difficult. And it's a small price to pay for helping our active duty military and veterans.

Do you meet the basic requirements and want to get started? Please contact Dave Robey, TRR National New Site Program Coordinator 703-717-1224, dave@teamriverrunner.org, and start paddling!