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## **Adaptability of PADI's Diving Program Helping Veterans Heal**

**Rancho Santa Margarita, California** – 9 November 2021 – PADI® Members around the world are helping veterans heal, both physically and mentally, through the techniques learned in the PADI [Adaptive Support Diver](#) and [Adaptive Techniques Specialty](#) courses. This week the PADI organization honors active-duty military personnel and veterans across the globe, along with the many PADI Members who offer dive programs to support them. In addition to the confidence building and life changing aspects training as a PADI diver offers, diving can also heal.

“We are committed to increasing access to the underwater world for everyone and believe that the transformational power of learning to dive can benefit the emotional and physical well-being of all humanity,” says Kristin Valette Wirth, Chief Brand and Membership Officer of PADI Worldwide.

“Promoting health and wellness through diving is a key focus area of PADI's [People and Humanity Pillar of Change](#), with the primary objective to remove barriers and increase access to diving for all.”

According to the [World Health Organization](#), there are around one billion people on the planet who are living with some sort of disability—mental or physical. PADI's courses have always allowed and encouraged adaptive techniques, but with the launch of PADI's Adaptive Techniques Specialty Course in 2018, the inherent flexibility of PADI courses for people with disabilities was better highlighted. This has helped instructors learn how a simple technique change can allow more divers to meet performance requirements and earn a PADI certification. Instructors learn how to implement techniques to leverage the strengths of their students and help each one overcome their unique challenges, thereby providing greater access to diving for all.

This summer, PADI teamed up with [Patriots for Disabled Divers](#), a non-profit organization founded by Jeff and Merial Curren, who own PADI Five Star Instructor Development Center Patriot Scuba in Virginia, USA, to certify retired U.S. Army SGT Bryan Anderson as a PADI Open Water Diver. Anderson completed his course in Catalina Island, California on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his deployment to Iraq, where he was injured by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) that resulted in the loss of both legs and his left hand. Bryan received rehabilitation for a period of 13 months at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and is one of the few triple amputees to have survived his injuries in Iraq. Anderson was awarded the Purple Heart because of his injuries.



[See Bryan Anderson's story here.](#)

It was Robert 'Bob' Taradash, Bryan's former Battalion Commander in Iraq, that first introduced the idea to Bryan and was instrumental in helping Bryan become a certified diver, serving as both an instructor and dive buddy throughout Bryan's certification journey. Now an active PADI IDC Staff Instructor and the Executive Director of Patriots for Disabled Divers, Bob wanted to recruit Bryan into diving because he knew that showing the world that Bryan could dive would be a powerful motivator for many people.

"Our relationship, that camaraderie, that desire to be there for each other is what brought us together to dive in Catalina," explains Taradash. "Just by the fact of him doing this, it might inspire others – disabled or not - to put on a tank, take their first breath underwater, and enjoy the undersea world. I think Bryan's story, in his adventure to breathe underwater, is going to be part of the lasting legacy in Bryan's journey to inspire others."

"You always have that thought in the back of your head, 'Well, maybe you're not going to get there. Maybe something will limit you,'" says Anderson. "But I worked through it, didn't panic, and being a triple amputee, I completed everything that I needed to become a certified PADI Open Water Diver. If you've had the thought like you might want to try diving and you're stopping yourself because your mind is stopping you and you think you can't, I want to show you that you can."

Anderson's recent journey with Patriots for Disabled Divers is just one of many around the world, with PADI Dive Centers and Resorts increasingly training their instructors with the PADI [Adaptive Techniques Specialty Course](#) and offering the PADI [Adaptive Support Diver Course](#) to those in the dive community.

"Scuba diving can have a tremendous impact on individuals diagnosed with PTSD. I see this transformation on a daily basis. Many of our PADI Pros have PTSD and there is a noticeable difference in them when they are actively diving. They have told me that when they get underwater, all the noise in their head is quieted. They are happier and more social when they get out. Scuba diving is also very freeing for our students who spend a good bit of time in a wheelchair. They get underwater and

experience a feeling of freedom they haven't felt in a long time and in some cases, ever," says Merial Curren. "For us working with people who never thought they could dive due to a disability, has been incredibly rewarding."

[Read more about other PADI Members who are champion adaptive diver training on the PADI Pros Blog.](#)

"Through the continued work of PADI Members supporting veterans through adaptive diving, their heroic journeys to become divers inspire us all. They prove that anyone can overcome barriers and try something with the power to transform their life," says Valette Wirth.

#### **About PADI**

PADI® (Professional Association of Diving Instructors®) is the world's largest ocean exploration and diver organization, operating in 186 countries and territories, with a global network of more than 6,600 dive centers and resorts and over 128,000 professional members worldwide. Issuing more than 1 million certifications each year, and with over 28 million certifications to date, PADI enables people around the world to seek adventure and save the ocean through underwater education, life-changing experiences and travel. For over 50 years, PADI is undeniably The Way the World Learns to Dive®, maintaining its high standards for dive training, safety and customer service, monitored for worldwide consistency and quality. With a longstanding commitment to environmental conservation, PADI is leading the way for millions of people to actively explore, steward and protect the ocean through its course offerings and partnerships with like-minded, mission-driven organizations. PADI embodies a global commitment to ocean health with its mission to create a billion torchbearers to explore and protect the ocean. **Seek Adventure. Save the Ocean.™** [www.padi.com](http://www.padi.com)