

Wounded Warrior Project spends lavishly on itself

By Dave Philipps, New York Times

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – In 2014, after 10 years of rapid growth, the Wounded Warrior Project flew its roughly 500 employees to Colorado Springs for an “all hands” meeting at the five-star Broadmoor hotel.

They were celebrating their biggest year yet: \$225 million raised and a work force that had nearly doubled. On the opening night, before three days of strategy sessions and team-building field trips, the staff gathered in the hotel courtyard. Suddenly, a spotlight focused on a 10-story bell tower where the chief executive, Steven Nardizzi, stepped off the edge and rappelled toward the cheering crowd.

That evening is emblematic of the polished and well-financed image cultivated by the Wounded Warrior Project, the country’s largest and fastest-growing veterans charity.

Since its inception in 2003 as a basement operation handing out backpacks to wounded veterans, the charity has evolved into a fund-raising giant, taking in more than \$372 million in 2015 – largely through small donations from people over 65.

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