

Douglas Dear Wins Prestigious Award

By King Montgomery



Douglas Dear, left, and Ed Nicholson of Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing with Dear's L. L. Bean Heroes commemorative lantern that symbolizes the light a Hero brings to the world. Photo courtesy L. L. Bean.

VOWA member Douglas Dear recently won the coveted L. L. Bean Outdoor Heroes Award, one of only five given nationwide, for his considerable volunteer work with Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc. (PHWFF). Dear, who splits his time between Great Falls and his farm near Syria, has been chairman of the PHWFF board of trustees for over four years

In 2007, he learned about PHWFFF, then a local, fledgling all-volunteer organization dedicated to promoting physical and spiritual healing of wounded and disabled military veterans through fly tying and fly fishing. The group was looking for a water venue to hold a fundraising tournament, and Dear promptly volunteered his farm with its gorgeous one-mile stretch of the Rose River loaded with rainbow and brook trout. Douglas runs a fee-fishing operation here, but donates the farm and stocks a mess of fish for the PHWFF events.

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Since the First Annual PHWFF 2-Fly Tournament in 2007, the organization has grown under Dear's board leadership from a single effort at Walter Reed Army Medical Center to over 100-programs for veterans across the USA and in Canada. And it's still growing.

Retired U. S. Navy Captain Ed Nicholson, who founded the program with the help of Trout Unlimited and the Federation of Fly Fishers, and still leads PHWFF, says this about Dear: "it didn't take long after first meeting Douglas to ask him to be on our board of directors and eventually to be chairman of the

board. He takes an active and personal interest in the wounded warriors."

In his nomination of Dear for L. L. Beans Outdoor Heroes Award, Ed Nicholson wrote: "He is a caring and patriotic American, who is most worthy of consideration for the L.L. Bean Outdoor Heroes Award, both for his advocacy of matching fly fishing experiences with the recovery of our men and women who serve, or have served, our country, on the waters of Rose River, and the healing opportunities of a natural environment that has brought peace and hope to our participants."

The L. L. Bean Outdoor Heroes Award recognizes outstanding people who have helped preserve and promote outdoor spaces and activities. This year a record 600 nominations were received, and on September 2, 2011 the five winners were announced. Each winner receives a \$500 L. L. Bean gift card (which Dear donated to PHWFF), an Outdoor Hero commemorative lantern, and other gifts. L. L. Bean also contributes \$5000 to PHWFF in Dear's name. Douglas parlayed this sum into \$10,000 of L. L. Bean fly fishing gear and equipment for PHWFF!

Janet Wyper, Community Relations Manager for L. L. Bean in Freeport, Maine, says of the winners, "These folks are the "real deal," and their personal commitments to the outdoors are very worthy of this recognition. It's been wonderful to speak with them all and learn more about their causes—they are really incredible people."

The next Annual PHWFF 2-Fly Tournament will be on April 29, 2012. For more information, see www.projecthealingwaters.org; for Rose River Farm fishing and cabins, www.rosesriverfarm.com; and L. L. Bean, www.llbean.com.