

GOING STRONG!

OPERATION ENDURING WARRIOR SKYDIVE



by Iveta Muravyeva

Operation Enduring Warrior Skydive (launched in 2013 as Operation X-Wing) had a very successful first year of operations and is continuing its mission to facilitate initial skydiving training for America's wounded warriors in 2014 and into the future. The skydiving community is going above and beyond to provide support for the program. For the second year, Skydive Arizona in Eloy is fully sponsoring a student's A-license program, and Airtec, Green Light, JOIN Skydiving Apparel, Larsen & Brusgaard, Performance Designs, Skydive Suffolk in Virginia, United Parachute Technologies and Rob Wardell have provided products, program support and funds to enable OEW Skydive to train its students and outfit them with specialized gear.

Joseph Grabianowski is the first student in the OEW Skydive class of 2014. After sustaining wounds from a roadside bomb in Afghanistan on May 29, 2012, Grabianowski underwent a grueling series of surgeries and the amputation of both legs. During his recovery, he set some personal goals, one of which was learning to skydive. "I've always wanted to skydive, even before I got wounded in Afghanistan," Grabianowski said. "I always wanted to achieve goals that would test me to my mental limits."

At first, he thought he would be restricted to jumping tandem. That all changed in 2013 when he heard about Todd Love, a triple amputee and the first OEW Skydive student to successfully complete AFF training. Grabianowski said, "Todd had similar amputations as I have, you see. Todd has been my motivator and my true inspiration."

To train Grabianowski, OEW Skydive turned to instructors Niklas Daniel and Brianne Thompson from AXIS Flight School at Skydive Arizona, who had trained Love the year before. After two days of wind tunnel training at SkyVenture Arizona (which Skydive Arizona also fully sponsored), Grabianowski was ready for the sky. He performed exceptionally well in freefall and under canopy. He is now more than halfway through the AFF program, is cleared to self-supervise and will continue his training in Arizona and at Skydive Suffolk. He expects to earn his A license soon.

For more information about the program, search for "OEW Skydive" on Facebook. Video of Grabianowski's and Love's jumps are available at the AxisFlight TV channel on YouTube.

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