

PVA VETERANS CAREER PROGRAM UPDATE

May 2024

HELPING VETERANS THRIVE



John Henderson, an avid endurance athlete and former dive officer in the Coast Guard, was cycling one sunny weekend afternoon when the unthinkable happened. A bus struck him from behind several miles from his home in Hawaii. The impact

shattered his pelvis, fractured multiple vertebrae, lacerated multiple organs, punctured his lungs, and bruised his heart. His survival, doctors said, was a miracle. But John, now full of steel rods and screws to stabilize his spine and pelvis, would never walk again.

After a month in a nearby hospital, John was flown to Craig Hospital, a renowned spinal cord injury rehabilitation center near Denver, Colorado. In between the daily, exhausting rounds of physician visits and medical tests, John recalls receiving a visit from a man from PVA, an organization John had never heard of. With the man's guidance and help, John eventually became a patient in the VA.

"Those benefits have been revolutionary in my life," John says. "I wouldn't be as far along as I am now without the PVA."

Recently, John reached out to PVA for career support. Having worked in medical device sales and construction management even from his wheelchair, John, 49, recognized a growing need to align his work with his physical abilities, which were better suited for an office than a construction site. John acted upon a long, latent passion, fusing a deep interest in psychology and personal development with his past avocation as an athletic coach.

Our Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Joel Hoots, guided him to his home state's vocational rehabilitation services, a resource he says he would never have found on his own. John is currently enrolled in a master's program to become a clinical licensed mental health counselor. Drawing upon his own journey through trauma and PTSD, he hopes to leverage his degree to help people navigate and process traumatic events, especially veterans.

John has been so impressed by PVA that he recently volunteered to become Utah's PVA area representative. "PVA has helped me thrive," he said. "I want to help other veterans thrive, too."

MONTHLY IMPACT

20 Client Placements

- 9 Paid Employment
- 9 Education/Training
- 1 Volunteer
- 1 Benefits Program
 - 17 Veterans
 - 1 Active Duty
 - 2 Family Members
 - 4 PVA Members
- The average salary for the 7 clients in full time employment was \$75,501; and the average income for the 2 clients in part time employment was \$30,800.



DOG TAG FELLOWS



On May 23rd, our Veterans Career Program Director attended the graduation ceremony for the Dog Tag Fellows Chicago Cohort 5. This was the first in-person graduation for the Chicago program and was hosted at Loyola University.

The Dog Tag Entrepreneurial 5-month Fellowship Program equips veterans, military spouses, and caregivers with the tools and education to build resilience, find renewed purpose, and forge community beyond the military.

One of the graduates of Chicago Cohort 5 was PVA Member (MN Chapter) Rich Scott (*in photo: back row, 2nd from right*). Rich is an Air Force veteran with a background in contracts and acquisitions. Shortly after retiring from the military in 2019, Rich was diagnosed with MS. In 2023, he decided to explore the idea of self-employment and applied for PVA's inaugural self-employment program. After attending a Veterans Career Live session, he decided to compete for a Dog Tag Fellowship slot. He was not selected for the Summer '23 program, but re-applied for their next cohort – to which he was accepted!

Rich was especially drawn to the Dog Tag Fellowship Program because of its emphasis on finding direction and moving forward. He found meaning and purpose in applying his experience and skills in starting a mobile handyman business. Congratulations to Rich and all of the Dog Tag Fellows Program (in both DC and Chicago).