

BRANCH: Army

TIME SERVED: 22 yrs Army, 8 yrs Sheriff's Deputy, National Guard

LOCATION(S): Afghanistan, Iraq

“YOU GOTTA DO SELF-AID BEFORE YOU CAN DO BUDDY AID, OTHERWISE YOU'LL BE NO GOOD FOR YOUR BUDDY”

Keith has some good stories... 22 years of service shared between active duty, NC National Guard, and Buncombe County Sheriff's Department. Over his 8 deployments, Keith primarily served as Military Police—convoy security, personal protection detail, SWAT, detainee ops, and protecting nuclear warheads were just a couple of his roles in the Army.

In 2003, Saddam Hussein was finally captured after one of the largest manhunts in history. The month between his capture and execution could be considered one of the most high-risk situations for US military. Keith, among others, was one of the soldiers left with the responsibility of guarding him. *No Pressure!*

After 2 decades of serving and protecting his country Keith medically retired in 2012, but that didn't mean he was *out*. The battle had just shifted from external enemies to internal ones and now required new methods of fighting. Time and time again, veterans share the mentality that looking out for the guy next to you is all that matters while looking out for yourself is a bizarre concept. They are constantly trying to 'not take the resources they think others need more', many times, to their own detriment. Keith was no different until he really realized the true depth of his struggle.

Keith applied to the Shepherds for Sheepdogs program with his own 2 yr. old, partially trained German Shepherd, Kai. Upon her evaluation, it took only minutes to realize her potential. Naturally in-tune and attentive to Keith, Kai just needed the right instruction. She has stayed with Steve for a couple months to practice her social setting skills and off-leash behavior. She has also been practicing retrieving specific items on command— like Keith's cane!

The needs of each applicant are different, some are more physical others are more physiological, but either way the result of this program has been improved confidence for the recipient in stressful situations which leads to lessened PTSD symptoms. Having a service animal returns the 'buddy next to them' mentality, somebody to look out for and someone to look out for them.

KEITH PACE

