



Veterans Day Spotlight

Keff D. United States Navy

Keff D. was born in Omaha, Nebraska and grew up with his Mom in Louisville, Kentucky. (*He fondly remembers the annual Kentucky Derby Pie!*) Over the summers, Keff spent time in Dorchester where his “Pops” lived. On those visits he developed a love of the Boston Red Sox, Bruins and Celtics. Keff’s visits “back east” included summer camp at Mount Washington. He says those adventures later influenced his decision to enlist in the military.

Back in Louisville, Keff graduated from high school in 1990. He recalls that he was full of energy and eager for new experiences, but he knew that college was not what he wanted. Inspired by his grandfather, who was a World War II pilot, Keff decided to enlist in the Navy. Soon, he was off to boot camp in Great Lakes, Illinois. It was so cold, Keff remembers hearing the ice crunch when he would remove his hat to enter the Mess. At boot camp, Keff’s “tough but fair” instructors recognized his leadership potential and appointed him AROC, Assistant Recruit of the Company.

When he finished boot camp, Keff was inspired by his Mom’s work as a nurse to become a medic. Keff got his training as a corpsman at the Naval Medical Center in San Diego. Keff recalls that he had never been to the West Coast before being stationed in San Diego. He jokes that he was so excited to hit the beach, that he was slathering on the sun tan lotion before it was even a warm day! Keff’s service at the Naval Medical Center involved caring for patients recovering from surgeries. He continued this work at his next duty station, the Naval Hospital in Oakland, California. After his honorable discharge from the Navy, Keff found that his service qualified him well to continue in the medical field, and he began civilian work as a phlebotomist.

After a few years, the desire to be closer to his Dad led Keff to depart California for Boston. Here, his adventures continued as he enjoyed running, working as a bike messenger, and even driving the Boston tourist trolleys along Beacon Hill. Keff was training for the Police Academy in 2001 when he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

Keff's gift for conversation had made him a natural at leading trolley tours, and eventually it even led him to learn about The Boston Home. One day, while living in Brookline, Keff was riding his scooter to the store, when a woman struck up a conversation with him. As it turns out, she also had multiple sclerosis. She was looking for a new place to host her MS group meetings, and Keff invited her to hold the meetings at the community room in his building. Keff first learned about The Boston Home when Lucille, The Boston Home's former social worker, came to speak at one of the meetings. Keff was impressed with what he heard, and decided to visit. He says he is grateful that he learned about The Boston Home, because it is a great place to live.

Keff says that his time in the Navy helped him to learn about himself, and how to work well with others. He still carries that with him today, along with his tattoos!