



Volunteer of the Month

September 2017

David Hagen



David Hagen is the Buddy-to-Buddy September 2017 Volunteer of the Month! He originally trained into the program in July 2014 and retrained in August 2016. David's commitment to improving the lives of fellow veterans in his community and beyond is evident in his willingness to help others struggling with particularly complicated circumstances. This demonstrated commitment has made David a trusted resource for program staff to turn to, particularly in getting help for veterans in his part of Southwest Michigan.

David served as an Army infantryman for six years, which included two tours to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He completed an Associate's degree in secondary education from Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC) and now works part-time assisting veterans through the Van Buren County office.

As David copes with the effects of PTSD and TBI, he finds that providing peer support to others who have gone through similar struggles as him is an important part of his healing process. He is heavily involved in his community, volunteering as a youth soccer coach and as a mentor in the Van Buren County Veterans Court. He is also a member of the Decatur VFW post as well as the Region 8 Veterans Community Action Team.

Buddy-to-Buddy Volunteer Veteran is one of the many hats David wears in the veterans community. He first found out about the program from fellow volunteer Mike Morehouse, who works in the KVCC Veterans Services Office. David appreciated the concept of the warm-handoff, a hallmark of the program. He explains he was motivated to become a volunteer by "the experience of struggling to find resources for myself and my family, of not knowing who to call, or how to get help." David says, "I'm not a soldier any more, and I'm not a civilian. Buddy-to-Buddy's allowed me to just be who I am."

David describes the time as a volunteer when he helped a veteran who was going through the Veterans Court program as particularly memorable. The veteran trusted David because he was a Buddy-to-Buddy volunteer, which he was familiar with because he served in the Michigan Army National Guard. David found working with that veteran by providing peer support and going to court with him very rewarding because he felt like it made a real difference in the veteran's life.

David loves spending quality time with his wife and three daughters, ages 17, 16, and 9. He also enjoys reading, coaching soccer, hanging out with friends, building things out in the woods with his youngest daughter, and playing board games.

We are so glad to have you as a volunteer, David!