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Veteran Finds Peace and Purpose in a Life on the Farm

By *Eddie Molina*



Many veterans returning home from the battlefield find adjusting to civilian life a bit challenging. Whether its difficulty finding a job that aligns with their military experience or learning to live with Post Traumatic Stress (PTS), there are more than enough reasons to struggle.

But one veteran found a creative way to adapt to the civilian world.

First, build a farm to grow fruits and vegetables to help feed struggling veterans and their families in the DC area at no cost to them. Then he started providing training opportunities for other veterans interested in learning about the farming industry. The kicker, he is accomplishing all this with no prior farming experience to help manage an extreme case of Post- Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Pete Scott, the veteran behind it all, is a former counter-intelligence agent for the 902nd Military Intelligence Group, worked hand in hand with special operations and tells Sofrep how he ended “After 11 years (1999-2010) in the Army, I was burnt out.” Pete said.

Can you blame him? Pete spent his entire military career during the most intense, tumultuous time for American armed forces actively fighting two wars. But Pete’s multiple deployments around the world eventually caught up to him.

“I’ve been through a lot. I was rated for 100% disability by the VA for PTSD. I had to go through an intense 6 month in-patient therapy.” Pete continues, “After that, I bounced around awhile but found nothing that stuck.”

Having a passion for food and cooking, Pete enrolled in culinary school. However, that didn’t do the trick either. “I didn’t like the high pressure and intensity of a kitchen.” Pete said.

For anyone who’s ever worked in a restaurant knows, there’s a lot of pressure to get food out on time which requires occasional yelling and some organized chaos- not exactly the right formula for someone with an on-going battle against Post- Traumatic Stress.

Around that time, he began growing vegetables as a hobby and a form of stress relief but had another problem; they were growing faster than he could consume. Pete said, “I put the vegetables in a crate, brought them to the chaplain in DC, put it on his desk and asked if he could use them, he told me ‘*We could always use food.*’”

It was at that moment he found his calling and decided farming was the answer.

“There are an estimated 50,000 veterans in the DC area who struggle with food insecurities.” Pete tells Sofrep.

Pete then leased a 9 acre farm in Maryland in 2018 and began farming. He freely admits he didn’t know what he was doing at first and learned everything through trial and error. But the numbers were impressive. In his third season farming, Pete has tripled his output of food and continues to expand. He has since prepared another lot to grow additional crops, acquired 25 chickens (donated by veteran Russell Gillespie of Marker 99 Poultry) and now has over a dozen beehives.

Pete said, “We partnered with Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVP) to help them find veterans interested in bee keeping. They (FVP) put the veterans through a beekeeping training program and once they complete it, we donate the hives to the vets.”

Additionally, he has already given away over six thousand seedlings (aka baby plants). But his goals go much higher than feeding veterans and their families. He recently was awarded a grant



from the Wounded Warrior Project to create and formalize an apprenticeship program for veterans. “We want to create a farm training program for vets to give them the farming knowledge to take with them.” Pete said.

As a veteran still dealing with Post Traumatic Stress, he understands the difficulty veteran’s face in the civilian world and wants to make a difference. In fact, he recently found a full time helping hand and veteran who was dealing with her own Post Traumatic Stress, Antoinette LaForce.

Antoinette, an Army supply NCO and veteran, who holds a degree in Horticulture, was also diagnosed with PTSD. Antoinette tells Sofrep, “I was in the process of losing my home and turning my van into a camper... and then I found Pete.”

She currently lives in the house located on the farm and is a full time caretaker. When asked what this opportunity and living situation meant to her, she stated “I’ve been given a new look on life to share with my kids. I feel like I’m part of a solution.”

Both Pete and Antoinette say that working on the farm is therapeutic and eases the difficulties of Post- Traumatic Stress. During my tour of the farm, I recognized that all the pieces needed to run a high performing farm are there. But it is very much a work in progress. In fact, despite all that Pete has accomplished, he tells Sofrep about his end goal, “I want to turn the farm into a pilot program to create purpose and employ veterans.” Pete continues, “Ultimately, I want to grow high quality food at market cost and get it into the hands of people that need it- then scale it!”



A very honorable and noble cause; all while killing three birds with one stone. Continuing his own therapy, feeding others and giving veterans useful skills. And you can help be a part of this special assignment by providing essential tasks.

Pete said, “We always need volunteers, especially in the spring. We could always use more money for better equipment and even more wood chips to fertilize seedlings.” That’s some smart

farm talk for someone with only three years in the farming business. And if you’re skilled, he could use your help too.

“We can use help from arborists, entomologists, and SME’s in growing market vegetables- even a beekeeper would be great!” If you are an expert, consider visiting to share your knowledge that will ultimately help veterans.

To support this cause or for more information, go to www.fieldsforvalor.org

About the writer: Eddie Molina is the author of A Beginner's Guide to Leadership available on Amazon. He also writes articles to keep military personnel informed on important issues. Go to www.eddiemolina.com for more information.