

# After Fighting for His Country, a Veteran Fights for Kids

## 'Service is not just a word to veterans, it's our way of life'

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"Service is not just a word to veterans, it's our way of life," said Zachary B. Allman, magistrate and VFW at-large member in West Virginia.

"We are protectors of the people, and our tour of duty ends when our heart stops beating. Until then, we will fight."

Allman's desire to serve has taken him from the military to a law enforcement career where he's fought to protect women and children.

Following the Sept. 11 attacks, Allman enlisted with the West Virginia Army National Guard and left college for basic training. He served in Iraq for a year during Operation Iraqi Freedom and also was deployed for state-side flood duty.

"During these activations, we worked a lot with local law enforcement and state police. It didn't take long to realize this was the job for me. I was easily able to transfer my military training and skill set into the law enforcement role," Allman said.

Allman earned a degree in criminal justice and served as a deputy sheriff for 12 years. Following that, he spent two years as a special investigator for the prosecutor's office and is currently in his first elected term as a magistrate judge. For the majority of his career, he specialized in investigating internet crimes against children and child sexual abuse.

"I spent years listening to children disclose being sexually molested and abused in every way imaginable," said Allman.

"I would like to think I am a battle-hardened vet who can endure anything, but this hurt me to my core. I was ultimately able to endure because I was saving children from a lifetime of physical and sexual abuse. What better gift could I possibly give another human but a

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chance to be happy, safe, and just be a kid again.”

Allman also teaches at Wheeling University and Bethany College. His Bethany College class gained state-wide attention for scholarly research presented to the Senate and helping develop West Virginia’s first law to protect primarily women being targeted through the release of explicit material.

A dedication to service has led to military honors and professional awards, but Allman considers his best reward the moments he sees victory for someone who was in a terrible situation. He will never forget reaching a point when he thought his job might break him, then getting confirmation his work was needed while teaching a high school group about dangers on social media.

“After class, a young lady waited for all the other students to leave and then asked me if I remembered her,” Allman said.

“She said she’d been abused for years and no one ever did anything to help her until she met me. She said, ‘You put that monster in prison and for the first time in my life I am safe in my own home. I just wanted to say thank you.’ She and I both cried. Of all the awards and achievements in my life, nothing will ever be as powerful as that.”