

'I Would Not be Here Today Without My Awesome Service Dog, Bugg'

Army combat medic Natalie Vines' service dog has helped restore her confidence, freedom and independence

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Before settling in Alto, Texas, Natalie Vines served in the Army as a combat medic and signal officer for more than 21 years. Assignments took her to Korea, Haiti and the Middle East. It was during one of her tours in Iraq that Vines sustained a traumatic brain injury.

She continues to experience seizures, balance and vision issues and migraines. She also struggles with her mental health following combat. In 2017, Vines was paired with a medical service dog through Guardian Angels Medical Group in Williston, Florida. For the past four years, Vines' dog Bugg has helped her in countless ways.

"Since Bugg, I have never looked back," she said. "He alerts me when I'm about to have a panic attack and helps me get through flashbacks. He wakes me from nightmares and can detect an oncoming seizure or even if my medication is low."

Bugg has helped restore Vines' confidence, freedom and independence. From running errands to attending appointments and taking part in outdoor activities and sports, Vines says life is easier and better with Bugg.

"He keeps me grounded and makes new adventures possible," she said.

In addition, Bugg enables Vines to uplift other veterans experiencing their own hardships.

"He allows me to participate with wounded warrior activities with various groups," she said. "And helping veterans and their caregivers gives me purpose and allows me to give back."

Vines credits Bugg with her ability to continue serving — and so much more.

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“I can honestly say I would not be here today if it wasn’t for my awesome service dog, Bugg,” she said. “He literally saved my life.”