

Gaming for Veterans

An Army National Guardsman and VFW member from Vermont created a video game Facebook channel to help raise awareness for veterans' issues, honoring his brother's memory

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In explaining his unwavering advocacy for veterans, Alex Black recalled a climatic scene from the critically acclaimed 2000 release of Mel Gibson's "The Patriot."

During the film's final battle, confronted with a faltered line against British forces, Gibson's character sets aside his personal vendetta, snags a tattered U.S. flag from a fallen flag bearer and rallies his troops to hold their ground.

Leading by example against a formidable opponent, Black compared the scene to his own call to action following his older brother's untimely death.

"My brother's passing was a big factor in finding the courage to try something new," said Black, who deployed with his brother to Afghanistan in 2010 as a combat medic with the Vermont Army National Guard. "It also ensured that I continue to help others whenever possible the way he did."

Alex's brother, Wesley Wade Black, made national headlines last year for a lawsuit he filed against the VA that claimed medical malpractice. The subsequent court's decision earned him a settlement for \$3 million in September 2021, as well as much national attention from media outlets. A recipient of the Purple Heart and Bronze Star for his service in Iraq and Afghanistan, Wesley used the platform to instead raise awareness for veterans exposed to burn pit toxins.

Seeing his older brother succumb to colon cancer on Nov. 7 at just 36 years old, Alex took it upon himself to continue the uphill climb for veterans.

Without the national news outlets and platform his brother had garnered, Alex sought to pave his own path toward reaching the same goal. He instead merged a passion for online

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video game streaming and his motto “Once a doc, always a doc” to create his own vision.

“My job in the military was to look after others, and that doesn’t stop just because I was honorably discharged,” added Alex, who left the military in 2018 after more than a decade with the Vermont Army National Guard. “I will continue to look after my fellow veterans to the best of my abilities.”

On Jan. 1, Alex officially launched a Facebook channel, “Doc Black Gaming,” where he livestreams himself playing games that include Call of Duty Warzone, Fortnite, Halo Infinite and Apex Legends, among others. The streaming, Alex added, immerses viewers into an atmosphere that he hopes could be synonymous with the camaraderie found among active-duty military.

“What I want people to know about this page is that it’s more than just gaming,” Alex said. “I didn’t go the route of leveling up to allow people to send me money. I keep my page completely free. Just come hang out.”

Though donations are welcomed, Alex’s goal is to grow his audience to more than a million followers, allowing him to become a loud advocating voice within the veterans’ community. Alex believes that in reaching a wider audience to raise awareness on veterans’ issues, he will be presented with sponsorship opportunities that in turn could help raise large sums of money for veterans-based organizations.

“I would prefer to get paid through a sponsorship once I get my subscribers larger in base,” Alex said. “But even then, the goal is to donate the money toward veteran-oriented causes that can continue to make a positive impact.”

Despite little capital thus far, the member of VFW Post 771 in Springfield, Vermont, has donated more than \$6,000 of his own money as of the publication of this story. These donations have been through organizations in Vermont and New Hampshire, which include the White River Junction Vet Center, New Hampshire’s chapter of the American Infidels Veteran Motorcycle Club, Trail Break Taps and Tacos, as well as Project New Hope.

Most of the money donated on behalf of “Doc Black Gaming” has gone to local homeless veterans in need of winter clothes and warm meals. There was also a \$500 donation of toys, gift cards, books and video games made in April to a local veteran’s 7-year-old nephew battling cancer.

“The money and sponsorships will come, so the goal is to continue to inspire change and continue to grow my following as a voice in the veterans’ community,” said Alex, who also is in the process of completing his bachelor’s degree in Christian studies from Grand Canyon University in Arizona. “My brother got the ball rolling, and I want to keep running while it’s still in motion.”

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