

'Echo Saved My Life'

When Army Reserve veteran Jeff Snyder's service took a mental toll , he found a way — and a friend — to help him cope

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Jeff Snyder's father was a World War I fighter pilot. And his uncle helped head the Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor of the CIA.

"They pretty much badgered me into becoming an officer in the armed forces," he said.

Snyder served in the Army Reserve for 18 years. He held different command positions and enjoyed the experience because he knew his soldiers were well looked after.

"My father always said, 'Take care of your soldiers before you take care of yourself — even at your own peril.' I took that to heart," Snyder said.

Eventually, his service and selfless mindset took a mental toll on Snyder. But in recent years, he has found a way — and a friend — to help him cope.

Eight years ago, Snyder adopted a rescue dog, Echo. After a few years, the pair underwent training with K9 Partners for Patriots to earn Echo's service dog certification.

Although the program teaches veterans how to become less reliant on their service dogs as time passes, Snyder still depends on Echo in unfamiliar places or situations that remind him of war. The support has allowed Snyder to give back to his community in different ways.

Today, in addition to #StillServing as a Life member of VFW Post 10093 in Safety Harbor, Florida, Snyder is also an executive board member of Grottoes International, a charity that provides dentistry to children with special needs around the world.

"I'm #StillServing because Echo brought me back to the real world when everything was falling apart," he said. "She has literally saved my life. Without her, I would never have progressed to this point. Echo has been the rock I have needed to keep moving forward."

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