

‘Booker and I Are Together 24/7’

After suffering for more than 40 with PTS, VFW Life member Paul McAfee's life changed when he received his service dog

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Paul McAfee, 74, a Life member of VFW Post 2535 in Lockport, New York, left the Army in 1971 after three years of service, including one year in Vietnam.

“Post-Traumatic Stress has affected my life and career ever since,” he said.

It was not until 2014 — more than 40 years later — that McAfee received an official Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) diagnosis and disability rating from the VA. His psychologist requested that Western New York Heroes (WNY Heroes), a local nonprofit, provide McAfee with a service dog.

He received Booker when the dog was 18 months old. WNY Heroes provided the pair with 18 months of training through its Pawsitive for Heroes Program. Since completing the course, Booker has helped McAfee set and achieve a slew of goals.

In the last decade, McAfee has taught business courses at universities around the world, including on the Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, campuses of Keuka College, Vietnam National University, Daemen University in Amherst, New York, and the University at Buffalo (UB) on both its main and Singapore campuses.

“I’m #StillServing through teaching to help the next generation of international students while building a healthy relationship with foreign citizens,” McAfee said, who despite his age has no intention of slowing down.

“Although I had business expertise from three decades of executive experience, I realized that I was lacking in teaching, so I enrolled in the Graduate School of Education at the University at Buffalo,” he said.

In June 2022, McAfee graduated with his Ph.D. in curriculum, instruction and the science

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of learning.

“At 73 years old, I’m pretty sure I was the oldest graduating student at the event,” he said.

Booker was by his side when he received the red, white, and blue veteran honor cord a month earlier from the Veteran Services Office at the University at Buffalo.

Today, he is using what he learned to continue teaching at the UB Singapore campus.

Because of Singaporean regulations, Booker is not allowed to enter the country, but McAfee knows their reunion upon his return home to Lockport will be special.

“When I’m not in Singapore, Booker and I are together 24/7,” he says.