

SGT Nicholas Degiglio

Nick grew up in the coal region town of Nesquehoning, PA. He is a 1998 graduate from Marian Catholic High School. After graduation, Nick joined the Army and headed to Ft. Jackson, SC to attend Basic and Advanced Individual Training as a Heavy Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic. Upon completion of training he headed to his duty station at Ft. Campbell, KY and was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division, 594th Transportation Company as a line-haul fleet mechanic, supporting over the road convoy operations until his enlistment was complete.

After Nick left Ft. Campbell, he moved to Nashville, TN where he worked for a couple of years as a Corrections Officer for the Tennessee Department of Corrections. There he supervised inmates and was selected as part of the Correctional Emergency Response Team (C.E.R.T.), a team of highly trained Correction Officers in the United States tasked with responding to incidents, riots, cell extractions, mass facility searches, hostage situations, and disturbances in prisons, possibly involving uncooperative or violent inmates. He was assigned to the infamous building 7 at DeBerry Special Needs Facility, known for its violent and unpredictable atmosphere.

In 2005 he moved back to Pennsylvania to be closer to family and got a job as a diesel mechanic in Bethlehem where quickly moved up the ranks to Fleet Maintenance Supervisor. Nick was happy but always missed the military. With the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan still in full swing, he decided to try to do his part and re-enlisted, joining the Pennsylvania Army National Guard in 2006 where he was assigned to the 1067th Transportation Company. He volunteered to deploy to Iraq and in 2007 through 2008 and was attached to 5th SFG with a small security detail at Camp Justice, Baghdad to support detainee and security operations. When he returned, he acquired a full-time job with the National Guard as a diesel mechanic and returned to the 1067th. There he maintained military equipment and was activated for several state emergency missions.

In 2011 Nick was deployed again, this time to Afghanistan for one year with the 131st Transportation Company as a H8 Recovery Specialist and stationed at Bagram, Airfield to conduct supply, convoy security, and recovery operations in RC East. He was responsible for maintaining vehicles, recovering disabled and battle damaged equipment, responding to roadside emergencies, and even clearing obstacles with his trusty M984A4 HEMTT Wrecker. Nick conducted over 70 combat operations, 139 recoveries, and was a major contributor to the success of a famous 25 day winter mission through the mountain passes. He was involved in numerous skirmishes and was even hit with a rocket propelled grenade and emerged victoriously. He was awarded by SMA Raymond Chandler III and SMARNG Richard Burch in recognition for all of his efforts. "They were the best, worst days of my life. When you are there you cannot wait to get home. When you get home you wish you could go back", Nick says.

Today, Nick is still in the PA National Guard assigned to the 1067th Transportation Company as a Recovery Operations Sergeant and working full time as a diesel mechanic at a PA

National Guard Field Maintenance Shop. He is the owner of Warrior Custom Concrete, a veteran owned and operated decorative concrete business. He plans to complete 20 years of years of service to this great nation and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

His list of awards include:

- Pennsylvania State Service Ribbon (3)
- Pennsylvania General Thomas J. Stewart Medal
- Pennsylvania Major General Thomas. R. White Medal
- Army Reserve Components Achievement Medal
- Army Service Ribbon
- Army Good Conduct Medal
- National Defense Service Medal
- Global War on Terrorism Service Medal
- Armed Forces Reserve Medal w/ Mobilization Device
- Overseas Service Ribbon (2)
- NATO Medal (2)
- Iraq Campaign Medal w/ 2 Campaign Stars
- Afghanistan Campaign Medal w/ 3 Campaign Stars
- Army Commendation Medal
- Army Achievement Medal
- Combat Action Badge
- Drivers Badge
- Mechanic Badge
- Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon
- Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal

Nick has been diagnosed with PTSD and struggles with depression and anxiety. He has several other medical conditions such as back problems, hearing loss, and sleep issues related to his service in the military.

From **NICK DEGIGLIO**: My PTSD therapist recommended I should get a service dog or I take up a hobby that requires persistent involvement on my behalf, not something I can just do whenever I feel like it. I was not impartial to a service dog but a friend I work with told me about the Hives for Heroes program that Beam's Bees put together. So, I decided to fill out the application. I have always been interested in honey bees from articles I've read and speaking to friends that are beekeepers. I was very excited when Jesse and Heather contacted me because I was selected as the recipient of the complete hive set up.

I went out to meet Jesse and Heather to pick up the ready to assemble hive parts. It seemed like there was a 1000 pieces. So I took it home and started putting it together. It took me a few weeks working on it in my free time but it was really fun. I had to put all the boxes and individual frames together then paint it. It was more work than I thought it was going to be.

When I was done it got me really excited to go back and pick up the bees and put them in their new home I made for them.

My friend that told me about the program ordered some nucs from Beam's Bees, so when the bees were ready, he and I went out to the apiary together to pick up our bees. Jesse and Heather gave us all the information we needed to get them set up and acclimated and answered all our questions.

I got my bees home and all set up. My friend helps me out with hive inspections and answers a lot of questions that I have. I feed them almost daily. I open up the hive pretty regularly just to see what they are up too and what is going on inside. It's pretty cool to see them working away. I learn more everyday by reading articles online, watching videos on YouTube, and following some beekeeping pages on social media.

Having the bees has been really awesome. Since I've gotten them I can really notice the difference dealing with PTSD. Working with the bees is very peaceful. It gives me an opportunity to get away from the stressors and triggers of daily life. I have found it relaxing just to take even that 10 minutes a day to feed them and just sit by the hive and watch them come and go paying close attention to whether they are bringing in pollen or concentrating more on the feeder. Whenever I start getting anxious or feel a panic attack coming on, I like to go out and tend to the hive. I have found that when I get near them I have no choice but to calm or they will also get irritated which is not good for either of us. They also help curb the anger issues since you have to be cool and careful while you are working with them. It helps with the depression since it gives you a sense of purpose, achievement, and accomplishment taking care of something that depends on you for its livelihood.

I am going to try to save some money over this winter because I would like to be able to purchase one or two more hives in the spring. I want to be able to get more veterans involved in my area that are dealing with the same issues as I am. I hope it can bring them some peace and tranquility like it has brought me. I volunteer with an organization called Vets For Vets in Pennsburg, PA where I mentor combat veterans that are transitioning out of the military or having trouble adjusting to civilian life by offering housing, job and educational opportunities, as well as providing any additional resources that may be needed to help in the adjustment period. We also complete outreach projects to assist senior and disabled veterans in the local communities by raking leaves and cutting grass to replacing roofs and bathroom renovations to help accommodate their disabilities. I would like to be able to introduce beekeeping to the individuals that I work with and mentor. My hope is to start a little network of veterans that are beekeepers and all work together on the endeavor to help bring back some of that comradery they once had in the military. I would like to be able to harvest the wax and honey and sell it to fund more Hives for Heroes and raise money to donate to local veteran organizations that do so much for the veterans in my area.

I am thankful every day for the opportunity that Jesse and Heather provided for me. Working with the bees has greatly improved my quality of life. I only wish they lived closer so I could work with them and learn more at the apiary.

Hive Update: Over the summer they didn't really bother with the feeder. I only had to fill it once or twice a week. End of August - beginning of September, they were taking a jar a day. Then late September until last week they backed off the feeder since my mums and late bloomers came in. This week they are going through a jar about every other day.