

‘It’s Been a Blessing’

VFW 'Sport Clips Help-A-Hero Scholarship' recipient wants to continue uplifting veterans who are struggling

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After graduating from high school in 1994, Paul Phelps enlisted in the Army and began his nearly 20-year career in the military. Throughout his service, Phelps sustained several injuries, eventually leading to his medical retirement in 2013. He had been involved in several explosions which led to hearing loss, ACL replacements and injuries to his back.

When he got home, Phelps began to experience symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He found it increasingly difficult to reconnect with important people in his life and would often suffer from flashbacks to traumas he experienced overseas in Iraq.

On several occasions, he attempted to take his own life.

Through these experiences, along with forming a deeper connection to religion, Phelps became inspired to uplift and support veterans who face similar challenges. He founded M.A.S.H. Ministries, a nonprofit organization based out of Westfield, Indiana, in 2013, whose mission is to “restore wholeness in the lives of veterans and first responders.”

M.A.S.H. Ministries views PTSD as an “injury that can heal,” rather than an “ever-present disorder.” The organization has helped many veterans and first responders, including assisting first responders at the 2017 Las Vegas mass shooting.

The organization also holds fundraisers, including a national memorial 5k, a gala and a golf tournament, with all proceeds going toward supporting veterans and first responders.

“(The nonprofit) has blown up,” Phelps said. “I never planned on it becoming a full-time job.”

Phelps first heard about the VFW’s “Sport Clips Help-A-Hero Scholarship” through a friend he met within the VFW. With his impressive accomplishments, Phelps was selected for the

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scholarship multiple times and is currently using the award toward a doctorate in counseling.

“Not a lot of scholarships help with working on a master's or doctorate degree, so it's been a blessing,” Phelps said. “I would not have been able to do this without the scholarships.”

M.A.S.H. Ministries will be hosting its annual golf tournament on Sept. 23 in Westfield, Indiana, and is open to the public.

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