



# MIDA MOUNTAIN VETERANS PROGRAM PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE DISTRICT



# CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS





*“While we organize the program (and the expense), the outside facilitators and the vet participants are the only people in the room, and the real impact is the support and interface between the vet participants.”*

*-Bill Jensen, MVP PID Board Member and Vail Veterans Co-Founder*

## VAIL VETERANS PROGRAM

# Wounded heroes learn purpose-driven living

By Tricia Swenson

Vail Daily

Zachariah Collett has seen the peaks and valleys of Vail. He also has seen the peaks and valleys of life.

Collett enlisted in the Army in 2002 and was deployed to Kuwait in April 2003. He spent 13 months in Mosul, Iraq, where he was hit by multiple improvised explosive devices throughout the year. Collett deployed back to Iraq in 2005 for 12 more months in Baghdad, where he encountered additional IED attacks.

“Over my 28 months in combat, I’d been exposed to more IEDs than I could count. I had a brain injury and obviously post-traumatic stress. I’ve since had seven back surgeries and my spine fused in multiple locations. And I’d gone through addiction to medication and addiction to alcohol, and I’ve overcome those,” said Collett, a staff sergeant with a rank of E-6. “I went through a divorce due to my terrible state of existence and had suicide attempts. You name it, the universe threw it all at me, to make me wake up, to realize that this was not the life I was supposed to be leading ... And now I’m grateful for it all.”

Collett, who has gone on to earn his bachelor’s degree in psychology and is now in graduate school and spends time with his wife and four children knows about the ups and downs of life.

“Life is still waiting for you when you get back off the mountain. Because on the other side of a mountain is another moun-



COURTESY OF VAIL VETERANS PROGRAM

The Vail Veterans Program brings 20 veterans to Vail for a three-day workshop that offers the space to dig deep and better understand one’s potential in life by defining their mission and discovering who they can be after their service and through navigating an injury.

asked Collett to be a part of the Veterans Path to Success this fall. Collett is a Vail Veterans Program alumnus and has participated in some of the recreational programs before. He is an ambassador of the nonprofit that was started in Vail 20 years ago by Cheryl Jensen.

**Redefining vets’ life missions**

Together he and Jensen knew what he was doing could provide emotional, spiritual, mental physical growth and healing for our nation’s heroes through its content depth and intensity. The program’s intent provides meaningful personal results. It is a personal journey for the veterans to discover how to be the best version of themselves and redefine their life’s mission.

gram’s facilitators and the veterans since his story has a common thread that resonated with the vets.

“I think I was able to put a lot of hearts and minds at ease because nobody really had an understanding of what they were coming here for,” Collett said. “They knew the Veterans Path to Success was some sort of work, some kind of mental work. But



# Next Step: Mountain Veterans Program

