



## HEROES HOMESTEAD

My story, Andrew Holstine Everyone has those days that are their best and worst days. My best days were meeting and marrying my wife, having my three kids, and meeting Jesus. My worst day was April 8, 2000. I just celebrated one year anniversary in the marines. I was promoted to lance corporal and selected to be part of a training exercise with the MV22 Tilt-Rotor Osprey. This was an honor to be part of an innovative approach for combat readiness. I served in 3rd BN 5th Marines as a machine gunner. We arrived at the training location when we were notified that our helicopter assignments were switched. My best friend was now stick 2 and I was assigned to stick 1. Upon landing the drill, the rear Osprey was dragged into the draft of the other helicopter. The crash blew us off our landing, and we came to realize the other helicopter was now engulfed in flames. 19 brothers lost their life that fateful day. I felt as if my fate was changed in a moment when the sticks were switched. My brother Santos was a far better man than I. Life felt like a gamble. The memory of the 19 Marines that gave their life that day, was a war in my mind as I raised my own family. PTS is a fog you live in. It invades your ability to make rational decisions, and pervades your sleep with vivid dreams. It clouds your values and interrupts your thoughts. Eventually, with the stresses of life, my PTS began to cycle. Owning my own business, managing a DIY home purchase and raising three kids was a big weight soon after my wife's employer downsized and laid her off. My capacity to cope BROKE. We needed help. The Vet Center and VA were well equipped for veterans, but my wife and family had close to zero resources. Additionally, it became evident how little was known about mental illness and depression. We were on a journey to find our own means of healing. We sold our home in Orange County, California. Said farewell to dear friends and family. Sold our belongings. Purchased an RV, and began an unknown destination of traveling the country. We needed open space, less bills, less stress, and more time with one another. We needed to find hope, and feel joy again. Our road trip inspired a dream in us. We found the answer all along was to slow down and focus on

the ones we love. I was fighting a war in my mind every second of every day. I needed to realize my family was what I needed to fight for. Veterans are trained for battle, but we forget what the war is for- itâ€™s for freedom, for hope, for the ones we love, for this beautiful nation. Our homestead will remind our veterans of freedom, hope, their family, and the beauty of this nation as we help them engage the great outdoors with their spouses and children. Please support and join our journey. You can read more of the event in 2000 here: <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-...>

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