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503 W Dean Rd
Fox Point, WI 53217
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To Whom It May Concern:

I was honored to speak on the podcast: Stigma Free Vet Zone, hosted by Bob Bach and Dr. Michael Orban about four months ago. SFVZ is one of the many resources that currently exist in and outside of the veteran community that provide candid, no-nonsense conversations and dialogue with veterans like myself who served in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past 20 years. Many of these resources ultimately turn out to be shared and disseminated across the country and across the world through social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram and are also available for almost everyone in the world on platforms like iTunes and Spotify.

I point this out because when servicemembers leave service, they scatter to the wind. A unit stationed in Germany may watch 38 of their 40 troops eventually leave and not reside in Germany permanently. With such a scattering, keeping in touch with their teammates and keeping a sense of connection becomes almost impossible. There is a saying "You don't know what you don't know." This could not be more true than when you exit service. It is not easy to find all the resources necessary when we exit service, and even harder to decipher what is a good resource and what is one that will burn us and waste our time and money, or actually has good intentions for us.



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To have an outlet like SFVZ is vital to what you could call a grass roots movement.

Without people like Bob Bach and Dr. Michael Orban putting something like this together, and continually getting quality content, veterans lose one source of the network. Many of the resources given on SFVZ are ones that focus on our mental health and wellbeing. When you listen to one of these podcasts and see that for once, maybe you are not the only one dealing with what you are dealing with post-deployment, it becomes a little less stressful and lonely.

Resources like this need more than just attention. Resources like this need to be amplified and given access to a larger network. We as veterans strive to make sure that the next brother or sister out of service has more resources than we did. This is one of those resources.

V/R

Matthew McDonell
Next 18 Executive Director