

KeizerCommunity

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Even without PTSD, re-entry can be rough for vets

By **LAUREN MURPHY**
Of the Keizertimes

Keizer resident Todd Stretar has worn many hats in his life—husband, dad and employee, all of which came before he joined the U.S. Navy.

“I was married, divorced with kids and all that stuff before the Navy was ever a thought,” he said.

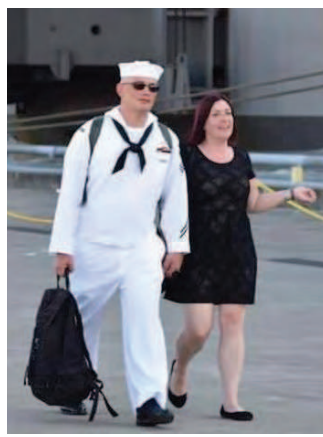
After the divorce, Stretar ended up living



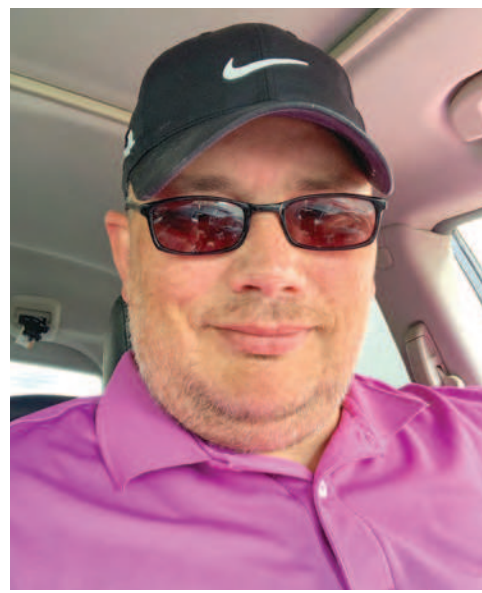
A series featuring the lives of veterans after they came home.

out of his car.

“I was still working and all that stuff, just couldn’t afford a place to live,” he said. Despite not being able to afford a place to live, he chose to stay in Texas to be close to his sons.



Submitted ABOVE: Stretar and wife, Amber, walking off the pier in Bremerton, WA after he returned from his last deployment on the USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74). RIGHT: Todd Stretar today in his capacity as a Farmers Insurance agent.



got to walk on the places where history happened. “To be in locations where world changing events happened and just soak it in, it’s just surreal,” he said.

After coming back home, Stretar struggled with a loss of purpose. “As bad as your day is in the military, there is still some sort

of this massive funk. I came to the conclusion that I had to step outside of myself,” he said.

He called the Young Life area director and offered to volunteer, “I was thinking she was going to say, ‘come to the office and help me lift heavy things,’ or do stuff like that,” he said, instead she invited him to a new leaders meeting where he met his best friend.

“I think it’s really important for veterans and anybody to realize that this whole grand scheme of things is not about you, it’s about everybody else and your impact on their life,” he said.

One thing that Stretar wants civilians to understand is that not every veteran has Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). While there are legitimate cases of PTSD, it does not apply to every veteran who’s ever served. “Veterans have a lot to bring to the table,” he said.

“I encourage any business to hire veterans, I encourage veterans to start their own businesses, I encourage anybody to give to organizations (that help veterans),” Stretar said.

Stretar has been home for almost two years. He settled in Keizer because it is his wife’s hometown. He has two sons, age 15 and 17, and a 21-year-old stepdaughter who is attending Chemeketa Community College. He is currently working as a Farmer’s Insurance agent in Salem.

tar said he mostly worked with the aviation side of the Navy.

For him, the hardest part was being away from his sons. He talked about calling them at 4 a.m. his time so they would be able to talk on their time.

“Also, watching Sunday football on Monday morning in Japan is really crazy,” he said, laughing.

Though being away from his kids was hard, Stretar did note that he was fortunate to have the freedom to talk with home and watch Sunday football, even if it was on Monday mornings.

“That’s not everybody’s situation,” he said.

Stretar said his time in the service was invaluable. In addition to learning new skills and meeting new people, he

of purpose or meaning behind it,” he said. “Working in civilian job does not always have that sense of duty.”

Stretar added that civilians don’t care in the same way military personal do.

“If you don’t show up for work Monday, your boss isn’t going to come beating down your door to check and see if you’re dead,” he said. “There’s not that purpose, there’s not that meaning, there’s not that care for your employees generally.”

About nine months after Stretar got out, he began to struggle with depression because he didn’t have something greater than himself to work for. “Shortly after Christmas of ‘18 when I was in the middle

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