

Technical Sergeant (retired) Matthew Zien

Advisory Board Member | Owner of Nexus Custom Designs | Professional Speaker | Professional Artist

Current Role at Victory for Veterans

Matthew joined Victory for Veterans as an Advisory Board Member in September 2018. During this time, Matthew was appointed the organization's Veteran's Advocate, assisting veterans by providing those suffering from PTSD and TBI's with coping skills, strategies, information and resources. Matthew regularly writes blogs on topics such as types of mental disorders and their symptoms, coping techniques, strategies, and therapeutic styles with mental trauma, and personal experiences from his own journey of recovery. Matthew used his artistic skills to design the VFVRide logo, the Warrior's for Life challenge coin, and other digital and multimedia projects.

Career Summary

Matthew entered Basic Military Training in February of 1999 and was assigned to the 321st Training Squadron. He became a Security Forces Apprentice upon the completion of technical training at the 343rd Training Squadron at Lackland AFB, Texas. His first duty assignment was with the 355th Security Forces Squadron at Davis-Monthan AFB. Matthew was quickly certified as a Security Forces Controller, becoming one of only two certified Airman First Class Security Controllers in the squadron. In 2001, he attended the Major Vehicle Accident Investigation School at Lackland AFB, Texas. In 2002, he was hired as the only Airman to perform duties as a unit Quality Control Evaluator.

In 2004, he was reassigned to McChord AFB, Washington and performed duties as the primary law enforcement and security trainer for all Security Forces personnel. Matthew also performed duties as one of only five certified Major Vehicle Accident Investigators in the squadron. He was accepted for Military Training Instructor duty in January 2008. After graduating Military Training Instructor School, he was assigned to the 326th Training Squadron, where he was the Team Chief for 15 Basic Military Training Flights. In 2012, he was reassigned to the 821st Security Forces Squadron at Thule Air Base, Greenland. Matthew was assigned as the Flight Sergeant for the day shift, and shortly thereafter, he was hand selected as the Noncommissioned Officer in Charge of the Supply and Logistics section.

In October 2012, he fell deathly ill caused by a routine dental cleaning. The Streptococci Virus entered his blood stream due to the use of unsanitary tools. Despite his health declining at an alarming pace, his illness went undiagnosed five separate times by Danish physicians. In January 2013, Matthew took previously planned leave to the states and within hours of landing, he reported to the emergency room where he was diagnosed with severe Bacterial Endocarditis, severe Congestive Heart Failure, severe Aortic Insufficiency, severe Mitral valve Regurgitation, severe Edema, and was in Septic Shock. During emergency open heart surgery to replace his severely damaged aortic and mitral valves with mechanical valves, he suffered liver failure, kidney failure, went into renal failure, and his heart stopped three times requiring resuscitation. Matthew was placed into a medically induced coma and the heart surgeon informed his family he was certain Matthew would not recover due to the severity of his illness, and that they should start making plans for his death. After being in a coma for three days, doctors referred to

Matthew as a “medical miracle,” and said they still had no medical explanation to why or how he was still alive.

After suffering from stroke like symptoms for nearly nine months, and later having a severe Grand Mal Seizure, an Otolaryngologist discovered that the endocarditis was so advanced and severe that it spread to the brain stem and into the brain, damaging his auditory nerves, left optic nerve, and cerebellum.

In March 2013, he was assigned to the 460th Medical Group at Buckley Air Force Base as a patient during the Medical Evaluation Board process. In July 2013, despite working diligently on his recovery, Matthew was the first patient in the history of Buckley Air Force Base to win Noncommissioned Officer of the Quarter for the 460th Medical group.

In April 2018, due to suffering from severe PTSD, Matthew attended the Denver VA PTSD Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program, and is now awaiting a class date to becoming a Peer Support Specialist to help others suffering with emotional and mental trauma.

Personal/Profession Achievements:

Matthew has deployed nine times in support of Operation Southern Watch, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. His decorations include Air Force Commendation Medal with four oak leaf clusters, Air Force Achievement Medal with three oak leaf clusters, the Iraqi campaign Medal with one gold star, the Air Force Good Conduct Medal with four oak leaf clusters, the National Defense Medal, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (gold border) with one silver oak leaf cluster, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, and the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal.

Current Position

Matthew is the Owner of Nexus Custom Designs, specializing in custom and fine woodworking, digital and multimedia art, and as a commissioned artist. Matthew is also a professional motivational, inspirational, and keynote speaker, traveling to numerous Air Force Major Commands, leadership seminars, schools, and conventions across the nation to share his message of resiliency, transforming obstacles into opportunities, and the power of attitude and perception. Matthew is also an ambassador with the Air Force Wounded Warrior Program.

Family

Matthew lives in Castle Rock, Colorado, with his son 2, and two step children, 9 and 7. Matthew has two daughters, 15 and 12, from his previous marriage who live in Ewa Beach Hawaii with their mother and step father who are also veterans.