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# Thank You for Your Service!

Introduced to the USO in 2009 by a great friend in Dallas, I continue to volunteer for our military and the USO and now serve on the advisory board for the San Antonio USO. The Military City USO has three operating centers - at the San Antonio airport, downtown, and at the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) on base at Fort Sam. As we go to print, this recently past Veterans' Day, the USO is scheduled to open its fourth center in San Antonio - a state of the art fitness facility on Fort Sam. In addition to their operating centers, the San Antonio USO provides many programs and events for the military and their families.

I met John-Matthew Urby, 25, through the San Antonio USO and their new RP/6 program that helps the U.S. military personnel and their families successfully transition into civilian life after their service ends. The program seeks to connect with military families during the 18 months before transition and the 18 months after - a time that many veterans fall through the cracks as they hit the reality of life outside the military. John is a USO San Antonio RP/6 alumni and mentor, one of the many who have separated from the military and now volunteer to mentor transitioning service men and women. I spent some time with John to learn more about his military and civilian life.



*Roxana: Who inspired you to join the military?*

John: My dad owns his own company in health services and my mom was a CFO for a government contracting company. They are people who have worked hard and always encouraged me to follow my own thing. At a young age I was watching the news and there was a story about soldiers serving in our military. Something about seeing these men and women serving our country drew me in and as soon as I turned 18, I went to a recruiter and, with the help of my assistant wrestling coach, who was a E-7 in the army reserves, I joined the U.S. Army on January 22, 2010. I did my basic training in Fort Jackson, SC and then went to Advanced Individual Training (AIT) as an intelligence analyst. I later retrained to be a Psychological Operations Specialist (PSYOP) in the army reserves.

*Roxana: What followed in your military career?*

John: In 2011, I went into a PSYOP reserve unit and became a junior non-commissioned officer as a corporal by the age of 20. In 2013, as part of the Army South and the Beyond the Horizon mission, I was sent to support a humanitarian mission in Panama and later the Dominican Republic that aimed to train foreign militaries, provide medical support to the local populations, and to build schools and clinics. In the Dominican Republic mission, I was the PSYOP NCOIC, and I was responsible for training PSYOP soldiers that were cycling in and out every two to three weeks.

*Roxana: What does your civilian life look like?*

John: I work as a project manager for CenCore, LLC, a government contractor that specializes in security, Intel, and IT. The army really helped set me up for success. It gave me the opportunity to learn, to grow, to take care of soldiers/people, to be in charge and accountable for my own development and for those around me. The army has phenomenal leadership training and programs that teach us how to be better leaders, as well as how to adapt to any situations and be successful in our missions/work. These were valuable skills that have helped in my civilian work. I have also been privileged to work with great mentors and leaders throughout my time in the army, and many of my mentors on the civilian side are veterans as well.

*Roxana: What surprised you about the civilian life compared to your military life?*

John: I had to adapt to differences of what I can and cannot do at my civilian job - like "corrective action." In the military, I could keep soldiers late if a mission needed to be completed. In the civilian job, I have to consider overtime costs and peoples' perspectives about working extra hours. I had to adapt, but I've been able to use the same leadership approach - if you take care of your soldiers/employees, they will take care of you.

*Roxana: How did you get involved with the USO and the RP/6 program?*

John: My mom volunteers with the USO. She shared information about the RP/6



program - a movement I truly believe in. I still serve in the Army Reserves, and I thought it was a great way as a veteran to help other veterans and become an alumnus/mentor. It is my way of paying it forward and keeping the movement going. The USO and RP/6 guides military personnel looking to separate from service and rejoin the civilian work with housing, education and jobs tips and preparation. The networking the San Antonio USO offers our military is invaluable.

*Roxana: What specific things are important for civilians to remember to support a military person rejoining the civilian world?*

John: The most important thing to understand is the incredible value a military person brings to any civilian company - strong leadership, job experience, years on the job training, great ability to adapt and multi task. Military people are mission oriented; their mentality is to get the job done and not focus on how many hours it will take. Explaining the military experience is hard; for example, translating the military experiences into civilian terminology - interviews versus promotion boards, acronyms versus specific tasks in a job. And, military people sometimes have to take a step down in the civilian job because their jobs were so specific in the military that it is difficult to equate in a civilian job.

*Roxana: What are your civilian life goals?*

John: I started my own company recently g - Com6, LLC. In the military COM usually stands for Command but it is also the basis for some powerful words, like Competence and Communication. The '6' means "got your back" in military terminology. My vision is to create a company to feel good about, stimulate the economy and create jobs. I want to have a comfortable living, keep it a small business and work with some of the same people I've served with, who bring crucial skills and loyalty to the company. This way I can create a strong company, help them and other veterans and also provide value by utilizing veterans' experiences.

At 25 years old, John is an incredible young man who continues to give to his country by assisting veterans and giving back to the local community. He credits most of his success to the mentors and people he has been associated with in the army. He doesn't want to lose touch with the veteran community and wants to continue to support the active military community. "The military brings together people with different backgrounds, lifestyles and experiences and never stops bettering you as an individual or service member", he says. What an incredible 25-year-old young man and veteran!



For 75 years now, the USO has been the nation's leading non-profit organization serving the men and women in the U.S. Military and their families. While most of you remember Bob Hope and the USO providing the military with entertainment across the world, the USO today supports the military from the moment they join service at the local MEPS (Military Entrance Processing Center), through their assignments and deployments, and as the transition back to their communities, through the new RP/6 transition program.

"USO-RP/6 transition program is a complimentary service to the transition services on Joint Base San Antonio(JBSA). The key ingredients to this program is the personalized buddy system approach and development of the transition alumni network. The unwavering support of our community has helped generate a community movement. "The commitment of our community and its involvement has allowed our transition alumni to develop invaluable relationships that provide vital transition insight and mentorship; ultimately fostering a successful reintegration and cultivating future leaders in our community," said Chuck Bunch, USAF (Ret), USO-RP/6 Site Manager in San Antonio.