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Through My Eyes: A Warrior's Experience

Posted by: [Health.mil Staff](#)

Monday, May 17, 2010

Sgt. Bill Campbell returned from Iraq with post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. **Pax** – a documentary film that premiered Wednesday at the **GI Film Festival** in Washington, D.C. – tells the story of how a dog named Pax, trained by inmate Laurie Kellogg at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women, helps him heal on a daily basis.



Before the screening, Campbell and his wife were introduced along with Pax, and I was filled with pride and raw emotion. There was a standing ovation that I didn't want to end. The lights were dimmed, and the film began. It was a mere 22 minutes long, but within those 22 minutes we followed lives being changed on a scale not able to be measured. I won't try to give a blow by blow account of the movie, but I will tell you what has stayed with me.

Imagine going to a foreign country, wanting to be part of something bigger than you, wanting to help your fellow soldiers and wanting to make a difference. You leave behind a "normal" job, a life and the comforts of "home" that we all take for granted at some point in our lives. You know full well that at any time you could die, or lose a limb, a fellow soldier, or kill another human being, but you are still willing to take the risk to serve your nation and the principles upon which you believe it stands.

Imagine witnessing your closest friend die right before you. Imagine driving home and running over a bomb put there by your neighbor's kids for no reason other than to kill you. You wake up in a hospital bed to never be the same for the rest of your life.

You come home.

Imagine not being able to remember the name of that body of water off the coast of Florida. You go to the mall and can't breathe because of all the people rushing by you, bumping into you, the noises, wondering if they are going to try to hurt you, and will you be able to protect

yourself? You feel afraid to leave your house, to drive to the grocery store for a gallon of milk.

You can't sleep, and if you do, you relive moments in your life so real you can smell and feel things you can't even begin describe to your best friend sleeping next you.

Imagine being welcomed home with parties for a few weeks and then being expected for everything to return to the way it was before you left for war, and it never does. You may need help on a daily basis for routine things, possibly forever.

This and more is what stayed with me. For Sgt. Campbell and his wife to share their story with all of us when most of us won't air "our personal life" with others is a gift to all of us.

I left with a sense of appreciation and gratitude that Campbell and his family were able to **find relief through Pax**. The dog is there for him through the good and the bad and can calm him with the touch of a wet nose. Witnessing the love, that bond and support that exist between the two is one of the special times in life. To have the opportunity to witness it, if only for a second as the two posed for a picture, I was filled with hope.

My hope is that every troop, veteran and their loved one will someday have the same support if they need it, and when they need it. Not a moment too late. And society will rally around them like never before.

I am in deep respect of the kind of patriotism, sacrifice and honor our troops, veterans and their families live every day of their lives—no matter the reason—and I mourn for and want to help them cope with their physical, emotional and spiritual wounds. I can't do it alone, and I can't do it fast enough.