

MAKING IT
Deliciously
SIMPLE
FOR YOU
TO
EMPOWER
THE OF
Lives OUR
VETERANS
MILITARY FAMILIES
© DOG TAG BAKERY
WASHINGTON, D.C.



Retired Sgt. Josh Tredinnick, a fellow at the Dog Tag Bakery, is training to become a baker through a work-study program conducted by Georgetown University's School of Continuing Studies in Washington, D.C.

Disabled NCO Vets Find Recipe to Transitional Success at Bakery

By Martha C. Koester

Bakers have long since known the healing powers found in the sanctuary of the kitchen. Thanks to a work-study fellowship at Dog Tag Bakery in Washington, D.C., disabled veterans, their spouses and caregivers will discover baking's therapeutic gifts as they take part in the program that will help them transition to the civilian workforce.

Kyle Burns, senior program director for the fellowship program at Dog Tag Bakery, said the program operates on a three-pronged approach. The first is education, where they partner with Georgetown University to deliver a certificate in business administration through the university's School of Continuing Studies. The second prong is rotations through various business roles at the bakery, such as management, human resources, marketing and customer service. The third prong is developing transition skills such as resume preparation, resolving

conflict in the workplace and networking. The bakery opened last year, and its second set of students began their five-month course in June and graduate next week. Most of the students have post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injuries.

"It's incredible to see the transition for all of them," Burns said. "They start anxious and excited, and then they go through this journey. It's just amazing to watch as they blossom and grow and begin to see how valuable the skill sets are and how needed they are in the civilian world — and they begin to see their place in it."

Occupational therapists say cooking classes are widely used in therapy, which aims to help people with mental or physical disorders maintain their daily living and working skills. In one 2004 study published in the *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, researchers found that baking classes helped boost confidence, increased

concentration and provided a sense of achievement for 12 patients undergoing treatment in in-patient mental-health clinics. The patients took an average of two baking classes.

I've enjoyed most about it that you can take this set of ingredients, you can follow these steps, and you're more than likely to come out with this final product every single time.



Retired Sgt. Josh Tredinnick bakes in the Dog Tag Bakery, Washington, D.C. The Dog Tag Bakery is operated by the administration and faculty of Georgetown University's School of Continuing Studies and helps rehabilitate disabled veterans by training them in the art of baking. (Photos by DoD)

Tredinnick's wife, Erica, enjoys his work at the bakery, especially when he brings home some of the French baguettes he bakes, he said.

"She's been very supportive," he said. "She's excited for what happens next."

Retired Sgt. Maj. Sedrick Banks plans to apply the business skills he learned through the fellowship toward a career as a life coach and in starting a nonprofit. Banks suffered a TBI in combat.

"I could go into all the training that Dog Tag has offered, but the biggest thing it's helped me with is transitioning from a wounded warrior back into society," Banks told the Washington Post. "It's helped me recognize my capabilities, despite my injuries."

Success Stories

Retired Sgt. Josh Tredinnick found the path to his future through the Dog Tag Bakery fellowship.

Tredinnick was injured in 2009 in Afghanistan when he was struck by an improvised explosive device. He underwent hip and back surgery and has a TBI and PTSD. He said his work in a veteran support office was fulfilling, but baking has always been beneficial for him.

"Baking has been very therapeutic as far as just getting me involved in a healthy activity," he said. "What

Wanted: Recruits

The professors provide handouts, resources online and a book to reinforce the material for those with PTSD and TBI issues.

"There are two fellowship programs each year," Burns said. "... We are always looking for wounded warriors, sponsors and caregivers to be a part of those classes."

The application is available on the Dog Tag Bakery's website at <http://www.dogtagbakery.com>, she said, noting that recruits are being sought for the January class.

"We encourage anybody who thinks this might be a great program for them to please apply," Burns said. ■

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