

Ground Operations: Battlefields to Farmfields

Synopsis

Short:

Our warriors are coming home from battle. They face a daunting transition back to civilian life, marked by unemployment, prescription drug addiction and astronomical suicide rates. They need a new mission. Simultaneously, we are losing half of American farmers to retirement and the USDA is calling for one million new farmers to fill the gap. Agriculture's problem is the veterans' solution.

"Ground Operations: Battlefields to Farmfields" champions combat vets who are rebuilding their own lives as organic farmers & ranchers and revitalizing their communities with access to local, affordable, fresh, healthy food. These heroes blow the lid off stereotypes and you'll be rooting for them all the way to your farmers market.

America needs a million new farmers. Veterans want the job!

Long:

Sgt. Adam Burke made a promise to God. Bleeding out from a mortar hit in Iraq, Adam promised God that if he could live to see his family again, he would do something to make his life worth saving. Two years later he started the Veterans Farm, a place of emotional solace and job training in organic blueberry production for disabled vets like himself. "Teach these guys how to farm, they can have sustainable lives with sustainable agriculture."

Our warriors are coming home from battle and sharing their stories. "Ground Operations" traces their journey into the war, through the gauntlet and back home, where they face a daunting transition to civilian life. Veterans have upwards to a 20% unemployment rate; they face a 9 month waiting period to even apply for disability claims and are 50% more likely to become homeless. As Marine Instructor Colin Archipley realized, "The V.A.'s supposed to pick up where the Defense Dept. leaves off, but there is no 'transition agency' within the government." Faced with the absence of their team and a mission, wounded and forgotten, a veteran commits suicide every 80 minutes.

Some vets are bucking those odds. "As a combat veteran, I was involved in a lot of destruction." says Marine Recon leader, Mike. "Shifting from that to growing something, seeing something thrive, causes a very deep spiritual transformation." Working on their own, often pulling their buddies along with them, we witness Ground Operations' heroes restoring their lives and serving their communities with new careers in organic farming and ranching.

Lucky for us — because “there are twice as many farmers over the age of 65 as under the age of 35., reports Michael/Farmer-Veteran Coalition. “ We see the loss of our farmers as a matter of national security.” The USDA is calling for a million new farmers in the next ten years, to fill the coming gap.

Fortunately, the Cavalry coming over the hill is just that ... it’s the Marines, Army, Air Force and National Guard. Recognizing the connection between local food security and national security, these young men and women are forging a network in sustainable agriculture that benefits us all.

Colin and his wife mastered organic hydroponic vegetable production and started the Veterans Sustainable Agriculture Training (VSAT). Jenn went to school on her G.I. Bill, focusing on the cross-over between veterans and farmers, while secretly dreaming of starting her own farm. Nick, a former medic, joins another veteran’s pasture-raised livestock ranch, to learn how to raise our meat-animals humanely. D’Artagnan, a Navy vet, finished his Phd and set out to build a fresh food system in an L.A. “food desert” to reduce the diabetes and heart disease in his community. Navy SEAL, Coleman “never thought to transition out of the Navy into the next corporate job,” and finds an established organic farmer where he can apprentice, along with his young family.

Central Casting couldn’t have done a better job. The vets in ‘Ground Operations’ are compelling, funny, handsome, entrepreneurial and engaging, and you’ll be rooting for them all the way to your local farmers market.

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