# A Saving Grace

### RevelationGolf's veterans programming has given those like Air Force veteran Michael Love a new look on life  BY JACOB BOMELI

"It's been a life-saver for me," said Michael Love when asked about his involvement in RevelationGolf's veterans program through the Great Lakes VA Hospital. "I was down on my luck for a while and they helped me get everything I needed to be successful on my own."

Love, a veteran of the United States Air Force, served our country from 2004-2014. Now a part of the Great Lakes VA Hospital's transitional residence program that partners with CDGA Foundation service provider RevelationGolf, Love has grown fond of the life-long sport in just one year in the program.

"It's fantastic," Love said of the game. "Getting out and being able to get some fresh air, be on the grass and see the water is perfect. Plus, I just love to swing. Golf is such a relaxing, enjoyable recreation – it's been really incredible to be in this program."

With the goal of improving the physical, social, emotional and spiritual quality of life of veterans around the Chicago District, RevelationGolf's veterans programming, which is funded by the CDGA Foundation, has been around since its founding in 2005. The idea to partner with the Great Lakes VA Hospital came to fruition when RevelationGolf executive director Donna Strum was approached by the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs' medical director with the suggestion in 2019.

Following 21 years of working as a therapist in a hospital setting, and more than a decade of success helping veterans and

As a participant in CDGA Foundation and RevelationGolf programming, veterans like Michael Love receive customized golf instruction and opportunities.



### Supporting Vets

The CDGA Foundation helps fund RevelationGolf's work, as well as other veteran golf initiatives. To support this programming, visit CDGAFoundation.org.

those with physical disabilities play golf, Strum viewed this addition to Elk Grove-based RevelationGolf as a no-brainer.

"The transitional veterans program is unique in that these folks actually are living in the community and are out getting jobs," said Strum. "This program is set to help [veterans] develop and achieve goals, and to continue to give them that positive self-esteem and self-worth. We also hope that, coming through the program, they're going to have a sense of normalcy in their lives again."

For Love, who recently began working as a volunteer for the VA, the program has also given him something to look forward to each week.

"The social aspect of it all," Love explained when asked what he is most excited about on a weekly basis. "There's not a whole lot of recreational opportunities right now and, now that the weather is getting nicer, this is the best. You can play crappy one week, but the next week you get to come back and improve on that. I just love everything about it."

With the help of associate director Kathy Williams, Strum and RevelationGolf have made this kind of positive impact on countless individuals who may not get the appreciation they deserve.

"It really is an honor to serve them, and to help them when they go through crises from the things that they've seen and had to do," said Strum. "They have so few moments of gratitude where people express that to them, that we really consider this an honor."

Being a part of the healing process for countless veterans around the Chicago District is what Strum and Williams have strived for since the program's creation, as around 90 percent of what RevelationGolf does is military veteran-oriented.

Love is the quintessential example for that, as he now has his sights set on a new goal on the golf course – to beat his brother.

"I never really took golf seriously when I went with my dad when I was younger," said Love, "but now I intend to get better at it so I am more competitive with my brother. He's a pretty good golfer, too." ●

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