



STEVEN WOODHAM

MARINE CORP VET & DIVEHEART DIVER

Q: HOW DID YOU FIRST HEAR ABOUT DIVEHEART?

I heard about Diveheart through the Aurora Vet Center. I was going there for readjustment counseling and was told that I might enjoy the Diveheart Scuba Experience (DSE) event that was being held nearby. This was in the Spring of 2017.

Q: CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR ABILITIES?

I retired from the Marine Corps in 2010, after 22+ years of combined Active Duty and Reserve service, including deployments for Desert Storm and (3) deployments for OIF / OEF. I also spent 24 years as a police officer in Naperville. The combination of these two professions resulted in the onset of depression and anxiety as well as several other physical limitations caused by multiple injuries during my times of service.

Q: CAN YOU TELL US HOW DIVEHEART ACTIVITIES HAVE HELPED YOU HOW HAS MOLLY HELPED YOU?

I started diving in 2017 with Diveheart, and since then, I have attended around 20 different diving events, including a trip to Key Largo, FL in June of 2019 where I received my Open Water Diver certification. Through Diveheart I have been able to deal with my physical and

emotional challenges in an environment that is safe, supportive, and fun.

Q: WOULD YOU RECOMMEND DIVEHEART TO OTHER VETERANS?

Molly and I have been together since Feb. 2019. She goes just about everywhere I do. Since retiring from both the military and police service, I no longer wear body armor when I go to work, or am generally out in public. I tell everyone that Molly has replaced that body armor for me. She acts as a barrier between me and the rest of the world and she only lets people in when I feel safe.

Q: HOW HAVE YOU SEEN DIVEHEART BENEFIT OTHER ADAPTIVE DIVERS?

Diveheart is what you choose to make of it. For some, it is just a bucket-list item to "go try" scuba. They may go to an indoor DSE, one of the open water dives in the area over the summer, or even try one of the trips to Cozumel or Key Largo, but then that's it. And that's okay since one of the tenants of Diveheart is, "Challenge by Choice." I however, have always been involved in teaching and training, so I thought that this program would be a great way for me to give back to my fellow veterans as well as others with special needs.

Currently I try and volunteer twice a week at the

locations in Downers Grove. I do everything getting air tanks filled for other DSE events, to changing lightbulbs and vacuuming the office if needed. I just try and help where I can because I know that the freedom, challenge, sense of accomplishment, and happiness that the program brings to everyone who is involved, both volunteer AND participant, is something very special and I look forward to continuing for a long time. ■

