

ASPENPOINTE

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Success Story: Justin

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The 24-year-old from Puerto Rico grew more alarmed as cars started to clear the road before being given the order to do so.

He was sure something was awry when a lone 8-year-old boy holding a cell phone on the side of the road waved to the troops as they passed.

What Justin didn't know was that within seconds his life would change forever: A road-side bomb killed two of his fellow soldiers and knocked him unconscious for hours. He woke with a traumatic brain injury (TBI), what experts are calling the "signature wound" of the war in Iraq.

Justin struggles to remember details and has trouble focusing on multiple tasks. He's always on guard. So something as simple as a car backfiring sends him into a dizzying flashback.

An estimated 150,000 U.S. veterans have been diagnosed with TBI, according to a report released by the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force.

"It's really hard," Justin said. "We got all these programs and people want to help the troops out, but we need he

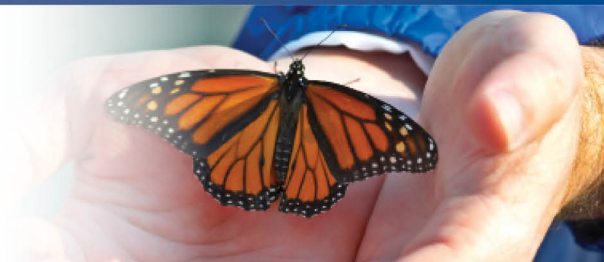


Since 1875, ASPENPOINTE has empowered clients, enriched lives and embraced purpose through individual and family services in mental health, substance abuse, employment & career development, education, housing, jail diversion & reintegration, telephonic wellness, and provider network services.

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lp finding the programs."

That's where Rich Lindsey and Pikes Peak Behavioral Health Group's [Peer Navigator Program](#) come in. Lindsey is a retired Air Force chief master sergeant who now spends his days helping people like Figueroa transition back into civilian life and get the mental health treatment they need.

Peer navigators simplify civilian systems for former military personnel. They are a "friendly face" that helps guide veterans and their families down meaningful pathways to improve their lives.

For Justin, that means navigating through culinary school applications, connecting with local supply companies for employment, and continued therapy for the brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder he brought home from Iraq.

With Lindsey's help, Justin hopes to find permanent work and enroll in a culinary school to pursue his dream of being a chef specializing in international foods.

"I wanted to make my dad proud of me," Justin said. "He is proud, but sad I have to live with this brain injury the rest of my life. They notice I am different now. I notice I am different."



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