

# Michael Madden

*I grew up in a small town called Ellwood City located in Western PA. This is the kind of town where the pride is the marching band, and no one asked what you were doing on Friday night, just what time you would be getting to the local high school football game. You looked forward to the summers craft festival and county fairs.*

*I came from a long line of military Veterans, so I knew one day I would join that line. I received my GED in June of 2004 and by July 1<sup>st</sup> I was enlisted and ready to go. After basic and AIT I was privileged to deploy to Iraq in 2006. This would be the first and longest of my tours, lasting 20 long months 18 months in country. Mentally this deployment would be harder than anything else I have endured.*



*My main mission while deployed was to serve as escort detail for Fallen Soldiers that were heading back home. These missions were referred to as "Hero Missions". Not because it made me into a hero but because the ones that are the Hero's will never be able to tell their own story.*

*During my deployment, I sustained injuries to the lower back and hips. These injuries would only cause a fraction of the pain that was to come. After returning home I would face the hardest battle yet. The long deployment and injuries left my mind in pain. Causing hyper-vigilance and anxiety that is not easily explained. These feelings and emotions are referred to as PTSD.*

*I now find it difficult to attend and enjoy the things my small town offers. Fairs, football, and craft festivals are obsolete for me. When I do attend them I am on edge and ready to leave the moment that I get there. I have really missed enjoying these events with my wife and children and I hope that I am able to return to them with the help of a Service Dog. My hope and prayer is that the Service Dog will assist in bringing a little normalcy and enjoyment to these events by providing me comfort when my PTSD starts up.*

*Thank-you for taking the time to learn a little bit about me.*