

## **Farming Project Invites Veterans to Work and Learn**

*By Cliff Figallo*

*Dated: Apr 23, 2010*

*A disabled Iraq Army veteran has expanded his blueberry growing operation to employ more disabled veterans. Adam Burke's farm offers horticultural therapy and paid work for recovering veterans.*

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Former Army Sergeant Adam Burke, founder and director of Veterans Farm, wants to provide paying work and horticulture therapy for fellow disabled veterans. Last year, Adam and his wife Michele began raising and marketing "Red, White and Blueberries" in central Florida with support from the Farmer Veteran Coalition ([www.farmvetco.org](http://www.farmvetco.org)), which specializes in helping veterans find livelihoods in the food and farming sector.

This year money raised by Work Vessels for Veterans ([www.workvesselsforveterans.org](http://www.workvesselsforveterans.org)) has enabled Adam to secure 8 acres of land outside of Jacksonville where he plans to expand Veterans Farm to include other berries and organic vegetables while providing more job opportunities for disabled veterans. WVFV serves as Veterans Farm's non-profit fiscal sponsor.

"Horticulture therapy by way of the blueberry farm helped my recovery so much that I thought it would only be greedy not to share it with others who have suffered so much," Adam said. "It was nice to have other disabled veterans out there. We stick together and work as a team."

Adam grew up on a family farm in Central Florida. The first member of his family to not go directly into farming, he joined the US Army instead, serving from 1995-2004. He served in Iraq with Operation Iraqi Freedom from December 2002 until March of 2004, when mortar fire near Balad gave him his second and most serious injury, earning him the Purple Heart.

Adam relates, "When I returned home I found it difficult going through the VA to get help for my TBI and PTSD. The psychologist and psychiatrist kept telling me that I needed to find a way to relieve stress. One of the best things I remember from my childhood was growing up on a farm. I remembered being in the outdoors and enjoying working with others. I remember the sound of the birds and the mist from the sprinklers, the wind and the calming effect it had on me."

Adam says that his next step in developing Veterans Farm on its new land is to raise money to purchase the blueberry bushes and pine bark so that he can accept his first group of disabled veterans to train and operate the farm. He is also seeking donations of equipment to help complete the project. He plans to make his farm fully self-sustaining.

Adam Burke can be contacted via his website ([www.veteransfarm.com](http://www.veteransfarm.com)) or email ([veteransfarm@yahoo.com](mailto:veteransfarm@yahoo.com)) or telephone (352-217-1662).

All donations for Veterans Farm through WVFV are tax deductible will go directly to helping disabled veterans and their recovery.

Press contact: the Farmer-Veteran Coalition Media Project, funded by Lewis Black

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The Farmer-Veteran Coalition provides opportunities for military veterans to successfully find vocational opportunities and training in the food and farming sector.

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