

Meet the 2019 Memorial Day Parade Grand Marshal: U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Thad Harvey



After 16 years of service and four combat tours in Afghanistan, the military career of U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Thad Harvey still cannot be described in the past tense. Following 12 years of active duty, he continues to serve in the Colorado Army Reserves while working a civilian job and raising a family in Commerce City. It is a busy life for Staff Sgt. Harvey, 34, a Colorado native who grew up in Greeley and moved to Commerce City three years ago after transitioning to the reserves.

“I’m honored to be involved in the parade and to represent the importance of never forgetting the service members before me,” said Staff Sgt. Harvey. “Memorial Day is about being thankful for those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. As long as you remember the service of someone in your family, a friend, or someone meaningful to you, their history will never die. That’s the whole meaning behind Memorial Day to me.”

The story of military service in the Harvey family dates back to the Korean War, where Staff Sgt. Harvey’s grandfather was an army draftee and two of his great uncles served in the U.S. Air Force. His uncle also served 22 years in the army starting in the 1980s. He was already motivated to become a third-generation soldier when the events of Sept. 11, 2001 solidified his desire to join the Armed Forces. While enrolled in high school, he enlisted for delayed entry and left for basic training shortly after graduating in 2003.

Staff Sgt. Harvey completed basic training and artillery observer school at Fort Sill, Okla. in November 2003 and was assigned to the 1st Armored Division in Germany for the next four years. He was then assigned to 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division prior to departing on his first and most difficult deployment to Afghanistan in June 2008. He spent the next year in eastern Afghanistan with stints in Kunar, Nangarhar, and Nuristan provinces.

As an artillery observer, he was responsible for directing artillery and mortar fire, close air support and close combat aviation support. Those skills served him well on May 3, 2009 (the day after his 24th birthday), when his squad was attacked by an enemy force outnumbering them by an eight to one margin. While engaged in small-arms fire, Staff Sgt. Harvey was on the radio adjusting artillery fire and directing attack helicopters to repel the assault. His squad did not lose a soldier during the attack. For his actions under fire by a superior attacking enemy force, Staff Sgt. Harvey received an Army Commendation Medal with Valor device.

He re-enlisted in 2009 and deployed to Afghanistan twice more during his active duty career, spending a year in Kunduz Province from early 2011 to 2012 and nine months at Bagram Air Base in 2014. He re-enlisted again into the reserves in late 2014 and then mobilized as a reservist, deploying to Bagram Air Base for his fourth combat tour in 2017.

Staff Sgt. Harvey is now an intelligence sergeant with the 1st Space Brigade in Colorado Springs, where he leads a team that processes satellite data and GPS information. His civilian job involves the same field and is still heavily involved with the military. As a trainer with CAE USA Mission Solutions, he travels to various military bases teaching the intricacies of GPS. He is currently under medical evaluation due to multiple injuries resulting from his 16 years of service. If he is not medically retired, he intends to reach 20 years of service and earn his military retirement.

His long list of decorations includes: Bronze Star Medal, Army Commendation Medal (6th award with valor device), Joint Service Achievement Medal with combat device, Army Achievement Medal (6th

award), Army Good Conduct Medal (3rd award), U.S. Army Reserve Components Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with four campaign stars, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal with mobilization device, NCO Professional Development Ribbon (Numeral 3), Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon (Numeral 7), Army Reserve Component Overseas Training Ribbon (Numeral 2), Non-Article 5 NATO Medal with Bronze Campaign Star, Meritorious Unit Commendation (2nd award), Combat Action Badge and Army Basic Space Badge.

Staff Sgt. Harvey and his wife, Brandalyn, grew up in the same Greeley neighborhood and were high school friends before being married in 2009 when he returned from his first deployment. They have two daughters: Arya (5) and Kayna (nearly 2), and are in the process of adopting Brandalyn's nephews, Haven (12) and Salem (11), and niece, Starla (9).

The city would like to thank Staff Sgt. Thad Harvey and his entire family for his service.