A driving force for veterans

DAV volunteer earns President’s Lifetime Achievement Award for work with Transportation Network

DAV volunteer driver Mike Lauffer displays his Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award along with his DAV Department of Utah Volunteer of the Year award. He has racked up over 113,000 miles while transporting more than 1,600 veterans since 2013.

“When prostate cancer happens, it gets pretty serious pretty quick,” said Navy veteran Mike Lauffner.

The diagnosis came during his first year volunteering as a driver for DAV’s Transportation Network. But Lauffer decided
he wasn’t ready to hang up the keys and fought back, undergoing radiation treatment for eight months and is now cancer free.

“The effects of radiation have a way of sticking with you for a little bit, but it was my choice, and I decided I wasn’t done giving back yet,” said Lauffer.

In the true spirit of volunteerism, he wasn’t seeking accolades for his service to the community. But since 2013, Lauffer has dedicated nearly 5,000 hours transporting over 1,600 veterans while covering more than 113,000 miles, and that attracted some high-level recognition.

For his efforts and dedication, Lauffer received the President’s Lifetime Achievement Award—created by former President George W. Bush after 9/11—as well as, the volunteer of the year award for the DAV Department of Utah.

The President’s Lifetime Achievement Award measures volunteer hours over a 12-month period with awards based on cumulative hours. The awards recognize each milestone of a person’s service achievement, according to the Corporation for National and Community Service.

“Mr. Lauffer has displayed many of the traits that veterans are so keen on,” said DAV National Voluntary Services Director John Kleindienst. “He served his country with grit and tenacity, and despite significant obstacles in his own life he continued to grind it out so he could selflessly give back to his fellow veterans.”

But still, to Lauffer, he was just doing his good deed.

“Although, I was extremely happy for the lifetime achievement award, I was absolutely flabbergasted by the DAV award,” said Lauffer. “I think everybody could volunteer a little bit,” Lauffer said. “If everyone does a little – things will get done and get done a lot quicker.”
If you or anyone you know is interested in giving back and volunteering through DAV please visit dav.org/help-dav/volunteer/.