



BE THERE WITH BELLS ON!

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Military Veteran Honoree Darci Edwards Veterans Lead the Sleigh (Team ID – 29294)

For Darci, it is hard to pinpoint exactly what initiated her battle with arthritis. As a classically trained ballerina, Darci was accustomed to rigorous conditioning and pushing herself to the limits physically. Throughout many years of training and performing, she hadn't experienced much more than fatigued muscles and bouts with tendonitis. Then at 25, and much older than most of her fellow soldiers, Darci enlisted in the U.S. Army and was invited to serve as a paratrooper, as a result her superior physical fitness scores. It was at this moment that she first realized that a woman could BE a paratrooper. Up for the challenge, Darci jumped in and excelled at the physical challenges her training demanded, including long-distance running, zipline training and parachute jumps.

Even in the early jumps, the physical pain of jumping, being airborne, and hitting the ground at 35 miles an hour took its toll. At this point, Darci hadn't been formally diagnosed with arthritis and thought her pain was typical and expected based on the physical challenges she was putting her body through. Never a quitter, she persevered through Airborne School, and upon graduation, served faithfully with the 173rd Airborne Brigade for the next 3 years. Continuous jumping without a diagnosis and treatment exasperated the issues she experienced. Finally, in 2011 Darci received the diagnosis of osteoarthritis.



Today, while Darci battles the effects of arthritis on a regular basis, she finds some relief from visits to her chiropractor, practicing yoga, and managing the pain with over-the-counter medicine. She also finds joy by spending time with her rescue animals (3 dogs, 2 cats). All the while, her arthritis continues to be something she faces every day. Darci is honored to be the 2022 Arthritis Foundation Honoree and hopes to bring awareness to the fact that arthritis affects people of all ages, and that its occurrence is more pronounced among the Veteran community due to the rigorous training and work carried out every day by our U.S. Military.

Join Darci and the National Veterans Memorial and Museum in the community team, "Veterans Lead the Sleigh", made up of Veterans, Veteran supporters, and all others who wish to rally in support of the important work the Arthritis Foundation does for our valued Veterans.

DECEMBER 3, 2022
Genoa Park/COSI

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