



### **Christopher Stowe, Master Gunnery Sergeant, USMC (ret.)**



A recent addition to the Tampa/St. Petersburg area, Chris recently retired from the USMC after 24 years of service in 2016.

Chris has been married to Brandy Lynn Rhoad of Bedford, Ohio for 18 years, and they have two children, Zachary (14), and Miranda (9). They currently live in Lutz, FL. Chris was recently hired as the Director of Safety and Security for Pasco County Schools.

Chris has served with multiple conventional and special forces units as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician, deploying six times to Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as multiple locations in Africa, Kosovo, Macedonia, and other CENTCOM countries over the course of his 24-year career.

Chris also served as a Congressional Fellow for (then) House Chairman for Veterans Affairs, Congressman Jeff Miller (FL). In this capacity Chris worked as a professional staff member in his committee office in DC for a year working on veterans' legislation and oversight of the Dept. of VA.

His own transformative experience receiving art therapy through the Creative Forces program at the National Intrepid Center of Excellence at Walter Reed fueled his interest in finding complementary and alternative therapeutic treatments as an adjunct to traditional pharmaceutical approaches and created his need to help others. This led him to create *Operation: Art Valor*, a partnership with the Morean Art Center in St. Petersburg and the first community-based partner with the James A Haley Veteran's Hospital, one of the 11 military medical facilities with Creative Forces programs, to offer no-cost classes to wounded military and veterans in traditional glassblowing as a means of a positive creative outlet.

