

‘I Felt a Calling to Help’

Navy and Marine Corps veteran Chris Ajinga volunteers with The Fallen Outdoors (TFO), a nonprofit that gets veterans and active-duty men and women outside to enjoy nature

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“I claim Inverness, Florida, as my hometown because I went to high school there, but I was born in Germany and lived a very ‘military-brat’ life,” veteran Chris Ajinga said.

Ajinga’s father served in the Army, and his stepfather served in the Navy, which meant he grew up in Hawaii, Georgia, California, Virginia and Florida. His family history, plus Ajinga’s desire to see the world, inspired him to enlist.

Ajinga spent three years in the Navy and 22 in the Marine Corps. Although his military career is over, Ajinga is #StillServing in different ways, including as a volunteer firefighter.

“I respond to fires and incidents that would go unanswered if there were no volunteers,” he said. “That’s why I do it. I saw a billboard that asked the question, ‘What if no one answered the call?’ And I felt a calling to help my community.”

Ajinga, 63, also volunteers with The Fallen Outdoors (TFO), a nonprofit that gets veterans and active-duty men and women outside to enjoy nature. As a TFO pro staffer, Ajinga coordinates fishing, hunting and boating trips for service members and their families, at no cost to them.

When asked why he gives so much of his time to others, Ajinga shared what his volunteerism means to him and those he encounters.

“Volunteering enables me to stay connected to my community both near and far,” he said. “I see the kindness of others, and I enjoy meeting new people. Sometimes, it’s in a time of need. Other times, I meet them because they see me fighting a fire or controlling an accident scene, and they offer support by way of water or just a simple thank-you. I even get a hug now and then. Life is good.”

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