



Abita Springs veteran uses repaired war injury to walk for fellow veterans



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ABITA SPRINGS, La. -- 'America's Parade' to honor our country's veterans stretched 20,000 strong across New York City Monday morning.

Abita Springs native Matt King, a former Army Ranger sergeant, was part of one of the marching groups.

"Very honored to represent other veterans," he said.

Taking part in the parade is sort of a miracle for King. His left leg and hip were badly injured when he was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade while in Afghanistan in 2005.

His unit was coming to the rescue of another.

"They kicked the hornets' nest and they didn't have enough members to eliminate the threat on their own," said King, recounting the incident that left him struggling to stay alive while helping complete the mission, "They started to take heavy casualties and it was our job to go in and pull them out."

For several years after that injury, King could walk, but it was different and painful. Things changed when the group Operation Mend of UCLA contacted him and gave him a full hip reconstruction.

"He's active, he's had great improvement in his function. He may or may not need any more plastic or reconstructive surgery," Dr. Sharon Hame said.

The organization offers veterans access to top plastic and reconstructive surgeons, as well as overall medical and mental-health support for the wounded and their families.

"They have more things to do for the veterans," King said. "It's a lot more hands on. It's a lot more face-to-face."

And so King walked with the Operation Mend group in appreciation for what it has done for him and to raise awareness for what it can do for other veterans.

King is actually helping with the construction of the new V.A. hospital in New Orleans.

To learn more about Operation Mend, [click here](#).