

Injured vet to march in NYC; Freeport man hopes to tell others about options for healing

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With his constant companion, Rex, retired Staff Sgt. Mike Mills of Freeport talks Friday at his Freeport home about the memory of the IED blast and subsequent burns that injured him when he was deployed in Iraq in 2005. Mills will march in a New York City veterans parade on Friday. / Kimm Anderson, kanderson@stcloudtimes.com



Written by

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FREEPORT— An Iraqi War vet from Freeport will march Friday in the New York City Veterans Day parade in New York City.

Retired Army Sgt. 1st Class Mike Mills will represent Operation Mend, a Los Angeles-based organization that provides reconstructive surgery for military personnel injured in Iraq and Afghanistan. Its founder, Ronald A. Katz, will be parade grand marshal.

Mills was severely burned in 2005 after his truck hit an improvised explosive device. Operation Mend surgically rebuilt his face and helped care for him after the attack.

Mills is now an advocate for disabled veterans. He has spoken openly about his experiences, saying that it helped him heal.

This is just the latest public appearance for Mills. From August 2010 to March 2011, Mills was home for seven weeks. That time away was spent in surgeries, public speaking, hunting and seeing family.

“It lets other veterans know what’s out there for them because of their disadvantages,” Mills said. “There’s more than sitting at home and watching TV.”

Mills still receives treatment from Operation Mend. He said doctors will be working on his hands, which were left deformed from the attack.

Mills and his wife, Suki, will travel Thursday to New York City and return Saturday. While there, Mills will be in the audience of “The Late Show with David Letterman.”

He and other Operation Mend patients will march with more than 20,000 parade participants.