

# IN FOCUS

## Wolff wants to take part in everything Appalachian has to offer

BY JANA NORDSTRAND  
Staff Writer

Steven J. Wolff is not wasting a second of his time at Appalachian State University.

Since arriving at Appalachian State Jan. 6, this 24-year-old from Trinity, N.C., has made it his goal to completely partake in what the university has to offer.

However, Wolff made a few stops along the road to college life and feels he is a better person because of his decisions.

After graduating from high school in 1998, Wolff had the option to attend college, but knew he was not ready for that step.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do. I was bored, I wanted some adventure, and I had always wanted to be in the military all of my life," Wolff said.

Following his dream, he enlisted in the National Guard in 1998 and went on active duty in the United States Army in 2000.

"The military teaches you a skill, it gives you money for school, it shows you a lot about yourself. It just helps you be a better person," Wolff said.

While on active duty, Wolff served as a mechanic and worked on Humvees, tanks, generators and did security work at one of the airports where Air Force One has landed.

Much of what Wolff trained for was the possibility of war.

"We saw videos of situations in Bosnia, things you would never see in the news. Things to let us know that this is what it could be like," Wolff said.

For Wolff, basic training was the most difficult aspect of the military

during his time.

"We would be lying in a ditch with bullets flying over our heads. You lift your head and you are dead. It is a lot to think about when you are in the moment," Wolff said.

"Being in the military helped me appreciate the small things in life and taught me that freedom isn't free. It has allowed me to appreciate the country and small things like being able to have a cup of coffee with a friend," Wolff said.

While serving in the military, Wolff was able to obtain his associate's degree in graphic design from Randolph Community College in Asheboro, N.C., and enter Appalachian as a junior.

"The G.I. Bill pays for my school and should be enough to pay for my master's degree if I decide that I want to stay and get it," Wolff

said.

Wolff finished his time in the military in October 2002 and worked as a butcher to save money and focus on the future.

"When you first get out, life as a civilian is tough, but right away I just did what I had to do to be able to take the next step," Wolff said.

"What I miss most about the military is the camaraderie between the soldiers. There is nothing like it in the world. You know that if you are ever in a situation, these are the men that are going to get your back, and that is something that you can't find anywhere else. There was an incredible amount of teamwork and leadership and that taught me a lot about myself," Wolff said.

Now at a full-fledged university, Wolff is making his mark.

"He is the most enthusiastic person that I have ever met. He is so excited about life and about being here at Appalachian. And all he talks about is what he is going to do next. He is a person who is truly going to be a light and make a difference on this campus," junior interpersonal and organizational communications major Jessica M. Herring said.

Two belts away from receiving his black belt in ju-jitsu, Wolff assists in teaching the art twice a week in Plemmons Student Union.

Instructed by Brian Hebert, a member of the United States of America Ju-jitsu team, Wolff has practiced ju-jitsu since the fourth grade and continued to do so while in the military.

"It is a way of life, a way of thinking and it teaches you how to find peace and harmony," Wolff said.

Wolff is also member of the Aikido Club and has used martial arts to help him stay in shape since leaving the military.

Wolff works thirteen hours a week in Food Services and has become involved with the Appalachian State Outdoor Program.

"Becoming involved has helped



Beth Ramsey/The Appalachian

Stephen J. Wolff joined the National Guard in 1998. After his four years in the military, he is now a graphic arts major at Appalachian.



Beth Ramsey/The Appalachian

Wolff has two black belts in ju-jitsu and is a member of the Aikido Club. He uses martial arts to stay in shape.

me meet so many people. As a student, I think you will be happier if you are involved because it keeps you happier and keeps your mind focused," Wolff said.

Military life and college life have proven to be different lifestyles for Wolff. He is already beginning to shine as a leader.

"Steven immediately pulls you in with his genuine smile, his caring and concern for others, his passion for life and his dedication to good causes drives him forward through each moment," junior communication disorders major Serena R.

Rector said.

"Being in college makes me realize how much my time in the military really has affected me. When I see a messy bed or something, I see how much I notice stuff like that. It has showed me so much discipline and has separated me, in a good way though," Wolff said.

Wolff aspires to work for a large print company, own a graphic arts company or print shop, or teach graphic arts.

One thing he is sure of: "I just know that in all that I do, I want to be successful in life," Wolff said.



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