

# “ IT TEACHES YOU NOT YOUR EDUCATION FOR



arine Staff Sergeant Herb Dover knows the adrenaline of attack sirens and security breaches. He has braced for the blast of Iraqi Scud missiles and emptied sweat out of his gas mask. He has been a strong shoulder for emotionally distraught troops and a reassuring presence for families visiting wounded warriors.

Despite the grit of military life, the Kent State University at Stark alumnus claims he's still easygoing and soft-spoken — although maybe a little more direct.

## BOOTS ON THE GROUND

Dover joined the United States Marine Corps in 2002, right after graduating from Canton McKinley High School. He'd always wanted to become a Marine and saw it as his ticket to higher education.

"No one in my family had gone to college and they all said I should go," says Dover. "But after basic training, I came home and was immediately deployed to Iraq. I was heartbroken!"

Fortunately, his duties in Iraq as a dispatcher and convoy coordinator ended a few months later and Dover returned home to continue his charge to a college degree. A friend who was a financial aid advisor at Kent State Stark helped him fill out student aid paperwork.

That's when Dover started classes at Kent State Stark. A bachelor's in math became his target. But four years later and a few courses shy of his degree, Dover was called back to Iraq. Instead of algebra and analysis, he returned to security detail, including guarding three of his fellow Marines — from themselves.

"It wasn't combat, but suicide watch was a tough assignment," says Dover. "I really learned how to read people and learned how there's no cookie-cutter way to handle individuals. Some respond well to tough talk and yelling, some need to be treated more gently."

Through that experience, Dover says he became more humble.

"I had heard about teamwork through youth sports, but it didn't become real to me until Iraq," he says. "I began to fully understand the importance of helping each other and working together through challenges."

He took those learnings with him on another tour of duty in Afghanistan in 2010, and then to Landstuhl, Germany, in 2011. There, he served as a Marine liaison to wounded service people and their families at the U.S. military

★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**MATH TEACHER  
MARINE**

Alumnus Herb Dover's path to a bachelor's degree included stops in Iraq and Afghanistan.



# NOT TO STOP OR ANYTHING.”

— Marine Staff Sergeant Herb Dover

hospital. As amputees, quadriplegics and other injured troops came to the hospital, Dover visited with them, explained procedures and helped them get services they needed.

## TROOPS TO TEACHERS

While stationed in Germany, Dover finally had the opportunity to take his last few college courses — online through Kent State University — and earn his math degree. That’s when his career vision started to shift from tactics to textbooks.

“One of my friends in Germany was a schoolteacher with the U.S. Department of Defense,” says Dover. “She told me about Troops to Teachers, a program that helps vets with bachelor’s degrees earn teaching certificates in their home states.”

With his life experience, people skills and new bachelor’s degree, Dover was ready for deployment of a new kind — teaching in a high school. He completed his assignment in Germany, returned to Canton and met with a Troops to Teachers advisor. The advisor helped him become licensed as a substitute teacher in Stark County.

Dover defines his classroom style as “firm but fair,” a reflection of military structure and discipline. He credits exposure to different cultures and religions for his unbiased understanding of students and their behavior.

Today, Dover is working on a full teaching license and is back in class at Kent State Stark.

“I need about four more education courses to earn a full teaching license,” he says. “Eventually, I want to get a master’s degree, maybe in education or math or counseling.”

## ONCE A MARINE, ALWAYS A MARINE

But what if he gets deployed again?

“I’d be willing to go, but I don’t think it’ll happen,” says Dover, referencing the U.S. military drawdown in Afghanistan and reductions in military spending. “The military is like a big brother. It’s constantly with you, helping you improve. And it teaches you not to stop your education for anything.”

He’s following his orders. From Iraq to Afghanistan to Germany to Canton, Staff Sergeant Dover’s educational dreams are alive and well at Kent State Stark.