

# 12-mile rucksack run to help support veterans and first responders

by Steven Spencer, Staff Writer  
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EDWARDSVILLE - Cory Garcia is teaming up with Got Your Six Support Dogs, local first responders and veterans to help raise awareness and funding for PTSD and helping pair suffers with support dogs.

This Saturday, Garcia will do a 12-mile run from his home in Collinsville to Evermore Tattoos in Edwardsville with one special catch, he'll be carrying a 45-pound rucksack the entire way.

"The whole run itself is to bring awareness to PTSD," Garcia said. "Most people don't know that 46 soldiers per day try to commit suicide and 22 of them succeed. It's something that's near and dear to my heart. I have a lot of friends that are suffering from PTSD and are not able to get the support they need. The pack represents, to me, the burden that our soldiers and first responders go through with PTSD. That is the burden

leaning on my shoulders and my back as I'm running."



Nine miles into the run Garcia will be stopping at Wang Gang in Edwardsville to regroup and finish the last portion of the run with local veterans, first responders, and friends.

Struggling with PTSD is something that affects every aspect of a person's life. That's why Garcia decided to partner with Got Your Six to help support and relief victims of PTSD with support dogs.

"Those dogs are \$20,000 a piece," Garcia said. "And that organization gives those dogs to the people that need them the most. They just give them. For them to do that, they really do need help with the funding. What I really like about it is they're a local company. I've heard a lot of veterans say hey I'm not getting any help from the VA, but we have this local company that will help. It's just an amazing thing that they do that."

Several people joined Cory Saturday to help support the cause.

"I'm here to support all the victims," Lieutenant Wayne White of the Glen Carbon Police Department said. "Everybody we know probably knows somebody whose been affected

by PTSD, and it wasn't til Cory brought this to light that you realize how close to home it hits. He's been contacted by military veterans, police officers, firefighters and first responders from all over the country thanking him for what it is he's doing."



Jason Countryman, a veteran and friend of Cory said he received a service dog from Got Your Six.

"They give the dogs to the veterans for free," Countryman said. "A lot of places charge up to about \$20,000. You and your dog both go through classes and they give you the dog. The dog is there to help you with your stressors or whatever it is. If I'm too stressed out he knows my tells. It's helped out a lot. Before my dog I wasn't a people person. I didn't go out in public too much. Now over the last year and a half I've learned to just kind of relax. He's been a big help."

Countryman said it's great to see what Cory is doing to help raise awareness and support.

"It's amazing what Cory's doing out here," he said. "Trying to bring light to this. It's a big issue."



