

How They Did It

## BRINGING THE FLAVOR

The only one of his 5 Army buddies to return home alive.  
OEF vet keeps his promise and turns a family recipe into a business.

BY DEIDRE WENGEN



**GERALD YOUNG SAYS** that his father's barbecue sauce is legendary in his home state of Iowa. While Young was growing up, the sauce was the hit of every family cookout and even won over the Chicago police department with its tangy, unforgettable flavor. When Young was deployed to Afghanistan with the Iowa National Guard in 2003, his father promised to share the secret recipe if his son returned home safely.

Young sustained a spinal injury while on duty in Afghanistan, but feels fortunate to have survived. His comrades weren't so lucky. "There were five of us,"

he says. "We all promised each other that whoever made it home would pursue their dreams of owning their own business. I was the only one who made it."

After recovering at Walter Reed Medical Center and gaining access to his father's coveted recipe, Young enrolled in the EVB program at Purdue University, a curriculum designed to help service-disabled veterans prepare for small business ownership.

"The EVB program was very instrumental in giving me all the tools I needed," says Young. "It provided free legal service and mentorship. From there,

I just kept going. I was very persistent in getting this product out on the market."

After perfecting the recipe — one that is gluten-free and made without high-fructose corn syrup — Young trademarked the Young G's brand and struck a deal with Hy-Vee food stores in Iowa to get his product on the shelves. He also received assistance from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to fund the production of a local television commercial. Now, Young is on the verge of working with larger distribution centers such as Cisco and Lomar to get Young G's in stores across the country.

"I am very confident in my product as well as the success of the business because of the passion that I have," says Young, who works with his production company in Kansas City, Kan., to make and bottle the barbecue sauce. Young says he has the capability to produce 6 million bottles in a year.

Recently, Young teamed up with a full-service marketing firm to help increase brand awareness and boost sales. For this service-disabled veteran, failure is not an option. "I have been trained as

a soldier to continue on and implement what needs to be implemented," he says. "The military has been there from the start with the self employment programs. They gave me a lot of support to get this dream off the ground." 🇺🇸

**Gerald Young**

Young G's Barbeque Sauce LLC  
Residence: Des Moines, Iowa  
<http://young-g-bbq.squarespace.com>

U.S. Army National Guard (1999-2003)  
Highest Rank: Specialist (E-4)  
MOS: Fuel Specialist  
🇺🇸 NaVOBA Member Since 2013