

## **John Papai - Florissant, Colorado**

John is a U.S. Marine Corps veteran who was diagnosed with traumatic arthritis in both knees after concluding his military service in the late 1990s. He became a law enforcement officer in Park County, Colorado, but soon had to step away from his career due to problems caused by his arthritis. After undergoing 22 surgeries, five different types of staph infections and four knee replacements in six years, John had his left leg amputated. He was introduced to adaptive skiing at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic in Snowmass, Colorado, and is now in his first season training with the NSCD in hopes of making the U.S. Paralympic Ski Team. He also competes in wheelchair basketball at a national level and swims regularly to build strength. John has a German shepherd service dog named Kilo and trains service dogs for veterans through Victory Service Dogs. He is involved in several veteran's organizations — including Beyond the Battlefield, which helped him cope with a period of depression and gain the confidence to become an adaptive athlete after his amputation.