

# ROB SANDS

WRITTEN BY **MATT DEBNAM**

A relative newcomer to Washington, for the past three years, Robert Greene Sands has made it his mission to make a difference in the lives of veterans and the landscape of the city's Historic District.

The avenue for achieving those goals came in an unlikely form — a neglected historic home on Washington's East Third Street. A professor of anthropology at Norwich University, Sands' involvement with veterans and the military dates back more than a decade.

"I teach in the strategic studies defense analysis program, mostly special forces who are getting their bachelor's," Sands said. "I started with the Department of Defense in 2008 as an anthropology professor for the Air Force."

His wife Allison worked with the DoD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. With their respective backgrounds working with active duty military and veterans, Sands understood some of the challenges facing some members of the Armed Forces — Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, sexual assault and addiction.

Coupling those needs with an interest in historic preservation, Sands brought in an old colleague, David Steckel, who decided to move to Washington with his wife Colleen. It was through that collaboration that Pamlico Rose Institute for Sustainable Communities was born.

In 2017, the nonprofit bought "Rose Haven," a circa-1892 farmhouse at 219 E. Third St. in Washington. With a goal of rehabilitating the house, and establishing meditation and produce gardens next door, Sands and the volunteers at PRISC hope to create a place where female veterans can begin the process of healing their wounds.

"The historic preservation aspect is just an avenue to be able to do what we want to do," Sands said. "What we really want to do is develop programs that advance wellness and resilience in veterans." §



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