

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES AUXILIARY

From the desk of:

Jan Owens
National Secretary-Treasurer

Dear Sample A. Sample,

Throughout the year, you've proven what a friend you are to veterans.

All of us are very grateful for your support of the men and women who sacrifice so much for our freedom and our safety.

You understand that even though the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are no longer big headlines, our nation's veterans still need us. Perhaps even more now that they've returned home ... as they deal with physical injuries and mental trauma they'll have to manage the rest of their lives.

Please take this opportunity to show your support of America's veterans and their families once again. **I'm counting on you to make your generous year-end gift to be used for your VFW Auxiliary Department today.**

Thank you, and may you and yours enjoy a peaceful holiday.

Sincerely,



*Jan Owens, National Secretary-Treasurer
406 West 34th Street • Kansas City, MO 64111*

From the Adjutant General

I'm proud to step into the role of adjutant general for the VFW — and pleased to be able to speak to you about one of the main initiatives the organization will be focusing on in the year ahead. Under the capable leadership of Commander-in-Chief, Brian Duffy, the VFW has launched a new focus on mental health and supporting veterans who have mental health concerns.

In collaboration with VFW Auxiliary President, Collette Bishop, we're working to build strategic partnerships with other influential organizations experienced in dealing with the unique mental health needs of

America's veterans and their families.

The VFW Mental Wellness Campaign will provide increased awareness, support and intervention for veterans. In addition to the channels of action for which the VFW is known, such as legislative

advocacy and National Veterans Service, we'll also be addressing mental health issues at the local levels ... and contributing to research for the advancement of new evidence-based treatments.

At its heart, this initiative is an example of the VFW seeing a need in the veteran community and moving quickly to address it. As Commander Duffy expressed so passionately in his speech accepting his new role within the organization, the VFW is well positioned to be a safe space for veterans to offer support to one another.

I encourage you to learn more about our renewed commitment to mental wellness and join with the VFW as we work to increase the resources available to veterans across the country seeking help with mental health concerns. And I thank you for your continued support of the VFW. ★



Bob Wallace, Adjutant General

Family of Seven

Continued from page 2.

"The lady was so kind and walked me through the process of applying for the VFW Unmet Needs grant," said Victoria. "When we got the approval notice, I cried tears of joy." With the grant money, the family was able to pay their electricity bill, phone bill and their rent.

"The VFW mailed us a receipt confirming our bills were paid and gave us a \$500 gift card to Wal-Mart. I cried again," said Victoria.

"We were able to stock our home with all the necessities us and our five kids were missing out on, during those hard times."

"If I could personally write each and everyone who donates to VFW a thank-you letter, I would," said Victoria. "They are changing people's lives in ways they couldn't imagine. They are saving lives."

Learn more about the **VFW Unmet Needs** program at www.vfw.org. ★

I wanted to write this letter to thank everyone who took part in getting my family approved for this grant. This has been one of the most difficult years of my husband's life since returning home from Afghanistan with PTSD and TBI. You not only saved our home, but also our peace of mind.

—The Norman Family



VISIT US ONLINE AT:



NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

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VFW SUPPORTER QUARTERLY



AN UPDATE FOR PATRIOTIC SUPPORTERS ★ FALL 2016



Mental Health a Key Advocacy Issue for VFW Leadership

New mental wellness campaign spotlights importance of complex issue.

The VFW and VFW Auxiliary are putting the focus on mental wellness for veterans and military families in the months ahead. Recent VA reports suggest as many as 20 veterans commit suicide a day.

The Mental Wellness Campaign is forging new partnerships to better serve veterans and their loved ones suffering from invisible injuries as well as provide specific training to VFW personnel who provide direct services to veterans. For example, VFW Service Officers have been recently trained on spotting the five signs of suffering so they can direct veterans to resources and programs to help them.

The VFW leadership believes the organization is uniquely poised to



www.changedirection.org

address the specific mental issues veterans face. VFW members are known for providing peer-to-peer support for one another, and the VFW community is a safe space for veterans.

In addition, advocating for federal legislation to improve access to mental health care and transitional benefits is a top priority.

Learn more at www.vfw.org. ★

FIGHTING FOR VETERANS!

Around the world, the VFW is reaching out to America's heroes—during long, dangerous deployments, during the often difficult transition back to civilian life and always in the years that follow. The VFW supports our veterans and servicemembers with programs that make a real difference ... educational resources and support ... financial assistance during hard times ... help navigating the VA system. These programs are available at no charge to veterans and their families, thanks to the generosity of members of the VFW, VFW Auxiliary and millions of patriotic supporters.

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Thank You for Your Support
We realize that much of our work would not be possible without your generous and dedicated support, and we would like to let you know how much we recognize and appreciate your continuing contributions.

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

The VFW Helps Keep Family of Seven in Home

The Norman family recently hit some tough times.

“This year has been really rough on us, in just about every way. My husband’s PTSD spiked earlier in the year, and it seemed as if he was giving up,” said Victoria Norman.

“He started to miss work due to his increasing anxiety and depression.” Victoria’s husband, Prince, served six years in the National Guard and was deployed to Afghanistan for a year as a trained Engineer. While on tour, Prince’s truck was blown up by an IUD—which left him with severe Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and a Traumatic Brain Injury.

“These past six months, we’ve been slipping on our bills. Prince was struggling with his PTSD and his appointments started interrupting his work schedule,” said Victoria. “His doctor recommended he stay in the hospital for temporary treatment. After that, I knew we needed help quick before we lost it all.”

Victoria had heard of the VFW and wrote them a letter. She explained her family’s situation and patiently waited to hear back. In less than 48 hours, she got a call.



After the Norman family hit some hard times, the VFW stepped in to help this family get back on track.

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Correcting a 40-Year-Old Mistake

Lawrence Taylor* entered the Army in 1973 and passed the required medical exam needed for entry. But after a year of military service, he began experiencing mental health issues and was honorably discharged.

He filed a claim for a nervous condition upon discharge and the regional office denied it. He filed again in 2000 but the regional office again denied the claim on the basis that there was no new and material evidence to reopen the claim.

George Sheets, VFW Appeals Consultant, took Taylor’s case on in 2008. He says from the 80s to the beginning of 2004, the facts of the case are muddy.

“He received pension in the late 80s, but then it just stopped,” he said.

In 2003, he filed again but the regional office again denied the

claim and he appealed. In 2008, the VFW got involved and took a deeper look. The goal was to help Taylor resolve years of struggle and vain attempts to appeal the initial claim filed in 1974.

“It was impossible to tell whether his entrance exam was considered in the earlier decisions, so the VFW argued effectively that Taylor’s mental health condition was indeed a result of his service,” Sheets explained.

Following two remands by the Board of Veterans’ Appeals and receipt of a favorable medical opinion, the Board granted service connection in 2012. Following that decision, the regional office awarded Taylor a 50% rating effective to the date of his last claim in December of 2003.

Despite the victory, upon review, Sheets knew that the outcome still

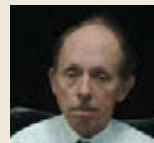
wasn’t right.

“When a claim is reopened based on receipt of additional military records it is necessary to go back to the beginning and conduct a fresh review,” he said. “This veteran’s case needed to be looked at from 1974, not 2003.”

Sheets requested an administrative review by VA Central Office and the results were monumental. Taylor was awarded \$249,320.80 in retroactive benefits!

“You have to take the time to look at the facts to ensure each veteran receives justice. This is an example of how a veteran’s quality of life is affected when attention isn’t paid to the details and errors come into play,” concluded Sheets. ★

*Name changed to protect privacy.



George Sheets

Army Veteran Learns a Valuable Trade



Anthony Allen

he was awarded a generous scholarship, allowing him to continue his undergrad studies at Clackamas Community College in Oregon City.

Allen is unsure of what the future holds, but he knows he wants to work with metal in some capacity.

“I love working with metal in many forms, from blacksmithing to fine jewelry,” said Allen.

Now in his third term, Allen is doing exceptionally well in school. He is a straight-A student and was just invited to join the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.

“It’s so nice to be able to focus on my studies knowing that I won’t have a huge debt to repay once I’m done,” said Allen. “I can’t thank you enough for this scholarship.”

Learn more about the VFW “Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship” at www.vfw.org. ★

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BEGIN YOUR PLANNING JOURNEY

Making an estate plan is an important first step toward securing a future for you and the VFW.

5 WAYS TO CREATE YOUR LEGACY

1. **A will** ensures that assets go to those you intend to receive them.
2. **Trusts** manage assets for the benefit of the person creating the trust or others.
3. **Life insurance policies** provide payments upon the death of the insured.
4. **Buy-sell agreements** arrange for the sale of a closely held business interest upon death.
5. **Beneficiary designations** allow you to choose who receives retirement plan assets.



HAVE A QUESTION? WE CAN HELP.

Planned Giving Office • (816) 968-1119 • plannedgiving@vfw.org



“I need you [VFW members] to push the message that the success of the VFW has always been because of our service to others. It is how we pay it forward to every generation who raises their right hand and takes an oath very few have taken.”

—VFW Commander-in-Chief Brian Duffy, in his 2016 acceptance speech



“Eighty-six years ago last week, VSOs made the Veterans Bureau happen. Nine years later, VSOs made the Veterans Administration happen. VSOs got us the GI Bill. You got us the Montgomery GI Bill. You got us the post-9/11 GI Bill. You’re why President Reagan made VA a Department—giving all of us ‘a seat at the table of our national affairs.’ And you’re the ones who can keep veterans in control of how, when and where THEY wish to be served.”

—VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald, in his address at the 2016 VFW National Convention



“We have an amazing ability to save soldiers on the battlefield, but we must extend that support beyond active duty and aggressively address their invisible wounds. We are honored to be part of this new and sustainable VFW Mental Wellness Campaign.”

—Retired Army Gen. Peter Chiarelli, CEO, One Mind (one of the partnering organizations VFW is working with on critical mental health issues)



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