

SUPPORTER QUARTERLY

AN UPDATE FOR PATRIOTIC SUPPORTERS ★ MAY 2020

Veteran is Grateful for Remarkable Service from VFW

Jay DePinto, 50, of Beaufort, South Carolina, served in the military for 27 years before retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel. The husband and father of three first joined the Marine Corps because of a sense of honor, duty and service.

For nearly three decades, DePinto was stationed around the world. He served on both the East and West coasts as well as in Iraq, Bahrain in the Persian Gulf and locations across Europe.

Service was often grueling. It included constant running and other rigorous physical activity. In retirement, DePinto suffered from chronic health issues affecting his ankles, feet, knees, hips and back. He knew he needed to file a claim, but he was not comfortable handling it alone.

“I did not want to do it myself, period,” DePinto said. “I knew I did not know enough about the VA to properly complete it.”

DePinto’s wife, Priscilla, worked at the Walter Reed Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland. She put her husband in touch with a VFW Service Officer there, who she thought might be able to help. She was right.

As a retired Navy Chief with experience in the medical field, the VFW Service Officer was able to guide DePinto through the process and help him understand what to expect.



Jay DePinto

Within a matter of weeks, the VFW Service Officer reviewed all medical records, obtained necessary documents and completed all paperwork.

“It was absolutely remarkable,” said DePinto.

After being evaluated, he received a VA rating of 90%. Assistance was critical. DePinto is grateful that such a high level of service is not only available, but also is completely free of charge.

To fellow veterans requiring assistance, DePinto recommends they start before retirement and trust in the process.

“Find a VFW Service Officer to speak with,” DePinto said. “They will provide excellent service. My family is so appreciative.” ★

NO ONE DOES MORE 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 service members 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.

Veteran Keeps Her Home Thanks to Unmet Needs Grant

Gaybriell Rockett had no idea a trip to a recruiting station with her uncle during her senior year of high school would result in a military career.

“While I waited, a go-getter recruiter suggested I take the practice ASVAB. I did well and suddenly I was headed to take the physical, then given a job and a date to leave after graduation,” said Rockett. “I decided to join because I had nothing to look forward to in my hometown of East St. Louis, so it was a way to gain leverage in my life.”

Rockett began her Navy career in 1992 and served for nine years with much of that time spent on assignments in and around Guam, Singapore, Hawaii, Japan, Hong Kong and Dubai. Back on land, Rockett spent her last three years in the Navy as a recruiter and was promoted to Interior Communications Electrician Petty Officer 2nd Class and then served with the Sacramento Military Entrance Processing Station as a job counselor.

Now age 45 and residing in Richmond, California, Rockett has had issues with her knees from being a

seaman and interior communications electrician. She works as a substitute teacher, but that means she’s not paid during breaks in the school year. The gaps in pay resulted in Rockett falling behind on her mortgage and struggling to make ends meet.

In looking for a program that might help, Rockett found many options had requirements that excluded her because she was working and didn’t meet poverty guidelines. She finally found the VFW Unmet Needs program and applied, hoping that she may qualify as a veteran with a military-related disability. She was able to breathe a sigh of relief when her application was approved.

“The grant paid about 95 percent of my mortgage. It helped me so much because I probably would have started

getting foreclosure letters,” Rockett said. “I am very appreciative. This has meant security and less worry.”

In addition to gratitude for the grant, Rockett is thankful for the people at the VFW who helped her throughout the process and made sure she felt cared for in navigating communication with the mortgage company and her bank. It let her know that the VFW and all who support programs like Unmet Needs truly have the best interests of veterans in mind. She hopes more people will donate to ensure veterans get the help they need before it’s too late.

“Thank you for the continued support of veterans in need. I was so happy to hear that I qualified because I really had an unmet need,” said Rockett. “This service is important because it is homelessness prevention, it’s a stress reliever before depression or other emotional or mental issues kick in that are not manageable. We need more preventative solutions like these. More people like me who are just getting by should be able to qualify before they are broken.” ★



Gaybriell Rockett

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Letters from the Heart

Every day, the VFW receives heartfelt letters of gratitude from America’s heroes.

There are simply no words for what you’ve done for me & my family. Thank you simply isn’t enough.

You’ll never know what this grant meant to me and my family. I knew my wife and kids got to keep a roof over their heads while I got help. That meant the world to me. I don’t have words to express the gratitude I have.

Thank you so much! This is going to help me catch back up on my finances and not be stressed about being evicted. Thank you once again!

Without this generous support, my final year would be very difficult. Because of this scholarship, I will graduate as a proud veteran. I couldn’t be happier.

VFW Awards National Youth Scholarship Winners

The Veterans of Foreign Wars proudly presented more than \$200,000 in scholarships and awards as it named the national winners of its 2020 Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen youth scholarship competitions. The awards were presented during the Parade of Winners ceremony, sponsored by Twisted X, at the VFW's annual Legislative Conference held in Washington, D.C.

Shruthi Kumar, a high school senior from Marian High School in Omaha, Nebraska, was named the first place winner and presented with the \$30,000 T.C. Selman Memorial Scholarship award during this evening's ceremony where she delivered her winning essay on this year's theme, "What Makes America Great." Kumar was sponsored by VFW Post 1581 in Omaha, Nebraska.

Second place winner Rachel Perry, a senior sponsored by VFW Post 7239 and its Auxiliary in Acushnet,

Massachusetts, was awarded the \$16,000 Charles Kuralt Memorial Scholarship, while Dallin Christensen, a junior sponsored by VFW Post 1481 and its Auxiliary in Ogden, Utah,

was named the third place winner and awarded the \$10,000 VFW Scholarship. All other state winners received no less than a \$1,000 college scholarship.

"The more than \$200,000 awarded tonight makes a grand total of \$3 million presented at the national, state and local levels of our competitions, and I know will help ensure the doors of opportunity are opened wide for this talented group of young people," said VFW National Commander William "Doc" Schmitz. ★



William "Doc" Schmitz & Peggy Haake with 2020 winners



"This is a momentous victory for the more than 65,000 military spouses who endured the tragic loss of their husband or wife who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Without these extraordinary spouses fighting in the trenches with us, the termination of the widow's tax may not have been possible."

—William "Doc" Schmitz, VFW National Commander on the recent termination of the "widow's tax" and signing of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2020

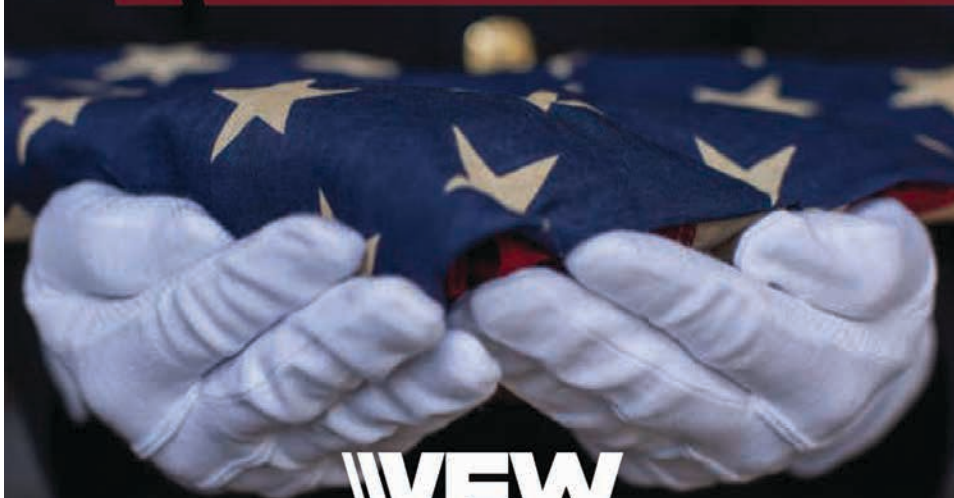


"Taking care of our homeless veterans is a mission we must take seriously, especially if there are children involved, and we feel there is an appropriate balance to be struck to make sure all veterans involved receive the services and care they need."

— Patrick Murray, Deputy Director, VFW National Legislative Service, in testimony before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs with respect to H.R. 2224, Homeless Veterans with Children Reintegration Act



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From the Adjutant General

Brave men and women who wear our nation's uniform are asked to serve in the most dangerous environments on earth. They deserve to receive their hard-earned benefits upon returning home. I'm grateful for loyal friends like you who agree.

But time and again, we have to go back to Capitol Hill and fight for justice for veterans. Most recently, we asked Congress to hold the Department of Veterans Affairs accountable for a lack of care for service members suffering from conditions associated with toxic

exposures like burn pits.

VFW National Commander William "Doc" Schmitz testified before joint House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees

during our National Legislative Conference in March. He proposed a framework that would identify toxic exposures, examine scientific evidence and require the VA to grant presumptive service-connected benefits. I'm thankful for your ongoing generosity that keeps us on the front lines in this battle.

It's unacceptable to make veterans wait decades for benefits and care. With your continued help, we will not give up until victory is won. It means everything to know we can count on your support.

Our voice is strong because of you. Thank you for all you do FOR VETERANS. ★



Adjutant General
Kevin Jones

'You Got This!'

Self-described "military brat" Yolanda Eddings, from Colorado Springs, Colorado, knew from a young age that she wanted to join the armed services. She enlisted in 2007, following in her father's footsteps after growing up seeing his career in the Army.

Eddings' military career spanned nine years. She was deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan and stationed between Fort Riley, Kansas, Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington, and Wiesbaden, Germany.

No matter where service led her, Eddings was often looking after others. She served as a Human Resources Specialist and later worked at a NATO Role III Hospital. These roles gave her the opportunity to care for civilians and soldiers.

Eddings, a wife and mother of three, knew she wanted to continue helping others once her military career ended. She learned of the VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship" from a fellow veteran and is incredibly grateful it's now helping her pursue her goals.

"I would like to thank all those who put this scholarship together to give us veterans hope," Eddings said. "I would sometimes feel as if civilians didn't like or understand veterans, and this has allowed me to see more of the good in others."

Today, at age 42, Eddings is working toward an Education Certificate in Deaf Education at Baylor University. One day, she hopes to have her own elementary school classroom as a Deaf Education teacher where she can continue doing what she loves.

"I enjoy working with kids and helping them master and overcome



Yolanda Eddings

obstacles such as not understanding a problem or dealing with the stresses of school," said Eddings. "I want them to know I am here for them and my ears are always open as well as my door, and they can trust and tell me anything."

Staying connected with fellow veterans is also important to Eddings. Eventually, she hopes to develop a network for regular get-togethers so veterans can support each other as they did while active in the military. She hopes she can inspire more service members to find the help they need to move forward in life.

"Never give up on your dreams," Eddings said. "Just like you made it in the military, through rigorous training and sleepless nights, you can do anything you put your mind to. It may take some time, but keep on pushing. You got this!" ★

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