

SUPPORTER QUARTERLY

AN UPDATE FOR PATRIOTIC SUPPORTERS ★ NOVEMBER 2020

Hard Won Victory Helps a Veteran Fight Cancer

“I was going to give up two times, and I wouldn’t have my benefits today without VFW Service Officer Ron Cherry,” said Janice Norwood.

As Norwood, 62, of Kansas City, Missouri, deals with a service-connected disability of bilateral breast cancer, she’s thankful Cherry hasn’t given up fighting for her.

Norwood joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1984 hoping to further her education. She was stationed at Camp Elmore in Norfolk, Virginia, and at Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, North Carolina, during her four years of service. She then went to work for the U.S. Postal Service but was forced to quit at the age of 47 as her ongoing battle with cancer limited her ability to do her job.

For two years, Norwood struggled to make ends meet because she was unable to work. While Norwood waited for disability and union arbitration to get resolved, other family members moved in and tried to help.

Years of health and financial troubles began to take a toll on Norwood. She also began to wonder if her recurring cancer was connected to her time in the military. One day, she spoke to a friend who gave her Cherry’s phone number and told her to ask

for assistance. Cherry was convinced that Norwood deserved help from the VA and filed claims several times. Each time, the claim was denied.

“At a point, I asked Ron what we would do if they kept denying my claim. He said that we’ll keep applying and appealing for my benefits. He had a persistent attitude, and we finally won on appeal,” said Norwood.

It was no easy victory. A change to VA law in 2012 acknowledged water contamination and related medical conditions for those stationed at Camp Lejeune during the time Norwood was there, but only included cancer care for dependents. Cherry’s commitment and belief in Norwood’s claim came through in April 2019 when she was awarded 70% service-connection for bilateral breast cancer.

“Ron’s dedication to his job and persistence on my behalf means the world to me and my family. I thought I was going to die of breast cancer before receiving any VA benefits,” Norwood said. ★



Janice Norwood

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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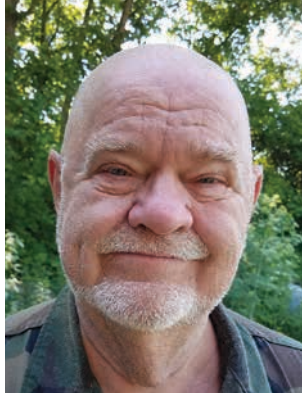
Thank You for Your Support

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.

Generosity Helps Relieve the Burden

Edwin Gable, 71, and his wife Nancy live in Mount Carroll, Illinois. They have four children: Jenny, Jeremy, Eliot and Wendy. Together, they raised a family while fighting battle after battle related to Gable's service-related injuries.

Gable joined the Army in 1966 and served five years in the Illinois National Guard. In 1968, his unit was federally activated to help control riots in Chicago following Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination.



Edwin Gable

2 During his time of service, he incurred bilateral hearing loss and still suffers from tinnitus. Gable also experienced traumas resulting in Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS). Sadly, that condition went undiagnosed, leading to decades of hardship. Despite his best efforts, both ailments had tremendous impact throughout the years and made it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, for Gable to work.

In 1983, his claim for a VA service-connected disability due to hearing problems was approved. This granted him VA Education Rehabilitation benefits. He was determined to make the most of the aid and get a sound education.

As part of the approval process, he had to travel to the VA Regional Headquarters in Chicago to finalize his education plans. Being back in Chicago stirred troubling memories of the MLK riots, and Gable suffered his first panic attack.

With the difficult trip behind him, Gable began school, but struggled. Testing confirmed a learning disability that was further aggravated by his hearing loss. By this time, Gable's family of six was on Medicaid, food stamps and struggling to make ends meet.

Gable continued to suffer panic attacks and other medical issues, so he transferred to a different school that was better able to accommodate his condition. Unfortunately, his episodes became more frequent, and he had to withdraw from all classes.

In 2014, he began to suspect the cause of his panic attacks was PTS. A doctor said she believed Gable was correct but an official diagnosis was not made. Lacking the diagnosis, claim after claim with the VA continues to be denied.

Gable's struggle to obtain the additional assistance he needs and what he is entitled to goes on to this day, which made Gable and his wife thankful to learn about the VFW's Unmet Needs program.

His wife discovered the program in a VA newsletter and helped him with the application process, which they thought was clear and easy. The grant has provided critical support on his difficult journey and covered some utilities and insurance and paid for food and clothing.

"I applied because our household income has wavered between low and just above low income for over 35 years," explained Gable. "We have no savings, no retirement — we struggle just to meet our basic needs each month."

He encourages those who can, to donate to the VFW to help other veterans who are coping with their own service-related disabilities and hardships. Anything to relieve their burdens is worth giving.

Currently, Gable's claim is with the Board of Appeals. As he continues his own battle, he and his wife appreciate the VFW's support.

"The grant has reduced stress for both of us as we await the VA's decision on my claims appeals," he said. "We are so grateful for the generosity and thoughtfulness of those who made this assistance possible." ★

Letters from the Heart

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

I want to thank you all for your assistance in these trying times, my family and I genuinely appreciate your consideration.

Thank you. I am so grateful! Our heads are popping back up above the water, we've gone so long making do with the very basics we've put off a lot of necessities and made do with what we had . . . I look forward to the day that we're able to be generous with others struggling like we are, what a gratifying feeling I imagine it is to be on the giving end. Thank you again for everyone's assistance.

Thank you so much. This helps tremendously. My family and I appreciate you and the VFW helping us in our time of need.

Issue Spotlight: VFW Urges Expansion of Telehealth Care for Veterans

In recent testimony before the House of Representatives, Tammy Barlet, Associate Director National Legislative Service, urged congressional leaders to expand upon the telehealth options already being provided to veterans.

VA offers telehealth through in-home services, in the clinic or in the hospital. According to the VA, over 900,000 veterans received care through VA telehealth in 2019.

During the pandemic, the need for telehealth care has increased. The VFW has always championed telehealth as a way to deliver high quality care to veterans — especially mental health care to veterans in rural areas. However, there is more to be done.

The VFW is encouraging the passing of several pieces of legislation to expand upon current VA telehealth offerings and remove barriers to care. This new legislation would also clarify the roles and oversight procedures of health care professionals providing services via telehealth.

Telehealth has transformed the way health care is provided. Unlike many federal and state programs that had to accelerate their use of telehealth during the pandemic, the VA has made it available under federal law for years. The VFW advocates for the continued and increased use of this technology as an effective way to care for veterans — and reach more veterans who may have faced obstacles to VA care in the past. ★



“Physical reproductive health is just as important as mental health conditions connected to the reproductive system. In VFW surveys, women veterans have voiced concerns over what they view as a lack of gender-specific training for mental health care providers. Congress and VA must work to ensure every VA medical center has mental health care providers trained in conditions such as postpartum depression, and conditions that stem from menopause or military sexual trauma.”

— Tammy Barlet, Associate Director, National Legislative Service, in testimony before the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs with respect to Veterans’ Access to Reproductive Healthcare



“The VFW strongly supports this proposal to help put unemployed and underemployed veterans back to work. Veteran unemployment had some of the lowest numbers in recent history until the COVID-19 pandemic struck the country and our economy. Immediately, veteran unemployment almost tripled in April reaching as high as 12% per the Bureau of Labor Statistics. While recent unemployment numbers have decreased slightly to 9.1% in May and 8.8% in June, the VFW recognizes that unemployment ebbs and flows and could increase again at any point.”

— Patrick Murray, Director, National Legislative Service, in reference to testimony before the United States House of Representatives with respect to H.R. 7111, Veterans Economic Recovery Act of 2020

ONE SENTENCE IS ALL IT TAKES

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From the Adjutant General

Like you, the VFW has experienced a year far different than we anticipated. I'm so grateful for your steadfast support of our veterans. You're helping us make sure they get the benefits and services they earned and deserve — that's especially critical now as the pandemic continues.

I'm also proud of the thousands of VFW members who serve others. The VFW launched the #StillServing campaign early in 2020 to bring attention to the ways veterans make their communities better. It's become more meaningful than we could've imagined as our members serve on the front lines of COVID-19 response and relief efforts.

We honored veterans who are making a difference with an online #StillServing Celebration in July. The event culminated with Commander-in-Chief Harold "Hal" Roesch II taking office. In his

speech, he spoke of how VFW members are pillars of our communities who have shown resiliency in this uncertain time.

As we look ahead, we're committed to Roesch's 20/20 Vision For Veterans. No matter what comes, we'll continue to rally together and rise to meet the challenges of every mission. The resiliency he named will carry us forward. And with your help, the VFW will not give up the fight to defend the rights of all veterans.

Please say we can count on your ongoing support. I'm counting on your commitment and concern for the brave men and women who have served our nation.

Your dedication really does make a difference in their lives. Thank you for all you do FOR VETERANS. ★

Veteran's Dream Comes True Thanks to a VFW Scholarship

Cindy Hernandez, 33, from Palmetto, Florida, dreamed of serving in the military from a young age. She was drawn to the ideals of courage, honor and strength. In high school, she joined JROTC and proudly kept a disciplined schedule of classes and fitness training. Enlisting was the next natural step.

Hernandez served as a Corporal Unit Supply Specialist in the Army Reserves for nine years. She spent much of her time in Florida, and deployed to Afghanistan for approximately one year during Operation Enduring Freedom.

Since transitioning out of the military, Hernandez has pursued a bachelor's degree in business administration from Northwestern State University of Louisiana (NSU) and Universidad Libre Seccional Pereira, Colombia, South America. After graduating from NSU, she plans to pursue her master's degree in business administration in Colombia where she hopes to start teaching at a university level.

Hernandez found pursuing her plans and dreams has required more resources than anticipated or covered by her military benefits. She came across an article about a veteran receiving the VFW "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship" and applied but didn't think she'd get anything. She was surprised to receive the scholarship and is very thankful.

"This scholarship has been a blessing," said Hernandez. "I will now be graduating without any student loans. Thank you to everyone who made this possible! You have become my heroes and helped me fulfill a dream of going back to school. I am forever grateful and humbled by your generosity and commitment to helping veterans continue their education."

Now that she's seeing her dreams come true, Hernandez wants to inspire more veterans to pursue schooling and achieve their goals.

"Go for it! Education will give you purpose, direction and the tools you need to create a wonderful rest of your life," Hernandez said. "Do not give up your dream. No matter how far-fetched or impossible it may seem, there is always a way to make it come true. And you are never too old to go back to school." ★



Cindy Hernandez



Kevin C. Jones,
Adjutant General



158 student veterans from around the country have been named recipients of the VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship" for the fall 2020 semester, totaling nearly \$700,000 in assistance.

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