VFW Service Officer Helps Soldier with New Life

Charles Gilkey dreamed of a simple life after the military.

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Retired E-7 Charles Gilkey from Clarksville, Tenn., never thought life would throw him such a curve ball. That is, until age 42 when he faced serious health problems.

Gilkey worked patrol in Iraq and also served in Bosnia and Panama. In a nasty fall in Iraq, Gilkey severely injured his back and tore his rotator cuff. On top of the extreme pain from these injuries, Gilkey suffered from glaucoma, arthritis and tinnitus.

“After I separated from the military, I just wanted to find a simple job and spend time with my kids,” said Gilkey, speaking of his two sons, ages 14 and 21. “After so many years away, I had missed a lot. Unfortunately, my injuries changed my life.”

Concerned about his lack of options, Gilkey turned to VFW Service Officer Lewis Thompson at Fort Campbell, Ky., who helped him apply for VA benefits.

“Mr. Thompson answered all my questions and prepared all the paperwork,” said Gilkey. “If it weren’t for him, I wouldn’t have known that help was out there.”

Eight months later, Gilkey was rated 90% disabled by the VA. Now Gilkey has peace of mind he never imagined possible.

“VFW is a worthy cause,” said Gilkey. “I just wish that more veterans knew about these programs. So many veterans apply for benefits alone, or not at all, but help is out there. You just have to seek it out.

“Mr. Thompson really had an impact on me and my family,” said Gilkey. “With any luck, lots of good will come his way.”

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