

Invisible Wounds Leave Marine in Need of Help

VFW Unmet Needs was there

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Marine Cpl. Ricardo Aponte was honorably discharged in 2009 after serving in Iraq. Though he looked healthy when he returned home, he, like so many others returning from the battlefield, was carrying invisible wounds with him, facing PTSD and depression.

Due to his medications and the severity of his conditions, Aponte wasn't able to maintain steady employment after being discharged. He was also forced to put his education at the University of Central Florida on hold while he sought help.

Without steady employment and with two pending VA claims, his financial situation took a turn for the worse.

"I felt lost, ashamed, hopeless, out of luck and angry knowing that due to my military service medical conditions I had to put a stop on my educational and professional life. This meant taking a big hit financially as my finances became more than worrisome," explained Aponte.

His VA social worker referred him to some veterans' organizations for help. That's when Aponte learned about **VFW's Unmet Needs** program.

He reached out to the Unmet Needs program and was approved for financial assistance. The program provides aid in the form of grants, so recipients need never repay it.

Aponte couldn't believe it; it all seemed too good to be true. "When I found out I was going to be a recipient of an Unmet Needs grant I was a bit skeptical," he said.

That changed when he saw the proof. He received assistance for a car payment and to help cover daily expenses. "I fell to my knees and cried for about 15 minutes straight. I felt a big weight lifted off my shoulders. I was happy, tearful, anxious and surprised all at once."

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He said his experience with the Unmet Needs program was wonderful, giving them a “10 out of 10.”

Through everything, Aponte remains hopeful he’ll be able to return to school in the spring “At the end of the day, I don’t know what will happen with my VA appeal and new claim. For now I try to focus more on my medical treatments and therapies, so one day I can regain part of my life back.”

To learn more about VFW’s Unmet Needsprogram and other VFW National Military Services programs, click [here](#).