

Marine Nearly Blinded by Fall

Injured Marine worried about supporting his family

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During military training, Marine Bob Smith* fell and suffered a direct hit to the head. In that instant, he hurt his neck and lost partial vision in both eyes.

“I went to see the Corpsman. He gave me some ibuprofen, and I resumed my training,” said Smith. “Then I started getting constant headaches. I mostly kept it to myself. I didn't realize how much worse it was getting until I blew out my shoulder.”

It was then that Smith's command saw what he was dealing with and sent him for treatment. He had sustained a cervical injury, which caused scar tissue to form in his eye. It would impede his vision forever. He underwent therapy for his neck and shoulder, but the headaches continued.

Returning home, Smith was unable to support his family. His previous job in construction was just too physical. Fortunately, he was able to use his GI Bill benefits to go back to college. With his wife still working, they were getting by on one income.

Then his wife was laid off. Smith used his new skills to find a job, but he couldn't start for another month. In the meantime, they were completely broke.

“The thoughts that go through your head when you feel you've failed your family are pretty scary,” said Smith. “We were on the verge of being evicted and losing our car. I decided to take any help I could get and started doing some research.”

Smith found VFW Unmet Needs online and filled out the application. He was beyond relieved when the grant came through. With the assistance, he was able to pay his past-due rent and get his car back.

“The support allowed me to breathe again. I knew I was almost over that hill. I was starting a new job, getting back on my feet. But while I waited for that first paycheck, I was so afraid I would lose everything.

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“Without this grant, I would not have been able to take the job. Honestly, I don’t know where my family would be right now.”

Smith is now receiving a paycheck and, aside from his injury, life is getting back to normal for the Smith family. But life may never be the same for him.

“The headaches are the hardest part. I take meds regularly just to keep the pain at a tolerable level,” he said.

*Name changed to protect privacy.