

VFW Helps Army Veteran Back on His Feet

VFW's Unmet Needs program steps up to provide assistance with life's basic necessities

Oct 31, 2016

Deon Wortham proudly served 20 years in the Army. He has been stationed all over the country, and he completed 10 overseas deployments, including two to Afghanistan.

Wortham separated from the military a year ago, and he struggled with finding a



job.

“The market was hard,” said Wortham, a member of Post 1361 in Hutchison, Kan. “The jobs I was finding were paying \$10 an hour. I had to transition from living off an E-7 [pay grade] to making next to nothing.”

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Office 816.756.3390
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

An Army Sgt. 1st Class with more than 20 years experience makes an estimated \$74,936 annually, [according to military-ranks.org](http://military-ranks.org).

While Wortham was struggling to find gainful employment, he also was “knee deep in the VA compensation process.” He said that was the same time he was dealing with numerous medical conditions, including traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder and bipolar disorder. All of the conditions limited his ability to work.

“I was homeless for about 100 days,” Wortham said. “It became a painful thing to make ends meet. I was living motel to motel, so I decided to get smart and move to Wichita where the resources are.”

Wortham said he heard about VFW’s Unmet Needs through a national disabled veterans program.

“When I went to see the [service officer], he was on it,” Wortham said. “We did the application right in his office, and he pushed it forward.

“The DSO reps have their hand on the pulse of the problems that most service members face when they transition from military to civilian,” Wortham said. “They’re right on it. They really navigate through the benefits.”

The VFW was able to provide Wortham with a \$500 gift card to purchase clothes, groceries and gas while Wortham was getting back on his feet. He accepted a job at a local grocery store and the additional funds helped him bridge the gap.

“Unmet Needs best serves service members regardless of branch or membership,” Wortham said. “It’s there to meet the needs of veterans and family members during crisis times or unexpected circumstances. I urge everyone who isn’t a VFW member to become one. It’s not just being part of an organization but being part of one that meets the needs of the veterans.”

[Learn more about VFW’s Unmet Needs program.](#)

By [Kelly Gibson](#), senior writer, *VFW* magazine