

VFW Advocates Join Forces to Help Homeless Veterans

Working toward stable jobs and safe housing for homeless veterans

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“They have no food, no money, no nothing...”

That’s how VFW Post 8692 Senior Vice Commander John Pemrick Lewis describes the veterans he sees on the streets of Albany,



N.Y.

When he first encountered these homeless veterans, he knew something needed to be done—and fast. He formed a unique partnership with multiple VFW Posts and other organizations in the Albany area to address the homeless veteran issue.

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“We assist them in securing stable jobs and moving into safe housing,” said Lewis.

Lewis had a distinguished 20-year career in the Navy and has since made it his mission to help other veterans improve their lives as they are transitioning back into civilian life.

Lewis scouts out and refers homeless veterans, many under the age of 30, to VFW Service Officer John Lombardo. Lombardo works tirelessly to help veterans file claims for benefits they deserve.

“These young men and women often sleep on the couches of family and friends or end up on the street,” said Lombardo. “The VA expedites claims for homeless veterans.”

Lombardo, a Navy veteran, calls his job “a cathartic outlet that allows me to give back to veterans.”

Lewis attributes many of the returning veterans’ problems to what he believes are the VA’s lacking mental health services. He thinks that some of the medications prescribed numb veterans and aid addictions.

Lewis stays in contact with the veterans while they’re awaiting benefits from the VA. He also likes to keep in touch with them afterwards to ensure they are able to succeed on their new paths.

“I follow them to the end. They’re some of my best friends today,” Lewis said.

Local veterans deeply appreciate the continuing support of the VFW.

“The VFW has unfailing loyalty to me and is helping me get through this stuff,” one veteran said.

Pictured (L-R): John Pemrick Lewis and John Lombardo