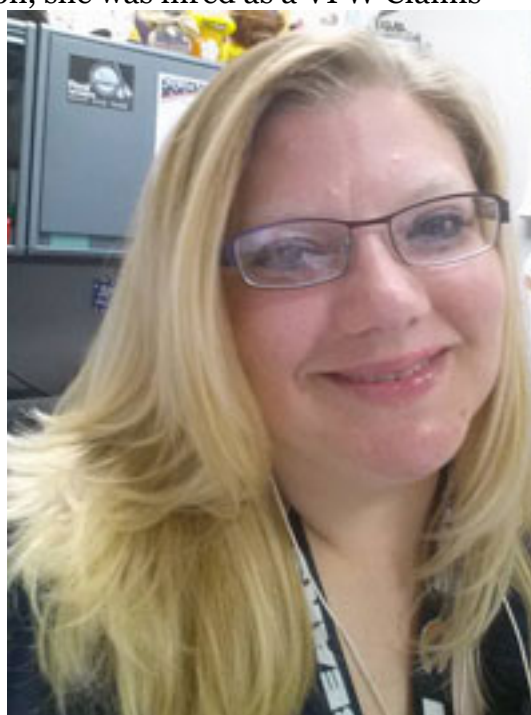


Vietnam Veteran Finds Peace at the End of His Battle

'He just wanted his wife to be taken care of ...'

May 12, 2016

Heather De Jesus first learned about veterans' advocacy and the VFW in college. She knew almost right away it was her calling. After graduation, she was hired as a VFW Claims



Consultant for the VA Regional Office in San Diego.

Four years later, she met the Patterson family and made the type of difference in a veteran's life she always dreamed of.

Navy veteran Allen Patterson developed Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) from being exposed to toxins during the Vietnam War. The disease progressed, and doctors warned him time was running out.

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The problem was he didn't receive nearly enough benefits for his COPD—and his wife, Susan, had no way to cover the cost of his end-of-life care. She called the VFW in hopes of bringing her husband peace at the end of his battle.

“As soon as I got Susan's message, I began working diligently to do whatever I could,” said De Jesus. “My office worked as a team to get this done quickly. We pulled together to get the necessary information to file his claim.”

Within 48 hours, his claim was approved and authorized for 100% service-connected disability.

Patterson was granted retroactive pay backdated to when he first went on oxygen in 2010. Susan was grateful for the peace of mind it brought to her beloved husband.

“The VA expedited the claim so Mr. Patterson could get his benefits,” said De Jesus. “It was a great example of the VFW and the VA working together in partnership.”

Soon after his benefits came through, hospice began to care for Patterson in the comfort of his home. He was able to pass peacefully with family by his side.

“After finding out Mr. Patterson had passed, I was deeply saddened. I had grown attached to the family,” said De Jesus.

Patterson's worries about leaving his wife in financial hardship were gone, as she will receive survivor benefits.

“He just wanted his wife to be taken care of,” said De Jesus.

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