

30-Year Career Ends With Benefits Thanks to the VFW

VFW Service Office provides renewed hope

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Charles Abell of Houston racked up a long list of injuries and illnesses during his 30-year career in the Navy: a separated collar bone, shoulder paralysis, degenerative disc disease, hearing loss, tinnitus, degenerative hip, sleep apnea, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,



anxiety, depression and insomnia.

But as he was preparing to retire, the Pentagon-based officer had no idea what to do next. After many deployments to the Western Pacific and Iraq, Abell was a well-equipped warrior, but making the transition to civilian life proved to be a challenge.

Fortunately, before retirement, Abell completed the required one-week Transition Assistance Program (TAP) class that introduced him to a VFW Service Officer.

“The service officer spoke about the importance of compiling our medical and dental records before separation, so that we might qualify for VA benefits,” said Abell. “I told him about my impending retirement and asked if he could help. He referred me to VFW Service Officer Gregg Orto, who sent me an in-depth email explaining everything I’d need to file my

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claim.”

With a clear set of marching orders, Abell spent 30 days compiling his records before sitting down with Orto to go over his options.

“Gregg reviewed my records and asked me a lot of questions,” said Abell. “Then after two hours, he printed out my claim forms with detailed instructions on how to file with the VA. I walked right into the Regional VA office in Houston with my claim and records in hand. They said it was the most comprehensive, well prepared claim they’d ever seen.”

After five months and several visits to VA-approved doctors, Abell received a combined overall disability rating of 100%.

“I never thought I’d be rated at 100%! It changed my life,” said Abell. “I am now receiving regular treatment through the VA, and it feels good to know I’ll be taken care of post-service.”

Orto is happy to have helped Abell, whom he calls a “true patriot.”

“Charles is a humble, modest veteran who embodies selfless service,” said Orto. “His conditions were all related to years of maintaining a state of combat readiness, and after a while that really takes a toll on your body. It was such a good feeling to see the VA provide him the benefits he’s rightfully earned.”

Abell is grateful for Gregg Orto, whom he says “single-handedly solved all of his problems.”

“I could not have done it without Gregg,” said Abell. “On top of the disability benefits, the VA approved me for Vocational Rehabilitation benefits, allowing me to study Public Relations and Advertising at Sam Houston State University.”

Abell now has a clear path to his future and is receiving regular treatment for anxiety and depression. When he’s not busy with his studies, he’s spending time with his loving wife, Debra Lynn—his high school sweetheart of 28 years—and their daughter, Cassandra. But perhaps his father, who is also a veteran, was the most affected by his VA rating ...

“Thanks to Gregg, I can now live in retirement and help my aging father, who is 78 with stage 4 prostate cancer,” said Abell. “That really means a lot to me and my dad.”

On top of all his responsibilities, Abell has dedicated himself to helping other veterans the way Gregg Orto helped him.

“Gregg inspired me so much that I have become a Life Member of VFW Post 12024 in

Woodlands, Texas, where I serve as Post Service Officer,” said Abell. “Gregg saved me and gave me renewed hope. I can’t thank him and the VFW enough. Rest assured, from here on out, I will do my best to take care of my fellow veterans.”

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