

# VFW Helps Keep Family Afloat

## 'They simply saw my need and helped me'

Dec 20, 2017

Veteran Mark Villegas gave 15 years to the United States Armed Forces, serving in Oklahoma, Louisiana, Texas, California, Bosnia and Iraq. He joined the military with a desire to be part of a team dedicated to serving the greater good, but also to better support his family.

Several years after his service ended, Villegas fell on hard times financially, and found supporting his family - the "Triple H's," as he affectionately calls daughters Hailey, Hope and Haven - near impossible.

Like many servicemen and women, the road is tough after making the heroic choice to enlist. For Villegas, the toughest day was September 12, 2004. He was working at Camp Cropper in Iraq when a modified rocket landed and detonated in front of him. Villegas sustained shrapnel injuries to his chest, head and left ankle. He was partially protected by his gear - however, there are still pieces of shrapnel embedded in his ankle.

Four surgeries and many hours of physical therapy later, Villegas once again committed himself to his Military Police duties, but was medically retired four years later when he received a diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis.

Soon after, Villegas found himself unable to cover basic needs such as utility bills and groceries for the girls. He wasn't quite sure where to turn, so he searched "loans for veterans" online.

He quickly found the VFW's Unmet Needs program and the simple application to request the help he urgently needed.

Soon, Villegas' electric and gas bills were settled and the VFW gifted him a \$250 Wal-Mart card so he could purchase groceries for his family.

"I want to thank everyone at the VFW who assisted me. I was never questioned as to why I needed help - they simply saw my need and helped me."

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Inspired by the grace of those who give to make the Unmet Needs grant possible, Villegas speaks of his plans for the future.

“Honestly I know there are others in worse situations than I was. Knowing this, I plan on making a donation or talking to the VFW as to how I can purchase a gift card for a fellow veteran in need now that I am financially stable.”