

‘VFW Has Helped Me So Much’

Army Veteran Jesse Thorsen’s family is among the more than 8,800 families who have received help from VFW’s grant program since 2004

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An Army veteran received a \$1,500 grant from VFW’s Unmet Needs program for living expenses because he is unable to work.

Jesse Thorsen, a member of VFW Post 5789 in Lee’s Summit, Mo., served two deployments in Afghanistan. During the first in 2009-10, Thorsen was an infantryman with 2nd Bn., 509th Regt., 25th Inf. Div. He later served as a combat engineer with the 402nd Engineer Company (Sapper) while in Afghanistan in 2012-13.

Thorsen, of Lee’s Summit, Mo., said that he suffers from epilepsy and had to separate from the Army after 14 years of service in August 2016. He is rated 70 percent disabled by VA due to his service-connected disabilities. After his discharge, he applied for social security disability due to having seizures.

“Originally, I was denied on my social security disability,” Thorsen said. “So I figured I would work to try to make some money for my family.”

Working as a bricklayer, Thorsen suffered a seizure on a job site and was unable to keep his job because of the episode.

“I understood why I had to be let go,” Thorsen said. “I thought I was going to eventually kill myself one day by working if I kept trying to work.”

Because he is epileptic, Thorsen is unable to work, and his wife, Susan, can’t work because she is his VA caretaker. Thorsen, again, applied for social security disability after losing his job. His claim was eventually approved, but in the meantime, Thorsen and his family needed money for rent. That’s when Thorsen found out about the Unmet Needs program through the Kansas City (Mo.) VA Medical Center.

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Thorsen applied for the Unmet Needs grant in February, which he said was an “easy” process. He said the program paid his landlord directly.

“We were very happy about that,” Thorsen said. “Our landlord was very understanding and good to us. It was nice to be caught up.”

After receiving the grant, Thorsen said he and his family were able to financially get back on track. He said that he thanks VFW for helping him and his family during a “hard time.”

“VFW has helped me so much,” Thorsen said. “The Unmet Needs program really helped out our family in a time that we needed it. We appreciate everything the VFW does for not only disabled vets but also for veterans of foreign wars and all veterans alike.”

This article is featured in the September 2018 issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by Dave Spiva, senior writer, VFW magazine. Photo courtesy of Jesse Thorsen. [Listen](#) to this article.