

Unmet Needs Grant Relieves Military Family Facing Homelessness

'Hats off to the VFW ... I don't think I would have made it without them'

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Michael Ward, 39, of Sacramento, Calif., has lived a full life with the military. He's been a part of the Marine Corps, Army and Army National Guard. He gives high praise to his family for supporting the military lifestyle.

"My wife Elaina has also done more than her part to serve in her own way," he said. "She has always gone the extra mile in supporting the armed forces by planning events on bases and actively supporting other spouses."

They are proud parents of four; Stephen (13), Malcolm (9), Justice (7) and Michael (2).

In 2004, before his first child was born, Ward was serving as a sergeant in Iraq. After being briefed at a command station, he and his group came under enemy fire.

"I was blown from my truck, and hit my head on a rock. The attack was surreal ... it felt like I was in a movie," Ward said.

Upon returning to the states, Ward faced a homecoming all too familiar for many troops. After serving his country with pride for 16 years, he suddenly felt isolated and unsupported.

Ward has a disability rating of 100%, and after mistreatment by a property manager, the fear of not being able to adequately house his family became a serious reality.

Ward initially joined the military to better his life and provide for his family. He had been a dedicated recruiter, sergeant and manager of aviation supply, transportation and logistics.

After completing two tours and devoting so much of his life to serving his country, Ward was shocked by the injustice of the situation.

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He said, "I simply couldn't believe my family and I were facing homelessness. It wasn't right."

Ward visited his local Veterans Resource Center where representatives informed him he may qualify for a VFW Unmet Needs grant. He filled out the information online, and soon received a phone call from the VFW.

"They called everyday and were really supportive. It felt really good to find veterans who assist other veterans. The staff member I worked with was a real lifesaver, and a blessing to my family and me," he said.

The Wards received a grant which covered hotel costs while they found a suitable home for their family.

Ward witnesses a lot of homeless service men and women in his area, and stresses the importance of funding the VFW, who provided his family with the services they so greatly needed.

"Hats off to the VFW. They were so patient and helpful. I don't think I would have made it without them."