

Boy Scouts Help a Connecticut Post Start an Adopt-a-Vet Program

Members of VFW Post 1926 in Simsbury, Conn., hope a new program will allow them to be more involved in the lives of veterans who need help

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The Post's long-standing veterans' relief fund program wasn't getting the job done, said Post 1926 Senior Vice Commander John Fox. That's why the Post started the Adopt-a-Vet program last year.

It not only helps veterans financially, but also helps them find jobs, transportation and housing. It also gives veterans additional help as time goes on, and veterans are given goals to meet in order to receive help from the program.

"It's about accountability," Fox said. "It's not only accountability for the veterans, but for us, too. We want to make sure we are providing the help that the veterans need and to be a safety net for them if we need to be in the future."

The new program is led by co-chairs Fox, a Vietnam War veteran who was an electrician's mate in the Navy from 1968-72, and Afghanistan and Iraq war veteran Jason Lill, a retired Army National Guard chief warrant officer 5 who was a helicopter and fixed-wing pilot.

"Our goal is to give a hand up — not a hand out," Fox said. "We don't want to just give veterans a grant to pay their bills. We want to give those veterans help and guidance to get them back on their own two feet and not let them fall into traps that made them dependent to begin with."

Fox said the program ensures that veterans have goals and that the proper help is given in order for them to succeed.

"We sit down with the veteran and have a conversation about what their needs are, and lay out a plan for them," Fox said. "We help them through every step."

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The first veteran to receive help through the program was a homeless veteran named Matt. He was a Marine stationed at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay during the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. Fox said Matt suffers from depression and was discharged from the Marine Corps because of his condition. The Adopt- a-Vet program helped Matt secure a job, find a place to live and provided him with a car that was donated from a local resident.

In December, the Simsbury Cub Scout Den 11 of Boy Scout Pack 276 donated \$486 to Post 1926's Adopt-a-Vet program.

“It was great receiving that donation from Cub Scouts,” Fox said. “For them to be so young and take the initiative to raise that money for veterans is a story in itself.”

This article is featured in the March/April 2018 issue of [Checkpoint](#), and was written by [Dave Spiva](#), senior writer, VFW magazine. Photo courtesy of John Fox.