

Airborne Veteran Grateful for Help From the VFW

With the VFW's assistance, Ruck got through the VA process quickly and with less stress

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Dina Ruck joined the Army in 1990, leaving the comfort of her hometown to pursue bigger dreams. Her military career took her around the world and to the skies many times as she jumped from planes for her airborne training. It's been thrilling, but tough on her physical health.

Ruck was stationed throughout the U.S., Germany, Kuwait and at the Pentagon. From the beginning she was inspired by the slogan to "be all that you can be" and although she enlisted as a Private, Ruck achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel before retirement.

Now 48 and residing in Virginia, Ruck experiences persistent pain in her left ankle, knee, hip and shoulder as a result of learning how to do a parachute landing fall (PLF). She has to be deliberate about pastimes that used to be purely enjoyable.

"I run for fun, it cleanses me. But the last couple of years, the pain has gotten worse. Now if I run, I'm unable to go for walks with my family and my hip pain increases," Ruck explains.

Ruck had not heard of the VFW's Pre-Discharge program until she was in the office of the Fort Belvoir's Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP). There she picked up a brochure which had Pre-Discharge Claims Representative Daniel Fletcher's contact information.

"I was excited to have a VFW representative located on my post and very grateful that Mr. Fletcher reviewed my medical record and did the claim," she said.

Before Fletcher's position helping veterans receive their deserved benefits, he was in the Marine Corps for 16.5 years. Upon retirement he attempted to navigate his VA disability claim on his own, unaware there were trained advocates to assist him. Fletcher's process did not go well, but he was inspired to make sure his fellow veterans wouldn't have the same

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“When I found this position, I told myself I would do my best to ensure that what happened to me, would not happen to someone else. I chose to be with the VFW due to their long, rich history and outstanding reputation,” Fletcher said.

With his assistance, Ruck got through the VA process quickly and with less stress. She now has a 60% combined service-connected rating and hopes others will lean on available VFW resources.

“There are so many services available to us as veterans, we are just not aware. Pick up all the brochures you see at your SFL-TAP office and read them all. Then, pass the info onto others,” Ruck advised.