

Proud to Serve in the Fight for Veterans

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VFW Life member Ron Cherry, 48, spends his days helping fellow veterans and their families. In serving them, he feels he has found his purpose in life.

As a supervisor in the National Veterans Service (NVS) office in Kansas City, Missouri, Cherry oversees a team committed to assisting veterans as well as their spouses and dependents. He's proud to provide each person who comes to the NVS office with the support and resources they need to file or appeal claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Cherry spent 12 years in the Army to serve his country and get his education. His career as a sergeant took him from his hometown of Vienna, Georgia, to Europe and Asia. With a wife and six children, and several relatives who've also served, Cherry knows the importance of veterans and their families receiving their hard-earned benefits.

Concern for military families runs deep for Cherry because of his background. Working with NVS programs was a natural fit after he transitioned out of the Army in 2000.

"I wanted to continue my service in some capacity and I knew I wanted to be around veterans. The rest is history," said Cherry. "Being able to impact the lives of so many over 20 years is a great accomplishment."

The job is not always easy. Cherry admits it can be a challenge to not get emotionally attached to the cases of clients and widows as he helps them navigate the claims process. But he knows the hard days are worth it when someone gets the help they need.

One client that stands out in Cherry's mind is a female veteran who was diagnosed with

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breast cancer and found herself in a long battle with the VA.

She filed a claim for service-connected compensation in 2010 due to exposure to contaminated water at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, in 1985. Her claim was denied. She began working with Cherry in 2012 and the claim was denied again.

Cherry and his office felt they were right and appealed the veteran's claim, supplying the VA with as much medical evidence as possible from her doctors. During the appeal, a change in VA law established Camp Lejeune's water was contaminated. The VA published a list of associated diseases and breast cancer was not on the list for compensation, however, it was on the list for health care for dependents.

"We continued our fight to the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA)," Cherry said. "The judge rendered a decision that would change her life forever. The judge granted the service connection for her breast cancer with an effective date of July 31, 2012. She was elated and received a deposit in her account for the back pay."

The veteran has some additional claims pending that were associated with the initial claim, and Cherry is optimistic that she could receive additional back pay.

Cases like this let Cherry know the fight is worth it. Every victory for a veteran on the verge of losing hope reinforces his choice to make a difference through his work as an NVS officer.