

Veterans Help Combat Homelessness in Louisiana

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VFW Post 8973 in New Orleans, Louisiana, is taking action to help veterans who are homeless or facing difficulties during the COVID-19 crisis.

The Post has a veteran relief fund supported by fundraising events and donations from members and the community. When they heard the call to care for homeless veterans and military families hit hard by the pandemic, they knew their fund was the answer.

A total of \$1,500 was donated to the New Orleans VA Medical Center. It's a natural fit for the Post's commitment to serve with the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System (SLVHCS).

"The VFW has been a longstanding partner of the SLVHCS in our shared mission of improving the lives of the veterans we serve. We are honored to accept this gift on behalf of the veterans of southeast Louisiana," said SLVHCS Medical Center Director Fernando Rivera. "The donated funds will be used to provide comfort to homeless veterans as we work to place them in permanent housing."

In addition, the program helps veterans and their family members who have lost employment and are in danger of becoming homeless.

"The funding will be used to support those with food insecurity and to help with living arrangements to prevent homelessness," said Social Media/Communications Chairman of the VFW Department of Louisiana Ben Armstrong, a member of Post 8973. "I was so proud to see the Post stand up quickly and dedicate a great sum to support."

Members of the Post talked with the VA staff about other ways to provide assistance. They

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111

Office 816.756.3390
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

found out about another program that gives shoes and clothes to veterans in need and was running low on supplies. The Post decided to hold a shoe drive and is now collecting shoe donations.

"Post 8973 is fortunate to be in the position where it is able to provide not only programs and support to our members, but also the veterans in the community. In this time of need and uncertainty, our membership had the forward thinking to set up a veteran relief fund which we were able to tap into to support the VA with their homeless veterans programs," said Post Commander John Wachter.

Wachter believes the Post has an important role to play in efforts to eliminate veteran homelessness. He says they will continue to do all they can to support these programs.