

‘It’s A Lifetime of Serving Mankind’

A Gulf War veteran and VFW Life member in South Carolina saved his Post from extinction, as well as implemented ways to help troubled youths and fellow veterans in his community

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When James Reese Beaty was honorably discharged from the Army in December 1991, the next chapter of his life would carry the need to continue serving.

The upstate South Carolina native returned home and began working for the Anderson County Sheriff’s Office as a detention officer. There, in the spring of 1998, he discovered how he could help.

In just a couple of months as a supervisor in the detention center, Beaty grew frustrated with a cycle of troubled youth making pit stops in jail before heading further into a life of crime.

“I witnessed too many of them throwing their lives away,” said Beaty, who served with the Army’s 101st Airborne Division during Operation Desert Storm and Operation Desert Shield. “I had to take action.”

In less than eight months, Beaty co-developed a program focused on tutoring and discipline for youths on the fringes of trouble in Anderson County and its surrounding areas.

“It was a program built around tough love,” Beaty said. “It offered tutoring as well, but getting their minds right was our main focus.”

The program’s success led Beaty in December 1998 to become a boot camp instructor with the Anderson County Alternative School, now known as the Renaissance Academy.

“It allowed me to provide physical training, life classes, mentorship and discipline to students who had been expelled from their home schools,” Beaty added. “Now I’m a teacher’s assistant and

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cafeteria supervisor, allowing me to still show some tough love to those that want to toe the line.”

In the more than 20 years of devotion toward the youth in and around Anderson County, about 120 miles northeast of Atlanta, Beaty also has shown unwavering support toward his fellow veterans.

He also remains a fixture at VFW Post 6089 in Anderson County. Since joining in 2011, Beaty has served as Post commander, adjutant, quartermaster and service officer, helping implement programs that mutually benefit his two passions — veterans and his community.

“Being able to serve veterans through the VFW’s platform has been my greatest opportunity to help other veterans and communities,” Beaty said. “I absolutely love being a VFW Life member. I also [wear clothing] that lets people know I’m a proud veteran everywhere I go. It’s a conversation starter that 100 percent of the time leads to a new membership.”

Beaty’s unique approach and infectious can-do attitude helped him resuscitate his beloved Post when in late 2011, Post 6089 found itself on the brink of folding due to low membership numbers.

Serving as Post commander then, his recruiting success earned him national recognition by being appointed VFW’s National Deputy Chief of Staff in 2011-2012.

One of the most recent projects spearheaded by Beaty came in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.

Dubbed Operation Restore Hope, Beaty launched the fundraiser to ensure Post 6089 could offer practical support to veterans with disabilities or those plagued by homelessness. The funds raised through the initiative provide wheelchairs, wheelchair pillows, food and assistance with utilities.

“This is an opportunity for the community to give back to the many veterans who decided to give their life or fought to keep us free,” Beaty said. “It helps us restore hope in our veterans by lifting their spirits with donations of toys, wheelchairs, food and home repairs.”

The Gulf War veteran also has instituted Post-sponsored summer camp programs focused on helping kids understand the value of serving others and being productive role models in their community.

Beaty is passionate about his work.

“I love what the VFW can do to help our veterans and the community,” Beaty said. “I love being part of the VFW because serving our country doesn’t end with your time in service —

it's a lifetime of serving mankind."

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