

Unmet Needs Helps Couple 'Get Back on Track'

Due to multiple military service-related injuries, this husband and wife, both of whom are veterans, received assistance from VFW

Jun 24, 2021

Two Iraq War veterans and spouses, Carlos and Jennifer Gonzalez, received much-needed assistance in paying their electric bill as well as \$500 in gift cards to Walmart through the VFW's Unmet Needs program after they were honorably discharged from the Army.

"Getting help ... helped us get back on track," Jennifer said.

Both Carlos and Jennifer served in Iraq from 2005 to 2006. Jennifer was with the 80th Inf. Div., while Carlos served with the 94th Inf. Division.

Jennifer said she was honorably discharged in November 2011 with injuries to her back and was diagnosed with PTSD. Later, she was diagnosed with fibromyalgia and Lupus.

"It just affected me where I felt like, at first, it took my life away where I wasn't able to function or work," Jennifer said of her diagnoses.

She added that Carlos was honorably discharged in March 2012 due to injuries to his shoulder, knee and hand. Furthermore, he has tinnitus, PTSD and some skin issues.

Jennifer said after departing the military, she and Carlos began working. Jennifer became a licensed practical nurse (LPN) with the VA. Carlos got a job as a VA police officer, but continued to work other jobs for some time before deciding that his physical and mental health were too greatly impacted for work.

As time went on, Jennifer noticed her PTSD grew worse and was taking a toll on her ability to do her job. In 2013, she left her job as an LPN and sought professional help for her injuries.

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Carlos's physical injuries and PTSD also took a toll on him, which eventually led to his quitting his VA job in order to maintain his health.

"We decided that it was best for both of us, both physically and mentally, for him to be home," Jennifer said.

Jennifer noted that COVID-19 affected their situation prior to Carlos staying at home full-time. Due to her autoimmune disorders, Jennifer had to be tested frequently for the coronavirus, which forced Carlos to quarantine during those times. She said his employer was not willing to work with Carlos' schedule so that the two could make their health appointments.

Now that the couple is able to stay home, Jennifer said they can properly take care of themselves. She noted that Carlos is now able to get some medical procedures done that probably should have been done a long time ago, but was not able to because he was working.

Carlos is a VFW member-at-large, and the couple heard about the Unmet Needs program through VFW magazine, which they receive each month. Jennifer said that the couple also heard about the program through the Sempre Fi Foundation.

Jennifer said the Unmet Needs application process was simple to do. She noted that she had some slight communication issues after she put in her application, but they were quickly resolved once she called.

"This program can really help a veteran in need, just as it did us," Jennifer said about the Unmet Needs program.

To learn more about the VFW's Unmet Needs program, [vfw.org/UnmetNeeds](https://www.vfw.org/UnmetNeeds).

This article is featured in the June/July 2021 issue of [VFW magazine](#). It was written by Madeline Mapes. Mapes is a freelance writer from Kansas City, Missouri.