

‘Don’t Give Up — You Have to Fight for Yourself’

Navy veteran John Wayne Massaro hopes people will do what they can to assist veteran families who sacrifice so much

Oct 20, 2022

John Wayne Massaro, 68, followed in his father’s footsteps and served in the Navy from 1972 to 1992.

“I joined to see the world like my dad, Mario,” he said.

Throughout 20 years of service, Massaro sustained several injuries that continue to affect him.

“In 1976, I was in a car accident while driving back to our ship in Gaeta, Italy,” he said. “I fractured my femur in the accident. I also suffer from sleep apnea, insomnia and 33 other disabilities.”

It was not until 2006 that Massaro considered seeking the benefits and assistance he was entitled to.

“After talking with my shipmate James Bollinger, who kept telling me to start a claim, I went to the States and stopped by the VA office in Orlando to start the process,” he said.

Friend and fellow VFW member Jacoby Fleming helped Massaro with his claim. Eventually, Massaro found additional assistance through the VFW’s National Veterans Service (NVS) where he connected with VFW-Accredited Service Officer Chris Singletary.

“Chris went through my medical records since no one ever had. He found all my disabilities,” said Massaro.

With Fleming’s and Singletary’s help, Massaro submitted his claim and received a VA rating

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

of 100%. He encourages other veterans to take action, no matter how long ago they left the military.

“I retired in 1992,” said Massaro. “Don’t give up — you have to fight for yourself.”

Today, Massaro is a member of VFW Post 12159 in Naples, Italy (formerly, he was a member of VFW Post 2093 in Orlando, Florida). He and his wife Filomena have a daughter Manuela, son Danilo and granddaughter Jasmine.

In 2009, their other son John Wayne Jr. passed away. Massaro believes his untimely death could have been prevented with adequate support.

“I hope that people try to help our service members and veterans overseas,” he said. “While I was in the service overseas, our children were born at the military hospital.”

Despite living there all their lives, Massaro’s kids struggled to find work on the base, so his son moved to the U.S.

“John Jr. had to go to the States and get a good job,” explained Massaro. “But he was all alone and passed away because of medical problems.”

Massaro is certain that better veteran support services could keep tragedies like his from happening to someone else. He hopes people will do what they can to assist veteran families who sacrifice so much.

“If by some miracle, someone can help, please do, because I’m not the only one in this situation,” he said. “And to other veterans — never give up.”

Learn more about [the VFW's National Veterans Service](#) (NVS) program.