

# 'To Be of Service Is the Highest Calling'

## **Marine Corps veteran Todd Schroeder insists the most important thing is being there for fellow veterans**

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Originally from Wahpeton, North Dakota, Todd Schroeder lives in Wichita, Kansas, with his wife, Nicola, and six children: Alexis, Ayden, Kaden, Tiana, Chelsee and Logan.

As a teenager, Schroeder contemplated his future. Feeling like his options were limited, he recalled past discussions with his father.

“He often talked fondly of his time in the military while I was growing up, so during my senior year, I decided to talk with a recruiter,” Schroeder said. “It changed the direction of my life forever — and for the better.”

Schroeder served 20 years in the U.S. Marine Corps, retiring as a gunnery sergeant. He was stationed across the United States and served two tours in Iraq.

After his service, Schroeder completed a corporate internship but realized it was not the right setting for him. Following the experience, the VA’s Veteran Readiness and Employment program referred him to the VFW Department of Kansas. Since September 2018, Schroeder has worked as a VFW Accredited Service Officer, overseeing the state’s Veteran Service Officer program.

“As a veteran who had applied for benefits while I was being medically separated from the Marine Corps, the prospect of learning how to do this job was enticing,” he said. “And it would appear I have a knack for it, hence the reason I’ve been here for more than four years.”

Schroeder’s main objective is to reach as many Kansas veterans as possible, as well as those in adjacent states, to provide information and help them apply for benefits. But no day or case is ever the same.

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“Every client is unique, and every scenario is different,” he said. “Some days, just a few clients are scheduled, and there are no walk-ins, calls or emails, which allows me the opportunity to review decisions and act on requests from the VA.”

But, Schroeder explains, those days are rare.

“Usually, I’m fully scheduled with office visits, there are walk-ins all day, 60 phone messages and 80 emails to respond to, reports are due — and my kids have to come home from school because they’re sick,” he said.

Despite all of its demands, Schroeder cherishes the role.

“To be of service is the highest calling that any of us can answer. To serve those who served this country is an amazing honor and a terrible privilege,” he said. “I understand veterans, and they understand me. I feel I must work hard to earn and maintain the honor and privilege granted to me. No matter who steps through that door or calls or emails me, I will fulfill my responsibilities to the best of my ability.”

In addition to the individuals Schroeder assists, he is helping modernize processes, both within his department as well as the VFW’s entire National Veterans Service (NVS). Soon, the NVS will transition to a new digital platform, the same one Schroeder’s department has used for more than three years.

“I’ve been finding ways to use the program more effectively and have provided the NVS with information on how to improve it,” he said. “My biggest accomplishment would have to be implementing processes that are moving the program forward into the modern era.”

Regardless of how the work is done, Schroeder insists the most important thing is being there for fellow veterans.

“The VFW has existed since 1899,” he said. “Even then, it required action on the part of its members. The voice of one veteran is awesome and can have an impact. But the combined, unified voices of our veterans are mighty, awe-inspiring, and magnificent — it shapes the country.

“It’s not just about you or me. It’s about all of us. It’s always been this way, and if that should ever change, the VFW will cease to exist.”

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