

‘It’s Been Good for My Family’

VFW Unmet Needs helps to restore an Army Reserve veteran's mobility and quality of life

Jul 18, 2023

James Conaway, 61, and his wife, Kelly, live in Asheboro, North Carolina. They have two sons, Zachary and Bryn-Marc, and two grandchildren, Meredith and Miles.

Before settling in Asheboro, Conaway served in the Army and Army Reserves for 33 years. He began as an infantry officer and retired as a colonel. Assignments took him all over the United States and abroad.

After more than three decades in the military, Conaway now manages several service-connected injuries and conditions.

“I tell people that the stuff you do in your 20s catches up to you at 60,” he said.

Conaway explained that many of his issues stem from a training accident in 1987, but after serving in Iraq years later, he developed other problems.

“I started having a variety of health issues, including joint, knee and hip pain,” he said. “While being treated for a meniscus tear in my right knee, we discovered that my pain was being caused by bone cancer in my hip.”

Conaway underwent a complete hip removal surgery. Because his mobility is severely restricted, Conaway and his wife purchased a vehicle that could accommodate his new wheelchair and applied for assistance from the VFW’s Unmet Needs program to help with the cost.

“The grant paid one month’s payment on our newly acquired van,” which has been vital since the surgery, he said. “The aid made a huge impact on our ability to manage tight financial resources, and it’s been good for my family.”

The van allows Conaway and his wife to leave home to spend time in their community and visit family, which has been important in recent months.

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“2022 was a very rough year for us,” Conaway said. “In January, my cancer was confirmed, and in February, I had surgery. In September, my wife was diagnosed with a brain tumor and had to have surgery herself. Then, in November, our family was shocked when our daughter-in-law passed away.”

Thankfully, Kelly’s tumor was benign, and the couple was able to travel to Vermont to be with their son and grandchildren. The couple appreciates the kindness they were shown during such challenging times.

“We have been through a lot, and we are grateful for the VFW and other veteran organizations that have supported us,” Conaway said. “If you’re considering donating to the VFW, please do. Your generosity makes a difference for veterans like me.”

Learn more about the [VFW’s Unmet Needs program](#).