VFW Unmet Needs Grant Provides Veteran With Freedom to Focus on Health

TBI and PTSD made transition nearly impossible

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After five combat tours and nearly 12 years with the Marine Corps, Sergeant Dustin Ellison deserved a smooth transition back into civilian life. However, suffering from the post-war effects of a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and severe PTSD made that change nearly impossible.

“I thought [Dustin’s discharge date] would be the happiest day since he came home from service … I was wrong,” explained Heather Boyd, Dustin’s sister. “It was 100 [times] harder after war. It breaks my heart to watch my brother go through life like a ghost carrying guilt from serving for his country.”



Heather hoped Dustin’s struggles would end after being accepted into a 12-week program specifically designed to treat military-related TBI and PTSD. But, when the severity of his condition and medical complications requiring surgery unexpectedly extended Dustin’s

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treatment, Heather feared her brother would leave the program if he was unable to keep up on his bills.

After learning about the VFW's Unmet Needs program during a wounded warrior PTSD focus group, Heather reached out to the VFW for help. An Unmet Needs grant came through just in time, providing Dustin and his family with a much needed reprieve.

"I personally had depleted the money in my bank account … this was not only a relief for myself, but it allowed him the opportunity to focus on treatment and not stress about his lack of income," said Heather.

Receiving an Unmet Needs grant provided the assistance Dustin needed to stay current on his bills, and more importantly, provided him the freedom to focus on his health – culminating with his graduation in January.

Heather explained that while Dustin still has work to do and will likely face daily struggles for the rest of his life, thanks to the VFW Unmet Needs program, he's functioning better than ever.

The VFW Unmet Needs program assists service members and veterans who have been deployed in the last six years and have run into unexpected financial difficulties as a result of deployment or other military-related activity. To learn more about VFW Unmet Needs program or to apply, click here.

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