

VFW Claims Director Shows Passion for Mental Health Awareness

'We need to shine a light to let veterans know they're not alone'

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Jon Gohn, 39, of Lakeville, Minn., serves as a Staff Sergeant with the South Dakota Army National Guard. Since enlisting in February of 2000, Gohn has deployed to Iraq and Kuwait. His work now focuses on training soldiers in the Army Basic Instructor Course, the Army Small Group Instructor Training Course and certification and non-commissioned officer training for 13M Multiple Launch Rocket Systems.

Gohn said, "I first wanted to join the military because I wasn't living a lifestyle that was conducive to self-improvement.

"I walked into the National Guard Office in Aberdeen, S.D. and told the recruiting officer, 'I need to give back and stop taking advantage of my freedoms.'"

Since then he has strived to model the core values he learned in the military.

"The National Guard has given back to me everything and more than I have put into it," Gohn expressed. "If I wasn't a veteran, I wouldn't have the career I have today.

"And I personally believe there's no better job out there."

Gohn also works as VFW Claims Director and VFW Service Officer for the state of Minnesota. He said his office exists to assist, track and maintain records as they pertain to veterans' VA benefits, but he needs to be a "jack of all trades."

"It's important to have knowledge of the medical field, be versed in Title 38, provide counsel to people going through sensitive life changes and sometimes just lend an ear to listen."

He worked for a number of years at the South Dakota State Department of Veterans Affairs, but made the move to Minnesota because he "always appreciated the knowledge and

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enthusiasm I saw in VFW Service Officers.”

When asked what he feels is the biggest issue facing veterans today, he spoke about the problem of mental health awareness and care availability.

“In many cases veterans feel like they’re alone on an island, when in reality there are so many in the same shoes.

“It makes me proud to know I thank veterans by assisting them and their families as best I can,” Gohn concluded.