

Unmet Needs Helps Army Vet

In coping with multiple service-related injuries and a global pandemic last year, a former Army sergeant received a helping hand from the VFW

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Eugene Hamric found himself in between jobs when COVID-19 struck a blow and left him short on options to meet payments last year.

Scrambling to find alternative ways of paying his bills, Hamric turned to Google's online search engine, which introduced him to VFW's Unmet Needs Program.

"I was Google searching grants to help me get by when I came across the webpage," said Hamric, who served with the Army's 1st Battalion, 37th Armor Regiment out of Fort Bliss, Texas. "I thought it could help, so I told myself why not apply and see what would happen."

Hamric, who deployed to Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, had suffered combat injuries during the five years and nine months he spent in the Army.

"I was hit by one rocket, two other close blasts and involved with other multiple explosions," Hamric said. "I was considered unfit for duty through my last unit. And instead of administering a med-board, they decided to separate me right then and there due to my health issues."

Upon being honorably discharged on March 8, 2012, Hamric's service-related injuries led to an 80 percent rating and compensation from the VA, but finding a job in the civilian world proved difficult.

In pleading his case on the application for a VFW Unmet Needs grant online, Hamric was awarded \$1,439 to help with a growing list of unpaid bills last year.

"You don't realize how fast time flies before the bills are back in front of you when you are already having issues applying for new jobs due to COVID and a work injury," Hamric said.

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“The grant helped me to pay my rent so I could focus on catching my truck payment up and keep my other bills in line.”

Hamric added that although the extra support VFW’s Unmet Needs Program provided him led to feelings of guilt initially, he has since accepted it as a proclamation of an organization willing to help veterans in need.

“I felt a little bit guilty at first as I have always thought you have to work to earn your keep,” Hamric said. “But I would recommend this for other veterans like me, and I would tell them not to feel guilty about it. It’s been a great recourse that has helped my and my daughter greatly during a time of need.”

Since its creation in 2004, VFW’s Unmet Needs Program has provided more than \$12.1 million in emergency assistance grants to nearly 11,000 qualified veterans and military families.