

Did You Know?

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That the American Legion VA&R Chicago office helps veterans and their dependents through many different means. We have walk-in hours, interviews by appointment; receive daily e-mails, telephone calls and regular mail. We also attend outreach events. Some of our contacts are routine e.g. follow up on claims, submitting new evidence or updating addresses or banking information. Other contacts involve much more and often times end up with our office filing a new or reopened claim. While we try our best to help all we serve we realize that we can't assist everyone. In those cases at least we will steer them in the right direction. Some of our more interesting and successful cases are referred to us by Post Service Officers. Looking back over the last 12 months I want to highlight a few of the more interesting and successful claims or situations we handled.

A Service Officer of a Chicago Post was doing a wellness check on one of its members. The veteran had just retired and it was getting hard to live on just his Social Security check. Private health insurance was expensive. We contacted the vet and found that he had a Purple Heart Medal. The injury wasn't serious but it was enough to get him enrolled into the VA hospital. He now saves a ton of money on his medication bills. Also, turns out while on a field exercise he was in the wrong place at the wrong time and a practice shell exploded to close to him causing hearing damage. He never knew he could file a claim. We did, got him 70% and now he gets over \$1,000 a month in compensation AND he no longer has to pay property taxes on his home. All as a result of a wellness check by his Post.

Another Service Officer from a Post in the Rockford area contacted us about a Gulf War vet who was denied her claim for sleep apnea. She was discharged in 1993 and the earliest evidence she could gather about her condition was dated from 2007. We explained how Buddy Statements could be helpful. Through social media like Facebook she was able to locate three of her former Marines who shared the same barracks. They vividly remember her crazy sleeping habits, loud snoring, stopping breathing, etc. With Buddy Statements from them she was able to get service-connected disabled compensation granted at the 50% rate.

Finally a Service Officer from a Post in the Granite City area referred us to a vet who was unable to prove he was assaulted off base by a group of thugs. To this day he suffers from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) because of that attack. His Army records were silent for this incident and the private hospital where he was treated at in Georgia didn't keep records that far back (1971). Luckily we were able to contact the C.I.D. unit at his base and there was a MP report on file. He finally got his benefits and a rather large retro payment.

So, as a new group of Service Officers are sworn into their Posts this fall please remember, we are here to try and help. We are only an e-mail or telephone call away.

Old age is not so bad when you consider the alternatives.