

WWP News & Media: Veteran Group Outings, Charity Events, Helping Vets

Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans on Ending Veteran Homelessness

Two-Time Wounded Warrior Project Grant Recipient Serves Minnesota Veteran Community

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (October 2, 2015) – When Kimberley Dotstry's service with the U.S. Navy ended, the transition from military to civilian life was much more difficult than she expected. She loved the uniform, but when she was discharged, she felt adrift. She says there were more worries, less money, and greater uncertainty, and she eventually became homeless.

"When you're discharged, that's it. You're out. I was homeless and had to support my family. I needed help," says Kimberley. "Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans stabilized my life and gave me balance."

Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) is a two-time Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) grant recipient that provides direct assistance to wounded veterans and their families in Minnesota who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless. According to MACV data, there are approximately 4,000 veterans who are homeless or in crisis of becoming homeless in Minnesota every year.

Homelessness happens for a variety of reasons, and each experience is different.

"There is a stigma attached to asking for help, but we aren't providing a handout," says Nathaniel Saltz, state program director of MACV. "Veterans in crisis are apprehensive and nervous about seeking assistance. We're offering them a hand up. We're returning the respect they deserve for the service they gave to us."

Kimberley is now a case manager at MACV, providing the same help to other homeless veterans that she received. MACV has found that having staff members who were in the military and subsequently experienced homelessness themselves builds an instant trust and rapport with the homeless veterans they serve. Kimberley can relate to these men and women, with whom she shares her own story of homelessness as she works to rebuild their self-confidence.

Nathaniel says the WWP grant helps MACV respond quickly and effectively to the WWP veterans in crisis it encounters, which is critical to the process of stabilization. Because of the \$50,000 grant from WWP, MACV was able to serve 72 veterans in crisis (many of whom had children), and 130 family members were saved from living on the streets.

The WWP Grant Program was created to bridge gaps in existing services and expand the availability of programs that provide specialized, critically needed support to this generation of wounded service members, their caregivers, and families. To date, the WWP Grant Program has provided over \$10 million through 107 grants to 90 organizations like MACV. Because of the increased focus on homeless veterans and the collaboration between veteran service organizations, Nathaniel believes that preventing most veterans in crisis from becoming homeless is a real possibility, and that those who do become homeless can be assisted back into stable housing rapidly and with as little interruption to their lives as possible.

"It will be a great day when that happens, because we'll have ended homelessness for so many veterans," says Nathaniel. "It's going to happen."

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About Wounded Warrior Project

The mission of Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) is to honor and empower Wounded Warriors. WWP's purpose is to raise awareness and to enlist the public's aid for the needs of injured service members, to help injured servicemen and women aid and assist each other, and to provide unique, direct programs and services to meet their needs. WWP is a national, nonpartisan organization headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida. To get involved and learn more, visit woundedwarriorproject.org.

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