Service takes a stand

At second DAV/VA co-hosted Homeless Veteran Stand Down in Cold Spring, benefits specialist brings claims assistance to those who need it most

DAV National Service Officer Mark Moore listens as Army veteran William Fry explains his service history during the second annual DAV/VA co-hosted Homeless Veteran Stand Down.

When William Fry left the Army in 1971, he was told he wouldn’t qualify for benefits and not to bother trying. But after meeting with a DAV national service officer this past month, Fry will now have access to the benefits he earned through service.
The Army veteran was attending the Homeless Veteran Stand Down at DAV Headquarters in Cold Spring, Ky. For several years, the nonprofit has partnered with the Cincinnati VA Medical Center for the annual event, and in 2016 began hosting the stand down with the help of dozens of area community partners and resources.

More than 225 homeless and at-risk veterans received legal assistance, medical services, housing and financial help, along with employment and education guidance at the day-long stand down. There was complimentary clothing and haircuts, and veterans were provided a meal amidst a relaxing atmosphere with games, music and camaraderie.

DAV also provided benefits assistance onsite.

“When I got out they told me I couldn’t file because I wasn’t physically injured, so I let it go,” explained Fry, who served in the infantry, and then as a heavy equipment operator. “I saw other veterans who were very injured so I just figured that was the norm.”

Fry is currently enrolled in Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans at the Cincinnati VA Medical Center, a comprehensive rehabilitation treatment program for homeless veterans.

“Some staff members told me I was likely a candidate for post-traumatic stress,” said Fry, who initially didn’t know what that was. After learning about the illness, he reconsidered the VA staff’s encouragement to pursue benefits assistance.

“I don’t come here for money. I came here for help,” said Fry.

DAV National Area Supervisor Mark Moore, a veteran who served in the Army and Navy, was onsite to help Fry.

“I can speak to veterans differently,” said Moore. “I just understand them, and I never felt as satisfied in other work as I have serving the veteran community.”
In the nearly decade he has worked at DAV, Moore said he is still surprised how often he hears a veteran say that they do not consider themselves a veteran, or state that they are not “disabled enough” to receive assistance.

“I want veterans like William to know that you’re never too old to access the benefits you earned through service,” said Moore. “There is help out there, even if some people may say there isn’t or that you’re not eligible. Keep trying.

“I believe in the ripple effect. I can help William and then he can tell other veterans about it. Anything I can do to get the information out there so we don’t hear another veteran say they didn’t get help because they didn’t think they could.”

Moore spoke with Fry extensively about his service, explained next steps with the VA and assured the veteran that he will stay in touch during the entire claims process.

Fry already has plans to spread the word to the other veterans in his life.

“Personally I didn’t want to take off work today but I knew the [Homeless Veteran] Stand Down had some venues to learn about different programs for veterans, so I came over to get that information to not only help me, but to learn about resources that I can pass along to other veterans.”

Moore stresses that helping any veteran who comes to see him is always important, but helping homeless or at-risk veterans find housing and information about benefits can be life changing.

“Anything I can do at the Homeless Stand Down to improve their livelihoods is what this event is all about for me,” said Moore.

Moore doesn’t want any veteran to fall through the cracks in receiving the support they earned through service, especially
the men and women who may benefit from it most.

“No one who served our country should be worried about when they will eat their next meal or where they will lay their head down at night,” said DAV National Service Director Jim Marszalek. “Ensuring homeless or at-risk veterans have access to the benefits they earned through service is an integral, preventative part of combatting veteran homelessness.”

According to Fry, the assistance and resources available were empowering.

“I don’t want a hand out, I want a hand up,” said Fry.