

Vietnam War veteran helps himself by helping others

52-year DAV member fights PTSD by volunteering



Roy T. Rogers credits his volunteer work for curbing many of his PTSD symptoms by staying busy and helping others in need.

In 1966, Roy T. Rogers was serving as a Marine in the Vietnam War when he stepped on a landmine that took part of his left hand, portions of his foot, and the road to recovery resulted in 15 months in the hospital.

Upon his return to the states, Rogers, became a member of DAV and a letter carrier for the United States Postal Service and retired after 33 years at the post office in 2000.

Despite his best efforts to stay busy and keep his mind occupied, according to Rogers, some of the horrors of combat had followed him home, and even persisted after his retirement, as he had more time on his hands.

“I was a nervous wreck,” said Rogers, a Wisconsin native. “The doctors told me if I kept it all inside I would go bananas.”

Perhaps a tipping point for Rogers was shortly after he retired from the post office and a neighbor noticed something wasn't quite right.

"It was a neighbor of mine who saw I needed something to do," said Rogers. "They suggested volunteering at the local hospital."

Fast-forward a decade and a half, and Rogers has volunteered more than 2,600 hours at hospitals, driving veterans to and from medical appointments, at local churches and visiting veterans at their homes.

"I think I would have fallen apart with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder if I didn't volunteer," said Rogers. "People need to volunteer. They have to consider the plight of the people who can't do things on their own."

Darlene Rogers, Roy's wife, and member of the DAV Auxiliary Chapter 17 in Oshkosh, WI., has noticed the difference in her husband.

"I have noticed more smiles," said Darlene. "He likes to keep busy. He is not one to just sit in a chair. He is out amongst the community nearly everyday."

"This is a perfect example of how we can tremendously help ourselves by being selfless and helping others," said DAV National Voluntary Services Director John Kleindienst. "When our fellow veterans get involved in the way Roy has; we all win. His service, his sacrifice and his volunteer work has benefitted a countless number of veterans lives, to include his very own."

Rogers is not shy about encouraging his fellow veterans or anyone to volunteer.

"I am alive today because of volunteering," said Rogers. "If you forget about your own problems for a bit and help others

you'll see how happy you can make other people, and it just makes me feel so good."

Rogers, in part, credits seeing veterans who face greater challenges with helping him through his own PTSD struggles.

"I see people coming into the hospital who are in somewhat worse shape than me," said Rogers. "I can't feel sorry for myself that I got hurt. It makes me feel better to be able to help them. Please, if you have any spare time, volunteer, someone needs you."

Rogers officially joined DAV in March 1966. Making last month his 52-year mark as a member of DAV.

"DAV is first and foremost in my life," said Rogers. "They have helped me immensely. DAV helped me retain all of my benefits, and I have a lot of good friends in DAV."

To get involved and volunteer for veterans or to receive assistance please visit DAV's new site www.volunteerforveterans.org. Veterans, caregivers and volunteers can create a profile and enter an opportunity for assistance, or volunteer. Be sure to check back often, as the site will update continuously with new information and could take time to spread to less-populated areas and suburbs.