

Out of the ashes



Marine Corps veteran Tyler Main (left) and his partner, Molly Hampton, embark on a new chapter in their lives as they rebuild after a devastating loss. Their new dream home is a cabin in the woods of Arkansas.

Veteran who lost his home to a devastating fire finds comfort through DAV's Disaster Relief Program

After years of planning and saving, Marine Corps veteran Tyler Main and his partner, Molly Hampton, were ready to invest in their dream—a cabin in the woods near Main's hometown in Arkansas. Everything was set, all the boxes packed and utilities canceled, for the couple to leave Maryland and start their next chapter on 10 acres in America's heartland.

Unfortunately, life had other plans. Just days before the move, Main and Hampton were saying goodbye to friends when their neighbor called. A fire had started in the couple's second-floor apartment.

“We were only away from the apartment for maybe 40 minutes when we got a call from our neighbor who said that the fire department busted in our door, saved our dog and evacuated our building,” said Main. “We didn’t know what to expect, so we drove home in a panic.”

According to the fire department, the fire started in the kitchen, where most of Main and Hampton’s belongings were stored in boxes, waiting for moving day. The sprinkler system was activated and the fire department used a hose to put out the flames, resulting in extensive water damage to Main’s apartment and several adjacent units.

In preparation for the move, the couple had already canceled their renters insurance policy. Without that protection in place, they faced a devastating financial blow.

“We lost a lot of our stuff, and then we found out we might have a very, very large bill on top of it. It was really scary; it was really stressful,” Main recalled.

After some of the immediate shock wore off, Main told the story to his friends and family on social media, letting them know he and Hampton were physically unharmed and thanking them for their love and support.

“I saw Tyler’s post about the fire in his apartment, and I immediately thought of DAV’s Disaster Relief Program,” said Assistant National Communications Director Todd Hunter—a fellow Marine who had also experienced a fire that devastated his home. “You feel so helpless at times like this. I wanted Tyler and Molly to know they weren’t alone.”

Hunter got Main in touch with Assistant National Service Director Scott Trimarchi, who oversees the DAV Disaster Relief Program.

When devastation strikes—from large-scale disasters to isolated incidents—the program provides support through

financial assistance as well as supply kits to veterans and their families so they can obtain basic necessities such as food, warm clothes and shelter.

“Todd reached out to me and let me know about the fire at Tyler’s apartment and asked if we could help,” said Trimarchi. “I spoke with Tyler, got the necessary documentation, and we were able to offer him some assistance in the aftermath of their devastating loss.”

Since the program’s inception in 1968, more than \$13 million has been disbursed to qualified applicants who were victims of disaster. In the past five years alone, DAV has awarded 9,671 grants totaling nearly \$3.7 million.

“[The grant] has been a huge help, and I was super excited to have an opportunity to receive this support during this time of turmoil and a lot of stress,” said Main. “It all basically came from Todd reaching out to me and asking if the DAV could help me. I didn’t even have to ask.”

“When you see a friend facing tragedy, all you can think about is ‘how can I help?’” Hunter said. “I was happy there was this small thing I could do for a fellow Marine in his time of need, because that’s what DAV is about—veterans looking out for veterans.”

Main said this experience has opened his eyes to the camaraderie and generosity of those around him, and it allowed him to see that the connections he’s made through his time in service are invaluable.

“It’s not always just the dollar amount or whatever’s being given to you; it’s just knowing that you’re not alone in the turmoil or in the grief of a situation,” said Main. “I think that’s the biggest takeaway from this: When you go through things, there are other people there to share the burden. It was awesome that DAV found a way to be a part of that.”

While Main and Hampton still don't know the results of the fire department's investigation, or if or how much they'll have to pay, Main said they're taking things one day at a time and trying their hardest to continue living for the future. They still made it to Arkansas.

"I found this awesome cabin on 10 acres in the woods," Main said. "It's a dream, literally a dream of mine to own this here. So despite a lot of bad news that has happened, there's still some good news."