



ACV Advocate

The quarterly newsletter of Air Compassion for Veterans

From the Desk of Chairman John Hoffmann



Welcome to the ACV Advocate!

As I write my first column for the new fiscal year (July 1 - June 30), I want to express my deep appreciation for all our selfless volunteers who make it possible for ACV to fulfill its mission, a mission that has never changed: To make certain that no veteran is denied access to vital medical care due to a lack of long-distance transportation.

Because of our volunteers' passion and drive for veterans, we can provide a unique service that fills an essential niche. ACV is the "safety net" when all other travel options fail. For so many veterans suffering from PTSD, TBI, and other serious medical conditions incurred from their heroic service to our nation, the gift of flight is the gift of life.

We're growing! Through this newsletter you can read inspiring stories and receive updates, so please ask your friends and family to sign up to subscribe on our website and be sure to Like us on Facebook and Twitter.

(Continued on page 2)

VET'S NEW BUDDY BRINGS HOPE AND HEALING



In 2011, Sgt. Brian, an MP, was on patrol in Afghanistan "outside the wire"; that is, outside the safe zone of a base camp or support installation. Suddenly an IED exploded and his truck rolled over and into a ditch.

He slammed his head, and even his helmet couldn't prevent the skull fracture that occurred, nor the PTSD and TBI that have tormented him ever since.

He returned home in 2012 with a 90 percent medical discharge. "We're fighting for 100 percent," said his wife, Alesha. "He needs 24-hour care."

"I had reached my limit with the battle that lived on in my head each and every day, and I had given up, literally," Brian said. The breaking point occurred when he failed to show up at school one day last month. He attends St. Petersburg College-Seminole Campus, and was found heavily bleeding, confused and hopeless.

(Continued on page 2)

From Chairman Hoffmann (Cont.)

I recently received this request from T.C.:

“Urgent need for assistance to attend the PTSD rehabilitation program at the Denver, Colorado, VA hospital. Since retiring from the military, I have been unemployed and am unable to draw my retirement for at least another six years (part of my service was in the reserves).”

He goes on to write:

“PTSD has my life spiraling out of control with the resulting lack of confidence, destructive habits, and haunting episodes causing additional strain on my marriage and all my personal relationships. I need help to find a way to control the PTSD demons as they appear and begin once again to live a constructive and purposeful life.”

Thanks to our volunteers who assist with mission coordination, financials, and other aspects of our charitable work, we could help. I’m proud of each volunteer and consider it a privilege to serve with them.

There is nothing that matches the joy and satisfaction of assisting a veteran like T.C. to transition from despair to hope. Consider joining our volunteer team right from the comfort of your home. We especially need the help of those with technical and social media know-how. And, of course, your financial support is also needed and appreciated.

Yours for the heroes,

John

John W. Hoffmann
Chairman, Board of Directors

Vet’s New Buddy (Cont.)

“He had cut his arms,” Alesha explained. She rushed him to the nearest VA facility where he was hospitalized for suicidal ideation and attempt. “I was lost,” he said.

Brian, 28, and the father of three children, had previously applied with K9s for Warriors in Ponte Vedra, Florida to receive a service dog but had been on a waiting list for over a year and wasn’t expected to access the program until late 2018. While Brian was in the emergency room, Alesha contacted K9s for Warriors and explained her husband’s desperate situation.

She learned that somebody had dropped the class and there was now a vacancy. “We would like Brian to come now. We will make it happen,” she was told. But there was one problem—the cost of transportation.

Ponte Vedra is 250 miles from the couple’s home in Pinellas Point, and due to Brian’s inability to work,



Brian is now able to go to public places with Alesha and his children, Kiera, 7, Micah, 4, and Brantley, 16 months.

“expenses were tight. That’s when I reached out to Air Compassion for Veterans.”

By the next day, a check covering fuel for two round trips had arrived. Alesha drove her husband the five hours to K9s for Warriors, then made the trip again three-and-a-half weeks later to pick him and Woody up following Brian’s training and graduation on July 20. “Without ACV’s help, Brian would have had to hitchhike home!”

Woody is a boxer-shepherd mix donated by K9s for Warriors and specifically trained for Brian’s disabilities. He’s “very gentle-spirited,” Brian says. Woody wakes him up from nightmares, protects Brian’s personal space by positioning himself as a barrier from strangers, and distracts him from stressful situations in public.

“He does anything he can to playfully gain my attention in order to pet him, which scientists have proven reduces stress levels and blood pressure within three minutes.”

“I noticed a huge difference even four or five days after he was back home,” Alesha said. “Before, I had to drag him out because he couldn’t be left alone. He would just be grumpy and mean all the time. We went Disneyworld and he did amazingly well. I’ve never seen him that calm in a situation with that many people.”

Brian and Alesha appreciate ACV’s help. “My family and I cannot even begin to gather our deepest gratitude into words to convey how much Air Compassion has changed our lives forever,” he said. Alesha added, “The kids love the dog. The past few days have been great. I can tell it’s just going to get better from here.”

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