

Veteran Plans to Pay It Forward

'Without this program, I don't know which way life could have turned'

Apr 24, 2020

Kyle Wickert, 32, of Hartford, Wisconsin, is a member of the VFW and says he will be for life. He is grateful for the support he received and plans to pay it forward in the future.

Wickert joined the Wisconsin Army National Guard in 2003, shortly after his seventeenth birthday. His service provided him a sense of purpose, duty, and community. It was because of this he felt at home while deployed overseas.

During his first tour in Iraq, Wickert was promoted to sergeant and then truck commander. He was awarded a Bronze Star for his service leading his convoy from base to base.

During a second tour in Iraq, his mission changed from convoy security to detainee operations. His new role meant working with Military Intelligence and Counterinsurgency and helping track dangerous individuals. In this new role he was required to maintain composure around detainees who had tried to harm him and coalition forces, which was often frustrating work.

For his third and final tour, Wickert served for one year in Afghanistan as staff sergeant assigned to security detail for the Agricultural Development Team.

Upon returning to civilian life, Wickert required care and rehabilitation. He was concerned about how to make ends meet during this time, and heard about the VFW's Unmet Needs program while at the Madison VA Hospital.

The Unmet Needs application process was simple and easy according to Wickert, and receiving support was a blessing. He was able to focus on recovery instead of stressing about how to take care of rent and car payments.

"I didn't need to cut my care short and return to work just to pay bills," said Wickert.

When asked what he would say to those who assisted him, it was simple: "THANK YOU," he

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said. “Without this program, I don’t know which way life could have turned.”

Wickert and his partner Ashley recently welcomed their first child. They say the VFW helped lift a weight off of them. He encourages other veterans to join the VFW, donate and volunteer to express thanks for the support the VFW provides and to connect with their community.

“The VFW, its programs and its staff are beyond incredible. This is just one of many things they do to help our service men and women in times of need,” said Wickert. “Without their help, I can't say I would have been able to seek the care I needed and make ends meet.”