

Veteran Job Seeker Success Story

One Gift Served Many



Theresa Joy recently lost her husband Walter, better known as “Skip”, of 63 years this past January. She is the mother-in-law of Kathy Joy, Operations Manager of Workforce Central in Southbridge.

Theresa had mentioned that she was interested in donating her late husband’s power chair (Hoveround). The Hoveround was barely used and was like brand new. Theresa thought possibly a hospital might be interested in the donation.

Kathy thought of the disabled veteran population in which Workforce Central provides employment services. She told her mother-in law, “Wait, I have an idea so please let me get back to you before you make a decision. I want to speak with a colleague of mine, Bill Ryan, who is a Veteran Counselor of Workforce Central in Worcester, that works very closely with the Central Mass Veterans Coalition.”

The Southbridge Manager was aware of the e-mail distribution list that Bill maintains to quickly communicate with all the members of the Veterans Coalition. The Coalition is made up of many support service organizations and providers that work very closely with veterans providing multiple support services to assist in every aspect of a veteran’s life after returning home.

Bill jumped on board with the prospect of a disabled veteran who may have a real need of acquiring a power chair. “When I heard that your mother-in-law wanted to donate a Hoveround to a disabled veteran, I knew the best way to get this information out as soon as possible to our veteran population was through our contacts with the Central Mass Veterans Providers Coalition (CMVSPC).” Bill sent out an e-mail right away to the CMVSPC notifying all the members.

Larry Corbin, the Veteran Representative from our Workforce Central Milford office reported that he knew a Vietnam Veteran who was quite ill and in need of the chair. Unfortunately, the veteran passed away the following day.

Dr. Margaret Laneri, of the Veterans Combat Counseling Center, located on 691 Grafton Street in Worcester, which belongs to the Coalition, reached out to one of their Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) disabled veterans. William Rivera suffered a very serious injury and almost lost his leg at 26 years old when his convoy was attacked by Iraqi militants while traveling to Baghdad for supplies.

William spent a lot of time in military hospitals and rehabilitation centers so he could learn to walk again. William is now 38 years old and needs a cane to walk. As he ages it becomes more difficult and painful to get around. When he was informed about the donation of a Hoveround, he was elated and contacted Kathy Joy that same day. "I have been looking on the Internet for a used one but they are still so very expensive," said William.

William arrived at Theresa Joy's house in Southbridge with a bouquet of flowers and a big hug for her. William said, "I feel so blessed and lucky to have been chosen to receive such a generous donation. I will now be able to go with my wife to flea markets, which she loves to do. I tried to take extra medication before going and trying to walk it, only ended in more pain." Theresa told William, "Thank you for everything you have done and for serving our country."

"Although my father-in-law was not a veteran himself, he lost his only brother at Pearl Harbor and I know he would have been very proud that his Hoveround went to a disabled veteran," stated Kathy. "It was the generosity of one person and the networking of many, that made this all happen for a very deserving disabled veteran."