

# ‘I Couldn’t Have Done It Without Her’

## Marine Corps veteran Kenneth Dieckmann’s VFW Post commander introduced him to a VFW Accredited Service Officer Shawna Rector who helped him move forward

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Marine Corps and Vietnam veteran Kenneth Dieckmann, 79, lives with his wife, Sharon, and their two dogs in St. Louis, Missouri. He joined the military in 1963 and served for four years, earning two Purple Hearts and achieving the rank of corporal. Like many veterans, Dieckmann wanted to be a protector of his country.

During his time in Vietnam, Dieckmann was exposed to Agent Orange, grenade explosions, and Punji stakes — a trap created from sharpened wood. He also developed coronary artery disease, Post Traumatic Stress, tinnitus, hearing loss and kidney disease as a result of his service.

“My greatest challenges have been learning to live with PTS and the diseases caused by Agent Orange exposure and not thinking about Vietnam,” he said. “I was blown up by a grenade, and the Punji stake cut up my leg. I try to leave Vietnam where it belongs.”

Dieckmann’s VFW Post commander introduced him to VFW Accredited Service Officer Shawna Rector. She helped Dieckmann receive a 100% rating and begin moving forward.

“My experience with Shawna was very good. I couldn't have done it without her,” he said.

Today, Dieckmann gives back to others in his community as a detachment chaplain for the Marine Corps League in St. Louis. Additionally, Dieckmann and his wife enjoy paying for active-duty military members’, police officers’, medics’ and firefighters’ meals when they see them while dining out.

“I’m always looking for ways to help,” he said.

Dieckmann encourages other VFW members to contact their Post representatives for

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assistance and says it has been a pleasure to be associated with the organization.

“I’m very appreciative of everything they’ve done for me,” he said.

Learn more about the [VFW's National Veterans Service \(NVS\) program](#).