

President's Message

Hello Fellow Members,

Courage comes in many varieties.

The **Grants Committee**, chaired by Dennis DeFrain with Linda Wolverton, Don Fordney and Rev Fannalou Guggisberg supporting, witnessed this recently when meeting with Angel (not her name). With the Board's approval, a grant of \$500 was made to her and her husband, Angelo (not his name), to help them through a financial emergency and bring their mortgage payment current.

Here is a short version of their moving story. SSgt Angelo had been a Marine for ten years, with three tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan under his belt. While leading a counter-insurgency patrol in 2010, a group of bad guys were sighted. Shortly after that an IED was detonated by an Afghani. Another Marine was killed and Angelo was severely wounded along with other US personnel. Angelo received multiple injuries to both elbows, both knees, and two broken vertebrae in his back. Most significant, he had a severe head injury with leaving permanent traumatic brain damage. Despite his wounds, he said, "I dragged my interpreter to cover and started directing the Marines around me to take up positions in case of an ambush," he said. Semper Fi, Angelo. He was rated 100% disabled by the VA doctors. Now with continuing VA and outside medical care, he still suffers from PTSD, severe migraine headaches and difficulties with concentration and memory loss. He cannot work or be left alone by himself.

Angel met with the committee recently. She taught us about another kind of courage, one of quiet, determined perseverance in supporting and holding her family together. She described the hard years after the injury of care and rehabilitation of her husband, and even harder years since his discharge from active duty in 2014. Due to a snafu in the discharge paperwork, Angelo did not receive a 100% medical discharge and thus was not eligible for full military retirement benefits. That meant that Angel and their eight-year-old son were not eligible for Tricare medical benefits. That situation went on for years. Their boy suffers from severe degenerative disease in his eyesight, which requires specially crafted eyeglasses with multiple lenses. Recently, having paid \$1300 out of pocket, they discovered the newest glasses were wrong. The replacement cost them an immediate additional \$1300 out of pocket. That forced a choice between paying the mortgage or paying for new glasses. They bought the glasses. In addition, Angel can no longer leave Angelo alone in the home, forcing her to arrange for a care giver when she leaves the home for any reason.

You really had to be there, listening to Angel. Her love and determination were so moving. She said that because they can't afford to pay, she simply does not go to the doctor anymore for her own care---she just gets by. She also spoke about how families like theirs feel so abandoned. "The country sends them over to fight, they are killed and wounded, and then the country forgets about us," she said. Angel is in a support group of families of vets in similar situations, which does help them cope. Her quiet grit and

determination to walk through the cannon smoke to protect and nurture her family left a lasting impression of courage on the home front.

The Board immediately authorized an additional grant of \$500 to help them through the immediate crisis. And recently, Angel learned the Marines would correct the discharge by granting a full medical discharge, enabling Tricare benefits for the family which they will expect in a few months.

The committee and Board are humbled and awed by this courage, and that of other veteran grant recipients. Luke Chapter's grant program continues.

"Never Stop Serving."

Mike