

**ROBERT POSEY
VETERAN: MARINES**



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THE POWER OF RECOVERY: A VETERAN'S STORY OF HOPE, COURAGE, AND RESILIENCE

With his mother's consent, Robert Posey enlisted in the U.S. Marines when he was only 17 years old. Mr. Posey and his girlfriend were expecting a child, and he thought joining the military would offer financial stability for his new family. However, Mr. Posey was not prepared to meet the challenges set before him. "I was young, naive, and scared," he says. One of 14 children, he describes his childhood living environment as very dysfunctional. Boot camp was not any easier for him. He states "For me, boot camp was a shocking and traumatic experience." He soon began using alcohol and other substances as a way to cope and ward off his intense feelings of loneliness and depression.

In 1971, Mr. Posey left the service and returned to his hometown of Mobile, Alabama. Although he had learned some carpentry skills from his grandfather, he was not able to maintain stable employment due to his drug and alcohol use. "I was left to my own devices—drinking, using drugs, and squandering money," Mr. Posey says. He continued on a self-destructive path that included substance abuse and living on the streets for well over a decade. He lost his family ties and became very depressed. He was isolated. "I was ashamed to look at myself and resented what I had become," states Mr. Posey.

What a Difference a Day Makes

Then, on an ordinary day, help arrived in the most unusual and extraordinary way. "I was sick and tired of being sick and tired," he explained. He had been using substances all night and was sitting in a park, contemplating how to end his life. "I was thinking about walking in front of a car," Mr. Posey says. Suddenly, a man sat beside him. They talked for several hours, and during this conversation, Mr. Posey's new friend, expressing concern, mentioned a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) treatment center located in Biloxi, Mississippi. As a result of this remarkable encounter, Mr. Posey was able to receive assistance and access to treatment from the VA.

While in treatment, Mr. Posey learned about the Gateway Treatment Facility in Harvey, Louisiana. Gateway offered comprehensive services that included a 6-month intensive inpatient setting and a 24-month recovery program. “I couldn’t see past 6 days, much less 6 months,” says Mr. Posey. “I wasn’t sure if I could finish the program.” However, Mr. Posey wanted something different. He knew he couldn’t continue on the same path and decided to try the program. Mr. Posey admits, “I was stubborn and a hard nut to crack.” However, he was committed to making a change, which included tackling problems instead of isolating and backing away from them.

The Next Chapter: Recovery

The next chapter in Mr. Posey’s life involved obtaining new skills and seeking employment. Robin Gray, a Volunteers of America Greater New Orleans case manager, enrolled Mr. Posey into the U.S. Department of Labor’s Homeless Veteran’s Reintegration (HVRP) program. Through HVRP, Mr. Posey was connected to the Louisiana Green Corps, which provides green

training and a technical certification program, as well as computer skills and job search education. Upon completion of his course work, Mr. Posey was hired to make cabinets and refurbish old lumber for resale. He finds this work fulfilling and says he feels appreciated. He also discovered that he loves working with people. In addition, Mr. Posey resides in an apartment subsidized through the Department of Housing and Urban Development –VA Supportive Housing program. He received assistance with his rental deposit, first month’s rent, and half of his utility expenses. He is also looking forward to the purchase of a truck.

“I have no reason to go back [to substance use],” Mr. Posey says. He has reestablished family relationships. In fact, he reconnected with his daughter and was present at the birth of his grandson. Mr. Posey feels truly blessed and is grateful for a second chance in life.

Having Hope and Motivation

Mr. Posey credits the HVRP program and the VA for his sobriety, along with obtaining an apartment and an occupation, stating, “I am hopeful today and motivated to do the right thing.”

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