

James D., Combat Engineer with the Army. Injured During His Tour in Iraq 2009. (Ft Dix/Clementon NJ) #49772

James represents many of the wounded warrior families that Operation Homefront helps with generous support such as yours. James suffers from what is referred to as the signature wound of the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns, Traumatic Brain Injury. And like so many, he faces the challenge of progress and setbacks both with his health and with navigating the Veterans Administration.

In the time since his initial diagnosis and disability rating, James' health deteriorated. The ongoing and residual effects of his traumatic brain injury began to impact his vision significantly. He was no longer able to drive, and his worsening health eventually meant he could no longer remain employed.

James submitted an updated claim to the Veterans Administration. Two years ago. As of this date, James is still waiting. He had been given a decision date for his appeal. September, 2014. Again, James is still waiting.

We see significant time lapses and delays in benefits regularly at Operation Homefront. During those delays, families use savings and cost cutting measures to make every dollar go as far as it can. But when one year stretches into two, as it has for James, one can begin to run out of options.

A tough winter this year meant high utility bills, and as you can imagine, when one is on a shoestring budget already, any fluctuation in costs of living can mean the difference between lights and heat, or groceries and medicines. Out of options, James came to Operation Homefront with a request for help with catching up with his electric and gas bills from the winter.

Not only were we able to help keep the lights on for James, but we were able to help provide him with information and referrals that will help with future financial security and sustainability. In talking with James, we discovered that he had a close friend that was assisting him significantly in his daily activities. James was unaware of the significant assistance and resources available for individuals who act as wounded warrior caregivers. Our caseworkers provided James with the application and VA Caregiver help line phone numbers, as well as referral to a partner non-profit for help with the process.

We are only able to help families like James' because of the support we receive from individuals and organizations like yours. The effects of over a decade of war on the health and well-being of our military and veteran families can last for years, and are still being quantified. Thank you for helping us ensure the support and resources are there for them, and for giving back to those who have sacrificed so much for our freedom.