

Veteran Makes Comeback for Grandchildren with the Help of Easterseals NH

When Joe was referred to Easterseals NH's Military & Veterans Services by Veterans Affairs in 2019, care coordinator Glenn Kazan knew he had his work cut out for him to give the New Hampshire Army veteran a hand up with basic needs. But there was another compelling element to Joe's story that gave his need for help urgency beyond that.

At the time Glenn met Joe, Joe had been living in isolation at an extended-stay motel. He was weeks behind on his rent payments and facing homelessness. Two-thirds of his fixed income was going toward housing, which left very little for other essentials like clothing, food, transportation, and health services. He had untreated post-traumatic stress disorder, and his mental health was fragile.

"Joe had been connected with a psychologist and a psychiatrist through Veterans Affairs, but when I met him, he had withdrawn from treatment," Glenn says. "He was depressed and discouraged. He was in a bad way."

Joe was barely eating because he had no money for food or to take a taxi or bus to a food pantry. His brother would help him out when he could, but not being local and working full time meant that was not very often. Joe also had dental problems and medical issues stemming from his depression.

Glenn acted quickly to help Joe apply for a Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) voucher for housing. While they waited for approval, Glenn took Joe shopping for clothes



at Goodwill and Salvation Army, drove him to the food pantry, and tapped Easterseals NH's Veterans Count program for financial assistance to help pay bills, cover rent, buy food, and get a bus card.

Glenn connected Joe to a therapist, and he began taking medication for his mental health. "That stabilized his day-to-day thinking," Glenn says. "He came alive again." Glenn calls this the

power of human connection: Joe had someone who cared. He was willing to accept help.

Joe was also hastening to turn his life around because of a family matter that needed resolution. His son and daughter-in-law, both struggling with substance use disorders, had been charged with neglect of their seven and nine-year-old children. The state had recently turned to him for

potential guardianship, and Joe did not want to let his family down. He told the state he would take custody if the parents could not and if he could meet the state's requirement that he stabilize his own situation.

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Glenn Kazan

"His hotel room was pretty sleazy," Glenn says. "Not the kind of place you want to raise two kids. The clock was ticking for him to get things moving." Joe was motivated.

Glenn set about helping Joe establish himself as a reliable potential guardian. When Joe could not get to his twice-weekly meetings with the caseworker at New Hampshire Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) on his own, Glenn drove him. Every time, Glenn made it a point to speak to the caseworker, using his knowledge of the court's process to communicate Joe's progress.

"He loves his grandkids," Glenn says. "Those kids were everything to him. I'd say they kept him alive."

When the VASH voucher was approved, Joe moved into an apartment in a good neighborhood. Through contacts in the community, Glenn found Joe a bed, cookware and utensils, and a Welcome Kit with house warming basics. He also worked with Joe to find him reduced-cost dental care.

Finally, Glenn helped Joe tackle a past legal issue that had been holding Joe back from driving or owning a car. Ten years earlier, he had failed to appear in court for a traffic violation. Joe had lost his license, and fees and fines had piled up in the interim. It was another hardship that could potentially affect his ability to care for his grandchildren. Drawing again from his past experience working with the courts, Glenn wrote a letter on Joe's behalf that outlined all he'd been doing to move forward.

On the day of Joe's hearing, he received the ultimate ruling in his favor.

"They closed the case and rescinded all the associated fines when they heard his [Joe's] story," Glenn says. "They opened the door to him getting a driver's license again. That was \$2,000 to \$3,000 they waived. It was a big win for him to have that whole thing dropped."

Thanks to Glenn's diligence and Joe's hard work, Joe is in an excellent spot to be an involved grandparent and potential guardian. Whether Joe takes guardianship of his grandchildren is still to be determined. But when Joe's MVS case was closed in 2020, DCYF felt comfortable granting him that role if his son and daughter-in-law could not resume parenting the children, Glenn says. Either way, the outcome was a victory from Glenn's perspective.

"I saw a vet make a total transformation in six months," Glenn says. "I was so pleased he could start to contribute to the community. He was on the sidelines for a while."