

Connecticut Auxiliary serving Veterans for over 100 years

HOMELESS VETERANS

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It takes a special kind of resilience to get back up again after a hurricane has left you homeless, not once but twice. Navy Veteran Margarita Belmarez has that kind of resilience. In less than 2 years and with the support of VA she has gone from sleeping in her car to owning her own home. Her story begins with her journey into and out of homelessness, it begins by trying to escape a controlling and abusive parent by joining the Navy in 1978 and serving 8 years as a mess management specialist.

Less than a year into her service she was assaulted on duty, an experience all too common for women in the military. She was told she needed to keep quiet if she wanted to keep her naval career, so she buried the trauma.

After discharge from the Navy and leaving an abusive marriage, she returned home. 3 years later Hurricane Katrina destroyed her home. The devastation she witnessed was life altering. She stuck it out and tried to make ends meet, finding herself without a place to live for the first time. She returned to her parent's home in Texas and Hurricane Harvey was bearing down on her in 2017. Over the next few years, she bounced from being sheltered and unsheltered, eventually sleeping in her car.

She went to the local VA clinic, meeting with a counselor who listened and understood her experiences as a female Veteran. Within 3 months she was in her own apartment and eventually purchased her own home. "It's been amazing, the turnaround in my life since VA has come in to assist me. I never knew about the help that was available" she said. Now back on her feet she makes sure to reach out to Veterans that are still struggling. "When I see my fellow Veterans falling by the wayside, I want to reach down and pick them up because that's what somebody did for me" she added.

They are out there and they need our support today!

Homeless Veterans Flyer #4