

PVA VETERANS CAREER PROGRAM UPDATE

May 2021

OTIS MATTOX: MULTIPLE STEPS ALONG THE WAY

After serving in the military, Otis Mattox, an Army Veteran and active PVA member with the Florida Gulf Coast Chapter, successfully started and ran his own FedEx retail outlet for nearly 30 years. After an unfortunate injury in 2015, Otis was forced to sell his business and embark on a new path.



In 2019, Otis was nearing the end of his extensive rehabilitation and was ready to start thinking about his future so a PVA National Service Officer referred him to Veterans Career Program Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Genia Hachenberg. Otis was at a crossroads: he could pursue paid employment or he could secure the long-term disability benefits to which he was entitled. Genia carefully presented both options making clear that the decision was his to make, and PVA support would not waiver. Otis was adamant that paid employment was his goal saying, *“Even though I’m in my 50s, I don’t think I’m done. Why not just make a life? I can still make a life for myself. So that’s my motivation right there, all itself. I can do something with my life.”* Next, Otis pursued education through the VA’s Veterans Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program. Initially, Otis’s application with VR&E was denied as they did not believe he would be able to successfully work, but Genia guided him through a lengthy appeal process and ultimately he was successful.

In August of 2020, Otis enrolled in a local technical college to build a new skill set. Genia and Otis discussed what it would be like to be back in the classroom, and she advised him on accommodations and addressed some of his “first day of school” nerves. Overall, Otis enjoyed being out of the house, interacting with new people, and learning again.

Otis attended several PVA Veterans Career Live sessions, learning different tactics on interviewing and resume development, and networking with employers. He also enjoyed interacting with other veterans and learning about free resources, such as Saylor Academy, where Otis earned a certificate in customer service.

In April 2021 Otis was ready for the next step: paid employment. Genia shared a variety of positions and Otis was most interested in a position with Maximus, a company that offers competitive pay, remote work, on the job paid training, and full-time employment. Otis accepted a position as a Customer Service Representative. He is happy to be working again and paying it forward for others who find themselves in his situation:

“My goal is to go back to work to replenish the system by paying taxes so someone else who needs to go to school can do that.”

IMPACT + OPPORTUNITIES

22 Client Placements

- 11 Paid Employment
- 9 Training/Education
- 2 Volunteer



19 Veterans

3 Family Members

5 PVA Members

95 Total Placements in 2021

PVA WELCOMES NEW PRESIDENT: CHARLIE BROWN

PVA announced on May 22nd that U.S. Marine Corps Veteran Charles Brown, who previously served as PVA’s national senior vice president, will now hold its highest elected office as the new national president.



“I’ve had countless PVA mentors throughout my life – those who helped me get up after my injury, pushed me to get active at the chapter levels, and encouraged me to be involved with the national office. PVA is in great hands, not because of me but because of the team that PVA is and has been for 75 years. Together, we are all the face of PVA and we will continue to let everyone know that we count, that our voice matters, and that we deserve the same rights as everyone else.”

JOIN PVA AND HONOR THE SPOT

Announced at our 2021 Annual Convention, PVA invites all American’s to Honor the Spot. This new call to action comes as pandemic restrictions ease and public spaces open up to larger capacities. The campaign includes a PSA airing on television stations throughout the U.S. and an invitation to sign a pledge of support. David Zurfluh, U.S. Air Force Veteran and PVA national president said:

“Our Honor the Spot campaign is about carrying that mission forward into today’s challenges, like accessible parking, which is a huge problem facing our members and others with mobility challenges. It is also about educating the public, who may not realize the impact that misusing these spaces, even for a minute, can have on people with disabilities.”

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