

Once Struggling Service Officer is ‘Paying It Forward’

Now in a position to help veterans, Maddie Fletcher works to help veterans no matter what may be going through

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When the Department of New York VFW published a posting for an assistant Department service officer, Navy veteran Maddie Fletcher considered applying for the job. But she decided the hour-and-a-half commute was too much.

A few months later, Fletcher attended a VFW conference where the Department announced it was still looking to fill the role. She reconsidered and spoke with Department personnel to see if it would be a good fit. Shortly after, Fletcher was called in for an interview, offered the job and accepted.

Since starting a few months ago, Fletcher splits her time between a VFW office in Albany and another in New York City. She uses the drive time to clear her mind before and after each day.

Fletcher’s main responsibility is to help individuals secure benefits. But she wants veterans to know that whatever they are going through — even if it is not related to benefits — her office is there to help.

“One of the first cases I got was a veteran in the city. His car battery had died, so he was getting tickets and couldn’t get to his job,” she explained.

Around the same time, the veteran and his wife were forced out of their apartment because of a rat and bedbug infestation, and the couple had to sleep in their car.

“The veteran called me one morning while having a breakdown and talked about taking drastic measures,” Fletcher said. “It broke my heart, and I knew I needed to do something.”

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Fletcher was able to provide immediate assistance. With her help, the couple got something to eat and put gas in their car.

“After that, everything just kind of did a 180,” she said.

The veteran got his vehicle to the shop, and with help from Fletcher and others, including New York District 1 Commander Luke Magliaro Jr., got a new car battery. After that, he was able to go back to work and find placement in a shelter. The case stands out to Fletcher because it proves that small actions can have a major impact.

“Sometimes, it’s just talking to somebody,” she said. “Anytime I start a conversation with a veteran, I ask them if their benefits are OK or if they know anyone looking for help. That’s generally how I’ve pulled things in — just talking to people.” Since that early case, Fletcher has had other victories. But that does not mean the job is easy.

“The most challenging thing is not being able to do everything, but there’s only so much you can do,” she said.

Despite feeling frustrated when things do not work out, Fletcher knows this is the role for her.

“I’m in a position now where I feel like I can actually do something to help people,” she explained. “There was a time when I didn’t have anything and I needed help. I feel like in a way, I’m paying it forward. It’s like it’s what I’m supposed to be doing — it just feels right.”

Learn more about the [VFW's National Veterans Service \(NVS\) program](#).