

Industry gets behind wellness alternative to benefit military vets

By Bill Lunn
Special to Furniture Today

MINNEAPOLIS — Navy veteran Brad Huff loved his time serving aboard an aircraft carrier, and during the Vietnam War, he served aboard the John F. Kennedy, where he suffered a back injury. It was an injury that nagged him for years after he left the Navy, growing progressively worse.

After decades of treatment and a bag full of prescriptions, Huff was still in pain and needed two canes to walk. He thought he was out of options.

Then Huff heard about Pain Free Patriots, a non-profit based in the Twin Cities that helps veterans deal with pain issues without the use of prescription medications and at no cost to the veteran.

"These people took this wrecked body that no one could fix and started repairing me. The pain is going away. I got rid of my canes," Huff said.

Huff's story is just one of more than 600 veterans whom Pain Free Patriots, the brainchild of Minnesota's Becker Furniture World founder Doug Huseby, has helped over the past eight years.

While Huseby had received a deferment from the Vietnam War to go to college, he watched many of his friends come home with wounds, some of them wounds others couldn't see. He felt obligated to help. It was a seed that would grow and motivate him to start Pain Free Patriots.

By 1978, Huseby was busy with a tiny 500-square-foot furniture warehouse in rural Becker, Minn., the beginnings of what would become a multimillion-

dollar furniture business with six stores around the state, including the 300,000-square-foot flagship store.

While he and his family ran the stores, health and wellness was Huseby's passion. He created clinics for his employees inside his stores. When his health insurance agent asked him how his claims were going down, while others' were going up, Huseby attributed the difference to his health and wellness clinics.

In 2010, Huseby came across a 30-year-old veteran in extreme pain. The veteran told Huseby that he had lost his job, car, house and that his wife had left him. Huseby invited the veteran to his wellness center and promised that all his treatment would be taken care of for free. Six weeks later the man's pain was significantly diminished, and he was resuming his life.

Word spread about the veteran who had been helped free of charge. A business associate of Huseby's asked if his uncle, a Korean War vet, could come in for treatment. Huseby agreed to provide treatment him for free as well. After six weeks, his pain was also diminished.

After working with these two veterans, Huseby and his granddaughter visited a veterans organization and signed up several more veterans to come in for free treatments. Pain Free Patriots was launched.

Today, Pain Free Patriots has served more than 600 veterans: Navy SEALs, Army special operators, Air Force vets, Marines and combat veterans from Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm and post 9/11. The vets who come to Pain Free



Jeff and Max McWey accept the 2018 Pain Free Patriots Appreciation Award.



LEFT: Tom Schmidt and Doug Huseby greet Brad Williams, Pain Free Patriots grant recipient.

BELOW: Army veteran Don Nosko with his donated HealthySleep pillow.



Patriots often share a similar story: They've been to multiple doctors, the VA and have been given numerous prescriptions including temporary relief from their pain, but when the meds stop the pain resurfaces.

The first thing vets are assured is that Pain Free Patriots uses no narcotics in treatment. Pain Free Patriots offers more permanent solutions through a series of protocols and technologies developed over decades of doing corporate wellness programs for many companies. At the clinic, the veterans see a doctor, who assesses their needs. More than 90% of veterans who complete the program report significant, lasting relief from their pain after treatment.

But treating veterans costs money. For Pain Free Patriots to put a veteran through a full course of treatments; about four to six weeks visiting twice a week costs on average between \$3,000 and \$5,000. The money is raised by Pain Free Patriots, mostly from within Minnesota.

Huseby, 75, is now seeing business leaders in the furniture industry and across the nation step up to help, and his goal is to expand the Pain Free Patriots program nationwide.

Stepping in to help

Among those who are getting involved is Jeff McWey of GBS Inds., a leader in furniture protection as well as top of bed products. McWey heard about Pain Free Patriots about five years ago, and he could empathize with the veterans struggling with constant pain.

As a former hockey player, McWey struggled with neck, back and hip pain, and he developed a specialized pillow to help with that. Besides contributing financially to the program, GBS Inds. now partners with Pain Free Patriots to give every veteran in the program one of McWey's custom-fitted HealthySleep Ultra Tech pillows.

In August, McWey's family and GBS Inds. were awarded the Pain Free Patriots 2018 Appreciation Award given to the individual or company that personifies the organization's mission to serve veterans.

Marine veteran Tom Schmidt, a salesman for furniture manufacturer Steve Silver Company in Forney, Texas, recently flew to Minneapolis for Pain Free Patriots' annual gala, impressed by Huseby's commitment and passion to serve veterans.

Schmidt says he is reaching out to other vets to make them aware of Pain Free Patriots and would love to see Pain Free Patriots expand its treatment around the country, especially to his state of Texas with so many veterans there.

Huseby is proud of his success in the furniture industry but now spends most of his time focusing on Pain Free Patriots and coordinating veteran treatments through his Ultimate Wellness Centers. For him, nothing beats the feeling of watching a veteran transition from pain to pain free.

"It makes you want to cry. That's the pay you get," Huseby said. "That's how we get paid, watching a veteran's life changed by our technology, so they can move forward, where they could not before." 

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Brad Huff, Navy veteran