

Long's Short Report – Helping veterans at the local level

By: Rep. Billy Long

U.S. Air Force veterans Ted and Amy Donaldson saw the needs of veterans in their community and decided to help their brothers and sisters in arms. In 2014, guided by their faith, Ted and Amy started Compass Quest, a local nonprofit in Joplin, Missouri, that supports veterans transitioning to civilian life. What started off as a small effort focused on veteran wellness soon grew into something much greater.

Veterans are always telling me about the challenges they face when returning home including job hunting. After serving in the military, many expect these veterans to transition into civilian life overnight. Unfortunately, that's not always an easy task. Almost one-third of veterans say they experience difficulties when re-entering and adjusting to civilian life. That's why local organizations like Compass Quest are essential to making this transition as smooth as possible by helping connect veterans with local opportunities.

After Ted and Amy started Compass Quest, they partnered with the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce and began an initiative called Welcome Home Joplin, which aims to attract veterans and their families to the local area. Through this partnership, they have been able to visit military bases close to Joplin and showcase the wonderful opportunities their city has to offer for veterans and their families, such as higher education, vocational training and a variety of career options. In 2017 alone, Compass Quest, with the help of the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce, assisted nearly 1,000 veterans through one-on-one support by providing resources and mentorship.

Sterling King, a veteran who struggled with addiction, said that it was because of his relationship with Ted that his well-being as a person improved so much. During Sterling's 18-month Veterans Court journey, which is a court designed for minor offenses and veterans suffering from service-related illnesses, Ted was paired up with him through the Veterans Court mentor program. Through the course of this program, Ted was there every step of the way giving Sterling support and advice and offering ways he could get involved with his community.

Sterling's story is similar to the thousands of veterans across the country. It's why organizations like Compass Quest and people like Ted and Amy are so important for local communities. Although I do my part on the federal level, it is the work at the local level that really helps veterans struggling to adjust to civilian life. I commend organizations like this who work each and every day to take care of the men and women returning home who have sacrificed so much for us.

For more information on my activities in our district and in Washington I encourage you to follow my Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Rep.Billy.Long> and my Twitter page

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