

Testimony of Corporal John Schneider, United States Marines

Mr. Chairman and Members:

My name is John Schneider. After serving in the United States Marines for 10 years and trained as a sniper, serving our country, I was honorably discharged and returned to Minnesota.

However, upon my return, I fell on hard times and had difficulty transitioning to civilian life. I was homeless. I lived out of a hunting blind in the Chippewa National Forest and at times, resorted to eating squirrels to stay alive.

I did not have the skills to live independently and had a disability. I was struggling with PTSD and undiagnosed epilepsy at the time.

Then one day, I received a call from a guy that was with the Independent Living Center. He offered to help and I came into his office to talk.

They went through all of my needs and issues. When an individual continually gets handouts, he loses the ability to help himself.

The first thing we accomplished was housing and we got an apartment with energy assistance, donated household supplies and furnishings. I learned cooking skills. Over time, I learned to advocate for myself, get medical treatment and file for Social Security Disability at the time.

The Independent Living Center taught me how to live my life. The most important thing is I got my family back. My son now lives with me and my mother is proud of me again. I once again respected myself.

I have now earned my Associate's Degree & Bachelor's of Science, with a 4.0 GPA.

I speak on the dangers of drugs and alcohol to minors and our community.

I have now moved into a house and own a reliable vehicle. I've had the honor of leading my tribe's ceremonial traditions as the Eagle Staff Carrier. I am now the Commander of American Legion Post 2018.

I consider myself a productive member of society once again.

I owe Access North Independent Living Center a debt of gratitude. I had a huge mountain of issues to overcome and the Center broke the overwhelming mountain down into achievable small steps that I could manage.

I'd like to thank this Committee and the Centers for Independent Living for being here today.

Thank you,

John Schneider, Bemidji, Minnesota

