



## **A Bank and a Nonprofit Join Forces to Change Lives**

A unique partnership between a bank and a nonprofit is transforming lives here in Orange County by helping veterans find meaningful employment and achieve self-sufficiency after service. Wells Fargo and Working Wardrobes have teamed up to do just that, and for veteran Dean Battaglia, this alliance has transformed his life in ways he never could have imagined.

Dean was raised in a military family and joined the Air Force right out of high school. After 10 years of service, touring in East Berlin during the fall of the wall and receiving numerous decorations, he retired from the military and went into the hospitality field where he had a successful decade-long career.

Then a series of tragedies in the family pulled his attention back home.

First, his brother committed suicide and then his father, stepfather, and brother passed away, just as his mother suffered a brain aneurism which left her temporarily paralyzed. Without a second thought, Dean gave up his career to return home and care for his mother. The recovery turned into a ten year journey, during which time Dean lost his job and fell into a deep depression, turning to alcohol and food for comfort. “I was penniless, facing homelessness and eviction,” he said. “At that point, I was depressed and eating to cope.”

Doctors told Dean that if he didn’t change his habits, he was on the path to a heart attack. He was referred to Working Wardrobes for help through the nonprofit’s VetNet program which is designed to transition at-risk veterans and put them on the path to success.

Dean’s VetNet case manager immediately implemented an employment plan of action that included career assessment and development services, job training, financial literacy workshops, interview tactics and skills, resume writing, and job placement assistance, helping him succeed at several part-time security jobs to build his resume.

VetNet also educates corporations on best practices available for veteran recruiting hiring and retention. Its team members educate human resources representatives about the skills veterans bring from their time in the military, such as leadership, loyalty, mission dedication, organizational skills, and a work ethic that often far exceeds their civilian peers.

Like VetNet, Wells Fargo is equally likeminded when it comes to helping veterans after service.

Wells Fargo created the Military & Veteran Affairs Program (MVAP) in 2012 to expand outreach to members of the military, veterans, and their families. Since that time, it has

donated over 350 homes valued at over \$55 million to veterans, hired more than 7,000 veterans, and donated more than \$47 million to military and veteran related nonprofits.

Through Working Wardrobes, Dean learned about the Wells Fargo Veteran Employment Transition internship program (VET) which supports and transitions veterans into the financial industry. A year ago, he took a career step by applying to VET and got the internship. "I won the lottery," he said.

He successfully completed his 8-week internship program and in 2017, Wells Fargo hired him as a full time Business Banking Credit Analyst in Irvine, an important role in which he is responsible for assessing a loan applicant's credit worthiness. He is a relationship manager in training, earning a paycheck that is now three times what he was making as a security guard. VET gained a lot of ground after the success of Dean's internship and Wells Fargo continues to grow its program, including the hiring of 50 additional interns.

Today, Dean gives back as well by volunteering each month in various capacities through Wells Fargo's Veteran's Team Member Network and at the Working Wardrobes' VetNet program. He has participated in several mentoring and resume building volunteer projects including the VetNet Employer Panel, where veterans receive mentoring in career skills from local business professionals.

"I never thought I would make it out of that dark place in my life," said Dean. "I know what it's like to be jobless, depressed, and hopeless. I don't want any of my fellow veterans to ever feel that way. There are incredible programs they can rely on and there is light at the end of the tunnel. Advocating for fellow veterans and educating them about programs like VetNet and VET is the least I can do to pay it forward. I want every veteran to understand how important it is to experience The Power of a Paycheck."

Today, Dean is happily engaged to the woman of his dreams, working full time as a Wells Fargo Credit Analyst, volunteering his time for veterans, and enjoying Southern California and the outdoors during his personal time.

Congratulations, Dean and thank you for your service! You deserve the very best in life.