



RAY, TRAVERSE CITY

Marine Corps veteran Ray Evans, 73, came to Northwest Michigan Health Services (NMHS) with some amazing stories to tell. His tales of combat and service were riveting and made the NMHS oral health team more determined than ever to help address his physical and financial needs.



When Ray came to the office, he was restricted to a liquid diet only. He could not chew, as he had only three bottom teeth and he was keeping his upper denture in with adhesive so it wouldn't fall out. NMHS staff helped by extracting three teeth, performing alveoloplasty, and fabricating a new set of dentures. Soon, Ray will receive implant retention pins.

Best of all? This work was all done at no cost to Ray.

NMHS was able to help with Ray's financial challenges thanks to a project they call Victors for Vets. Through the program, the office provides free dental care to veterans by using U of M dental students, local volunteer dentists, and its own auxiliary staff.

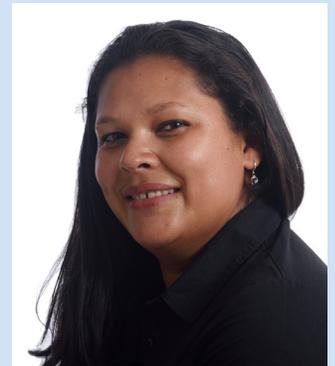
Unfortunately, many former servicemen and women have been left to deal with the consequences of their military time alone (from PTSD to cancer and other post-deployment issues). They have no dental care (the nearest veteran dental clinic is hours away), limited access to help for any medical issues, no quality behavioral healthcare, and no real advocate to turn to for help. They need housing, jobs, food, shelter, healthcare – many of them are homeless or underemployed.

Ray Evans is just one of the vets NMHS has helped. He is so happy, now eating, speaking, and smiling like a new man. This program is very emotional for everyone, but very rewarding.

Like Ray, many of the veterans NMHS has served

JULIE, DETROIT

Julie needed dental care to be able to get her customer service job at Home Depot back.



At Home Depot, you are required to greet customers with, "Can I help you find something?" Without front teeth, Julie was unable to say "find" clearly and kept substituting other words. Finally, she was demoted to the store room, where she had no contact with customers and got paid less per hour.

During the wax-try-in for her dentures, she said, "Can I help you find something?" and burst into a huge smile. Julie got her job back.

Access to dental care is limited or nonexistent for nearly one million Michigan residents, creating serious oral health care issues that lead to tooth loss, pain and potential lifelong issues. Sadly, these access challenges make stories like Julie's commonplace.

can now smile without pain or being self-conscious. Many of them have obtained gainful employment with a smile of nice teeth and some new self-esteem.

But from what we hear, there are tons of vets in the region with no access to dental care – no dental insurance, no transportation to get to a VA center downstate, and no money because of no job or a disability. NMHS is forced to turn away many anxious former servicemen due to lack of funding and support. More help is urgently needed to give back to the men and women who have given so much to the nation.