

Summerlin-based fund offers immediate aid for veterans



Joseph Whacks, his wife, Ghowanda, and their twin girls, seen around Christmas 2017, pose outside the Tuscany Hotel and Casino where the Kline Veterans Fund of Summerlin put them up after the family became homeless. (Kline Veterans Fund)

By Jan Hogan / LVRJ - View
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When veterans are in a bind, the Summerlin-based Kline Veterans Fund often lends a hand.

In 2017, the nonprofit saw its biggest outlay of money yet, \$106,000, more than double the prior year's \$52,000 and triple the 2015 figure of \$37,000, according to the group. It was established in 2012 and has aided an estimated 3,000 families.

While many veterans get help directly from the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Kline Veterans Fund is able to step in immediately and pay rent, a housing deposit or a utility bill.

It contributes monthly to the [United States Veterans Initiative](#) and [The Shade Tree](#). The Kline Veterans Fund recently partnered with [Michael's Angel Paws](#) to provide service dogs to two veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

“Many veterans come here (to the Las Vegas Valley) thinking of the weather,” said Morton Friedlander, Treasurer of the Kline Veterans Fund. “They can’t take the cold. But they arrive thinking they’ll find a job and then the job doesn’t pan out.”

The Kline Veterans Fund is steered by a handful of veterans who volunteer. The help often comes out of their own pockets.

In mid-January, for example, the Kline Veterans Fund learned of a 65-year-old veteran whose wife was walking 4 miles to and from the disability office.

“(Friedlander) arranged to personally pick her up and drove her around town to the different agencies to help get their issues resolved,” said board member Stephanie Helms.

The Kline Veterans Fund raises funds by soliciting money and awarding poppies to those who make any size donation. They bring in \$30,000-\$40,000 a year with grant money and donations making up the rest of the fund’s income, Friedlander said.

Joseph Whacks, 62, was in the Army from 1973-80. He and his family followed his sister-in-law to Las Vegas in 2017 for a fresh start, but job opportunities were difficult to find.

Whacks packed the family, including his wife and three children, into their vehicle. It was home for a few nights, until they came up with a plan.

“It was tight. It wasn’t just us; it was us, our clothes and everything,” he said.

At the VA center, he learned about the Kline Veterans Fund through a representative of another nonprofit, U.S. Vets. The Kline Veterans Fund put the family up at Tuscany Suites and Casino for two weeks and, later, at Siegel Suites. The fund managed to get the \$360 fee that Whacks’ wife, Ghowanda, needed to get her nursing credentials transferred from North Carolina to Nevada waived.

“We housed them for two weeks during the Christmas holiday until they could get on their feet,” Helms said.

Whacks got a job in lawn care, and the family is now in permanent housing. But he recalls how it almost didn’t happen.

“I was so blessed that someone was there to help us. I’m so grateful to them (the Kline Veterans Fund),” he said. “I owe them everything.”

The Kline Veterans Fund began as an offshoot of the Jewish War Veterans Post 64, of which the late Edward Kline was a founder. Kline formed the organization along with other veterans to provide assistance to those in need. Kline died in 2011.

Visit klineveteransfund.org.

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