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Mary Assists Homeless Veteran

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Mary Petering, FSA Corporate Director of National Accounts, lives the SGA Difference, at work and outside of work.

Back in October 2017, she saw a gentleman panhandling on the side of the road with his dog in Houston, Texas. Mary asked him if he needed anything. His only request was a coffee, and she was more than happy to get the man a warm cup.

Over time, Mary passed him more often; getting to know him a little more each time. She learned that Dave is a Vietnam veteran who lost his job and apartment, all while dealing with his PTSD. All he had left was his dog, Annie—his whole world.

“There has to be more I can do to help this person,” Mary believed—and that thought set in motion the steps it took for Dave to get back on his feet.

Mary contacted a local Veterans Affairs Center, provided them with Dave’s military identification, and watched Annie while he went to speak with a social worker. Through this process, she got Dave in the system to receive housing.

When January came around, Mary received a call from the case worker who notified her they’d have an apartment available for Dave and Annie the following month. Though she bought Dave some warm clothes for the nights, she didn’t feel it was enough. For the next six weeks, Mary set Dave and the dog up in a hotel so they didn’t have to spend the frigid 15-degree nights under the interstate.

Hilda Moy-Phillips, SSA Corporate Director of Procurement, along with Hilda’s husband, were also catching Mary’s generous spirit. They both donated money to Dave to help him provide for himself and Annie.

To this day, Mary is still making positive contributions to Dave’s life; from helping him get an ID and a new birth certificate to assisting with furnishing his new apartment.

“Helping Dave and Annie brought me joy after a tough year,” Mary said. With a loss in the family and Hurricane Harvey, 2017 was particularly trying for her.

“There’s so much truth in the statement about how ‘we don’t meet people on accident, they are meant to cross our paths for a reason.’ Dave and Annie became a bright spot for me,” she said. “It’s impossible to not feel great when you’re able to do good for others.”

Dave and Annie moved into their new place, and have been able to secure some assistance through the VA to cover their basic needs. Dave is currently seeking employment opportunities and striving to ultimately live an independent life. Mary continues to help any way she can.