

Bethalto Naval Veteran With ALS Needs Caretaker's Assistance

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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BETHALTO - Mark Cassidy, a Bethalto resident and U.S. Navy veteran with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), is in need of assistance from a caretaker as his disease progresses. His current Medical Assistant, Amy King, is seeking applicants to help her assist Cassidy with day-to-day functions.

Cassidy said veterans are twice as likely to get ALS, regardless of their branch or position.

“About 5,000 people a year are diagnosed with ALS in the United States, and for some reason, veterans are twice as likely to get ALS as non-veterans,” he said. “It doesn’t matter what branch of the service they were in, whether or not they saw combat duty, had a desk job ... it doesn’t matter, veterans are twice as likely.



“[The Association](#), after finding out this oddity about us being twice as likely to get it, they made the determination that there must be some connection between our service and ALS.”

During his time in the Navy, Cassidy served aboard the U.S.S. Illusive from 1973-1977. The Illusive was a mine-sweeping ship, and Cassidy said it was the only wooden-class ship in the Navy.

Cassidy said his ALS began with difficulty lifting his right foot and progressively made him lose motor function in his legs, a phenomenon known as “limb-onset” ALS. The disease is now affecting his upper body, making it impossible to lift anything with his left arm and extremely difficult to lift anything with his right.

While he’s currently taking Relyvrio, a new drug that helps slow the progression of the disease, daily tasks are still a challenge - underscoring his need for an additional caretaker.

King said potential caretakers would need some medical knowledge or the skills to learn quickly. The position pays \$21.75 per hour, and hours would mostly include evenings, weekends, overnights, or some combination thereof.

After an initial phone interview, King said a personal interview will be held to make sure the caretaker is a good, trustworthy fit for Cassidy. After those interviews, she said the application process would take place through the Department of Veterans Affairs. Those interested can contact King at (618) 540-9027.