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*Both Cruz R., left, and Ron P.,
CPO, are military veterans who
served our country in Vietnam.*

Former Marine Is an Advocate for Veterans' Disability Benefits

As is the case with many veterans who have served their country with honor, Cruz R. didn't complain much about his war-related injuries when he returned home from Vietnam. Like others, he was simply glad to be home and to move on with his life. That included marrying his sweetheart, Patricia, and providing for a household of four children. He retired from his position at NIPSCO as an Instrument and Control Technician in 2005, after 30 years of service.

When speaking with Cruz, you get the sense that he would rather not talk about himself. He would rather direct the discussion to veterans who are entitled to healthcare benefits.

As a member of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Chapter #17 in Hammond,

Cruz is part of a chapter that prides itself on reaching out to other veterans and helping them with disability benefits evaluations through encouragement, guidance and direction. Cruz is an essential part of that process. While facing a variety of health problems, he motivates others to reapply for benefits they may have been turned down for in the past.

Cruz speaks from experience. Many of his current medical issues are the result of being blown off a bunker during his 1969-70 tour of duty as a member of the Marine Corps. In fact, Cruz's spine fracture remained undiagnosed for more than 10 years, until one day the pain became so severe he had to seek medical treatment and his doctor connected the dots

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to Cruz's time overseas.

"Even though I was diagnosed with these conditions, I was turned down for benefits," he said. "But I didn't give up; I keep filing claims."

Veterans returning from combat get evaluated on their disability compensation by being assigned points on a rating system. Many members of the military, especially from conflicts prior to the current War on Terror, were denied claims in the past and if their injuries or ailments are deemed

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not combat-related, they cannot be treated at VA hospitals.

But what many vets don't know, and this is where Cruz and other volunteers like him can help, is that they can be re-evaluated and can appeal their decisions. "Some of these guys haven't been evaluated for more than 40 years," Cruz said. "I tell them they can apply again, and the DAV will help with the paperwork."

Although Cruz eventually received treatment for his hearing impairment from the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago, he is still in the appeal process for Agent Orange Type 2 diabetes* and his spine fracture.

His diabetes also resulted in a below-knee amputation on his right leg, and a partial foot amputation on his left leg. He also had a kidney transplant in 2006, with the donor being his daughter, Esther. This was Cruz's second transplant. In 1972, Cruz donated a kidney to an older brother. Eleven years later, Cruz's remaining kidney began to go bad, and another brother donated a kidney to him. In July 2006, when kidney problems resurfaced, Esther volunteered to become the donor.

Cruz's newest kidney is working fine, but one week after the transplant, he suffered a second stroke that severely constricted his ligaments. As a result of that, he relies on a wheelchair for mobility. Despite having so many health problems, Cruz remains dedicated to helping fellow vets. "I talk to other veterans whenever I see them. I carry the card of the Chapter #17 DAV post and recommend they talk to the



membership official about whether they have a case. If they do, the DAV will help them with the paperwork and processing."

In fact, Cruz was instrumental in urging his prosthetist, Ron P., CPO, and owner of Calumet Orthopedic & Prosthetics Co., to follow-up on his own benefits. Ron, also a Vietnam vet, came home from the war with a severe hearing loss. When he applied for benefits, he was turned down with one of the reasons being his records could not be found after the 1973 fire at the National Personnel Record Center (NPRC) in St. Louis. "I didn't pursue it," Ron said. "Like other vets, I was just happy to be home and happy to have a life again."

But after Cruz came to him for a prosthesis and the two began talking about their shared experiences, Cruz urged Ron to seek compensation. "Cruz really prompted me to do something for myself," Ron said. "Because of Cruz, I went to my local DAV post in Porter County to get the paperwork going."

This time, enough of Ron's military records were reconstructed to indicate his hearing ability was significantly different pre- and post-deployment.** "My service representative said it is a classic case of being able to reapply for benefits," Ron said.

"Never give up on filing claims," said Cruz. He remains upbeat about his own health concerns, and turns the focus to others in need. "I take it one day at a time. But I urge all veterans to get their healthcare updated by going through a re-evaluation.

"My role is not hard," he added. "I just talk and let them know what they can do, and encourage them to attend our monthly meetings."

Cruz and other vets who stay involved must be doing something right. According to the Hammond Chapter #17 Web site, the post is the number one recruiting chapter in the state of Indiana, averaging 70 to 80 active members attending every meeting.

*In 2000, the VA added Type 2 diabetes to the list of "presumptive diseases" associated with herbicide exposure. That action followed a report that the National Academy of Sciences found "limited/suggestive" evidence of an association between the chemicals used in herbicides during the Vietnam War, such as Agent Orange, and Type 2 diabetes. – Source: American Diabetes Association

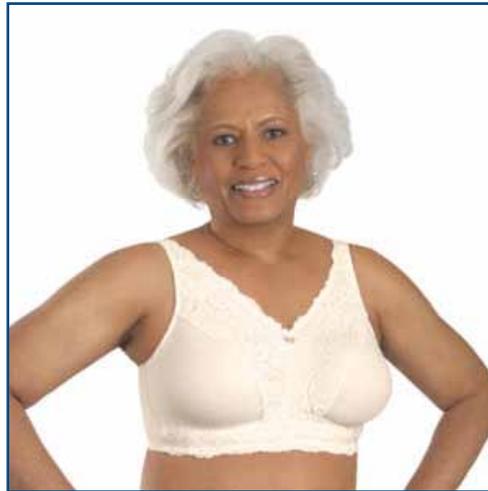
**By using alternate sources, NPRC may often be able to reconstruct a veteran's beginning and ending dates of active service, the character of service, rank while in service, time lost while on active duty, and periods of hospitalization. NPRC is usually able to issue NA Form 13038, "Certification of Military Service," considered the equivalent of a Form DD-214, "Report of Separation from Active Duty," for the purpose of establishing eligibility for veterans benefits. – Source: National Veterans Legal Services Program

Although Memorial Day has passed, we at Calumet would like to take this opportunity to thank all our military, active and retired, whose courage and sacrifice, allow us to live in freedom.

Innovative and Luxurious “Pink” Line Now Available at A Fitting Image

A Fitting Image, Calumet’s postmastectomy care division devoted exclusively to women who have had full or partial breast removal or reconstructive surgery, now offers the “Pink” line of products from American Breast Care. The technologically-advanced bras and breast forms are designed to increase a woman’s self-confidence while providing comfortable support and fit.

The Embrace bra, finished in an elegant lace detail, features wide straps for maximum security and higher side panels that offer greater support for women who need additional coverage. The higher neckline of the bra makes it ideal for wear with any American Breast Care breast form. The non-coated metal appointment on the back of the bra also makes it easier to slip into and increases durability. Sizes are available in 34 - 40 A, B, C, and D.



Also new is the Massage Form, a breakthrough breast form made of smooth, soft satin skin that is designed to provide extra comfort for women with lymphedema. The back of the breast form features channels of silicone gel that create paths for air circulation, providing a massaging action to the chest wall and making it cooler than other asymmetrics. The asymmetric design also provides a secure fit for less shifting in the bra. Sizes are offered in 3 through 14 and can be designated for the left or right breast. A supportive bra is best when wearing this breast form.

A Fitting Image offers private fitting rooms and professional assistance in selecting, wearing, and caring for custom-fit breast forms and accompanying foundation garments. For details on any postmastectomy product, or to schedule an appointment, contact Patty M. at (219) 942-2148 weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Hire Heroes USA Helps Disabled Vets Find Jobs

Hire Heroes USA is a program designed to help veterans with disabilities find careers nationwide. Hire Heroes helps veterans returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom with any level of disability as determined by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Hire Heroes will identify veterans with disabilities who are seeking career placement services by working with transition centers and VA rehabilitation centers. Each applicant will be qualified and screened to determine career interests, job skills and location preferences. Additionally, Hire Heroes USA will work with potential employers by contacting interested companies to identify suitable positions for the veterans. Efforts are underway to raise the necessary operating funds to make this program a success.

If you are a disabled veteran or an employer who would like to help, more information is available at www.hireheroesusa.org.

Employer Database of Job Candidates with Disabilities

The U.S. Department of Labor offers a free database to employers of more than 1,900 job candidates with disabilities seeking employment in a wide variety of fields.

The Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities, co-sponsored by the Labor Department’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and the U.S. Department of Defense, compiled

the database by sending recruiters to college campuses across the country to interview eligible undergraduate and post-graduate students, as well as recent graduates.

“Historically, people with disabilities consistently have experienced difficulties finding employment regardless of the economic climate,” said Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. “Providing an internship or first job to someone with a disability can provide a real jumpstart in launching a successful career. The Workforce Recruitment Program offers top talent while enabling college students and recent graduates the opportunity to gain invaluable work experience.”

Hiring officials at federal agencies can access the Workforce Recruitment Program database and conduct independent searches on the Internet by obtaining a password at <https://WRP.gov>.

Employers in the private sector, state and local government agencies, and nonprofit organizations should contact the Labor Department’s Employer Assistance and Recruiting Network at (866) 327-6669 to access the database. The Workforce Recruitment Program has assisted employers in identifying job candidates with disabilities who meet their recruitment needs since 1995.

ODEP is leading a 21st century federal response to the historic underemployment of people with disabilities. In collaboration with other government agencies, public and private employers, and additional stakeholders, ODEP facilitates the development and implementation of innovative policies and practices necessary to achieve a fully inclusive workplace. For more information, visit www.dol.gov/odep.

Calumet Orthopedic & Prosthetics Co.

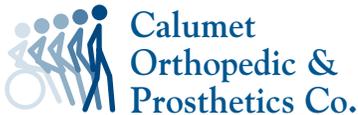
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Serving the Calumet Region Since 1953



Epirus® Is a Lightweight Low-Profile Foot for Active Amputees



The Epirus® from Endolite is a lightweight, low-profile, energy-storing foot designed for low- to high-impact K3 amputees who may enjoy occasional recreational sports. It is biomimetically-engineered to provide more natural ankle motion, and comfort and stability for the amputee on varied terrain and activities. The Epirus features Endolite's patented e-carbon independent heel and toe for stability and multi-axial rotation to reduce torsional pressures on the residual limb.

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Iceross® Transfemoral Liner Designed to Fit the Thigh

Ossur North America's Iceross® Seal-In® X5 Liner for transfemoral amputees, gives users the convenience of a simple step-in-and-go system, yet results in an airtight seal that conforms to the residual limb and the internal socket wall. This proprietary design with five incorporated seals ensures firm, pure suction, allowing for unprecedented function without sacrificing stability, comfort or skin health. The integrated full length matrix supports the seals during donning to prevent elongation of the distal tissue, while maintaining step-in-and-go convenience.

