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## Project Salute Rolls Into Jax To Help Disabled Vets

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**JACKSONVILLE, Fla.** -- Project Salute's mobile law office rolled to Jacksonville on Monday to help low-income veterans with benefit claims and to train lawyers to help vets continue to fight for the benefits they were promised.

The University of Detroit Mercy School of Law is making a difference on wheels. Their bus and the professors and students inside have already traveled to six cities in Texas and Florida helping hundreds of veterans get the disability benefits they deserve but haven't been able to secure.

Hit by a mortar blast in Iraq, Army Pvt. Patrick Feges in Texas has war stories and even a purple heart, but what he didn't have last year were any of the benefits he earned after waiting more than 19 months for help.

"I lost a lot of faith in the VA system," Feges said.

"Maybe if he had gotten his help when he got out -- things would have been different," said Feges' mother, Mary Jowell.

"There are some cases in which there are people who seem to have very strong claims and it seems like the evidence will be there in terms of showing that their injuries are service-related," said Mark Gordan, of the UDM School of Law.

Edward Sanchez visited Project Salute in Houston. He said he has paid thousands of dollars for dental work that the VA now won't cover.

Sanchez told Channel 4 he has been trying to get his \$30,000 back for the last two years.

After years of hearing the same words, Sanchez found at Project Salute an ear from someone willing to help him fight.

The stories are endless of veterans who marched in strong soldiers but emerged decades later disabled and defenseless.

"I've been trying for 15 years to get some benefits," said Vietnam veteran Don Hodges.

In Duval County, there are 200,000 veterans and more than 100,000 receive benefits. However, there are others who have tried and continue to be denied. For those Vets Project Salute could help.

"You really get the sense that you're helping people and they've gone through other avenues and haven't been helped and we can really help some of these people," said UDM law student Brad Erickson.

Project Salute will be in Jacksonville Tuesday through Thursday. The bus will be at the Mary Singleton Senior Center at 150 E. First St. for an information session from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Tuesday and benefit interviews from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Wednesday.

The mobile office will move to Jacksonville Area Legal Aid at 126 W. Adams on Thursday for attorney training.

The Jacksonville stop is one of 64 scheduled over nine months. During its inaugural stop -- in San Antonio, Texas -- 225 veterans registered for assistance.

To assist in the group's mission, the school is asking for the financial support and the help of local attorneys.

For more information, visit [Project Salute](#) or call 888-836-5294.

### Previous Stories:

- March 12, 2008: [Project Salute To Help Jacksonville Vets](#)

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