

Veterans Helping Veterans

After a sales call to a former military nurse in need of therapy, this ex-Marine's loyalty to his brothers and sisters in service took over.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO



For Mike Sandoval, having a true veteran-owned company is an important part of his makeup. Having served 4 years of active duty in Iraq and another 10 in the reserves, the former Marine and owner of Phoenix's Above and Beyond Pool Remodeling has hired fellow vets for key positions in his company.

He knew that, one day, he and his company would make a large gesture to help a fellow vet. He figured the recipient of his good will would be a strapping former soldier trying to pull his family together after returning from combat. So when, near the close of business on a Friday, he took a call and heard an elderly woman's voice, he didn't know this would be it.

Sandoval had some time that evening, so he went to Linda Webb's house to evaluate her pool. She didn't mention that she was a veteran. But after seeing the contractor's USMC tattoo, she talked about her father's service in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. But she seemed fluent in military vernacular, so Sandoval did some prodding and found out that she had served stateside during the Vietnam era for 10 years, with active and reserve duty combined. As a medic, she aided returning Vietnam vets. For nearly 40 years after, she worked as a nurse.

Now, she needed physical therapy to help her recover from a non-combat-related injury that hindered her mobility. The pool was in particularly bad shape, but she was unprepared for the cost, which Sandoval estimated at about \$20,000.

"When I was talking to her, it just hit me right in the heart," Sandoval says. "She didn't want anything for free. But she needed this pool, and I wanted to be the one to bless her with it, and I didn't want to charge her a dime."

The homeowner hesitated to accept his offer of a free renovation. But, after sleeping on it, she did. Sandoval refinished her pool and deck, replaced the equipment, added lights and even provided some lighted scupper bowls left over from another project. As a finishing touch, she received updates to her irrigation system and shrubbery. Sandoval did this with the help of Hayward Pool Products, Noble Tile Supply, Xcel Surfaces and local plaster and start-up expert Greg Garrett, a fellow veteran.

Now Webb uses the pool twice a day, Sandoval says.

"Something just drew me to Linda," he says. "I believe I was there for a reason. That call was meant to come on my phone on that day, and I was meant to meet with her."

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