

Cross country journey for vets brings man to Bristol

by Teresa Eubanks, *Journal Editor*

He's quick to admit, "People think I'm crazy to do this."

Shane Moore is walking from Jacksonville to San Diego, CA to raise funds and remind people about our nation's many homeless veterans.

The 45-year-old says he's gotten some quizical looks from people who eye his 300-lb. body and the double baby stroller he pushes to haul his supplies. "Other than being overweight, I'm in good physical shape," he says. But he can see the question they're asking themselves: "Is that guy going to make it?"

The former weekend hiker isn't worried about stamina; he's more concerned about finding a place to sleep each night and catching some wi-fi so he can call his brother and update his Facebook page.

He sold his Jeep to fund the trip and his former Navy shipmate in Michigan is also helping financially. He says any money he collects along the road he will donate or use to help those in need that he meets along the way. He has set up a funding site at <https://www.generosity.com/community-fundraising/hike-for-vets>. He hopes to raise \$25,000.

"Far too often, the men and women who put on those uniforms and place themselves in harm's way are mostly forgotten. Sure, we think about them on Veterans Day, Memorial day or perhaps when it is convenient to use them in some political argument, but then we ignore them when we see them in dire straights lying on a sidewalk or panhandling on a corner," he explains on his fundraising page.

"I want to do more and hopefully you will too."

He expects the trip to take about six months. Along the way, he'll be dropping in on some old Navy buddies as well as family members who live along the route he's taking. His two brothers may meet up with him in Mississippi. He'll catch up with his daughter when he comes through Texas, along with a few friends from his home state.

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His journey started in Jacksonville on Oct. 10, where he had to keep a sharp eye out for traffic and learned how difficult walking on concrete can be on foot.

On the first night, he realized his options for finding a place to sleep were limited. He couldn't find a spot to put up his tent, so he took a chance and knocked on the door of a home flying the American flag. The man who answered the door was a Navy vet who let him camp in his yard, and then brought him a hot plate of dinner and some cold water. The next day, a couple of the man's employees greeted him with coffee and bagels. He was also presented with a flag to present to someone to commemorate the end of his trip.

When he later made his way through MacClenny, where the fire department gave him a place to sleep, shower and wash his clothes. In Olustee, he posted a selfie to celebrate finding a grassy spot in the shade to rest.

After spending the night at a home in Lake City, he got back on the road for awhile before stopping at a Planet Fitness to cool off with the air conditioning and use the wi-fi. When he headed back out, he enjoyed an hour sitting with what he described as "five old guys talking about all the things old guys talk about."

His goal was to walk at least 10 miles a day but found he was averaging a bit more, logging 88.4 miles the first week.

He spent one night in an old country church in Live Oak; the next night, he camped behind another church in Lee. His route then took him into Madison and then Greenville, where he stopped to photograph the Ray Charles statue. Then, on to Madison and later, a long walk through Tallahassee, where he had a view of the FSU campus and then camped at the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) post for the night.

By Thursday, Oct. 26, he was heading into Liberty County, where he crossed paths with Pastor Kyle Peddie, who invited him to camp on the grounds at Corinth Baptist Church.

His brother was making a few calls ahead that day and called the Liberty County Chamber of Commerce line at The Journal office to find out if there were camping areas or an active VFW group here. The VFW put him up at the Snowbird Motel in Bristol for the night and he joined them for a picnic that had been planned for Saturday. Later that afternoon, he walked on to Blountstown and stayed with VFW members there before resuming his journey.

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Along the way, he posts photos of some of the things he sees including a giant spider poised in a web, a snake making its way across SR 20 as well as the occasional cat or dog. There are scenic shots of Lake Talquin and the Ochlockonee River along with pictures of interesting buildings he discovers as he walks through small towns.

People driving by will sometimes stop to check on him, asking if he needs help. Others have been quick to question him about the

stroller he pushes, which is covered with a tarp printed with a message explaining his mission. "Several people have asked me if there was a baby in there," he said. To their relief, he told them no baby, just camping supplies.

In his short time on the road, he's met a lot of people but only one who was on foot like himself. "Just outside Greenville, I came across this guy who migrates every year between the Florida Keys and West Texas," he said. "He said he's been doing it for 10 years, walking and hitchhiking."

He has met a number of cyclists, including a group of riders in their 60s and 70s who were biking cross country.

He says he's never felt unsafe during his travels, noting, "I'm a pretty big looking guy; I haven't had any issues." He does admit, however, to keeping an eye out for "big, gnarly-looking spiders" that seem to keep crossing his path.

Still, he might have had second thoughts about being on the open road when he was near Ft. Braden and came up on a Bear Response Team - three trucks, including one with a large cage, along with several people - trying to capture a bear reported to be near the highway.

Along the way he's met several homeless people, in one case buying a much-needed new pair of shoes for a man as well as sharing his protein bars with an older homeless lady who appreciated having someone to talk to.

"Throughout my life, I've been exposed to homeless people and I've always tried to help them as I come across them," he said. His close brush with losing everything himself showed him just how much a little help can mean.

And after just a short time on the road, "Physically, I already feel better....mentally, I feel great," he said. "It's refreshing for me to know that I'm doing something for someone other than myself."

Navy vet takes to the road to spread the word for the cause of homeless veterans

by Teresa Eubanks, *Journal Editor*

Life had become a little too comfortable.

Shane Moore, 45, had a good job in Michigan as operations manager for a granite company but when his 18-year-old daughter left to attend college in Texas, he realized it was time for him to act on an idea that had been on his mind for some time: helping homeless veterans.

At one time, he was close to being one.

"I've had jobs making six figures a year and jobs at eight dollars an hour but a few years ago, I was on the verge of homelessness," explains Shane, who served in the U.S. Navy from 1990 to 1996. He was a nuclear Machinist's Mate, trained to operate steam power plants on nuclear reactors. "The majority of the time I was in school or teaching classes," he says.

After leaving the Navy, he began working with computers and then got involved in environmental restoration on pipelines. Later, he was hired as a district manager for Planet Fitness. It was a great job but required a lot of moving around. The single dad, who has had custody of his daughter since she was two, decided to quit so he could give her some stability by staying in one place as she went through high school. When he made the decision, he had \$20,000 in the bank. "I kept telling myself that another job would come up but waited too long and burned through the money," he said. A former shipmate learned about his situation and hired him to work at the granite company he owns in Michigan.

He hasn't forgotten that feeling of relief he felt when he got help. Now, he wants to be the one to help veterans - particularly those who are homeless.

Finding a way to raise awareness of the plight of the county's homeless veterans has been on his mind for a long time. "Unfortunately, in the world today we've gotten to the point where people need to see grand gestures in order to pay attention," he said, adding, "Just asking people to help doesn't seem to have the same effect."

So he decided to take a little walk.

Visit Shane at www.hikeforvets.com and on his Facebook page Hike For Vets to learn more about his day-to-day travels and find out about his fundraising efforts. Donations to his cause can be made online at <https://www.generosity.com/community-fundraising/hike-for-vets>.

