

Veterans helping veterans

It has always been about fighting the good fight.

Nick Romano helped launch the Bonita Bay Veterans Council a year and a half ago after he realized that veterans weren't getting enough help. The Army veteran knows what it's like to need assistance. He earned a Purple Heart when he was wounded three times in action in Vietnam.

Since its inception, the organization has helped more than 55 veterans with support ranging from rent to building ramps for their homes. The Bonita Bay Veterans Council has become a lifeline for veterans in need.

They have also become a lifeline for Community Cooperative. Recently they teamed up to help William Almore, a Navy veteran.

The 74-year-old resident of Cape Coral suffers from congestive heart failure and cancer. Rendered fairly immobile because he didn't have a motorized wheelchair, William didn't eat well and was missing medical appointments. He was living off of coffee and juice.

"I knew I could pick up the phone and call Bonita Bay Veterans Council and they



Stefanie Ink-Edwards, Jen Larson and William Almore

would help William," said Stefanie Ink-Williams, Director of Development and Marketing at Community Cooperative, who came to know William through a referral from a Veterans' Affairs social worker.

Nick and his team found a motorized

wheelchair and had it delivered to Community Cooperative. They also wanted to make sure William had access to healthy meals so the Bonita Bay Veterans Council is sponsoring the Navy veteran's first year of Meals On Wheels which will be delivered to his home seven days a week.

The veterans organization also worked with Community Cooperative to pay for hotel accommodations for a homeless veteran who didn't want to be separated from his service dog while waiting for housing. The temporary shelter that was available while he waited did not accept pets.

"The veterans who get assistance are all profoundly grateful," Nick said.

"They all say the same thing," he said. "They say, 'We didn't know somebody had our back.'"

It's a relief for staff at Community Cooperative to know the Bonita Bay Veterans Council has its back.

"They are a really special organization," Stefanie said. "Now if we have a veteran who needs anything I can pick up the phone and they will be there to make it happen." 🌟