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20 from Navy, Marines help out at Pine Street Inn

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JULY 02, 2012

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Veteran Anthony Addison, 67, found his visit with Anthony Murphy uplifting.

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Anthony Murphy has served in the Navy for nearly eight years. Visiting Boston this week for Navy Week, the 27-year-old boatswain's mate second class from North Carolina, was on a liberty day. He could have been doing anything he wanted on a warm, sunny Sunday afternoon.

He used his day off to serve.

Joining about 20 Navy and Marine members, Murphy helped dish out meals to about 300 homeless men who came in waves to a warm 100-seat cafeteria at the Pine Street Inn shelter in the South End. Before the meal, five Navy sailors from the Northeast Navy Band put on a musical performance.

"It's another opportunity for us to give back," said Murphy, who has been on three deployments over his Navy career, including a mission to protect offshore oil platforms in the Middle East and an assignment to provide humanitarian aid

in the Mediterranean region. “It’s a hot meal that starts a conversation and a chance to get to know them.”

“I’ve learned to take advantage of things like this that you can look back on and cherish when you are older,” he added.

Moments later, Murphy sat across from Anthony Addison, a 67-year-old military veteran who served during the Vietnam era. Addison talked for a while about the history of the shelter where he has been staying periodically for the past 14 years. He also told the story of how he ended up there and how it has changed his life for the better. “They pick up our spirits and make us feel good,” Addison said of the military members’ volunteer visit to the shelter. “It gives us encouragement to carry on — that there’s another side of the fence to look at.”

As the two sat at a cafeteria table, Murphy, as he put it, “lent an ear.”

“I’m just happy I can give him that hope,” he said afterward.

According to the federal Department of Veterans Affairs, military veterans are 50 percent more likely to become homeless compared with other Americans, and one out of every six adults in homeless shelters are veterans.

When asked about that, Murphy declined to comment. Fellow volunteer Marine Gunnery Sergeant Antwoine Wiggins, who has served in Iraq and Afghanistan, hesitated, at first. A military member for 20 years, the 39-year-old said talking about the topic could get him in trouble. Then, he said: “The Marine Corps gave me a path to succeed and it’s up to me to make my own choices.”

Sharon McGuyer, 57, has been working at Pine Street Inn as a case management worker for the past 15 years. She said a large number of the homeless men who seek the shelter’s services are military veterans.

“We have a lot of veterans, a lot of the old-timers here and a few of the young ones, so they like [being visited by active military members] a lot,” said McGuyer, as the Navy and Marines helped fill and pass out dinner trays featuring chicken breast, mashed potatoes, vegetables, fruit cups, juice and water.

“This is great,” she added. “Serving this many people, you need volunteers.”



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Antwoine Wiggins delivered a meal.

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