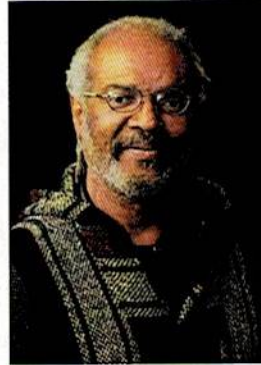


## - DIAMOND SERVICE AWARD -

*The Diamond Service Award is given to a formerly homeless individual who has not only overcome homelessness but is giving back to individuals or the community in a meaningful way.*

**RAY LAY**  
**NAMI VETERANS PEER**  
**SUPPORT SPECIALIST**



Ray Lay was first diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia at the age of 15 after being committed to a state-run mental institution. During his three-year stay, his doctor and parents never disclosed his diagnosis. After being released, Ray joined the Marine Corps. He was a good Marine until he experienced a psychotic break. He was discharged from the Marines without treatment and started self-medicating. The drugs and alcohol led Ray to an eventual charge for robbery and confinement. He was sentenced to state prison for seven years. Ray left prison in 1986 and has stayed away from the criminal justice system since. However, Ray's untreated mental health and abuse of drugs and alcohol led him into homelessness.

Ultimately, Ray accessed treatment because he wanted housing. After experiencing homelessness for 10 years, he focused on becoming clean and sober, but still did not address his mental health issues. 3 years later, he came to terms with his mental health condition and sought treatment. After receiving mental health treatment, the VA accepted his claim and helped him move into housing. Ray recently bought a house of his own in June 2017.

Today, Ray serves as a peer support specialist, engaging veterans who have mental health or substance abuse issues to try to motivate them to get into and stay in recovery. He is also a part of the VA Medical Center's Mental Health Intensive Case Management team. Ray serves on the Board of the Indiana Balance of State Continuum of Care and National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).