

Facts Presented.....

- According to the Department of Veteran Affairs, there are about 22.2 million living U.S. Veterans
- 1 in 5 Veterans are homeless, which is an estimated 170,000 homeless on any given night.
- By 2035, the percentage for women who are veterans are expected to increase from 8% to 15%
- An estimated 11-20% of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans suffer from PTSD; Researchers found that 30% of Veterans from Vietnam and 10% of Gulf War Veterans also suffer from PTSD
- 20% of Veterans between the ages of 20-24 years old are unemployed, according to the Department of Labor. That's 10% higher than unemployed non-veterans the same age.
- 8 Veterans a day commit suicide
- Drug & alcohol abuse , family disintegration, & incarceration are rampant among Veterans

Resources:

- Maketheconnect.net
- www.thelongwalkhome.org
- www.dosomething.org
- <http://veteranscrisisline.net/>
- http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/vetcenter_flsh.asp
- http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/
- <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1>
- www.volunteer.va.gov/
- www.serve.gov/vets.asp
- www.nvf.org and www.nsf-usa.org/
- Veteransfamiliesunited.org/how-to-get-help/
- Www.usvetsinc.org/how-to-help



Barefoot Crusade Against Veteran Suicide



Taking A Stand!

Where it Began.....

Ronald Zaleski is a veteran for the United States Marines and has been disappointed by the lack of efforts and assistance that have been provided to military personnel by the United States government upon being discharged. Therefore, Ron saw this lack of help as a problem and was motivated to take a stand!

Ron Zaleski's efforts began with making a bold statement and was determined to provide awareness to others. Within this mission, Ron began to walk barefoot, and has been doing so since 1972.



He's walked — barefoot, of course — across the U.S. and the Appalachian Trail collecting signatures to support his counseling initiative. He carries a sign bearing a haunting message in bold print: 18 veterans commit suicide each day.

What Happened on the Journey

Within Ron's journey across the United States, he encountered moments of grief, sorrow, and moments filled with tears.

As Ron walked the roads, this created opportunities for him to meet families of veterans that were succumbed by the pressures of life, which resulted in those members' suicides.

The many individuals and families he met reached out to him to offer support, care, donations, and prayer as he continued to bring awareness to an important issue many were faced with.

Ron made an effort to speak before the Committee of Veterans Affairs and decided that "HE IS THE GOVERNMENT" and decided this was the time to act. He has put forth an effort along with others willing to help to open gyms to the public that will be free to Veterans & active military personnel on duty. It has been established that a concert will be taking place April 5, 2013 in Key Largo, Florida.

A petition is in progress that focuses on the institution of grief counseling, civilian re-entry program, & an availability of support groups for Veterans after discharge.

Veterans' Experiences

Some Veteran's pain comes from experiencing traumatic events, such as death of a friend from their unit, seeing others die, or past sexual assault & abuse from childhood.



Other difficulties experienced are setbacks from divorce, losing a job, unemployment, feeling like one's honor is lost. They begin to think about suicide due to a build up of stress, depression, anxiety, PTSD, and situations that they may deem as unbearable.

What Can We Do?

-be aware of the veterans in their neighborhoods and communities by engaging them in activities like hiking or fishing and then "don't talk; you listen."

-volunteer

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