

OUR MISSION

To engage, connect with, and inform our fellow veterans and service-members about the issues we face, the programs & treatment options available to us, and otherwise to raise awareness for who we are, where we come from, what we're dealing with, and how we can deal with the situations and circumstances we're faced with in ways that are safe, healthy, and constructive.

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The Warrior™
c/o No Vet Left Behind, Inc.
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14 Jewett St.
Ansonia, CT 06401

The Warrior™

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What Being A "Warrior" Means To Us...

The term 'warrior' has been around for centuries, but as we all know there mankind has been busy "making war" ever since the beginning of time. In *that* sense, you might say that warriors have been around for as long as humans have been on earth, even though the term – as we know it today– originated in roughly the 14th century.

Here at *The No Vet Left Behind*, however, we do not use the term to simply refer to those who have been in combat, or even– for that matter– only those who have worn the uniform. Rather, we use the term to refer to those who are experienced in, and actively engage in, "*taking a stand*."

Of course, since we are, after all, military veterans with a commitment to stand up for our brothers and sisters who have "answered the call" to serve, we know what being a *warrior* is, through and through.

Someone once wrote, anonymously, that a warrior "is one who stands between his adversaries, and all that he [or she!] holds most sacred and dear." We agree, but it also needs to be said that a true warrior recognizes that our "wars" are just as often fought "within" as they are with outside "adversaries" (i.e. external forces.) Whether it is overcoming PTSD, a physical injury, TBI, MST, or substance abuse, many times we have to fight against our *own* weaknesses in order to find our hidden strengths. Indeed, mankind has dreamt of, told stories about, and even written epics like *The Odyssey* to depict "archetypal" warriors. For us, being a true warrior *is* a reality– that is, something we *can* become– but it all starts with a good look in the mirror. As we do every day, ask yourself...

Who am I? and What do I stand for?

Highlights Inside Our 'Inaugural Issue':

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*The Cry of A Warrior** (A 'Memorial Day' Speech Delivered on May 19, 2013 at the Woodbridge Ave. Memorial in Ansonia, CT to recognize and honor the sacrifices of veterans, living and departed.)

Having come from a family full of veterans, and being a disabled veteran myself, I understand full well the cries of a warrior. Beyond this even, being the daughter of a Purple Heart recipient I grew up knowing, and honoring, that cry. As such, my organization- No Vets Left Behind- was founded on these principles, and today we are here, with these principles in mind, to honor these symbols of our fallen countrymen who, during a time of war, exhibited the honor, courage, and commitment of a warrior. Their actions, and sacrifices, are humbling examples of the strength and spirit which stands as a model of valor for every veteran and soldier here today.

Many in our modern society do not fully understand or comprehend the meaning of these acts of valor. Being a veteran, or one who simply serves their country- regardless of rank or branch of service- exhibits a valorous act just by voluntarily taking that oath. We are the true "one percenters," and as a collective whole, we veterans we should feel honored, and *be* honored, for this call to service alone. As veterans, our service to our country represents the bold determination and bravery that many before us, and surely after we are gone, have needed, and will need, to fight the battles our military service often requires us to fight.

That being said, after coming home our acts of bravery are too often draped behind curtains of guilt, shame, and sorrow as we begin a *new* battle: this time against the stigmas that leave us feeling isolated and, all too often, forgotten or betrayed. As a result, we as a "collective" struggle, and suffer, in the face of homelessness, divorce, suicide, and atrocious wounds, both physical and "invisible."

As a veteran, I am angered by these "realities" of life after service, but as a *warrior*, and the daughter of a warrior, I am humbly resolved to continue the fight- that is, to continue advocating for, and honoring, my fellow veterans- living and departing. As a warrior, I hold that "we"- as the veteran community- can no longer allow the "not in my rice bowl" held by the majority of people who have not served to allow us to be

(cont'd)

...forgotten, or in the very least, marginalized.

As a community, we can no longer allow the individual behaviors of some to reflect upon, and define, our “image” as a whole. As veterans, the ultimate “act of valor” is to, long after our military service has ended, continue to pay homage to our fellow veteran- especially those who have fallen on hard times, and to find purpose by getting actively involved. As veterans, we have to understand that this valor, though a gift, comes only through sacrifice. It doesn't come through training or ideals alone, but through the learned experience of realizing, and demonstrating, the courage that exists in the heart of all warriors, past and present. Our valor is the shining example to which we, as a whole, are owed the deepest respect of a community. As veterans, we must embrace this, and remain, forever, warriors true to our deeds of service, and the virtues this service was based upon. We see it in the strength and sense of sacrifice- often, too, the sorrow- that radiates from the hands of every veteran and service-member as they join together in saluting the ultimate symbol of our freedom.

In closing I would like to say that, as members of a community and a society, veterans and non-veterans alike, we should “never forget” to express our gratitude to the “warrior's sacrifice,” for it is only through these sacrifices that our freedoms and liberties are protected. We should especially remember, and be grateful to, the valiant actions of those- in particular- whose names grace this memorial, as well as all those who, even now, are serving us, especially those who are in harm's way.

With that, I would also like to challenge us all- myself included- to stay actively involved in the “cause” of fighting the stigmas that our veterans continue to battle, every day and every dark & lonely night, and offer a hand to any and all veterans in need. Only by doing this can you, too, consider yourself a “warrior” in the deepest sense of the word....

THANK YOU.

A “Mindful” Approach: VA Signs Contract to Provide Yoga to Veterans

Those of us who have served in the military, and have since turned to the VA for healthcare services, are all too familiar with how rigid both “systems” can be, so it might surprise you to know that there is actually a growing interest in treatment options that are outside the realm of “Western” medicine.

Case in point? Well, for starters, there was the U.S. Army’s interest, as early as the 1970s, in such “Eastern” forms of treating illness, which came about because of a man named James Reston, *A New York*

Times reporter who had emergency surgery in China a few weeks before Henry Kissinger’s 1971 trip, he was amazed by the fact that acupuncture “worked” to treat post-operative pain.

Nearly 50 years later— and better late than never— the VA just signed a landmark contract that will introduce yet another non-Western form of therapy to the “West”: yoga. The contract stems from the dedicated efforts of Suzanne Manafort, owner of Newington Yoga Center. After seeing firsthand how beneficial yoga

was for veterans suffering from PTSD, TBI, and other disabilities in a series of pilot programs she had managed to bring to the VA in 2011, it was time to take things to another level.

It seems her efforts have finally paid off. The recent contract signing between Newington Yoga and the VA allows for 16 different yoga programs to be run at various VA facilities in CT. Veterans who are interested— particularly those who suffer from PTSD, TBI, and/or MST—can start by asking a doctor or VA clinician for a program referral.

For more info on the benefits of yoga for veterans, visit: <http://givebackyoga.org/projects/yoga-for-veterans>

WWII & Korean War Veterans Visit D.C., Return to a ‘Hero’s Welcome’ at Bradley Airport

On April 27th, a group of CT veterans finally “came home,” albeit long after their initial return from the battlefield. After leaving Bradley Airport early that morning, they spent the day in D.C. touring the various war memorials and monuments— in many cases, for the first and only time in their lifetimes— before flying back to Hartford.

Despite an exhausting schedule, and a delayed return flight, there were nothing but beaming smiles and looks of pride on the faces of all who made the journey. As they walked or were wheeled through the terminal gates, some even appeared astonished as a grateful crowd cheered and a USO band played hits that evoked the 1940s and 50s.

Although the event was specific to WWII and Korean War veterans, the spirit of camaraderie in the air indeed spanned across the generations. Along with the scores of families who awaited their loved ones, those in attendance also included Vietnam, Persian Gulf, and “post-9/11” veterans. Some were standing in as part of the *CT Patriot*



WWII & Korean War veterans pause for a group picture at the Iwo Jima Memorial in D.C. (Photo courtesy of Eileen Hurst, who volunteered for the day.)

Guard Riders’ Honor Guard, others came as volunteers from Northeast Utilities’ veteran organization, and others just came to show their mutual appreciation for those who served before them.

The trip was sponsored by *American Warrior*.

George's View... *On 'Peer Support'*

Seldom does the opportunity come along to “set the standard” and to allow us, as veterans, to help *other* veterans move forward rather than become “stuck” in a stagnant cycle of anxiety, fear, depression, and helplessness. As I think about what our veteran community needs, I always come back to the same scenario: As soldiers, we always had a purpose, or should I say, a *mission*. As veterans, we can take this concept and use it as a tool to move forward. We can use this “mission-oriented” approach and apply it to mentoring other veterans— that is, leading those who have lost their way, as many of us have, too, at times. Moreover, we have the ability to use our experiences and creativity to remind us daily of how far we have come— not only in our different recovery processes, but as soldiers-turned-veterans who are now trying to emerge as leaders in the very field that we, too, have had to navigate, often the “hard way.”

On that note, as leaders we will strive to give guidance and support to those in need, mixed with compassion for their struggles as they endeavor to reintegrate back into mainstream civilian life— something that, in many cases, can be difficult given the absence of a structured lifestyle such as we once knew in the military. I, for one, want to be part of the “trail-blazing model” that creates new pathways for veterans to follow, while guiding them to the “light at the end of their tunnels,” whatever their goals may be, and whatever the obstacles are that will continue keeping them from those goals without the guidance and support of a *mentor*.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

In August 2012, the VA vowed to hire, and train, over 800 “peer support specialists” nationwide.

3rd Annual “CT Welcomes Home Vietnam Veterans” Event Draws Record Crowd

What began in 2011 as a “vision” shared by a group of Vietnam Veterans and some younger counterparts who all met at VFW Post 591, turned into a dream fulfilled. On Sunday April 21st at Guilford Fairgrounds, the various members of the CT WHVV Day Committee just couldn't seem to stop smiling.

Despite some cold winds sweeping through, the sun was shining in more ways than one as the band- “Suit, Ty, and Thursty”- rocked its way through an opening set. And by the time a sizable crowd had gathered ahead of the keynote addresses, there was already a spirit of pride, honor, and camaraderie in the air.

Following POW/MIA speaker Ted Aub's ever moving ceremonial introduction, and a presentation of colors by the awe-inspiring Native American Women Warriors, the crowd heard the genuine words of Col.(ret.) Rob Simmons.

After a long overdue but nevertheless dignified presentation of *Legion of Merit* medals to a dozen of his fellow Vietnam Veterans, followed by a crowd-pleasing flyover, all eyes turned to Sr. Airman Michael Malarsie and his Fidelco guide dog “Xxon.” As he told of being blinded by an IED attack in Afghanistan in which several of his battle buddies were

killed by his side, the crowd stood in silent reverie. No one who heard his story— which spoke of a journey involving a remarkable recovery, triumphing over enormous odds, and at last becoming a transition assistance coordinator for fellow service-members—could doubt his bravery, courage, and selfless service.

To cap it all off, Steve Kreider gave an equally moving account, based on actual events, of the bonds that unite veterans from one generation to the next. All told, it was a day of healing for all present. www.ctwhvvd.com

An Urgent Plea to My Fellow Veterans and Active Service-Members....*

As most of you are well aware, the rate of suicides amongst veterans and active duty service-members is staggering. Current estimates by the VA say that ***an “average” of 22 of our brothers and sisters take their own lives every day.*** The simple fact is, the stressful and often traumatic experiences we have as Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines which lead us to have, and far too often, to *act* upon, “suicidal ideations,” are anything but “average.” That being said, however, there are places to turn for help. And I, for one, *should know*.

Having deployed to Iraq in 2004-2005, I am no stranger to the fact that, as we so often hear, “war is hell.” Despite many positive experiences and outcomes of my work as a Civil Affairs Specialist, my tour-of-duty was nevertheless defined by two events that I thought I’d never be able to truly “shake.” The first came when a Vehicle-Borne-Improvised-Explosive-Device detonated at point blank range in front of the HMMWV I was driving. Although my physical wounds were relatively minor, I was haunted by the memory- along with the realization of how close I came to seeing the light go out on my life, and the fact that an innocent child was killed before my eyes - for years to come. But that wasn’t all. Several months later, a mortar attack on a FOB that I worked out of left a fellow soldier mortally wounded. Having been so close to the scene, I was one of the first to come to her side, and will forever have the image of her eyes looking back at me, so full of fear and pain as she lay dying, branded in the deepest parts of my soul.

But what is the purpose of telling you all this? Am I looking for sympathy? Pity perhaps? Am I trying to make you relive your own experiences and your own “invisible” wounds? *Negative*. I am telling you because I want you to know that I am no stranger to trauma, and hope that you’ll listen all the more closely when I tell you this also: I am neither a stranger to the thought, or even *attempts*, at suicide. In fact, it has taken me many years- eight in all, to be exact- to finally come to a place in mind, body, and spirit where I can actually say that I’ve “risen above it.” Does that mean I’m “fixed”? “Healed”? Done with taking medication and seeking counseling? *Negative*. But it *does* mean that I’ve finally realized one thing above all else: that despite the pain, grief, guilt, and shame... the burdens I’ve carried...not to mention those “intrusive thoughts” that I tried for so long to escape from- and in all the wrong ways, at that- I know that life is truly worth living. I’ll say again, over: *Life is truly worth living*.

So what’s my “secret”? Well, unfortunately there’s no easy answer for that. Just as we are all unique in our personalities, our life experiences, and our military experience- whether or not we’ve deployed or, for that matter, whether we’ve witnessed trauma firsthand- we are all unique in how we handle, and recover from, stressful circumstances. As I’ve already said, I’m no stranger to wanting to take the “easy way out” along my journey, but I can say with confidence that while it might’ve spared *me* from the overwhelming emotional pain I’ve felt at many times, it would only have left everyone else in my life with that much more of their own.. Bottom line- and take it from me- you need to gather up the people you trust, tell them how you’re *really* feeling, and let them *know* when you *really* need them. You can’t just “check the box” or tell others “I’m good” when you’re not. You need to be open and honest when you share, and you need to *listen* when others share with *you*. You need to know that you’re never alone, that there *is* another way out- that is, a way to deal with your pain constructively, and even ways to “fix” it. You need to *talk*- whether it’s to your battle buddies, your chain-of-command, your counselor, your spouse, your chaplain, and especially, your fellow veterans. Whether it’s at drill, at the Vet Center, at the VA, or even over the phone, you need to allow others to see you in your darkest moments, if and when you have them, instead of just *avoiding* it. Believe me when I tell you that...it’s not just about *you*. After all, you might even end up being the “link” that allows someone *else* to find help by owning up to your *own* pain.

EDITOR’S NOTE: *This letter was written by “Mack” and shared with various veteran boards.

NO VET LEFT BEHIND, INC.
PRESENTS

OPERATION S.O.S.
(“SAVE OUR SOLDIERS”)

TO RAISE AWARENESS,

RESTORE HONOR,

AND

PROMOTE HEALING

BY

‘STANDING-TO’

July 27, 2013

Veterans Memorial Park

Shelton, CT

8am-4pm

-Free donations of clothing and household items to veterans in need

*(*Must show valid proof of service.. i.e. VA card)*

-Vigil Ceremony

-Vendors

-Honored Guests

-Music / Poetry Readings

*(*FOR MORE INFO, to HOST A BOOTH / TABLE, to DONATE, or to VOLUNTEER,*

PLEASE CONTACT MARY @ 203-906-0533 or novetleftbehind@hotmail.com

Did You Know?

Some of the earliest known written works in history— the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the Hindu *Bhagavad Gita*, and Homer’s *Iliad*—were records of human conflict. Another, Homer’s *Odyssey*, tells the tale of the “hero’s journey” to finally find “home” after ten years of fighting against the Trojans..

NOTE:

It took Odysseus another ten years, and a great many more “trials” along the way, to finally make his

MUST-READ BOOKS ON WAR & HEALING

War & the Soul, Dr. Edward Tick

Achilles In Vietnam and *Odysseus In America*, Dr. Jonathan Shay

The Boys’ Crusade, Paul Fussell

The Things They Carried, Tim O’Brien

Born on the Fourth of July, Ron Kovic

What It Is Like To Go To War, Karl Marlantes

At Hell’s Gate, Claude Anshin Thomas

A Rumor of War, Philip Caputo

In Pharaoh’s Army, Tobias Wolff

The Unforgiving Minute, Craig Mullaney

In Search of the Warrior Spirit, Dr. Richard Strozzi-Heckler

Books on “Trauma”:

Waking the Tiger, Dr. Peter Levine

Full Catastrophe Living, Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn

Resilience, Dr. Steven Southwick

CELEBRATIONS PLANNED FOR THE 60th ANNIVERSARY of the KOREAN WAR ARMISTICE

The state of CT and partnering organizations will be marking the 60th anniversary of the end of the Korean War— often called the “Forgotten War”— this coming July. Although a formal peace agreement was never made, an armistice was officially signed on July 27, 1953, thus ending three years of conflict between the U.S., North Korea and its Chinese allies. To mark this date, as well as to honor all those who fought and died in service to their nation, ceremonies will be held in Washington D.C. Here in CT, which is home to an estimated 31,000 Korean War veterans, the anniversary will be celebrated by formal ceremonies to be held on *Friday, July 26th*. Event will include a reading of the 326 names of CT’s fallen from this war, as well as honorary guests.

NOTE: Event location is still TBD. For updates, contact: tammy.marzik@ct.gov

About The Editors



Mary Elizabeth Porter served in the U.S. Army during the post-Vietnam era, and is also the proud daughter of Korean War veteran and Purple Heart recipient David Smith, who passed away in 1994. Inspired by her father, as well as her own military experience, Mary has dedicated the better part of her life honoring and serving her fellow veterans.

The founder and President of *No Vet Left Behind, Inc.*, a non-profit organization based in Ansonia, CT, which was opened in 2009, Mary is an outspoken “voice” for those who suffer, as she does, from PTSD, TBI, and MST. Along with providing a variety of services and donations to veterans in need, she- above all else- tirelessly advocates on their behalf.

In addition, Mary is currently working on a degree in Forensic and Clinical Psychology at the University of New Haven. Beyond her military service and lifelong commitment to serving other veterans, she is most proud of her seven children, seven grandchildren, and- last but not least- her Cherokee/Blackfoot (Sioux) heritage, and her Harley Davidson “Rebel.”

SPC (ret.) Matt “Mack” McDonald served as a Civil Affairs Specialist in the U.S. Army. While deployed to Iraq in 2004-2005, he was wounded during combat operations, but returned to duty for the duration of a year long tour. He went on to complete a Bachelor’s in History at Central CT State University, and later earned a Master’s in Education from the University of New Haven. After a brief but memorable career as high school history teacher, he went on to commit himself fully to his “healing journey,” which has only been possible through his continued need to “serve”- particularly by advocating for those, like him, who suffer from PTSD and TBI.

In addition to working with *The Warrior™ (N.V.L.B.)* Mack is also a musician, writer, self-described “Warrior Poet,” and currently serves as Co-Chair of the VISN-1 (VA) Mental Health Community Advisory Board, as well as a board member on the CT Nat’l Guard’s Subcommittee for Suicide Prevention. Above all, he is blessed to call himself “Papa Bear” to his daughter, Talia Jein.



Mark Your Calendars!

MAY

- 8- Victory in Europe Day (WWII)
- 18- Armed Forces Day
- 27- Memorial Day (Observed)
- 31- Memorial Day

JULY

- 4- Independence Day
- 18- Bike Night (N.V.L.B. Benefit)
Riverview BBQ, Seymour, CT 6-9pm
- 26- CT 60th Anniversary of Korean War Event, (Location TBD)
- 27- **OPERATION S.O.S./ Veterans Park (Shelton, CT)**
(see event details on p. 7)

JUNE

- 6- D-Day Anniversary
- 14- Army's 238th Birthday
- 20- Bike Night (N.V.L.B. Benefit)
Riverview BBQ, Seymour, CT
6-9 pm

AUGUST

- 14- Nat'l Navajo Code Talkers Day
- 15- 68th Anniversary of VJ Day *
(*Observed on Sept.2)
- 15- Bike Night (N.V.L.B. Benefit)
Riverview BBQ, Seymour, CT
6-9pm

Coming In Our Next Issue...

Featured Articles:

- “War Wounds Are As Old As War Itself”
- “Proud Warriors: Native Americans in the U.S. Military”
- “Looking Back on the Korean War: 60 Years Later”

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