



DMAVA HIGHLIGHTS

June 6, 2013

SUICIDE

“...Military suicides eclipse combat deaths report states”

New Jersey's programs are the model DoD is using to combat this new enemy

Story by Staff Sgt. Wayne Woolley; Cover graphics by Mark C. Olsen, NJ/DMAVA Public Affairs

It had been an unimaginably tumultuous time for the young New Jersey Army National Guard Soldier. In a span of 24 hours, his car broke down, his civilian employer laid him off and he was forced from his apartment after discovering his live-in girlfriend there with another man.

The Soldier soon found himself sitting in the car that now held all his belongings, clutching a bottle of pills and contemplating suicide. He made a phone call instead.

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SUICIDE

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Fortunately, the voice at the other end of the line belonged to Dr. Cynthia Lischick, the full-time director of psychological health for New Jersey National Guard Family Programs, who convinced the Soldier that ending his life was not the answer. In the days that followed, the Soldier was connected with more professionals who ultimately helped him find a new job and a place to live.

The safety net that caught this Soldier here in New Jersey is one of the most comprehensive systems to be created anywhere in America to assist service members, Veterans and their families with mental health issues including suicide prevention, post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and substance abuse.

cornerstone of its suicide-prevention efforts to break the negative stigma associated with mental-health issues. In addition to training unit-level suicide prevention specialists, the National Guard has established the Joint Military and Family Assistance Center (JMFAC) located at the Bordentown armory.

Even these measures are no guarantee of success.

In most of the country, our military – particularly the active Army and the Army National Guard -- is grappling with what could only be described as a suicide epidemic. Although the suicide rate for the active Army and Army National Guard leveled off in 2009 after five years of increases, the rates increased over the first seven months of this year and eclipsed more than one a day in July.

Public awareness of this issue was heightened by a Time Mag-



Melissa Tippett, a Vets4Warriors counselor works the Vet2Vet hotline, a toll free, 24-hour Veterans Helpline, which is run in partnership with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. The helpline

has been widely emulated by other state and federal agencies. Tippett was injured by a roadside bomb during a tour in Iraq as an Army military policeman. (Photo by Mark C. Olsen, NJ/DMAVA)

In the past eight years, New Jersey has created a unique umbrella of organizations and partnerships using a blend of state and federal funding to create a system that is saving lives. It's a system that has helped the state maintain one of the lowest suicide rates in the Army National Guard.

"Suicide prevention is our number-one priority," said Brig. Gen. Michael Cuniff, The Adjutant General. "And it starts with every Soldier and every Airman. We need to look out for each other."

The New Jersey National Guard has made resiliency training a

azine cover story in July that not only laid out the grim numbers but put human faces on the tragedy. Two of the most heartbreaking stories were those of Ian Morrison, 26, a West Pointer and attack helicopter pilot, and Dr. Michael McClendon, 37, an obstetrician who had once been an enlisted Soldier on a bomb squad. Both men were captains. Both took their own lives 4,000 miles apart on March 21 after each had repeatedly tried to get help for the deep depression that had overwhelmed them.

The effort to keep our service members from falling through

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the cracks begins practically the first day they put on the uniform.

After the Soldiers and Airmen of the New Jersey National Guard complete their training and join their units, some of the first people they hear from are chaplains assistants and people like Staff Sgt. Jamie Gayner, who serves as the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training non-commissioned officer with the 119th Combat Service Support Battalion in Cherry Hill. It's her job to train other leaders about the ways to identify at-risk Soldiers. She also takes it upon herself to be a walking rolodex of resources both inside and outside the military where a Soldier can turn to for anything from help finding a new job to a trained mental health specialist.

"Getting people help when they need it is my passion," says Gaynor, who is majoring in social work at Rutgers University.

Giving service members the tools they need to tackle their challenges before they become a crisis is at the heart of New Jersey National Guard Family Programs. From an office in Bordentown, more than a dozen full-time professionals assist National Guard members and their families with issues ranging from civilian employment, to relationships with spouses and children, to all aspects of mental health. The work done in Bordentown compliments the work done by the staff at eight Family Assistance Centers co-located with Army Guard armories and Air Guard families.

Family Programs takes the lead on all issues involving the re-integration of Soldiers back into their civilian lives following a deployment, with a particular focus on mental health.

The mental health resources at Family Programs were bolstered three years ago with the hiring of Dr. Cynthia Lischick as Director of Psychological Health.

In those years, Lischick has successfully intervened in more than 50 cases where a Soldier was contemplating suicide. Although her main objective is to link Soldiers suffering from mental health issues with other professionals who can provide long-term counseling if needed, she often fills that gap in cases where other treatment is not available. But she's a fierce advocate for Soldiers in helping them immediately access mental health services, often accompanying them to facilities run by the U.S. Veterans Administration – and not leaving until they are screened, prescribed medication if needed, and a follow-up treatment plan established.

"I'm 24/7, 365," Lischick says. "And that's fine because I love my job. I was told when I was hired it would be the best job I'd ever had and it is. This is one of the best National Guard organizations to work with. I have none of the problems I've heard from my counterparts in other places. We remain one of the lowest suicide rates among the states and there's a reason for that. A lot of it is that we have military commanders who understand and have seen to it

that we are resource rich."

New Jersey is one of only seven states that provide additional mental health services for Veterans and the only state to extend this assistance to their families.

The state of New Jersey became a pioneer for mental health services for its service members and Veterans nearly a decade ago with the launch of Vet2Vet, a toll free, 24-hour Veterans Helpline – 1-866-838-7654 (1-866-VETS-NJ4).

More than 3,500 Veterans and nearly 1,500 family members have called this number and been connected with one of the dozen Veteran peer counselors who man the phones. The hotline, which is run in partnership with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey has been widely emulated by other state and federal agencies.

Perhaps the ultimate recognition of the potency of Vet2Vet came in December when the National Guard Bureau selected UMDNJ's University Behavioral Health Care to launch a federally-funded companion service called Vets4Warriors. And it is exactly what its name describes, Veterans helping those still in uniform. The helpline is available to current and former National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from across the country. Since its launch, Vets4Warriors has fielded calls from more than 13,000 Veterans.

The mission of Vets4Warriors is to connect Veterans with the help they need for any mental health issue, and to do it with fellow vets who speak their language. The top issues facing these Veterans – more than one third of whom served in Iraq or Afghanistan – are anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, medical issues, post-traumatic stress disorder.

Many of the callers are just looking to talk to someone who has walked in their shoes.

"They want to hear from someone who knows that PTSD is real, traumatic brain injury is real, that feeling like you're in a dark place and can't get out is real," says Melissa Tippet, a Vets4Warriors counselor who was injured by a roadside bomb during a tour in Iraq as an Army military policeman.

Tippet came home from Iraq with pieces of shrapnel still lodged in her body from the blast and a numbness in half her body. Her most vivid memory of coming home was dropping to her belly and low-crawling through a Walmart parking lot near Fort Polk, La., when a car backfired.

"Someone was walking past me and said something like 'It's OK, you're home now' and I felt a little better," she said. "That's why I love this job. If a service like Vets4Warriors would have been around when I came home, it might have made a big difference in how I dealt with things."



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US Family Health Care, a Tricare Prime option providing a civilian based managed care network, will be holding Question and Answer sessions to provide information for servicemembers and families.

Joint Military and Family Assistance Center

1048 US Highway 206, Bordentown
June 13 and 20
12 to 4p.m.

JB-MDL McGuire Library

2603 Tuskegee Airmen Ave, JB-MDL
June 11 and 24
12 to 4p.m.

Camden County Veterans Affairs

3 Collier Dr.-Lakeland Complex, Blackwood, NJ 08012
June 10, 17 and 24
1 to 3p.m.

Pinelands Public Library

39 Allen Avenue, Medford, NJ 08055
June 18
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

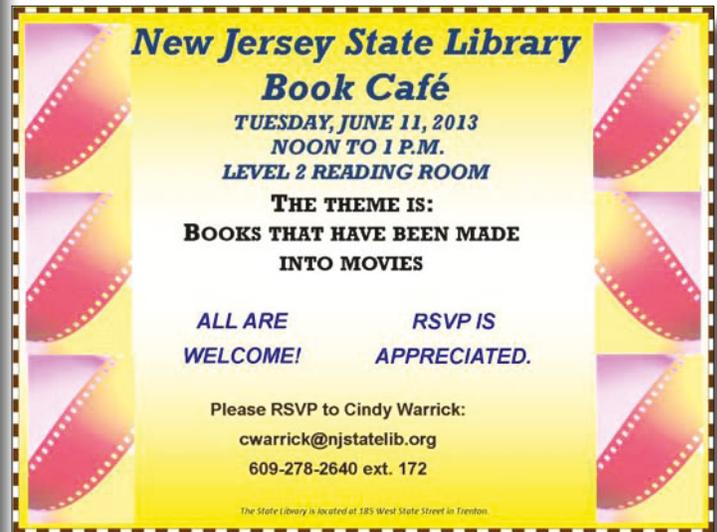
Warfighter and Family Readiness Center

Bldg. 488, Highway 547, Lakehurst, NJ 08733
June 27
11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Call 1-800-241-4848 option 3 or visit www.usfhp.net for more information.

“Education on the Green”

Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst’s Air Force Education and Training Center will host its annual “Education on the Green” College Information Fair on June 20, at the Falcon Creek Golf Course from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.. There are more than 20 colleges, universities, and agencies attending to provide information on college degrees, certificates, and educational opportunities available to JB MDL and surrounding areas. All military services, civilians, spouses, contractors, and high school students are invited to attend. (Non Department of Defense civilians must have a military sponsor to access base). For additional information, contact Jude Marranco; chief, Education and Training at 609-754-5345.



New Jersey State Library
Book Café
TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2013
NOON TO 1 P.M.
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**THE THEME IS:
BOOKS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE
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ALL ARE WELCOME! RSVP IS APPRECIATED.

Please RSVP to Cindy Warrick:
cwarrick@njstatelib.org
609-278-2640 ext. 172

The State Library is located at 185 West State Street in Trenton.



Military Appreciation Day

Place: Casino Pier, Seaside Heights
800 Ocean Terrace
Date: Saturday, 8 June 2013
Time: 1000 – 1430 Hours for bracelet pick-up
Waterpark opens at 1000 Hrs
Rain Date: Saturday, 15 June 2013

Soldiers/Airmen and Family members are cordially invited to attend “Military Appreciation Day” at the New Jersey Shore.

You will be required to show a Uniformed Services Military ID to obtain waterpark bracelets for you and your dependants only. Friends and extended family members will not receive bracelets.

- **** *check in through the side entrance of the Breakwater Beach Waterpark on 800 Ocean Terrace off Grant Ave. between 1000 Hrs – 1430 Hours.*
- **** *Waterpark opens at 1000 hours.*
- **** *Each Military Family will receive a debit card (one) worth \$25.00 to be used to play games at the Casino Pier. (slot machines, ski ball, pin ball games)*
- **** *Due to Hurricane Sandy, the rides WILL NOT be open ☹️ The Casino Pier staff have offered free go-kart and carousel rides along with one free round of miniature golf.*

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DOD expands Safe Helpline with innovative peer support system for sexual assault victims

The Department of Defense (DoD) announced May 30, the launch of The Safe HelpRoom created in response to Safe Helpline users who identified a need for peer support services. The new service allows victims of sexual assault to participate in group chat sessions to connect with and support one another in a moderated secure online environment at www.Safe-Helpline.org. The moderator is also available to provide referrals as necessary and ensure all ground rules are adhered to prior to chat postings.

“Survivors of sexual assault have told us that being able to discuss their concerns with peers can provide a level of support not available through other means,” said Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Jessica L. Wright. “The Safe HelpRoom is a groundbreaking development in the department’s commitment to support military victims of sexual assault.”

Safe HelpRoom sessions will begin immediately and are available twice weekly in two-hour sessions. The session schedule can be found at SafeHelpline.org, along with polls to determine session topics to address specific concerns. The Safe HelpRoom and Safe Helpline are administered by DoD and operated by the non-profit Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN), the nation’s largest anti-sexual violence organization, through a contractual agreement with DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and

Response Office (SAPRO).

“Safe HelpRoom was designed with unique safeguards to ensure a safe and welcoming place for survivors to connect,” said Maj. Gen. Gary S. Patton, director, DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. “Safe HelpRoom is the first of its

kind to require participants to commit to a series of ‘ground rules’ of acceptable behavior before entering a session. Additionally, each participant comment is reviewed to ensure it complies with the ground rules prior to posting for the group to see. The Safe HelpRoom provides a secure and private environment for positive and support-

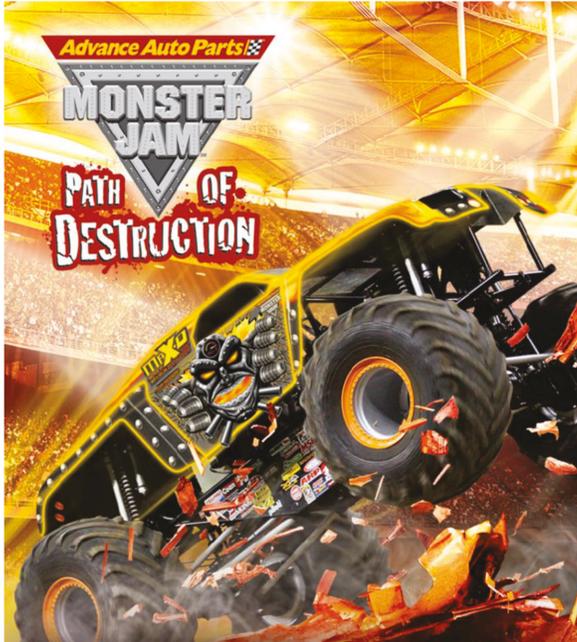
ive discussions.”

When users visit Safe Helpline, the staff provides one-on-one tailored assistance and offers a variety of up-to-date service referrals for resources on and off military bases and installations. Service referrals include information for sexual assault response coordinators, along with legal, medical, mental health, and spiritual military resources. The referral database also houses information for local civilian and the Department of Veterans Affairs resources for helpline users seeking information and crisis support away from the military response system.

Additional information regarding DoD SAPRO and DoD Safe Helpline/Safe HelpRoom can be found at <http://www.sapr.mil/>.



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Private Meet & Greet (For Total Access Pass & Breakfast with Champions ticketholders) 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM
PIT PARTY (\$15 per pass with ticket purchase) 1:30 PM - 5:00 PM

*Special Pricing: \$30 Adults

Regular Ticket Prices:

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\$125 Total Access Pass

(Includes an event ticket, admission to the private meet & greet and admission to the pit party)

\$200 Breakfast with Champions

(Includes breakfast with drivers, an event ticket, admission to the private meet & greet and admission to the pit party)

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Friday, June 14, 2013

10:00am to 2:00pm

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Please come to our museum at a special one day rate on Flag Day
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Talk with our ship expert for a behind the scenes
look aboard the Cruiser *Olympia* & Submarine
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Walk through the new exhibit, Tides of Freedom
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Education Director

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Must RSVP to attend by calling or emailing by 06/11/13**

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NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY & VETERANS AFFAIRS **Veterans Outreach Campaign**

NJ KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL
COMMEMORATIVE CEREMONY ON THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE SIGNING OF THE KOREAN WAR ARMISTICE
July *26

* Medal Ceremony at 11:00a.m. will be part of program chaired
by Korean War Veterans Association of New Jersey
Brighton Park Amphitheatre & the Boardwalk, Atlantic City, NJ
(Atlantic County)

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