



DMAVA

HIGHLIGHTS



SEPTEMBER 14, 2012



Sgt. Cesar Cuevas is all smiles as he is reunited with his two children at the 150th Aviation Welcome Home ceremony Sept. 13. (Photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen, DMAVA/PA)

150th Aviation returns home from Kosovo deployment

By Staff Sgt. Wayne Woolley, NJDMAVA Public Affairs

The hours were long, the living conditions were Spartan and the work was sometimes dangerous. But for New Jersey Army National Guard Sgt. Cesar Cuevas, the toughest part of a one-year deployment to Kosovo was being separated from the two little people he scooped into his arms at a homecoming ceremony for Bravo Troop, 150th Aviation, Sept. 13.

"I missed them like you wouldn't believe," Cuevas said as he cradled his 3-year-old son, Cesar Jr. and 18-month-

old daughter in a hangar at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst where he and 45 fellow Soldiers greeted their cheering families.

The West Trenton-based unit flew UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters as part of the NATO Kosovo Force, transporting supplies including water, food and fuel to Multi-National Force troops operating in areas often made inaccessible by road due to protests in a region that remains politically unstable. The unit used sling loads nearly every day to transport the supplies – essentially hoisting the material and fly-

ing with it hanging underneath the helicopter. It is a method of travel that poses many logistical hurdles for pilots and air crews and one most aviation units don't do every day.

The unit, known as the Black Sheep, also played a key role in helping Multi-National Force soldiers train for air assault operations across Kosovo.

"Our mission would not have been successful without having the support of our families back home," said Capt. Sarah Moore of Sparta, the Black Sheep company commander.

Veterans looking for jobs attend military-friendly job fair

By Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez, NJ DMAVA Public Affairs

The unemployment rate in New Jersey is hovering around 10 percent, but for New Jersey veterans 18 and older that figure is higher at approximately 12 percent. Accordingly, it wouldn't be a far fetch for a Guardsman or a veteran to drive several hours and more than 100 miles to attend a military-friendly job fair.

Consequently, driving from Netcong, N.J. and Bridgeport, Conn., is what Spc. John Parks, a New Jersey National Guardsman, and 1st Lt. Carson Shaw, an Army Reservist, had to do in order to hopefully get back in the workforce.

"At this point, I'll take anything," said the Netcong native, Parks, as he stood in front of the GameStop employment booth.

Parks and several other veterans were present at the Hiring Our Heroes job fair Sept. 12, at Sun National Bank Center in Trenton. The event was sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce as a nationwide



Spc. John Parks, right, and his brother-in-law, Pvt. Robert Olivo, left, both New Jersey National Guardsmen, inquire about job openings at the New Jersey Department of Corrections at the Hiring our Heroes job fair held at the Sun National Bank Center in Trenton, N.J., Sept. 12. The job fair was sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and geared towards hiring United States military veterans and their spouses. (Photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen, DMAVA/PA/Released)

initiative to help veterans and military spouses find meaningful employment.

With more than 120 organizations from several job sectors, the event looked to match

potential employees to employers that are looking for the attributes found within a military service member.

"GameStop knows the value of a veteran," said Deborah Warren, field human resources manager. "We know they are well adjusted, have good leadership skills and are customer service oriented. These are the transferable skills we are looking for."

In the past 18 months, they have hired nationwide approximately 1,500 veterans, said Warren, an Army veteran herself. "From store managers to sales/game advisors, this organization is strongly committed to our veterans."

Parks, 25, who is married and has a child, dragged his brother-in-law, Pvt. Robert Olivo to the event in hopes of finding a job for both.

"We literally found out about this event two days ago,"

said Parks. "We got an e-mail through our unit distribution list, and here I am."

Olivo, 19, an 11B infantry Soldier also with the NJNG, recently graduated from Advance Individual Training and is looking forward to beginning his military career along with some meaningful employment.

As for Shaw, he was recently laid-off and is currently looking for employment within the IT job sector. The married 45-year-old father of four is currently depending on his reservist position as a company commander within the 78th Regional Training Center East at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst to support his family.

"This is a wonderful event and the employer's hiring personnel are willing to work with you," said Shaw. "They know I have gained excellent leadership skills and will apply them within their organization."



Hiring personnel from GameStop pose for a group photo in front of their booth at the Hiring our Heroes job fair held at the Sun National Bank Center in Trenton, Sept. 12. From left to right are Tim Nemeth, Deborah Warren, Steve Champagne and Matt Tietgen. (Photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen, DMAVA/PA/Released)

DOD: Families, friends need to recognize signs of potential suicide

By Karen Parrish, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - September, National Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month, is a reminder to everyone in the military community to watch out for each other, a senior defense official said.

Jacqueline Garrick, acting director of the Defense Suicide Prevention Office, told the Pentagon Channel and American Forces Press Service the Defense Department's theme for the month's observance, "Stand By Them," is a prompt to get involved when a friend or loved one seems distressed.

Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta, she noted, has been adamant about encouraging people to seek help, and in stressing leaders' responsibility to ensure their people get the counseling they need.

"I think the first key factor is to understand the signs and symptoms of suicide, and not to be afraid to ask the question," she said.

"It's a myth that if you ask somebody, 'Are you feeling suicidal?' that you'll put a thought in their head. And that's just not going to happen. If somebody's really in distress, the first thing we want people to know to do is ask the questions, 'Do you feel like you could hurt yourself?' 'Do you have a plan?' and 'How can I help?'"

Garrick said relationship issues, legal or financial problems often are factors in the lives of people at risk for suicide. Anyone suspecting possible suicidal impulses in a friend, co-worker or loved one also should be sensitive to changes in moods or behavior patterns, she added.

Excessive risk-taking, substance abuse, giving away possessions and changes in life insurance arrangements are all possible indicators someone may be considering suicide, she said.

"Be mindful of those kinds of things," she advised. Garrick added that mood changes in both directions can indicate a person is considering suicide.

"Sometimes it's a euphoria, or it's a depression," she said. "So just be mindful. And leadership needs to know what their service members are like, so that they can know when there have been those changes."

Garrick said she encourages military family members concerned about a loved one's state of mind to contact commands, chaplains' offices, community services, or any other means of help they can reach.

"One of the key features that we're working on right now is with the Department of Veterans Affairs," she said. "For several years, they have been working on the Veteran's Crisis Line, and we have been working with them to rebrand [it] as the Military Crisis Line so that our men and women in uniform know that the Military Crisis Line -- the '1-800-273-TALK(8255) num-

ber, press 1 if you're military' -- is for them as well."

The Military Crisis Line is an overarching and confidential resource -- "one number to call when you're experiencing any kind of crisis, any kind of suicidal ideation, any thoughts, feelings that you're not sure how to deal with," Garrick said.

The crisis line also has an online chat option at <http://www.militarycrisisline.net>, and a text component reachable by smartphone at 838255, she explained. "You can access assistance any way, any time of the day, from anywhere in the world," Garrick said, adding other options are in place or in development for troops overseas.

Any of the various means of approach to the crisis line will put military members or their families in contact with a VA mental health provider, she said. Garrick noted family members often are

the first to notice a loved one's struggles, and she encourages them, as well, to reach out through the crisis line.

"We know that family members are usually the first ones to see if somebody has had any changes in mood, personality and activity," Garrick said. "They're the ones that need to hear the message first."

"We want to give them a way to get involved," she said. "If they call the crisis line, family members can be supported as well - for their service member, and for their own issues."

Garrick acknowledged there is a common belief among military members that seeking help for mental health issues can damage their careers.

"Not seeking help is going to harm your career even more," she said. "So even if you have to take a medication, or you can't deploy, or you have to go for further testing, there are benefits to treatment. Treatment works."

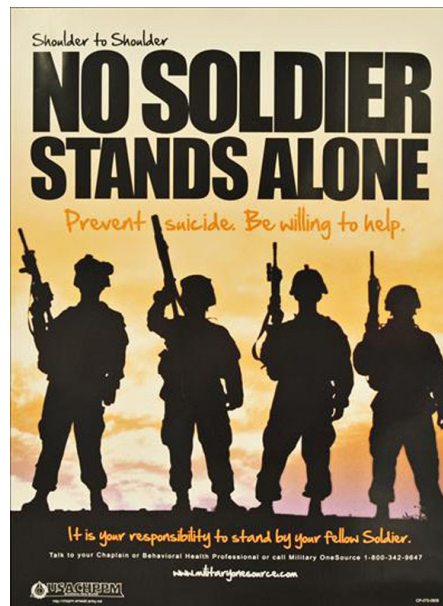
Mental health support "that we know works" is available across the services through military treatment facilities, community mental health services and chaplains' offices, Garrick said.

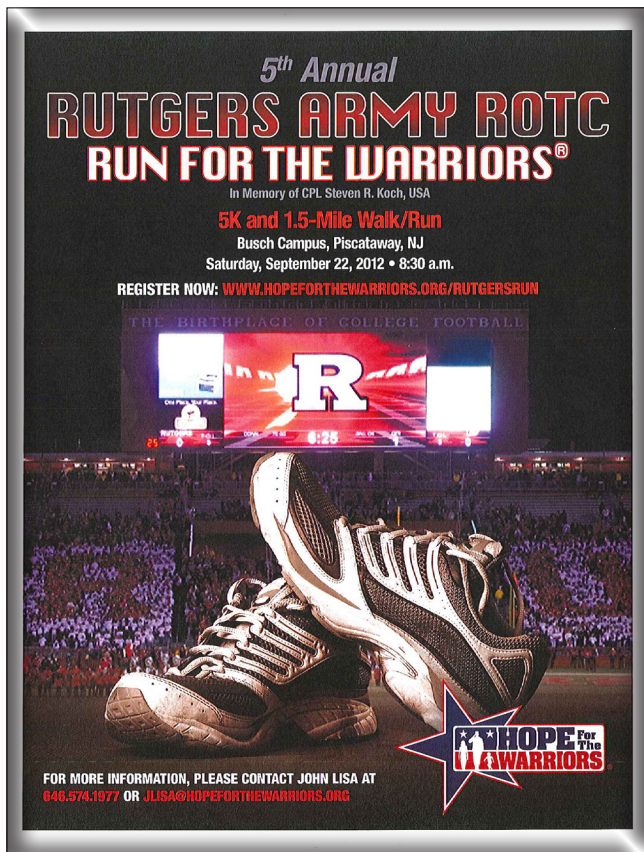
"That will benefit your career in the long run," she added. "And it will benefit your life in the long run, because this isn't just about your military career - it's about your family well-being, it's about your safety, and it's about what your long-term plan is for your future."

Someone who calls the crisis line, Garrick said, "can expect to talk to somebody who is compassionate and competent. These are all trained clinicians [and] providers that are on the other end of the line."

Military crisis line responders understand military culture, and many are themselves veterans, she said.

"The VA works very closely with this department to make sure that our service members are being cared for properly," she said. "So they can expect to get the best possible assistance and competent care."





VETS4WARRIORS

★ ★ ★ 1-855-VET-TALK ★ ★ ★

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- **Goal**
Vets4Warriors provides 24/7 peer support, information and referrals for National Guard and Reserve service members and their families.
- **Access**
Rapid access to a variety of services, follow up contacts, 24/7 LIVE helpline. All Vets4Warriors calls are answered by a Veteran peer or clinician within 20 seconds, utilizing sophisticated technology to ensure accurate data collection. This program utilizes University Behavioral Healthcare's Access Center, staffed by individuals with over 15 years of helpline experience who answer more than 10,000 calls per month.
- **Soldier and family peer-to-peer support; combating stigma**
Who better to understand the challenges of military life than someone who has lived it? Veterans provide support to soldiers and families, engaging them in a personal, non-threatening way, helping to mitigate stigma and concerns about confidentiality.
- **Integrates existing resources**
The helpline is designed to maximize the use of existing state, federal, academic, medical and community resources, to provide the caller with information to meet their specific need.
- **Soldier and family case management**
Service members and their families are offered follow-up contacts to assure continued support where needed. Data tracking assures timely follow-up. Outreach to "high risk" service members is also provided.
- **Vets4Warriors is modeled after NJ Cop2Cop and Vet2Vet, programs certified by the American Association of Suicidology & the QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) model of Military Suicide Prevention.** Trained peer staff is partnered with experienced mental health staff to provide additional support for callers in crisis.
- **Prevents problems from becoming crisis**
Offering phone support when questions and concerns arise, along with continued contact while problems are resolved, mitigates crisis situations. Continuous customer satisfaction survey tools help inform quality of care.
- **Employs Veterans**
Vets4Warriors employs Veterans as peer staff.
- **Web-based services**
Vets4Warriors – Peer and family support counselors provide live chat for soldiers and their families. Those services are accessed at the following URL: <http://vets4warriors.com>.

Call toll free 1-855-838-8255 to connect to a Veteran who understands.
You are never alone, anywhere, anytime.
We have been there...now we are here for YOU.

DMAVA bike team looking for riders

Join Team DMAVA at this year's Bike MS: City to Shore Ride, Sept. 29-30.

Named by Bicycling Magazine as the "Best Cycling Getaway in NJ," the Bike MS: City to Shore Ride promises to be the best cycling experience on the east coast.

Ride with 7,000 cyclists of all ages and cycling abilities for the challenge of your choice with several route options from a one day, 25 mile ride to a two day, 150 mile ride. Enjoy flat terrain as you travel from Cherry Hill through the quaint towns and back roads of Southern New Jersey. Pedal through the blueberry fields of Hammonton, experience the serene beauty of the Pine Barrens, and listen to the waves as you roll into historic Ocean City.

This ride is fully supported with catered rest stops, bike support, and transportation. Invite your family and friends to cheer as you cross the finish line and enjoy a wonderful evening stroll on the boardwalk.

This is not just a ride, but an experience. The sense of accom-

plishment that you'll feel as you cross the finish line can only be matched by the difference you'll be making in the lives of people affected by Multiple Sclerosis.

To learn more about the Bike MS: City to Shore Ride, visit their website at www.ms-cycling.org.

Contact Team DMAVA captain Bill McBride at william.mcbride@njdmava.state.nj.us or bill.mcbride1@us.army.mil, or 609-530-7136 to learn more or to join the team.



DMAVA Highlights is published weekly by the Public Affairs Office of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. The views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Department of Defense, the Army, the Air Force, the National Guard, Veterans Affairs or the state of New Jersey. Letters may be sent to: NJDMAVA, DMAVA Highlights, Public Affairs Office, PO Box 340, Trenton NJ 08625-0340. e-mail at pao@njdmava.state.nj.us.

New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff – The Adjutant General
Brig. Gen. James J. Grant – Director, Joint Staff
Raymond Zawacki – Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Patrick Daugherty – Public Affairs Officer
Air Force Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez - Public Affairs Specialist
Army Staff Sgt. Wayne Woolley – Public Affairs Specialist