

March 2015

Veteran's Advocate



Neil Doyle  
Nathan Pike  
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**Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) invites you to participate in a free:**

**DROP-IN LEGAL CLINIC FOR VETERANS**

**HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT, BENEFITS, EXPUNGEMENT, WILLS,  
DEBT COLLECTION, FAMILY LAW INCLUDING CHILD SUPPORT**

Thursday March 5th, 2015 | 10:00 am - 3:00 pm  
Olmsted County Community Services Building  
2117 Campus Drive SE - Room 161 | Rochester, M N

Attorneys , MACV Staff, County Veterans Service Officers, and Child Support Officers will be available throughout the clinic to assist veterans with questions, legal forms and counsel.

For more information call: VETLAW Program MACV: 651-200-4750



**Olmsted County Veteran's Services**



## **PTSD Support Group for Veterans**

SEMCIL's Veteran Services Program is offering a support group for Veterans that have been diagnosed with PTSD, or those who have signs and symptoms of PTSD, and their family members. Maybe you need to talk or just be in the company of your extended Veteran family. The support group will be a place for Veterans to share, heal and talk about their experiences in dealing with PTSD.

We will be there for each other.

We are our brothers and sisters keepers because the oath we took to never leave a fallen comrade has no expiration date. For many of us, combat veterans, there are daily reminders of deaths of brothers and sisters.

The group will be facilitated by Jennifer Shumaker, Veteran, and Olmsted County Veterans Service Officer

**Thursday, March 26, 2015  
6:30pm-8:30 p.m.  
American Legion Post 92**

315 1st Ave NW,  
Rochester, MN, 55901

Jennifer at 507-328-6324 or [shumaker.jennifer@co.olmsted.mn.us](mailto:shumaker.jennifer@co.olmsted.mn.us)



**Olmsted County Veteran's Services**

# Preventing Suicides Among Veterans Is at Center of Bill Passed by Senate

By: Richard A. Oppel Jr. Feb 3, 2015

As a Marine serving in Iraq, Clay Hunt barely missed being killed by a sniper, yet he faced what proved to be more powerful foes after leaving the corps: depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Mr. Hunt killed himself four years ago, even as he worked to help other struggling veterans. His death helped galvanize an effort to provide better help for suicidal veterans or those otherwise suffering serious mental health issues. The Senate on Tuesday, by a vote of 99 to 0, passed legislation, named for Mr. Hunt, to improve suicide prevention and mental health treatment programs at the Department of Veterans Affairs. The bill, which also passed the House unanimously, now goes to the White House, where President Obama is expected to sign it. It signals an unusual level of bipartisan agreement on Capitol Hill, where the measure had died late last year because of a parliamentary maneuver. According to the latest government data, an estimated 22 veterans kill themselves every day. While many are older veterans, a survey by the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America — which had made the Clay Hunt bill a centerpiece of its efforts to prevent veteran suicides — found that two out of five of its members knew a recent combat veteran who had committed suicide.

Paul Rieckhoff, the organization's founder and chief executive, said after the bill's passage: "While we are thrilled about today's vote, all of us must remember the sobering reality that necessitated this action: the invisible wounds of war and our nation's initial failure to treat them." Under the legislation, the V.A.'s suicide prevention and mental health treatment programs will be subjected to outside evaluations. One goal will be for independent evaluators to spotlight the best-performing approaches among the department's 800 hospitals and clinics so those can be shared around the system. Another provision will create a peer-support pilot program in at least five of the agency's 22 regional networks, with the intention of quickly matching returning veterans with colleagues they can talk to and confide in about mental health concerns. The measure also calls for the creation of an interactive website with all of the department's mental health and suicide prevention resources so that veterans — and spouses and parents — can find help. It provides for medical school debt repayments for psychiatrists who join the agency, reflecting the department's extreme difficulty recruiting mental health professionals.

And it includes a provision extending by one year the period under which returning late-stage combat troops who served in Iraq and Afghanistan can obtain Veterans Affairs health care without first proving a service-related disability. That part applies to troops who left active duty from Jan. 1, 2009, to Jan. 1, 2011; normally veterans have only five years of access to the care for conditions not medically proven to have been attributable to their service.

Government data shows that the suicide rate for male veterans who are enrolled in Veterans Affairs health care fell slightly from 2006 to 2010, while the rate for other veterans rose. Yet among male veterans ages 18 to 24, the suicide rate for even those enrolled jumped from 46.1 per 100,000 in 2009 to 79.1 per 100,000 two years later. Since its start in 2007, the department's Veterans Crisis Line — 1-800-273-8255 — has taken nearly 1.4 million calls and helped make more than 42,000 rescues of veterans contemplating suicide.

Senator Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, the ranking Democrat on the Veterans Affairs Committee and one of the bill's sponsors, said that the measure would lead to a significant improvement in treatment of suicide-prone veterans. But he added that more needed to be done, such as extending even further the time combat veterans have access to the agency's health care without first proving a service-related injury.

"We owe these wounded warriors more effective psychiatric services and counseling so they can win the war against the inner demons that come home with them from service," Mr. Blumenthal said. "This bill will help save lives, but still it's only a first step."

He said he hoped the department would become as sophisticated in treatment of suicide risk and other serious mental health problems as it has for prosthetics and injuries highly correlated with combat service.

## Upcoming local events

### **Rochester American Legion Post 92**

**3rd Tuesday of each month**

**315 First Ave NW**

**Rochester, MN 55901**

**7pm**

**Legion Riders**

**2nd Thursday of each month**

**7pm**

**Forty et eight at the American Legion**

**2nd Tuesday of each month**

**7pm**

**Military Order of the Purple Heart**

**3rd Thursday of each month,**

**6pm, March, May, July, September, and**

**November**

### **Rochester VFW Post Meeting**

**2nd Tuesday of each Month VFW Post 1215**

**16 6th Street SW, Rochester, MN 55902**

**7pm**

### **Byron American Legion Post 119**

**1st Monday of the month**

**March 2, 8pm**

**505 Frontage Road NW, Byron, MN**

### **DAV Meeting**

**2nd Monday, of each Month Rochester's Elks Lodge**

**1652 Hwy 52 N, Rochester, MN 55901**

**5:30pm dinner, meeting at 6:00pm**

### **Korean War Veterans**

**Every Monday at Grandmas Kitchen**

**1514 N Broadway, Rochester, MN 55906**

**(Silver lake plaza)**

**8 AM**

### **Marine Corp League Meeting**

**4th Tuesday of the month, 7pm, American Legion**

**315 First Ave NW, Rochester, MN 55901**

### **POW/MIA Riders Association, Member Meeting**

**2nd Saturday of the month 11am-1pm, VFW Post**

**1215 16 6th Street SW, Rochester, MN 55902**

### **Kasson American Legion Post 333**

**Third Thursday of the month**

**March 19 , 7pm**

**212 West Main Street , Kasson, MN 55944**

### **Chatfield VFW Post 6913**

**2nd Tuesday of the month**

**March 10**

**9- 2nd St SW, Chatfield, MN**



## Gizmo Helping Vets



**Working with MN Dog Rescues is a Win - Win for Veterans and Dogs We are here to help you, find the right dog, raise money, training and education.**

**All starts with filling out a form. Link to the form:**

**[http://gizmohelpingvets.org/Dog4Vets\\_form.php](http://gizmohelpingvets.org/Dog4Vets_form.php)**

**WE WORK WITH YOU and your local VFW or American Legion** to raise funds for the first year including cost of the dog from the rescue, ( Food, Grooming, Veterinary bills, dog toys, leashes, dog bowls etc. )

*Figures below are estimated cost for first year:*

*Average cost/1st year for a Therapy Dog is: \$1,200.00 - \$1,500.00*

*Average cost/year for a PSD dog is: \$1,500.00 - \$2,000.00*

*Average cost/1st year for a PTSD is: \$3,000.00 - \$5,000.00*

*<http://gizmohelpingvets.org>*

*POC: Dave Soderberg [GizmoHelpingVets@gmail.com](mailto:GizmoHelpingVets@gmail.com)*

*(507) 923-5145*



**“To promote the interests and welfare of veterans, their dependents and survivors and to enhance their quality of life through counseling, claims assistance, education, advocacy and special projects.”**



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