

SOLDIER'S heart

Soldier's Heart is a veterans' return and healing project addressing the emotional and spiritual needs of veterans, their families and communities. Soldier's Heart promotes and guides community-based efforts to heal the effects of war based on strategies presented in "War and the Soul".

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September 13–16, 2007

Healing Veterans from PTSD: A Three Day Workshop for Soldiers, Their Loved Ones, and Helping Professionals, Olcott Campus near Chicago IL

‘Healing Veterans from PTSD’ is an intensive healing and training workshop providing experience in the groundbreaking healing techniques developed by Dr. Ed Tick. The workshop is open to veterans of any war and their families, counselors, therapists, chaplains and clergy.

The workshop is co-sponsored by Quest Books and Soldier’s Heart. It will be held September 13th –16th 2007 at the Olcott campus of the Theosophical Society, 1926 North Main St., Wheaton, IL. For details visit <http://www.theosophical.org/events/conferences/soldiersheart.php>. To register, or if you have questions, please call Christine Pomeroy: 800-669-9425, ext. 350, or email cpomeroy@theosmail.net

Wayne Coste Biking Across America For Soldier’s Heart (Thank you Wayne!!)

Last month Wayne Coste, a Connecticut man, began a 4,200 mile, coast-to-coast bicycle trip across America to spread awareness of veterans’ issues and raise funds for Soldier’s Heart. In 64 days, he will traverse 13 states and a Canadian province, averaging 65 miles per day, under his own power.

Wayne is traveling with a group of about 30 cyclists from all walks of life who set off from Seattle on June 16th. Their grand trip, arranged through Cycle America (www.cycleamerica.com), will take them across Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ontario, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine, before finally arriving in Boston in mid-August. He is raising money from people pledging a tax deductible penny a mile (or more or even less) for Soldier’s Heart. .

Wayne is really excited about this once-in-a-lifetime adventure that is both physically and mentally demanding. Not knowing quite what to expect – from the terrain, to the weather, to his conditioning, Wayne prepared for the adventure to be challenging as well as exhilarating. Go Wayne!! To follow Wayne’s ride, to make a pledge or to read his blog, go to: www.waynegoesicycling.com/

Media Coverage: Wayne is looking for media coverage as he rides, to bring greater awareness and hopefully raise more funds. If you have any contacts in the cities Wayne is riding through, please let us know.

GOODBYE AND THANK YOU

We regret to announce that Maureen Daly, our coordinator for regional development of Soldier's Heart, has decided to seek other employment. Many of you know Maureen from your communications with her and from her hard and devoted work on our retreats and gatherings. Maureen has contributed to Soldier's Heart and our efforts to aid our veterans through these contributions and in many other ways.

We gratefully acknowledge Maureen's year of devotion and commitment, sacrifice and contribution.

Maureen, all of us in the Soldier's Heart initiative and community express our gratitude for all you have given and wish you well in all your future endeavors.

Ed Tick, Kate Dahlstedt and Paula Griffin continue as Soldier's Heart staff and for now will pick up the tasks Maureen was attending. Please be assured of our continuity and direct your inquiries or needs to one of us.

Best wishes and bon voyage, Maureen!

Ed Tick, Director

A Soldier's Heart

A Commentary by Laurie Smith

Soldiers Heart Veterans' Return Retreats provide support, safety and presence so that our veterans have an opportunity to return home -- home to themselves and then to their families and our communities. The retreats provide a sacred space where there is permission for veterans to see themselves and their roles as warriors. They see that their role is socially important as protector of all of life as they walk in a balance of power, wisdom and deep love. My perception is that many, no matter what war or conflict, are unable to see who they are beyond their war experience, beyond being anything more than a disabled vet. I have also personally witnessed in my own workplace that communities continue to look at veterans with the same expectations of who they were before their service as when they return. This separation, alienation and denial is perhaps a reason that veterans themselves are unable to accept that they are in fact different people, changed and transformed by their war experiences, whether it was in combat, state-side, medical, or other duties. As civilians our job is to step through this denial and alienation and provide the space for our veterans to re-identify themselves to look beyond the fear and pain and into a place of deep wisdom, honor and love. Our job as a country and a community is to carry their pain as our own so that our soldiers may fully return.

A wise man once said what you do to one you do to all. In war humanity is stripped away - the enemy is differently named to make them separate from us and not human. The military does a great job at training soldiers to be self-less, to be a unit, to become a number. Ask any vet and they can give you their dog tag numbers more easily than their address or phone numbers. During wartime this is what may keep order and provide some level of structure. However, what also happens is that with the continual threat of death, fighting for their and their brothers' lives becomes most important. Many soldiers still love their country but in the war

zone it's them and their fellow soldiers who are important -- not their own family safely at home, not their country's ideals or political or economic standing.

During our retreat we were able to honor this disillusionment of war through poetry, story telling, theatre and war dancing. During the war dance many danced into the pain that had made its home in their bodies, accepting the pain instead of fighting, denying and numbing it. This was an opportunity for me, as part of the community, to witness their surrender to their pain, to see their vulnerability. Their deep love and commitment to humanity is about seeing the fragility of life. It is in this place that there is great hope for humanity. In this place is wisdom, selfless service, heart, humanity, and strength - true power. From this place of releasing the pain, the shame and disillusionment soldiers can re-identify themselves and claim their place as warriors with the deep need to protect, love and serve humanity. Stand at attention! World, there is a new power coming! A power which comes from a place of wisdom and heart, a heart that reaches beyond the promises and deception of personal gain to a power that unites humanity. A Soldier's Heart.

"Voices from the Front Lines" - A Community Forum

by Sally Jo Gilbert de Vargas
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Soldier's Heart Seattle, in cooperation with Legacies of War and Bellevue Community College, joined Voices in Wartime Education Project in an extraordinary evening of sharing and storytelling titled, "Voices from the Front Lines," held at Town Hall Seattle on May 5, 2007.

Andrew Himes, Executive Director of Voices in Wartime Education Project, was the MC and principle organizer of this groundbreaking community forum. He introduced award-winning poet and Bosnian and Iraq War Veteran Brian Turner (from Sacramento, California) as keynote speaker to open the program. Brian's recently published book of poetry, Here, Bullet, won the 2005 Beatrice Hawley Award. Brian gave opening remarks and read several of his heart-rending poems to a captivated audience of over 100 people. Andy Himes showed a brief (10-minute) video segment from "Voices in Wartime," a full-length documentary film depicting the important connection between war and poetry, and how people through the ages and in all cultures have used this creative art form to help us all comprehend and integrate the complexities of war and its aftermath.

The main portion of this interactive community event was a panel of speakers from many cultures and walks of life, each of whom shared their own personal story of how war has impacted their own life. Each panel member spoke with such honesty, courage, and depth of feeling that the listeners could not help but be transformed by the experience of listening to and witnessing their testimonies.

- One Laotian grandmother spoke of her escape from Laos during the Vietnam War and the brutal US bombing campaign there in Laos which tore apart her family and forced her into exile.
- A 12-year old Liberian boy told his story of how he had narrowly escaped being kidnapped and inducted into the Liberian armed forces as a child soldier.
- An American woman poet spoke of her search for understanding and reconciliation with her father, a WWII veteran who returned from war a crushed and broken man who died an untimely and tragic death. Later, she fortuitously met a French man whom her father had heroically saved (as a child) during the war, and who had been searching for him all these years.

- A young Bellevue Community College student told the touching story of her experience interviewing a recently returned serviceman from the Iraq War, and how she struggled to find the courage to ask the right questions and listen compassionately to the answers he gave.
- A wounded Iraq War veteran read a beautiful and moving poem he had just written the night before, and told the tragic story behind the poem, asking the audience to be compassionate witnesses to his suffering and grief.

There were several empty chairs around the table, and after all the others had been heard, members of the audience were invited to come up and share some of their own stories.

This event had a profound and lasting impact on the participants. Everyone became a witness to all the others, and we all gained insight, inspiration, and healing from the courageous sharing and compassionate listening. Hopefully we will all be inspired to continue our search for deeper awareness and understanding, and will be encouraged to form compassionate communities to witness the creative sharing of personal stories of war and healing.

Pathways to Hope

Wounded soldiers can benefit from having a service dog specially trained by prisoners at the California Institution for Women in Southern California as well as other "prison-dog programs" across the country. The dogs are given to the wounded veteran free of charge. New veteran-owners will be taught how to handle the dog, care for him or her and find new independence partnered with their canine friends, who can go in all public places.

One of the programs is known as Dog Bless America. This program is expanding its vision to include America's current veteran heroes. By combining their efforts with Pathways to Hope the prison-dog program and many of the Veterans Affairs organizations across the country have created a win/win situation.

In 1981, Sister Pauline Quinn started the prison-dog program in Washington State, rescuing shelter dogs and bringing them into the prison, where inmates trained them to assist the handicapped. The inmates learned responsibility through the care and training of these special dogs.

Sister Pauline has started Pathways to Hope, a nonprofit organization that helps other prisons and service-dog groups start prison-dog programs.

Pathways to Hope identifies the programs and dogs to be matched with the veterans. Pathways receives funds from Dog Bless America, money that is then given to a particular prison program that can match and place a service dog to help a wounded soldier.

Please help communicate this program to people in need of these services. For more information visit www.pathwaystohope.blogspot.com.

.For more information about Soldier's Heart and Ed Tick, PhD visit www.soldiersheart.net. **To Contact us at Soldier's Heart:** Kate Dahlstedt, Co-Director, kate@mentorthesoul.com Paula Griffin, Administrative Assistant, paula@mentorthesoul.com