

# 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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Dear Friends,

As I contemplate sharing with all of you who are devoted to our mission of war-healing, I recall the story of Job, "the perfect and upright man."

Our veterans, their families, and all victims of war are like Job. They too have lost land, homes, incomes, resources, children, spouses, health, and security – everything except life. They lost all at the hands of "The Adversary," the proper translation of the Hebrew, ha satan. That which attacks or opposes us, which some personify as Satan, can visit in the guise of any human or natural antagonist -- from aerial bombardments to enemy combatants to bureaucratic governmental systems to natural disasters. They represent Life sending that which would oppose and destroy us.

Our survivors are also like Job's Messenger who declared, "I only am escaped alone to tell thee." Barely surviving, they must tell their stories. And they are not soothed by the comforters of our modern age, which the poet Archibald MacLeish named as psychiatry, religion and politics. Not one of these realms gives answers adequate to the wounding.

Finally only a breakthrough spiritual experience helped and restored Job. In despair on the dung heap when all else failed, Job was shown a vision of how to

include his suffering in the unfolding of the universe, how to comprehend and embrace a Divinity that permits such suffering, and how to accept and rejoice in his own small, vulnerable part in the grand design.

No understanding of violent trauma is complete without comprehending the depth and extent of abject suffering it causes. No response is complete without creating the possibilities of a spiritual breakthrough like Job's. Our vets learned to say, "It don't mean nothin'." To redeem suffering, we must give it meaning. We must experience transformational growth or we are rent into pieces and our trials have been for naught. . And we must not impose answers from without but enter into the intolerable with our survivors to "get it" with them and facilitate the possibility for breakthrough spirituality.

Since our last newsletter, I too have been roaming over the earth. I have been to Viet Nam, Ohio, South Carolina, California, Oregon, upstate New York, Ft. Hood, Texas, and in our criminal justice system this past autumn and winter, to research, practice and teach war healing. In each place I have met countless souls crying on their dung heaps. I met woman survivors of military sexual trauma, men and women who served up to six combat deployments, people who survived imprisonment, rape and torture, people whose psychic wounds have ravaged them for up to six decades, people warehoused in old hospitals and new barracks because there are too many wounded but no places for them to live or heal. And I have met so many good people from within and without the military who are willingly wounded as they strive to help our most desperate. All cry out for answers that provide hope.

Our deepest wish and most sincere mission at Soldier's Heart is to expose, explore, and strive to heal this wounding to the souls of individual, community and planet that inevitably results from extreme and willful violence. Job could not rest or be restored until he achieved a spiritual response that healed. Beyond religion, beyond politics or economics, we believe the same. We strive to help our survivors discover and experience post-traumatic growth, identity transformation and vision. Nothing less brings healing. And these achievements bring warriors home and can heal us all.

During this season of rebirth, may you all be restored. And we humbly ask that you continue to support our shared mission in any way you can – through service, education, donations. Through spreading the word, listening to stories, honoring survivors. Through reconciling with former antagonists, organizing your communities, and making leadership answerable. And especially by believing and practicing that there is hope for healing and steps we can take to achieve it. There is much to do. It takes us all.

Blessings,

Ed Tick

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## UPCOMING 2009 EVENTS:

**May 3** - Soldier's Heart and Ed Tick and Kate Dahlstedt will be featured on Link TV's Global Spirit series. The episode is called "Forgiveness and Healing. For more information go to the Link TV website.

**June 10** - Training Day  
Pumpkin Hollow Retreat Center  
Craryville NY

Come learn more about the psycho-spiritual aspects of PTSD and how to help veterans in your community. Geared for helping professionals, clergy, and students, this training day is open to all who are interested. It may be combined with the Veterans' Healing Retreat beginning June 11th.

**June 11 – 14** Veterans' Healing Retreat  
Pumpkin Hollow Retreat Center  
Craryville, NY  
Open to all

**Sept. 17 – 20** Veterans' Healing Retreat  
Racine Dominican Retreat Program  
Racine, WI  
Open to all

**Nov. 6 – 22** Journey to Viet Nam  
Veterans Day in Viet Nam! Ninth Annual Healing and Reconciliation Journey.  
Open to everyone. Veterans especially welcome. Now taking reservations.

**For more information about retreats and journeys, please contact us at [info@soldiersheart.net](mailto:info@soldiersheart.net)**

\*\*The Soldier's Heart community honors and sends prayers to Evan Priesthoff, Navy SEAL, who left for Iraq on April 9th. We send our love and best wishes to his family as well.

\*\*Larry Winters, author of Making and Un-making of a Marine, has an incredible poem recorded on his website. It is co-written by Paula Griffin and read by Larry and his wife Helese Winters. Please take the time to listen to it.

<http://www.makingandunmaking.com/video.html>

## **Their Hope Is That Their Experiences Will Help Soldiers To heal** **By Terri** **(Excerpted from A SOLDIERS MIND website)**

Recently, two Generals opened up on national television and talked about their feelings, talked about the problems they faced in dealing with PTSD. Their hopes are that by doing so, they can help remove the stigma attached to seeking help for psychological problems.

One of the largest hurdles that the military faces in dealing with Troops returning from combat, suffering from PTSD, is the social stigma that has always been placed on people who sought help with mental health problems. For military officers, that stigma is even more pronounced, as they're looked upon as leaders.

Brigadier General Gary S. Patton and General Carter Ham, both have sought counseling to help them deal with their PTSD and they've stepped forward, to tell their stories and hopefully show the thousands of service members serving, that it's okay to ask for help. The emotional traumas that each man suffered from their time in Iraq, was more than what they could deal with by themselves, and they both readily admit that they sought help in dealing with these issues.

Their hope is that by going public with their experiences, that others who are suffering from PTSD will realize that it's okay to ask for help and seek it.

PTSD is not an easy thing to speak about, especially for someone in their position. To do so, both General Ham and Brig. General Patton are doing what Generals are supposed to do, lead by example. I applaud both of them for their courage in allowing their stories to be told publicly, in order to help the thousands of men and women serving in the military, who also suffer from PTSD.

To view the entire article go to <http://soldiersmind.com/2009/03/10/their-hope-is-that-their-experiences-will-help-soldiers-to-heal/>

## **VETERAN COURTS**

Excerpts of an article by Libby Lewis( NPR website)

(City Court Judge Robert) Russell and his staff started a docket for veterans in January when they realized increasing numbers of them were showing up in court. They counted 300 veterans who came into the local courts last year.

"The reality is, we knew we had to do something now ... because soon we're going to have 400,000 coming home," says Hank Pirowski, who heads Judge Russell's staff. He says a lot of the veterans they've seen got into trouble because they were dealing with the aftermath of combat. NPR

Excerpts of article by Nicholas Riccardi (Las Angeles Times)

A new approach in the criminal justice system: specialized courts for veterans who have broken the law. Judges have been spurred by a wave of troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, battling post-traumatic stress disorder and brain injuries and stumbling into trouble with the law. But advocates of the courts say they also address a problem as old as combat itself.

The few veterans courts in the nation are modeled on drug courts that allow defendants to avoid prison in exchange for strict monitoring. Most are only a couple of months old, and it is difficult to track their effectiveness, but the results from the first court, which opened in Buffalo, N.Y., in January 2008, are striking.

Since Russell's court started, veterans courts have opened in Orange and Santa Clara counties in California; Tulsa, Okla.; and Anchorage. Pittsburgh, southern Wisconsin, Phoenix and Colorado Springs, Colo., are opening or considering new courts this year. Some in Congress have proposed a federal program to help spread veterans courts across the country.

Most veterans courts admit only nonviolent felony offenders, though some include violent crimes. Defendants are required to plead guilty to their crimes.

In exchange for a suspended sentence that can include prison time, they must consent to regular court visits, counseling and random drug testing. Should they waver from the straight and narrow, their sentence goes into effect.