LIFE PROMOTION AS SUICIDE PREVENTION:
ENGAGING FAITH COMMUNITIES TO PROMOTE ABUNDANT LIFE FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

VISN I - Be There: Strengthening our Communities
June 26, 2019
Chaplain Steve Sullivan
Quote 1:
“When I came back from Iraq to my church, I was either treated as a Hero or Monster. I’m neither of those.”

Tyler Boudreaux, Marine, Iraq War
SUICIDE PREVENTION: WHAT WE HAVE DONE WELL

• **Awareness**- 22, Out of the Darkness, PSA’s, Mayor’s Challenge, Governor’s Challenge, TFV

• **Education**- S.A.V.E., MH First Aid, Soul Shop, ASSIST, ACE, BattleMind, CCTP, Mental Health Summits

• **Crisis Intervention**- gun locks, Vet Crisis Line, VA SP coordinators, 911, protocols.
Suicide and Veterans

They’ve already died
They didn’t sign up to be SAFE
Veterans run TOWARD things, not AWAY
Give them something to shoot at
INSPIRATION
QUOTE #2

• “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

John 10:10 (KJV)
WHAT ARE WE OFFERING?

LIFE PRESERVER

LIFE PROMOTION
GREAT DEFENSE, BUT WHAT ABOUT OFFENSE?
“There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in.”

- Bishop Tutu
Numerous potential pathways:

- **Substance Abuse**
- **Health Problems**
- **Spiritual Struggles**
- **Social Problems**
- **Anxiety Disorders**

**Community/Clergy engagement:**

- Care within the context of faith communities
- Facilitating access to VA and community care
- Collaboration with Mental health Care
- Supporting Family members
Community/Clergy Engagement

- Promoting healthy behaviors
- Finding community leadership roles
- Helping identify a new “tribe”
- Connecting Veterans to service
- Religious /spiritual practices & resources
- Helping restore family relationships
WHAT DO I DO?
THE COMMUNITY CLERGY TRAINING PROGRAM TO IMPROVE RURAL VETERANS MENTAL HEALTH (CCTP)

• Equipping Community Clergy to Help Warriors
WHAT OUR TRAININGS LOOK LIKE
HOW THIS TRAINING HELPS?

• Equips rural clergy to minister to Veterans and families in their communities.
• Joins rural clergy together in community partnerships of care for Veterans
• Helps congregations and communities to take their rightful role and responsibility for our warriors
• Helps Veterans get the resources, understanding, acceptance and community support they need
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CCTP “PARTNER”?

• You care about Veterans and their families and are interested in learning more about how to help.

• You are willing to help coordinate a free CCTP Viewing Event in your area with one of our 25 chaplains in the U.S.

You join the Manchester CVEB or new (coming soon) Community Action Board!
ANOTHER OPTION:
“A PLACE TO CALL HOME”

- Faith Communities (≈ 20 minutes each)
  1. “Partners in Care”
  2. “Trauma”
  3. “Moral Injury”
  4. “Belonging”
WHY FAITH COMMUNITIES?

- Overwhelming ministry needs for Veterans
- Limited number of military and VA Chaplains
- Community clergy want to help, but …
  - are unaware of the Veterans in their congregation
  - are unsure about what they can or should do to help
  - don’t feel they know enough about Veterans issues and VA services
OVERWHELMING MINISTRY NEEDS

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Depression
- Suicide
- Military Sexual Trauma (MST)
- Substance Abuse
SPIRITUAL REACTIONS TO WAR

- Guilt/Shame
- Loss of faith
- Growth of faith
- Questions about God/theodicy
- Questions about worldview
- Loss of trust (in God or others)
- Loss of community/relationships
- Moral Injury
1ST TRIVIA DOOR PRIZE
LIFE PROMOTION IN FAITH COMMUNITIES?
“THIS GUILT THING ISN’T GOING ANYWHERE”

Study suggests feelings of guilt may be a top factor in PTSD

By Gregg Zoroya, USA TODAY

A leading cause of post-traumatic stress disorder is guilt that troops experience because of moral dilemmas faced in combat, according to preliminary findings of a study of active-duty Marines.
“Perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.”

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<tr>
<th>Moral Injury</th>
<th>PTSD</th>
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<td>• Guilt and/or shame over something they have done, seen, or heard about</td>
<td>• Fear after a traumatic event that prevents normal reintegration into life</td>
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“I don’t regret what I did in Vietnam. I was a marine. They should have known that we were calling in air strikes in that area.... But I’ve tried to go back to church. I just can’t. It’s like there is this wall there.”
WHAT CAN FAITH COMMUNITIES DO TO HELP?

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

• Come to this Workshop
• Pepper your public prayers with difficult words
• KEEP them on your prayer lists
• Focus on the Family
• Small Things are better than Big Things
• Keep doing what you already do well
• Let them plan their own Veterans Day service
• Engage Veterans in things that matter
• Engage Veterans in things that don’t matter
• Above all, Listen and Love
• “You know, Steve, our goal is not to reintegrate Veterans to the VA, but to their communities.”

friend and colleague, Dr. Jeff Pyne
WHY DO COMMUNITIES MATTER?

2nd Trivia Door Prize:
WHAT DOES LIFE PROMOTION LOOK LIKE IN COMMUNITIES?
BREAKFAST FOR TROOPS ON
DRILL WEEKEND
“YELLOW-OUT” GAMES
LIFE PROMOTION IN VETERANS?
JASON + BLUEGRASS COMMUNITY = LIFE
• During what War did the U.S. first start offering benefits to Veterans?
“If we send ‘em, We must mend ‘em”

- Wendell Berry
“IF WE SEND ‘EM, WE MUST MEND OURSELVES”
WHAT DOES LIFE PROMOTION LOOK LIKE IN YOU?
I WANT MY DOG’S LIFE EXPECTANCY
ALL OF US PROMOTING LIFE TOGETHER = SUICIDE PREVENTION AND ABUNDANT LIFE
QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, TESTIMONIES?

• Chaplain Steve Sullivan  
  Thanks!
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• VA/Community Chaplain  
  Go live your life.
  Amen.

• www.mirecc.va.gov/MIRECC/mentalhealthandchaplaincy

• Clergy MH videos, “Pew vs. Couch” paper JORH