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## **Secretary John A. Scocos Column: June is PTSD Awareness Month**

Just one suicide is too many.

From 2007 to 2011, 680 military veterans in Wisconsin took their own lives.

June 27 is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day and June is PTSD Awareness Month. This time calls to attention that veterans with PTSD struggle with many issues after their service, up to and including suicide.

The men and women who have served our country often sacrifice their own personal health. The sights and sounds of service stay with them long after they have returned to civilian life. Male veterans are twice as likely as their civilian peers to die by suicide. Suicide deaths among female veterans increased by 40% over the last decade...an alarming trend.

Preventing our returning warriors from succumbing to the pressure to take their own lives is something that takes entire communities and our entire nation. Our duty is to ensure those that served on our behalf are properly taken care of when they return from service.

The effects of PTSD vary and there are many factors that influence a veteran's ability to cope with or overcome PTSD, but in the past decade numerous resources have been dedicated to helping our men and women as they return from serving our country.

In addition to our existing partnerships, including with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the WDVA is currently undertaking a new effort to help prevent and bring an end to veteran suicide. The Zero Veteran Suicide Initiative is working to empower veterans while also serving as a mental health resource for veterans and their family members.

We want people to know that they are not alone. We also want those who have a loved one who has served that there are resources out there for them.

Before individuals reach a crisis point, let us help. The State of Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs is also available to connect you to the resources you or your veterans may need at 1-800-WisVets or [www.WisVets.com](http://www.WisVets.com).

If you or a veteran you know is suicidal or needs immediate help, Vets4Warriors offers 24/7 confidential support to Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve service members, veterans, retirees, and their families/caregivers. This is peer to peer support for those who are serving or have served. Vets4Warriors can be reached by phone (855-838-8255), via the website 'live chat' at [www.Vets4Warriors.com](http://www.Vets4Warriors.com).

Or you can call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1 to speak with United States Department of Veterans Affairs responders.

Every service member brings home with them a unique set of experiences – good and bad. Those memories can bring joy or they can bring pain. We must be aware and mindful of the weight that each of our nation's heroes carries, and do all we can to provide each of them with the resources they need to live a happy and fulfilling life.

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