


**0 Comments**


**32**


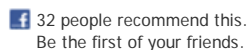
## The invisible wounds of veterans

 By **JEREMY WILLIAMS**  
**HOUSTON CHRONICLE**  
 May 29, 2011, 8:52PM

### Share






 32 people recommend this.  
 Be the first of your friends.

Memorial Day is a day of remembrance of those who died in service to our country. It is also a day to remember our warriors who were wounded in combat. For the returning warrior, the "war" has just begun. The new front is now inside the warrior's mind; it is the constant reliving and experiencing of the realities of combat. The nightmares, intrusive thoughts, anger and outwardly numb appearance are the result of months and years in combat.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have exposed an estimated 2 million service members to repeated deployments, long periods of combat-related stress, traumatic events and more, prompting the military to increase its concern for the mental health of our military personnel and their family members.

With the second largest population of veterans in the nation, the Houston area is in urgent need of greater behavioral health outreach and services for returning veterans and their families.

Some reports suggest that around 25 percent of U.S. service members returning from Afghanistan and Iraq will experience one or more combat-related problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury, depression or anxiety disorders. A significant number will return to Houston with these major health issues. While many will receive appropriate care and treatment, it is reported that as many as half will delay or fail to get help primarily due to the stigma attached to seeking care. Without treatment, mental illnesses such as major depression and PTSD can greatly increase the risk of suicide.

All branches of the armed forces are working to care for mental health needs of these individuals. However, loved ones of service members can help reduce stigma and ensure returning veterans seek treatment if they need it by learning about the common, treatable mental health risks facing soldiers who have experienced trauma.

Caring for our military service members also includes tending to the well-being of their families and caregivers. Family members are also at risk of developing mental health problems. When service members go to war, the families are affected. Many times, they too endure depression, anxiety and fear as they cope with issues such as loneliness, distance, long-term deployment and thoughts of the unknown danger their loved one may experience.

Additionally, when veterans return home their families are physically and emotionally unprepared to care for the physical injuries, disabilities and/or mental health needs of their loved ones. Many of these family members, including children, will experience a change in their roles and become caregivers that could potentially result in other mental health concerns.

To help address this need in our community, in 2008, Mental Health America of Greater Houston convened more than 100 individuals representing 70 city, county and state agencies to develop a plan to address the needs of returning veterans and their families in the Houston area. Our work focused on the successful community reintegration of Houston's returning veterans and families and their need for community support as they face issues such as the dissolution of the family unit, substance abuse, unemployment, family/domestic violence, poverty, criminal prosecution, homelessness and suicide.

In 2009, MHA Houston presented these recommendations to the city and Harris County, and in April 2010 the Houston/Harris County Veterans Behavioral Health Initiative began to implement the recommendations through collaborations between government and nongovernmental organizations.

Our efforts are focused on expanding peer-to-peer mentoring and outreach services for veterans and their families, training law enforcement personnel on responding to veterans in crisis, providing veteran-specific trauma training for non-military health care providers, and a multifaceted public awareness campaign to encourage veterans and families to seek help and advocacy.

Though we can never repay our debt for their sacrifice, MHA Houston and local entities are working to ensure that veterans and their families receive the mental health care, treatment and resources that they need and have earned.

*Williams serves as MHA Houston's Veterans Behavioral Health Program coordinator. In 2007, he was retired from the Marine Corps as a result of his combat wounds.*

Search [advanced search](#) | [archives](#)



Chron.com
  Web Search by
  Businesses
 **YAHOO!**

**Houstonian pleading guilty to child porn awaits punishment**

**3-year-old and an infant die when vehicles collide in NE Harris**

**DWI suspect jailed in crash killing officer**

**Two killed in College Station plane crash identified**

**Senator kills school finance bill with filibuster**

**HPD officer hit, killed while investigating car wreck(427)**

**Study finds Mexican gangs opt for assault rifles(206)**

**Obama going to Joplin help in healing after tornado(202)**

**Obama praises Texas family that's helping tornado victims in Joplin, Mo.(32)**

**Parker's feud with firefighters snarls Houston's budget plan(19)**

**Changes to Secure Communities are for the better**

**It's time to find new allies as NATO withers away**

**David Brooks: Story of 'Kiki Kannibal' reflects changing culture**

**CenterPoint power-line project will benefit all Texans**

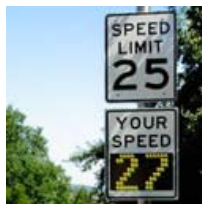
**Letters: Pipeline safety challenges**

Read More

From Chron.com:

Powered by one spot

**As we measure our lives in better detail, will our...**



**Pence returns after missing five games**



**Texas wildfires reach unlikely places amid...**

FORT WORTH, Texas — Hurricane season has reached the Gulf Coast, but electronic signs along Houston's freeways have been warning...

**Uzbekistan boxers relocate to Houston,...**



**Military court upholds Gitmo war crimes...**

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — A military court has upheld the conviction of the first Guantanamo Bay prisoner to be tried for war crimes at the...

From Around the Web:

**Team based care in health reform needs patient involvement**

Jun 25, 2011 | KevinMD.com

**Calgary Flames re-sign veteran left-winger Alex Tanguay to five-year extension**

Jun 25, 2011 | NHL.com News in English

**Flames complete trade to send veteran Robyn Regehr to Sabres for 2 players**

Jun 25, 2011 | NHL.com News in English

**Theodore Knell uses social media to help wounded warriors and their families**



Jun 24, 2011 | Examiner Business & Finance Channel Articles

**Up close: 'It's asking, what do they need?'**

Jun 25, 2011 | Business

ADVERTISEMENT

Comments



Add Your Comment

New to the site?

To use commenting, you need to sign up.

[Sign up](#)

Already a member?

Please log in.

[Forgot Password?](#)

Email

Password

Remember Me

[Log in](#)

CHRON

- [Home](#)
- [Houston & Texas](#)
- [Nation](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Life](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Corrections](#)
- [Blogs](#)

- [Weather](#)
- [Chron Commons](#)
- [Traffic](#)

TOPICS

- [Small Business](#)
- [PetsHouston](#)
- [MomHouston](#)
- [HoustonBelief](#)
- [Gardening](#)
- [29-95](#)

NEIGHBORHOODS

- [Aldine](#)
- [Alief](#)
- [Baytown](#)
- [Bellaire](#)
- [Clear Lake](#)
- [Conroe](#)
- [Cy-Fair](#)
- [East End](#)
- [Fort Bend](#)
- [Heights](#)
- [Katy](#)

- [Kingwood](#)
- [Lake Houston](#)
- [Magnolia](#)
- [Memorial](#)
- [Montrose](#)
- [Pasadena](#)
- [Pearland](#)
- [Spring](#)
- [Tomball](#)
- [West U](#)
- [The Woodlands](#)

MARKETPLACE

- [Find Houston jobs](#)
- [Homes](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Place a classified ad](#)
- [Contests](#)

SERVICES

- [Help](#)
- [Business directory](#)
- [Legal notices](#)
- [Contact us](#)
- [Send us tips](#)
- [About the company](#)
- [Employment opportunities](#)
- [Place a Retail Ad](#)
- [Advertising Services](#)

MEMBERSHIP

- [Sign up](#)
- [Log in](#)

OTHER EDITIONS

- [Home delivery](#)
- [Mobile](#)
- [RSS feeds](#)
- [Chronicle In Education](#)
- [e-Edition](#)
- [Breaking news alerts](#)

LOCAL SERVICES

- [Houston Attorneys](#)
- [Houston Salons](#)
- [Houston HVAC Contractors](#)



[Privacy statement](#) | [Terms of service](#) | [About Our Ads](#)  
Copyright © 2011 The Houston Chronicle

HEARST newspapers