



Waunakee Rotary Club

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More service men and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are experiencing post traumatic stress syndrome and brain trauma, and Jeff Johnson's goal is to get them help.

A retired U.S. Marine, Jeff is the Welcome Home Coordinator with the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. Jeff saw a big change in the soldiers returning from this war, he said. He gives presentations to law enforcement and community members so they can understand the changes these soldiers were going through.

Jeff has two children in the U.S. Marines, one currently home from Iraq and another in boot camp.

He noted that 75-80 percent of veterans return from the war and resume productive lives. And now, the training for deployment is better than it was at the war's onset.

Jeff described one soldier from Richland Center who was on a Humvee turret when a blast went off, slicing one of his hands in half and taking several fingers off of the other.

Wounded soldiers have three military Veterans Centers in the U.S. for treatment. Afterwards, they return home. The Richland Center soldier has had several surgeries on his hands; meanwhile, he's running marathons.

But soldiers like him want to get back to their units. Jeff said it's like being a member of a sports team and getting injured. Soldiers who are wounded feel guilty that they cannot help with the effort.

In addition to physical injuries, returning soldiers are experiencing post traumatic stress syndrome disorder (PTSD). In fact, the Veterans Administration is seeing higher numbers of returning soldiers with that disorder than they did during the Vietnam War, Jeff said. This may be because active soldiers serve more tours than they did in the 1960s and '70s, so soldiers in their 20s may have served a quarter of their lives

deployed.

Some 94 percent serving in Iraq have received small arms fire, Jeff said.

Some of the symptoms of PTSD include reliving the traumatic experience. For instance, one veteran wakes up in the middle of the night and sees the Taliban in his room, Jeff said.

"He knows he's in his room, but when he has nightmares, he's in Afghanistan," Jeff said.

In addition to reliving the trauma, Jeff said soldiers with PTSD go through avoidance, numb themselves with alcohol and can feel keyed up at all times.

Many soldiers also suffer from blast injuries that cause brain trauma and/or trauma to the intestinal tract. Sometimes, brain trauma is mistaken for PTSD. Brain trauma can cause loss of memory, attention span, organization and induce extreme fatigue. Because the symptoms are so similar, some veterans treated for PTSD may actually be suffering from brain trauma.

As the Welcome Home Coordinator, Jeff helps direct soldiers to the services they need within the Veterans Administration. He often explains benefits to family members and helps veterans navigate the VA system with the GI bill.

Other news:

- The Waunakee Rotary Board of Directors approved to put \$1,000 toward a matching grant for the Waunakee Neighborhood Connection and another \$500 toward that organization's operations. Another \$5,000 was approved for a matching grant for the retention pond project, tentatively called the Rotary Walk, said Secretary Phil Willems. Another \$500 was set aside for the Haiti house building project and another \$500 for phase 3 of the Haiti well project. Donations were also approved for the Post Prom Party and the Safety Patrol.

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Calendar of Events:

- Whitetails Unlimited, Feb. 26.
- Super Raffle, March 12.

- In the absence of President Lynn Spielman and President elect Dan Statz, Phil inducted James Chancellor into the club. James is a sales executive with RG Heating and Air Conditioning. The board of directors also voted to approve the membership of Bob Kase, who will be inducted at a later date.

- The board approved the resignations of Kim Lengfeld and Fred Caywood.

Guests: Margaret Meyer, guest of Jim Meyer.

Visiting Rotarians: None.

Birthdays: Feb. 24, Danny Paul; Feb. 26, Sandy Taylor; Feb. 27, Ralph Montello.

Anniversaries: None.

Prayers: Feb. 21, Leonard Allen; Feb. 28, Kim Wilde; March 6, Pat Durden; March 13, Msgr. Kramer.

Programs: Feb. 21, Haiti Trip report; Feb. 28, Ken Anderson, Project Graduation; March 6, Club Assembly.

Greeters: Feb. 21, Shelley Moffatt, Richard Murphy; Feb. 28, Daniel Muxfeld, Ed Niebuhr; March 6, Ted Pertzborn, Ken Pesik.

Make up meetings online

It's easy to make up a meeting on the Internet. The site is www.rotaryclubone.org. Print out the form and give it to Phil Willems, the club secretary.