

VETERANS AND FAMILY SUPPORT

November has long been my favorite month. As the crazy Halloween fun is winding down, the calm beauty of Autumn days can be a respite that allows us to breathe in the peace before the Christmas holiday madness. It's time to pick up pecans from under the trees and prepare for more brisk mornings and evenings. We start to look forward to the days that will be filled with plans and preparations for fun family gatherings, travel, and of course sharing good food, good company, and good times.

For some veterans however, the holidays are not as cozy or comforting, due to struggles with ongoing PTSD issues, depression, physical suffering and chronic pain from injuries incurred during active service, difficulties transitioning to civilian life, and resulting loneliness and isolation. These are just a few challenges that can make holidays emotionally trying and can lead to suicidal thoughts and possibly actions.

Yes, September was Suicide Awareness month, but suicide is a year-round, day-to-day reality that often ramps up during the holidays, and it is important to be aware and ready to help in these coming months as well.

According to advice found on both www.vfw.org and www.vfwauxiliary.org, to help a veteran in crisis, encourage them to call to the **Veterans Crisis Line at 988 and press 1**. You can also offer genuine, non-judgmental support by listening, validating their feelings, and helping them find professional help together.

I hope that September was an important "reminder" month in terms of suicide awareness and prevention this year, but we can't forget that the holidays can be a pivotal time when putting that knowledge and readiness into action can be of especially critical importance.

With all the celebrations and events during these next few weeks, let's remember to check on our veterans and families often, make a special effort to include them in our plans and gatherings, and let them know how important they are to all of us.

Chairmen, please let me know about all the ways you and your Auxiliary bring the joy of the holidays this year to your veterans and families. Send me photos and post them on your social media page!! And please let me know if there is any way I can help you help others. I am here for you and so proud of all you do.

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