



**From
Patrick Welch
Director**

Each Memorial Day we remember those Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our great nation. For many of us, Memorial Day occurs everyday because of people we were close to, so we hope that Americans realize what the true meaning of today is.

As we reflect upon their service from the Revolutionary War to the latest casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq we must always remember that the freedom we enjoy everyday is a direct result of actions taken by those we pay homage to today.

We build monuments that represent the wars we have fought in from the Revolutionary War to our current engagements not to glorify war but to remember those who served with courage and valor and gave all they had for our freedoms.

Since the founding of this country Americans have served all over the world to combat those tyrants and dictators who wish to oppress and destroy the free will of the people on this planet. Many of these battles have been politically and morally correct and some have not been.

But those who went to serve and give of themselves must not ever be judged upon the political correctness of their service; but solely upon the merit of their service when their country called.

Where does America get such fine young people? The fact is that we have been raising them since 1775, when the young colonists put down their pitchforks and picked up their muskets to establish the United States of America. For 234 years, over 48 million American's have served in the Armed Forces and over 1.2 million have given their lives in war.

These are the official numbers from the Department of Defense however they do not include the over 93,000

Memorial Day

Americans still listed as POW/MIA's, nor the hundreds of thousands that did not die on the battlefield, but subsequently succumbed to the physical and mental wounds of war.

On foreign beaches, in isolated fighting holes, at sea and in the air, they met their final fate wearing the uniform of freedom. They are the sons and daughters of liberty, they are they legacy of courage, they are the reason we build statues, memorials and walls of honor. For so many of them, life had hardly begun. They were in the dawns of their lives, they had big dreams and high hopes.

But in the blink of an eye and the calling of their country, they would sacrifice their dreams for ours.

We remember today because such heroism, such courage, such sacrificial love must never be forgotten. The free air we breathe is the product of the blood they shed.

Courage is not confined to the field of battle; it has been abundant in every home that sent a loved one off to war. Behind each name etched in the granite of a memorial are moms, dads, brothers, sisters, wives, husbands and children who have paid a tremendous price, the flesh of their flesh, the blood of their blood. To this day, they cling to a final letter, an old year book, a sports jacket that may still hang in a closet, precious reminders of a loved one who never came home. To those who gave the gift of a loved one, we offer our profound thanks. You have endured unthinkable grief, may god grant you lasting peace.

Freedom, which is the birthright of all Americans is a precious gift and has been given to all of us at a great cost. It is what members of our Armed Forces have fought and died for since the founding of our nation. It is the duty of those of us who survived to keep alive the memory of our

(Continued on page 8)

PTSD—PART II

ABANDONED
HEROES SERIES
...Part IV



By Sergio R. Rodriguez
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We continue our Abandoned Heroes Series with Part II of our PTSD coverage. This issue includes our meeting with Dr. Terri Julian of the PTSD Clinic at Batavia, NY and an exclusive interview with Chris, an Iraq War veteran recently discharged from the U.S. Marine Corps.

"An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal behavior."

MEETING WITH DR. JULIAN

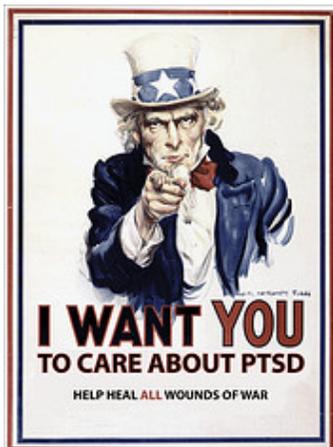
While in attendance at the County Veterans Service Officers meeting in Batavia, NY, our Service Officer Alyssa Erasing and I took the opportunity for a brief interview with Dr. Terri Julian at the nearby PTSD clinic for veterans.

The PTSD clinic has been serving the Western New York veterans community since its inception in 1996. It has since expanded to include a women's program that is among the first of its kind in the nation. The women's program is eight weeks in length. The men's program usually lasts about four weeks. The PTSD clinic at Batavia also serves veterans who live outside of our region. Dr. Julian has been the Program Manager at the Veterans PTSD Clinic since 2001.

Doctor Julian's career with the VA began in 1994 when she worked as an intern at the Buffalo VA Medical Center. She then worked at ECMC treating chemical dependency. A part-time position at the PTSD clinic then led to her current position as Program Manager. The program encourages veterans to reconnect with the community around them. The center also promotes social activities and encourages veterans to go outside and visit local shops, go on bicycle rides and explore the area's surroundings.

As with other VA programs, veterans service organizations also help support some of the activities that benefit those seeking treatment. At the PTSD clinic at Batavia, the local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) organization raised over \$70,000 to provide a lounge space with access to televisions, bean bags, video games and other activities that help make the experience of a veteran at the center feel more like home.

Part of what makes the PTSD program effective is the family involvement: "for the most part..." says Dr. Julian, "families are very supportive and the education for families helps them realize what the veteran is going through and lets the veteran know that they are not alone". Dr. Julian also stresses peer support. Many volunteers at the center are also graduates of the PTSD program.



Dr. Julian recognizes that there are varying degrees of symptoms. If a symptom "is extremely traumatic, it'll likely have some type of impact" on the veteran who experiences it, says Dr. Julian. Some suffer an acute stress disorder, which is a less severe form of PTSD and is usually short term.

Just about anyone can develop PTSD. The trauma is often unpredictable. Thus, it's difficult to expect someone to prepare for something that cannot be predicted. Dr. Julian makes mention of a popular quote used in the professional therapy circles by Viktor E. Frankl, a Holocaust survivor, who used a phrase to describe how a person copes with traumatic events: "An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal

(Continued on page 3)



(Continued from page 2)

behavior”.

CHRIS

Our journey into the troubling world of PTSD culminates with a one-on-one interview with an Iraq War veteran named Chris. Chris is a Marine Corps veteran who served four years of active duty between the years of 2003 and 2007. He participated in two back-to-back tours in Iraq. He grew up in the Town of Amherst, New York and achieved the rank of Sergeant while in the Marines. He comes from a family steeped in military servitude. His dad was drafted to the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War and both sides of his family have a history of patriotism which goes back beyond World War II. So it's only a matter of natural occurrence, if not tradition, that Chris would grow up fantasizing about joining the military when the opportunity came. To fulfill his dreams, he joined what he terms as “the smallest and baddest branch” of the military.



After completing Marine Corps boot camp training, Chris was sent to California to become a Radio Operator. On August of 2004, he and his unit were deployed to the Al-Anbar province of Iraq. Soon after, he was detached from his base to join his comrades and assist with the second Battle of Fallujah. As a radio operator relaying messages from the field and back to headquarters, Chris was also asked to pick up his M-4 Rifle and use it to aim at his opponents. Then again, this is what he was trained for. He always carried a 9 millimeter pistol by his side for added protection.

Traveling at night and equipped with their night vision goggles, the Marines moved fast and the insurgents rarely saw them coming. The Marines jumped out of their armored Humvees and sprinted towards the nearest targets. Kicking in the doors, or blowing through them, they took the ammunition found inside - which they later melted or vanished using EOD (Explosive Ordinance Disposal) procedures. They would only leave behind a single weapon found at each household (one weapon per -household was allowed under local laws). Intelligence

from prior reports led to interrogations of those captured. Upon confirmation, the detainees were later either released or put in jail.

During these excursions, Chris was shot at more than once. His life was in direct danger and often threatened. Bullets flying in his direction made for an intense period that led Chris to experience a surreal state of mind – at times not realizing what was happening or what to make of it. Surrounded by people who lived in a third world country that lacked basic living standards such as sewage drains, Chris came to appreciate many of the things that we commonly take for granted. There were moments when, despite all of the calamity that surrounded them, kids would wave to him and smile. Yet, one cannot help but wonder what lies behind each of these kids' smile. One can only imagine that, behind the glare in their eyes there lies a veil which covers many truths left untold. Devastating truths which bare witness to the ravages of war.

But Chris has no regrets: “Being overseas is a great thing, but you make a lot of sacrifices. Combat is hard – yet I got everything I ever dreamed of.” How things are handled after coming home is an entirely different matter. “I came home and didn't know how to deal with the scars left behind afterwards. Alcohol was how I came to cope with it.” He recounts the first day he came back home from the military: when the house dog barked, Chris rolled to the floor instinctively as if he was being ambushed. His dad witnessed this reaction and knew in an instant that his son was showing signs of PTSD.

Chris did not know how to readjust or where to seek help. He drank as much as possible. He didn't want to deal with the scars. Though he has been diagnosed with PTSD, he still doesn't understand it. To this day, when he's in a room, Chris prefers to sit with his back towards the wall so that he can observe anyone coming in to the space and watch for any suspicious activities. He pays



attention to little things that most people wouldn't, such as coughing, the hum from heat vent and other small sounds or noises that we simply tend to ignore. When he visited New Orleans recently, the narrow walkways and four story buildings brought flashbacks to his time in

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

Iraq – he snapped, went to his hotel room and didn't come out until the next day. Sometimes the smell of diesel fuel triggers a reaction (Humvees run on diesel). He lives with what he terms as a "hyper-sense of awareness". "I get angry over stupid things that shouldn't bother me, but they still do" says Chris. He sometimes doesn't sleep much for fear of his life.

Coming home and finding people who you can relate with helps. Getting to meet people who understand each other because they share a common bond that no one else understands makes a big difference. Had Chris known about the Buffalo Vet Center, perhaps he could have avoided the DWI he received one night after being pulled over by a cop who noticed a waving vehicle. His life has changed. He lost his innocence, there in combat. Not all veterans deal with PTSD in the same fashion. "Some stuff you see over there is blocked out or you develop a morphed image of a situation, hoping that the interpretation of some events will serve as a coping mechanism".

Chris realizes that the DWI he got was perhaps the best thing to happen to him. "Sometimes you just have to hit rock bottom before you reach out to the VA and other resources out there". Others, however, hit a bottom that they can never climb out of. If you or someone in your family suffers from PTSD, why not make an effort to reach out today?



Did you know...

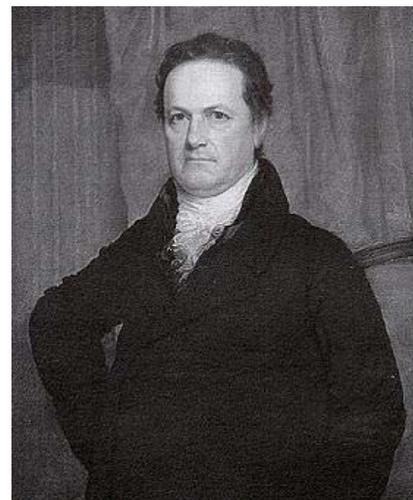
The **Batavia PTSD Program** Was Named "2006-2007 Special Project" by the Department of New York State Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary Pick PTSD Program as their Special Project. This was the first time that a state-level veteran service organization has identified a particular VA clinic/program as their target of support.

The Western New York Connection...DeWitt Clinton

Governor of New York and Erie Canal proponent

DeWitt Clinton served as governor of New York from 1817 to 1822 and was largely responsible for the construction of the Erie Canal.

He was widely met with criticism for his support of the project. Many viewed the endeavor as impractical, and referred to the project as "Clinton's Ditch." The canal was completed in 1817, and Clinton sailed from the mouth of Lake Erie to New York City, where he poured water from Lake Erie into the New York Harbor to celebrate the connection between the two areas.



Source:

200 Years 200 Faces, A Special Bicentennial Edition; Published by the Lockport Union-Sun & Journal, The Niagara Gazette and the Tonawanda News

WHERE TO TURN FOR COMBAT STRESS/REINTEGRATION ISSUES

If you're a vet suffering with PTSD, please know that you are not alone. Please take your [symptoms](#) seriously.

From the [U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command website](#):

Fellow Soldiers - Talk to your friends about what you are feeling. Oftentimes it's a reality check ... a first line of defense.

Chain of Command - Team leaders, squad leaders, platoon sergeants/leaders, first sergeants, company/battalion/brigade commanders, command sergeants major.

Unit Ministry Teams - They're especially good at counseling.

Family Life Chaplains - Many have a Master's Degree in Counseling and will try to save a marriage; some will also work individually with the members of a couple.

Military One Source (Formerly Army One Source) - Call 1-800-342-9647, or visit the Web site. They offer six free sessions and it's anonymous.

Primary Care Managers - Many family practice physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners are quite comfortable treating depression and sleep problems.

Community Mental Health Service - They usually have at least one psychiatrist and a vari-

able number of psychologists and social workers on staff as well as behavioral health technicians.

TRICARE Counseling - Spouses can go for free. Service members can often share a family member's appointment for marriage counseling.

Veterans Administration - Or [Veterans Centers](#).

Army Substance Abuse Program (formerly ADAPCP) - Especially helpful if the Soldier or family member has a problem with alcohol or drugs.

VA/DOD Joint Programs - Aimed at service members near retirement and currently operating at Forts Hood and Bliss.

Local Church Programs - Lutheran Social Services, Catholic Social Services, etc.

Army Community Services - Often coordinate/conduct stress management, anger management, parenting and other classes.

Online Community Bulletin Boards - A great resource to tap if you have questions; usually manned by veterans and military family members who've been through the same experiences.

The Internet - There is a truckload of solid information available on-line. Just do a search using the keyword [PTSD](#).

Source:

<http://ptsdcombat.blogspot.com/2007/01/need-transition-help-free-resources.html>



Coming soon to East Aurora!
American Veterans Traveling Tribute

June 25-29, 2009

Go to www.avtt.org for more details

Veterans Advocate of the Month

—James McDonough

Colonel (Retired) **James D. McDonough, Jr.** was named the May 2009 Erie County Veterans Advocate of the Month. He was appointed Director of the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs on Veterans' Day in 2007, after serving 26 years in the United States Army as Commissioned Officer. He is an OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM Veteran and has served in numerous command, staff, and leadership positions throughout the Army and around the world. He is a graduate of the United States Army War College and holds multiple Masters' degrees. During his service he wore the Joint Chiefs of Staff Identification Badge, the Army Staff Identification Badge, and Parachutist Badge.

He is married to the former Barbara Joan Schehr of Saratoga Springs, New York. Together they have three children, Matthew, a professional engineer in New York City, Andrew, a sophomore at Elizabethtown College and Nicholas, a fifth-grader. The McDonough's reside in Wilton, New York.



Photo: left to right – Ed Simmons, James McDonough, Patrick Welch, Alyssa Ersing and Sergio Rodriguez

1812 Legacy Council— The Bicentennial: Niagara 2012-2014



In our busy modern lives, why should we who live on both sides of the Niagara River stop to commemorate the War of 1812? Well, for one, this region was the center of the entire conflict. The hub of military action was the Niagara Region. Here are some of the facts.

Fighting in Niagara lasted from the late summer of 1812 until the late fall of 1814. No other region in North America can claim this long a period of military activity during the War of 1812.

The Niagara Region/Frontier was the scene of the hardest fighting of the War of 1812. Based on casualty lists, half the casualties suffered by combatants during the War take place within 35 miles of the Niagara River.

The forts along the river changed hands repeatedly and the most famous stand up firefights of the war take place at Chippawa and Lundy's Lane.

Most of the famous, and infamous, generals of the war served in the area. Isaac Brock, Gordon Drummond, Winfield Scott, Jacob Brown, and William Henry Harrison all spent time in Niagara.

The Niagara was the scene of the worst day of fighting, Lundy's Lane, and the longest siege of the war, Fort Erie.

Important naval engagements took place within cannon shot of either side of the Niagara River: the capture of the Detroit and Caledonia; also, the capture of the Ohio and Somers. Squadrons of war-ships, some amongst the largest afloat at that time, patrolled the shores of Niagara.

John Norton and Red Jacket are two of the famous Native leaders operating in the Niagara. John Norton allied to the British and Red Jacket allied to the Americans. The remnants of Tecumseh's army served in Niagara in the last year of the war.

No other region can claim the combination of British, American, Canadian, Native and Naval operations -- and on as large a scale--as this area.

That's some of the quick facts about the military side of things. But what does that have to do with life in the 21st century Niagara. Hear more in next month's newsletter. - Jim Hill

<http://www.discover1812.com/>



Red Jacket

(Continued from page 1)

brothers and sisters who gave their lives so that others will understand the sacrifices required to maintain that freedom.

Such sacrificial love must not ever be taken for granted, must not ever become a fading memory. We must always remember, we must always remember so that we may always be free.

Remember that Freedom is not Free, because it has been bought and paid for with the sweat, tears, blood and lives of those who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States.

For our current military, when you meet these men and women who serve America, you find the strength and character of this nation and the enduring belief that what matters most is freedom.

Keep them in your thoughts and prayers.

Patrick W. Welch, PhD

Director, Erie County Veterans Service Agency

Mission Statement of Erie County Veterans Services

To insure that every veteran in the county is registered in the VA System and is fully aware of all the benefits that they have earned.

To make veterans an economic force in education, employment and business development.

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IT TAKES THE COURAGE AND
STRENGTH OF A WARRIOR TO
ASK FOR HELP...

If you're in an emotional crisis,
call 1-800-273-TALK (Press "1" for Veterans)
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org