

Shouting it from the high points



Written by Sue Pitts

Monday, 19 January 2009 10:44



Emotions were palpable Saturday as about 40 people gathered at Campbell Hill in a symbolic gesture to raise awareness to post traumatic stress disorders suffered by soldiers overseas, a mission that started its national focus in Bellefontaine.

Summit for Soldiers cofounders Steve Redenbaugh and Michael Fairman introduced their message at Ohio Hi-Point Career Center with a presentation of vital information for and about those who suffer from PTSD and their families, and are taking the word to the highest point in each state.

Guests also heard emotional presentations from Larry Lewis, a former member of the 664th AC&W Squadron that was based at Campbell Hill, and Doug Thompson and Glen Minney, veterans who are traveling with the cofounders with their personal messages of coping with the disorder.

The goal of SFS, a project of Mountain Goats Inc., is "to inform and educate veterans, families and communities on the facts about PTSD and (to simplify) the resources and treatments available to them."

According to studies, one in five combat veterans report symptoms from the disorder and that the rate of veteran suicides nearly doubles that of other Americans. Sufferers also tend to be more susceptible to developing alcohol-related problems.

Fighting the disease is complicated by roadblocks that may keep them from finding the help they need, organizers related, such as the stigma and misconceptions associated with the illness, fear of jeopardizing one's career and the affordability of treatment.

The group also is concerned that reserve units may not be getting the support services they need as well.

Organizers related a number of resources available to veterans and their families and pointed out that veterans are eligible for up to five years of free medical and dental coverage.

Veterans are encouraged to seek help through Elizabeth Estrada at the Lima VA Outpatient clinic, 1303 Bellefontaine Ave., Lima, (419) 222-5788 ext. 6803, elizabeth.estrada2@va.gov; the VA Suicide Hotline, (800) 273-TALK; or the Chillicothe VA Medical Center, (740) 773-1141 or on the Web: www.militaryonesource.com; Ohio Cares at ong.ohio.gov/ohiocares; www.SummitforSoldiers.org.

Contact e-mail: spitts@examiner.org



Steve Redenbaugh, left, and Michael Fairman share a congratulatory handshake for completing the first step in their efforts to raise awareness of post traumatic stress disorders suffered by soldiers. The duo co-founded Summit for Soldiers and they are taking the message to the highest point in all 50 states, starting the mission Saturday at Campbell Hill in Bellefontaine.

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