

Help to prevent suicide of nation's wounded warriors

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Help to prevent suicide of nation's wounded warriors

Members of our military honorably serve the nation, endangering their lives to protect our freedom and liberties. Upon returning home, however, some face personal challenges with regards to PTSD and suicidal thoughts. With an average of one suicide daily, we must better recognize and help those wounded warriors in need.

As part of Suicide Prevention Month (September), the VA and Defense Department have launched “The Power of 1” campaign to reinforce the impact one person or one action can have to save a life. Recognizing the signs, checking in and offering support could have a real, positive result.

South Jersey veterans and military families need to know that help is available to them as the VA, various organizations and my office stand ready to assist. Veterans seeking a mental health professional can contact community-based outpatient clinics in Cape May, Northfield, Sewell or Vineland or the VA Wilmington Medical Center. Alternative options available 24/7: 1-800-273-8255, texting 838255 or confidential online chats (www.VeteransCrisisLine.net).

Our military personnel and veterans have stood up in defense of our nation; it is our obligation to do the same for them.

Congressman Frank LoBiondo

R-2nd District

Collective action needed for solutions to assist AC workers

If there's one thing Atlantic City needs, it's a sure bet. Reeling from casino closings and job loss, the future of our region, and the livelihoods of thousands are at stake.

Strangely enough, we have stood here before.

Nearly two years ago, Superstorm Sandy pummeled our coast leaving millions in damage in its wake. Recovery, amid dismal headlines and insurmountable odds, seemed a long road ahead. At the time, a coordinated response was critical and together, we aligned to help our most vulnerable neighbors. Through the Long Term Recovery Groups — a collaborative effort of more than 40 organizations, including United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey and local and national nonprofits, community leaders, experts and volunteers—we came together to tackle the issues and find solutions. Each member had a role to play and resources to share, and it was our commitment to collective action that moved recovery forward.

Recently, a number of conversations, or “Summits,” have opened lines of communications throughout our community, and according to our lawmakers everything is on the table in terms of solutions. It's critical that we continue to act in a coordinated, collective way to address the challenges that lie ahead. United Way remains committed to working with the nonprofit community to assist our local residents in identifying their needs and connecting them with resources.

One critical service is 2-1-1 — a free, confidential, non-emergency helpline that is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, thanks to a partnership between local United Ways and the State of New Jersey. When callers dial 2-1-1 or visit www.nj211.org, they are connected to a broad network of service providers and programs that may be available to them. 2-1-1 call specialists can help callers pinpoint their needs and make connections to:

- food pantries, clothing closets, rental and utility assistance
- employment training programs, credit counseling opportunities, affordable housing options
- child care options, after school programs, mentoring and tutoring programs
- senior services, medical insurance, affordable healthcare, respite care, home healthcare and more.

Uncertain times are ahead for Atlantic City, and our region. It's imperative that we continue to work toward a collective, coordinated response, and United Way will continue to be a part of the solution. For our friends and neighbors facing crisis right now, 2-1-1 is a critical first step. For help, answers, guidance and a caring voice, dial 2-1-1.

John Emge

John Emge is executive director of the Atlantic and Cape May Counties, United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey