

The long-lasting sacrifice of war: A veteran reflects post-Memorial Day

5

Gallery: Memorial Day



By **Guest Voices**

on June 08, 2017 at 9:47 AM, updated June 08, 2017 at 9:48 AM

By Brad Israel, chief operating officer for **68 Ventures** and Chief Leadership Officer for its core companies (*Truland, Bellator, Thrive Title, 68V Development Services, and **FM Solutions***). Brad joined the Army in 2005 and has served multiple rotations in Afghanistan as well as Central & South America, leading an Airborne Rifle Platoon, a Heavy Weapons Platoon, a Scout Reconnaissance Platoon and then serving as a Detachment Commander in 7th Special Forces Group.

As a U.S. Army Special Forces Veteran, holidays like Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Veteran's Day are an especially powerful reminder of the lives lost to maintain our country's freedom. Reflecting on Memorial Day is particularly painful and difficult for the loved ones that grieve and reflect on the heroes we lost.

It is vitally important that we always honor that ultimate sacrifice these men and women paid for us by being intentional about how we live each of our remaining days and by creating a positive impact in the lives of others. One way we can do this is by recognizing the sacrifices made by the living servicemen and women affected by post-traumatic stress, severe depression, and traumatic brain injury.

ADVERTISING

After serving multiple rotations in Afghanistan and other countries across the globe as a former Infantry Platoon Leader and Special Forces Detachment Commander, I have formed relationships with and invested in the lives of hundreds of Soldiers, witnessing the effects of combat-related stress.

The devastating truth of war is that it is an incredible sacrifice.

Although not all Soldiers return from overseas with physical wounds and battle scars, one in three will return with a combat-related stress or traumatic brain injury because of our ongoing wars.

The estimates predict there are more than **two million men and women** struggling with the effects of combat-related stress. In Alabama alone, Alabama Public Health identifies mental health and substance abuse as the **second greatest current health concern** in the state, with mental disorders causing **90 percent of suicides** nationwide. The Department of Veteran Affairs conducted the most **comprehensive analysis** of veteran suicide rates to-date, finding that over 7,400 veterans took their own life in 2014 alone. Current information shows that 20 veterans and one active duty Soldier commit suicide every single day.

Many veterans face **daily barriers** that prevent them from seeking the treatment they need. Whether it be personal embarrassment about post traumatic stress, being perceived as weak, lack of access to quality care, or the shame associated with seeking sustainable treatment, there is a stigma surrounding these invisible wounds of war that we need to change.

Although veterans and civilians suffering may not seek help for themselves, I challenge friends, family and loved ones to feel empowered to do so by understanding **signs of emotional pain**: personality change, agitation, withdrawal, poor self-care, and hopelessness. Some may also experience severe depression or anxiety.

By recognizing these signs of distress, we can inspire hope and help alleviate some of the suffering they experience daily.

By **pledging** to identify some of these signs of emotional suffering and help change the perception surrounding mental health, we can support the service men and women who have served all of us, and our great Nation.

As we take time to remember and honor our military's fallen heroes, let us also take time to recognize those suffering in silence and provide the support they deserve.

My former Commander-in-Chief, President George W. Bush, said it best, "Our warriors are the one percent of America who kept the other 99 percent safe. We have a duty to help make their transitions as successful as possible."

*Brad continues to apply his leadership skills in his hometown of Mobile, Ala., serving as the Vice Chair for Military Affairs for the Mobile Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, in addition to board positions with the Child Advocacy Center and Habitat for Humanity of Southwest Alabama. He enjoys leadership consulting and speaking through his consulting entity, FM Solutions, and loves creating memories and experiences with his wife and three boys through travel, adventure, the outdoors, and his community. Brad is also a member of the 2017 **Presidential Leadership Scholars** program.*

RESOURCES:

Websites

[**Stop Soldier Suicide**](#)

[**The Boulder Crest Retreat**](#)

[**K9s For Warriors**](#)

Hotlines

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Crisis Text Line: Text SIGNS to 741741

Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255, Press 1

Vets4Warriors: 1-855-838-8255

Registration on or use of this site constitutes acceptance of our **User Agreement** and **Privacy Policy**

© 2017 Alabama Media Group. All rights reserved (**About Us**).

The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or otherwise used, except with the prior written permission of Alabama Media Group.

Community Rules apply to all content you upload or otherwise submit to this site.

 **Ad Choices**