



Veterans Outreach Coordinator
Lucas Gradney

Veterans Outreach Program seeks veterans to help other vets

Lucas Gradney said, “I can't stand when someone is sitting directly behind me. I constantly need to have enough space between me and people I do not know. There are also nights when I will have dreams about when I was over there and wake up in the middle of the night in cold sweats.”

Those words come from an Iraq War veteran recounting his experiences after coming home from combat with PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). Now, he wants to help others going through the same thing.

Spindletop MHMR is searching for veterans interested in counseling other veterans in Southeast Texas. The sessions are slated to take place at various locations across the region. The Veterans Outreach Program is in its infancy at STMHMR, but the staff understands how important it could be to returning vets.

“The need for this is very urgent,” said Gradney, veterans outreach coordinator for STMHMR and an Iraq veteran himself. “I struggle with the lingering effects of combat, so I understand what people go through on a day-to-day basis.

To become a peer-to-peer facilitator for veterans at STMHMR, call Gradney at (409) 651-6084

“With the end of active combat in the Iraq theater, a lot of men and women might be returning to civilian life, and many of them will bring a lot of baggage

besides their luggage home with them,” said Betty Reynolds, director of outpatient clinic services at STMHMR. “There are some serious problems that can follow a veteran home from war, and MHMR wants to address those problems. People can get lost; they often need a sympathetic ear.”

Gradney said, “I was an Army specialist and spent 2 years in Iraq. My service was very important to me, but it didn't come without a cost. I'm happy to be coordinating this program as a veteran myself, because I understand what people go through. People need help, and we need vets to step up to the plate to do that work.”

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“That is my own cell phone number,” said Gradney. “When you call me, you're not just getting an office; you're getting me, one on one, wherever I am.”

“You've been to a place where you were in constant danger, and you might have seen things you hope no one ever has to see. If you can have someone who has been where you were and you can talk with that person in a welcoming atmosphere, it can make all the difference,” said Gradney.

Veterans who wish to be peer-to-peer group facilitators will need to travel to attend a three-day training session. After that, they will run group sessions at different locations around Southeast Texas. The sessions will allow returning vets to work through their feelings and their PTSD symptoms. STMHMR will fund the trip and the training.