

For Immediate Release:

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Mental Health Association in Orange County, Inc. (MHA) joins the nation in welcoming the return of our troops. We are pleased that the war in Iraq is now over. It is difficult to believe that the war lasted for 9 years. For many Americans, the only experience with this war has been from the radio and television. However, we must not forget that many families have been struggling with loss and despair for a long time. Thousands of soldiers are headed home to their families as we speak. As the soldiers and families rejoiced in this good news, the sad reality still remains that over 6,000 people have lost their lives in this war. The ramifications of the war will be felt for many years to come.

MHA wants to take this time to reach out to the residents of Orange County. Assisting individuals in their time of need is exactly what MHA is prepared to do. MHA is empathetic to the needs of family members and returning war veterans. The trauma felt by the war affects many family members and spans many generations. The transition home for veterans can be difficult and emotionally demanding.

Veterans are faced with many issues when transitioning to civilian life. Many veterans return home with physical disabilities and mental scars. According to the San Francisco Veterans' Administration Medical Center more than 40 percent of U.S. soldiers have sought out treatment from a Veterans' Administration hospital for mental health disorders. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, alcohol abuse and other mental illnesses were reported.

The unfortunate statistic is that many veterans will not seek out treatment for mental health issues due to stigma. Just as the war has ended, the stigma of having a mental illness can end as well. Education and correct information is vital at this time.

The community plays a very important role in supporting veterans who are transitioning home. Recognizing mental health symptoms are vital in assisting individuals. Suicidal thoughts, symptoms of PTSD and depression can sometimes elude family members. MHA in Orange County, Inc. has a 24 hour Crisis Helpline, **1-800-832-1200. The line is open 24/7** to answer any mental health related question you may have. MHA's warm line is equipped to answer questions about signs and symptoms of suicide, PTSD and depression. MHA has a list of mental health providers, support group and other pertinent resources you or your family may need during this difficult time.

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Please reach out to us. We are here for you anyday, anytime.

Mental Health Association would like to take this time to thank all individuals that have served our country. We wish people from all over the world a happy and healthy New Year. Please see resources below.

Resources:

Mental Health Association in Orange County, Inc. - www.mhaorangenyc.com, 24 Hour Crisis Helpline, 1-800-832-1200. Text 4 Teens (T4T) (845) 391-1000.

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America- www.iava.org , 1-888-777-4443

Middletown Vet Center, Readjustment Counseling Service- www.va.gov/rcs ,(845) 342-9917

United States Department of Veterans Affairs- www.mentalhealth.va.gov

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) - www.nami.org Veterans Resource Center

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