

VETERANS CORNER

Veterans Crisis Line

September is Suicide Prevention Month and as such I am compelled to address that topic here in Veterans Corner. Current statistics indicate the average suicide rate among veterans to be 20 per day, down from 22 per day in 2013. During Suicide Prevention Month and year-round, the U.S. Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Defense (DoD) work together to raise awareness of the suicide prevention and mental health resources they offer and to encourage communities to support Veterans, Service members, and their families and friends.

VA collaborates with community groups, Veterans Service Organizations, health care providers, corporations, educational institutions, government agencies, and others that serve, employ, or support Veterans, to spread the word that help is available. These stakeholders help VA remind Veterans, Service members, and their loved ones that free, confidential crisis support from the Veterans Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

The responders at the Veterans Crisis Line are specially trained and experienced in helping Veterans of all ages and circumstances — from those coping with mental health issues that were never addressed, to recent Veterans dealing with relationships or the transition back to civilian life. You can show your support for Veterans and active-duty, service members who may be in crisis, by spreading the word about *The Power of 1*. Veterans, service-members, and their loved ones can call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1; send a text message to 838255, or chat online to receive free, confidential support - even if they are not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care. Our local crisis resources in Kings County can be accessed by calling (559) 582-4484 or 1-800-655-2553. Let's work together to support our veterans in need. It only takes one person, one phone-call or one conversation – to make a difference!

The Kings County Veterans Service Office can complete the DMV Veteran Status Verification Form for the new California Veteran Designation on your driver's license and also issues Veteran I.D. cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Scott Holwell if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To determine if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at www.countyofkings.com/vets.

Scott Holwell, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230; call (559)852-2669; or e-mail scott.holwell@co.kings.ca.us.