

Vets Helping Vets

Post partners with nonprofit to bring suicide awareness

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Members of VFW Post 6755 in Liberty, Pennsylvania, hosted a Suicide Awareness Brunch on Feb. 18 to help raise donations and awareness for a local nonprofit dedicated to helping veterans.

In a joint partnership with This is My Quest: Veterans in the Wild, a local nonprofit created in 2022 to provide veterans of all ages with outdoor exposure therapy, the event served brunch to 85 people and helped raise more than \$1,700 among other donated items.

“All the money raised was for This is My Quest: Veterans in the Wild to help with their efforts to get veterans out in nature and talking,” Post 6755 Commander Scott McLaughlin said. “Whether it is at a VFW Post or out in nature, we believe just a simple conversation or gesture might make all of the difference for a fellow veteran.”

The idea for a suicide awareness brunch was presented to Post 6755 by one of their own, trustee Travis McConnell, who serves as the nonprofit’s veterans outreach director. It was through McConnell that Post members jumped at the opportunity to raise awareness about an issue as important as the suicide numbers among their own.

“Mr. McConnell is a Post trustee, so naturally, when he asked, the Post gladly provided him with the space and support he needed to host such a meaningful event for our local veteran community,” Post Quartermaster James Reed said.

During the brunch, the Post also received donations in the form of 30 blankets, 40 knitted hats, 100 pairs of socks, a few packs of T-shirts and 15 pairs of gloves. The donations will go toward veterans in need of clothing items and blankets to stay warm.

Through their joint partnership, Post 6755 and This is My Quest: Veterans in the Wild plan to continue to raise awareness on behalf of veterans committing suicide at an alarming rate.

For Reed, the “heart-stopping” number of veterans’ suicides each year is something he

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believes all veterans feel deeply personal about. Events like the Post's recent Suicide Awareness Brunch provide a means toward opening discourse among those close to the edge.

“With each obituary skirting around the cause of death, instant messages, phone calls or texts from battle buddies, it never gets any easier,” Reed said. “Those lost in the shadows know that it takes another who has been down that dark path to lead them back out. Without these events and networking amongst each other, we will lose others to the darkness.”