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VA Continues PTSD Outreach with AboutFace Campaign

Veterans Provide Video Testimonials on Experiences with PTSD

WASHINGTON – In observance of June as PTSD Awareness Month, the Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has begun a new online initiative, AboutFace, focused on helping Veterans recognize PTSD symptoms and motivating them to seek treatment.

“We must do all we can to help Veterans identify possible indicators that they may be suffering from PTSD,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “It requires a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to be effective. We hope that this initiative, while just one aspect of our program, will play an important role in that effort.”

The AboutFace campaign introduces viewers to Veterans from all eras who have experienced PTSD and turned their lives around with treatment. Through personal videos, viewers will meet Veterans and hear how PTSD has affected them and their loved ones. Visitors will also learn the steps to take to gain control of their lives.

AboutFace, which is PTSD specific, was designed as a complementary campaign to VA’s current Make the Connection (www.MakeTheConnection.net) campaign. Make the Connection uses personal testimonials to illustrate true stories of Veterans who faced life events, experiences, physical ailments, or psychological symptoms; reached out for support; and found ways to overcome their challenges.

“VA is committed to ensuring the men and women who bravely served our Nation can access the resources and services tailored for them that can lead to a more fulfilling life,” said Dr. Robert Petzel, VA’s under secretary for health. “We want Veterans to recognize themselves in these stories and to feel optimistic that they can overcome their challenges with proper
treatment. We set aside this month of June to urge everyone to increase awareness of PTSD so those in need can get effective treatment that will enable them to lead productive, fulfilling and enjoyable lives.”

AboutFace launched in June in time to help bring attention to PTSD Awareness Month. It is located on the National Center for PTSD website, www.ptsd.va.gov. There viewers will watch as Veterans candidly describe how they knew they had PTSD; how PTSD affected the people they love; why they didn’t get help right away; what finally caused them to seek treatment; what treatment is like and how treatment helps.

VA provides effective PTSD treatment and conducts extensive research on PTSD, including prevention. Those interested in further information can go to www.ptsd.va.gov to find educational materials including courses for providers on the best practices in PTSD treatment and the award-winning VA/DoD PTSD Coach Mobile App for electronic devices, which provides symptom management strategies.

These campaigns are part of VA’s overall mental health program. Last year, VA provided quality, specialty mental health services to 1.3 million Veterans. Since 2009, VA has increased the mental health care budget by 39 percent. Since 2007, VA has seen a 35 percent increase in the number of Veterans receiving mental health services, and a 41 percent increase in mental health staff.

In April, as part of an ongoing review of mental health operations, Secretary Shinseki announced VA would add approximately 1,600 mental health clinicians as well as nearly 300 support staff to its existing workforce of 20,590 to help meet the increased demand for mental health services. The additional staff would include nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers.

For more information on AboutFace, visit www.ptsd.va.gov/aboutface/ or contact the National Center for PTSD at (802) 296-5132.

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