

# VFW Aims to Destigmatize Mental Health

## National mental wellness campaign events begin Oct. 8 with ‘A Day to Change Direction’

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More than 150 VFW Posts held events Oct. 8 to help kick off VFW’s national mental



wellness campaign.

“A Day to Change Direction” is part of the overarching initiative, launched by Give an Hour, to “change the greater culture” surrounding mental health.

VFW’s goal for the day, which included 179 Posts nationwide, was to make the public “aware of the five signs” of emotional suffering – Personality change, agitation, withdrawal, poor self-care and hopelessness.

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Posts hosted events in their communities or displayed information regarding mental health awareness.

Post 3769 Quartermaster Robert Howard, who served in Iraq in 2005, said 20 people attended his Post's session at Coal Run City Park in Pikeville, Ky. West Virginia's Huntington VA suicide prevention coordinator Deanna Stump provided suicide-prevention training and Cheryl Walker Combs, of Big Sandy Health, offered mental health awareness training. The Kentucky state commander also spoke at the event.

"City mayor of Pikeville Andrew Scott took the pledge along with his staff, and he challenged this city to take the pledge on Facebook," Howard said.

Howard said the significance of the event is to "change the mental health stigma and culture."

"Our mental health is just as important as our physical health, and we cannot be ashamed to admit we may have a problem," Howard said. Howard said the Post also plans to hold a similar event Oct. 17 at the Veterans Transition Center in Pikeville, Ky., for its homeless veteran community.

Posts 1170, 1179 and 4075, also in Kentucky, joined forces for a suicide prevention discussion and presentation of "[Know the Five Signs](#)."

Others events around the country included hosting seminars or benefit races. For more coverage of VFW's mental wellness campaign, read the January issue of *VFW* magazine.

By [Kari Williams](#), editorial associate, *VFW* magazine