VFW, GAH Set for ‘A Day to Change Direction’

VFW campaign focuses on mental health awareness and day of service

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. - In support of the Campaign to Change Direction, Give an Hour (GAH) and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States are partnering for the inaugural “A Day to Change Direction” on October 8, 2016.

This will be a national day of service, honored by the VFW and GAH, to promote dialogue on mental health, emotional suffering, and access to care, while striving to change the culture of mental health in America in general, and for the veteran community in particular.

VFW Posts and Auxiliaries across the country will participate in this day of service by hosting activities in their local communities and helping to create awareness of the Five Signs of emotional suffering.

VFW National Headquarters and VFW Post 56 in Leavenworth, Kan., have joined forces with the local Department of Veterans Affairs facility in Leavenworth for a day full of community service projects and discussions about mental health and wellness. The VFW Washington Office is teaming up with VFW Post 3150 from Arlington, Va., to host a variety of projects for the residents of the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Washington, D.C. Joining them in Washington will be VFW Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief B.J. Lawrence and VFW Auxiliary National President Colette Bishop.

“The VFW is proud to be joined by the VFW Auxiliary and the nation’s leading mental health organizations to help change the culture of mental health,” said VFW National Commander Brian Duffy. “Now is the time for veterans to get out there and do our part. I

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encourage every VFW Post and Auxiliary to get engaged in helping to solve mental health awareness issues throughout our communities."

Give an Hour Founder and President Dr. Barbara Van Dahlen said, "We are honored to join the VFW in this historic effort. VFW Posts can serve as important anchors in communities across the country – and around the world – to engage, educate and inspire veterans from all eras to learn the Five Signs and to reach out to those who are suffering." Dr. Van Dahlen added, "Our veterans are assets in our communities and they can help lead the way as we change the culture so that those in need receive the care and support they deserve."

VFW will stream live on Facebook from the Leavenworth and Washington, D.C., events. All participants in the day's events are encouraged to use **#VFWPostPride**.

Over the coming months, the VFW will also work closely with Seattle-based One Mind to encourage VFW members to participate in online communities to better understand and improve their own brain health. They can also volunteer patient and caregiver input to research aimed at developing new evidence-based diagnostic and treatment options.

-VFW-

About Give an Hour: Give an Hour, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) providing free mental health services to military members, veterans, and their families, was founded in September 2005 by Dr. Barbara Van Dahlen, a psychologist in the Washington, D.C., area. Give an Hour has been instrumental in the development of the community-based approach to addressing the challenges that face our nation's military community, having created a successful model for harnessing skill-based volunteers eager to offer their services. Thus far, the network of nearly 7,000 licensed mental health professionals has provided more than 200,000 hours of care and support to those in need. To learn more, visit www.giveanhour.org.

About Change Direction: The Campaign to Change Direction, a national initiative to change the culture of mental health in America, encourages Americans to care for their mental well-being just as they do their physical well-being. The Campaign is led by Give an Hour, a national nonprofit organization providing free mental health services to the military and veteran community. Change Direction addresses common barriers to understanding mental health and raises awareness about Five Signs that may indicate someone is suffering emotionally and needs help: change in personality, agitation, withdrawal, decline in personal care, and hopelessness. Over 240 partner organizations are using their unique skills and opportunities to spread awareness. Organizations and individuals who are

interested in learning more or making a pledge can visit www.changedirection.org.