

VETERANS CORNER

2015

September is Suicide Prevention Month. Statistics show that currently an average of at least 22 veterans a day commit suicide. To assist veterans in need of someone to talk to, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) developed the Veterans Crisis Line. You can find more information at <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>

The Veterans Crisis Line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year to provide free confidential support to veterans, whether or not they are currently registered with the VA or enrolled in VA health care. If you are a Veteran, service member, or loved one, you can call the Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255; press 1. You may also send a text message to 838255 to receive support.

Established in 2007, the Veterans Crisis Line has answered more than 1.86 million calls and made more than 50,000 lifesaving rescues. Responders at the Veterans Crisis Line are specially trained and experienced in helping Veterans of all ages and a wide range of circumstances, including those coping with unresolved mental health issues that were never addressed to recently separated veterans dealing with relationships or transitioning back to civilian life.

Since 2009, when the Crisis Line implemented an anonymous online chat service, they have had more than 240,000 chats; in 2011, they established text-messaging and have responded to more than 39,000 texts.

Along with the Veterans Crisis Line, Tulare County is currently in the process of updating the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Community Planning Process in support of County Mental Health. We expect to set up focus groups in the near future; the Veterans community will be one of these groups. More information will be available soon on dates and location. If you are interested in being part of the focus group, please call the MHSA Community Planning Program Coordinator at (559) 624-7457 or email agalvez@tularehhsa.org and leave your name and number so that we can contact you when we have more information.

Ken Cruickshank, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Services Officer for Tulare County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 205 N. L St., in Tulare, by calling 684-4960 or emailing kcruicks@tularehhsa.org.