

Vietnam Veterans of America  
CHAPTER 788 NEWS  
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***"Never Shall One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another"***

**Each Day, 20 Veterans Take Their Life, Most are 50-Plus Years of Age**

The Veterans Health Administration has just released new data about veterans' suicides, based upon examination of over 55 million veteran records from 1979 to 2014, from every state in the nation and U.S. territories.

Since 2001, U.S. adult civilian suicides increased 23 percent while veteran suicides increased 32 percent during the same period. From these more current data, the VA has also determined that veterans take their lives at the rate of 20 per day. Of these 20 veterans, 6 were in the care of the VA for at least one year prior to their death; the other 14 were not.

However, 65 percent of all veterans who died from suicide in 2014 were 50 years of age or older. In fact, 45 percent of veteran suicides in 2014 were aged 60 and older. Also disturbing is that suicide in the 18- to 29-year-old veteran cohort is steadily increasing, as is the number of women veterans who do not utilize VA services, but who take their own lives. In another not-unexpected note, 66 percent of all veteran suicides involve the use of a firearm.

"These statistics are tragic," said John Rowan, National President of Vietnam Veterans of America. "They shock and disturb us. These numbers also suggest a variety of questions that ought to be asked if we are to find some of the answers: How many of those who take their life is homeless? Did they have meaningful employment, fair housing, health problems, relationship or financial issues? What seems to be the 'common' trigger, if any?"

"Hundreds of millions of dollars have been expended by the VA, by the Department of Defense, by private foundations, and by public research institutions, all trying to gain insights into suicide by veterans. Still, suicides persist," Rowan said. "It is incumbent upon all of us in our communities-veterans, our families, our friends—along with the agencies of government to overcome the barriers and to coordinate financial resources and outreach efforts to find the key, if indeed there is one, to preventing suicide in as many instances as possible. One veteran suicide is too many.



***Through the experience of fly fishing in Montana, WQW is a catalyst for positive change in the lives of post-9/11 combat veterans.***

In 2015, WQW served 67 of the nation's combat-wounded service members and 12 of their spouses bringing the total number served to 470. The 2015 program model was influenced by the philosophy that 'the greatest healing can take place when we get out of ourselves so we may be helpful to others.' Taking this into consideration and as WQW strives to enhance its long-term support for program participants, a new program model was created.

Over the course of the season WQW invited 27 warrior alumni to return to Southwest Montana – not to fish – but to fulfill the role of "Alumni Companion." By partnering alumni with warriors participating on their very first FX, alumni had the unique opportunity to serve a fellow veteran experiencing similar challenges in reintegration. "Thank you for giving me a hand out of the darkness and giving me an opportunity to witness and help with other warriors and their Montana experience." – Bradley Herold, Alumni Companion. Feedback on the new FX model has been resoundingly positive from both volunteers and warriors. WQW looks forward to continuing this mentorship model in the new program year.

As WQW prepares for 2016 programs they look forward to strengthening professional referral partnerships with veteran service organizations whose missions align with WQW. Recruiting methods are evolving as we gain distance from recent wars and as service members transition into the civilian population. Participation in an FX may be the first time a warrior has asked for, or accepted, help. It may be their first time stepping onto the path of emotional or spiritual healing. "You have saved my life in every way possible. I will never give up." – Ron Verhine, Alumni Companion.

**Learn More > [warriorsandquietwaters.org](http://warriorsandquietwaters.org)**



## Vets in Pain Program

With so many of our veterans returning home, many with injuries, there is an increased need to help them to return to a full life.

One of the major obstacles for so many of them is their injuries that, for many lead to chronic pain problems.

Our focus is to validate the impact of chronic pain among veterans and their families as we increase knowledge about pain management among veterans so that they can improve the quality of their life and reduce their sense of suffering.

### **Mission**

- To assist U.S. veterans who live with pain.
- As a project of the American Chronic Pain Association, we recognize the specific needs of U.S. veterans and military personnel.
- In response, the VIP Program provides education in pain management and a selection of other veteran-oriented resources, including online access to ACPA peer support groups.
- Our virtual peer support groups are intended for veterans with transportation issues. Remember that virtual meetings are not a substitute for face-to-face peer support group meetings.



[vetsinpain.com](http://vetsinpain.com)



**Despite dire warnings about the dangers of synthetic cannabinoids, popularly known by names such as K2, Spice, Black Mamba and Kronic, they continue to grow in popularity.**

### **Everything You Need to Know Synthetic Cannabinoids**

Synthetic cannabinoids refer to a growing number of man-made mind-altering chemicals that are either sprayed on dried, shredded plant material so they can be smoked (herbal incense) or sold as liquids to be vaporized and inhaled in e-cigarettes and other devices (liquid incense).

These chemicals are called cannabinoids because they are related to chemicals found in the marijuana plant. Because of this similarity, synthetic cannabinoids are sometimes misleadingly called "synthetic marijuana" (or "fake weed"), and they are often marketed as "safe," legal alternatives to that drug. In fact, they may affect the brain much more powerfully than marijuana; their actual effects can be unpredictable and, in some cases, severe or even life-threatening.

Synthetic cannabinoids are included in a group of drugs called "new psychoactive substances" (NPS). NPS are unregulated psychoactive (mind-altering) substances that have become newly available on the market and are intended to copy the effects of illegal drugs. Some of these substances may have been around for years but have reentered the market in altered chemical forms or due to renewed popularity.

Manufacturers sell these herbal incense products in colorful foil packages and sell similar liquid incense products, like other e-cigarette fluids, in plastic bottles. They market these products under a wide variety of specific brand names; in past years, K2 and Spice were common. Hundreds of other brand names now exist, such as Joker, Black Mamba, Kush, and Kronic.

For several years, synthetic cannabinoid mixtures have been easy to buy in drug paraphernalia shops, novelty stores, gas stations, and through the Internet. Because the chemicals used in them have a high potential for abuse and no medical benefit, authorities have made it illegal to sell, buy, or possess some of these chemicals. However, manufacturers try to sidestep these laws by changing the chemical formulas in their mixtures.

Easy access and the belief that synthetic cannabinoid products are "natural" and therefore harmless have likely contributed to their use among young people. Another reason for their use is that standard drug tests cannot easily detect many of the chemicals used in these products.

**Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse**

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/synthetic-cannabinoids>