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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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VA Black Hills Health Care System to Host Semi-annual PTSD Women's Retreat

The Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Clinical Team (PCT) at the VA Black Hills Health Care System will host its semi-annual Women's Retreat April 23-25, 2010 at the Fort Meade VA Medical Center.

This program is intended for women veterans (all eras) and collaterals (wives, domestic partners, mothers, adult daughters, etc.) of male veterans traumatized by experiences during their military service. The PCT program operates two annual retreats a year (spring and fall) to help participants learn about the psychological, physical, social and spiritual issues of PTSD and relationships

The retreats provide a unique opportunity for women to learn more about the effects of war, as well as other types of trauma. The primary emphasis of the weekend is to learn how to cope with the devastating effects PTSD can have on veterans and family member's lives. The retreat program also encourages participants to examine problem areas in their lives and help them make healthy changes and choices.

All meals and lodging are provided at no cost to eligible participants. The retreat program is supported through the generous donations of the Disabled American Veterans Charitable Trust, as well as other veteran's service organizations and interested groups/individuals that want to support this beneficial program.

Those wishing to participate must pre-register by phoning 605-720-7449 or 1-800-743-1070, extension 7449. Seating is limited and on a first come, first served basis. Prior to registration, a brief telephone screening is required.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an emotional and psychological response to trauma (a painful, shocking experience). PTSD can affect survivors of events such as war, violent crimes (attacks/rapes), motor vehicle accidents, natural disasters, childhood abuse and witnessing a suicide or murder. Common reactions to traumatic events are: shock, anger, disbelief, confusion, insomnia, social withdrawal, intrusive thoughts and self-blame. Sometimes PTSD surfaces months or even years after a traumatic event.

After trauma, many survivors feel their lives have changed. If the trauma-related symptoms listed below persist for more than one month after the event(s), there is a possibility that an emotional disorder is present and survivors are highly encouraged to seek medical/psychiatric services.

Some symptoms of PTSD

- Intrusive thoughts
- Flashbacks
- Isolation
- Emotional numbing
- Depression
- Anger
- Substance Abuse
- Guilt
- Suicidal thoughts and feelings (if this symptom is persistent and you develop a plan to harm yourself, please contact your medical provider or go to the local emergency room)
- Anxiety (nervousness)
- Emotional constriction
- Denial
- Irritability and jumpiness
- Sleep disturbance and/or nightmares

Characteristics in spouses, family members and close friends could include:

- Pre-occupation with the veteran
- Isolation
- Emotional numbing
- Depression
- Anger and resentment
- Guilt
- Feeling stressed
- Denial
- Over-responsibility (enabling behaviors)

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