



# HEALING TOUCH

## Vet TRIIP Volunteers Provide Holistic Services to Local Military Heroes

by Deborah Charnes

**M**ore than 2.6 million veterans have served in the Middle East since 9/11. Overall, an estimated three in ten have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injuries and/or major depression. During the past two years, more of our active duty service men and women have lost their lives from suicide than from combat. Equally tragic, each day 22 American veterans end their own lives.

The Veterans Team Recovery Integrative Immersion Project (Vet TRIIP) was established to ease the emotional and physical pains that many of our military families face. Recognizing the potential to improve their lives through complementary healing techniques, Vet TRIIP volunteers provide holistic services to vets and their families residing in San Antonio and the Hill Country.

"We want to honor and empower our veterans living with PTSD, chronic pain and related symptoms to create healthy, happy and productive civilian lives," says Vet TRIIP Executive Director Dottie Goodsun.

Millions of veterans struggle with post-traumatic emotional symptoms, hyper-arousal, severe sleep disturbances and/or persistent

discomfort and pain. Not surprisingly, these issues wreak havoc on the family dynamics and emotional well-being of the vets and their families.

Vet TRIIP volunteer practitioners address these conditions through a variety of holistic, natural and energy-healing modalities including Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), aromatherapy, clothes-on therapeutic massage, qigong, Reiki, chiropractic adjustment, meditation, reflexology and acupuncture rebalancing. Two-hour sessions offer a combination of these holistic treatment options.

"My feet hurt so bad, I walked on hot coals," says Della, a U.S. Navy fleet operations veteran. "My pain was off the charts. I was homebound for years. Now I can walk around freely. The quality of my life has improved drastically." Della now has a full-time job.

Della's experience is shared by many. "My heart stopped hurting. I'm not getting angry like I used to," says Richard, a U.S. Army veteran who served in Iraq.

"I no longer need my pain medications. My pain no longer controls my life," says Robin, an Air Force veteran who served in Desert Storm. "Vet TRIIP offers me the tools

that I'm learning to use so I can be more proactive instead of reactive to all the challenges in my life."

Vet TRIIP documents the experience of each participant, and 98 percent of veterans who participate report that the sessions improved their emotional or physical state, with most positive results lasting from two days to two weeks or longer.

Goodsun and Vet TRIIP President Bob Deschner plan to continue providing free integrative health services to veterans, active duty service members, military family members, their caregivers and service providers. Currently, volunteer health providers gather twice a month and provide more than 1,100 free therapeutic sessions on an annual basis. The twice-monthly sessions take place in spaces donated for the effort, such as local churches.

With the large number of veterans and active duty personnel in the San Antonio area, the need is great. "We need more volunteer chiropractors, acupuncturists, licensed massage therapists and energy workers so that we can increase the number of people we can serve and the frequency of their visits," says Deschner.

To help boost their capacity, Goodsun and Deschner are looking to The Big Give S.A., a 24-hour online fundraising event on May 6. Anyone can participate and contribute as little as \$10; all donations have the opportunity to earn matching funds and prize incentives. Deschner says donations to Vet TRIIP will help them continue to provide much-needed treatment to soldiers past and present, like Ken.

"I have pretty severe PTSD," says Ken, a retired U.S. Army Sergeant with active duty in Vietnam and Desert Storm. "I've jumped from planes and messed up my knees and back. I always come in some pain. I always leave here with almost no pain. Now I can stand up tall and walk again."



*Vet TRIIP began as a pilot program in 2009 in Austin to provide relief from the stress-related symptoms that destroy our veterans' quality of life and ability*

to function at home and at work. It branched out to San Antonio in 2012, and is now a 501c3 non-profit organization seeking additional volunteers and funding to expand services to reach more veterans in need. For more information or to volunteer, visit [www.VetTRIIP.org](http://www.VetTRIIP.org) or [www.facebook.com/VetTRIIP.org](https://www.facebook.com/VetTRIIP.org) or call 210-573-7745.

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## WAYS YOU CAN HELP

### 1. DONATE

Give generously to Vet TRIIP during The Big Give S.A. on May 6. The Big Give S.A. is a 24-hour online event designed to increase local awareness of and provide funding for local nonprofit organizations. The goal is to bring together nonprofits and donors to benefit the community and local residents. To donate to Vet TRIIP, go to [www.thebiggivesa.org/#npo/vet-triip-inc](http://www.thebiggivesa.org/#npo/vet-triip-inc) on May 6. You can also donate at [www.vettriip.org](http://www.vettriip.org).

### 2. VOLUNTEER

Vet TRIIP's capacity to offer services depends on the number of volunteer providers who generously donate their time and talents. If you are a chiropractor, acupuncturist, energy practitioner, massage therapist or practitioner of other integrative healing modalities, consider donating a small portion of your time to Vet TRIIP. For more information on volunteer opportunities, call 210-884-0229.