

Thank you for serving our country!

Ashley Doughty

To all the men and women who are currently serving or who has served, we thank you. Without your bravery, we wouldn't be in a safe place and home of freedom. Thank you for the days, months, and years of dedication for our country. We appreciate you and will always support you.

**"And I'm proud to be an American, where at least I know I'm free. And I won't forget the men who died, who gave that right to me."
- God Bless The U.S.A.**



Brave Solider holding our flag during the "Star Spangled Banner".

Ending Homelessness For Veterans

Ashley Doughty

Imagine a world where the community took care of each other. It's hard to picture that type of world that we strive to become. In the United States, we have many world issues that we need to fix, change, and help. Homelessness being one of the many issues we face in America.

Homelessness among veterans is an issue in the United States. There are 553,000 Americans that are homeless, and roughly 40,065 are veterans (1). Nearly 1.4 million veterans are at risk of becoming homeless due to poverty, lack of support networks, and dismissal living conditions in overcrowded and substandard housing (2). Veterans that are already homeless and veterans that are at risk of becoming homeless live with life-long effects such as PTSD, substance/alcohol abuse, and co-occurring disorders (3). Of the 40,056 veterans that are homeless, the majority are male and 9% are female. 9% of homeless veterans are between the ages of 18-30, and 41% are between the ages of 31-50 (4). Other reasons



Sign that was left behind from a homeless vet.



A veteran waiting to be off the streets.

veterans become homeless is because they come from poor, disadvantaged backgrounds (5). Majority of the homeless veterans are single and living in urban areas. (6)

They struggle to make connections and find things in common with their friends and family. They also struggle to fit back in with civilian life. As well, they have a difficult time maintaining a job (7). This is a result of what the veterans deal with on the streets, PTSD being one of the reasons. PTSD is a common thing among veterans, while some veterans did not get the proper treatment to deal with PTSD (8). A statistic from *Very Well Mind* stated that 12% of veterans that served in the Gulf War experience PTSD, and 30% who served in Vietnam experience PTSD (9).

The percentages of what homeless veterans deal and struggle with only increase slightly over the years. A study showed that 76% of homeless veterans experience alcohol and substance abuse or mental health issues (10). The study had also showed that 20,000 veterans with the government sponsored mortgage lost their homes in 2010 (11). Within homelessness across America, the study shows that veterans are twice as likely to become chronically homeless than any other American groups (12).

It is a difficult time for veterans becoming homeless. Returning from serving our country only to be left with nothing but to live on the streets. This is something we need to take care of right now. Many veterans put years of dedication into serving our country. The thanks they get is to be put on the streets.

Article 2

Homelessness in Pennsylvania

Ashley Doughty

Roughly there are 15,000 people dealing with homelessness in Pennsylvania. In Eastern, PA, there are 1,998 individuals that are homeless on any given night. The number of homeless people in Pennsylvania has decreased by a few over the years.

Veterans in Pennsylvania are facing homelessness as well. In 2016, it was reported that there were 1,136 homeless veterans in Pennsylvania. In York, 13 veterans were without homes in 2016. Later in 2017, the East Shore YMCA in Harrisburg was able to give 16 rooms to homeless veterans in the Harrisburg area (13).

In York, PA there are many homeless shelters, but there's one just for the veterans. Mr. Sandy's Homeless Veterans Center houses homeless veterans in York. The shelter is located on 412 W King St, York, PA. The shelter requests for all kinds of donations for the veterans, from vehicles to food. The shelter provides and has so much for the veterans to get them off the street and into a safe warm home.



Mr. Sandy's Veteran Center on 412 W King St, York, PA 17401.

Mr. Sandy's Veteran's Center

October of 2015, the shelter first opened doors to veterans looking for a warm place to stay (14). The center became the first shelter for homeless veterans in York City and York County. Sandy, himself, was a veteran that served in Vietnam. Unfortunately, due to health issues, Sandy lost his fight on March 14, 2015 at the age of 63 (15).

It was Sandy's dream to open the doors in York to veterans. He did not want his fellow veterans to feel isolated or unwelcome when returning from war. For most of his life, he has helped and served the homeless and needy of York (16). As well as opening the shelter, Sandy had opened the Veterans Thrift Store on 450 Manor St, York, PA in 2006, which is now permanently closed.

Mr. Sandy's Veteran Center requests for many goods for the veterans. From vehicles to home goods. As well, they ask for toiletries products, survival products, basics, treats, food and drinks, and things to connect them to the world. You can drop off your donations to the shelter at any time. All donations must be placed in a duffle bag or backpack.

Toiletries

Multipurpose Wipes
Chapstick
Facial Wipes
Moisturizer
Comb
Toothbrush & Toothpaste
Soap, Shampoo, Conditioner
Deodorant
Female Hygiene Items

Food & Drinks

Instant Coffee
Tea
Energy Drink
Beef Jerky
Trail Mix
Nuts
Spam/Vienna Sausages
Granola Bars
Protein Powder Packs

Help Them Connect

Journal & Pen
Stationary
Stamps
Envelopes

Survival

First Aid Kit
Water Bottle (built in filter)
Hand Warmers/Heat Packs
Multipurpose
Individual Tarps
Sleeping Bags
Towels

Basics

Winter Hats
Gloves
Scarfs
Socks
T-Shirts
Undergarments
Socks

Treats

Chocolate
Fruit Snacks
Cookie Snack Packs
Candy
Chewing Gum

Article 3

The Struggles

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Homeless Veterans struggle with mental illnesses and are often left untreated when they enter homelessness. From PTSD, alcohol and/or substance abuse, to the lack of support from family and friends. These types of things take a toll on a lot of active and past military troops.

PTSD is one of the many common issues veterans suffer from when returning from war. Many veterans did not receive adequate treatment to deal with what they had witnessed in the war zone. Because of this, they struggle to maintain a job and fit back in with civilian life. As well, they struggle to make connections and engage back with their family and friends (17).

A way to deal with PTSD symptoms often leads to drinking heavily, using drugs, or smoking too much. People who struggle with substance and alcohol abuse are likely to develop PTSD.

Substance and alcohol abuse is also a leading issue with homeless veterans. According to the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, the number of veterans that smoke is almost doubled for those with PTSD (18). Studies show that 1 in 10 veterans returning from the war in Iraq and Afghanistan have a drug and/or alcohol addiction. As well, studies also show that veterans with PTSD and drinking problems tend to binge drink (19).



Solider holding PTSD Scrabble words to spread awareness.



Our men and women that fight for our country.

There are ways to put an end to PTSD and substance and alcohol abuse. Treatments and therapy can target both issues at the same time. Many veterans with these three occurring issues are likely to become homeless when returning from war.

Divorce rates within the military are significantly high. In a study from Military.com in 2017, it was said that 21,290 of the 689,060 military marriages ended in a divorce (20). Divorce rates tend to be higher when an active military spouse is deployed. Military divorces can happen for a few reasons. Military families

move around a lot, deployments are too long, one person is not faithful, couples are keeping secrets, duties can get confusing when a spouse returns from deployment and the non-military spouse may have to abandon a career.

Military divorces can leave the military member to be homeless. With nothing left for them but have no choice but to be on the streets. This puts a significant toll on the active military member and veterans when their family is not there to support them anymore.

Article 4

Ways To Get Involved

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There are ways that we can end veteran homelessness once and for all. As a community, we can start locally. Our goal is to bring it to our state's attention to the governor and bring it nationwide. If everyone gets involved, homelessness within veterans could come to an end. Veterans will be able to return to their homes, to afford a house, and afford other needs.

Starting Locally.

As a community, the first step is to start locally. We can get in contact with landlords and property owners to house veterans that are exiting homelessness. This is the first step for veterans exiting homelessness. Most can not afford a house or are not eligible for houses. As well, we can arrange coordinated assessment and entry systems to ensure that all veterans can get the help they need and the housing they can afford.



LA Crosse Combats Veterans Homeless in 2016.

Most veterans need household items and costly supplies to make their new home feel like home. Getting together a team to donate or help purchase new items, like furniture, mattresses, and household items can help and go along way to the veterans. We can also start fundraisers to help support move-in costs to our veterans exiting homelessness.

Another important thing to do is to help veterans exiting homelessness transportation. Some might not have a way to get around the community. Taking the time to sit down and help them find transportation will help. Mapping out and finding bus routes to their doctor, job, and other places that they might need to get too. Help to find car dealerships to purchase or make payments to vehicles. Mapping out a walking distance from here to there. Anyway to help with transportation for the vets can help them in their day to day needs.

Bringing To The State.

Another way can end homelessness among veterans is to get in contact with the Governor. Emailing and mailing a letter to Governor Tom Wolf of Pennsylvania can help with the movement of ending homelessness among veterans. Listing important and valid reasons why veterans should exit homelessness and the benefits they should receive may help with our goals.

As well, starting a protest can help. Gathering people who all have the same hope in ending veteran homelessness can go along way. Not only will a protest help end this problem, but it will spread awareness across the nation.

Awareness Across The Nation.

Spreading awareness of the problem with homeless veterans can potentially end it once and for all. Many people are not aware of why veterans become homeless and what their struggles are. Giving information to the people that are unaware will help build their knowledge of why we should take steps. When we come across homeless people, we often just keep walking and don't think about who they were before homelessness and what they deal with.

Once Americans become more understanding of this issue, many will get involved. Families with loved ones who have served or currently are aware of homelessness among veterans. To the ones who don't, are not aware.

Starting fundraisers, campaigns, protests, and an online post can help spread the word quickly. With these few small steps, it's most likely to get to the attention of someone high in authority who can help with the cause.



Homeless vet with sign.

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