

Scott Walker, Governor

John A. Scocos, Secretary



**STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

201 W. Washington Ave.
P.O. Box 7843
Madison, WI 53707-7843

Phone: (608) 266-1311
Toll-free: 1-800-WIS-VETS (947-8387)
Fax: (608) 267-0403
Email: WisVets@dva.wisconsin.gov
Website: www.WisVets.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, August 25, 2015

Contact: Amber Nikolai, (920) 258-4247

amber.nikolai@dva.wisconsin.gov

WDVA to Co-Host Workshop, Ceremony that Addresses Soul Injury in Green Bay *Candlelight Ceremony to Mark 9/11 Attacks*

MADISON – Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) Secretary John A. Scocos today announced that the WDVA and Heartland Hospice, in partnership with Opus Peace, are sponsoring a free Soul Restoration Ceremonial Workshop for the public on Friday, September 11, 2015 from 2:00 - 7:30 p.m. at the Green Bay Distillery, 835 Mike McCarthy Way, Ashwaubenon.

At 8:00 p.m., following the Soul Restoration workshop, there will be a candlelight procession from the Distillery to the Brown County Veterans Memorial for a Fallen Comrades Ceremony to mark the 14th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks and for the community to acknowledge the service and sacrifice of our state's veterans and first responders.

The Soul Restoration Ceremonial Workshop will address the issue of soul injury, wounds generated by un mourned grief and unforgiven guilt that occurs during trauma, abuse, and neglect. The daylong event will include exhibitors and referrals for veterans services, art therapy, story boarding, labyrinth walking, massage therapy, one-on-one counseling, yoga, and Eye Movement Desensitization Resolution (EMDR), as well as follow-up referrals to community resources.

The Fallen Comrades Ceremony will honor those who survived a traumatic situation and carry the burden of a fallen comrade's memory. Based on Native American warrior welcoming-home rituals, the Fall Comrades Ceremony seeks to restore hope for healing the soul injury that combat veterans, first responders and others often sustain. Civilians are encouraged to participate in the ceremony and will receive information about supporting veterans and others in meaningful ways.

"Veterans and first responders often carry un mourned grief and unforgiven guilt for things they think they should or should not have done," explains Deborah Grassman, co-founder of Opus Peace. "This sometimes causes a soul injury that lingers long after the war or traumatic event is over. Healing the soul requires cultivating the courage to love, forgive, and trust ourselves to navigate in the world again after the injury occurs."

"Many veterans have served in dangerous-duty assignments – assignments that sometimes leave an indelible mark of trauma on their souls," said Scocos. "These scars are often covered up with a stoic facade that keeps the wound hidden as veterans resume civilian lives. However, as veterans age, traumatic memories often surface. When veterans leave careers and family to move into one of our veterans homes, thoughts and feelings arise that need skilled support. Responding to their soul injuries is part of our commitment to them."

“We recognize that soul injury has been neglected too long,” says Tracy Rosinski, Manager of Business Development at Heartland Hospice. “As clinicians, we’re not routinely trained in how to assess and respond to soul injuries. The Soul Injury workshop will help to address this gap in healthcare services.”

For more information on the workshop or to register, contact: Tracy Rosinski at trosinski@hcr-manorcare.com or call 920-257-7044.

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans operates three 24-hour skilled nursing homes for veterans and spouses statewide – the Wisconsin Veterans Homes at Chippewa Falls, King and Union Grove. The Wisconsin Veterans Home at King will also be hosting Fallen Comrade Ceremonies for King residents, their families, and first responders on September 9, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. The public is welcome to attend. For more information about the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King, visit: www.WisVets.com.

Opus Peace is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization started by a group of VA hospice nurses including Deborah Grassman who took care of 10,000 dying veterans during her 30-year career as a VA Hospice Nurse Practitioner. They learned lessons from dying veterans as they helped them prepare for their deaths; the nurses learned first-hand about soul injury – a term they began using to describe what they were seeing. Helping veterans forgive themselves and grieve their losses became one of the primary interventions the hospice nurses developed so veterans could die peacefully. Veterans often experienced a visible liberation, expressing great relief. For more information about Opus Peace, visit: www.Soullnjury.org.

Heartland Hospice is part of the HCR ManorCare family, a leading provider of home health care, hospice care, skilled nursing, memory care and post-acute care. To learn more about Heartland Hospice, visit: www.heartlandhospice.com.