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CONTACT:

Douglas A. Etter
Manager, Public & Community Relations
717-272-6621, ext: 6079
Douglas.Etter@va.gov

**FOR
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Suicide Prevention Month: BeThere

VA Highlights Initiatives to Prevent Veteran and Servicemember Suicide

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LEBANON, Pa. – Today marks the start of Suicide Prevention Month, and the Lebanon VA Medical Center, along with the entire Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), is asking for the nation’s help in reducing Veteran suicide. VA is calling on community leaders, supervisors, colleagues, friends, and family members to **BeThere** for Veterans and Servicemembers starting with a simple act, which can play a pivotal role in preventing suicide.

“Do not under estimate the power that one person can make,” said Andrea Comp, Suicide Prevention Coordinator at the Lebanon VA Medical Center. “Educating yourself on resources can make all the difference.”

Lebanon VA Medical Center (VAMC) provides acute crisis intervention, inpatient and outpatient long-term and short-term care and on-going case management with highly trained personnel. Lebanon VAMC provides appropriate same-day access to high quality, recovery-oriented mental health care that anticipates and responds to Veterans’ needs, supports their reintegration into their communities and protects their dignity and self-worth. Lebanon VAMC has also developed a national best practice, using on demand innovative technology to assist primary care teams (at each location) to immediately engage Veterans experiencing suicidal ideation with a suicide prevention specialist. Additionally, the new state of the art 43 bed Residential Recovery Center focuses on holistic health outcomes: complete medical care, stable housing and vocational training to support Veterans through their struggles.

“You don’t have to be a trained professional to support someone who may be going through a difficult time,” said Dr. Caitlin Thompson, Director of the VA Office of Suicide Prevention. “We want to let people know that things they do every day, like calling an old friend or checking in with a neighbor, are strong preventive factors for suicide because they help people feel less alone. That’s what this campaign is about - encouraging people to be there for each other.” The campaign also highlights VA resources that are available to support Veterans and Servicemembers who are coping with mental health challenges or are at risk for suicide, and it encourages everyone to share these resources with someone in their life.

“We hope our Suicide Prevention Month efforts help educate people about the VA and community resources available nationwide,” said VA Under Secretary for Health David J. Shulkin, M.D. “We’re committed to working with experts and organizations across the country to identify ways we can help Veterans and Servicemembers get the care they deserve and to expand the network of mental health support.”

Veteran suicide data released by the VA Office of Suicide Prevention in early August 2016 serves as a foundation for informing and evaluating suicide prevention efforts inside the VA health care system and for developing lifesaving collaborations with community-based health care partners.

VA is planning a series of roundtable discussions with key stakeholder groups in the coming months as part of its plan to develop a public health strategy for preventing Veteran suicide. In August, VA hosted its first roundtable discussion, “Suicide Prevention is Everyone’s Business,” with corporate sector partners. In September, VA will host the Veterans Affairs Suicide Prevention Innovations event, which will bring together a community of experts from business, industry, academia, and government agencies to collaboratively identify solutions for reducing suicide rates among Veterans and Servicemembers. In addition, new programs such as REACH VET are being launched nationwide in September to identify Veterans in VHA care who may be vulnerable, in order to provide the care they need before a crisis occurs.

For more information about VA’s suicide prevention efforts:

- Suicide Prevention Month website: VeteransCrisisLine.net/BeThere
- Suicide Prevention Month toolkit: VeteransCrisisLine.net/SpreadTheWord
- [Suicide Prevention Fact Sheet](#)
- VA’s Veterans Crisis Line: Call **1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**; chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat or text to **838255** — even if a Veteran is not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care.
- Make the Connection website: <http://maketheconnection.net>
- VA Mental Health website: <http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov>

The Lebanon VA Medical Center is one of 152 medical centers in the nation with the sole purpose of providing world-class medical care to America’s veterans. If you are veteran, you may be eligible to receive care and benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. To learn more, call 717-228-6000.

For more information about the Lebanon VA Medical Center, visit www.lebanon.va.gov, like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/VALebanon, or follow us on Twitter as www.twitter.com/VALebanon.

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