

“ The injuries to a war veteran that you cannot see are worse than the ones you can. ”

—Sen. Bob Kerrey



At Ease

*Trauma treatment and therapeutic support for active military, veterans and their loved ones,
provided by Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska.*

Media Release & Alert (Note – Friday night event and availability)

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Reservists and National Guard troops returning home to Central and Western Nebraska now have a new resource to help life get “back to normal” after war and to erase the stigma of seeking counseling. “At Ease” brings education and therapeutic support both to those returning from the battlefield and to their families.

At Ease is a two-year-old program of Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska which serves active military, veterans and their loved ones. It was created especially for those affected by untreated trauma reactions and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). *At Ease* is headquartered in Bellevue, near Offutt Air Force Base.

Among the donors contributing to the *At Ease* program: Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska. Blue Cross has awarded one of its 2011 BlueHealth Advantage Wellness Grants for *At Ease* outreach and promotional support in the Lexington area. **Blue Cross representatives will present the \$10,000 check to Lutheran Family Services immediately preceding the Demo Derby at the Dawson County Fair Grandstand, Friday, July 22 at 6:30pm.**

The outreach program will encourage people to seek trauma treatment who might otherwise avoid it. According to the General Accounting Office, **only 40 percent of veterans who are entitled to PTSD treatment at the Veterans Administration (VA) ever pursue this option.** The *At Ease* program, disconnected from the official “military,” is positioned to overcome the strong stigma which exists among military service men and women against receiving treatment from official sources – both because getting help is considered “unmilitary,” even cowardly, and because the disorder itself is very difficult to face. This stigma is a primary obstacle to

accessing treatment, and with our program's commitment to confidentiality and its independent status, *At Ease* circumvents it.

"We're excited to bring *At Ease* education to Central Nebraska," says Paul Greenwell, *At Ease* Supervisor. "Twenty percent of all households in Dawson and Lincoln counties have a veteran. The two counties each have a National Guard unit which has been repeatedly deployed over the past ten years. Nearby Hall County has seven units. We know there are hurting families there."

At Ease complements existing services offered by military and veterans' organizations, with a focus on eliminating barriers to treatment for those suffering from the effects of deployment and the uncertainty of war. Services are completely confidential and provided on sliding scale. **LFS offices in Grand Island, North Platte, and Lexington have therapists who specialize in trauma therapy. And this fall, free support groups will be available through an *At Ease* satellite office in Grand Island.**

"Around 1,000 Soldiers and Airmen are currently deployed, with many coming home this summer," says Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska National Guard adjutant general. "Having these services more immediately available to these families is a very positive thing – not only for the Guard, but for the communities we serve."

Notes:

- 1 out of every 3 Nebraska National Guard members is currently deployed, with many units to return this summer.
- As 1 out of every 5 deployed troops will develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, many troops returning to Nebraska this summer will undoubtedly require mental health services.
- Nationally, Reservists and National Guard make up 45% of military deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. 335,000 Reservists have deployed involuntarily.
- The Reservists and National Guard comprise 18.4% of total casualties in the Middle East, as well as 20.5% of those wounded in action.
- Nebraska has dependent children of military personnel in 89 out of its 93 counties. 109 of these children live in Lincoln County and 65 live in Dawson County.

At Ease USA is the fundraising organization founded and led by Omaha's Scott Anderson, and is the primary sponsor and financial support for LFS' *At Ease* program.

Paul Greenwell (MSW, LCSW) serves as the *At Ease* program coordinator and can be reached at (402) 292-9105 or AtEase@LFSneb.org.

Thousands of families of all faiths are served through Lutheran Family Services' statewide programs and services in the areas of Behavioral Health, Children Services and Community Services. Behavioral Health Services focus on the needs of those who have experienced trauma, including outpatient mental health treatment, substance abuse/addictions treatment, 24/7 urgent care and emergency and community support services. To learn more about LFS services, visit www.LFSneb.org.