



NEW ENGLAND CENTER FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

17 Court Street, Boston, MA 02108
617-371-1729 | www.nechv.org

April 15, 2010

Hidden Wounds: A soldier's story

Dear Friend,

I would like to share with you the story of how I came to find myself living at the New England Center for Homeless Veterans (NECHV). After high school I joined the Army Reserves to take advantage of the College GI Bill. Completing basic training, I was almost immediately deployed to Iraq, postponing college.

During two tours in Iraq I lost many friends and saw things I wish I could forget. I returned home hoping to resume some semblance of normality—get a job, start college, enjoy regular civilian life. This would not be the case. I soon began to suffer from severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and tried to combat it with drugs and alcohol. This masked the pain for a time, but my memories refused to fade. My marriage fell apart, I was no longer welcome in my own home and I was in no shape to work. I was at rock bottom.

My name is Sarah DeWitt and I now live in the Women's Dorm at the New England Center for Homeless Veterans.

I am one of the 1.8 million women veterans in the U.S. and our numbers are rising. Women now comprise over 15% of the Active Duty forces. More women have fought and died in Iraq than in all the conflicts since World War II. Over 230,000 of us have served in the Middle East since 2001, over 650 have been wounded and 120 have died to date. These numbers do not include the countless other female soldiers, like myself, who will go on to suffer from the hidden wounds of debilitating psychological damage.

So here I am, clean and sober for 6 months. I'm taking classes at the on-site Veterans Training School, as well as UMass Boston. I am getting my degree and rebuilding my life. I could never have done this without the aid of my case worker and the countless others here who have contributed to my success. I'm not the first and I won't be the last female veteran who needs the help of the NECHV. I ask on its behalf of NECHV to please consider making a gift so other deserving veterans may mend the wounds of war and rebuild their lives.

With many advance thanks and best wishes,

Sarah DeWitt

Private 1st Class, Sarah E. DeWitt



P.S. Just as our nation stands high on the shoulders of those who have sacrificed much, the NECHV relies on selfless donors who have recognized a need and invested in it—your kindness is greatly appreciated.