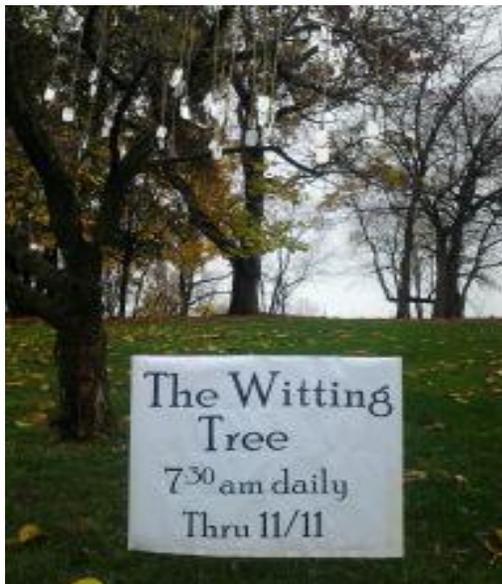


For more information please contact:

Touchstone Veterans Outreach (headquartered at St. Andrew's UCC), Perkasie at pastor@standrewsucc.org 215.257.2880

Veterans Community Network, Co-founder Donald Glen Miller, Harleysville at dglenmiller@verizon.net 215.527.6203

Witting Trees Call Attention to Veterans' Suicide Rate



Beginning November 1, 2015 a growing number of faith communities and organizations from Montgomery and Bucks Counties will be hanging 22 sets of dog tags on "witting trees" in a public remembrance of the estimated 22 veterans who take their lives by suicide every day. The witness will last for 11 days, culminating on Veterans Day, November 11th. There are many locations throughout Montgomery and Bucks County. St. Andrews United Church of Christ, Perkasie, Bucks County will hang 22 dog tags everyday starting November 1 at 7:00am.

Glen Miller of Veterans Community Network, a Vietnam Army Ranger, admits that suicide is a word we do not like to talk about. He asks often: "Why are so many of our veterans and active duty personnel taking their own lives?" He hopes that these acts of remembrance will bring awareness, consciousness, and witness to the burdens of war. "We are seeking to demonstrate our concern for our foreign and domestic protectors in a public remembrance. The witnessing does not provide a solution to this traumatic trend. Witnessing does, however, raise the consciousness for all of us and hopefully those passing by will stop and ask or join us."

"The Witting Tree" began last year at St. Andrew's United Church of Christ in Perkasie as part of that community's Touchstone Veterans Outreach. Each morning people gathered in reverent silence to hang the 22 sets of dog tags. By Veterans Day, the tree was filled. Roger Kessler, a Desert Storm veteran who coined the name "Witting Tree," explains that "witting" is an adjective meaning to be conscious or aware of the full facts of a situation. Reverend Scott Hutchinson of St. Andrew's adds: "There is a communal need for honest acknowledgment of the burdens and wounds of war, careful tending, and genuine homecoming. There is also a

deep need for our society as a whole to take responsibility to interrupt and transform destructive cycles that cost our service people so much.”

Says Glen Miller: “Clearly, ‘thank you for your service’ is not enough consideration regarding the well-being of our service men and women. Perhaps consciousness will lead to helpful action.”

Veterans Community Network (VCN) in Harleysville, Montgomery County and Touchstone Veterans Outreach in Perkasio, Bucks County have organized this remembrance along with their partners. The Veterans Community Network (VCN) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to promoting collaboration, communication, and innovation among families, groups, and organizations providing resources for military veterans in the Delaware Valley.



Join us in a day of remembrance as our communities offer witness with "The Witting Tree" as we hang 22 dog tags acknowledging the number of veterans' suicides in a public remembrance.

Please consider coming any day to these locations listed here in a silent reverent remembrance.

Witting (adjective)

--done in full awareness or consciousness; deliberate

--(of a person) conscious or aware of the full facts of a situation

The following churches will create "The Witting Tree" at their church, non-profit, or organization symbolizing the 18-22 suicides a day by veterans of all ages:

November 1-11 at 7:30am each morning – Rev. Scott Hutchinson, St. Andrews United Church of Christ, 615 E. Walnut St. Perkasie, PA 18944 culminating with a Veterans' Day service in the evening on November 11th

Nov. 1st at 11:45am – Rev. Michael Derstine, Plains Mennonite Church, 50 Orvilla Rd., Hatfield, PA 19440

Nov. 3rd at 8:40am – Joe Landis and Betsy Roush, Peaceful Living, 569 Yoder Rd., Harleysville, PA, 19438

Nov. 4th at 7:00pm – Rev. Chris Nickels, Spring Mount Mennonite Church, 20 Perkiomen Ave., Spring Mt., PA 19478

Nov. 7th at 7:30am – Rev. Steve Hamilton, St. Peter's Tohickon, UCC, 1071 Old Bethlehem Rd., Perkasie, PA 18944

Nov. 8th at 10:00am service – Rev. Michael Meneses, Wellspring Mennonite Church, 1183 Cressman Rd., Skippack, PA 19474

Nov. 10th at 10:00am – Ella Roush, The Bucks-Mont Collaborative membership meeting, Broad Street, Colmar, PA 18915

TBD – Rev. Joe Hackman, Salford Mennonite Church, 480 Groff Mill Rd., Harleysville, PA 19438

TBD – Erdenheim Farms, 665 Thomas Rd., Lafayette Hill, PA 19444

TBD – Sara Erlbaum, Whitemarsh Township Miles Park, Joshua Rd. and Germantown Pk., Lafayette Hill, PA 19444

Veterans Community Network, for more information: Donald Glen Miller, 215.527.6203 [/dglennmiller@verizon.net](mailto:dglennmiller@verizon.net); Co-Founder, VCN