Veterans Children and Family with Hepatitis C

October 21, 2016 By Carleen McGuffey

We attended a Stand Down Yesterday for Homeless Vets. We tested 41. Had 4 positives, all Viet Nam era vets. Educated 175. Loved on and smiled at every person we came in contact with. It was easy. These guys are easy to love. Some because they are desperate, sad, and even embarrassed about being poor. I have been all those things and remember how good love felt when I was down….so yeah, easy to love.

All of them were thankful.

This event was especially sweet for me because I hugged my oldest goodbye as he flew off to boot camp just the day before. I'm officially a marine recruit mom now. Marine Recon that is. Meaning my son has been chosen to join The Force Reconnaissance companies, also known as Force Recon, one of the United States Marine Corps's special operations capable forces that provide essential elements of military intelligence to the command element of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force. In other words. My kids a Soldier.

This is the same son who we were told tested positive for Hep-C. My warrior son is partially responsible for our passion to serve people with Hep-C. Not because he had Hep-C but because he didn't. The doctor told us he was positive and that he would never be able to serve in the military, there were no approved drugs for children with Hep-C so all we could do is monitor. So we did, we monitored and cried and felt ashamed and worried. It was a whole year before more blood work was drawn and a doctor who actually knew a little about Hep-C shared that he had cleared the virus on his own. We were elated, relieved and perturbed. Its very typical for doctors to not give the whole picture, order the right tests, follow up with a confirmatory. I hear it all the time and experienced it first hand. No one told me…..No one had told us there was a chance my son could clear the virus. I went a whole year thinking I had infected my son with a deadly virus. I thought I was responsible for ruining his dream to serve in the Military. This lack of good information highly motivated us to change that for others. Misinformation or lack of any information at all is common in the Hep-C world, we wanted to change that.

I pray Kaleb is not homeless in 40 years, but if he is I pray he would meet and be blessed by people who generously serve him. These men at the Stand Down were not unlike my son at one time. Young, strong, courageous. Warriors. They served their country for noble reasons just like my Kaleb to protect their friends, and family. They served, and trusted, and many came home with

Hepatitis-C from Jet Gun Inoculations. Many still dont know they carry the virus. My dad is a Viet Nam Vet and had never been tested until we started our advocacy work. Dont assume your Veteran Friends have been tested, even if they go to the VA. In fact dont assume anyone is free of this virus. Tell everyone you know to get tested. My son, now soldier was lucky to of cleared the virus on his own, but many of our soldiers are still carrying this deadly virus and have no idea.

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