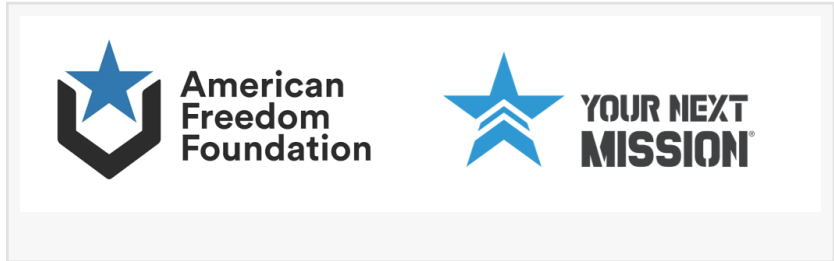


Top Retired Army Official Urges America To Get Tough on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

The 12th Sergeant Major of the Army (Retired) Jack L. Tilley Lends Voice to the Challenges Veterans Face when Transitioning from the Military to Civilian Life



TAMPA , FL, UNITED STATES, November

1, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As the country honors Veterans Day on Saturday, November 11th, with parades, discounts, and ceremonies, one top retired Army official is sounding the alarm on the mental health challenges our Veterans and their Families face by raising the awareness and support for Veteran suicide prevention across the country. Suicide is the second leading cause of death in the military, according to [Cohen Veterans Network](#), a leading nationwide system of mental health clinics that serves post-9/11 Veterans and their Families.

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12th Sergeant Major of the Army (Retired) Jack L. Tilley

“It's time we start talking about the mental health challenges of our military before they exit the military and transition into civilian life,” exclaims 12th Sergeant Major of the Army (Retired) Jack L. Tilley.

A designated Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA) is the most Senior Enlisted Soldier who serves as a spokesperson for

the military. For SMA Tilley, it's a title and role that he has devoted his life to, and he believes that the country needs to get tough on bringing to the forefront the mental health challenges of our Veterans and their Families.

"Suicide is not talked about enough. We hear about it. There are lots of wonderful organizations that are providing great resources, but no one individual is standing up and saying enough is enough. That's why I am here today – to try to make a difference. It is time to have the hard conversation," adds SMA Tilley.

Face the Fight, a USAA-led coalition that raises awareness and support for Veteran suicide prevention, reports that Veteran suicide is 57% higher than the national average and that nearly 120,000 Veterans have died by suicide since 2001.

SMA Tilley thinks that Veterans need more community interaction and better resources for support in all aspects of life. That's why he co-founded the [American Freedom Foundation](#) (AFF), a non-profit that relentlessly betters the lives of Veterans, Military Servicemembers, and their Families.

Jon, a former military member, shared his brush with suicide and the challenges he faced after separating from the military with SMA Tilley on a recent episode of AFF's [Your Next Mission](#)[®] video podcast. "I agree," he said. "We need better messaging that Veterans are not alone when it comes to mental health challenges. I had a plan to end my life. I had an actual plan. But I sat down with other Veterans at a get-together, and they helped me escape a very dark situation."

Through the weekly [Your Next Mission](#)[®] video podcast where Veterans and Families can receive information and resources that can help them face their challenges with transition, SMA Tilley hears many similar stories. But for many Servicemembers and their Families, telling their story, as important as that is, is not enough.

SMA Tilley says, "This Veterans Day, take a moment not just to thank a Servicemember or Vet, ask them what role they played in the military. Hear their story and find out what it meant for them to protect this country. It's not political; it's a matter of gratitude. That's how everyone can make a difference this Veterans Day."

Where to Go

If you are having thoughts about suicide, please dial 988 and know that you're not alone. As SMA Tilley always says, "We're all part of a family and need to take care of each other."

About American Freedom Foundation

In return for their service and sacrifices made for our country, the American Freedom Foundation (AFF), founded in 2004, believes Veterans, Military Servicemembers, and their Families deserve support that empowers and enables them to lead confident and productive lives. AFF serves and supports them by creating awareness and building support for their service, sacrifice, and needs through partnerships with military-focused organizations and is, and always will be, relentlessly driven to better the lives of these Heroes and their Families. AFF has made grants of approximately \$1.2 million to more than 30 military organizations and awarded over 1,200 full and partial scholarships to Military Spouses and their dependents in 50 states and eight countries through the AFF/Kaplan University Military Scholarship program valued at more than \$9.2 million. Through AFF's national Veteran's employment initiative program, [Your Next Mission](#)[®], thousands of Veterans have been connected to hundreds of companies for employment.

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