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A memorial to veterans dead from suicide rises in Bandera

By **J.p. Lawrence** | October 17, 2016 | Updated: October 17, 2016 1:52pm

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Grieving family members dedicated a monument for veterans who died from suicide on a breezy Saturday in Bandera.

The ceremony took place at the grand opening of Warriors Heart, a PTSD and addiction health center for veterans and first-responders.

The Warriors Heart Center sits on 543 acres of Texas hill country. The “War at Home” memorial stands at the entrance. Twenty slabs of steel are arrayed in a v-formation. Cut out from each of the 10-foot-tall slabs is



Photo: /

the shape of a veteran who died from suicide. At the foot of each slab is a dog-tag with their name.

Relatives of the soldiers memorialized gave speeches at the ceremony.

Sabine Ward, who lost her husband Clay Ward in 2013, broke down as she told his story and hers.

“There is something about that place that is sacred, and I feel privileged to be a part of this movement to educate more people on how serious of an issue veteran suicide really is,” Ward said. “Unless you’re affected you have no way of knowing what kind of a monster suicide really is.”

Warriors Heart claims its Bandera center is the first and only private health center solely for veterans and first responders in the U.S.

The 40-bed facility has been open since April. Private insurance may cover most of the Warriors Heart program costs, and a Warriors Heart spokesman said they are in the process of getting TriCare and TriWest insurance credentialed.

The organization said it hopes to break the stigma surrounding suicide by bringing veterans and first responders among peers.

The memorial will travel from city to city, staying in each city for two years, said Sara Dowdy of Mission 22, the organization who brought the memorial to Bandera.

“What better place for the home to be than a place of healing for veterans,” Dowdy said.

A steel sculpture with the shape of Clay Ward, an Army medic who died from suicide in 2013, was dedicated Oct. 15 in Bandera.





J.p. Lawrence

Military City, USA
editor

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