



Through correspondence with troops who are involved with the soccer ball distribution, the Kick for Nick Foundation has become acutely aware of a new and historically unique situation; the large number of women soldiers who, in the near future, will be returning home as veterans of combat zones.

Research on the subject turned up compelling numbers and found that, although transitional and permanent housing for veterans is an issue which is being widely addressed, housing specifically for female veterans is largely insufficient for the growing need. Connecticut currently has 106 transitional supportive beds but less than 10 of them are for women. Meanwhile, the Department of Veterans Affairs shows that 6,000 - 8,000 women veterans are homeless in our country. Today this is 5% of all homeless veterans while 10 years ago women were only 3% of this group. This is the most in the nation's history and a number that will increase as today 20% of new recruits to the military are women. To date, approximately 180,000 women soldiers have been deployed to Iraq & Afghanistan. This is almost 11% of all the U.S. troops serving in these areas. To amplify the situation, statistics show that 30% of women veterans identify themselves as being from ethnic minority groups having lower economic backgrounds.

When compared to previous conflicts, a much higher percentage of the women soldiers who are deployed to the Middle East are actually serving in active combat zones. They are not just serving in medical facilities or Headquarters administration. The Department of Veterans Affairs reports that disorders suffered in combat, such as Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), among new OEF / OIF female veterans treated at the VA has grown dramatically from approximately 1% in 2002 to nearly 19% in 2006.

To assist in establishing transitional supportive housing specifically for homeless women veterans, the Kick for Nick Foundation members will be working with Homes for the Brave, an organization which already operates veteran housing in Connecticut, to identify buildings which are available and can be renovated into suitable residences. It is anticipated that 2/3 of the funds required for the project will come through a Veterans Administration Grant and a Per Diem Program for Homeless Veterans while the balance of 1/3 will be acquired through fund-raising. Co-chairing the fund-raising effort are Shalini Madaras, Nancy Pantoliano and Annalisa Stravatto. Plans are currently being drawn up for an initial fund-raising event to be held May 2, 2009. The theme of the event will be Comedy Club ~ Carnival Night.

When the project is ready to launch, there will be numerous opportunities for volunteers to help in renovating the building and preparing it for occupancy. Anyone interested in lending their assistance or becoming involved in other ways can contact Shalini Madaras via email [shalinimad@aol.com](mailto:shalinimad@aol.com) or phone 203-451-6622. For more information please visit [www.kickfornick.org](http://www.kickfornick.org) and [www.homesforthebrave.org](http://www.homesforthebrave.org).

The Kick for Nick Foundation and Homes for the Brave are hoping that this initial project will raise awareness about this growing issue and possibly develop into a model for similar residences in other states.

“Women Soldiers – Forgotten Heroes” is being undertaken in dedication to and in memory of PFC Nick Madaras. Nick was dedicated to bringing positive change to peoples’ lives. He hoped to do this for the children in Iraq by providing them with soccer balls so they could pursue their love of the sport and have an alternative to the daily strife of war which surrounds them. His desire has also touched the hundreds of people across the USA who have donated soccer balls to help make his wish come true.

To date approximately 11,000 balls have been donated from over 300 cities in 46 states to the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan for distribution to the children.

While in Iraq, Nick also tried to find something positive in the difficult situations they had to face daily by injecting some of his humor to lighten the effect on his fellow soldiers. In this same spirit, we know that Nick would want to ease the burden of soldiers who have bravely served but have returned home bearing the mental and emotional scars of combat and are finding difficulty returning to normal life, even though they are now safely back in their own country.

This project is being developed together with Joy Kiss, director of Homes for the Brave, with the guidance and collaboration of Dr. Laurie Harkness, PhD, CPRP, Director, Recovery Services, ECCC, Errerra Community Care Center, VA Connecticut Healthcare System, Associate Clinical Professor, Psychiatry, Yale School of Medicine.

*\*\*\* Homes for the Brave is the transitional supportive housing program of the Applied Behavioral Rehabilitation Institute, Inc.*