

RESTORATION

When disaster strikes, we want you to know Georgia Power will be there to help in the restoration effort. We are dedicated to keeping the lights on. That's our commitment. Visit Georgia Power's Storm Center and learn how to prepare for storms and power outages at www.georgiapower.com/storm.



82°

Broken clouds

MORE WEATHER TIDES

Home / Effingham Now

Comment Email Print Blog This [social icons]

Follow Accent RSS

Workshop to help churches build 'military ministry'

Posted: August 20, 2010 - 11:55am | Updated: August 29, 2010 - 7:44am

Back | Next



Vazquez family celebrates with Pfc. Thomas Vazquez prior to his departure for training.

By Dana Clark Felty

SYLVIA VAZQUEZ and her husband were overflowing with pride and respect when their son Thomas Vazquez enlisted in the U.S. Army. But as Thomas prepares for his first year-long deployment to Afghanistan, Vazquez worries about how her son's faith could be tested by the experience.

"One of the very important things to me, with him going into the military, was that he didn't lose focus on his spirituality," said Vazquez, who is Catholic. "I want him to know that people are praying for him and to keep God close to him."

Addressing the spiritual struggles of active duty service men and women and their families is the mission of a new nonprofit organization called Care for the Troops.

The group is hosting a workshop on Sept. 11 to help clergy and congregational lay leaders understand both the practical and spiritual needs of those who have fought overseas.

The gathering also aims to teach faith leaders how they can create a "veteran

friendly" atmosphere in their congregation.

Vazquez, who lives in Marietta, volunteers with the new group as it works to expand its network of churches throughout the state.

"A lot of people don't realize there are 18-year-olds who are having to deal with death when they've really never even seen much of life," said Vazquez. "I just feel like we need to be ready, when they come back, to be a safety net for them."

Weaving a safety net

Workshop organizer Gina Farrell believes churches have an important role to play as troops

Most Popular

Most Viewed Most Commented Highest Rated

- Massive container ship to leave Savannah on Sunday morning
- Obama: Iraq war is ending, Baghdad to chart future
- Sports briefs 3:18am
- Spotted@: Tybee WWII Hero receives key to City 11:42am
- CITY TALK: Downtown to get autumn boost

Sudoku
Crossword
Pic-a-Pix
CalcuDoku
Kakuro
Hashi
Battleships
Games

click to play

New puzzles & games are here!
savannahnow.com/puzzles

ADVERTISEMENT

return from war.

Before opening her own family counseling practice in Rincon in 2008, Farrell worked as a marriage and family therapist at the Mary Lou Fraser Foundation for Families in Hinesville.

She estimates that 80 percent of her clients were members of the military and their families.

"Sometimes, problems don't start to develop until three, six months maybe even a year after they've returned," Farrell said.

Many told her they were more likely to talk about their struggles of readapting to life after a deployment with a chaplain or member of the clergy before turning to a mental health professional.

Farrell organized the workshop to help churches be better prepared to help.

"A lot of times, clergy have the formal training from seminary and they have training on pastoral counseling, but they may not have specific training in the signs and symptoms of trauma, traumatic brain injury or the sideways manifestations of the stress of combat," she said.

Churches are especially important to service men and women returning to rural communities, Farrell said.

Such areas may limit a veteran's access to health benefits offered by the federal government.

Rural veterans "are often without the benefit of the training and support conventionally available on military installations, training for themselves and ongoing support for their families," Farrell said.

Military ministry

The workshop uses the expertise of the Marietta-based group Care For The Troops. The nonprofit organization was founded just over a year ago by Episcopal priest, the Rev. Robert Certain.

A combat aviator in the Vietnam War, Certain was held four months as a prisoner of war. He wrote his account of the experience in his 2003 self-published book "Unchained Eagle."

Today, Certain serves as an Episcopal priest and rector of St. Peter and St. Paul Episcopal Church in Marietta.

The Rincon workshop will be led by executive director Peter McCall and licensed marriage and family therapist, Dr. Alan N. Baroody, executive director of the Mary Lou Fraser Foundation.

Care For The Troops began in May 2009, by hosting workshops for licensed marriage and family therapists around the state to improve their understanding of the needs of military families.

"I think we've done a pretty good job of connecting with clinicians," said McCall, a 1970 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and a veteran, having served on active duty and in the Army Reserves for over nine years.

This year, the group added the goal of encouraging more congregations to build a "military ministry."

The project includes suggestions for letters to send to members in the military, services dedicated in honor of troops, how to organize assistance for practical and spiritual support and how to build awareness within the congregation of the needs of military members and their families.

Care For The Troops has received endorsements from such mainline religious groups as the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta (PCUSA) and the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

"We just want to offer a place of comfort and support and to let them know you appreciate and honor the sacrifices they've made," said Farrell. "They're the one percent who serve while the other 99 percent of us don't."

Training for faith leaders

What: Care For The Troops workshop and luncheon

Spotted

Featured Photos - 9 total (Expand)

next »



62nd Primetime Emmy Awards

Recent Comments

- [cypress trees](#)
- [Sorry to hear this. A loss to the law enforcement community](#)
- [Such a loss to the community](#)
- [Jfb](#)
- [.aceman](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

Half Price Gift Certificates

Business Directory



Search SavannahNOW's Local Business Directory.

Search

[Apartments in Savannah](#)
[Attorneys in Savannah](#)
[Auto Dealers in Savannah](#)
[Auto Parts in Savannah](#)
[Auto Repair in Savannah](#)
[Beauty Salons in Savannah](#)

[Insurance in Savannah](#)
[Loans in Savannah](#)
[Mortgages in Savannah](#)
[Movers in Savannah](#)
[Pizza in Savannah](#)
[Realtors in Savannah](#)

Where: St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 155 Goshen Road, Rincon

When: 9-11:30 a.m. Sept. 11

The workshop will be followed by a free luncheon. Participants are asked to RSVP by Sept. 4.

For information, contact Gina Farrell at 912-665-1935 or at ginof@planters.net or visit

<http://www.careforthetroops.org>.

[Comment](#) [Email](#) [Print](#) [Blog This](#) [SHARE](#) [Follow Accent](#) [RSS](#)



Home Accents

Home Accents Visit Today!
ClearoutGiftShop.com

Online

Get online coupon codes.
Start Here Now & Save up
to 50%
offercode.biz

Home Decorations

Searching for home interior
decorating. Find it Quick
and Easy here.
www.articlesbase.com

Ads by Yahoo!

Explore more of SavannahNow.com

- [Most Commented](#)
- [Recent Comments](#)
- [Recent Forum Posts](#)
- [Most Viewed Stories](#)

- [Letters to the editor Monday](#) 3:18am
- [Local church plans 'flash mob' in Forsyth Park](#)
- [Reformed Savannah-Chatham schools to go under microscope Monday](#)
- [Paris Hilton arrested on cocaine charge in Vegas](#)
- [Spotted®: Tybee WWII Hero receives key to City](#) 11:42am

- [Car Rental in Savannah](#)
- [Dentists in Savannah](#)
- [Doctors in Savannah](#)
- [Flowers in Savannah](#)
- [Hotels in Savannah](#)
- [Home Based Business in Savannah](#)

- [Restaurants in Savannah](#)
- [Storage in Savannah](#)
- [Tax Preparation in Savannah](#)
- [Travel in Savannah](#)

Featured | [More...](#) | Powered by Local.com
» [Get Listed!](#)