

“Project 22” coming to BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing

Documentary addresses PTSD, suicide among young veterans



“Project 22,” an April 2015 documentary created by two young combat veterans, will be shown at 12:45 p.m. Nov. 14 at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, 2849 W. State St., New Castle. The screening is free and open to the public.

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(New Castle, PA) BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing on Nov. 14 will offer a free public screening of “Project 22,” an April 2015 documentary created by two young combat veterans and one that heightens awareness about post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide among those who served in recent wars, the president of the college’s Student Veterans Association said.

“Project 22” will be shown at 2849 W. State St., New Castle, from 12:45 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.

“The paramount thing that comes to mind is that you are not alone in thinking about suicide and you are certainly not alone in having a tough time and readjusting to civilian life after having been part of the military,” said Ben Knight, a 32-year-old BC3 sophomore who served three tours in Iraq from 2003 to 2008.

“It was huge for me,” said Knight, in his first semester as president of BC3’s Student Veterans Association. “I hate to say it, but I wish (the documentary) would have come out earlier. It creates awareness, and awareness that it is not taboo to be labeled as a veteran with mental health problems or PTSD or substance abuse problems. All those things kind of go hand-in-hand.”

Two BC3 student-veterans sought counseling at VA Butler Healthcare in April 2016 after viewing the documentary on the college’s main campus, according to Stella Smith, BC3’s student-veterans coordinator.



Ben Knight, a 32-year-old BC3 sophomore who served three tours in Iraq from 2003 to 2008, is in his first semester as president of BC3's Student Veterans Association.

The documentary is written and directed by Daniel J. Egbert and Doc King, young wounded combat veterans who ride motorcycles coast-to-coast to speak with other veterans about their post-war experiences.

"I was terrified to be in normal society again," Egbert said in the documentary. "You get off the bus, you literally land straight from Afghanistan into the states, you see family, and then you're back in country. You can't turn that off."

VA: Suicide rate among young veterans high

In its "Suicide Among Veterans and Other Americans 2001–2014," the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of Suicide Prevention reported in August 2016 that in 2014, an average of 20 veterans died by suicide each day, and that the rates of suicide were highest among veterans ages 18-29 and lowest among veterans ages 60 and older.

The report also stated that veterans in 2014 accounted for 8.5 percent of the adult U.S. population but for 18 percent of all deaths by suicide.

"It doesn't take a hero or it doesn't take a superman to be there for a friend," King said in the documentary. "You don't have to be able to know what to say or be able to fix their problems or work it out or show them the light. You just have to be there."

Up to 20 percent of veterans who served in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom have PTSD in a given year, and up to 12 percent of those who served in Desert Storm, according to the VA.

"It's a really nice thing that these guys were able to come out of their comfort zone and address their own demons while helping other guys find healthy coping mechanisms and not destructive things like overusing drugs or alcohol," said Knight, a sergeant in the Army who served in Baghdad and Ramadi.

"Project 22," he said, "is a peer thing. It's not a psychologist talking about PTSD. It's about guys who had that adrenaline rush of combat, came home and there was none of that and it takes a while to readjust."

14 student-veterans attend BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing

Nearly 160 student-veterans attended BC3 in the spring 2017 semester, Smith said, including 14 at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing. Nearly 55 percent of BC3's student-veterans are age 30 or older, and about 75 percent are male.

BC3 in August was designated a Military Friendly institution for the fifth consecutive year by Victory Media.

Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a veteran in crisis, can call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call (800) 273-8255 and press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or text to 838255.