

**November 2011**

**VA Introduces *Make the Connection*:**

**Shared Experiences and Support for Veterans**

WASHINGTON – *Make the Connection*, a new campaign launched by the Department of Veterans Affairs, is creating ways for Veterans and their family members to connect with the experiences of other Veterans—and ultimately to connect with information and resources to help them confront the challenges of transitioning from service, face health issues, or navigate the complexities of daily life as a civilian.

“I have seen over and over again how important it can be for a Veteran to hear a message from another Veteran. This type of communication will be especially useful in helping to break down the stigma associated with mental health issues and treatment,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “VA is leveraging this powerful connection using an approachable online resource that links Veterans to personal stories from their peers, to VA resources and support, and to reliable information about mental health and resilience.”

The campaign’s central focus is a website, [www.MakeTheConnection.net](http://www.MakeTheConnection.net), featuring numerous Veterans who have shared their experiences, challenges, and triumphs. It offers a place where Veterans and their families can view the candid, personal testimonials of other Veterans who have dealt with and are working through a variety of common life experiences, day-to-day symptoms, and mental health conditions. The Web site also connects Veterans and their family members with services and resources that may help them live more fulfilling lives.

“VA is heartened by the tremendous commitment of Veterans of all service eras, genders and backgrounds who are stepping up to share their stories,” said Shinseki. “Just as they would never leave a fellow Servicemember behind on the field of battle, they are once again reaching out to support their fellow Veterans with their compelling examples of successful treatment and recovery.”

At MakeTheConnection.net, Veterans and their family members can explore information on mental health issues and treatment—and easily access support—in comfort and privacy, anywhere, anytime. Visitors to the Web site can customize and filter their online experience, directly connecting with content that is the most relevant to their own lives and situations.

VA's *Make the Connection* campaign is raising awareness through public service announcements, advertising and partnerships with Veteran Service Organizations and mental health service providers nationwide. For more information, visit MakeTheConnection.net or VA's mental health services website at [www.mentalhealth.va.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov).