

Fly Fishing and PTSD

A softly gurgling stream out of the way and nobody around, your mind at peace with no anxiety or worries except for catching your next fish, sounds like a place you can only read about in some fantasy novel. That's not the case for Veterans who attend the Source One Serenity fly fishing retreat. A little over an hour outside of Roseburg, Oregon a group of Veterans gathered at



Lamolo Lake to learn the fine art of fly fishing and fly tying in a week-long retreat. "Nature doesn't judge and doesn't care, it just is" said Rusty Lininger who leads this retreat when asked about how it was to be out in nature and fly fishing. He went on to say that "there are no side effects to the outdoors and it just works".



The workshop is geared to help Veterans learn how to manage their PTSD. The focus required to tie a fly and even the simple act of casting into the water helps to take their mind away from their troubles. Imagine yourself standing wait deep in crystal clear water, warm sun on your back and no distractions. As you bring your arm back in preparation to throw another cast into the water you let out a deep breath. All your

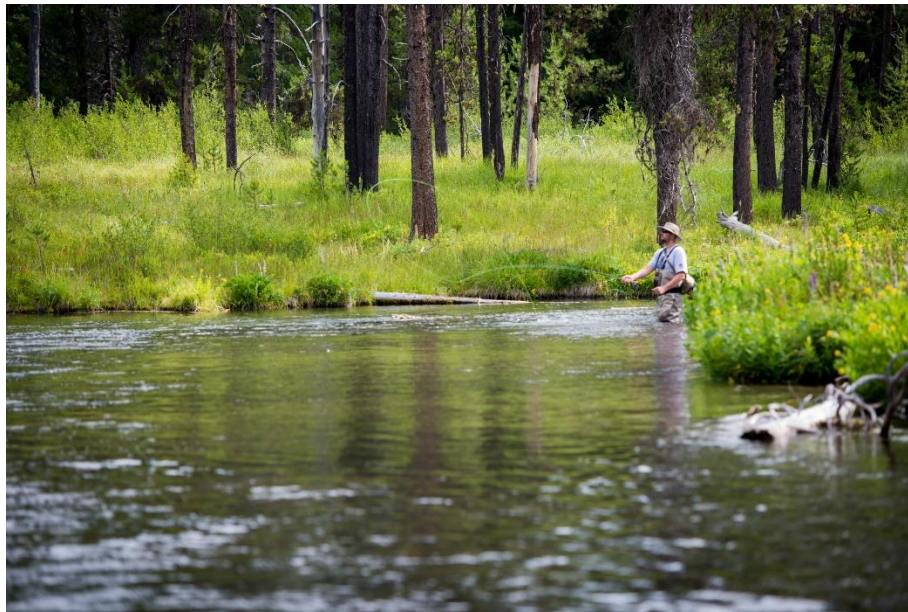
worries, stress and anxiety are gone with that breath and as the lure makes it way to the water you feel a sense of relief wash over you. The Roseburg VA Health Care Systems Interim Director, Dave Whitmer was able to join the group of Veterans for some fly fishing and great conversation. "I really enjoyed this fly fishing program led by Rusty Lininger of Source One Serenity. It allowed me to meet with our Veterans first hand and learn about their health care needs and how best the Roseburg VA can meet them. Plus, I learned how to tie flies, cast a fly rod, and appreciate the beautiful and peaceful sound of the North Umpqua as I waded into the water to catch trout" said Whitmer.

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VA recreational therapists are vital members of an interdisciplinary health care team using a wide range of activity and techniques to improve the physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and leisure needs of Veterans battling psychological and physical illnesses and other disabling conditions. Whitmer said, “Recreational therapy reduces or removes limitations and restrictions that prevent Veterans from enjoying recreation and leisure as the road to whole health care. We need to expand these programs as part of our whole health programs and partner with the community to increase recreational therapy activities. Programs such as fly fishing can provide a new sense of purpose and meaning in a Veteran’s life, help them connect with nature and the natural beauty of our area, as well as with other Veterans who face similar problems.”



Just what the doctor ordered doesn’t even begin to describe the relief this fly-fishing trip



does for our Veterans. PTSD is not something that ever goes away but the goal of this week-long workshop is to learn another way of coping with PTSD. When asked what Rusty hopes each Veteran gets out of the workshop he simply stated, “I hope that I have empowered them with enough knowledge for

Veterans to go out and do this on their own and to share”. The best part is that no medications are needed, just add a little nature, fly fishing gear and a peaceful stream. Serenity is on its way in and anxiety and depression are on their way out.

By Shanon Goodwin