

Death Is Not the Answer
Military Veterans
Featured Focus

This two-hour state of Michigan PBS documentary about depression and suicide is scheduled to premiere fall of 2016. In the context of the film, we feature some of our country's most well-respected clinical and advocacy professionals as well as deeply touching personal stories. We are also dedicating a large portion of the film to first responders and military veterans. We address both the physical and emotional toll of the work first responders and military veterans do, including PTSD, TBI, and the loss of 22 veterans a day nationally to suicide.

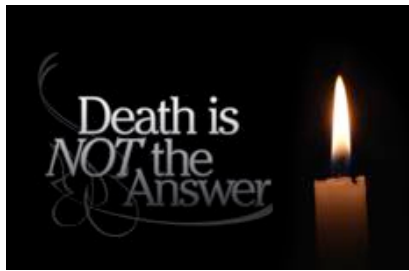
Major Ivan Castro of the U.S. Special Forces, who was badly wounded and blinded in Iraq in 2006, has become a national representative for military personnel who were injured in the line of duty. Over the last few years, he has been working closely with Prince Harry and his support for veterans through the Invictus Games. Through MAJ Castro's story we see how one soldier's life has been changed forever.

US Air Force Technical Sergeant (ret) Leonard Anderson, US Army Sergeant (ret) Lonnie Gaudet, and US Army Sergeant (ret) Matt Kinsey are members of the Louisville Slugger Warriors, a highly decorated slow pitch softball team comprised of veterans and active duty personnel from around the country. They work to promote an active lifestyle and community engagement with fellow veterans. Also joining us will be **Michigan Army National Guard Staff Sergeant (ret) Michelle Wager**, a Michigan native who was injured in Iraq in 2006.

These five veterans will travel to Michigan the week of August 15th.

Part of the filming session will include a round-table discussion among the veterans. They will also have a conversation with a local high school cross country team to talk about mental health and life's challenges. The discussions on how combat injuries have affected their lives and how they cope with PTSD related issues will enable the audience to step into the personal world of these armed forces veterans.

To learn more about the film, see our community supporters, and watch a trailer for our veterans and first responders segment, please visit www.deathisnottheanswer.com.



Major Ivan Castro Special Forces

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MAJ Ivan Castro before sustaining his injuries in 2006

Major Ivan Castro of the U.S. Special Forces enlisted in the military in 1988. After a career of nearly twenty years that included deployments during Desert Storm and Desert Shield and to the Balkans, South America and Central America, he was blinded and severely injured in 2006 while deployed in Iraq. A year later, Castro ran the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington D.C., beginning of a decade-long

pursuit of excellence in endurance athletics. Over the years, Ivan has become one of America's most well-known and out-spoken military service

leaders. In 2012, he cycled across America, and in 2013, Ivan was part of an expedition to the South Pole through Walking With the Wounded. This mentally and physically challenging trek was led by Prince Harry and his compassionate desire to support wounded veterans. The 200-mile race across Antarctica was composed of 12 veterans from the U.S., Britain, Canada, and Australia who had all suffered severe combat injuries.

In May of 2016, Ivan competed in and was one of three key ambassadors for the Invictus Games held by Prince Harry in Orlando, Florida. The Invictus Games, created in 2014, is a Paralympic sports event for wounded military personnel from around the world. He has completed two 50-mile races and over 50 marathons.

Major Castro currently lives outside Ft. Bragg in North Carolina. He is a Purple Heart recipient. Today, One of his main objectives and responsibilities is to meet and help other military personnel from all branches who have faced similar challenges.



Castro at the Air Force Marathon in 2008



MAJ Castro and Prince Harry at the South Pole in 2013



Leonard Anderson **U.S. Air Force** **Louisville Slugger Warrior**

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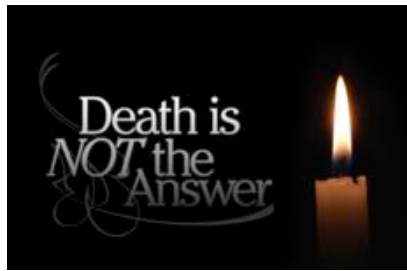
Technical (ret) Leonard Anderson grew up in Chester, SC. After participating in baseball, football and wrestling in high school, he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 2002 as a Security Forces airman and later becoming a Military Working Dog Handler. During his second tour to Afghanistan in 2012 he was working with an Army Infantry unit in Sperwan Ghar, Afghanistan. On July 28, 2012 TSgt (ret) Anderson and his Military Working Dog Azza were struck with a remote detonated Improvised Explosive Device while on a foot patrol in a nearby village. The blast rendered him with massive leg trauma, amputation of his left hand, amputation on most of his right hand leaving two fingers, and shrapnel throughout his body.



During his recovery Leonard has worked with many organizations to help with not only his but others rehabilitation. Some organizations include 4 The Fallen, the Warrior Games - winning six medals for

swimming and shooting - and the Invictus Games, winning 2 medals on a military world stage for swimming. But nothing is more calming and peaceful than when he is on the softball field. To some it is just a sport but to him it's so much more, it's a family, something that has brought and continues to bring life long friends into his life. The very same friends he played with before his injury were right there to push him while learning to play again. Playing for The Louisville Slugger Warriors allows Leonard to get the competitive edge out while continuing something he loves to do. TSgt (ret) Anderson was retired from active duty on October 28, 2015 with more than 13 years of service. He is a Purple Heart recipient. Leonard currently resides in Colorado Springs, Colorado with his family.





Lonnie Gaudet
U.S. Army
Louisville Slugger Warrior

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Born in Morgan City, LA, Sgt. (ret) Lonnie Gaudet moved to Auburndale, FL where he played baseball and wrestled during his high school years. While deployed in Afghanistan with the U.S. Army in 2010 and 2011, he stepped on a land mine in the Arghandab River Valley and suffered right below-knee amputation. He has received two Purple Hearts.

Now, as a Louisville Slugger Warrior, Lonnie pushes himself to train harder than his competition, and believes we must not waste the opportunities we are given in life. He lives in Purdin, MO with his wife and three children.





Matthew Kinsey
U.S. Army
Louisville Slugger Warrior

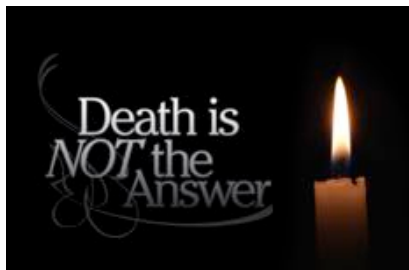
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Born and raised in Rockville, IN, Sgt. (ret) Matt Kinsey played baseball and football in high school. Upon graduation, he attended Danville Community College where he played Jr. College Baseball before enlisting in the Army on March 2, 2006. After basic training in Ft. Benning, GA, he served with the U.S. Army 82nd Airborne at Ft. Bragg in North Carolina. While deployed in Afghanistan in June 2010, he lost his right foot after stepping on an IED.

After recovering, Kinsey played in the 2012 MLB All Star Legends and Celebrity Softball Game in Kansas City, MO and was named Most Valuable Player. He has been playing softball for five years now and currently works as a Baseball Instructor at Legends Sports Academy in Louisville, KY and resides in New Albany, IN. Kinsey is a Purple Heart recipient.





Michelle Wager Michigan Army National Guard

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SSG (ret) Michelle Wager joined the Michigan Army National Guard in 1999. Over her 10 years of service, she has deployed twice, including post-9/11 assignments to the Detroit Ambassador Bridge, the Pentagon Security Force as well as overseas.

In July 2006, she volunteered to go to Iraq with the 46th MP Company. Five months into her 15-month tour in Baghdad, a roadside bomb hit her vehicle on January 22, 2007, killing two soldiers and wounding two others, including herself. Her right leg was salvaged at the hip and her left was amputated above the knee. Michelle is a Purple Heart and Bronze Star recipient.

In September of 2015, she married best friend and fellow National Guardsman Bryan. The two live in Byron MI, and Michelle chooses to, as her aunt used to say, "carpe diem!"

