

also led to his suicide.

“My husband served for 25 years, and we always felt a part of the community,” the Deltona resident says. “It wasn’t until the day he was injured that we both felt alone.

Pam says soldiers are practically shunned after being injured. There’s a tendency to avoid them or not look them directly in the eyes.

“The more serious the injury, the more other soldiers

ans Administration (VA) that he retired for medical reasons. “Tim’s operation was in 2007 and we spent the next five years embroiled in the medical board process,” Pam says. “Tim’s official military retirement certificate reads February 13, 2013.”

Sustaining critical injuries, losing your hard-earned career, losing your sense of community are significant issues to face while recovering from serious injury. Along

television or something he was dreaming that triggered some sort of attack. I don’t think he was fully awake when he shot himself.”

Pam believes many veteran suicides could be prevented by providing earlier and better intervention. “Service members are literally having their careers ended in front of them with no say, no participation. And on top of it, they have to deal with their injuries.”

“I woke up to the [sound of a] gun shot...Tim was not the typical vet where you say, ‘yeah, there were signs or we saw this coming.’ He was exactly the opposite. He loved life.”

—PAM HUNT, WIDOW OF STAFF SGT. TIMOTHY HUNT

want to disassociate with them. They feel that could be them,” she says.

To add insult to injury, just 30 minutes after leaving the hospital following knee surgery, Tim had to sign paperwork indicating he was no longer in the U.S. Army. “It said Tim acknowledged and understood he was no longer deployable, therefore he was no longer a soldier,” Pam explains. “They refused to let him have convalescent leave unless he signed it.”

During the 13-hour trip from Fort Knox to Minneapolis, Tim talked about his frustration and anger at being “forced to pull his own pin and end his military career.” Pam says there was no other choice.

Although the Army said Tim was no longer deployable, it was up to Tim and Pam to convince the Veter-

with constant pain, the danger of continuously taking addictive prescription drugs, and a loss of self-worth, it creates the perfect storm.

Welcome to Tim Hunt’s world at that time.

Pam is convinced her husband’s medications also contributed to his decision.

“We had an appointment

OF THE 22 VETERAN DEATHS A DAY, ONLY ABOUT FIVE ARE PATIENTS IN THE HEALTH SYSTEM.

—STARS AND STRIPES

the next morning to review his meds because he knew they were dangerous,” Pam says. “My personal feeling is there was something on the

That is followed by the chaos and confusion of the VA system and fighting for what should be automatic. Pam said these veterans struggle to get mental health services, and the care they receive is poor at best.

After Tim’s death, Pam’s personal mission became reducing the number of veteran suicides—22 every day—a number she thinks is conservative. She became a volunteer working with veterans’ issues including A Veterans Community, which provides safe and stable housing for vets.

One of her passions is the Spartan Pledge. Forged from scraps of metal that came from the 9/11 World Trade Center tragedy, The Spartan Sword was hammered into shape by a veteran. As veterans touch its surface, they say, “I will



VETS MAKE UP 7 PERCENT OF THE AMERICAN POPULATION BUT ACCOUNT FOR 20 PERCENT OF SUICIDES.

—DEPT. OF VETERAN AFFAIRS

not take my own life by my own hand until I talk to my battle buddy first. My mission is to find a mission to help my warfighter family.”

Villagers for Veterans a local nonprofit organization is sponsoring a Spartan Weekend May 19-21, 2017, when the sword will be in this area. They invite local veterans to take part in the Spartan Pledge. Those who can’t get to the sword will place a hand on the shoulder of a veteran touching it. Pam will be a featured speaker during the event.

“I think people who have served have a very specific and engrained code of honor, morality, and integrity. When they take an oath, when they swear to something,” Pam says, “especially to a fellow service member, it has more meaning behind it.”

For more information about the Spartan Pledge, visit descendantsofsparta.com

For more information about Villagers For Veterans, visit villagersforveterans.org

For more information about A Veterans Community, visit aveteranscommunity.org

To contact Pam Hunt, email her at Pam@aveteranscommunity.org

To watch a moving testimonial about Staff Sgt Timothy Hunt’s life, visit www.youtube.com and enter: “In memory of Timothy Shawn Hunt.”