

December 20,2020

To Whom It May Concern:

Healing Americas Heroes

I have so many good things to say about Healing Americas Heroes (HAH). As a woman veteran, I found that Mr. Eddie Crain and his organization, HAH, have treated all women with respect and understanding. I attended a one-week session in September 2019 and can say that it was enlightening and more important, it helped me begin to change and be willing to try things I was unfamiliar with or afraid of.

The program consisted of group counseling, individual as well as group work with horse therapy and fly fishing. The group of women veterans who participated with me were also awesome.

Group therapy consisted of explaining the different parts of the brain and how it affects PTSD. The horse therapy helps with one side of the brain while fly tying and fishing work on the other side. I learned that working toward minimizing the effects of my trauma was a good beginning during this week. It was very scary yet very calming to face some of my fears.

Because of my fear of heights, horse therapy was the most difficult part of the program. Eventually, I was able to feel comfortable on the horse while being led and holding on to the pommel with one hand. I also felt the power I had, by learning how to groom and saddle a horse. Ultimately, it gave me the opportunity to think about what I can accomplish if I decide I can. One year later, Mr. Crain surprised me by calling and asking for me to help represent HAH and women veterans by riding a horse in the NM State Fair Parade. FEAR IMMEDIATELY POPPED INTO MY MIND! I explained that I didn't think I could because I hadn't gotten on a horse since I had been to the program the year before (I was still thinking about how high I would be on that horse). Well, a few days later, Mr. Crain called again and asked me to reconsider. He explained that he would walk leading the horse and all I had to do was sit. It was still a very scary scenario, riding on a horse, lots of people watching and lots of noise that could spook the horse! Well, I finally decided to try, I could always back out at the last minute. Ultimately, I rode the horse and after the first 5 minutes, I actually relaxed, and enjoyed the whole experience. Mr. Crain's confidence in me helped immensely and in return, I was glad that I could help support and encourage women veterans to participate in the HAH program.

I also learned about the benefits of fly tying and fly fishing. Fly tying is very detailed and it helps with focusing. Fly fishing is the most relaxing individual sport and, also requires relaxing your mind and body

which many times is very difficult to do in daily living with PTSD. Since participating in the HAH program, I also became a member of the Albuquerque Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing group.

I totally support Healing Americas Heroes and what they do to help all the veteran participants both male and female. I encourage and speak about the program at every opportunity especially to women veterans.

Sincerely,

Gloria Gutierrez, USAF

Past Secretary

Women Veterans of New Mexico