

A new center also recently opened in Clinton, she added, and the federal government feels it will be adequate to serve Charles and St. Mary's counties, while Calvert will continue to be served out of the Annapolis center. However, she predicts the Clinton center will become overwhelmed with Prince George's residents and will not have any resources to donate to the local area. "It will just become more clear we need our local vet center," Shaw said.

Of Brewster, Shaw added, "He's very, very dedicated to trying to see the vets get what

they need. We're reaching out in every way we know how."

Brewster said he believes a major cause of veteran suicides is a lack of supportive friendship and mentorship, and that's what he hopes the Battle Buddies can provide locally. "A lot of people who

come back from military service, from combat, they don't understand what's happening to them, and they can't find anybody to talk to about it," he said. "They need

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Buddies

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about it," he said. "They need an advocate, a mentor and a friend."

The combat experiences of Battle Buddies could be the key to helping veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress or a brain injury that occurred during overseas fighting, Brewster said.

"When you have similar

experiences it helps to create a link, a bond, and build a relationship," he said. "Perhaps someone can share his own experience at transitioning back into civilian life, and women too."

Brewster said women will be paired with women and men will be paired with men, and even civilians, such as military wives, can become Battle Buddies. Right now, he has about six people interested in being trained, but he would like to have plenty

more. The commitment will involve two years of staying connected to one buddy, contacting that person once a week and meeting once a month as a group. The training will encompass 40 hours spread out over several weekends, although no dates have been set yet.

Brewster has trained about 100 peer counselors over the years, he said, and said everyone has described it as a positive experience. "They will feel comfortable

they can counsel anyone anywhere in anything," he said.

Also, if anyone has a neighbor, friend or loved one returning from combat whom they feel could benefit from the SMBB drop-in center, Brewster encourages referrals.

Both the mobile vet center and SMBB will be at the Tri-Forces Triathlon and Wellness Fair in North Beach on June 18.

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