



CAPTAIN

JOHN D. MASON



VETERAN PEER OUTREACH PROGRAM

Working Together to Connect
Veterans and Families



VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

PROGRAM INTRODUCTION

**PRESENTED BY SUSAN SMYKAL
MEDICAL COLLEGE OF WISCONSIN**

MCW Veteran Peer Specialists

Christopher Swift ~

- Decorated and retired US Army Combat Medic
- 20 years Military Medic and Emergency Department
- Experienced in policy development, staff management procedures, and operational improvements positively impacting overall morale and productivity
- My goal is to help other Veteran's with the tools and experience that I have developed over my many years of dedicated service.

Mark Flower ~

- Retired US Army Veteran with 17-year career as Staff Sargent, 11B Infantry, 19E Armor and 91B Medic
- A Vet in recovery and an advocate for change.
- Community engagement consultant at MCW & Milwaukee VA
- Co-founder of Dryhootch of America and very involved with Milwaukee area Veterans working as the Veteran Peer Coordinator for Milwaukee County Veterans Court and the new state-wide Veterans Peer Respite.
- Involved with the (HSR&D) (VA), advocating for Veterans engagement as a partner in Research.
- Constantly advocating for the wellbeing of our Veterans in the community, and folks in general.



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Bertrand D. Berger, Ph.D.

Clinical Psychologist

Assistant Professor

Department of Psychiatry

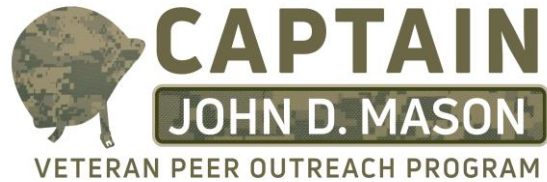
Medical College of Wisconsin

Mental Health Division Manager

Milwaukee VA Medical Center

**Southeastern Wisconsin Suicide Prevention
Taskforce**

**Program Director for the Capt. John D. Mason
Veteran Peer Outreach Program**

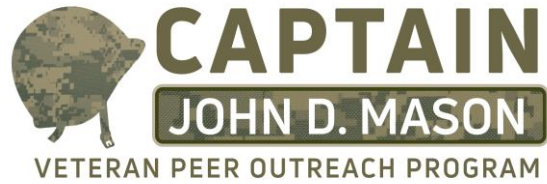


Captain John D. Mason Story

- Capt. John D. Mason served in Vietnam with the Second Battalion, Twelfth marines, Third Marine Division
- Awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V"
- Struggled silently for years with depression and PTSD stemming from Vietnam
- Stigma of mental illness prevented him from seeking treatment
- Died by suicide in 2013
- Left 5 suicide letters
 - * To his best friend wrote, "Get me to the VA..."



70% of Veterans who die by suicide are not connected to the VA



Letter read by Joe Tate

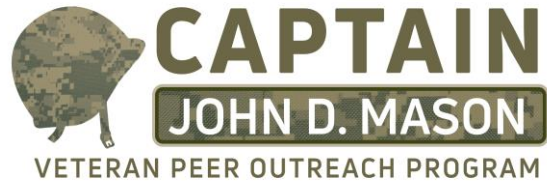
John Mason's letter read by his best friend, Joe Tate

<https://vimeo.com/252043469?ref=fb-share...>



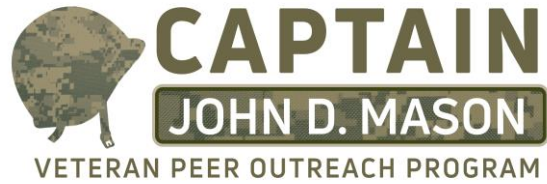
**Because of the loss of his best friend,
Joe was moved to start a program that
would benefit Veterans.**

**Program funded by Joseph & Jennifer
Tate**



Program Inception

- Collaboration between Medical College of Wisconsin & Clement J Zablocki VA Medical Center
- Program started October 2018
- Program Premise:
 - “John believed in the camaraderie among Veterans, who often understand each other in ways no others can”. John Mason Family
- Unique program with Veteran peers hired to provide outreach
- TMJ4 News <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/veteran-s-suicide-note-leads-to-new-outreach-program-in-wisconsin>



Mission Statement

- Help motivate Veterans and their families to engage in Veteran Administration health systems, seek eligible VA benefits and/or connect with other health care systems. **The primary goal is to provide Veterans with the knowledge and resources to live a healthy and productive life.** This will be accomplished by developing a sustainable outreach program of Veteran Peers who use their unique skills and Veteran affiliation to develop a connection with Veterans and their families.



- **Save lives** by locating Veterans in the community
- Engage Veterans & families in VA healthcare, mental health services & community resources
- Provide hope & empowerment
- Peer to:
 - * Offer direct access to hand Veteran off to the VA
 - * Disseminate information about VA services
 - * Assist Veteran in enrolling
 - * Articulate goals for recovery
 - * Identify barriers to achieving goals

