OPINION



Veterans need help with PTSD

War is a dirty business. Spend enough time there, and its fear and brutality will stain you, long after you get out.

The dreadful murder-suicides in Nova Scotia earlier this month are a sobering testament to that simple but stark truth. Lionel Desmond shot and killed his wife, their daughter, his mother, and finally himself. He had been a soldier in Afghanistan in 2007 and was released from the military in 2015. His obituary said he had succumbed to the tortures of PTSD.

Those initials stand for post-traumatic stress disorder, which overwhelms its sufferers with constant anxiety, sleeplessness and flashbacks. It is a mental-health disorder most common among veterans, first responders, and sufferers of physical and sexual abuse.

Not everyone with PTSD becomes violent, but it carries a higher risk. Experts explain that the intense sense of anxiety experienced by PTSD sufferers can quickly transform into anger.

The link between PTSD and violent behaviour is undeniable. For example, a 2010 study by the United States Marine Corps surveyed more than 1,500 veterans. Those who reported PTSD symptoms were more than six times as likely to engage in antisocial or aggressive behaviour than those who did not.

Lionel Desmonds situation is particularly heartbreaking, because he was trying to overcome his illness. He had received treatment for his rapid mood swings, including counselling for himself and his wife, Shanna. But it wasn t enough. Last year he asked for more help and couldn t get it. Relatives said he had tried to check himself into a mental health unit at a nearby hospital and was told they were full.

There is a tragic mismatch at play here. This war wound is deadly: More Canadian veterans have died from suicide between 2002 and 2014 than were killed in combat, a report by the Canadian Forces shows, Yet there are plenty of effective treatments for PTSD, including different therapies, relaxation techniques, and medicine. Some of those treatments could have saved some of those lives.

We need to do far better by the men and women who have risked and damaged their own lives in order to keep the rest of us safe. The least we can do in return for their sacrifice is to understand that healing their tortured minds is part of the cost of war, just as much as tanks and boots.

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Letters to the editor

Where s the sensitivity?

I m writing to express profound disappointment in a recent editorial choice made by the IFP. At best I would politely characterize it as tone deaf.

The last several months have witnessed a deterioration in the breadth and depth of local coverage with most stories being nothing more than a recitation of the police blotter, but I feel The IFPs most-read stories of 2016 hit a new low.

First off, it s just lazy coverage. These are your most-read stories. I would contend that, by definition, they don t need to be covered again when there are plenty of local stories that are going untold, presumably due to a lack of re-

More importantly, the two top stories were about a tragedy that struck well-loved and respected families in this community. To say the community was captivated by this story, when devastated is much nearer the mark, is to tear open a wound that I am sure is still fresh and barely beginning to heal, especially for those who lost loved ones.

I understand that resources are scarce as traditional media gets overtaken by online media. But I would point out that this story first came to my attention in my Facebook news feed. Please try to understand the caring community that you serve when making editorial choices.

> Eleanor Young, Georgetown

Help in Halton for abused women

The death of Dr. Elana Fric, 40, makes us all pause and reach out with deepest and heartfelt condolences to Elanas three children, her family, friends and

Dr. Fric was allegedly violently murdered at her North York home after filing for divorce from her husband of 12 years.

Her husband, a Toronto neurosurgeon, is accused of her murder. None of the allegations against him has been

This tragedy highlights what we already know: domestic violence is a grave issue. Anyone who believes otherwise is looking the other way. It happens everywhere, and as this case points out, can happen to anyone.

For those of us who work to put an end to violence against women, Dr. Frics tragic death makes us reflect and question if there was some way we could have reached Elana and offered help this, in an attempt to save her from this dreadful ending.

What this highlights for us at Halton Women's Place is that our efforts to enhance community awareness about our services and the countless barriers facing abused women needs more focus now more than ever before.

Women need to know that our staff is here 24/7 and that there is a safe place for them at Halton Women s Place or at a shelter in their own community.

For women who are experiencing abuse or think they might be, help is available. Please don t hesitate to call the Halton Women's Place Crisis Line at (905) 878-8555.

> Diane Beaulieu, Executive Director at Halton Women s Place