

News You Can Use

Your monthly resource for news and information about behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disabilities in western North Carolina and beyond

From the doctor: With Chief Medical Officer Dr. Craig Martin

We return to our work today with memories of time spent with family and friends and of appreciation for veterans especially in our hearts and minds on Memorial Day. Driving to work this time of year on Interstate 40, I see poppies planted as part of highway beautification. I recall the poem “In Flanders Fields,” memorized years ago: “In Flanders Fields the poppies grow, between the crosses, row on row ...”

After World War I, the Veterans of Foreign Wars initiated the Buddy Poppy Program to benefit people in need and “honor the dead by helping the living.” Since then, the tissue paper poppies have become a ubiquitous, recognizable symbol of love and sacrifice.

The sacrifice of our armed service members has helped keep our nation free – yet, this group often struggles to have their healthcare needs met. The Veteran’s Administration is outsourcing \$10 billion in medical care

over the next four years to improve timely access to services. So, what is Smoky doing?

First, we honor veterans as an integral part of our communities, regardless of what insurance they receive or where they go for care. Second, we’re piloting an initiative to increase behavioral healthcare access for veterans who aren’t eligible for military healthcare benefits or Medicaid. We’ll also offer training to local veterans services officers and link them to program participants. We’re investing more than \$300,000 into the project, not counting additional care coordination and administrative duties.

This project benefits not only veterans, but also entire communities. This is our contribution, in our corner of the world, to truly “honor the dead by helping the living.”

