



## INYO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

DAN TOTHEROH • JEFF GRIFFITHS • RICK PUCCI • JENNIFER ROESER • MATT KINGSLEY

NATE GREENBERG  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

DARCY ELLIS  
ASST. CLERK OF THE BOARD



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 3, 2022

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:  
Public Relations Liaison Darcy Ellis, (760) 878-0292

# INYO COUNTY YOUTH MUSCLE THEIR WAY INTO NATIONAL AWARENESS EFFORT

Approximately 100 students in Independence and Bishop will soon be wrapping up a physical fitness challenge meant to raise awareness about mental health and substance abuse challenges faced by U.S. veterans when they return from the battlefield.

For the second year in a row, Inyo County Veterans Service Officer Gordon Greene has partnered with Health & Human Services-Public Health & Prevention to bring the #22PushupChallenge to local schools, encouraging students to challenge themselves physically while being taught critical lessons on support and prevention.

“The #22PushupChallenge is meant to bring attention to veteran suicide and mental health and substance abuse issues,” Greene said, explaining the name of the challenge refers to the statistic that 22 U.S. veterans commit suicide each day. (Since the inception of the challenge in October 2013, the number has fallen to 20.) “Our veterans returning from combat often face difficulty transitioning back to civilian life, which can manifest in many different ways. Difficulties finding or holding employment, homelessness, broken family dynamics, and substance abuse are not uncommon experiences of combat veterans – including those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, military sexual trauma, or traumatic brain injuries.”

Supporting veterans – whether with funding, housing, employment assistance, mental health services, or even public expressions of gratitude – is crucial. Greene said the #22PushupChallenge is a symbolic gesture, but not an empty one.

“Anything the public can do to express support for veterans and let them know that their service and sacrifices are appreciated and their struggles recognized, is worth the effort,” Greene said.

Participants of the #22PushupChallenge are tasked with completing 22 pushups a day for 22 days. High school students at Owens Valley School in Independence and Bishop Union High School in Bishop, along with elementary school students from the Bishop After School Program and elementary and middle school students from Bishop Indian Education Center, joined the challenge during the week of October 24.

According to Greene, it really is the effort that counts more than the actual number of pushups completed although he does encourage students to stick to it. “What I’m hoping to see are some of the kids who were struggling on Day 1 being able to do all 22 on Day 22,” he said.

Greene said he and HHS Prevention Specialist Micala Muro visit each school or program once a week, doing pushups alongside the students.

Created by the veteran non-profit organization Honor Courage Commitment, Inc., the #22PushupChallenge has in years past gone viral on the internet and social media platforms, similar to the ALS IceBucketChallenge from 2014, with celebrities, influencers, and others posting videos and photos of them participating in the challenge.

Greene encourages anyone interested to take the challenge themselves. The more participation, the more awareness that's spread about a serious issue.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention advocates for implementation of evidence-based clinical interventions focused specifically on suicide prevention, but also recognizes there must be a fully engaged nation if prevention efforts are to be successful. "...(W)e need everyone at the table, leveraging work within and outside of clinical health care delivery systems to decrease both individual and societal risk factors for suicide," the 2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report states. "The public health approach reminds us that what we do can and does make a difference."

There are a wide variety mental health and social services available to veterans through the Veterans Administration. For more information, visit [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention/data.asp](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/data.asp). If you or a veteran you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts, please call the Veterans Crisis Line by dialing 988 and pressing 1.

For more information about services for veterans in Inyo County, or to speak with VSO Greene, call (760) 873-7850 or visit <https://www.inyocounty.us/services/veteran-services>.