

DRAFT FOR REVIEW

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FORMER VICE PRESIDENT MIKE PENCE TO JOIN BRAVEHEARTS "TRAIL TO ZERO" RIDE INTO FORT WAYNE

More than 20 veterans to ride 20 miles to raise awareness for veteran suicide prevention and the healing properties of therapeutic horsemanship for suicide elimination

Harvard, IL. (September 17, 2021) – Reflecting on this 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, on October 9th, BraveHearts Therapeutic Riding and former Vice President Mike Pence will honor our U.S. veterans with a 20-mile "Trail to Zero" ride through Ft. Wayne, Indiana. BraveHearts is the leading program in the United States offering equine-assisted therapy to veterans suffering mental health-related and physical challenges as a result of their military mission. BraveHearts has hosted its "Trail to Zero" rides in cities across the country over the last 5 years in an effort to commemorate the 20 veterans who lose their mental health battle to suicide each day in the United States. The BraveHearts' mission is to offer its special and successful brand of equine-assisted therapy and activities to every veteran who would benefit. BraveHearts invites your support for this mission and our veterans.

"To know that veterans who have already sacrificed so much are returning home to fight their own war on suicide, is beyond heartbreaking. It is imperative we raise awareness and find solutions to actively protect those who put their lives on the line for our nation," said Meggan Hill-McQueeney, President/COO, BraveHearts. "Trail to Zero was developed to combat the intensifying suicide crisis. Our mission is for these events to be critical conversations starters and immediate call to action to provide veterans the vital support they need."

The Fort Wayne ride will take place on Saturday, October 9th and follows the opening of Veterans National Memorial Shrine earlier this year. The tour will be attended by Former Vice President Mike Pence, an avid supporter of Trail to Zero and Indiana's most popular and beloved resident.

"We are thrilled to bring BraveHearts' "Trail to Zero" tour to Fort Wayne this year – a first for our city. With Ft. Wayne's sizable veteran population, the BraveHearts' mission to eliminate veteran suicide is meaningful to our city and aligns with our community's deeply held values." said Richard Beck, Allen County Commissioner. "Innovative and alternative activities and therapies should not be the last stop or the last hope for veterans. These BraveHearts' veterans are here to tell their stories of hope and salvation as a result of these programs. As a community, we are committed to our veterans and won't rest until this epidemic of suicide is eliminated."

Riders from the Three Rivers Horse Trail Group will also be joining BraveHearts for the Fort Wayne Trail to Zero ride. This not-for-profit group, in conjunction with the Allen County Commissioners, are currently constructing a Horse Trail Park in the county which will be ADA compliant and available to the Therapeutic Riding programs in the community. Summit Equestrian, which started its veteran program in 2018, will also have 6 veterans join in this year's ride.

“Having served as a United States Marine in Afghanistan, I know firsthand how difficult it is to come home and make sense of your tour of duty and your new place in the U.S. For many veterans, the aftermath brings deep despair and, far too often, suicide. It is a national tragedy. Programs like those BraveHearts offers are simply life-saving. It is imperative we put our shoulders into rescuing the very best men and women the country has groomed after they have given us their best. BraveHearts offers them the very best path to healing and to learning skills that translate to opportunity s our veterans reconnect with the U.S.” said Nick Montijo, Veteran Advancement Coordinator, BraveHearts.

BraveHearts’ “Trail to Zero” multi-city tour kicks off this September, being National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, and also includes rides scheduled in Chicago (September 18); Lexington, KY (October 1); and New York City (October 16). To learn more, visit trailtozero.org.

About BraveHearts

BraveHearts is the largest Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.) accredited program in the country serving all veterans at no cost, offering equine services to provide emotional, cognitive, social and physical benefits for veterans. Veterans at BraveHearts have reported benefits including increased self-esteem, self-worth, trust for others and community integration and decreased depression, anxiety, post traumatic disorder symptoms and self-inflicting thoughts. For more information, visit braveheartsridding.org.

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