

*We are looking to partner with each county in Washington State to train MST Advocates to provide services directly to our veterans.*



### **Charity for Veterans with Military Sexual Trauma Opens in Seattle**

Seattle, Washington (July 6, 2009) – Pack Parachute Charity, a nonprofit organization which offers financial assistance to Washington State veterans with military sexual trauma (MST), opens today. Kira Mountjoy-Pepka has laid the groundwork for this during the last year.

Pack Parachute Charity is a gateway organization for people with MST who in many cases are not able to ask the usual veteran and military-affiliated organizations for assistance when they develop PTSD or other mental and medical issues as a result of their trauma.

“Many of our veterans with MST have fallen through the cracks, not yet or ever qualifying for the VA or other services,” Susan Avila-Smith said. Avila-Smith is one of the founders of Pack Parachute Charity, and is the volunteer director of VetWow, an advocacy organization for people with MST.

Pack Parachute Charity offers a personal, community-based approach to veteran support that many people with MST find very accessible. Along with offering limited financial help, Pack Parachute assigns trained volunteer advocates to help their veterans access other assistance, including the often-difficult and intimidating VA.

Avila-Smith is encouraged by the public’s first opportunity to provide direct support to people with MST through Pack Parachute Charity. She has given thousands of dollars out of her own pocket to people with MST, many of whom are homeless and unable to work.

“With nearly one million claims pending for injured service members, it is imperative that the public take the responsibility for our veterans,” Avila-Smith said.

Individuals with MST are often especially alienated from other service members as part of their trauma comes from the documented lack sympathy or outright hostility active duty members of the military face when reporting sexual trauma.

Although Pack Parachute Charity is currently just providing services to Washington State, as funding and support permits they plan to expand their assistance to other states within the next year.

### **Pack Parachute Charity is providing free MST advocacy training in Tacoma, WA on Saturday, July 18.**

See [www.packparachute.org](http://www.packparachute.org) for more details.

To contact Pack Parachute Charity, please email our director at: [kira@packparachute.org](mailto:kira@packparachute.org)

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