

HicksStrong

BY JENNA CAPUTO



On February 11, 2019, the Hicks family received every parent’s most dreaded phone call when a child is in the military. “Mr. and Mrs. Hicks, your son was found dead this morning.” Their son, Macoy Austin Daniel Hicks had served with the Navy for two years, first serving as a Ceremonial Guardsman at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, DC, participating in 6-8 funerals a day before taking his post on the USS Nimitz in Bremerton, WA. After also sustaining a Traumatic Brain Injury as a result of a bicycle accident, the injury mixed with his PTSD from the constant stream of young soldiers buried every day, had become too much to bear.

The Hicks family’s lives had changed forever, forcing them to learn to live in their new world. Macoy’s mom, Jolee, found painting to be therapeutic and attended an event at the pottery shop,

Piece d’Occasion, in Loudonville. The event sparked an idea, and afterwards, Jolee asked one of Macoy’s shipmates what she thought was something every sailor wants or needs. Without hesitation, his shipmate replied, “A hug!” Working with Piece d’Occasion, Jolee created the HicksStrong Hug Mugs. Each mug is hand-painted by a volunteer, making them all unique. The mugs are then shipped out to our military members as a way to give them all a hug and to show our support. The non-profit, HicksStrong Inc., had been born, and they were on a mission to save military lives.

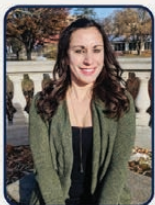
America loses thousands of veterans to suicide every year, and HicksStrong vows not to stop until the military suicide epidemic is addressed and eliminated. With the goal of connecting service members to licensed therapists via telehealth, HicksStrong ensures that our military personnel can receive truly confidential support no matter where they are without the fear of any information getting back to their supervisors. Using the HicksStrong service removes the red tape and shortens the gap between service members and the help they need from a qualified therapist. It provides a healthy

outlet to deal with their struggles while at the same time working to remove the stigma surrounding mental health in the military. Anyone in the service who is in need of help can simply complete the request form on the HicksStrong website, and someone will be in touch within 24 hours.

In addition to providing connection to therapy services, HicksStrong also offers workshops on suicide prevention and various mental health issues like PTSD, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation, both for those suffering as well as for the leaders in their lives, assisting in identifying those within their community who may be struggling to find meaningful ways to assist.



For more information on the HicksStrong organization, upcoming events, how to help, or to request assistance, visit their website at www.hicksstrong.org.



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