

Hands for Heroes

Having worked with veterans for years at the Phoenix School of Holistic Health in Houston, Texas, massage therapist William Barry understands the wounds of war can go far beyond what meets the eye.

"Many veterans experience pain and suffering that exist long after they've left the battlefield," Barry said. "The VA does their best, but their main modalities are counseling and drugs with mini side effects. We have been told by many veterans that they prefer not to be on medication, and we saw massage was the most useful way of helping people with post-traumatic stress disorder and other problems."

According to a recent study in the *Journal of Pain*, about 100,000 Gulf War veterans have reported chronic muscle pain. Seeing an apparent need for



Massage, Barry said, can help with many problems, from mental health issues to pain and

Iraq war veteran Elliott Marcott, who as a Humvee driver suffered a concussion and other injuries. "I would highly recommend this generous program to any and all veterans regardless of their condition."

More than 365 massage and touch therapists work in partnership with the organization, donating their time and skills to provide therapeutic bodywork to our nation's veterans. In exchange for committing to provide those sessions, therapists receive complimentary Hands for

Heroes marketing materials.

"What we discovered early on was that this was a great concept and there was a great need, and our goal is to provide 1 million bodywork sessions," Barry said. "What the provider can get out of it is the altruism of giving, which is so much a part of our human nature. As any massage therapist knows, it's very satisfying to see and improve a population that is in great need right now."

—Keith Loria

MASSAGE Magazine has teamed up with Hands for Heroes to encourage therapists to donate their services to our nation's veterans. To join in this effort, visit www.massagemag.com/joinhands.

these former soldiers to feel safe, healthy touch, Barry began offering free massages to veterans at the school in 2009 and founded the nationwide Hands for Heroes (www.handsforheroes.net) organization in 2011.

illness suffered in battle.

"Most veterans have some wear on their bodies; for me, it was my knees and shoulders. I found massage not only relieved the pains I was experiencing, but in time I no longer had any pain at all," said