

MAY 12, 2010

ROOM 345 SHB
SENATE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS & MILITARY INSTALLATIONS
Grace After Fire

Senator Leticia Van de Putte, Chair

Senator Eliot Shapleigh, Vice Chair

Senator Wendy Davis

Senator Joan Huffman

Senator Craig Estes

I am honored to sit before your Committee. My name is Stephanie Moles, Founder/CEO of Grace After Fire a nonprofit whose headquarters are now firmly grounded in the great State of Texas. Grace was formed by and continues to be driven by women veterans who are ready to take on the task of creating change for them, the women veterans who came before them, and the many that are on their way home right now.

Grace has chosen Texas as our National Command Center, specifically, due to the fact that Texas has the nation's 2nd highest number of women veterans – 152,571. But more importantly, Texas was chosen because Texas is 3 to 4 steps ahead of the rest of the nation in addressing the needs of women veterans. Yes, Texas has many gaps and challenges in meeting the increasing demands, but I have been all over the country and I can tell you personally that you are ahead of the game.

Grace After Fire was founded in response to the growing demand of women veteran for private and confidential access to their peers, and access to services for PTSD, Trauma/MST, Depression, Anxiety and the harsh transition women experience from military back to a civilian lifestyle.

Without belaboring the statistics, we all know that our veteran families are suffering new and traumatic experiences, multiple deployments that are tearing away at many of our veteran families apart. Suicides while in active duty and after returning home are on the rise, adolescent children's suicide and depression are in the rise, family violence and divorce rates are on the rise, and unemployment rates amongst our veterans is greater than twice that of civilians. Our military children are struggling in school as they worry about the safety of the parent in combat, if they will come home, and wonders at night why they left in the first place.

51% of all women veterans are married to a servicemember. 38% are mothers and 11% are single mothers. We are talking about families – this includes men. The latest reports show that every male soldier has a mother, but I could be wrong 😊.

This demand for new and innovative resources has reinforced our 2002 foundational design of providing access to these types of services for women via a safe and secure internet protocol. In addition to 24/7 access, women are asking for women in the community to talk with face-to-face, and a toll free call line where they call to talk to another women veteran. Grace is answering that call.

Why the focus women? Women are the bearers of life, we are the nurturers of the home, and we nurse. We nurse our babies, our children's wounds, our family's woes, and we nurse our men's souls. Who is there to nurture the women?

I would like to introduce to you three amazing women that represent our community of veterans.

Betty Stewart – Vice Chair, Austin Veterans and Family Advocacy Council; Army 1976 – 1986

Serena Hayden; Army 2003 – 2007

SSG Kimberly Ison; 1985 – 1995, and 2003 – 2010/present

Under the \$5million for mental health services programs awarded following the Ft Hood tragedy, Grace has won (10) sub-contracts totaling approximately \$800,000 [see attached map] for community campaigns called “Texans Helping Texans” which will provide the following:

Outreach and Peer Support – focus on rural areas, and direct women and their families to appropriate services in the community, both VA and private providers

Create a Veteran Service Provider Network (VSPN) from a local community Stakeholders, organize for community training, and offer innovative networking both monthly meetings and online. This network is utilized by our Call Center Staff and Outreach Coordinators, providing unique data collection and specialty referrals to services that are Trauma Informed and Gender Responsive.

Marketing and communications about services, providers, events, peer to peer group meetings, and children/adolescent resources. If we cannot serve her family, we cannot wholly serve her.

We are hoping to work with this Committee, the Commission for Women, Texas Veterans Commission Women’s Subcommittee, and help carry the message about the

Our annual budget – fully operational – is \$3.2 million. These subcontract monies will absolutely allow us a slow start but we hope to gain speed with future funding through corporate sponsorship, private foundation grants, and we are currently requesting funds from Texas Veterans Commission from Round II funds from the Veteran Lottery Scratch Offs.

Grace After Fire is ONLY as good as her partners: Give an Hour, Texas Veterans Commission, 211, Military 211, TX Military Forces, TexVet, Yellow Ribbon/Family Readiness Groups, Freedom Care, Mental Health & Substance Abuse Service – Women’s Special Programs.

What about the VA? – Dr. Stephen Holliday, Dr. Kimberly Arlinghaus, Dr. Su Bailey, the Vet Center.

In closing, when our most recently appointed Board Member, Brigadier General Roma Amundson, was asked why she felt she should be appointed to the Board, she responded:

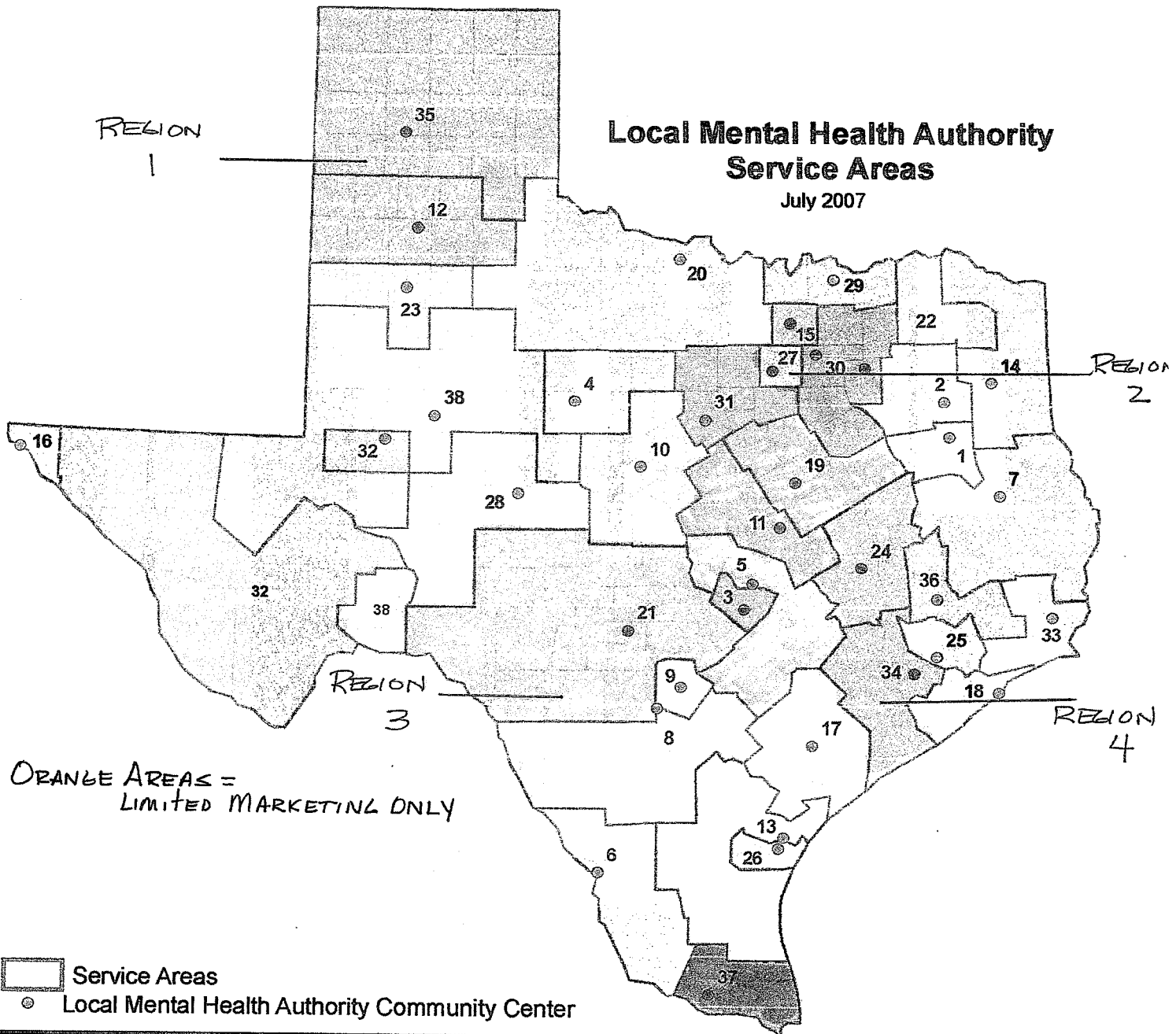
First, I think that I bring a wealth of experience and knowledge of military leadership to the table. I will have served in the military for 32 years in April, 2010, having been one of the last few remaining Women's Army Corps enlistees before it was phased out in September 1978. I've seen the growing involvement of women in the military and their assumption of many of the tasks that had been originally viewed as typically "male" tasks. I've seen them go off to Desert Storm and return with very little fanfare, even though our female helicopter pilots were every bit as involved in extraction of wounded soldiers in the battle areas as were the male pilots. I've sent off women soldiers during OIF and OEF and watched them return to their homes and families and struggle with the demands placed upon them by their families and by employers, thinking that it was all their own fault that they were having a tough time coping....

Finally, how I think I can benefit from membership on the board is that I will have the opportunity to learn about the situation of women veterans across the nation, and it is my hope that I will be able to be an effective voice for them. I've always aspired to be a "woman of influence" and I think that membership in Grace after Fire would provide me an avenue to accomplish that.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Local Mental Health Authority Service Areas

July 2007



ORANGE AREAS = LIMITED MARKETING ONLY

- Service Areas
- Local Mental Health Authority Community Center

MapID	CenterName	MapID	CenterName	MapID	CenterName
1	Anderson/Cherokee Community Enrichment Services	14	Community HealthCore	27	MHMR of Tarrant County
2	Andrews Center	15	Denton County MHMR Center	28	MHMR Services for the Concho Valley
3	Austin Travis County MHMR Center	16	El Paso MHMR	29	MHMR Services of Texoma
4	Betty Hardwick Center	17	Gulf Bend MHMR Center	30	North Texas Behavioral Health Authority
5	Bluebonnet Trails Community MHMR Center	18	Gulf Coast Center	31	Pecan Valley MHMR Region
6	Border Region MHMR Community Center	19	Heart of Texas Region MHMR Center	32	Perrin Basin Community Centers
7	Burke Center	20	Helen Farabee Regional MHMR Centers	33	Spindletop MHMR Services
8	Camino Real Community MHMR Center	21	Hill Country Community MHMR Center	34	Texana MHMR Center
9	Center for Health Care Services	22	Lakes Regional MHMR Center	35	Texas Panhandle MHMR
10	Center for Life Resources	23	Lubbock Regional MHMR Center	36	Tri-County MHMR Services
11	Central Counties Center for MHMR Services	24	MHMR Authority of Brazos Valley	37	Tropical Texas Center for MHMR
12	Central Plains Center	25	MHMR Authority of Harris County	38	West Texas Centers for MHMR
13	Coastal Plains Community MHMR Center	26	MHMR Center of Nueces County		