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**BY CHRIS MAYO**

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**VETERANS PROJECT**

Free help is available to troops, veterans and military families through the Veterans Project of South Florida. The group consists of 35 mental health practitioners who offer unlimited, confidential services and who also help train volunteers involved with Florida BrAlve Fund.

“Along with the need for mental health services for troops, we offer help for the wives and parents who are left behind and need help coping while their loved ones are gone and when they return,” project coordinator **Cristina Virsida** said. “We are especially concerned with helping the children who need someone to talk to.”

There will be a free conference from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. March 20 at the Miami VA Hospital, 1201 NW 16th St., second floor auditorium. The topic is “Combat Trauma: Its Destructive Effects on the Minds of Soldiers and their Children.”

Presenters will be **Dr. Jonathan Shay**, author of “Achilles in Vietnam and Odysseus in America;” French psychoanalysts and trauma experts **Drs. Francoise Davoine** and **Jean-Max Gaudillere**; **Dr. Daniella David** of the Miami VA Hospital; and **Dr. Ana Eriksen** of the veterans project.

About 20 percent of soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan show symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, substance abuse and depression. The Project has received grant support from the American Psychoanalytic Foundation and the Florida BrAlve Fund of the Dade Community Foundation. Call 877-783-2748 or contact [veteransprojectfl@gmail.com](mailto:veteransprojectfl@gmail.com). Reservations are required. Go to [www.SEFAPP.org](http://www.SEFAPP.org) and click on the Veterans Project link.

*If you have news for this column, please send it to Chris Mayo, Friends and Neighbors, Neighbors, 4302 SW 73rd Ave., Miami, FL 33155, or fax to 305-269-7901. Pictures cannot be returned. Her e-mail address is [ChristinaMayo05@aol.com](mailto:ChristinaMayo05@aol.com).*