

I was in the back of a dark, filthy abandoned office. It seemed as if I would never see the light of day; all seemed hopeless. My body had huge cracks from neglect, I wondered if I would ever be whole again. I am dirty, I belong nowhere. Darkness is my friend.

One day a door opened. She insisted I come with her for reasons unknown to me. Why would anyone want me? I did not ask for help, I did not ask for hope. The sting of being judged is too strong. I can't handle it. Leave me alone. But, no.

My tag said I was carved and painted in 2008 by Erv and Holi Doane at Tree Art Chainsaw Carving in Pigeon Forge, TN. How did my journey end up here in Kerrville, TX? Where have I been for twelve years and how did I become so damaged? When did I become abandoned?

She didn't know how to help me but she reached out. She found a connection, they live here and are experts in handling such things as me. Would Bill and Vera be willing to assist? They said yes. They would put their heart and soul into restoring me, all I had to do was come along and trust the process.

Several weeks had passed as Bill and Vera filled in gaping holes, painted, and polished me. I was beginning to take on a new look, regain my confidence, look majestic again! Wow!

I now sit in a freshly painted office. I have a pedestal! They named me Sam. I am the mascot for **Together With Hill County Veterans (TWHCV)**, a veteran suicide prevention program. What do we have in common? A lot, because I was found shattered and restored to health by caring folks, people who want to see me do well.

I believe that one day we can be whole again. I believe in receiving help. I believe, with time, we can recover from our wounds. I believe we can advocate for others who have shared experience. I believe in healing. I am your mascot Sam.



The bravest thing I ever did was continuing my life when I wanted to die.

Juliette Lewis

Together With Hill Country Veterans (TWHCV) is a non-profit suicide prevention program dedicated to providing education and training toward raising awareness and reducing stigma surrounding suicide. We are in the Hill Country Veterans Center, 411 Meadowview Ln, Kerrville, TX. Contact Susan Becmer, Executive Director, at Tww.hillcountry@gmail.com or (830) 315-5012 information.