

US soldier's widow speaks on post-traumatic stress

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In this May 2, 2014 photo, family, friends and members of the military gather beside Kryn Miner's casket after his funeral outside St. Lawrence Church in Essex, Vt. His widow Amy Miner, third from left, believes the Veterans Affairs health system must do more to help veterans who struggle with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder after returning home. (AP photo/Burlington Free Press, Emily McManamy)

Amy Miner says the last night of her husband's life got off to an amazing start. Kryn Miner and his wife attended a wedding in April in Vermont with two of their four children, dancing and celebrating with good

friends. But then things went wrong.

The troubled 44-year-old U.S. Army veteran became verbally abusive toward his wife on the ride home and began to hit himself. Prosecutors say he threatened to kill his family, assaulted his wife, and then threw a loaded handgun to their teen child who came to her aid.

"Do you want to play the gun game?" the sniper-qualified Miner asked the teen, according to authorities. The teen fired six shots when Miner pulled another gun from a bag. Prosecutors ruled the April 26 shooting justified and the teen won't face charges.

Kryn Miner was a loving father and husband, his wife said. A dedicated career soldier. The guy who would walk into a room and make immediate friends. But after 11 deployments in seven years, he became troubled. He suffered from [post-traumatic stress disorder](#), known as PTSD, and a [traumatic brain injury](#) after Amy Miner said he was thrown into a wall after a blast in Afghanistan in 2010 while serving with the Vermont National Guard.

Amy Miner, 39, said that his mental health became a constant struggle and that she agreed to an interview with The Associated Press a little more than two weeks after her husband's death to speak out about the need to provide better treatment for [veterans](#).

"The truth of the matter is if we can't take care of our veterans we shouldn't be sending them off to war," she said. "It doesn't make sense. Because they're coming back and this is the result and it's happening more and more."



In this May 12, 2014 photo, Amy Miner, of Essex, Vt., poses in Burlington, Vt., with an April 2013 photo of herself and husband Kryn Miner, an Army veteran who suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and who was shot to death by one of their children in April after threatening to kill the family. Amy Miner believes the Veterans Affairs health system must do more to help veterans who struggle with PTSD after returning home. (AP Photo/Holly Ramer)

About 15 percent of veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from PTSD, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. PTSD is a treatable condition and many soldiers diagnosed with it are successful and high functioning, said Army Medical Command spokeswoman Maria Tolleson.

But PTSD also affects entire families who must deal with a loved one who may become isolated because of anxiety or act out due to anger or

depression.

Dr. Thomas Simpatico, director of the division of public psychiatry at the University of Vermont, said the more families know about the disorder the better.

"If your father is all of a sudden flying off of the handle or breaking dishes, or whatever, and it happens to be after you said something, one might make the wrong conclusion that his behavior is the result of your activity," he said.

Kryn Miner joined the military in 1987. He became a paratrooper, ranger and sniper, jumping into Panama and serving in the Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Amy Miner said things changed after the blast in Afghanistan, one of 19 in his 25-year career. He tried to kill himself in September 2013.

About a month ago, Amy Miner wrote down what her husband experienced in a day. They include anxiety, anger and depression. He felt lost, empty, suspicious, worthless, like a failure. He felt guilty for being home while some of his comrades died or were still deployed. He felt like he should go back overseas and had suicidal thoughts throughout the day, wanting to hurt himself because of the guilt and the hurt that he had caused his family.



This 2012 photo provided by Amy Miner shows Amy, second from right, with her husband Kryn Miner, third from right, and their four children on a ferry on Lake Champlain off the Vermont shore. Kryn Miner, an Army veteran who suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, was shot to death in Essex, Vt., by one of their children in April after threatening to kill the family. Amy Miner believes the Veterans Affairs health system must do more to help veterans who struggle with PTSD after returning home. (AP Photo/Courtesy of Amy Miner)

He began therapy at a Veterans Affairs facility, but Amy Miner said he often had to wait for hours to see different counselors. He stayed overnight at a Veterans Affairs hospital but doctors told him it wasn't the place for him, Amy Miner said. He got into another treatment program unrelated to the hospital and learned how to cope with some of his depression and anxiety, but they didn't deal with PTSD.

He turned to the Lone Survivors Foundation, which helps wounded veterans return to civilian life, offering retreats to service members diagnosed with combat-related PTSD and their families. The foundation educates veterans and their families about PTSD, coping skills and reducing symptoms of stress.

"He was deeply committed to the notion that our nation's veterans have access to the peer support network and resources they need to manage the impact of their time in the service," said Beau Teal, the owner of CrossFit Burlington, where Miner was a trainer. He also developed a workout for veterans battling emotional wounds. It's 32 minutes long, representing the 32 veterans who either attempt or succeed in committing suicide daily, Amy Miner said.



This 2010 photo provided by Amy Miner shows her Kryn Miner in Afghanistan, an Army veteran who suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and who

was shot to death in Essex, Vt., by one of their children in April after threatening to kill the family. Amy Miner believes the Veterans Affairs health system must do more to help veterans who struggle with PTSD after returning home. (AP Photo/Courtesy of Amy Miner)

She says her husband's new mission was getting help for others suffering from PTSD, including a Chicago TV appearance to speak about the Lone Survivors Foundation and telling his story at a gala to raise money.

After the tragic end to his life, Amy Miner says she will continue her husband's work.

"Kryn was my everything," she said. "(I) will not ever quit on him or this."

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