

Donna Finicle, LCSW, BCD, ACSW, QCSW – 2010 Social Worker of the Year

Donna had enjoyed a two decade career as a Veterans Administration Social Worker, counseling veterans, soldiers and their families in Colorado when she came out of retirement after 3 years to develop the innovative program Welcome Home Warrior to fill the emotional, physical and psychological needs of veterans after they return home.

Welcome Home Warrior provides services to Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, their families and other veterans, including Guard and Reserves up and down the Front Range. The home office is located in Woodland Park and consists of a group of veteran volunteers who help to keep the office open. The program reaches out to veterans in the community that are in need of services, and works closely with the local police as part of this effort. These are just a few of the important services which also include workshops, retreats, counseling and resource finding.

Since 2007, WHW has conducted four retreats for families of deployed soldiers. WHW is preparing for a fifth retreat for families with returned soldiers. These retreats, held over a weekend with child care provided, include activities such as discussion groups, treatment of psychological wounds from the war, plus fun family activities and quality time for the spouse and children. Information and support for coping and to assist with returning soldiers and the transition back home is the focus. WHW relies on volunteers and uses fundraising to pay for the retreats, which are free to military families.

Donna Finicle's willingness to take the risk to start WHW with no funding, and to advocate for a population that was just beginning to be acknowledged for the effects of the war, speaks to her commitment to community programs that meet the needs of the population and to social work values. WHW is being lead by Donna Finicle from the ground up. Her leadership qualities are exceptional.