

# THE LAWTON CONSTITUTION

## Veterans walk to raise PTSD awareness ends in Lawton

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Ten veterans walked from Oklahoma City to Lawton to raise awareness for veteran suicide and PTSD. From left: Anthony “Tony” Salgado, Rene Braun, Jan Bautista, Kenny Toone, Woody Prichard (service dog), Chad Prichard, Hilary Williams, Dustin Herzog, Henry “Esco” Escobedo, Stephen Carter

Courtesy Photo

On April 4, 10 veterans left the Oklahoma City Memorial on foot heading south toward Lawton.

Over five days, the veterans hiked over 100 miles to raise awareness about veteran suicides and PTSD through the Semper Fi & America Fund. This is the third such walk that the fund has held.

Jon Lujan, the fund’s sports programs manager, has participated in the previous walks. For this walk he helped coordinate hotels and rest stops for the walkers and drove the safety vehicle.

“We want to continue to do these every year, bringing together five new veterans and five veterans who have already completed a walk,” Lujan said. “We do this to raise that awareness about veteran suicides and PTSD.”

Lujan, who has been involved with the fund since 2009, is a veteran himself who was injured in Iraq in 2003, suffering a spinal cord injury that left him paralyzed from the waist down. He has since recovered some of the feeling in his legs.

“I think people believe that, since the war is dying down, it’s less and less of a problem. But for the veterans that went to war, it’s a lifelong effect,” Lujan said. “We’re trying to keep the awareness out there, keep it in the news. The whole goal is to get veterans talking about it.”

The most recent walk raised over \$5,000 for the fund to help spread awareness about veteran suicide. Donations are still being accepted. To donate, visit [give.thefund.org](http://give.thefund.org).

“I think the biggest thing for people to understand is that we are open to all branches. The fund gives out grants to veterans from all branches, even though it’s primarily Marine-based, we help everyone,” Lujan said. “There are a lot of resources out there for veterans suffering from PTSD or suicidal thoughts. We want those veterans to not be afraid to ask for help.”