



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARDSMAN HELPS FELLOW VETERANS BATTLE SUICIDE THROUGH MUSIC**

*David Allen Stone of Robinson, Illinois, brings attention to Mental Health*

*Story by Mike Chrisman, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs Office*

**ROBINSON, ILLINOIS** – As a kid, David Allen Stone of Robinson, Illinois always wanted to be in the military and serve his country. Enlisting in a post-9/11 era, Stone knew he would be deployed overseas. However, he never envisioned the internal struggles he would endure during his military service.

For many, depression and suicide are taboo topics no one wants to talk about. However, Stone has turned his pain into music, with hopes of helping others struggling with mental illness.

Stone, an Illinois Army National Guard sergeant first class, is part of the 123rd Engineer Battalion in Murphysboro, Illinois. He has served in the Illinois Army National Guard since 2004, when he enlisted at the age of 18. Deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq gave him a unique perspective on the 'personal demons' many Veterans face. Like many Veterans, Stone turned to alcohol to cope with his depression. It was those personal struggles that enabled the 35-year-old Veteran to hone in on his passion, finding an outlet that helped him cope. Now he's helping others struggling with depression and suicidal ideations.

"I wrote the song 'Bury These Burdens' when I was in a pretty dark spot in my life and thought I could fix my problems at the bottom of the bottle," Stone recalls. "I thought ending my life would be

best for everyone, until a conversation with my aunt, Angie Watson, helped me use my passion for music to focus on my pain.”

Stone said he wrote ‘Bury These Burdens’ simply to unleash his sadness and anger in a way where no one would get hurt. However, when a high school friend and fellow Illinois Army National Guard Soldier died by suicide in January 2020, Stone knew it was time to act.

“I had the song started, but after Tyler Zellers passed away, I really focused my mentality on getting the message out,” Stone said. ‘I wanted others to know that it’s okay to talk about your feelings. For me, it helped talking about what I was going through. You can’t hold it in. I want others to know they’re not alone. You can talk about it. There are many others going through similar struggles just like you.”

Zellers’ sister, Chrissi (Zellers) Arvin of Hutsonville, Illinois, said she doesn’t want to see others endure what they’ve gone through as a family.

“Because of what happened, so many people have opened up about things,” Arvin said. “If it changes one mind not to make the final decision Tyler did, then it’s absolutely worth it. Tyler didn’t die in battle, but he lost his life for this country.”

Stone’s biggest advice to people struggling with depression and thoughts of suicide is to find something you love and you’re passionate about and surround yourself with positivity. Stone said embracing his passion for music helped save his life and now he wants to help others with similar struggles.

“If you’re going through depression or dealing with alcoholism and don’t think life is worth it anymore, start hanging out with people who give you positive verification you are good person,” Stone said. “You’re on this Earth for a reason; you just haven’t found your purpose in life yet. Surround yourself by people you admire and find an escape from reality.”

Suicide rates in the military community are at an all-time high since record-keeping began after 9/11 and those rates have been increasing over the last five years at a steady pace.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reports there are an average of 20 Veteran suicides per day, and suicide among Veterans account for approximately 14 percent of all suicides in the U.S. every year.

The Illinois National Guard has taken a strong proactive approach to Veteran suicide, hoping someday there will be zero suicides in the force. Part of the prevention effort is training Soldiers on what to look for and how to help someone who may be contemplating suicide.

“Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) equips the Soldier with the ability to identify risk factors and intervene in a suicide situation,” said Erica Metzger, Illinois Army National Guard Risk Reduction Coordinator.

The Illinois Army National Guard has 370 Soldiers (four percent of the overall force) trained to intervene if someone shows signs of suicide.

In addition to ASIST, Illinois Army National Guard leaders can enroll in an 8-hour ‘Ask, Care, Escort (ACE) Suicide Intervention Course.’

Thirty-five Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers have taken their own life since 2003. However, those numbers have decreased over the last few years. In 2019, four Soldiers died by suicide. Since 2019, four Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers have died due to self-inflicted wounds.

While it may be difficult to find positives in life when you’re coping with depression, Stone encourages others to find outlets to channel their emotions so those feelings aren’t bottled up inside.

“Music is my escape, but it’s also a way to put your emotions into something,” Stone said. “If I’m angry, my music will reflect that. If I’m sad, the song I’m writing will reflect those feelings.”

Stone said he was sad and depressed when he wrote ‘Bury These Burdens.’

“I just wanted to help,” Stone recalls. “With that mentality, I wrote a song that can help others if they listen to the message. I want others to know they’re not alone. There’s always someone there for you. You just have to reach out and talk. That is the key behind the song. Don’t hold it in anymore. Talking to others helps you understand there are other people struggling in similar ways.”

Arvin doesn’t understand why we think it’s taboo to talk about suicide.

“Our brains are just as important as everything else,” Arvin said. “If we’re sick, we go to the doctor to get medicine. We don’t think twice about it. We need to start treating ourselves the same way and learn what to look for in others.”

Frances Hill of Robinson, Illinois, Stones’s mother, hopes this song will give others comfort knowing it’s okay to talk about your feelings.

“It has a very important message,” Hill said. “Don’t be afraid to reach out to others. There’s always someone who will listen. If you need to talk, David is the type of person who will be right there. Even if you’re miles away, he will get in his car and come talk to you. He has been there and he knows how important it is to talk through your feelings.”

Stone and his wife Brittany have been married since September 2010. Together, they have two young boys, 10-year-old Draven and 8-year-old Bayne. Brittany says she has witnessed the ups and downs during their marriage and believes in the message of this song.

“I think everybody needs something where they can take a break from life and do something they love,” Brittany said. “David is able to use music to escape from reality and the stress of life. I think it’s important for people to find something that makes them happy, something that helps them escape from reality for a little bit.”

Stone hopes his battles with depression will help show others there isn’t a negative stigma with mental health. Admitting you are struggling is the biggest step to recovery.

“We’re Soldiers. We don’t talk about our feelings,” Stone said. “Talking about your feelings doesn’t mean you’re weak. It doesn’t mean you are less of a man. It just means you are strong enough to know you need help. That is important for everyone to understand, not just those serving in the military.”

Stone has performed at a handful of places since the song was released on Veterans Day 2021. Once the pandemic subsides, Stone is hoping he is able to be more active in suicide prevention, especially in the Veteran community.

"I don't care if this song hits five million people," Stone said. "If it affects just one person in a positive way, the song is a success. If this song can help just one person from taking their life, then I'm happy."

**For video story:** <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=702852504399907>

**Check out David Allen Stone's song "Bury These Burdens":**

**YouTube:** HYPERLINK "<https://youtu.be/aMl4vVM19IU>" <https://youtu.be/aMl4vVM19IU>

**Spotify:** HYPERLINK

"[https://open.spotify.com/artist/50V8WBXoVqJkT46KB0fZ8?si=LNMDLMQuR9mqR8Q\\_LIKXCA](https://open.spotify.com/artist/50V8WBXoVqJkT46KB0fZ8?si=LNMDLMQuR9mqR8Q_LIKXCA)  
&utm\_source=copy-link"

[https://open.spotify.com/artist/50V8WBXoVqJkT46KB0fZ8?si=LNMDLMQuR9mqR8Q\\_LIKXCA](https://open.spotify.com/artist/50V8WBXoVqJkT46KB0fZ8?si=LNMDLMQuR9mqR8Q_LIKXCA)  
&utm\_source=copy-link

**Apple Music:** <https://music.apple.com/us/artist/david-allen-stone/1558404025?is>

**Suicide Prevention Assistance:**

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 24/7 assistance:**

Call: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) – Press 1

--or--

Text: 'HELLO' to 741741 and trained crisis counselors will respond and help you.

**Local Contact Info for Illinois Army National Guardsmen:**

Suicide Prevention Coordinator: 217-761-3873

Risk Reduction Coordinator: 217-761-3628

**Other Resources:**

HYPERLINK "[https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention/prevention/index.asp](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/prevention/index.asp)"

[https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention/prevention/index.asp](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/prevention/index.asp)



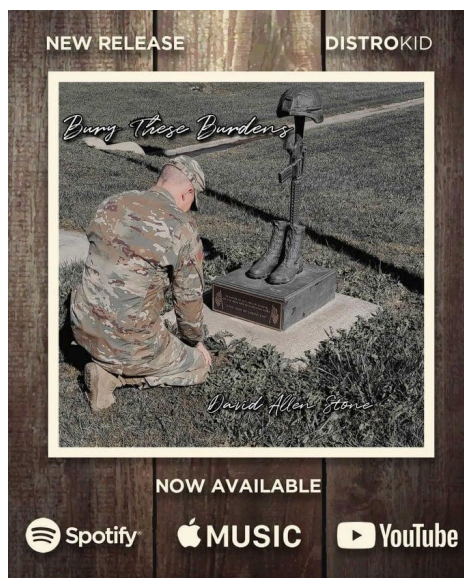
Illinois Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class David Allen Stone of Robinson, Illinois, an intel sergeant with the 123rd Engineer Battalion in Murphysboro, Illinois.



Illinois Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class David Allen Stone of Robinson, Illinois, addresses Hutsonville High School students during their Veterans Appreciation Day event on Nov. 10, 2021. Stone, a 2005 graduate of Hutsonville H.S., released the song 'Bury These Burdens' on Veterans Day 2021. The song's message is directed at those coping with depression and thoughts of suicide. (Photo by Chrissi Arvin)



David Allen Stone of Robinson, Illinois, performs at Saratoga Tavern in Palestine, Illinois June 12, 2020. Stone, a member of the Illinois Army National Guard, wrote the song 'Bury These Burdens,' to help those coping with mental illness and thoughts of suicide. (Photo courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class David Allen Stone)



Illinois Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class David Allen Stone wrote and recorded the song 'Bury These Burdens' to help anyone coping with depression and thoughts of suicide. The song was released Nov. 11, 2021. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, there are an average of 20 Veteran suicides per day in the United States. (Photo courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class David Allen Stone)





Illinois Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class David Allen Stone performed his song 'Bury These Burdens' at Gap Bar & Grill in Herod, Illinois on Sept. 4, 2021. The song was released the following week. 'Bury These Burdens' has an important message for anyone contemplating suicide. Stone says if he can help save the life of just one person, then he has accomplished his goal. (Photo courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class David Allen Stone)



Illinois Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class David Allen Stone performs 'Bury These Burdens' prior to kick-off of the Southern Illinois University Military Appreciation football game against Missouri State University Nov. 6, 2021. Stone wrote and recorded the song to help anyone coping with mental illness and thoughts of suicide. (Photo courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class David Allen Stone)

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