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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Women Veterans Network (WOVEN™) Celebrates One-Year Anniversary!**

(Bradenton, FL) Celia Szelwach, Founder of WOVEN will be celebrating the one-year anniversary of a volunteer-driven national support group for women veterans on Friday, June 27<sup>th</sup> from 5:30-7:00pm at the Women's Resource Center (WRC) of Manatee County. Szelwach recently attended the National Summit on Women Veterans Issues in Washington, DC and will share an update on the status of women veterans to include a brief discussion of Szelwach's viewing of *Lioness*, the documentary on Team Lioness, the first generation of female combat veterans sent into Ramadi, Iraq in 2003 to accompany Marine unit raids and search Iraqi women for weapons and intelligence.

During its first year, WOVEN accomplished several milestones:

- Launched its WOVEN logo and website [www.womenveteransnetwork.org](http://www.womenveteransnetwork.org) on Sunday, November 11, 2007
- Held 10 meetings with speakers covering topics such as health and benefits from Veteran's Affairs (VA), job search techniques, student history projects, stress management, life planning, and OEF/OIF veteran transition.
- Provided information and resources for three doctoral students performing research on women veterans.
- Donated over \$750 to support Szelwach's three-day 60-mile walk for the Susan G. Komen Foundation.
- Supported the Stand Down held at Manatee County Fairgrounds in November 2007 for homeless veterans.
- Collaborated with veteran service organizations and local non-profits to support veterans and their families.

Szelwach states that the mission of WOVEN is to connect women veterans for social support and camaraderie, to share information and resources, and to serve other veterans and local communities.

WOVEN has grown to 80 members across the U.S. with new members joining monthly. Members include several women veterans with more than 20 years of service in the Air Force, Navy, Army, and Coast Guard as well as pioneers such as the first female Command Master Chief in the Coast Guard. The network stays connected through monthly meetings and via email updates which highlight national and local community events for women and veterans. Szelwach, a 1990 West Point graduate, former Army Captain and paratrooper started the Network in June 2007 with the desire to create a global online community of women veterans spanning all services, experiences, war eras, ranks, and geographies. The group serves not only as a support network for current women veterans but also for future veterans, particularly those from the latest conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The website [www.womenveteransnetwork.org](http://www.womenveteransnetwork.org) includes a handout of the 25 Frequently Asked Questions by women veterans, a listing of veteran's events, helpful fact sheets and a comprehensive resources page which highlights contacts for VA health and benefits, historical research and statistics on women veterans, career transition and employment, veteran small business, and resources for military families.

For additional information about WOVEN or to receive e-mail updates, contact Celia Szelwach at 941-795-0928, email Celia at [cszelwac@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:cszelwac@tampabay.rr.com) or contact her through the "Contact Us" page at [www.womenveteransnetwork.org](http://www.womenveteransnetwork.org).

Celia Szelwach, DBA (ABD) is a corporate ethics and compliance manager and the Director of the Women Veterans Network (WOVEN), a global online community committed to helping women veterans successfully transition from military service. In October 2006, she was appointed by the Secretary of the VA to serve on the 14-member Advisory Committee on Women Veterans. Her active duty service from 1990-1995 at Fort Bragg, North Carolina included redeploying troops and equipment from Desert Storm/Desert Shield and two humanitarian service missions—for Haitian migration to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and for Hurricane Andrew disaster relief in Miami, Florida. Her awards and decorations include the National Defense Service Medal, two Army Commendation Medals, two Army Achievement Medals, two Humanitarian Service Medals, and the Senior Parachutist Badge.

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