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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Women Veterans Network (WOVEN) Hosts Lioness Film on Women in Combat for Memorial Day**

(Bradenton, FL) Celia Szelwach, founder and director of the Women Veterans Network (WOVEN) will host a public screening of the Lioness Film in honor of Memorial Day. The event is open to the public and is scheduled for Friday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> from 5:00 to 7:00pm at the American Legion Kirby Stewart Post 24 at 2000 75<sup>th</sup> St. West, Bradenton, FL 34209. A \$2 donation per person for use of the American Legion facility and RSVP in advance to Len Sirotzki, Post 24 Commander at 941-794-3489 (call between 9am-12pm) or Celia Szelwach at 941-545-6383 are requested to ensure space is available.

The Lioness film is an 82-minute documentary on five members of 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. The success of the Lioness teams continues today. Although women currently represent over 15% of the active duty military and about 7.5% of the veteran population at over 1.8 million women veterans, they are projected to be 15% of the veteran population by 2020. Florida has the third largest population of women veterans at 138,684, and more than 23,832 reside in Hillsborough (9,906), Pinellas (8,757), Manatee (2,321) and Sarasota (2,848) counties.

After the film, a panel of speakers will answer questions regarding women veterans. The all-veteran panel includes:

Susan Young is the Women Veterans Program Manager (WVPM) assigned to the Bay Pines VA healthcare system which includes most of Florida and Puerto Rico. As WVPM, she uses her clinical and administrative skills to assist and support the needs of women veterans throughout the Bay Pines System and within VISN 8—the VA Sunshine Network. Young was trained as a Flight Nurse in the U.S. Air Force Nurse Corps from 1974 to 1977 at Keeler AFB, Biloxi, MS, and served in the Air Force Reserve at MacDill AFB after leaving active duty. She holds a Master of Science in Nursing from the University of Florida in Gainesville and has achieved numerous professional certifications over her 35-year distinguished nursing career. Her subspecialties include medical/surgical, critical care, post anesthesia care, and nursing education.

Elaine Westermeyer is a Veterans Benefits Counselor, Personal Trauma and Women Veterans Coordinator (WVC) and alternate Homeless Veterans Outreach Coordinator for the VA Regional Office in St. Petersburg, FL. As a representative for the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), Westermeyer participates in benefits fairs, homeless stand-downs, conduct briefings, and works one-on-one with veterans throughout the personal trauma claims process. During her service in the U.S. Navy from June 1985 to May 1998, she was a Cryptologic Technician and Navy Career Counselor and achieved the rank of Petty Officer First Class/E-6. Her assignments included tours in Guam, Italy, Okinawa, and Florida. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Management with minors in Psychology and Sociology.

Celia Szelwach is a corporate organizational development/ethics professional and the Founder and 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. After graduating in the 10<sup>th</sup> class of women from West Point in 1990, she served as a Captain and senior paratrooper in the Army Transportation Corps. Her active duty service from 1990-1995 at Fort Bragg, North Carolina included redeploying troops and equipment from Desert Shield/Desert Storm and two humanitarian service missions—for Haitian migration to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and for Hurricane Andrew disaster relief in Miami, Florida.

Hot dogs, mini-pizzas, popcorn, and beverages will be available for sale at the Legion and all veterans, family members, and friends are welcome.

For additional information about the Lioness film visit <http://www.lionessthefilm.com>. More information on resources for veterans and WOVEN can be found at [www.womenveteransnetwork.org](http://www.womenveteransnetwork.org).

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