

Cardenas brings traditional healing methods to retreat

Ellen Miller-Goins | Posted: Wednesday, July 1, 2015 10:48 am

Isaac Alvarez Cardenas, director of programs for American Indians In Texas At The Spanish Colonial Mission, says he came on board at the National Veterans Wellness and Healing Center in Angel Fire after they did a nationwide search for practitioners of traditional Native American healing techniques.

The National Veterans Wellness and Healing Center sponsors week long retreats for veterans suffering from PTS (post traumatic stress) and their "significant others." According to the programs' website, the retreats include "Native American healing ceremonies, equine reintegration training, massage, yoga, aroma therapy, acupuncture, art therapy and reiki (a Japanese technique for stress reduction), along with couples and group counseling sessions."



Isaac Alvarez Cardenas

In addition to using equine therapy, along with Nancy Burch, owner/operator of Roadrunner Tours, Cardenas works with veterans and their significant others through what he calls the "spiritual part of this program... peeling away layers of pain and trauma" using a pipe ceremony and medicine wheel that begins, symbolically, in the East and takes participants around the compass ending with an "altar of freedom" in the West "where the sun sets."

Veterans lay items, such as a helmet, rifle and boots at the alter, Cardenas says, then "Express themselves by saluting. some kneel in reverence to their loved ones and, for others, it's very emotional. They never got a proper chance to say 'goodbye' to those they lost.

"Finally, before they leave, I fan them off as part of a blessing to continue their path to healing."

Cardenas concludes that while he believes "divine providence brought me here, I'm just one piece. We all work together as a team to help with (the veterans') healing."