

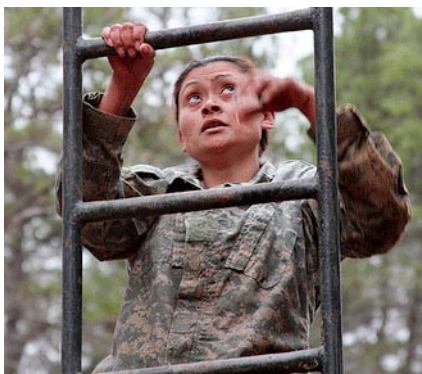
# DCoE in Action

VOL 3/No. 1 | January 2010



## Emphasizing Health and Well-Being Across the Mind, Body and Spirit

The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) marked the New Year by emphasizing health and well-being across the mind, body and spirit during the 2010 Suicide Prevention Conference in Washington D.C. Co-sponsored by the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the conference focused on “Building Strong and Resilient Communities” and was attended by the military services, federal agencies and civilian organizations who discussed ways to address the issue of suicide in military and veteran populations.



The conference emphasized ways to increase care and interventions across departments and communities, bring awareness of tools and support systems available to those in need and




share knowledge on the current state of research.

VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, spoke at this important event highlighting the need to continue building strong communities across the federal and civilian sectors.

On a related project, DCoE has been working on the *Total Fitness Initiative* with Admiral Mullen for the past several months to define ways to approach resilience in a holistic and integrated manner. Rather than looking at enhancing health and performance separately, this initiative brings together different domains, including, but not limited to, behavioral, environmental, medical, nutritional, physical, psychological, social and spiritual. A holistic approach to health and well-being builds force readiness and enhances performance.

Total fitness underscores the need to strengthen the mind, body and spirit of service members as these factors all contribute to overall well-being and thus play leading roles in the performance of a warrior in theater and at home.

A new year brings many challenges, but also many opportunities to continue the important mission of supporting our service members. DCoE is looking forward to another year of collaborating with our federal partners and academic experts to identify and disseminate best practices to help our service members achieve the healthy lives they deserve. 



[www.dcoe.health.mil](http://www.dcoe.health.mil)

## From the Director: Service to Others



Brig. Gen. Sutton, M.D. DCoE Director

Martin Luther King, Jr. once noted that “life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” Being of service to others can be as simple as asking your buddies how they are doing, being there for your loved ones, lending a listening ear when needed most or being a vessel of hope for others by sharing how you deal with some of life’s most daunting challenges.

These challenges our military faces today are not new, we know the impact of war on our country and its

uniformed citizens extends throughout history, leaving lasting impressions across generations. How our Nation supports this generation of Warriors is informed by lessons of the past... Thanks to the action of so many across the DoD, VA and communities around the country and throughout the world, we are making this moment in history count.

The invisible wounds of war are a national challenge that touch every community. This challenge requires a level of national unity and effort that mobilizes support, sacrifice, understanding, connection and action. It is a partnership between the faith community, business community, employers, schools, policy makers, non-profits, academia, and the media. YES, we truly are all in this together.

***“Being of service to others can be as simple as asking your buddies how they are doing, being there for your loved ones, lending a listening ear when needed most or being a vessel of hope for others by sharing how you deal with some of life’s most daunting challenges.”***

When you or someone you know reaches out for support, opportunities are created. The opportunity to share hope, eliminate the often deadly stigma associated with seeking help and let others know they are not alone in the often unseen battles of the mind. It also gives us an opportunity as a Nation and a community to help the healing process begin.

If you or someone you know is struggling with invisible wounds—be it depression, post traumatic stress, anxiety, pain, addiction, concussion or traumatic brain injury—I encourage you to reach out... It is our sacred duty—we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers.

For information on resources and opportunities to share them with others, please visit:

- [www.dcoe.health.mil](http://www.dcoe.health.mil)
- [www.realwarriors.net](http://www.realwarriors.net)
- [www.afterdeployment.org](http://www.afterdeployment.org)
- [www.facebook.com/dcoepage](https://www.facebook.com/dcoepage)

All together now ~

Loree K. Sutton, M.D.  
Brigadier General, MC, USA

***“The invisible wounds of war are a national challenge that touch every community.”***

## New Podcast Series from *afterdeployment.org*: There and Back

“Combat brings individuals face-to-face with the harshest demands imaginable. In fact, it’s impossible to be unaffected by these experiences.

Stress reactions, family and relationship difficulties and work conflicts can affect an individual’s emotional well being.”

These words set the stage for the premiere episode of *There and Back*, a new audio podcast series developed by the [afterdeployment.org](http://afterdeployment.org) project team. *Afterdeployment.org* is a Department of Defense website developed by the National Center for Telehealth and Technology (T2) and the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE).

**“Combat brings individuals face-to-face with the harshest demands imaginable. In fact, it’s impossible to be unaffected by these experiences.”**

The podcast series is directed to the entire military community to support their efforts in managing the challenges that are often faced following a deployment.

“Military audiences are tech-savvy and desire portability,” says, Dr. Robert Ciulla, division chief of Population and Prevention Programs at T2. “We chose to use podcast technology to extend the reach of *afterdeployment.org* and to augment the availability of the site’s wellness content.”



Podcasting is a method of distributing episodes of digital audio recordings over the Internet. These prerecorded podcasts are accessible from any computer capable of playing media files. A portable media player is not required, but can be convenient when working offline.

“Learning about Depression,” the initial ten-minute podcast in the *There and Back* series is a tapestry woven of education, encouragement and emotional connection.

Dr. Jennifer Alford, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist and *afterdeployment.org*’s functional director, guides listeners through the world of depression.

Alford relates, “Depression can happen to just about anyone given the right set of circumstances. Taking no action, or believing that time will heal the depression, could result in the depression getting worse or lasting longer.”



The podcast is punctuated with personal stories told by service members and their families. The experiences shared are poignantly real and relevant to the military community. Listeners will discover they are not alone; in fact, many face similar issues.


*There and Back* forms common ground and community, successfully connecting with listeners through an expedient and refreshing podcast concept.

**“Military audiences are tech-savvy and desire portability. We chose to use podcast technology to extend the reach of *afterdeployment.org* and to augment the availability of the site’s wellness content.”**

[Click here](#) to listen to “There and Back: Learning about Depression.”

Upcoming episodes will discuss post-traumatic stress, anger management, sleep problems and relationship issues.

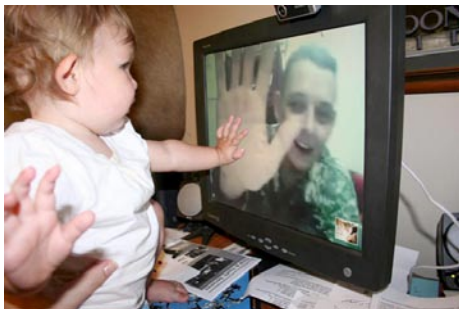
Maintaining resilience among our forces and their families is an ongoing objective. In addition to the *There and Back* series, visit [afterdeployment.org](http://afterdeployment.org), where you can take an anonymous self-assessment, learn new skills and hear how others have managed the challenges often faced following a deployment. The site’s resources can be privately accessed 24/7, anywhere that an Internet connection is available.

If you or someone you know is having trouble adjusting to home life after deployment, reach out for help. Seeking solutions is a sign of strength. 



## DCoE Co-Hosts a Scientific Conference on the Impact of Military Service on Families and Caregivers

Deployments and readjustment following a traumatic event can take a toll on any healthy military relationship or family. To better understand the impact these experiences can have on caregivers and families and to help generate solutions, over 200 participants came together at the National Institute of Health's Bethesda, MD campus in December 2009 to attend the second annual *Trauma Spectrum Disorders Conference: A Scientific Conference on the Impact of Military Service on Families and Caregivers*. This conference was jointly hosted by the [Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury \(DCoE\)](#), the [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#) and the [Department of Veterans Affairs \(VA\)](#).



The conference brought together a broad range of participants, including providers, researchers and military leaders to focus on the impact of trauma spectrum disorders.

The term, *trauma spectrum disorders*, refers to any injury or illness that occurs as a result of combat or a potentially traumatic event, and covers a broad range of psychological health and traumatic brain injury issues. The con-



Brig. Gen. Sutton, M.D. director of DCoE speaks at Trauma Spectrum Disorders Conference

ference took a special look at military and veteran families and caregivers across deployment, homecoming and reintegration.

The morning opened with remarks from Brig. Gen. Loree K. Sutton, M.D., director of DCoE; Janine Austin Clayton, M.D., deputy director of the Office of Research on Women's Health; and Joel Kupersmith, M.D., chief research and development officer of the VA Office of Research and Development. Keynote speaker Patricia K. Shinseki, wife of Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki, and a former board member of the Military Child Education Coalition, shared her ideas on how to help children thrive through good times and bad.

Following the morning session, the conference was divided into three breakout sessions:

1. Trauma-Related Caregiving
2. Child and Adolescent Development
3. Family Functioning


The first session, Trauma-Related Caregiving, focused on providing the latest research, caregiver experiences and shared lessons from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) injured populations.

The second session, Child and Adolescent Development, identified how parental military deployment, service and reintegration affect overall family adjustment and well-being.

Lastly, session three, Family Functioning, addressed how current and prior military service can affect adult relationships.

With additional deployments underway, DCoE and its federal partners are committed to ensuring that our service members, veterans, caregivers and families are provided with the tools they need to stay strong and successful. The *Trauma Spectrum Disorders Conference* was a successful step towards evaluating these very needs.



[Click here](#) to view all presentations from the *Second Annual Trauma Spectrum Disorders Conference*. 

## “LIONESS:” The Story of Female Soldiers in Direct Combat

The [Deployment Health Clinical Center \(DHCC\)](#), a component of the [Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury \(DCoE\)](#), recently teamed up with the Walter Reed Behavioral Health Department for a showing of “[LIONESS](#)” — the story of a small group of female soldiers sent into direct combat in Ramadi, Iraq — to a full house of providers and patients. Organizers hoped to bring awareness of and promote discussion on the impact of women serving in theater, both alongside their combat brothers and more often in combat support missions.

Filmmakers Meg McLagen and Daria Sommers captured these sisters in arms in the moving documentary. The film looks at the significant effect service in Iraq has had on these women, their families and the community after they return.

Retired Army specialist Shannon Morgan and Maj. Kate Guttormsen, two of the women featured in the documentary, as well as the filmmakers, joined Walter Reed health care providers who had recently returned home from deployments in a panel discussion following the screening.

McLagen and Sommers saw the first years of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) as “...a turning point in history, and we searched for a story that represented that, and we came upon the ‘Lioness’ story,” said Sommers. The film took three years to make with work beginning in 2004.

“This is not a film about the Iraq war. This is a film about the women who have returned, reflecting and bringing those experiences home with them,” Sommers said.

“It has created a lot of visibility and there are lots of good things that are coming out of the film. Shannon [Morgan] has been traveling [to screenings of the film]. She’s created and inspired legislation for women’s Veterans Affairs benefits,” noted Guttormsen, a West Point graduate who served as a company commander during her deployment to Iraq. She believes she may have been the only female commander in her brigade in Iraq. Guttormsen commanded 25 women.

In the film, Ranie Ruthig, a former active duty staff sergeant now serving in the National Guard, notes the tension and aggression she felt after returning from combat and the adjustment she went through to resume her role as a mother.

One of the panelists, Lt. Col. Tonya Dickerson, a clinical nurse specialist who works in nursing education and training, said women need support from their families when they return home to their family roles, and family members also need a support system. Dickerson returned from a 15-month deployment in August to a 14-year-old daughter.

“Research that we’re doing shows that this group of women [in combat] has unique things to be looked at, different than other women,” said panelist Lt. Col. Jeffrey Yarvis, a social worker and integrated service chief for adult outpatient psychiatry. “These experiences are going to be hard for them to describe, hard for them to solicit support for. There are going to be sources of resilience and risk we haven’t seen before.”

Many audience members expressed how poignant the movie was for them and how it prompted them to recognize the impact their service in Iraq had on them.

*Continued on bottom of page 6*

### Team LIONESS



Captain Anastasia Breslow



Specialist Rebecca Nava



Major Kate Guttormsen



Staff Sergeant Ranie Ruthig



Specialist Shannon Morgan

## Leadership Spotlight: Dr. Lolita O'Donnell

Dr. Lolita O'Donnell serves as the deputy director of the [Clearinghouse, Outreach & Advocacy \(COA\)](#) directorate of the [Defense Centers of Excellence Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury \(DCoE\)](#). In this role, O'Donnell is charged with providing oversight of the directorate's business programs and resources and ensures the directorate is responsive to directives and requirements in support of its mission, goals and objectives.

As a medical-surgical clinical nurse, O'Donnell has been at DCoE since its establishment in November 2007. She was involved with the initial planning and continues to be involved with the development of the concept of operations, strategic plan, programs and initiatives in outreach and advocacy efforts for service members and their families with psychological health (PH) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) concerns.

The COA directorate is responsible for providing relevant information, tools and resources about PH and TBI for warriors, families, leaders, clinicians and the community that empower, support and strengthen their resilience, recovery and reintegration. The directorate plays a crucial role as it oversees DCoE's [Outreach Center](#) which provides 24/7 comprehensive information, tools and resources for service members, veterans, their families and others who have questions and concerns about PH and TBI. DCoE's

goal through the Outreach Center and other initiatives, is to serve as the central source where anyone may obtain current information regarding PH and TBI.

Through the COA directorate, DCoE holds monthly [webinars](#) focusing on topics relevant to the military community, such as *Support for Family Care Givers* and *Life as a Chaplain*. This outreach forum provides an opportunity for discussion of critical issues relevant to PH and TBI and also ensures global access to authoritative and credible subject resources. Information on upcoming webinars is updated regularly on the DCoE Web site.

"I'm proud of the opportunity to serve those who serve us in order to maintain and uphold our freedom," said O'Donnell on her role as deputy director of the COA directorate.

O'Donnell serves as an advisory committee member of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's *Paving the Road Home: The 2nd National Behavioral Policy Academy on Returning Serving Members, Veterans and Their Families*. In addition, she serves as a leader of a small workgroup within the Federal Partners' effort on Reintegration Needs of Returning Servicemembers and their Families. In this role DCoE partners with other federal agencies in addressing the reintegration needs of returning service members and their families.



Dr. Lolita O'Donnell, Deputy Director, Clearinghouse, Outreach & Advocacy

Prior to joining DCoE, O'Donnell was an assistant professor of nursing at the College of Nursing and Health Services at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. Her work there focused on all phases of clinical nursing and included teaching nursing research, leadership and administration. O'Donnell believes education is a lifelong process. "As an educator, I love the ability to provide credible and relevant information to people."

O'Donnell's military experience includes serving as a clinical nurse in the U.S. Air Force Nurse Corps and as a flight nurse in the U.S. Air Force Reserve Corps. She was deployed during Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield.

O'Donnell enjoys listening to audio books, exercising and spending time with her family. 

## "LIONESS:" The Story of Female Soldiers in Direct Combat


(continued from page 5)

"It was healing," said a soldier in the Walter Reed audience who recently returned from a deployment. "It's so powerful."

The story reveals the very real issues service women face not only in combat

roles but also in the challenges of readjustment these women experience once they are back home.

DHCC helps meet the health care needs of combat veterans and provides guid-

ance to their care providers. The clinical center provides hands-on care to service members with deployment-related psychological stress injuries and complex chronic pain conditions. For more information, go to: [www.pdhealth.mil/](http://www.pdhealth.mil/). 

# TOOLS YOU CAN USE

Additional links are available at [www.dcoe.health.mil](http://www.dcoe.health.mil) under “Resources”

## Resources for Health Professionals

- **Army STARRS - Army Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Service Members**  
<http://tinyurl.com/armySTARRS>
- **Impact of Parental Combat Deployment on Children, Spouses and Service Members: Assessment to Guide Intervention**  
<http://tinyurl.com/deployment-impactonchildren>
- **The Effects of Interventions with Caregivers**  
<http://tinyurl.com/caregiverintervention>

## Resources for Service Members and Families

- **[www.afterdeployment.org](http://www.afterdeployment.org)**
- **Dealing with Depression**  
[http://afterdeployment.org/index2.php?cid=s102\\_0000](http://afterdeployment.org/index2.php?cid=s102_0000)
- **Improving Relationships**  
[http://afterdeployment.org/index2.php?cid=s104\\_0000](http://afterdeployment.org/index2.php?cid=s104_0000)
- **Helping Kids Deal with Deployment**  
[http://afterdeployment.org/index2.php?cid=s109\\_0000](http://afterdeployment.org/index2.php?cid=s109_0000)
- **Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress - Resources for Children**  
[http://www.centerforthestudyoftraumaticstress.org/resources/category-2\\_children](http://www.centerforthestudyoftraumaticstress.org/resources/category-2_children)

## DCoE is now on Facebook

Join our Fan Page at [www.facebook.com/DCoEpage](http://www.facebook.com/DCoEpage)

## Save the Date

### DCoE - Monthly Webinar: “Support for Family Caregivers”

Thursday, 28 January 2010 1300-1500 EST

This webinar will provide perspectives on the needs family caregivers of service members have and will discuss potential systemic, policy and programmatic responses to help meet those needs.

To register for this event or for more information, [email dcoe.globalvtc@tma.osd.mil](mailto:dcoe.globalvtc@tma.osd.mil).



DCoE In Action is a publication of the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE). Please send us your comments on this newsletter and story ideas to [dcoemedia@tma.osd.mil](mailto:dcoemedia@tma.osd.mil). Our mailing address is 1401 Wilson Blvd., Suite 400, Arlington, VA 22209. Phone: (877) 291-3263.

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