



WOUNDED WARRIOR

Inside this Issue

2011 Edition, Issue 7 - July 2011

PAGE 2

AFW2 seeks help for PTSD

PAGE 3

New center open for business

PAGE 4

Services and Resources

PAGE 5

2011 Warrior Games wrap-up

Send your comments, feedback

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AFW2 program gets a new chief

By Tammy Cournoyer
Air Force Wounded Warrior Program

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas -- Lt. Col. Susan L. Black becomes the new chief of the Air Force Wounded Warrior Program beginning July 8 when she reports to the Air Force Personnel Center here.

She replaces Lt. Col. David L. Bringhurst who is transferring to Joint Base Andrews, Md., where he will serve as chief of the Psychological Health Branch for the Air National Guard Readiness Center.

"I have had the chance to work with a group of the most committed professionals on a daily basis," said Colonel Bringhurst. "This has been a great blessing to me. I'm going to dearly miss serving our warriors, working with the Air Force Wounded Warrior team, and being part of the professional team at the Air Force Personnel Center."

Colonel Black commented that she is looking forward to her new duties and plans to dedicate herself to the AFW2 mission.



Lt. Col. Susan L. Black (Courtesy photo)

"I have a focused commitment on ensuring that our wounded warriors and their families receive the comprehensive care, support, and assistance needed throughout their recovery lifecycle including a successful return to duty where feasible, or a subsequent transition to veteran status," said Colonel Black. "I plan to partner with any organization dedicated to the mission of enhancing, empowering, and honoring our wounded warriors and their families."

Colonel Black previously served as the chief of Wounded Warrior Information

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Warrior learns importance of seeking help

By Tammy Cournoyer
Air Force Wounded Warrior Program

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas – When Staff Sgt. David Mullikin returned from Iraq in 2008, he was hypervigilant, irritable and aggressive. He suffered from nightmares, and was alarmed by any loud noises or noises similar to those he had heard in combat. All of these issues are related to an incident he will never forget.

Sergeant Mullikin, a helicopter flight engineer, and his crew were sent to rescue a fellow serviceman who went down. Because of simultaneous missions going on, they were advised to temporarily hold off. Frustration and tension set in. Once they were allowed to proceed, it was too late. The man was ultimately captured by the enemy.

He finished his tour and returned home to the 66th Rescue Squadron at Nellis AFB, Nev., ready to get back to “the real world.” But he came back with excess baggage in the form of full-blown post-traumatic stress disorder.

Sergeant Mullikin didn’t understand that PTSD could affect someone like him. How could it? He’d been through tons of tough training, including both land and water survival schools -- he was a highly trained Air Force survivor. Besides that, his deployment to Iraq was his first and only combat tour.

“I considered myself a strong person and I didn’t think things like this could happen to me,” he said.

“It would have been different had I been deploying for years, or I was in a ground unit,” he

“***I had to come to terms and admit to myself that I wasn’t able to do this alone and I needed help.***”

Staff Sgt. David Mullikin

explained. “Then I would have considered myself as having ‘gone through something.’ I felt like I hadn’t been through much so I had no reason to seek help; help for what?”

Sergeant Mullikin believed only people who “weren’t right” sought mental health treatment. Plus, he wasn’t willing to risk being treated differently or jeopardize his future in the Air Force.

“I wanted to keep my career and retire, not get discharged,” said the 34-year-old Virginia native.



Staff Sgt. David Mullikin performs a pre-operations check for an HH-60 Pavehawk at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. Sergeant Mullikin is a flight engineer assigned to the 66th Rescue Squadron. He returned from a tour in Iraq suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and got help through the Air Force Wounded Warrior program. (U.S Air Force photo/Senior Airman Stephanie Rubi)

He believed the unsettling feelings – the aggression, irritation and haunted thoughts -- were things he could handle on his own.

“I tried to keep everything inside and used alcohol to ‘fix’ and deal with the problem,” he explained.

Before long, Sergeant Mullikin realized that his self-treatment program was actually making things worse. He didn’t have the answers or the tools to make his life better.

“I had to come to terms and admit to myself that I wasn’t able to do this alone and I needed help,” he said.

Sergeant Mullikin initially self-identified himself as having an alcohol problem, but it was discovered the alcohol was covering up a much deeper issue. He called the

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New warrior, family center open for business

by Tammy Cournoyer
Air Force Personnel, Services and
Manpower Public Affairs

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas – Air Force officials held a ribbon cutting ceremony and grand opening for the Air Force's new Warrior and Family Operations Center here May 25.

More than 200 people witnessed the grand opening of the 7,000 square-foot facility housing four critical programs -- Air Force Wounded Warrior; Airman and Family Readiness; Retiree Services; and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response.

Formerly an Army and Air Force Exchange Service eating establishment next door to the Air Force Personnel Center here, the building was completely renovated before the Airman, Family and Community Operations Branch moved in. Renovation began in mid-October last year and was completed in mid-April.

"This building allows us to take better care of our people," said Lt. Gen. Darrell D. Jones,



Maj. Gen. A.J. Stewart, commander of the Air Force Personnel Center, talks with Staff Sgt. Marc Esposito after a ribbon cutting ceremony and grand opening for the Air Force's new Warrior and Family Operations Center May 25 at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas. Sergeant Esposito was wounded in Afghanistan in May 2009. (Courtesy photo)

deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services. "We will always take care of our Airmen, and that means taking care of their families."

The ribbon-cutting was extra special for AFPC's commander, Maj. Gen. Alfred J. Stewart, who began the day by marking his 30th anniversary of Air Force

service.

"One thing has been consistent over those 30 years, and that is the Air Force has always taken care of me," he said. "I'm proud to lead an organization that devotes every day and resource to developing and caring for Airmen."

The new "people center" will allow the Air Force to continue taking care of its people. It houses four critical Air Force programs. It provides a one-stop workplace for nearly 80 professionals tasked with delivering a full spectrum of integrated services supporting all Airmen and their families throughout the military lifecycle and beyond. This mission includes a special focus on Airmen who suffer combat-related wounds, illness or injury.

General Jones recognized the importance of caring for the Air Force's wounded warriors: "They suffered at the hands of the enemy, and showed us what it

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Social Security numbers being removed from all identification

To protect the privacy and personal identity information of active and retired military and their dependents, the use of a Social Security number is being replaced with a Department of Defense identification number on all ID cards.

As of June 2011, Social Security numbers will no longer be printed on any new ID card, and the removal will occur in three phases.

Additionally, the new DOD ID number will be used as the Geneva Conventions serial number. For people eligible for DOD benefits, there will also be a DOD benefits number printed on the new ID card.

For more information, visit the DOD Smartcard site by clicking [here](#).

Services and Resources

HOME

[Pets for Patriots](#) connects adult and other at-risk shelter pets with service and veteran members of the U.S. military in cooperation with not-for-profit shelters, rescues, humane societies and tax-exempt municipal shelter partners. To help make pet ownership affordable, Pets for Patriots provides access to discounted veterinary care through community veterinary partners, and provides direct financial support to veterans to make the purchase of pet food, supplies, toys and other essentials easier. Individuals are eligible to apply from all U.S. armed forces and from any stage of their careers, including active-duty, reserve, inactive reserve, national guard, retired and veteran status.



Military field physicians are using acupuncture to treat cases of mild traumatic brain injuries, including concussions, and cases of post-traumatic stress disorder. The Department of Defense is putting its weight behind acupuncture. For example, the most recent Veterans Affairs clinical guidance recommends acupuncture as a supplementary therapy for PTSD, anxiety, pain and sleeplessness. The VA is even recruiting candidates for a formal study of acupuncture's effectiveness on PTSD and mild TBI. For more information on how acupuncture is being used, click [here](#).

[Stateside Legal](#) offers a website designed especially to help low-income service members, veterans and their families. For that reason, it focuses on legal services that are available free of charge. The site has indexed the three largest networks of free legal aid including military legal offices. Although there are not enough free legal services to help everyone, you may be able to find a free lawyer or advocate by searching the site's data base to find the relevant legal help resources in your state.



Campaign offers advice on psychological fitness

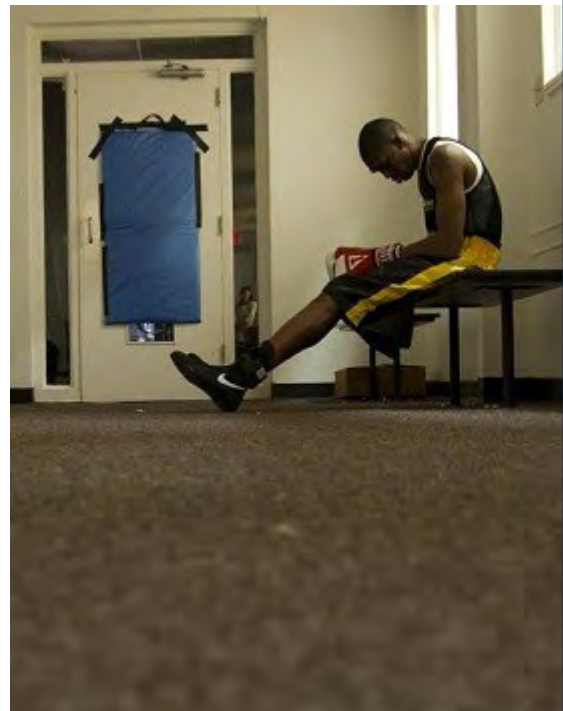
The Real Warriors Campaign website offers advice on psychological fitness and the importance of keeping your mind fit.

Fitness is a whole-of-body experience, not just about how much weight you can lift, or how many miles you can run, but it includes a number of other factors outside the realm of strength, agility and speed. Psychological fitness is one of those factors.

Psychological fitness is about strengthening your performance and resilience. It involves the way you think and process information; feel about yourself, others and your environment; and act in response to your thoughts and feelings.

Understanding what makes up psychological fitness and how to develop a healthier mental state can improve your readiness to confront the challenges of life – both in the military and in civilian life.

For more information, click [here](#).



Psychological fitness involves the way you think, feel and act. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Patrick Kilgore)

2011 Warrior Games wrap-up, story of inspiration

The following Air Force athletes earned medals at the 2011 Warrior Games:

- * Retired Senior Airman Jennifer Stone: gold-shotput; silver-50m freestyle swim.
- * Retired Staff Sgt. Stacy Pearsall: gold-800m run.
- * Retired Staff Sgt. Jason Morgan: bronze-800m wheelchair race, 200m wheelchair race, 50m backstroke swim, 50m freestyle swim and 100m freestyle swim.
- * Cadet Matt Pirrello: silver-50m free and gold-100m free.
- * 200m relay: bronze-Tech. Sgt. Francis Reilly, Cadet Pirrello, retired Chief Master Sgt. Damian Orslene and Senior Airman Matt Bilancia.
- * Retired Airman First Class Chatriex Goodson: silver-prone rifle.
- * Retired Staff Sgt. Jeanne Goldy-Sanitate: bronze-10k cycling.

Although the games lasted a week, the impressions people walked away with will last much longer. Tomas Fredricks, an Air Force recovery care coordinator, wrote about one of the victories he witnessed at this year's event:

"[Army athlete] Alfredo Delossantos, a special operator, competed in the men's handcycycle event. A handcycycle is a recumbent cycle with the pedals configured so they can be cranked by hand (yes, a

complete upper body workout). Freddy's chain broke two kilometers from the finish. He wouldn't quit.

"He moved himself across the finish line by hand. I, and seemingly half the Air Force Academy, watched as he pushed himself forward and uphill by hand -- first by placing his hands on the ground and pushing; then by moving the front wheel hand over hand, then using his hands to push the rear wheels. He did this cycle again and again until he crossed the finish line. At first, most people didn't realize what was happening, but as awareness spread, the cheers became louder and louder. Athletes, family members, volunteers, even the press shouted encouragement. His branch of service didn't matter, and moist eyes were plentiful.

"Once Freddy finished, one of the medalists in the event offered him his medal, stating, "Dude, I want you to have this. I don't think I would have had the guts to do what you did."

Mr. Fredricks hopes that more Air Force wounded warriors will try out for next year's games.

"When we looked for participants for this year's team I thought I only had two potentials from my caseload. I've already talked to four more people about next year and intend to recruit more," he said. "I realized anyone can compete after watching a quad-amputee dive off the starting block and swim down the lane."

Upcoming events

Caregiver Retreats are available for wives, mothers, sisters, husbands, fathers, brothers, and other family members who are helping their wounded loved ones face a range of physical and mental challenges. These weekend-long, all-expense-paid retreats are hosted at numerous locations around the country, and offer a chance for new friendships to grow. Participants frequently share that the weekend provided them with the opportunity to create support bonds that continue long after the conclusion of the retreat itself. The Wounded Warrior Project staff follows up with all participants and assembles a comprehensive contact database to ensure everyone can stay connected. For more information, click [here](#).

Do you need to update your contact information?

NOTE - Updates should be provided to: AFW2 Program Office, AFPC Disabilities Branch, DEERS, DFAS, and the VA.

AFW2 Program Office – Call **800-581-9437** or via e-mail: wounded.warrior@us.af.mil

AFPC Disabilities Branch – Call **210-565-5653**, or e-mail disability@us.af.mil

DEERS – Updating info in DEERS is accomplished in one of three ways:

Call **800-538-9552**

Visit a military base ID card issuance facility

Visit the website at: <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/address/indexAction.do>

DFAS – Online at "myPay" website: <https://mypay.dfas.mil>

VA – Call **800-827-1000** or visit their website at www.va.gov for the nearest VA office

