



WOUNDED WARRIOR

Inside this Issue

2011 Edition, Issue 8 - August 2011

PAGE 2

Amputee returns to active duty

PAGE 3

Military spouse employment

PAGE 4

Services and Resources

PAGE 5

Upcoming events

Send your comments, feedback

Airman, Family, Wounded Warrior and Community Operations
ATTN: AFW2
550 C. St. West
Randolph AFB, TX 78150-4739

1-800-581-9437
Fax: (210) 565-3385/DSN 665-3385

Visit: www.woundedwarrior.af.mil

E-mail: wounded.warrior@us.af.mil

VA task force improves care of women veterans

by Karen Parrish
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON -- The newly formed VA Task Force on Women Veterans will go a long way in addressing key benefits gaps to female veterans, according to Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki.

While support for women veterans has improved, "it has not been enough," Shinseki said during the 2011 National Training Summit on Women Veterans held here in July.

The task force's "near-term mission," he said, is to develop -- in coordination with VA's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans, and in conjunction with the Defense Department -- a comprehensive VA action plan that will focus on key issues facing women veterans and the specific actions needed to resolve them.

Those issues include obstetric and gynecological care, childcare, military sexual trauma, homelessness, aging



Women veterans and Veterans Affairs employees gathered last month in Washington for the two-day 5th National Summit on Women Veterans. The summit focused on ways to improve gender-specific care and services for female veterans. (VA photo/Robert Turtill)

and end-of-life issues, among others, the secretary said. A draft of the plan is due to Shinseki on Jan. 1 and "will set our course for the next four years in everything we do, from planning to programming, to budgeting, to education and training," he said.

The action plan will update and inform VA's approach to women's issues within its health care, benefits, and cemetery

[Read More](#)

Disclaimer: This news bulletin is for informational purposes only. The appearance of hyperlinks, and the information and services you find at these locations, are provided for your convenience and do not constitute endorsement by the Department of the Air Force. AFW2 Program does not exercise any editorial control over the information you may find by accessing hyperlinks.

Amputee works hard for active-duty return

by Samuel King Jr.
96th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. -- After months of surgeries and rehabilitation, continuous physical therapy sessions and a full medical evaluation board an explosive ordnance technician gets to remain an Airman.

"It's exactly what I've been working so hard for," said Staff Sgt. David Flowers, a seven-year veteran who lost his right leg and most of his left leg to a land mine in the mountains of Afghanistan. "I didn't want to leave, (EOD) means a lot to me." May 11, 2009, was Flowers' last day as a completely qualified EOD tech, but he didn't know it then.

While securing and disposing of a weapons cache, Flowers stepped on a land mine. The blast took off his right leg at the knee and shattered his left. Even though the incident changed his life forever, the sergeant can joke about it two years later.

"My foot flew up and hit me in the face," he said. "I actually kicked myself in the face." Flowers also incurred a broken right arm and permanently damaged hearing. He said he believes his fellow EOD techs, Staff Sgt. Gene Tschida and Tech. Sgt. Lilly Smith, saved his life that day.

After the blast, Tschida sprinted across the field to begin medical treatment on Flowers. Smith rushed to call in the medical evacuation from a satellite phone.



You can talk all day (to students) about someone who was hurt or died, but until they see it firsthand, they have no connection to it. I can show them what it's really like."

Staff Sgt. David Flowers

"They did the impossible," Flowers said. "It's easy to lie on the ground and bleed. The hard part is to mustering up the courage to race across a minefield and save somebody's life."

After arriving at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the sergeant underwent 29 different surgeries. Muscles were removed from his



Staff Sgt. David Flowers holds himself up with the parallel rings during a workout June 28. The explosive ordnance technician was officially returned to duty in June after he lost his right leg and incurred major damage to his left leg in a land mine explosion in Afghanistan in 2009. In August, he is scheduled to begin training to be an EOD instructor at the Navy EOD School. (U.S. Air Force photo/Samuel King Jr.)

stomach and back and placed on his left leg. Skin was also removed from the side of his thigh and placed on his calf.

In September 2010, Flowers said he felt he was ready to move on to outside treatment.

"(The medical staff members at WRAMC) were great at getting you back on your feet and even keeping you there, but I felt I could get help somewhere else and not take time from others who were still on their backs," said the Airman.

Before leaving Walter Reed, medical officials created a narrative summary of Flowers' health status. The summary initiated the medical board process and included a full breakdown of his injuries, capabilities and mobility. The medical board would determine if Flowers was fit enough for continued duty, or if he should be separated from the military.

Flowers was reassigned here, where the Eglin AFB hospital and a local-area prosthetics lab could meet his medical

[Read More](#)

DOD addresses military spouse employment

by Elaine Sanchez
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON -- In an effort to address military spouses' employment challenges, the Defense Department launched a program June 29 to expand career opportunities for military spouses worldwide, and to recognize the skills and talents they bring to the employment table.

Flanked by military spouses and corporate leaders, top government and military officials unveiled the Military Spouse Employment Partnership during a ceremony at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce here. The partnership encompasses more than 70 employers who have committed to opening their doors to spouse employment.

In remarks at the event, Dr. Jill Biden, the wife of Vice President Joe Biden, lauded military spouses for their



Dr. Jill Biden and Navy Adm. Mike Mullen talk during the kickoff of the Military Spouse Employment Partnership on June 29 in Washington. The partnership is designed to promote meaningful, long-term employment opportunities between U.S. employers and military spouses. (Defense Department photo/Petty Officer 1st Class Chad J. McNeeley)

service and sacrifice as they juggle households, children, volunteer work and jobs, many times in the midst of deployments.

Due to their ability to thrive despite multiple challenges and demands, she said, military spouses possess the qualities highly sought

[Read More](#)

DFAS offers pay handbook

Officials at the Defense Finance and Accounting Service believe it's important for wounded warriors and their families to understand the unique pay-related topics that apply to them.

For this reason, DFAS offers a handbook intended to serve as an explanation of pay and entitlements for members of the U.S. military who are injured while serving in a combat zone and receiving medical treatment at military facilities outside of the zone.

DFAS officials encourage wounded warriors and their families to contact their Air Force care manager for any updates to the information contained in this handbook.

Air Force care managers have designated DFAS personnel assigned as part of the Wounded Warrior Pay Management Team.

To view the handbook, click [here](#).

VA begins mailing caregiver stipend checks

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Veterans Affairs sent out more than \$430,000 in stipend payments to nearly 200 family caregivers of veterans in July. These family caregivers were the first to complete their caregiver training under the program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. The first payments to 96 recipients were issued July 1.

"This is a long-awaited day for many family caregivers who diligently worked to achieve this landmark legislation to enhance services for family caregivers," said VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki. "I am proud VA can now offer direct support to the loved ones who give the veterans we serve a greater quality of life by allowing them to remain at home surrounded by family and friends."

Family caregivers will receive an average \$1,600 in monthly stipend payments. The initial payments will average \$2,500

[Read More](#)

Services and Resources



The [National Association of American Veterans](#) is committed to assisting eligible service members, veterans, and their families experiencing financial hardship. A one-time grant up to \$1,500 (based on availability of funding) may be provided to help families in the areas of: mortgage assistance, rent, home repair/maintenance, vehicle repair/maintenance, medical expenses, and transportation expenses. Financial assistance can be obtained for other critical needs on a case-by-case basis.

The [Stanford School of Medicine's Vets Connect](#) program provides free individual psychological therapy to Post 9/11, Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom veterans and their family members, including free couples therapy and family therapy in an outpatient setting. Your first point of contact will be with a clinical coordinator who will assist you with the enrollment process, which consists of: a 10- to 15-minute phone assessment; a personal interview; and a case review.

Reaching out for help is a sign of strength. If you or someone you know has questions or would like more information, don't hesitate to call one of the trained health resource consultants at the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury. They understand the common stress reactions resulting from combat and are always ready to talk, listen and provide confidential guidance. Just pick up the phone and call 866-966-1020, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



The goal of ABILITYJobs and JobAccess is to enable people with disabilities to enhance their professional lives by providing a dedicated system for finding employment. Jobs range from entry-level candidates to people with PhD's. Click [here](#) for more information.

AF Warrior and Survivor Care survey begins soon

The RAND Corporation will be conducting a survey to find out how the Air Force Wounded Warrior and other Air Force programs can better serve combat-wounded Airmen. The RAND Corporation is an independent, objective nonprofit research institution.

In the next two months, combat-injured Airmen, including those who have already medically retired, will be invited to complete a survey that will ask about several important life areas and needs addressed by Air Force programs, such as wounded Airmen's health and well-being, as well as their experiences with and opinions of these programs. The survey will take about 45 minutes to complete. Airmen who choose to take the survey will be offered the choice of completing it over the phone or on the web.



The military benefits and standing of individuals invited to participate in the survey will not be affected by their decision regarding whether or not to

participate in the survey, said Air Force officials, and the survey is confidential. The research team will not share or make public any information that might be used to identify specific individuals who choose to participate. The decision to participate, as well as individual responses to all questions, will not be shared with the U.S. military or Veterans Affairs or anyone else outside of the RAND research team. Findings from the survey will be reported only in summary form.

In the next month, all active-duty and medically retired Airmen will receive a letter in the mail notifying them of when they will be called and invited to participate in the survey.

Upcoming events

Wounded Warrior Project offers Project Odyssey. With its name derived from Homer's epic poem about overcoming adversity and finding the way home, Project Odyssey helps warriors heal their spirits and helps to overcome combat stress through outdoor, rehabilitative retreats that encourage a connection with nature, peers, and others. The retreats focus on the positive aspects of military service, teamwork, and overcoming difficult obstacles. Warriors participate in outdoor, recreational activities geared at building self-esteem and overcoming fears including separation from family, interaction with others, and trust issues. Activities may include horseback riding, canoeing, whitewater rafting, kayaking, rock climbing, rappelling, a high ropes course, fishing, skeet shooting, sled hockey, and skiing at retreats held in various locations. Click [here](#) to learn more about upcoming events in late August and September.

Calling all motorcycle enthusiasts! The Home Base Program will present its first "Ride for Our Heroes" on Sept. 24. The ride features starting points from locations in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Maine and Vermont. The day will kick-off with a patriotic opening ceremony and acknowledgement of local military heroes at each starting point. The ride ends with a Rider Appreciation Party for bikers and families at Manchester Harley-Davidson in New Hampshire. There will be food, a band, celebrities, and activities for the children. To register or learn more, click [here](#) or email Paula Goldfarb at pgoldfarb@partners.org.



The National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic is set for April 1 to 6 in Snowmass Village, Colo. This clinic promotes rehabilitation by instructing veterans with disabilities in adaptive Alpine and Nordic skiing, and introducing them to numerous adaptive recreational activities and sports. For many newly injured veterans, including many injured in Iraq and Afghanistan, the clinic offers their first experience in winter sports and gives them the inspiration to take their rehabilitation to a higher level. Participants include veterans with spinal cord injuries, amputations, traumatic brain injuries, neurological challenges, and visual impairments. The VA Medical Center in Grand Junction and the VA's Rocky Mountain Network host this event each year. For more information, click [here](#).

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

