

## **World's largest PA program graduates three**

By John Brooks, General Leonard Wood Army Community Hospital Marketing Specialist and Public Affairs Officer

The world's largest Physician Assistant program, the Interservice Physician Assistance Program, graduated three new PAs at the General Leonard Wood Army Community Hospital on Sept. 7.

Capt. Mandi Breyman, Capt. Christine Whiteman, and Capt. Stacy Gross, class leader, all combat veterans with extensive and impressive resumes, are now "entrusted to ensure Soldier readiness and force sustainment through leadership, training and quality healthcare," in accordance with the program's mission.

"The IPAP averages over 240 graduates per year and places 11th in more than 150 PA schools nationwide," said Capt. John Berg, General Leonard Wood Army Community Hospital, IPAP Phase 2 Coordinator.

The training is extensive, beginning with Phase 1 Didactics at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, consisting of four, 3-month semesters in specialized areas from Biochemistry and Medical Law to Trauma Management and Surgery, according to Berg.

In Phase 2 training at an Army hospital, students begin 49 weeks of clinicals in 19 specialty categories such as Psychiatry, Pediatrics, Family Practice and Surgery. Providers and preceptors at General Leonard Wood Army Community Hospital are tasked to train and expose their IPAP students to everything from evaluating and treating emergency medicine cases to delivering babies with the OB/GYN preceptors, Berg said.

The program envisions leaders within the Army healthcare system delivering worldwide services to the nation and its Armed Forces "anytime and anywhere", according to its vision statement.

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"Army PAs have been an integral part of the Army's healthcare team since July 1973, when the first PAs graduated from the Medical Field Services school PA program at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Since then, Army PAs have provided troop medical care in all major Army operations and missions, as well as providing garrison and community healthcare to Soldiers, Family members and all other eligible beneficiaries," Berg said.

"Recognition of the ever-expanding role and scope of practice for Army warrant officer PAs resulted in the commissioning of eligible Army PAs and their incorporation into the

Army Medical Specialist Corps in February, 1992. Army candidates who successfully complete the Masters in Physician Assistant Studies from the IPAP now receive commissions as First Lieutenants,” Berg said.

“Today, Army PAs serve in all echelons of care from combat maneuver and special operations units to specialty clinics and services in Army Medical Centers. Physician Assistant practice in the Army truly exemplifies the Army Medical Department motto which is ‘To Conserve Fighting Strength’,” Berg added.