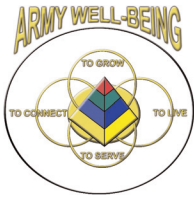


Your Well-Being Information Resource

Well-Being Liaison Office (WBLO)



FLO Notes



Soldiers on Point for the Nation – Persuasive in Peace, Invincible in War

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June 2004

Chief's Corner

Communication remains key to family readiness

Today we are an Army at War. As such the look of family readiness is changing right before our eyes.

The current situation is such that families must be independent and highly interdependent, more so than any time in our modern day history. Army families must be ready for extended separation and the time to grow that readiness in our families has run out.

The reality is that readiness for the Army family may be the most important aspect of their 21st Century life.

I sense that we are not there yet. When I read the comments on our Web surveys that tell of tremendous strength among our families, the level of their support, strength, and determination I feel humbled with a tremendous sense of admiration.

The other side to this is that there are many stories of great challenge.

Family members relay their story of not being called, the feeling of overwhelming stress, and sometimes loneliness is prevalent in our remote locations.

There are countless stories where spouses talk of not being ready, receiving poor information, or having little contact with their Soldier's unit. It is our job to make sure we change the story in this very unstable environment.

There are two sides to family support that need our concentration.

The first and all-important is that of outreach. I call this connecting out. This is a FRG responsibility, a commanders duty, the top noncommissioned officer and the NCO chain's critical task, and a shared critical task of every family member in The Army – active-duty, Army National Guard and Army Reserve.

Our great NCO's out there will remind me that this is not a part of the Common Task Skill development outlined in the Soldiers Manual of Common Tasks. Maybe it should be listed as a common task skill. Maybe we need to learn to train to a standard in our connecting out activities.

This may seem a little funny but command communication is critical to mission accomplishment. Communication to our Soldiers is a must, but communication links to our families are just as important.

I cannot overstate the importance of outreach to our Army family. For this to work we all must be involved and accept this as our individual mission.

The flip side of outreach requires the family to stay connected (connect up) to the Chain of Concern, the FRG, commander, rear detachment, the NCO chain and their Soldier.

Connectivity is a shared responsibility between command and family. This is more vital today than ever before.

Bringing together the outreach element (connect out) and the responsibility to connect to the command (connect up) is critical to our efforts in keeping informed in a dynamic changing environment.

Denial of the wartime environment leaves you at risk to that of uncertainty, disappointment and even anger.

I recognize that there is disappointment and anger, but being ready stretches the notion of readiness to a new level.

Change and uncertainty are inevitable in this environment. There will be more change and more uncertainty as we continue the war on terrorism. Prepare your selves and your families for this change.

Army announces new disabled Soldiers initiative

The Department of the Army recently announced a new initiative that gives severely disabled Soldiers, such as those wounded during the Global War on Terrorism, an additional means of getting help once they are medically retired from the Army. The program is called the Disabled Soldier Support System, or DS3.

Through DS3, the Army provides its most severely disabled Soldiers and their families with a system of advocacy and follow-up to provide personal support and liaison to resources, to assist them in their transition from military service. DS3 is a holistic approach, and is an extension of the philosophy that the Army takes care of its own – once a Soldier, always a Soldier. DS3 links the Army and the



U.S. ARMY

The Army's Disabled Soldier Support System (DS3)

The Army provides its severely disabled Soldiers and their families with a system of advocacy and follow-up to provide personal support that assists them in their transition from military service and into the civilian community.

organizations that stand ready to assist these Soldiers and families, such as the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) and the many Veteran's Service Organizations (VSOs), to the Soldier. This linkage is conducted through the Army's Well-Being Liaison Office.

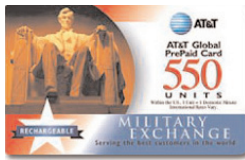
One key element of DS3 is the ability to provide a network of resources to severely disabled Soldiers, no matter where they relocate and regardless of their component, be it active, reserve or National Guard. The goal is to ensure Soldiers, families, and communities receive responsive support services that meet their needs. The Army realizes many of these Soldiers were not planning to make the move back to civilian life so abruptly. DS3, in partnership with the VA and the VSOs, provides a much-needed cushion for that transition.

The benefits of DS3 are numerous. Severely disabled Soldiers and families are able to better understand what their future holds, and how to access the services they may require with a phone call to the Army Information Line (1-800-833-6622) or on the Web at www.ArmyDS3.org. Additionally, Well-Being Liaison Office Constituent Liaisons work individually with our nation's heroes to monitor and follow up, ensuring their needs are met. The DS3's outreach is ongoing and proactive.

The Army Information Line is a toll-free telephone resource to provide accurate information, useful resources and helpful referral services to those with issues or concerns pertaining to Army Life (deployment, child support, family readiness, etc.). The line serves as a safety net for those who have exhausted all other resources. WBLO staff members are available from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday to assist members of the Army's constituent communities – Soldiers (Active-Duty, National Guard and Army Reserve), Civilians, Retirees, Veterans and their Family members.

AAFES public phone card sales supports troops

The Defense Department recently granted approval for the Army and Air



Force Exchange Service to sell prepaid phone cards to the general public for donation to

Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom servicemembers.

By law, only patrons with military exchange privileges can shop at AAFES retail stores, but officials announced recently that the exchange service would begin selling phone cards to normally ineligible people and organizations on its Web site – www.aafes.com.

Those wishing to purchase the cards can log on to the site and click on the "Help Our Troops Call Home" icon. The cards can be designated for an individual servicemember, or sent to "any servicemember" and distributed by the American Red Cross.

Frost said phone cards can also be donated to the Air Force Aid Society and Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, as well as the Fisher House. All are nonprofit charitable organizations that support servicemembers and their families in need.

AAFES officials said most calls from the Middle East to the United States originate from one of their 54 call centers. AAFES has four phone centers in Afghanistan with 98 phones in operation, 19 in Kuwait with 571 phones, and 31 in Iraq, with 936 phones.

The average price for a call is 32 cents per minute from Iraq and Afghanistan, and 19 cents per minute from Kuwait.

The AAFES price is about 8 cents per minute cheaper than its closest competitor, according to Frost. The price per minute when calling from Iraq and Afghanistan has been reduced from 32 cents per minute to 25 cents per minute when using the AAFES 550-unit prepaid card.

AAFES also is allowing normally ineligible patrons and organizations to purchase gift certificates for deployed servicemembers through its "Gifts from the Homefront" program. The certificates are sold by a commercial vendor through the AAFES Web site or by calling 1-877-770-4438, toll-free. The certificates can be sent to service-

members overseas and used for purchases at AAFES facilities.

Officials extend stateside Space-A travel test

The one-year test to expand space-available travel privileges to family members of active-duty and retired servicemembers traveling within the continental United States was extended until further notice, according to Air Mobility Command's air transportation division officials.



The extension will allow the test to continue while Office of the Secretary of Defense officials complete their evaluation of the test. Under the Space-A test phase, the family members of active-duty and retired servicemembers are able to travel space-A aboard military flights when accompanied by their sponsors. The test does not apply to "gray-area retirees" – Guard and Reserve Airmen who are retired but are not yet eligible for retired pay and benefits.

For more information, see a related Air Force Air Mobility Command News Service story at www.af.mil/news/story.asp?storyID=123007246.

SMA discusses 1st AD extension with families

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth Preston's visit to Wiesbaden Army Airfield, Germany, May 4 was a homecoming of sorts.

Preston, the Army's top enlisted Soldier, made the trip to discuss current issues with Family Readiness Group members from V Corps' 1st Armored Division and the 104th Area Support Group. During his 28-year Army career, Preston has served as sergeant major for both the corps and the division.

Preston found himself in familiar territory here as he answered questions from concerned FRG members, most notably the family members of "Old Ironsides" division troops who recently learned that their deployed Soldiers' tours in Southwest Asia in support of

Operation Iraqi Freedom had been extended.

A large number of questions asked of the sergeant major revolved around Army policies on keeping Soldiers on deployments longer than originally planned. Preston said they were about staying the course and the Army working its way out of a job.

“We don’t always understand why these decisions are made,” Preston said, “but if you look at what democracy has done in the world, you can see that what we are doing is important and we are making a difference. In light of our current military commitments, the overall goal for the near future is to give predictability and stability for Soldiers and their families.

“The fact is that these units have to be reset and ready,” Preston said. “We don’t know what lies down the road. It’s a different war, and it’s a mind-set we have to accept.”

The assembled FRG members asked that if extensions are necessary, that they be notified as soon as possible, rather than at the last minute.

Preston encouraged family members to not speculate about possible future operations or give credence to rumors, but rather to stay focused and believe that Army leadership in Washington, D.C., cares about them and is working to make changes that will benefit the military family.

Preston spoke about plans for Army transformation over the next three to five years. He said that the Army plans to increase its manpower to give it more flexibility during this time of continued deployment. That growth, he explained, will primarily consist of adding 10 to 15 brigade combat teams to the 33 the Army has today. Those BCTs will be “locked down” into 36-month life cycles, to give Soldiers more family stability and improve unit cohesion and effectiveness.

The role of the National Guard and Army Reserve in OIF was discussed as well. Preston said there are untapped units in these forces that will be mobilized to assist with the workload of the active Army. Currently, 40 percent of the troops in the second iteration of



Spc. Kristopher Joseph
Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston discusses Army transformation and mission-related issues with Soldiers and Family Readiness Group members from V Corps’ 1st Armored Division and the 104th Area Support Group during a visit to Wiesbaden Army Airfield, Germany, May 4.

OIF come from the Guard and reserve.

Another concern expressed by several FRG members was the policy of giving Soldiers a six-month break between deployments. Many enlisted Soldiers returning from their one-year stint in OIF must immediately attend lengthy leadership development courses, they said, giving them only two to three months’ reunion with their families.

Preston said there are already plans to merge some redundant training within leadership courses and to shorten overall course lengths to reduce time away from families.

The sergeant major also quelled rumors that 1st Armored Division would be moving back to the U.S. No such decisions have been made, he said.

Preston closed his visit by praising today’s military families, calling them “the next greatest generation.”

“Even though these are difficult times, 20 years from now the Soldiers and families will watch the History Channel about what’s going on now and look back with pride and honor in what they accomplished through their great sacrifices,” Preston said.

During his two-day visit to Germany, Preston also attended a memorial service in Baumholder, Germany, for eight 1st Armored

Division soldiers killed in an improvised explosive device attack in Iraq in late April and met with V Corps sergeants major and FRG members from the corps’ 1st Infantry Division and the 98th and 100th ASGs.

Raising money for war victims, families

The Fallen Patriot Fund of the Mark Cuban Foundation was established to help families of U.S. servicemembers who were killed, or seriously injured, in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Financial resources are vital to enhancing the sustainability of the family unit who has suffered a loss because their loved one sacrificed themselves for freedom.

Mark Cuban, president and chairman, HDNet and owner of the Dallas Mavericks is working with Bank of America to accept donations for the Fallen Patriot Fund and in support of the fund; he will be matching up to \$1 million in total contributions. For more information about this fund or to make a contribution, please visit the Fallen Patriot Fund’s Web site at www.fallen-patriot.org, information is also available through the *Army Families Online* “SmartBook” at www.wblo.org.

Physicals for returning reservists

Reserve-component Soldiers going through the process of being released from active duty following deployments are given the option of a physical, a senior Army medical official said.

The physical is in addition to required demobilization-related health assessments required. A January memorandum from OTSG set out to standardize the exit examination Armywide, but may have caused some confusion for those not familiar with the other medical requirements of demobilization.

Army policy requires all Soldiers, active and reserve; to complete a

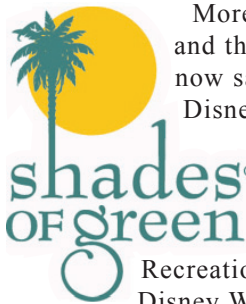
FLO Notes’ articles are for information only and are not an endorsement of referenced sites or any products/services offered therein. Well-Being Liaison Office, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, ATTN: DAPE-HRP-FLO, 300 Army Pentagon, Washington, DC 20310-0300. Call toll-free: **1-800-833-6622** (in all states including Alaska and Hawaii; also Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands), or call (703) 696-5393, DSN: 426-5393. Address e-mail to ArmyFamily.Link@hqda.army.mil and visit *Army Families Online* — www.wblo.org.

Department of Defense Form 2796 (Post-Deployment Health Assessment) that assesses deployment-specific issues and have a face-to-face interview with a healthcare provider upon redeployment.

Healthcare providers arrange additional consultations, examinations, counseling, and testing as appropriate. In addition, reserve-component Soldiers being released from active duty complete a second health assessment, Report of Medical Assessment or DD Form 2697, that is more general in nature.

Reservists who do not deploy outside the United States still go through these same steps, Gilman said. For more information, see a related Army News Service story on the Internet at www4.army.mil/ocpa/read.php?story_id_key=5832.

Shades of Green reopens



More servicemembers and their families can now say "I'm going to Disney World," thanks to the recent expansion of Shades of Green Armed Forces Recreation Center on Walt Disney World Resort.

Affordability, a term often lost on Disney World visitors, is the main Shades of Green attraction. Room rates are based on rank and range from \$70 to \$225 per night for a standard room and \$82 to \$119 for a poolside room.

With the reopening, Shades of Green has more than doubled in size, adding 299 rooms to the previous 287, a 500-seat ballroom, two new restaurants, and a second heated swimming pool.

The upgraded complex also better accommodates buses that shuttle guests around Disney's property, separate from the flow of traffic near the hotel's check-in area. For more information, visit the Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation Web site – www.army.mwr.com – for a related news story at www.armymwr.com/portal/news/display.asp?NEWS_ID=465.

Depression can be deadly

Editor's note: The following story

was contributed by an Army spouse who lost her husband to suicide, as the result of depression. It is her hope that sharing her experience may raise awareness of depression and the drastic effects it can cause. For more information on Suicide prevention, consult the Army Families Online "SmartBook" under "Suicide" at www.wblo.org.

There are two dates I will never forget. First, I will never forget August 5, 1995. That is the day my husband Pete and I got married.

In Pete, I saw everything I ever wanted in a husband. He was smart, ambitious, religious, strong, and principled. He made me feel safe, secure, and loved. We had a great life together.

We did have disappointments. Pete had to do an unaccompanied tour in Korea the second year of our marriage. While he was there, I miscarried our first baby.

However, we were reunited in Hawaii, and there we were blessed with our beautiful daughter Mary.

Three-and-a-half years later, in Charlottesville, Va., we welcomed our son Ron into the family.

We were planning a move to Washington, D.C. where Pete would start his dream job. We were going to buy our first home together. It seemed like we were living the "happily ever after" part of our storybook romance.

"Seemed" is the key word here. What began as a fairy tale ended up as a tragic nightmare.

Shortly before our son was born, Pete began having trouble sleeping. At first, I didn't think much of this. We had a lot of life stressors about to happen at one time, a job change, a move, a new baby. Then, our son was born with a minor heart problem.

Just a few weeks later, our daughter had to be hospitalized for dehydration after bad stomach flu.

By this point, Pete's behavior had really started to alter.

The man who once lived for his family started to see us as horrible burdens. He wrote a prayer in which he hoped to see us as blessings instead of "consequences of his own failure."

He used to adore spending time with our daughter. Each night after dinner was "Daddy-Mary time." That became a tiresome chore.

Even our son, the boy he so wanted, couldn't lift his spirits. Pete loved the

baby, but he was easily frustrated by our son's feeding difficulties and he never bonded with him.

Our marriage was not a fun place to be. One minute I was "the greatest wife in the world." The next I was a lazy person who never did enough for him or the family. I had no idea who he was. All I knew was that my husband was gone. I wanted him back.

His illness affected his job, too.

When he learned he was going to the litigation division, he was beyond excited. It was his dream job.

As the illness took hold of him, suddenly there were all sorts of problems with the assignment. "It's not exactly what I had hoped for; I'll have a bad commute; The area is so congested; There are no houses in our price range." Everything was negative. There were no positives.

March 27, 2003, is the other date I'll never forget. Pete shot himself while I was out grocery shopping with our two children.

I have to live with the painful memory of finding him and hearing his last breaths for the rest of my life. I have to raise my children alone, and I have to try to preserve the good memories about the father they will recall only vaguely, if at all.

No one else should suffer like Pete did. He never sought treatment because he believed the Army had no tolerance for "character flaws" like depression. The Army, fortunately, realizes that depression is an illness that deserves treatment, not scorn.

There are several programs in place to help Soldiers who suffer from this disease. People just need to be aware of the symptoms.

If you notice sudden changes in behavior, appetite, sleeping patterns, in libido, or a loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyed, seek help. If there is any talk of suicide, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. If I had known about the programs, my story might have a happier ending.

The most important thing to know is that there is no shame in seeking help.

With proper medication and therapy, people with this illness go on to lead productive and happy lives.

It's too late for me to save Pete, but maybe his story can save someone else. I can't imagine a better legacy than that.