



**News Release:  
For Immediate Release**

June 15, 2012

## **Col. Greg Gadson Turns over the Reins of the Army Wounded Warrior Program**

Alexandria, Va. – Col. Gregory D. Gadson, father, son, husband, war hero, Army Wounded Warrior program (AW2) soldier and director, movie star and *'action figure'* – not yet but likely in the cards – will turn over reins of the AW2 to Col. Timothy M. Karcher during a ceremony at Fort Belvoir, Va., next week and take command of Fort Belvoir, July 25.

Col. Karcher is also an AW2 soldier and highly decorated battlefield commander. Brig. Gen. Darryl A. Williams, Assistant Surgeon General, Warrior Care and Transition, and Commander, Warrior Transition Command, will host the Army Wounded Warrior (AW2) change of directorship ceremony, 10 a.m., Tuesday, June 19, National Guard Regional Training Institute.

Gadson, who lost both legs in Iraq in 2007, has managed the AW2 program and its nearly 11,000 soldiers and veterans since 2010. AW2 supports and advocates for the most severely wounded, ill and injured soldiers and veterans with a vast network of more than 200 AW2 Advocates and additional support staff located at Army Warrior Transition Units (WTU), Military Treatment Facilities, VA Polytrauma Centers, and other VA facilities across the country. AW2 personnel support these soldiers and their families throughout their recovery and transition, even into Veteran status.

"It has been a wonderful honor to serve as AW2 Director for the past two years and with God's blessing I've been able to continue to serve my country and the Army for 24 years," said Gadson, an above the knee double leg amputee who lost his legs in a Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast in Iraq. "Former Warrior Transition Command (WTC) commander, Brig. Gen Gary Cheek first approached me about leading AW2 when I was still rehabilitating at Walter Reed. I wasn't sure about my Army future at the time and never looked too far over the horizon. I just want to be able to make a difference every day."

Gadson ultimately took on the responsibility of leading AW2.

Anyone reviewing Gadson's career might surmise that he is a soldier to the core and likely had outlined his entire Army career goals and objectives during his time at West Point – or even earlier.

"Actually, during college at the Military Academy, I really thought I'd complete my military commitment and then transition to civilian life to teach history and coach football. That was my plan," said Gadson. "It is always humbling to teach and the opportunity to learn from others is very important to me. I continue to try to teach and learn every step of the way."

Gadson didn't make that quick exit to the high school ranks back in the 90's like he thought he might but maybe that door will open to him in the future. "Doors open and doors close. It is important to remember that as you walk through one door others will open, as well," he said. Gadson's Army career would ultimately see him serving in every major conflict of the past two decades, including Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm (Kuwait), Operation Joint Forge (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and

Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq), where he commanded a new unit as part of the surge to secure Baghdad in 2007.

To Gadson, every mission he has taken has been about soldiers and service. And serving as the AW2 Director since 2010 has allowed him the opportunity to serve the most severely wounded, ill and injured soldiers and veterans.

“Of the 11,000 member AW2 population about 9,000 are veterans. The Army is a volunteer force and it is strategic in nature for our country to support and care for our soldiers and families,” said Gadson. “George Washington said if we don’t care for our soldiers and families we’ll jeopardize our nation’s security. Our nation depended on it then and continues to depend on it today.”

An important part of AW2 is transition. Transition is a thread that resonates throughout AW2 and the WTC.

“Transition is always taking place. You have to stand on your own and the Army doesn’t have unlimited resources,” said Gadson. “AW2 is here to assist with transition which, of course, is in concert with WTC’s mission of assisting soldiers’ transition back to their units or as productive citizens.”

Since most of the AW2 population is or will transition to veteran status, Gadson’s AW2 Advocates are the *‘rubber that meets the road’* with soldiers, veterans and family members. Advocates assist with career, education, pay and benefits and other essential issues on a continuous basis. As Gadson reflected on the most rewarding part of the job, he indicated that the interaction he has with soldiers and his advocates really impacts him.

“The most satisfying part of my job is getting feedback from soldiers and veterans who tell me how an AW2 Advocate made a difference. For example, I received a letter from a Las Vegas, Nev. soldier saying that his AW2 Advocate had been a lifesaver,” said Gadson. “The high level of gratitude you feel for that soldier - who you serve – when he says to you that an Advocate saved his life, is incredible.”

For Gadson, his three pillars of strength come from *faith, family and friendship*. He relies on them every day and each was essential in empowering and enabling him to survive his life-threatening battlefield wounds. “Yes, faith, family and friends allowed me to accept and make sense of what has happened to me in my life. I’m so thankful for what I have,” he continued. “My family has been there to support me 100%. That unconditional love and friendship has allowed me to continue to serve.”

Visiting seriously wounded, ill and injured soldiers in military hospital recovery and rehabilitation facilities is important to Gadson. His memories of his own difficult and tedious rehabilitation serves as a reminder of the long path forward other soldiers must travel. “I’m mindful of providing courses of action to these soldiers. I let them ask the questions,” he said. “I tell them don’t live your life the way I do, we all have our own set of challenges. My enduring message is to be grateful for what you have.”

Being a victim, however, is not part of his lexicon and it troubles him to see that language sometimes used in reference with wounded, ill and injured service members. “We are not victims. We all volunteered to serve,” said Gadson. “I don’t like to see people use the *‘victim card’*; I bristle at the reference. Fortunately, it is a very infrequent problem among our population.”

He added that we are fortunate that Army leaders and Congress have resourced the WTC on a number of fronts so that we are up to the tasks of taking care of the wounded, ill and injured population.

“What we have done for this population is profound and is a result of our nation coming together through non-profits, communities and public and private organizations,” said Gadson.

“Working at WTC for Brig. Gen. Williams has been truly rewarding. He promotes a healthy command environment, he said. “Under his direction I’ve seen the organization evolve and become stronger. He creates a great synergy. Working alongside him and Sgt. Maj. Bob Gallagher has made me a stronger officer. It has been a truly rewarding experience.”

**EDITORS NOTE/MEDIA ADVISORY:** AW2 is part of the U.S. Army Warrior Transition Command and the official Army program that assists and advocates for severely wounded, ill and injured soldiers, veterans and their families, wherever they are located, regardless of military status. Soldiers who qualify for AW2 are assigned to the program as soon as possible after arriving at one of the Army's 29 Warrior Transition Units. AW2 personnel support these Soldiers and their Families throughout their recovery and transition, even into Veteran status. More information can be found at the following links: [www.WTC.army.mil/aw2](http://www.WTC.army.mil/aw2) and [www.WTC.army.mil/](http://www.WTC.army.mil/).

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**Event:** Media engagement with Brig. Gen. Williams, Col. Gadson, and Col. Karcher.

**Location:** Fort Belvoir

**Date:** Tuesday, June 19

**Time:** 9 a.m., media engagement; 10 a.m., ceremony.

All interviews will be conducted at 9 a.m. Leaders will not be available after the ceremony.

**Media Arrival:** Meet at Fort Belvoir Tulley Gate by 8 a.m. to be escorted to the event.

**RSVP:** By noon, Monday, June 18: [Cynthia.Vaughan@us.army.mil](mailto:Cynthia.Vaughan@us.army.mil); 703-325-0470.

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