



MEDCOM NOW A newsletter highlighting the challenges, successes and personnel of Army Medicine.

Inside this issue:

Cheek, Gates discuss advances in care for warriors

Program pushes hiring wounded warriors, spouses

WTU housing opens in Alaska

USO opens facility for wounded warriors in Landstuhl

Nonprofit builds rehab center in Massachusetts

Education center benefits Soldiers

Wounded warrior has ideas to solve energy shortages

DoD declares November Warrior Care Month

“Since my appointment as Secretary of Defense, care for our Wounded Warriors has been one of my highest priorities. Indeed, it is a solemn obligation our nation owes to the men and women who have sacrificed so much.

“I am proud to announce that November 2008 will be Warrior Care Month — a time during which OSD Public Affairs, in conjunction with the appropriate DoD Components, will make a concerted effort to inform the military and their

Families about the programs and initiatives currently being provided through our Warrior Care system, and improvements to occur in the future. Throughout the month, we will also provide to our military and their Families more educational tools to better understand and take advantage of the resources available to wounded, ill and injured service members.

“It is my hope that this month will accomplish

two goals. First concentrating all levels of the Department of Defense on an area where we have let our troops down in the past, and where shortfalls still remain. Second, to provide a clear message to our service members and the public that there is no higher priority for this Department than caring for those who have made personal sacrifices in the defense of our nation.”

Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense

TRICARE will host a series of teleseminars during Warrior Care Month. Discussions will be from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. Eastern Time on Nov. 5 (How Does Medicare Affect My TRICARE Benefits?), Nov. 12 (The TRICARE Transition) and Nov. 19 (The New Respite Benefit). Participants can telephone 866-866-2244 and use the participant code 9299856.

Also, Army Surgeon General LTG Eric B. Schoomaker will take part in Blog Talk Radio, discussing Army initiatives to care for wounded, ill and injured warriors as well as Family members, and what Soldiers need to know to get the care they need and deserve. That show can be heard at 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Nov. 13 at <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/stations/PentagonRadioNetwork/Dot-Mil-Docs/>

Leader notes advances in warrior care

By John J. Kruzel

American Forces Press Service

The Army now has three dozen Warrior Transition Units across the country dedicated to nurturing the wounded back to health and even into civilian life, said Brig. Gen. Gary H. Cheek, director of the Warrior Care and Transition Program.

“If you compare this to Walter Reed and the organization we had in place in February 2007 when the articles from the *Washington Post* came out, we had one noncommissioned officer responsible for a couple hundred soldiers,” he said. “That soldier, in fact, was also a cancer patient.”

The key to the 36 transition units across the country is what the Army calls its “triad” of care. One primary-care manager is assigned to 200 Soldiers, a nurse case manager is responsible for 20 Soldiers, and each squad leader monitors 10. Medical personnel provide individual attention at every turn and coordinate closely to ensure no detail falls through the cracks, officials said.

“Warrior Transition Units [allow us] to house and manage and lead all the Soldiers that are going through medical treatment to either return them to the force or to civilian life if necessary,” Cheek told an audience at the Association of the U.S. Army conference.

The general also addressed how the Army has mitigated the chaotic bureaucracy that Families faced while attempting to visit the injured service member they love. Thanks

to the Soldier Family Assistance Center, he said, connecting wounded troops and Family members is far easier than in the past.

“When the Walter Reed articles were first written, Families would have to go all over the place on the Army installation just to get some of these things taken care of,” he said.

But now, imagine that a Soldier who hails from Wisconsin is hurt while on deployment in Iraq. He is medically evacuated to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany, en route to Walter Reed.

“What we can do with the Soldier Family Assistance Center is assist that Family in their travel to Walter Reed, accommodations when they get there [and with] expectations of what their Family member’s going to go through,” Cheek said. “We basically help them with any issue or problem they have in a single place and focus where they can go.”

In addition to these initiatives, the Army has invested \$350 million into upgrading its facilities to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act strictures. And with an increase in numbers, some 3,200 medical personnel now are committed to helping wounded warriors heal from the moment they “inprocess” to the time they transition back to civilian life.

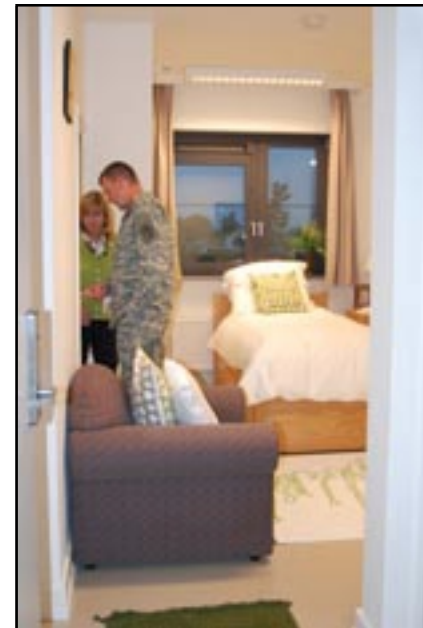
Col. James Rice directs the Army Wounded Warrior Program, which signed a memorandum of agreement with the National Organization on Disability to help increase the rate that disabled Ameri-

cans are hired. He said that while some employers are reluctant to hire recovering troops, others are eager.

“Companies — large and small — will come to organizations like the Army Wounded Warrior Program and say, ‘We want to hire wounded warriors,’” he said. “And that’s great, and we want to help them do that.”

Echoing Rice’s comments, Cheek emphasized the role of employment in a wounded warrior’s recovery.

“If a soldier is employed, suddenly he begins to heal a lot faster,” Cheek said.



Col. Mike Madsen, commander of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe Healthcare Facility in Belgium, shows his wife barracks rooms redesigned for warriors in transition at Chievres Air Base. The rooms feature wider doors and showers as well as other amenities. Photo by Christie Vanover, USAG Benelux.

SecDef calls steps 'significant'

By Gerry J. Gilmore
American Forces Press Service

The military has made "some significant steps forward" in caring for wounded warriors, said Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates.

Inpatient care provided to wounded warriors always has been world-class, Gates said.

"We've never had a problem with that," he said, "and the medical treatment that our Soldiers and Marines and airmen and sailors get from the battlefield to these hospitals has no peer anywhere in the world."

"I think that the services have really taken a lot of forward steps in terms of improving care, having care managers who make sure that appointments get made and that they're sequenced correctly," he said.

Other improvements are under way with the disability evaluation system that's used to determine how much money injured service members receive after they're discharged, Gates said, as DoD and Department of Veterans Affairs officials work together toward streamlining that process.

"We have a pilot [disability rating] program where there is just one exam and one rating between us and the VA, but it is just a pilot program," Gates said.

Gates acknowledged that still more can be achieved in caring for wounded warriors.

"Part of the problem is we make decisions here and we budget money here for things, and it takes

awhile, often, for that to trickle down to individual posts and bases and to the individuals involved," Gates said.

About \$900 million in resources have been earmarked for treatment and research of service members suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury, Gates said, and the Defense Department will establish a Center for Excellence at Bethesda, Md., that will specialize in research and development in finding new treatments for PTSD and TBI.

"It will be a world-class facility at Bethesda, serving all of the services," Gates said. "There's a lot that we don't know about TBI and post-traumatic stress, so we've got a lot of experiments going on around the country."

To help change the military culture to accept that psychological injuries are as devastating as physical wounds, Gates supported the initiative to remove a question on the security clearance form that asked service members whether they ever had received psychological counseling or other kinds of mental health treatment.

"I think changing Question 21 where people don't have to worry about losing their security clearance or have their career affected is an important step," Gates said. "But fundamentally, it's a leadership issue."

"This is another area where we have a strong culture to overcome, where people basically say, 'Suck it up and get on with the job,' and

so on," Gates said, "without realizing that people who have PTSD have suffered a wound just like they've been shot and need to be treated."

The secretary credited Army Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey Jr. with leading his service in promoting the need for Soldiers of all ranks to care for their mental health. Noncommissioned officers of all the services, Gates said, play a key role in monitoring young troops' mental health and encouraging them to seek help, if necessary.

Changing military attitudes about mental health issues will take time, Gates acknowledged.

Gates signs condolence letters for the Families of service members who have died in service to their country, and he provides hand-written notes with each one. Shortly after he took office, Gates told his staff he wanted to see photos of each fallen service member, as well as the hometown newspaper obituary, attached to the condolence letters he was to sign.

"I think not forgetting the sacrifice that has been made and not letting people become a number is absolutely essential," he said.

With a new administration taking over in January, Gates said, the bonds he has forged with military members will make it hard for him to leave the Defense Department.

"The opportunity to serve with our troops and to lead them has been the best thing that's ever happened to me," he said.

Army starts program to hire more wounded warriors and spouses

By Gary Sheftick
Army News Service

Army personnel officials are launching an outreach program as part of a push to hire more wounded warriors and their spouses as civilian employees.

In the past four years, 43 Soldiers wounded in action have been hired as civilian employees Army-wide, G-1 officials at the Pentagon said. But they emphasized that new initiatives have the potential to bring many more veterans and their spouses into federal service.

An executive order signed by President Bush Sept. 25 authorizes non-competitive appointments in the Civil Service for spouses of disabled veterans and surviving spouses of service members killed in action.

Dr. Susan Duncan, the Army's assistant G-1 for Civilian Personnel Policy, said she expects the Office of Personnel Management to issue implementing guidance that will allow the Army to begin hiring spouses of wounded warriors under the executive order by first of the year.

"Many times, our wounded warriors' source of income is their spouse's work," Duncan said. She added, though, that the Army personnel community is also redoubling its efforts to hire wounded veterans into the civilian workforce.

The Army has proposed a Defense-wide referral program for wounded warriors that DoD officials are considering.

In the meantime though, G-1 is fostering local partnerships between the Army Wounded Warrior program, known as AW2, and civilian personnel offices.

"It's a partnership at the lowest level," said Scott Rowell, deputy assistant G-1 for strategic planning.

One such partnership at Fort Riley, Kan., is being held up as a model for other installations.

"How do we replicate what you're doing at Riley?" Lt. Gen. Michael Rochelle, G-1, asked Kelly Frazier of the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center at Fort Riley. Frazier, along with wounded warriors hired by the CPAC, were manning a booth at the Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition, Oct.

6-8, in Washington, D.C.

"To me, it's just a matter of training," Frazier said, answering the general's question.

"At Fort Riley, the AW2 representative and the CPAC work together," said Calvin McCloy, a former first sergeant who was wounded and now serves as a civilian employee at the Army Benefits Center at Riley.

"A wounded Soldier is not just going to walk up and say, 'hey, I have a traumatic brain injury and can you help me?'" McCloy said.

McCloy was a first sergeant with the 1/41st Infantry near Ramadi, Iraq, when his vehicle hit an improvised explosive device in April 2005. He suffered severe burns.

He was angry when he was told that he couldn't stay in the Army. Being a first sergeant was his life, he said: "That's all I wanted to do."

After spending several months in the burn unit at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, McCloy went to the Warrior Transition Battalion at Fort Riley. He wrote a resume through the Army Career and Alumni Program. The resume was sent to Kelly Frazier of the Fort Riley CPAC, and she called in McCloy for an interview.

"Kelly explained the HR field to me," McCloy said.

She then paired him with the ABC call center that handles retirement benefits for employees Army-wide, and McCloy found it to be a good fit.

Frazier helped another wounded warrior, former Staff Sgt. Donald Laplante, find a job with the Forces Command G-8 at Fort Riley. Laplante said he interned in the office as a Soldier assigned to the Riley Warrior Transition Unit. Then the day after he took off his uniform, he was able to start working as a civilian employee there, thanks to the hiring preference he received as a disabled veteran.

The Army is currently able to hire disabled veterans through both competitive and non-competitive authorities, said Steve Lewis, a G-1 Human Resources specialist. He explained that disabled veterans automatically receive a 10-point preference when competing

Continued next page

(continued from previous page)

for government jobs. In addition, the Veterans Recruitment Act and the Disabled Veterans Appointment Authority allow the Army to hire some wounded warriors without competition, he said.

“The Army is already actively placing our wounded warriors, but we’re trying to be more systematic,” Lewis said. He would like to formalize the partnership between AW2, ACAP and the civilian personnel community, and have other services follow suit as well.

“We’re trying to get the other services to buy into the program,” Lewis said.

He’s advocating a proposal that would have resumes of wounded warriors disseminated Defense-wide using the same electronic application as the Priority Placement Program. He emphasizes that wounded warriors would not actually be priority placements, but their resumes would simply receive “maximum visibility” through the program, if it’s approved by DoD.

“It will work once the dominoes are in the right place,” said Rowell of the outreach hiring program for wounded warriors. He said the key is for the wounded warrior to have a one-on-one interview with a CPAC specialist.

Designed for warriors’ needs

New quarters open in Alaska

By David Bedard
Fort Wainwright, Alaska

The Denali Village Army Family Housing development officially opened Oct. 7 when Sgt. Wilberto Marrero of the Fort Wainwright Warrior Transition Unit, cut the ribbon spanning his housing unit’s doorway.

Col. Timothy Jones, Fort Wainwright garrison commander, presided over the ribbon cutting ceremony.

“These are a very special set of quarters they’ll be moving into, built especially to help our Soldiers that may have medical disabilities and need a little bit more time to recover,” Jones said.

Marrero, who returned from Operation Iraqi Freedom four months ago, said it’s his goal to get better and to stay in the Army until he retires. He said he suffered a traumatic brain injury and numerous orthopedic injuries stemming from multiple roadside bomb attacks during his last deployment.

Jones said several of the Denali Village housing units were built specifically to accommodate WTU Soldiers, with single-floor design, spacious entryways and other accessibility measures.

“It’s a very exciting day,” Marrero said. “I am finally getting the accommodations I need. Since I don’t have to be going up and down the stairs, my joints are going to be able to heal better.”

The Denali Village units are built with hardwood floors and the latest furnishings. Marrero said he believes the new housing units are the finest he’s experienced in his six years of service.

“This is more than I expected. It’s more comfortable, more roomy; it’s a lot better. I’ve got room. The other (housing units) are kind of small,” he said.

Rhonda Carlson, Fort Wainwright Soldier and Family Assistance Center director, said special housing units for WTU Soldiers comprise one of many consider-

ations SFAC has to take into account when assisting Soldiers during the healing process.

“The model is that a WTU Soldier is supposed to have the best housing available on post,” Carlson said.

Carlson said the SFAC staff resides in the WTU interim barracks, where they are available to assist WTU Soldiers in a wide range of services. The SFAC directly provides human resource services, information, referral and follow-up services, education services and social services coordination.

Carlson said the SFAC coordinates other needed social services and brings service providers to the SFAC or arranges for priority appointments at locations that are convenient for the Soldier and the Soldier’s Family members.

“The whole point of the SFAC is to give (WTU Soldiers) priority services to make sure that they get all of their needs met and that they are first in line,” Carlson said.



Fore!

Maj. Gen. Elder Granger, deputy director of the TRICARE Management Activity, tries out a video golf game used as physical therapy by warriors in transition at Fort Campbell, Ky. Granger visited the Warrior Resiliency and Recovery Center and spoke to staff, patients and Families. He also greeted troops returning from deployment. Photo by Laura Boyd.

USO serves warriors at Landstuhl

The USO Warrior Center at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany opened in October.

The Warrior Center is a 2,400-square-foot facility intended to provide wounded warriors with that special touch of home that the USO is so well known for among its more than 130 facilities around the world.

The USO Warrior Center features:

* A comfortable “living room” style lounge area furnished with reclining sofas and chairs and a 50-inch plasma screen television offering a full range of American television channels and sporting events via cable television. A wide selection of current DVDs is also available.

* A fully equipped kitchen complete with a kitchen counter where wounded warriors can sit and enjoy coffee, soft drinks and snacks while watching their favorite sporting events or other programs on a flat screen television. Special snacks and holiday meals will also be prepared by USO staff and volunteers.

* A bistro seating area where wounded warriors can meet, relax, read, play board games or use a laptop to connect to the free Wi-Fi which is available throughout the center.

* A Cyber Café with eight notebook computers outfitted with webcams, headsets and microphones to facilitate communication with loved ones via e-mail or

teleconferencing.

* Two hard-wired telephone stations and six cordless telephones.

* A five-station Xbox 360 video gaming room that features individual gaming televisions for four stations and one large wall-mounted LCD television gaming offering current top-rated video games, the newest peripherals on the market, and the opportunity for multiple players to compete as a team against another team via the internet. The hi-tech gaming room, connected via multiple high-speed internet lines, allows gamers in the room to compete with each other as well as with friends and Family worldwide.

* A multipurpose room equipped with a Nintendo Wii gaming system and all the latest peripherals, a 46-inch wall-mounted LCD television and a web camera. Sectional tables and chairs can easily be configured into a scenario enabling worldwide video calling and conferencing. The USO’s United Through Reading Program will also be offered from this multipurpose room, allowing wounded warriors to send sounds and images of themselves reading books to their children back home.

* An outdoor patio that will allow wounded warriors to enjoy nice weather and barbecues during the summer months. (Landstuhl)

Work begins on veteran rehab center

American Forces Press Service

Construction has begun in Gardner, Mass., on an \$8 million live-in rehabilitation center for wounded warriors.

The Northeast Veteran Training and Rehabilitation Center will be built on the main campus of Mount Wachusett Community College.

The facility will include 10 duplex housing units and a rehabilitation center to serve veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan who have suffered loss of limbs, traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder or disfiguring burns.

Veteran Homestead, a nonprofit organization providing housing, hospice care, rehabilitation and counseling services to veterans,

funded the project through grants and private donations.

“One of the reasons that this facility is needed is that there are many veterans in rural areas with no access to services,” said Leslie Lightfoot, the organization’s chief executive officer and founder.

Lightfoot said the facility will incorporate individual and Family counseling, education, rehabilitation and job-placement assistance.

In August, the Massachusetts legislature approved a bill allowing Mount Wachusett Community College to lease 10 acres on its 269-acre campus to Veteran Homestead to build the center.

Veterans and their Families will have free access to the college’s

academic programs as well as use of campus amenities, including the fitness center, swimming pool and theater.

In lieu of payment for the lease, Veteran Homestead is providing the college with internship opportunities for students enrolled in nursing and allied health programs. The 30-year lease includes options for two 10-year extensions.

Janice O’Connor, director of public relations for Mount Wachusett Community College, said she considers the center a model because “it combines an academic component while being located on a college campus.”

Officials expect the center to be completed by January 2010.

Education center benefits Soldiers

By Elaine Wilson
Fort Sam Houston

“I see a lot of former infantry Soldiers here. Most are interested in continuing some facet of their Army career and focus in an area of law enforcement,” said Gabriele Dias, one of two Army Continuing Education System counselors dedicated to helping warriors



Gabriele Dias, education counselor, helps Staff Sgt. Juan Rodriguez navigate GoArmyEd, an online education resource for Soldiers.

in transition at the Soldier and Family Assistance Center on Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

The SFAC, which is just up the road from Brooke Army Medical Center, contains myriad resources for wounded warriors and their Families to include help with education, personnel issues, benefits and finance.

“ACES (Army Continuing Education System) has a lot to offer Soldiers, particularly Warriors in Transition,” said Dias. “We have counselors, instructors and interactive computer programs all aimed at helping Soldiers and Family members succeed in their goals.”

Dias said she spends a majority of her time working with Soldiers on college degree plans, serving as a liaison to universities and an advocate on behalf of the Soldiers.

“I’m working to develop relationships with universities so I can offer students the easiest transitions back into the classroom,” Dias said.

Dias also helps Soldiers navigate GoArmyEd, which is the portal for Army Tuition Assistance, as well as more than 200 universities.

Warrior has energetic ideas

By Glory Boschert
Fort Carson, Colo.

1st Lt. Benjamin duPre', one of nearly 800 wounded warriors in the Fort Carson, Colo., Warrior Transition Battalion, drafted an alternate energy proposal using wave oscillation along our nation's 95,000 miles of shoreline. The proposal was reviewed by Colorado Springs Mayor Lionel Rivera, and presented to Senator John McCain and Governor Sarah Palin during their visit to Colorado Springs on Sept. 6, 2008.

duPre' received his Bachelor of Science degree in nuclear engineering from the United States Military Academy.

duPre' recalled vividly what drew him into military service. One evening, while returning from working at a ski resort, he looked at the city of Reno, Nev., from the side of the mountain. He says that he was struck with the fact that there were so many people living there and that not many protected them.

While at the Military Academy, he was assigned cadet leadership training in Vicenza, Italy. He was attached to a military police unit and on the weekends he traveled to France, Germany, and much of Italy. There he saw how Europeans held a much different perspective of power distribution.

duPre' observed how the French have generally geared their country to run on many small nuclear reactors spread throughout the country without excessive government regulation. He noted that the French provide power to much of Germany and even export a large amount to Great Britain.

He says he also observed how the Italians used their coastline by using wave-break pontoons to ab-

sorb wave energy and generate power, while still protecting their harbors. In the North Sea, smaller European countries are banding together and forming organizations that will power their countries with both wind and tidal current power.

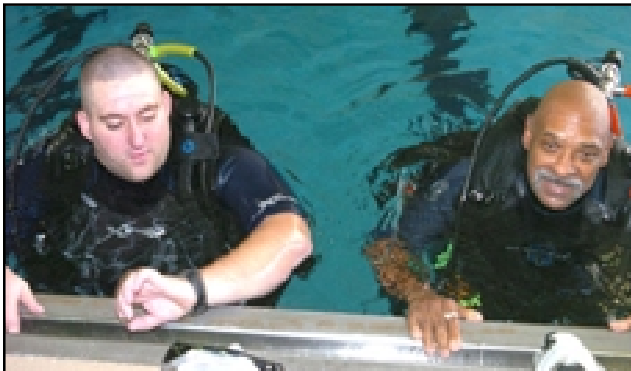
duPre' feels that nuclear power is a great option, but admits he is obviously biased.

He has other ideas for generating power, including a rugged translucent material that could go over photovoltaic solar panels. This would require systematically replacing roads with solar panels that people could essentially drive on.

duPre' theorizes that roughly 50 percent of the sun's energy makes it to the surface of the Earth. He proposes that we place solar panels outside of the atmosphere and then shoot the energy through the atmosphere via microwave. He admits that this idea was postulated a while ago, but now we have the technology to do this.

duPre's ideas for wave oscillation came to him while he was SCUBA diving. It was then that he thought of the massive amount of energy produced by the pulsing of the waves. He says that at a depth of 7 to 15 feet the surge always rolls in and out at a relatively constant rate. Regardless of surface conditions, cloud cover or other conditions, the sea still surges.

He proposes that a simple mechanical energy-harnessing system would not require much maintenance, would not threaten fish, would not obstruct the surface sea lanes, and would be modular and basically unnoticed. duPre' believes this could be started in the U.S. for a relatively small amount of money, and could be quickly expanded.



Submerged Soldier

Spec. Shawn Robey (left) completes a new course at Fort Stewart, Ga., to certify warriors in transition for SCUBA diving. The course was designed by retired Col. Stefan Sherman (right). Robey said he is determined to show his leg injuries and traumatic brain injury will not prevent him from enjoying outdoor activities. Photo by Randy Murray.