

# MEDCOM NOW

**MEDCOM NOW**—a newsletter highlighting the challenges, successes and personnel of Army Medicine

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*Office of the Army Surgeon General and Army Medical Command*

## Survey Says "WTU Care and Services Moving in the Right Direction"

A survey of 435 Warriors in Transition Soldiers, conducted by [Zogby International](#) in February, reports that the Department of Defense Military Health System (MHS) and the Army, are moving in the right direction to enhance care and services provided Soldiers located at the Warriors in Transition Units (WTUs).

The Soldiers surveyed were all men and women severely wounded in Iraq or Afghanistan who required at least six months of comprehensive health care services. They were assigned to the WTUs stood up across the Army last June. As Warriors, their primary mission is to heal.

Overall, 77 percent of the Soldiers surveyed said they were satisfied with their care and believed the Army and the MHS were doing everything they could to provide quality, comprehensive care and services. Trust and confidence in the Army and MHS also increased for 58 percent of the Soldiers surveyed.

Among men assigned to the WTUs, 78 percent said the Army and MHS were doing everything possible to take care of their needs, while 69 percent of women Soldiers assigned reported the same. Among enlisted Soldiers, 69 percent agreed that the Army and the MHS were on track and moving in the right direction, compared to 76 percent of officers assigned to a WTU.

Upon review of the results across all groups, older Warriors in Transition tended to be more satisfied with their care and services than younger Warriors. Among Soldiers age 18-35, 55 percent said their confidence and trust was improving, while 59 percent of Soldiers age 35-44 and 79 percent of Soldiers age 45-54 reported the same.

For Soldiers home from a deployment for six months or less, 64 percent reported they were satisfied with their care and services at the WTU, while 84 percent of Soldiers home between 19-24 months and 93 percent of Soldiers home between 25-36 months agreed.

Asked whether they thought conditions for Warriors in Transition and Family members had improved since the well publicized reports last year of conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center; a majority or 71 percent of the Warriors surveyed said the Army and MHS were on track and moving in the right direction. Another 10 percent said the Army and MHS were not on the right track or moving in the right direction, and the remaining 19 percent of Soldiers surveyed said they were unsure.

The Army and MHS have listened and transformed by establishing the WTUs, and will continue to adjust as needed to promote healing and enhance the services provided wounded, injured and ill Warriors and their family members.

## Fort Gordon Upgrades Underway for Warrior Transition Battalion

Story & photo courtesy Fort Gordon Public Affairs

Upgrades are on the way to improve the quality of life for Soldiers assigned to the Fort Gordon Warrior Transition Battalion (WTB).

"The changes are a result of the Army Medical Action Plan," said Lt. Col. Everett Sharpe, Battalion Commander.

"The Army took a look at how it was providing care and services to Wounded Warriors and made sweeping changes," he said. "I think it was time."

Construction of six new buildings which will house and provide a variety of support services to approximately 250 Warriors in Transition located at Fort Gordon is scheduled for completion this month.

Five new social workers are being hired to support the WTB, as well as one occupational therapist for each Warrior In Transition Unit.

"This is very important," Sharpe said. The additional personnel will enhance the services Fort Gordon is able to provide.

While some changes are on the way, others have already begun.

"Transportation for Warriors was once a real issue. We now have transportation available around the clock," he said.

Last month, Fort Gordon's garrison signed a contract for 11 vans and three additional wheelchair accessible vans are also on the way.



Heavy equipment moves steel beams into place Feb. 14, as construction on the new Warrior Transition Unit gets underway at Fort Gordon.

There are two routes that travel to the places Soldiers need to go, and for sponsored activities, Soldiers can be taken off-post.

The contract also provides transportation for family members of Soldiers as long as the family member has invitational travel orders.

"We're really happy about that," Sharpe said.

## Army Inspector General Visits Tripler Warriors in Transition

Story and photo courtesy Tripler Army Medical Center, Public Affairs

The U.S. Army Inspector General, Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb talked candidly March 5, while eating lunch with Soldiers from Tripler Army Medical Center's Warrior Transition Unit, Schofield, Barracks, Hawaii.

Whitcomb spoke with WTU Soldiers without unit cadre present to specifically address care and welfare issues, just two weeks after Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman, Adm. Mike Mullen visited with troops. Whitcomb echoed Mullen's sentiment voicing how impressed he was with Tripler's WTU and what the command was doing there to take care of Warriors in Transition.



Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb dines with WTU Soldiers from Tripler Army Medical Center's Warrior Transition Unit, March 5.

## American Hospital Association Honors AMEDD Nurses

Story courtesy American Hospital Association

The American Hospital Association (AHA) Section for Federal Hospitals honored two Army Medical Department (AMEDD) nurses March 13, in recognition of their outstanding service in the health care field.

Col. Jimmie Keenan, Chief of Staff, OTSG Army Medical Action Plan (AMAP), received the 2007 Award of Excellence. Keenan, helped restore public trust and confidence in the AMEDD by leading a team that developed and structured the AMAP, and optimized resources to improve care and services for Warriors in Transition and Family members.

Lt. Col. Dawn Garcia, Head Nurse, Combined Intensive Care Unit (ICU), Landstuhl, Regional Medical Center, Germany, received the 2007 Special Achievement Award. Garcia spearheaded the design and delivery of clinical training competency plans that helped ensure rapid integration of new personnel into the combined ICU. She also promoted interdisciplinary performance improvements and infection control processes that led to Landstuhl becoming the only Level 2 Trauma Center outside of the U.S.

"Lives have been saved and the quality of life for many Soldiers has vastly improved thanks to their work and commitment," said Barbara Lorschbach, AHA's senior vice president of members relations.

## Being Productive Helps Warriors in Transition

Story & photo courtesy, Amy Bagula, U.S. Army Garrison, Bamberg, Public Affairs

BAMBERG, Germany - The Bamberg Warrior Transition Unit is looking beyond the physical injury in addressing the mind, spirit and heart of each injured Soldier by incorporating part-time work into their daily routines.

"A WTU Soldier's priority is his medical appointments with his primary care physician; then responsibility to his unit; and then to his vocational interests or even a job," said squad leader Staff Sgt. Ronald Chitty.

Bamberg's WTU activated as part of the Army Medical Action Plan, as the first four wounded Soldiers arrived in November 2007, with that number currently standing at 22.

Chitty is charged with helping the unit stay focused on the mission, and, along with Kyshone Moss, a nurse case manager, is using the Soldiers' input to build and refine programs.

"Soldiers facing Medical Evaluation Boards (MEBs) are really talking about the need to adapt to civilian life," said Joseph Pehm, social work services chief, who oversees a monthly support group for WTU members.

Support during transition is especially important for those undergoing an MEB, which determines if a Soldier still meets the minimum requirements to remain in the military.

To help deal with the mind and the spirit of a Soldier, "we treat the whole person - not just the injury - because it is about the transition as well," Pehm said.

It's about helping Soldiers, he stressed, to answer the question:

"What will it mean to me and my life if I can't continue to work for the Army?"



Sgt. Jamerson Hayward, listens to instructions from Spc. Donald Heitger, an Army medic, while taking Kyshone Moss' blood pressure at the U.S. Army Health Clinic Bamberg. Hayward, a Soldier in the Warrior in Transition Unit, is training to assist at the clinic.

Chitty addresses these concerns head-on.

"All my Warriors work, Bamberg is 100 percent employed," he said proudly, giving credit to unit and garrison leadership for their support.

Spc. Mica B. Kells, 23, was one of the first Soldiers to join the WTU. Kells, a former mechanic with the 173rd Brigade Support Battalion (BSB), now can be found assisting Soldiers during in-processing at Army Community Services (ACS).

"There is a real need for this kind of program," said Kells.

He explained how the WTU provides direction and speeds up the process of getting a troop back to his regular Army duties quicker or onto another focus, such as school.

The WTU was a big change of pace for Spc. Chadwick Molloyhan, 25, who has deployed twice during his Army career, and was also working as a mechanic with the 173rd BSB.

"I went into something that revolved around me instead of me working for something," he said.

As a WTU charter member, he has been a valuable resource in developing and refining processes for the Soldier and Family Assistance Center located at ACS.

Molloyhan believes that having a job gives people "a purpose."

ACS isn't the only garrison agency working with the WTU.

Soldiers have been placed in positions at the health clinic, military police, the directorate of public works, tax office, U.S. Army Garrison Bamberg, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, and the consolidated mailroom.

WTU Soldier Sgt. Jamerson Hayward is currently training to assist with medical screenings at the Bamberg Health Clinic.

Hayward, a former Navy medical corpsman, is excited about the opportunity to use his skills to help others while recovering from his own injuries. With almost 12 years of active-duty service, he believes a program such as the WTU is "absolutely necessary."

"With this unit, there is no way to get lost in the system," he added.

Chitty said all participating agencies are aware of the Soldiers' restrictions—and their number-one priority— their appointments.

Most of the work is administrative, although some Soldiers earn certifications they can use in the future, or do jobs that prepare them for a different military occupational specialty.

In one Soldier's case, the work is directly related to a professional degree.

"I love my job," Chitty said.

"There (aren't any) of my Warriors working at a job right now that they don't like. They tell me, and their supervisors tell me, on a weekly basis."

## Army Wounded Soldier and Family Hotline Celebrates First Anniversary

Story courtesy U.S. Army Human Resources Command, Public Affairs Office

The Army's Wounded Soldier and Family Hotline celebrated its first anniversary March 19. The hotline was created a year ago by Army leadership and serves as an additional resource for Wounded Warriors in need of assistance to resolve difficult medical or administrative issues.

During its first year, the hotline staff responded to approximately 12,000 calls regarding 2,700 issues and 6,700 other requests from Wounded Warriors and Family members across the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and other locations as far away as Afghanistan, Iraq, Germany, Korea, Japan, Philippines, Brussels, Italy, and Kuwait.

"The Army cares about its Soldiers and Families. We are going to take care of them and ensure they have every single resource available to them in the U.S. Army," said Col. Edward Mason, the hotline's Chief.

The top issues resolved by the hotline staff include those related to health care, pay and benefits, chain of command issues, legal assistance, and awards. They have also intervened to prevent many threatened cases of suicides. Although not everyone who calls the hotline can be satisfied with their outcome, 85 percent of all callers thus far have had their issues resolved favorably.

The Wounded Soldier and Family Hotline is managed by the U.S. Army Human Resources Command and available to receive calls 24 hours a day, seven days a week at (800) 984-8523.



## Bavaria-East WTU Soldier Qualifies to Return to Duty

Story and photo courtesy Nick D'Amario, USAG Grafenwoehr, Public Affairs

Sgt. Keith Gautreaux, a Soldier attached to the Bavaria-East Warrior Transition Unit (WTU), Grafenwoehr, Germany, is one of the first in U.S. Army Europe to qualify to return to normal duty status after recovering at a WTU.

The Bavaria-East WTU was activated in November 2007, as a result of the Army Medical Action Plan. It provides Soldiers with a place to heal from their injuries and illnesses and the opportunity to further their education and enhance their life skills.

Gautreaux, previously assigned to the Supply and Transportation Troop, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, 6th Squadron, was attached to the WTU in November 2007. Since then, he has finished his associates degree in psychology and became the operations specialist for the 7th Army Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) Academy, Grafenwoehr. He is currently awaiting orders for his next duty assignment.

"Sgt. Gautreaux has been a great benefit to us since being assigned," said 1st Sgt. Jody R. Heikkinen, Company A, NCO Academy, Grafenwoehr.

"We don't have authorization for a company administrative position, so we certainly welcome someone of Sgt. Gautreaux's experience and professionalism. He's helped augment our mission enormously which allows other NCOs here to focus on training our Soldiers."

Heikkinen and Gautreaux both praised WTU Bavaria-East 1st Sgt. Paul Ninelist and the academy's Deputy Commandant, 1st Sgt. James A. Mitchell, for their efforts, after the WTU's creation, for helping Soldiers like Gautreaux find jobs.

"It's rewarding," said Gautreaux of his four-month tenure at the Academy. "I feel appreciated and look forward to the possibility of attending the Warrior Leadership Conference in the near future."

As part of a new phase in caring for Wounded Warriors, the Army launched the Comprehensive Care Plan in March. The focus of the program healing the whole person—body, mind and spirit—and not just the physical well-being.

It encourages and prepares Soldiers to gain life skills during their recovery so they can achieve success as they return to duty or upon leaving active duty service, seek employment as a civilian.



Sgt. Keith Gautreaux, the first Bavaria-East Warrior Transition Unit Soldier to qualify to return to duty, currently supports A Co. at the 7th Army NCO Academy in Grafenwoehr, Germany.

## Army Medic Awarded Silver Star

*Story & photo courtesy Army News Service*

Spc. Monica Brown, a 19 year-old from Lake Jackson, Texas, was awarded the Silver Star, by Vice President Dick Cheney, at a ceremony held March 21, Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. She is the second female Soldier to receive the Silver Star, the nations third-highest medal of valor since World War II.

On April 25, 2007, Brown, a medic from the 82nd Airborne Division's 782nd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, was on a routine security patrol in an isolated district in Afghanistan's Paktika province when insurgents attacked her convoy.

"We had been out on a mission for a few days and had just turned into an empty river bed when our gunner yelled out that the vehicle behind us had been hit by an improvised explosive device," Brown said."

Brown had just opened her door to see what was going on when the attack began. "I only saw the smoke from the vehicle when suddenly we started taking small-arms fire from all around us," she said. "Our gunner started firing back, and my platoon sergeant yelled, Doc! Let's go." Brown and her platoon sergeant, Staff Sgt. Jose Santos, exited their vehicle, and while under fire, ran a few hundred meters to the site of the downed Humvee.

"Everyone was already out of the burning vehicle," she said. "But even before I got there, I could tell that two of them were injured very seriously." In fact, all five of the passengers who had stumbled out were burned and cut. Two Soldiers, Spcs. Stanson Smith and Larry Spray, suffered life-threatening injuries. With help from two less-injured vehicle crewmen, Sgt. Zachary Tellier and Spc. Jack Bodani, Brown moved the immobile Soldiers to a relatively safe distance.

"There was pretty heavy incoming fire at this point," she said. "Rounds were literally missing her by inches," said Bodani, who provided suppressive fire as Brown aided the injured casualties. "We needed to get away from there."

Attempting to provide proper medical care under the heavy fire became impossible, especially when the attackers stepped up efforts to kill the Soldiers. "Another vehicle had just maneuvered to our position to shield us from the rounds now exploding in the fire from the Humvee behind us," Brown said. "Somewhere in the mix, we started taking mortar rounds. It became a huge commotion, but all I could let myself think about were my patients."

With the other vehicles spread out in a crescent formation, Brown and her casualties were stuck with nowhere to go. Suddenly, Santos arrived with one of the unit's vehicles and backed it up to their position, and Brown began loading the wounded Soldiers inside.

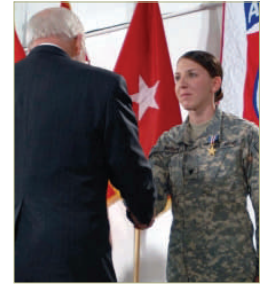
"We took off to a more secure location several hundred meters away, where we were able to call in the medical evacuation mission," Brown said.

She then directed other combat-life-saver-qualified Soldiers to help by holding intravenous bags and assisting her in preparing the casualties for evacuation. After what seemed like an eternity, Brown said, the attackers finally began retreating, and she was able to perform more thorough aid procedures before the helicopter finally arrived to transport the casualties to safety.

Two hours after the initial attack, everything was over. In the darkness, Brown recalled standing in a field, knee-deep in grass, her only source of light coming from her red head-light, trying to piece together the events that had just taken place.

"To say she handled herself well would be an understatement," said Bodani, who quickly recovered from his injuries and immediately returned to work. "It was amazing to see her keep completely calm and take care of our guys with all that going on around her. Of all the medics we've had with us throughout the year, she was the one I trusted the most."

Having people call her "Doc" means a lot to Brown because of the trust it engenders. "When people I've treated come back to me later and tell me the difference I was able to make in their life is the best part of this job," she said. Due to her quick and selfless actions, both Smith and Spray survived their injuries.



Vice President Dick Cheney congratulates Spc. Monica Brown after presenting her the Silver Star during a ceremony held March 20, Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

## Office of the Surgeon General and Army Medical Command

### Coming Events

**5th Annual World  
Health Care Congress**  
*April 21-23, 2008*

**2008 Army Medical  
Department Symposium  
and Exhibition**  
*June 9-12, 2008*

**Force Health Protection  
Conference**  
*August 9-15, 2008*

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## Purple Heart Awarded to Fort Hood Warriors in Transition

Story & photo courtesy Jon Connor, CRDAMC Public Affairs

The Fort Hood Warrior Transition Unit held its first Purple Heart ceremony Feb. 29 at the Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center honoring two wounded Soldiers, Spc. Phillip Gleason and Cpl. Timothy Euting. Gleason, a then 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division infantryman, was on a mounted patrol in a Bradley Fighting Vehicle, when he was hit by a roadside bomb Oct. 31, 2006.

Euting, a then 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division scout, was on a combat patrol June 6, 2006, when he was hit by two improvised explosive devices. The Soldiers were serving in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Purple Heart is the oldest military decoration in use by the U.S. Army and the first American award made available to the common Soldier. Fort Hood has the largest WTU in the Army at 1,100 Warriors as of mid-March.



Spc. Gleason (left) and Cpl. Euting pose for a picture Feb. 29, after receiving the purple heart.

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### The Way Ahead

Army medicine "resets" the injured and ill and ensures Warriors and their Families receive the best possible care and have the best possible chances of recovering full health. The AMEDD also reassures deployed Soldiers that their Families' health at home will be "sustained" with access to world-class health care.

The magnificent people who staff the AMEDD are at work, providing a world-class health care team in support of America's Army at home and abroad. We are accessible to the Army Family and accountable to the American people. Together we are making Army Medicine and the Army...ARMY STRONG!

### Lieutenant General Eric. B. Schoomaker

Commander, US Army Medical Command,  
The Surgeon General