



# The Journey

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## AW2 Expanded Eligibility Criteria

By Philip Paternella, Medical Support Specialist

The Secretary of the Army recently approved the action to expand the eligibility criteria for AW2 to include Soldiers who have received a combined Army Physical Disability Agency (PDA) rating of 50% for injuries and conditions incurred in combat or are combat related. In many cases, these Soldiers receive between 50% to 80% combined ratings for their combat related injuries, but no single special category (SPECAT) rating of 30% or above. The Army leadership agreed with AW2's recommendation that this group of Soldiers should be afforded the opportunity to utilize AW2's services.

This expanded criterion does not supersede the original eligibility requirement, but rather permits the inclusion of Soldiers with multiple medical conditions which when combined, substantiate considerable limitations.

The expanded eligibility criteria aligns with the program's original intent and the current mission of providing personalized support services to severely wounded, injured, and ill Soldiers and their Families. Expansion of the eligibility criteria now establishes that to be considered AW2 eligible, a Soldier must:

- Suffer from injuries or illness incurred in the line of duty after September 10, 2001, in support of the Global War on Terrorism
- Receive or expected to receive a 30% Army disability rating for one of the following conditions due to wounds received, an injury, or illness: loss of vision, loss of limb, spinal cord injury, paralysis, permanent disfigurement, severe hearing loss, severe burns, traumatic brain injury, post traumatic stress disorder, and fatal and incurable disease with limited life expectancy

OR

- Receive a combined 50% PDA rating for any other combat or combat related conditions

The impact of this expansion of the current eligibility is still being assessed, but based on analysis conducted in April 2008; AW2 expects an addition of approximately 250 to 300 Soldiers to the program. The majority of these Soldiers will be identified through the PDA data review process and entered into the Wounded Warrior Accountability System (WWAS) by the AW2 Operations Branch. For more information contact Philip Paternella at [philip.paternella@us.army.mil](mailto:philip.paternella@us.army.mil).

Below is an example of a situation where an injured Soldier would now become eligible for the AW2 program:

- SGT Jones sustained injuries from a blast injury while serving in Iraq in August 2005. After an extensive recovery period at a Military Treatment Facility, he was found physically unfit for further service by the Army Physical Evaluation Board.
- Block 8 of the Physical Evaluation Board Proceedings (DA 199) listed the following ratings for his combat related injuries:
 

Left Upper Extremity	20%
Facial Injury	20%
Left Hand Burns	10%
Right Lower Extremity Burns	10%
Cognitive Disorder from Traumatic Brain Injury	10%
- In block 9 of the DA 199, the board recommended a combined rating of 50%, using the PDA formula for calculating combined disability ratings.
- Block 10 A/C on the DA 199 found that the disability resulted from direct armed conflict, or related to combat.



LTC Gregory Gadson and Family.

## In this Issue

Career and Education Section Ready to Serve Soldiers and Families .....	2
AW2 Soldier, Adam Menin, 'Cooking it Up' .....	2
A Message from COL Rice.....	3

AW2 Year in Review Snapshot .....	4
Meet the Fowlers, AW2 Family .....	5
AW2 Soldier, SFC Holsey, 'On the Run' .....	6

## AW2 Career Program Experts Ready to Serve Soldiers/Families

By Roberta Berry, AW2 Career Coordinator

**A**W2's Career and Education Section, located at headquarters in Alexandria, VA, is the career, education, and employment resource for AW2 Advocates, AW2 Soldiers and their Families, and hiring organizations. AW2



AW2 Soldier Clay Rankin and his service dog Archie at work.

Leadership has assembled a team of subject matter experts to assist Soldiers, as well as their Family members, in meeting career or educational needs.

The AW2 Career and Education Section is designed to assist AW2 Soldiers and Families by:

- Providing accurate resources and referrals
- Maintaining and disseminating information on career, employment, and educational opportunities
- Making referrals to service organizations
- Working closely with organizations and corporations to create employment and educational opportunities
- Ensuring they receive access to career, employment and educational opportunities

Contact the AW2 Career and Education Section at [AW2careerprogram@conus.army.mil](mailto:AW2careerprogram@conus.army.mil) or at:

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## AW2 Soldier, Adam Menin, 'Cooking it Up'

By Tania Meireles, AW2 Stratcom

**A**W2 Soldier Adam Menin, an Iowa native, joined the Army at 19. While serving in "all the hot spots" he was injured several times from improvised explosive devices, mortar, and missile attacks throughout 2003-2005. Menin, who injured his leg, also suffers from a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

In 2005, Menin was sent to Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC) to recover. His AW2 Advocate maintained contact with him making sure Menin knew AW2 was there to support him.

After his recovery at BAMC, Menin returned to the familiar world of culinary arts. "I started as a bus boy at age 12 and they quickly moved me up the line. I was a sous chef by 16. I have done everything from pizza delivery to five-star restaurants."

He enrolled in vocational rehabilitation and while completing culinary school, Menin supervised a restaurant kitchen. He enjoyed

the work but was looking for higher pay in a government job. He saw a position available at the Ft. Hood Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center (CRDAMC) and called Advocate David Gerdts to see if he had any contacts. Gerdts quickly responded to his request for aid in job placement and called Rose Marie Tinker, AW2 Career Coordinator, for her help.

Tinker made calls to the hospital executive office to let them know that Menin was applying for a position there. She told them Menin was a qualified candidate, culinary school graduate, and wounded Soldier. "Adam was proactive by developing his skills, getting training, finding positions, and applying for them. I was just the conduit to make his efforts recognized," said Tinker.

"AW2 has courteous, helpful people who move like they have a purpose in life. That is how I move—so I like that," said Menin.

Tinker also made calls to the Civilian Human Resources Agency (CHRA) which is involved in the Army federal hiring process.



AW2 Soldier Adam Menin preparing meals at Ft. Hood's Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center (CRDAMC).

CHRA contacted the hiring officials at the hospital to ensure that they were aware of Menin's qualifications.

Within two months of starting the process, Menin was sworn in as a government civilian Nutritional Care Cook at CRDAMC and making twice the salary. "I like the people here and I get a chance to talk to other Soldiers. I can answer their questions because I had them too."

## A Message from COL Rice



**F**or me, this photo that was taken at AW2's 2008 Symposium, is what this year—and AW2—is all about: supporting the whole Family as they transition to life post injury. Over the past year, I have been pleased to see and be a part of so many

improvements made to warrior care within the Army, and especially AW2.

While AW2 has stayed the course supporting the Army's most severely wounded, injured, and ill Soldiers/Families by increasing the number of local Advocates, expanding our eligibility criteria, growing our outreach efforts, resolving Symposium issues, and launching a career section—the Army has focused on broader changes. In January, AW2 will join the newly formed Warrior Transition Command which will eventually fall under MEDCOM. This realignment will provide AW2 more visibility and opportunities to affect change, and will improve cohesion among the Military Treatment Facilities,

warrior transition units, AW2, and the Soldier Family Assistance Centers. Army leadership made this decision with the intent to improve and better align the care to our wounded warriors and their Families. Most of these changes should be invisible to Soldiers and their Families, and is not expected to change the role of AW2.

I look forward to utilizing these improvements in the upcoming year to give AW2 Soldiers and Families the best support possible, for as long as it takes. I wish all of you a safe and happy holiday season.

COL Jim Rice  
AW2 Director

## AW2 to Manage DoD's Recovery Care Coordinators (RCCs)

By SGM Brent R. Jurgensen, AW2 Sergeant Major

**T**he Department of Defense recently implemented the congressionally mandated Recovery Coordination Program (RCP) starting on November 24, 2008. The program assigns Recovery Care Coordinators (RCCs) to recovering servicemembers who are seriously wounded, injured, and ill, and their Families.

In the past, each service put into place its own recovery plan for wounded servicemembers, but the plans varied. This mandate will ensure all servicemembers will have equal access to RCC support and the same multi-faceted recovery plan. The recovery plans are based on a 10-step process that guides both the Family and servicemember from recovery to rehabilitation and then reintegration back to their community or back into the service. Each plan addresses an individual's personal and professional goals as they work through their educational, transportation, housing and financial needs. This initiative is based on feedback from Families, such as those who gathered recently for the Wounded Warriors Family Summit.

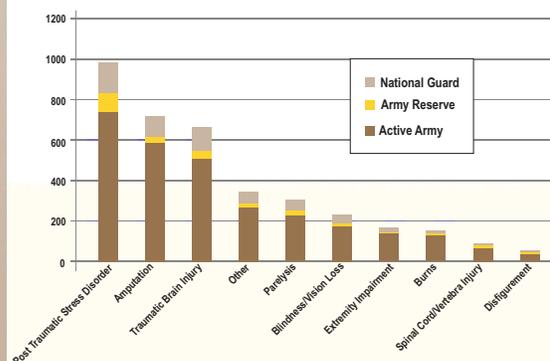
AW2 will integrate the RCP into the AW2 mission in a series of phases. Six AW2 sites have been selected to begin the implementation of the RCP. These include Forts Bragg, Campbell, Carson, Gordon, Lewis, and Stewart. Thirteen new RCCs were hired and trained alongside six experienced AW2 Advocates, one from each of the sites. AW2 Advocates at other sites will be trained to integrate the expanded mission at a later time.

AW2 Advocates' mission of serving severely wounded, injured, and ill Soldiers and their Families for as long as it takes will not be changed. The RCC mission is the AW2 mission and the addition of the RCP will allow AW2 to provide better oversight of care for Soldiers who have significant needs due to their injuries. The Army chose AW2 to implement this mission because of our expertise and experience in this area.

## AW2 Soldier Population at a Glance

In 2008, the AW2 Soldier population grew from approximately 2500 to more than 3700 Soldiers. This year also marks the first time that post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is the most prevalent injury category among AW2 Soldiers.

## Injury Categories by Component As of 1 Dec 08 Total: 3722

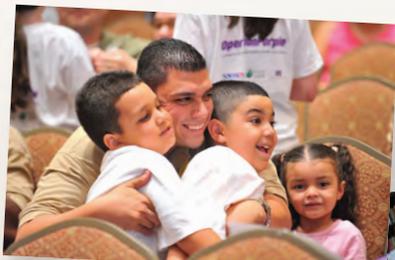


\*Data Source(s): Wounded Warrior Accountability System (WWAS); AW2 database

# 2008 AW2 Year in Review

## "I am AW2"

For the fourth AW2 Symposium, AW2 brought together more than 70 severely wounded Soldiers, Family members and caregivers to identify the top five most important issues to be addressed to improve wounded Soldier care. For the first time, children could attend and participate in a week long urban adventure camp provided by National Military Family Association's Operation Purple.



## Sharing Stories

AW2's new educational video features Soldiers and Families sharing their stories of transition into life post-injury—and AW2's support throughout the six stages of the wounded warrior lifecycle.



## Raising Awareness

To ensure Soldiers, Family members, and community leaders know about AW2 and its support services, AW2 launched a comprehensive outreach campaign that features a new logo.



## AW2 Online

In addition to launching a blog that features a variety of guest authors, AW2 created a new website complete with benefits information, a Family Corner, medical fact sheets, news room, and events.



# Meet the Fowlers, AW2 Family featured in AW2's video "For as Long as it Takes"

By Tania Meireles, AW2 Stratcom



## The Day it Happened

**S**SG (R) Joe Fowler, a dog handler, and his dog Dak would do anything in Iraq from attack work to looking for explosives. "Out there looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack," Fowler said.

Fowler, Dak, and several others were only four minutes outside the base gate when their armored High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (Humvee) rolled over an anti-tank mine. "I remember everything. We were just going off on a little three day mission to go work the December elections out in Baghdad."

There was an initial explosion and the flames started coming up from the bottom of the truck. Fowler was trapped inside and thought, "I'm going to die here." Then another explosion caused him to be thrown from the Humvee about sixty feet into oncoming traffic like "a little human fireball flying through the air."

He remembers the orange and red flames coming off his body and yelling for someone to help him. Eventually he was able to calm down and do what he was taught as a child, to "stop, drop, and roll." The flames would not extinguish, and he had to stand back up and throw off his vest and helmet to roll on the ground again.

He finished patting out a little patch of fire that was on his leg while walking around looking for Dak. "He's my troop, so I had to go make sure he was okay." Unfortunately, Dak lost his life sustaining shrapnel from the explosion but had saved Fowler's life in doing so. "That was actually the hardest thing I had to deal with—losing him."

By this time, the rest of the trucks in the convoy had turned around to help. "Honestly I felt no pain whatsoever; adrenaline is just pumping through you." Fowler was walking around with severe burns over 54% of his body, a broken ankle and wrist, and a dislocated elbow. He was taken back inside the gate and he remembers the medics saying "pump this guy up with as much morphine as he can handle." He has memories of taking off in a Black Hawk, then waking up in Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC) weeks later. His wife, Leslie, got to the hospital the same day he did, but he doesn't remember due to medication.

## The Recovery



His son was five months old, born while Fowler was deployed in Iraq. "That was always one of the things that you've just gotta basically get well for, the Family, and get back to daily life. Not giving up. I had to get well for the Family and for myself just because I'm very stubborn."

While at BAMC, their AW2 Advocate checked on them weekly. The AW2 Advocate made sure that the Fowlers were able to think about what was going to happen in the future and had the information they needed. "And information is invaluable at times. It can comfort you just knowing that life will end up being okay in the end," said Mrs. Fowler.

"[Our Advocate was] a big emotional support. And that was important at that time."

## The Future

"With Dennis as my AW2 Advocate, it's played a major role in my life," said Fowler. "He's just helped out with basically trying to figure out what I want to do." Fowler hopes to get back to work either volunteering or working with dogs and his AW2 Advocate, Dennis McCormack, has also suggested he go back to school. "Without having Dennis as my AW2 Advocate here I could tell you one thing, it would be a lot harder struggling with everyday things and just trying to figure out everything that you're going to be doing. Going to school, finding a place, and then looking for work all at the same time—having Dennis around made it a lot less stressful."

McCormack loves his job as an AW2 Advocate because, "When it comes down to the mud, the blood and the tears, I'm an Advocate for the Soldier and Family. I'm on their side. If somebody needs to take their side, that's what I do."

An example of this was when McCormack was able to help Mrs. Fowler get a teaching position. "Dennis got me in contact with a school board member. A lot of times with most situations it's not what you know, it's who you know." Mrs. Fowler feels a part of the Army now because of their AW2 Advocate. "They're looking out for your best interest as well, not just the Soldier. He's helped me get back to work, and it's just nice having somebody that incorporates me into the military Family as well, and I don't think we could do it without him."

*Fowler sustained severe burns in 2005, and he and his Family were gracious enough to share their story in the new AW2 video. If you are a burn survivor and would like to contact Joe Fowler, please email him at [extra.crispy@hotmail.com](mailto:extra.crispy@hotmail.com).*

## U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2)

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## AW2 Soldier SFC Holsey 'On the Run'



*SFC Holsey has been training with AW2 Advocate Barry's husband and recently completed the Army 10-miler and ING Georgia Half Marathon.*



**M**ost co-workers didn't even know SFC Johnathan Holsey was an AW2 Soldier until they saw him proudly wearing his Army T-shirt and standing on his prosthetic leg on AW2's new outreach materials and running on his prosthetic leg in the AW2 video. He has also been featured in many articles and videos by the media. Holsey is currently assigned as EPMD Administrative NCO at Human Resources Command (HRC) and is attending Virginia Community College working toward an Associate's Degree in Business Administration. His future plans include becoming a warrant officer. Many people at HRC had the honor of witnessing his promotion in November from Staff Sergeant to Sergeant First Class, just shy of the fourth anniversary of his injury. Few could keep a dry eye as he graciously thanked his Family, friends, medical team, Army leaders, and AW2 Advocate Ayandria Barry. The bond between Holsey and Barry was evident and heart-warming to all in the packed room. Holsey said he felt that God put the right people in his life to help him and get him where he is today.