



The Journey

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AW2 Symposium: Tell the Army What You Really Think!

By COL Jim Rice, AW2 Director

Now is your chance to tell the Army what you really think by submitting an issue for this year's AW2 Symposium. This is your opportunity to influence and change policies related to warrior care and transition for wounded, injured, and ill Soldiers, Veterans, and their Families. Issues selected and prioritized by delegates at previous symposiums have been brought to the attention of the Army resulting in positive changes. Issues can be submitted by AW2 Soldiers, Veterans, Family members, caregivers, Warriors in Transition, Warrior Transition Unit cadre, and AW2 Staff. If you would like to submit an issue please visit our Web site at www.AW2.army.mil/Symposium.

"Being the voice of other AW2 Soldiers is one of the most important, highest honors," said AW2 Veteran Jared Hatch.

The 6th AW2 Symposium will be held in San Antonio, TX, June 18-25. AW2 conducts symposiums to identify and develop recommendations to resolve issues and change policies that impact wounded Soldiers, Veterans, and their Families. Approximately 250 Soldiers, Veterans, and Family members have attended AW2 Symposiums since their inception in

AW2

ARMY WOUNDED WARRIOR
SYMPOSIUM 2010: I AM AW2



AW2 Family at the 2009 AW2 Symposium.

June 2006, and 65 issues have been prioritized and worked by the Army and Veterans Affairs.

"The AW2 Symposium was a positive experience because I didn't feel like I was alone," said AW2 Veteran Melissa Cramblett. "I was surrounded by AW2 brothers and sisters who understood what I was going through."

We are also asking AW2 Soldiers, Veterans, and Family members to apply to become delegates at this year's Symposium. AW2 will select 65 delegates to represent the AW2 population at the Symposium. To apply to become a delegate visit our Web site or contact your AW2 Advocate.

There are many exciting events planned for this year's Symposium. There will be a Job Fair and Career Expo and a Community Support Network Exhibit Hall. Additionally, AW2 is again teaming up with the National Military Family Association to host Operation Purple®—an urban adventure camp for children ages five and up. Daycare will be provided for children under the age of five. Both daycare and Operation Purple® are provided at no cost to the delegates. Please contact your Advocate for additional information.

"My grandson still talks about meeting so many other kids whose Families are facing the same issues with recovery," said AW2 Spouse Brenda Kraft. "It helped him a lot to realize that he's not the only one."

You are encouraged to submit an issue and apply to become a delegate so that your voice will be heard. For more information visit www.aw2.army.mil/Symposium or contact your Advocate.

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The Inaugural Warrior Games

By BG Gary Cheek, WTC Commander

In January, I proudly joined Charlie Huebner, Chief of Paralympics from the U.S. Olympic Committee to announce the inaugural Warrior Games. On May 10-14, wounded Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen, and Coast Guardsmen will battle at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, CO.

We want all our nation's wounded warriors to strive to test new limits and achieve new goals as they demonstrate the power of ability over disability. Our servicemembers continually rise to the occasion both in the call to duty and in their efforts to recover from serious injury. The Warrior Games will provide a unique challenge for those who wish to learn more about adaptive sports and compete at a national level.

Eligibility will include wounded, ill, and injured servicemembers from differing categories including:

- Upper body injuries
- Lower body injuries
- Spinal cord injuries
- Traumatic brain injuries
- Post-traumatic stress



BG Gary Cheek, Commander, U.S. Army Warrior Transition Command, announced the inaugural Warrior Games at a Pentagon press conference on January 7, 2010.

In addition to winners in each event, there will be an "Ultimate Warrior" competition in a pentathlon format, and service team scoring for a rotating Chairman's Cup. An estimated 200 athletes will be drawn proportionally from each service. This event will provide the opportunity to serve as an introduction to Paralympic sports for injured servicemembers, while at the same time building camaraderie and raising awareness of Paralympic sports.

Being physically fit is a part of military service. The Warrior Games will demonstrate the continued role physical fitness can play in service members' lives regardless of

injury. The Warrior Games will host 200 wounded warrior athletes to compete in the following events:

- Archery
- Cycling
- Discus
- Shooting
- Shot put
- Sitting Volleyball
- Swimming
- Track
- Wheelchair Basketball
- Ultimate Warrior Competition

At the press conference, I met SGT Juan Alcivar, who has been working toward recovery at Walter Reed. SGT Alcivar competed in sports for most of his life, and he is applying to compete in the Warrior Games in sitting volleyball, shot put and discus, and cycling.

SGT Alcivar told members of my team, "Staying in the Army is my biggest goal right now, and training for the Warrior Games will help me get in shape for my PT test. My squad leader is very supportive of things like this that help me to move forward with my life. Plus, I'm excited for the chance to beat a couple of my Marine buddies from physical therapy."

Good luck to SGT Alcivar and all wounded warriors training for the Warrior Games. I look forward to the competition in May.

Warrior Transition Command Launched New Web Site and Blog

Please visit the new WTC Web site at <http://WTC.armylive.dodlive.mil> and the new blog at <http://WTC.armylive.dodlive.mil/blog> and tell us what you think.



2010 AW2 Annual Training

By COL Jim Rice, AW2 Director

The business of caring for wounded Soldiers, Veterans, and their Families is dynamic and ever changing. As part of our commitment to our Soldiers, Veterans, and their Families, we need to ensure our staff has the knowledge, resources, and tools they need to support our Soldiers and their Families. Part of this commitment is continuing our own education and training. The 2010 AW2 Annual Training Conference will include our entire AW2 staff. Everyone will participate and in some cases staff will be called upon to also instruct, as we have much expertise to share within our own staff.

Staff will have a week of classes on the Comprehensive Transition Plan (CTP), Veterans Affairs (a top AW2 Symposium topic), Case Management, Career and Education, Wounded Warrior Accountability System (WWAS), Medical Support, and Networking with Resources. Staff will receive updates on Traumatic Servicemembers Group Life Insurance/Combat-Related Special Compensation (TSGLI/CRSC), TRICARE, Social Security, and the Army Donations Program. There will also be regional breakouts.

All AW2 staff will be in Dallas, TX, from April 19-23. This will be a great time for staff to learn and reconnect with colleagues and refresh their knowledge base. Together we can learn from each other and make our AW2 team stronger and more knowledgeable.

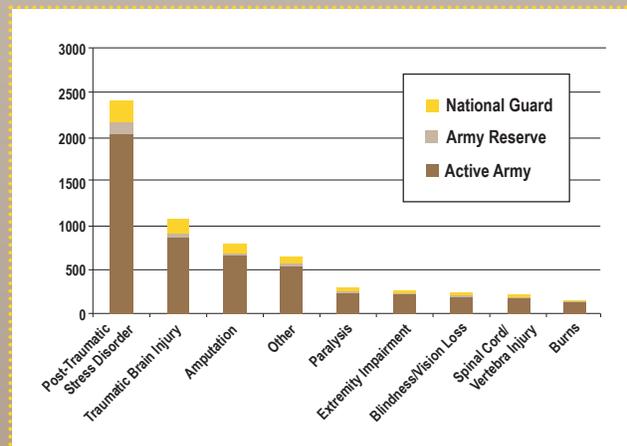


Dave Roeber (left), a Veteran severely wounded in the Vietnam War and motivational speaker, received a certificate of appreciation from COL Jim Rice (right) for speaking at the AW2 Annual Training in April 2009.

AW2 Soldier Population at a Glance

- Between November 1, 2009, and February 1, 2010, the AW2 Soldier and Veteran population grew from 5,572 to 6,093.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) (respectively) remain the most prevalent injury categories among AW2 Soldiers and Veterans.

Injury Categories by Component
As of February 1, 2010



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

Welcome AW2's New Sergeant Major - SGM Robert Gallagher

By Ryan Alexander, WTC Stratcom

SGM Robert Gallagher recently joined U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2) as the new Sergeant Major. SGM Gallagher is a highly decorated Soldier who has spent more than 28 years serving our country in operations all over the world. As a Soldier who has suffered from combat wounds, including traumatic brain injury (TBI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and hearing loss, SGM Gallagher has firsthand experience with the challenges facing AW2 Soldiers, Veterans, and their Families.

"I'm available 24/7 to you and AW2 wants to get your feedback, whether it's positive or negative," said Gallagher. "The only way that we can correctly inform Army leadership about what we have done well and where we still can improve is if we get honest feedback from our Soldiers, Veterans, and Families."

To read more about SGM Gallagher, visit the AW2 blog at <http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/>.



SGM Robert Gallagher recently became the AW2 Sergeant Major.

Career Building Opportunity Signed by Army and Navy

By Lee McMahon, WTC Stratcom

In front of wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers, VADM Kevin McCoy, commander of Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA), and BG Gary Cheek, commander of Warrior Transition Command (WTC), signed a document which equates to potential careers for not only Soldiers, but all severely wounded, ill, and injured Veterans and Families as well.

A memorandum of agreement (MOA) between NAVSEA and WTC provides career opportunities to wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers, Veterans, and Families. The MOA solidifies a relationship that began in 2008 between the Army and NAVSEA with regard to the hiring of wounded Soldiers.

"What we've got to do is provide that opportunity, that light, that inspiration for a rich, productive future for our Soldiers," Cheek said.

McCoy spoke about the wide array of careers available through NAVSEA which capitalize on any number of skills from technical to legal to project management.

"There are opportunities within this command across the United States, possibly in your hometown or where you'd like to live, doing things you would like to do, making a contribution to the Nation, doing the type of activity you want," said Cheek.



VADM Kevin McCoy, commander of NAVSEA, and BG Gary Cheek, commander of WTC, sign a memorandum of agreement to provide career opportunities to wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers, Veterans, and Families on January 13, 2010.

While not all of the Warriors in Transition sitting in the bleachers were ready to decide on their future, many acknowledged the important meaning of the memorandum signing.

SPC William Word, a Warrior in Transition at Walter Reed, said, "I think it's great. It's always good to see that things are being done. They do a good job here at Walter Reed letting us know there is help for us out there, that there are ways we can go about having a future."

The MOA covers careers as well as Operation Warfighter internships and post-hiring support of Warriors in Transition, AW2 Veterans, and spouses/caregivers. If there are no available opportunities within the command, NAVSEA is dedicated to working to find wounded Soldiers employment through coordination with other Navy commands.

Cheek provided a bottom line to those in the audience, "If you are excited about your future then great things can happen to you, but it's going to start with you."

To find out more about opportunities within NAVSEA contact your AW2 Advocate.

There is No 'Impossible'

By Tania Meireles, WTC Stratcom

A very unfortunate turn of events lead to the amputation of SGT Kisha Makerney's leg after she arrived home safe from her first deployment. Makerney deployed to Iraq with the Oklahoma National Guard right after high school in 2004. She was part of the Asphalt Section Equipment Platoon and was also a gunner to help protect convoys for the 120th Battalion Security Team. Despite these dangerous assignments, she returned home without injury.

Unfortunate Turn of Events

While running an errand at home in Oklahoma on her new motorcycle, her tire blew out and she was thrown from her bike in between two road signs in 2005. Her leg was severely injured, and she eventually received her prosthesis from the Dallas Veterans Affairs Medical Center. She stayed there for two weeks to learn how to walk. She went home, concentrated on adapting to her prosthesis, and strived to return to her unit.

"I've always known that my destiny is in the military," Makerney said. "When I lost my leg, my desires didn't change. I wanted to show others that if you have faith, and you believe, and don't give up, that through God, there is no 'impossible.'"



SGT Kisha Makerney received the Army Commendation Medal in 2005.

Returning to Theater

She attended classes at Northeastern State University for three semesters, had another leg surgery in June 2007, and wanted to volunteer to go back to Iraq.

"My buddies that I deployed with in 2004, were going back," she said. "We went through a lot then, and they were there for me after my amputation, believing in me. I couldn't let them go without me."

She deployed in 2008 and may have been the first woman to return to theater with a prosthesis. She was a correctional officer instructor for the Iraqis from March 2008-October 2008.

"I was excited about my unit's assignment," she said. "It gave us the opportunity to work with the Iraqi's, and the opportunity to empower them."

Taking Care of Herself

She was assigned to the WTU in Fort Bliss to have surgery on her shoulder, which was also injured in the accident, after her deployment. She requested to go to the Center for the Intrepid at Brooke Army Medical Center for physical therapy and another surgery on her shoulder and most importantly to get physical therapy for her amputation. She wanted to, "learn the tricks of the trade."

"I wanted to go there so I could be trained how to walk better, and how to run, along with any other skills that could improve my quality of life," she said. "The health care was amazing for me. Bodies come in broken and come out healing. Peers heal, grow, and teach together."



SGT Makerney received underwater instruction for her open water diving certification in 2009.

Into the Beyond

She is also planning for her future. She would like to enter Warrant Officer Candidate School (WOSC) and become an Apache helicopter pilot. Her other plan is to go back to college and attend Oklahoma State in the summer.

"I'm excited about my future!" she said. "I don't know exactly what the future holds for me, whether or not I get accepted into WOSC or not, or what will happen with college. I know my destiny will show up, and I will be ready, because of the great medical care I've received, my Family and peers who have supported me through everything, and, most importantly, my faith."

When asked about her advice for other wounded warriors, she said, "Don't give up, everything will get better, and don't limit yourself by what others think you can or cannot do. Believe in God, and in yourself, and go for your dreams. You can let your injury affect you negatively or you can let it affect you positively. Choose positive and reach for the sky!" She said that female wounded warriors are still beautiful, and now, being wounded will cause them to tap into a great strength that they may have never found otherwise. "I'm thankful for what has happened to me, I've grown so strong, my faith is greater, and I am so adventurous!"

U.S. Army Warrior Transition Command (WTC)

U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2)

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AW2 Soldier Takes Command

AW2 Soldier CPT Ray O'Donnell took command of Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC) which provides support for the Stryker Brigade's battalions. The Stryker Brigade is preparing to head back to Iraq this summer.

O'Donnell was severely injured in western Afghanistan when he was ejected from a Humvee that fell into a gulch and crashed into trees in 2007. He suffered a traumatic brain injury, and severe damage to his face, femur, hip, nerves, pelvis, and spinal cord. He still has severe paralysis in his lower left leg, and wears a prosthetic-like brace that allows him to run.

Despite his injuries, O'Donnell completed a triathlon—500-meter swim, 12-mile bike segment, and 5-kilometer run—a few months ago.

To read more about CPT O'Donnell, visit the AW2 blog at AW2.armylive.dodlive.mil.



CPT Ray O'Donnell speaks during the HHC change of command ceremony in 2010.



CPT O'Donnell runs towards the triathlon finish line in 2009.