



Wounded Warrior Voice

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WHAT'S NEW: COAD/COAR Soldier Forum

By Venus Bradley, HR Specialist

On behalf of WTC, AW2 will host a Continuation on Active Duty/Continuation on Active Reserve (COAD/COAR) Soldier Forum during January 24-28, 2011, in Alexandria, VA. The Forum is for AW2 Active Duty/Active Reserve Soldiers with approved COADs or COARs or who have conditions that meet AW2 criteria but were found Fit for Duty (FFD) by the Medical Evaluation Boards/Physical Evaluation Boards (MEB/PEB). Many of Soldiers who underwent the MEB/PEB and/or applied for COAD/COAR experienced difficulty navigating through this process and continue experiencing obstacles when they returned to duty; while others have much different stories to tell and have had the support of their leadership. Attending this conference is an opportunity to share lessons learned and impact Army readiness and culture.

During the conference, Soldiers will identify issues specific to the AW2 population and recommend solutions. Their input will assist in reshaping the COAD/COAR/FFD process, address changes in policy in areas such as assignments, promotions, schools, Non-Commissioned Officer Education System (NCOES), Officer Education System (OES), and update regulatory guidance (Army Regulation 635-40: Physical Evaluation for Retention, Retirement, or Separation, 600-9: The Army Weight Control Program, Field Manual (FM) 21-20: Physical Fitness Training, etc.). Participants in the Forum were specifically selected to represent a cross-section of the AW2 population to encourage diverse view points. The work during this Forum will provide strategic feedback and make a positive impact on the future of the Army's COAD/COAR program. If you have questions, contact your AW2 Advocate.

WHAT'S NEW: WTC Website Launch

By Jim Wenzel, WTC Stratcom

WTC launched a new website with approximately 30 pages of updated content and images on issues identified in feedback from more than 3,300 wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers and Veterans. The new site, www.WTC.army.mil, is a comprehensive source of information on the Army's Warrior Care and Transition Programs, which includes AW2, for more than 16,000 wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers and Veterans. In an effort to improve the Warrior Care and Transition Program, the Army sought feedback from wounded Army Veterans and from Soldiers at 29 Warrior Transition Units (WTUs) located throughout the United

States and Europe. The respondents indicated that having a single, comprehensive website was among their most pressing information needs. Soldiers requested assistance "navigating benefits and access to resources" and "getting correct information in a timely manner" because "we are making life changing decisions." The new site contains information on the primary concerns indicated by wounded warriors, including:

- Army Physical Disability Evaluation System
- AW2
- Comprehensive Transition Plan
- Career and Education
- Resources for Families and Caregivers

Let us know what you think by e-mailing warriorcarecommunications@conus.army.mil.

MONEY MATTERS: DFAS Releasing 2010 Tax Statements Via myPay and US Mail

Military servicemembers, military retirees and annuitants, and federal civilian employees paid by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) can get their 2010 tax statements up to two weeks earlier using myPay. DFAS released the schedule for posting and mailing 2010 tax statements such as W-2s, 1099Rs, and 1099INTs customers will need to file their annual tax returns. DFAS customers with myPay access (<https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>) will be able to obtain their tax statements online on the day they are posted using the secure and convenient pay management system. Additionally, military retirees and annuitants can download their 2010 account statements with information on wages, tax withholdings, and allotment information.

2010 tax statement myPay and USPS mail schedule:

Form/Document	Date available on myPay	Dates mailed via the U.S. Post Office
Retiree Annual Statement (RAS)	Dec. 4, 2010	Dec. 16-31, 2010
Retiree 1099R	Dec. 14, 2010	Dec. 16-31, 2010
Annuitant Account Statement (AAS)	Dec. 15, 2010	Dec. 19-31, 2010
Annuitant 1099R	Dec. 15, 2010	Dec. 19-31, 2010
VSI/SSB W-2 *	Not available via myPay	Jan. 4-5, 2011
Active Duty Air Force, Army, Navy W-2	Jan. 24, 2011	Jan. 24-29, 2011
Civilian employee W-2	Jan. 6, 2011	Jan. 7-15, 2011
Savings Deposit Program 1099INT	Jan. 21, 2011	Jan. 21-22, 2011
Travel PCS (DITY Move) W-2	Jan. 31, 2011	Jan. 20-25, 2011

* Voluntary Separation Incentive/Special Separation Benefit

(SOURCE: DFAS Press Release, December 2010, <http://www.dfas.mil/news/DFASRelease121001.pdf>)

MONEY MATTERS: 2011 Cost of Living Allowance Adjustment is Zero

The 2011 Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) adjustment for military retirees, disabled Veterans, and social security recipients will be zero for the second year in a row. Each year military retirement pay, Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation and pensions, and social security benefits are adjusted for the rate of inflation. This annual COLA is determined by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the previous

year. In a normal cycle the CPI for a given year is compared to the previous year to determine the actual rate of inflation. Retiree COLA differs from the Active Duty COLA which is paid based on the cost of living in a given high-cost locality. This number will be released in late December. For more information, visit <http://www.military.com/benefits/military-pay/cost-of-living-allowance>.

(SOURCE: Military.com, <http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2010/10/2011-cola-watch/>)

MONEY MATTERS: Out of Service Debt

By Ron Perry, Finance Advisor

Members who receive a collection notice from Defense Finance Accounting Service (DFAS) are required to contact the originator within the suspense date (normally 30 days) of the notification. If the member fails to contact the originator within those 30 days; the debt is considered delinquent. The debt notification is sent to the Credit Bureau if payment is not received within 62 days of the initial notification letter. To avoid debts being reported to the Credit Bureau, members should call (866) 912-6488 and arrange to make a minimum payment even when the debt is being disputed. The minimum payment is not admission the debt is valid, but it allows the opportunity for an AW2 finance subject matter expert to assist with the debt. If the account becomes delinquent and referred to the collection agencies, a Soldier or Veteran must contact that collection agency directly to discuss payment options. DFAS uses numerous collection agencies, such as:

- FedDebt: (888) 826-3127
- Allied Interstate: (888) 214-9749
- CBE Group: (888) 895-4766
- Diversified Collection Services: (888) 310-2006
- Linebarger, Goggan, Blair & Sampson, LLP: (877) 815-8501
- Ocwen Federal Bank: (888) 778-2696
- Pioneer Credit Recovery: (877) 907-1820
- Progressive Financial Services: (866) 484-0204

Soldiers and Veterans should contact their AW2 Advocate for assistance as soon as they receive a debt notification letter from DFAS. Additional information can be located at the DFAS website at www.dfas.mil/militarypay/debt.html.

CAREER & EDUCATION: Veterans and Civilian Careers

American Corporate Partners (ACP) assists Veterans in advancing their civilian careers. All Army Reserve Soldiers who have served in Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) are eligible to participate. ACP is a nationwide mentoring program that matches employees from some of the nation's largest corporations and universities with OIF/OEF Veterans for the purpose of mentoring, networking, and career counseling. ACP assists Veterans develop the valuable relationships, key skills, and action plans needed for success in private enterprise. This program is free of charge to those who have served in the U.S. armed forces.

ACP has 28 participating institutions including companies and universities across the country. ACP is currently active in 17 cities: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas, Denver, Hartford, Houston, Los Angeles, Manhattan/Topeka, New York, Oklahoma City, Philadelphia, Raleigh/Durham, San Antonio, San Francisco and Washington, DC. For Soldiers who live outside of these areas, ACP offers an E-Mentoring program. ACP aims to strengthen the relationship between America's leading corporations and universities and those who have served. ACP's program is competitive and not everyone who applies will be selected. Since its inception more than two years ago, 70 percent of the program's applicants have been Army or Army Reserve Veterans. To learn more about the program, please

visit www.acp-usa.org or e-mail info@acp-usa.org.

(SOURCE: Army Reserve Leadership e-mail, November 2010.)

CAREER & EDUCATION: Expanded Entrepreneurship Boot Camp for Veterans

The Entrepreneurship Boot Camp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV), which recently expanded to include EBV-F for spouses of disabled Veterans, has expanded yet again to include a seventh school, Louisiana State University (LSU), and expanded their scope of effort to include women Veterans and National Guard and Reserve members and their Families. With U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) second year of support with the Syracuse University based program, started in 2009, the program was able to expand to the seventh campus. LSU joins a consortium of business schools including the University of Connecticut, Texas Agricultural and Mechanical, University of California, Los Angeles, Florida State University, Purdue University, and University of Syracuse. Last year, 129 service-disabled Veterans participated in the program, bringing the total to more than 320 wounded warriors who have graduated since inception. Also, more than 150 businesses have been launched by graduates.

SBA's support through a three year cooperative agreement, starts two new programs. The first program is called Women Veterans Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship (V-WISE) and focuses on training, networking, and mentorship for women Veterans. The three-day, off-site training program, online training, and network support structures will be delivered in several locations around the nation, and initial estimates indicate assisting to 1,400 female Veterans over a 36-month period. The second new program, Operation Endure & Grow, targets National Guard and Reserve members, their Families, and business partners. The goal of this program is to mitigate the economic hardship of deployed members and their Families. It is an eight-week online course that will focus on the fundamentals of launching and/or growing a small business for those who will sustain the business if the servicemember is deployed, injured, or killed. Initial estimates indicate more than 500 individuals are expected to participate. In total V-WISE and Operation Endure & Grow will serve over 1,900 individuals and their Families. For more information, visit <http://whitman.syr.edu/ebv/>.

(SOURCE: ACP article, November 2010, http://www.acp-usa.org/acp_program/program_updates/small-business-administration-expands-entrepreneurship-boot-camp-vets)

CAREER & EDUCATION: Veterans' Transition Program at the University of Pittsburgh

ELeVATE is a transition program which pays its participants to learn about assistive technology and engineering and prepare for college. Veterans with disabilities will work with graduate students and faculty full time on a research project in assistive technology and engineering for the 2011 summer; meet with rehabilitation counselors, Veteran mentors, tutors, and study groups; have an opportunity to apply for college; and work in part time internships through the 2011 fall and 2012 spring semesters. Veterans will receive a 10-week stipend and financial assistance for housing; technical, machining, and software training; college application assistance; and help from organizations in the area.

To participate, AW2 Veterans should be interested in engineering or technology careers and attending college starting in fall 2011 (previous college experience is

not required). There are no prerequisites and interested parties may apply now at www.qolt.pitt.edu/veterans by February 15 for program beginning May 31, 2011, through August 5, 2011. For more information, please contact Dr. Rory Cooper rcooper@pitt.edu or Mary Goldberg mrh35@pitt.edu or (412) 954-5291.

CAREER & EDUCATION: Web Portal Helps Land Jobs

A new Web portal (<http://www.EmployerPartnership.org>) was rolled out to help Veterans—as well as reserve-component members, their Families and wounded warriors—land jobs with civilian employers who value their military experience. The user-friendly tools will enhance the Employer Partnership of the Armed Forces program by making it easier for both job-hunters and employers seeking their skills. The new portal simplifies the job application process by allowing users to set up a personal profile and maintain a record of their job searches and search parameters. That means users don't have to start from square one each time they enter the system—saving them time and inconvenience. In addition, a résumé builder helps users create a résumé and maintain it in the system, and they can even set an alert function that notifies them when particular job announcements are posted.

The new portal will be easier for about 1,200 employers participating in the partnership program because they will now be able to enter position vacancies directly into the system and track applications. In addition, they will be able to tap into résumés already in the system and reach out directly to candidates who qualify for their positions. Please visit <http://www.EmployerPartnership.org> for more information.

(SOURCE: Department of Defense press release, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=61639>)

CAREER & EDUCATION: New Program Eases Veterans' Transition to College Life

Two community colleges and three four-year colleges and universities are being added to VA's VetSuccess on Campus pilot program. The pilot program is designed to ensure Veterans' health, educational, and benefits needs are met as they make the transition from active-duty military service to college life. VA counselors are being assigned to assist Veterans attending school under the Post-9/11 GI Bill and make the most of their educational opportunities at Salt Lake City Community College, the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, Arizona State University, and Texas A&M University—Central Texas. For more information, visit <http://www.vba.va.gov> or <http://www.vetsuccess.gov/> or call (800) 827-1000.

(SOURCE: VA press release, <http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1978>)

FAMILY: Phishing Scam Targets Military Families

A new phishing scam targeting members of the U.S. military and their Families was discovered recently. This scam arrives in the form of unsolicited e-mails purportedly from USAA, which is one of the nation's largest financial services and insurance companies. USAA serves over seven million members and provides banking, investments, and insurance services for current and former military members and their Families. The e-mail usually arrives with the subject titles "USAA Notification" or "Urgent Message for USAA Customer." It contains a link

embedded in the e-mail body and attempts to trick people into divulging their personal information such as usernames and passwords to hackers who will then use this information to steal the user's identity. Those who click on this link will be navigated to a fake login page that looks very similar to the USAA's legitimate website where they are prompted for their personal information. This scam is considered to be quite a sophisticated phishing attack because of the number of different counterfeit USAA websites that have been created to serve this phishing scam.

Here are some ways in which you can protect yourself from falling prey to such a scam. Phishing attempts are usually characterized by a generic greeting and a false sense of urgency. Prior to clicking on any Web link within a message or opening up an attachment, confirm the validity of the e-mail source and verify that it is digitally signed. When sending out e-mails always digitally sign your e-mails. Especially make sure that you digitally sign and encrypt all messages that contain sensitive information. Do not send e-mail using HTML formatting; use plain text whenever possible. To have a better understand of the threat of phishing, review the Department of Defense Phishing Awareness training available at <http://iase.disa.mil/eta/phishing/Phishing/launchPage.htm>.

(SOURCE: IA Monthly Awareness Bulletin, November 2010)

AW2 COMMUNITY SUPPORT NETWORK: Why It Matters to Families

By Patty Sands, WTC Stratcom

An AW2 spouse contacted the Warrior Transition Command because she was hesitant to call an AW2 Community Support Network organization. She didn't "want a hard sell pitch." This AW2 spouse was not new to AW2, but she never reached out to organizations before. The primary goal of the AW2 Community Support Network is to connect AW2 Soldiers, Veterans, and their Families with caring organizations that can help them transition to life post-injury. Help us spread the word about the value of the AW2 Community Support Network to more AW2 Families.

The AW2 Community Support Network organizations offer their services free or their services are covered by insurance. There is no business opportunity involved or strings attached. These organizations can be beneficial to the recovery and support of AW2 Families. We encourage you to add the website page (<http://www.aw2.army.mil/supporters/index.html>) to your "favorite places" so it will always be at your fingers tips. Reach out to the organizations, ask questions, and get a feel for what is available. Each organization stands ready to assist and would be happy to take your call or answer your e-mails.

The organizations are structured in categories and interests that will assist with the lifecycles and stages of recovery. With that said, we are happy to report that in the month of December, the AW2 Community Support Network welcomed two new organizations. In total, the AW2 Community Support Network stands at 192 organizations. Please visit the AW2 Community Support Network at <http://www.aw2.army.mil/supporters/index.html>. This network grows with your help. To nominate an organization that seeks to assist AW2 Soldiers, Veterans, and Families, please contact (703) 901-5111 or AW2communitysupportnetwork@conus.army.mil.

OPPORTUNITIES: US Paralympic Military Introduction Sports Camp

Military personnel who have sustained physical injuries are invited to join the Lake Shore Foundation for an introduction to Paralympic sports. Clinics will be led by Paralympic athletes and coaches from February 24-27, 2011, at the Lakeshore

Foundation, Birmingham, AL—an official U.S. Olympic and Paralympic training site. All skill levels are welcome. This program is not just about sports. It's also about attitude, camaraderie, and promoting healthy, active lifestyles. They are accepting applications for 30 participants and it's a first come first serve for those qualified servicemembers. Programs serve those men and women with injuries such as spinal cord injury (permanent paralysis), TBI, amputation, blind/visually impaired, burns, and permanent disfigurement. There is no cost to military servicemen or women. The injuries do not have to be combat related, but it is preferred that they served post 9/11. Please submit applications by January 25th to ensure proper time for flight arrangements. Visit <http://www.lakeshore.org> or <http://www.facebook.com/lakeshorefoundation> for more information. If you have specific questions, please contact Mandy Goff, coordinator of Operation Lima Foxtrot Programs at (205) 313-7437 or mandyg@lakeshore.org.

(SOURCE: Mandy Goff, Lake Shore Foundation e-mail, December 2010)

VA UPDATE: VA Launched Blog and VBA Newsletter

VA launched its first official blog, Vantage Point (<http://www.blogs.va.gov>), opening a new line of communication between the Department and its stakeholders. The debut marks VA's latest outreach effort aimed at improving the way VA and its clients engage online. The blog launched with two primary features, a main column of articles written each day by VA staff and a section comprised of guest pieces submitted by other employees, stakeholders, and the general public. Readers will be able to comment and participate on all articles. Vantage Point's guest pieces will essentially function as "letters to the editor." Whether from a VA physician, a student going to school on the Post-9/11 GI Bill, or a representative from a Veterans service organization, all pieces will be considered for publication based on their rationale and reasoned points—not on how closely their views align with those of the Department. The VA blog expands VA's social media reach, adding to its presence on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube. Each VA administration has its own Facebook page and Twitter feed, and these platforms are being adopted by VA medical centers. Currently, 51 of 153 VA medical centers maintain a presence on Facebook and 27 are operating Twitter feeds. The Department currently has the largest Facebook subscriber base among cabinet-level agencies with over 68,000 subscribers. To view the blog, visit <http://www.blogs.va.gov> or visit <http://www.va.gov> for more information.

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) announced the release of their newsletter VBA Today available on their website at <http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/> under "Benefits Newsletter." This newsletter will keep people informed about new benefits as they become available or new initiatives that improve business.

(SOURCE: VA press release, <http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1995> and VBA Today, http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/newsletter/issue/Oct_10.pdf)

SHARE YOUR STORY

Sharing your stories lets other Soldiers, Veterans, and Families know that they are not alone in dealing with an injury, wound, or illness. Sharing what you do and learning what others are doing to address these issues creates new opportunities for healing. AW2 may publish your story on the AW2 Blog. We would also like to highlight special messages from spouses and children for their loved ones on the AW2 Blog. Messages should be between one to three paragraphs long or could be

a drawing or a short poem. If your Families would like to send in their messages, please e-mail warriorcarecommunications@conus.army.mil.

THE BLOG UPDATE: December

The War Behind Closed Doors

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/12/27/the-war-behind-closed-doors/>

Happy Holidays

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/12/23/happy-holidays-2/>

Ready for Christmas

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/12/22/ready-for-christmas/>

Welcome to the AW2 Community Support Network

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/12/21/welcome-to-the-aw2-community-support-network-3/>

A Different Way to Get Down the Mountain

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/12/16/a-different-way-to-get-down-the-mountain/>

A Blessing in EMMA®

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/12/15/a-blessing-in-emma%c2%ae/>

True Stories, True Impact

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/12/14/true-stories-true-impact/>

Going the Extra Mile

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/12/10/going-the-extra-mile/>

I Am Here. I Am Ready to Help.

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/12/02/i-am-here-i-am-ready-to-help/>

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U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2)

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