

Spectrum

Wounded Warrior care month

Charmain Z. Brackett
Correspondent

The Warrior Transition Battalion has seen numerous changes over the year to provide the best quality care for the Soldiers it serves.

Building projects have been many, but it's the people inside those buildings and the jobs they perform that have provided the most impact.

"We've seen big changes in operation," said Lt. Col. Everett Sharpe, battalion commander.

Assisting Soldiers transitioning out of the military are two Veterans Administration liaisons who are assigned to the battalion.

"They don't have to go to the VA facility," said Sharpe of Soldiers.

Another important position Army wide is the Army Wounded Warrior Advocate.

"They are responsible for tracking severely injured Soldiers and those at a certain level of injuries," he said. "This came about in the need for Soldiers not to be dropped through the cracks between military and civilian life."

Since there is a network of people, a Soldier can be connected with an advocate in the event of a geographic move.

Also new are four different non-clinical case managers with different titles such as the federal recovery coordinator and recovery care coordinators.

"These advocates will assist veterans and their Families throughout their lives," said Sharpe.

Although additional space has been provided for all of the new personnel, Sharpe said he could use more.

"We're running out of room for staff," he said.

There are about 350 Soldiers in the WTB; many of them are National Guardsmen and Reservists who've been injured at Camp Shelby during training.

"If they aren't healed after 26 days, they come to us," said Command Sgt. Maj. Lester Williams, the WTB command sergeant major.

Also, the WTB will soon be getting a career counselor.

Another initiative was to hire nine civilian drivers for the WTB shuttle vans.

"One of the biggest complaints used to be travel time from Point A to Point B on a routine basis," said Sharpe.

At one time, WTB Soldiers were screened and filled the

driver slots; however, higher level officials decided that was not the best practice although no accidents were reported during the 18 months WTB Soldiers drove the shuttles, said Williams.

Now that the buildings are finished, VIP visits have settled down, and policies are in place, Sharpe and Williams can get down to their highest assignment, caring for Soldiers, Sharpe said.



During the year Wounded Warriors have successfully transitioned through the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center, Dwight D. Eisenhower Army Medical Center and the Warrior Transition Battalion with great success. The care received has received Congressional accolades.



Army offers returning Soldiers new health care

Haley Wright
Department of Defense

WASHINGTON — As part of the Department of Defense's efforts to ensure the well-being of returning Soldiers and Civilians, the U.S. Army's Post-Deployment Health Reassessment program offers eligible Soldiers and Civilians access to care for physical and behavioral health concerns that may result from a combat deployment.

Soldiers and Civilians who returned from a combat deployment more than 90 days ago are eligible for the three-part screening. Soldiers who redeployed after March 10, 2005 are required to complete the PDHRA as part of the U.S. Army's Deployment Cycle Support process. The PDHRA proactively screens for potential health issues before they become chronic conditions as well as treat recognized health problems. The program also focuses on identification and treatment so that Soldiers and Civilians may retain a healthy balance in spite of the multiple stresses associated with deployment.

"I think it [the PDHRA] is helpful and much needed. Things happen to all of us as Soldiers, but those issues are put on the back burner because they aren't as pressing as getting back to work and feeding our

Families," said Sgt. 1st Class Wendal Burks who deployed twice as an Army Reserve Soldier. He currently works with the 81st Regional Support Command PDHRA Coordinator to encourage his fellow Reserve Soldiers to get help despite stigma sometimes associated with admittance of health concerns. Sergeant Burks added, "The biggest issue is just trying to reach eligible Soldiers."

The PDHRA program is a part of the DoD's overall Force Health Protection Program and is a global health initiative based on solid research. "Over the years, the Army has made great strides in helping Soldiers maintain a healthy lifestyle. Most Soldiers complete the PDHRA as part of a unit-scheduled event 90-180 days post-deployment, and can track completion through Army Knowledge Online under "My Medical Readiness," stated Lt. Col. Sophia Tillman-Ortiz, PDHRA Program Manager.

The PDHRA may include Soldiers taking part in Battlemind II Training, which emphasizes safe and healthy personal relationships and teaches Soldiers to look out for each other's health.

Soldiers must fill out the DD Form 2900, a questionnaire that asks about physical and behavioral health concerns. Also, Soldiers will speak one-on-one with a health care provider.



WARRIOR CARE MONTH – OPEN LETTER TO OUR ARMY COMMUNITIES

In the month of November, Americans traditionally reflect on the service of our Nation's veterans – past and present – and give thanks for the freedoms we enjoy because of their courage and sacrifice. Fittingly, the Department of Defense has designated November as "Warrior Care Month," taking stock of the advances we have made in treating our servicemen and women and, equally importantly, reaffirming to our troops our country's commitment to care for our wounded, ill and injured Soldiers and their Families.

Over the past seven years, the United States Army has transformed the way we care for our men and women in uniform. From Soldiers highly trained in self-aid, buddy-aid and combat life-saving techniques, to our combat medics on the battlefield, to our forward-based surgical teams and combat support hospitals, to our medical evacuation personnel and on to our superb regional medical centers overseas and in the United States, the Army's medical care system provides world-class care for our Warriors. Today, nearly 90 percent of Soldiers injured in battle survive, compared to the 70 percent who survived during World War II. There is no better evidence of our Army's commitment to taking care of our own. It's clear, our Army care effort doesn't start when a Soldier arrives at one of our outstanding hospitals—it begins well before they get to the hospital.

The Army supports its Wounded Warriors and their Families through the entire recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration process to ensure all their needs are fully met. Our thirty-six installation-based and nine community-based Warrior Transition Units provide individualized care for Soldiers and their Families. These efforts ensure Soldiers can heal and successfully transition—back into the Army or into civilian life—according to the best interests of the individual and their Family. For our most seriously injured Warriors and their Families, the Army Wounded Warrior Program offers dedicated and ongoing support, providing them a place to turn for help as their needs change over time. In addition, we are working daily to improve coordination between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs so our Soldiers and Families receive the full range of benefits they so clearly deserve.

This progress has come with the help of volunteers across America. So many have opened up their hearts and offered their time and volunteer efforts on behalf of our wounded, ill and injured Soldiers and their Families. They deserve our gratitude for their extraordinary work.

Warrior Care Month is a time for us to tell this story, the full story of Army care, throughout our Army Family. It is a story that touches every Soldier, every Family, and every community. Aside from the war and the defense of our Nation, providing the highest quality care and support to our Soldiers and their Families remains the Army's number one priority. No Soldier or Family should ever feel alone in their recovery.

We know there is more to be done. Meeting our obligation to Wounded Warriors and their Families will take the sustained efforts of not only the Army, but the Nation as a whole. Working together, the Army and our partners will ensure our Warrior Care programs are worthy of the sacrifices made by our Soldiers and Families in service to our great Nation.

Kenneth O. Preston
Sergeant Major of the Army

George W. Casey, Jr.
General, United States Army
Chief of Staff

Pete Geren
Secretary of the Army