



Wounded Warrior Voice

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WHAT'S NEW: WTC Launches New Web site

By Bob Moore, WTC Stratcom

The Warrior Transition Command (WTC) launched a new Web site and blog in November. The establishment of the WTC Web site is part of an ongoing effort by the command to better enable the Army to support wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers, Veterans, and their Families by providing information and updates from the command. With the launch of the new Web site, we are providing information to more than 9,000 Soldiers in Warrior Transition Units and allowing them to easily share feedback and experiences through the WTC 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.

WHAT'S NEW: My.Army.Mil

My.Army.Mil is the U.S. Army's user-customized Web site. This is the first of its kind across all military branches in the Department of Defense. The U.S. Army launched this Web site in December, in an effort to create a more personalized browsing experience and to connect the Army community.

My.Army.Mil is connecting the Army on the Web in ways it never has before. In today's global society, it is important for Soldiers, spouses, Family members and civilians to have the ability to quickly access information that is important to them. My.Army.Mil allows users to pull in information from commands, corps, divisions, installations, and traditional news sections. Additionally, users can pull in external Web content with RSS (Really Simple Syndication) widgets. Please visit My.Army.Mil at <http://my.army.mil/login>.

WHAT'S NEW: Real Warriors – Real Battles – Real Strength

The Real Warriors Campaign is an initiative launched by the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) to combat the stigma associated with seeking psychological health care and treatment. The Real Warriors Campaign encourages servicemembers to increase their awareness and use of the resources available. The campaign features stories of real servicemembers who have sought treatment and are continuing to maintain successful military or civilian careers. In addition, DCoE established the DCoE Outreach Center, a 24/7 call center staffed by health resource consultants to provide confidential answers, tools, tips and resources about psychological health and traumatic brain injury. Visit their Web site at <http://www.realwarriors.net/>.

CAREER & EDUCATION: Tennessee Engineers Program

By Scott Cox, Career Coordinator

America's Veterans to Tennessee Engineers Program (AVTEP) at the University of Tennessee (Knoxville) continues to expand. The program is designed to allow Veterans with math skills to earn an undergraduate degree in an engineering field, and upon graduation, "walk across the street" into a engineer position with one of several national companies or Department of Energy agencies supporting the power industry in the Tennessee Valley area. There is a very high probability of obtaining employment. Today, most of those engineer positions start in the high \$50K salary ranges.

There is assistance and mentorship available, and there is a strong Veteran presence on campus. More than 20 Veterans from all services have been selected for the program, and a recent article published by the *Knoxville News Sentinel* at http://blogs.knoxnews.com/knx/munger/2009/09/two_more_companies_join_the_ve.html reports that 11 Veterans are now working for one of several companies in the area. Each of these companies have committed to having positions available to commit to new AVTEP graduates.

Veterans can use their VA educational benefits for the four-year degree. The engineer track has customary course loads and academic requirements. For more information, visit <http://www.y12.doe.gov/jobs/stem/>.

CAREER & EDUCATION: Spouse Scholarship Applications Due in January

The National Military Family Association's Joanne Holbrook Patton Military Spouse Scholarships have three scholarship categories—spouses of the wounded, spouses of the fallen, and for all military spouses. Scholarships range from \$500 to \$1,000 and are awarded to spouses of uniformed servicemembers to obtain professional certification or to attend post-secondary or graduate school. The scholarship funds may be used to assist with tuition, fees, and school room and board, and are paid directly to the accredited educational institution involved. Applications are due by midnight, January 31, 2010. Please visit www.militaryfamily.org/scholarship for more information.

You can locate your closest Personal Financial Manager (PFM) by going to Military Installations at <http://apps.mhf.dod.mil/pls/psgprod/f?p=MI:ENTRY:2770748051513324>.

BENEFITS: Social Security Tools Available

By Michael Weakland, Social Security Administration Area Director (Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area, Philadelphia Region)

Military servicemembers receive expedited processing of their disability applications from Social Security. Under an agreement initiated by Social Security, the Department of Defense transmits information that allows us to quickly identify military personnel injured in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. The expedited process is available for any military servicemember who becomes disabled during active duty on or after October 1, 2001, regardless of where the disability occurs. Depending on the situation, some Family members of military personnel also may be able to receive benefits, including dependent children and spouses.

Please visit www.socialsecurity.gov/woundedwarriors, for more information on Social Security, such as; commonly asked questions, information about disability benefits and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), fact sheets, "Disability Benefits for Wounded Warriors" and "Expediting Disability Applications for Wounded Warriors."

To learn more about Social Security for those who have served in the military, read a copy of *Military Service and Social Security*. You can find it online at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10017.html, or call (800) 772-1213 for a free copy.

MONEY MATTERS: Termination of Pay Allowance Continuation Program

By Ronald Perry, Finance Advisor

Soldiers who are assigned to Warrior Transition Units (WTUs), Community Based WTUs (CBWTUs), and Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) and receiving Pay Allowance Continuation Program (PAC) entitlement may have had their entitlement terminated effective November 30, 2009. The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) has made a final determination not to extend PAC entitlement beyond November 30, 2009, for those Soldiers who have received the entitlement beyond 12 months and two extensions that were approved by OSD. Exception to policy will be evaluated on case by case basis if continuation of PAC entitlement is warranted. The final authority for exception to the policy must be approved by Human Resource Command (HRC) and Deputy Chief of Staff, Army G-1. Below are examples to determine if/when to expect the PAC entitlement to terminate.

Member MEDEVAC	Member arrival at WRAMC (WTU)	Authorized PAC	PAC originally terminates	Extension-6 months	PAC ends
May-2008	May-2008	May-2008	April-2009	October-2009	November 30, 2009
June-2009	June-2009	June-2009	December-2009		December 31, 2009

If you have questions on your PAC entitlement, please contact your AW2 Advocate.

VA UPDATE: Disability Evaluation System Pilot Program Expansion

By Jane Dulin, AW2 VA Liaison

Beginning in January 2010, the VA/DoD Disability Evaluation System pilot program will expand to six medical facilities at Fort Benning, GA; Fort Bragg, NC; Fort Hood, TX; Fort Lewis, WA; Fort Riley, KS; and Portsmouth Naval Medical Center, VA. Twenty-one other military facilities have already taken part in the program. The pilot program began in November 2007, within the National Capitol Region and affects servicemembers who separated from the military under honorable conditions for service-related injuries. It addresses redundancy and inconsistency in medical evaluations in separate disability processes used by DoD and VA. Under the pilot programs, evaluations for Veterans are managed first by DoD physicians, then by VA. Physicians in both departments collaborate on medical findings, speeding the claims and benefit payment processes for disabled Veterans. More than 5,400 military members have participated in the pilot program.

"Streamlining our disability claims system and working closely with DoD to care for today's generation of heroes are among VA's top priorities," said VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki. "We will never lose sight of the fact that Veterans and military personnel have earned their benefits ... by virtue of their service to the nation."

AW2 COMMUNITY SUPPORT NETWORK: Recreation Opportunities

Several AW2 Community Support Network participants have outdoor recreation opportunities scheduled over the next several weeks. Advocates are encouraged to share the opportunities below with their Soldiers and Veterans.

Heroes on the Water Family-Inclusive Retreat:

Guided kayak fishing excursions build self confidence and camaraderie with other wounded warriors. Food, lodging, and equipment are provided.

Dates: February 5-8

Location: Port Aransas, TX

Contact: Jim Dolan, jim@kayakanglersssa.org or (214) 295-4541

Lakeshore Foundation - U.S. Paralympic Military Sports Camp:

Introductory level camp with Paralympic coaches and athletes. Airfare, lodging, meals, and program expenses are paid for up to 30 wounded warriors.

Dates: February 25-28, 2010, Application Deadline: January 22, 2010

Location: Birmingham, AL

Contact: Mandy Goff, mandyg@lakeshore.org or (205) 313-7437

Vail Veterans Program:

Skiing, snowboarding, and outdoor recreation activities for Soldiers and Veterans injured in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. All expenses are paid for wounded warriors and one guest.

Location: Vail, CO

Contact: Cheryl Jensen, cjensen@vail.net or (970) 476-4906

- Family Ski Program: Wounded warriors and their immediate Families
Dates: January 27-31, 2010
- Newly Injured Ski Program: Wounded warriors and one guest
Dates: March 3-7, 2010

If you have heard of other organizations that support wounded warriors and their Families and would like to recommend them to join the AW2 Community Support Network, please e-mail AW2communitysupportnetwork@conus.army.mil.

NOTE: These offers are from private organizations and are not affiliated with or endorsed by the U.S. Army or Warrior Transition Command. Participation is voluntary and at the discretion of the applicant. Interested applicants should contact the individuals listed above. No points of contact are located within the Command.

FAMILY: School Leaders Supporting Military Children

Two million U.S. military children have had one or both parents deployed since 2001.

Understanding the challenges facing military Families—and the resources available to assist military children—is essential to meeting their unique educational needs. The American Association of School Administrators has released a toolkit on “Supporting the Military Child” to help school leaders meet the needs of children whose parents are deployed or in transition.

The toolkit includes several items, such as:

- Top 15 things school leaders can do to support military children
- Key facts about the military child
- Facts about Impact Aid, the federal funding available to help school districts handle the cost of educating children from military Families

This free, online resource is available on the American Association of School Administrators Web site at www.aasa.org/MilitaryChild.aspx. (SOURCE: American Association of School Administrators)

MONEY MATTERS: GIFTS 101

By MAJ Teresa T. Phelps, Command Judge Advocate, Warrior Transition Command
AW2 Soldiers, Veterans, and Family members often have questions about receiving gifts from organizations or individuals. I have chosen a few of the frequently asked questions regarding gifts to provide some clarification. There are different regulations for Soldiers and their

Families, wounded Soldiers and their Families, and Veterans and their Families. When in doubt, please contact an ethics counselor or your AW2 Advocate.

Q: What is a gift?

A: A gift is anything of value: cash, property, or services.

Q: What is the general rule on gifts?

A: Soldiers and their Families may **not** directly or indirectly solicit or accept gifts given (1) because of their official position, i.e. a Soldier (see below for additional exceptions for wounded Soldiers) (2) or offered by a "prohibited source"

Q: What is a prohibited source?

A: A prohibited source is any person who seeks official action from the employee's agency, does or seeks to do business with his agency, conducts activities regulated by his agency, or has interests that may be substantially affected by the individual employee. (Example: DoD contractors, some private or non-profit organizations)

Q: Are there any legal restrictions on gifts?

A: Yes, but there are exemptions and exceptions.

Q: What are some examples of exemptions?

A: Examples are:

- Modest refreshments that do not constitute a meal (think of it as the "Coffee and donuts" rule)
- Greeting cards and items of little intrinsic value, such as trophies, certificates, and coins, intended solely for presentation
- Loans from banks and other financial institutions on terms generally available to the public
- Opportunities and benefits, including favorable rates and commercial discounts available to the public or large groups like all uniformed military personnel even if restricted geographically (Example: Free admission at Disneyworld or discounts on cell phone service contracts)
- Rewards and prizes given to competitors in contests and events, like random drawings open to the public

Q: What are some examples of exceptions?

A: General rule, gifts, other than cash, that are less than \$20 per occasion and do not exceed \$50 per calendar year, from the same source, can be accepted.

Other exceptions:

- Gifts based on a family or personal relationship. (Example: Your brother works for a defense contractor and gives you tickets to a sporting event, worth \$50, as a birthday gift. Can you accept? Yes, if your brother paid for the tickets. You may not accept if his company paid for the tickets. You also can't "pay down" to get under the \$20/\$50 limit, but you can pay the fair market value for the gift)
- Gifts based on meritorious public service (see next question)

Q: Are there any additional exceptions for wounded Soldiers?

A: Yes, the Joint Ethics Regulation (JER), 3-400 and 3-401, increases the normal \$20/\$50 limit, **if** the following conditions are met:

- Gifts are **not** offered by foreign governments,
- Gifts are **not** accepted in return for being influenced in the performance of official duties,
- Gifts are **not** accepted in violation of any other statute (such as bribery and compensation from other sources for performing Federal duties), and
- For gifts with an aggregate market value exceeding the minimal value (\$335 in 2009) from one source on any particular occasion, or \$1,000 from one source in a calendar year, an agency ethics official has made a written determination that:
- The gift is not offered in a manner that discriminates among covered DoD employees on the basis of the type of official responsibility or of favoring those of higher rank or rate of pay;
- The donor does not have interests that may be affected substantially by the performance or nonperformance of the covered DoD employee's official duties; and
- Acceptance would not cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question the integrity of DoD programs or operations.

Covered DoD servicemembers are:

- Members of the armed forces (including Reserve and National Guard members on Title 10 orders) on active duty, enlisted members of the Reserve on inactive duty for training, and all members of the National Guard performing official duties who,
- While on active duty, on or after September 11, 2001, incurred an illness or injury
 - as a direct result of armed conflict;
 - while engaged in hazardous service;
 - in the performance of duty under conditions simulating war;
 - through an instrumentality of war; or
 - in an operation or area designated by the Secretary of Defense as a combat operation or combat zone.

To ensure the gift can be accepted, the Soldier should seek an ethics review prior to accepting any gift that exceeds the \$335 value (fair market value).

Q: Are there differences between what Active Duty Soldiers (JER applies to Reserve Component and National Guard Soldiers in a Title 10 status) and AW2 Veterans can accept?

A: Yes, the JER only applies to federal employees, so the medically retired AW2 Veterans are exempt from the gift rules, unless they are currently government employees.

AW2 SOLDIER STORIES

To find out what has been in the news about AW2 Soldiers, Veterans, Families, and staff, visit the AW2 Blog on Mondays for the weekly digest of those stories at

<http://AW2.armylive.dodlive.mil>.

THE BLOG UPDATE: December

Wounded Warrior Alligator Hunt

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2009/12/31/wounded-warrior-alligator-hunt/>

Here am I. Send me.

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2009/12/30/here-am-i-send-me/>

Fighting and Standing Together

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2009/12/30/fighting-and-standing-together/>

AW2 Soldiers Receive Scholarships from CTU

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2009/12/29/aw2-soldiers-receive-scholarships-from-ctu/>

AW2 Veteran Climbs to New Heights

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2009/12/28/aw2-veteran-climbs-to-new-heights/>

A Memorable Event from 2009

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2009/12/28/a-memorable-event-from-2009/>

The Story Behind the Photo

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2009/12/21/the-story-behind-the-photo/>

AW2 Weekly Digest 12/7-12/11

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2009/12/14/aw2-weekly-digest-127-1211/>

Female AW2 Soldiers and Veterans Making Headlines

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2009/12/14/female-aw2-soldiers-and-veterans-making-headlines/>

WTC Launches New Web site

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2009/12/10/wtc-launches-new-web-site/>

Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Recognizes AW2 Soldiers and Veterans

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2009/12/09/former-chairman-of-the-joint-chiefs->

[recognizes-aw2-soldiers-and-veterans/](#)

AW2 Weekly Digest 11/23-12/4

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2009/12/07/aw2-weekly-digest-1123-124/>

AW2 Soldier Graduates from Pathfinder School

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2009/12/04/aw2-soldier-graduates-from-pathfinder-school/>

The Coming Home Project

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2009/12/03/the-coming-home-project/>

An Interview with AW2 Soldier LTC Hoffmeister – Part II

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2009/12/02/an-interview-with-aw2-soldier-ltc-hoffmeister-%e2%80%93-part-ii/>

AW2 ADVOCATES IN THE FIELD: Joe Fowler

Joe Fowler, AW2 Veteran, started as an AW2 Advocate in Fort Carson, CO, in October. Fowler served in the Army for 10 years with the Military Police and most recently served as a dog handler doing anything from attack work to looking for explosives. Fowler said that his Advocate Dennis McCormack played a major role in his life. When he found out that McCormack was retiring, he knew that he wanted McCormack's job as Advocate at Fort Carson. Fowler has been through the process and wants to provide a different outlook to Soldiers and Veterans that, "life does continue on." Fowler can be reached at (719) 330-1702 and joseph.fowler@us.army.mil.

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