



WOUNDED WARRIOR REGIMENT NEWSLETTER

CONNECTING WOUNDED, ILL, AND INJURED MARINES AND FAMILIES TO THE SUPPORT AND SERVICES THEY NEED TO SUCCEED

THE CONNECTION

FOURTH QUARTER 2010

A Message From the Commanding Officer

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor to serve as commanding officer for the Wounded Warrior Regiment. Since taking command July 8th, I've had the privilege of meeting many of our wounded, ill and injured Marines and sailors, and their families and I look forward to meeting more of you.

Through my travels, I've gained an appreciation for the dedicated and determined spirit of our staff and those supported as they recover and transition back to duty or separate from active duty and reintegrate to a community of their choice. From a newly injured Marine who is healing in National Naval Medical Center Bethesda, to the warrior learning to run on his new legs at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, to the family member providing tireless support for our Marine- I am inspired. We will continue to work hard to ensure that our level of support equals your commitment and meets your needs.

At the WWR, we embrace the principle that the recovery and transition process is more than medical appointments and evaluations. True recovery and transition encompasses four additional elements: mind, body, spirit and family. This holistic view to recovery and transition will be in the forefront of how we support WII Marines and sailors, and their families. This newsletter includes articles addressing the mind, body, spirit, and family elements of this recovery and transition model.

November is Warrior Care Month. This is a time to recognize the sacrifices of our WII service members and their caregivers. It is also an opportunity to increase awareness of the programs and services available to WII Marines and sailors, and their families by the Department of the Navy and the WWR. Visit our website at woundedwarriorregiment.org to find out more about our programs and to see what our WII Marines and sailors, and caregivers are doing throughout the Regiment.

Semper Fidelis,
Col. John L. Mayer



WAR-time is upon us

Major Susie Stark, WAR program director

Every person who has earned the title Marine has been trained to work as part of a team and never give up, whether the challenge is during wartime or peace. When a Marine is wounded, ill or injured, these basic skills remain and are sharpened through the Warrior Athlete Reconditioning program, also known as the WAR program.

Participation in the Wounded Warrior Regiment's WAR program provides opportunities for Marines to engage in physical and cognitive activities outside the traditional therapy setting. Integrated into each of the Regiment's subordinate commands, the program is designed to enable Marines to recondition their bodies and minds and train as athletes, whether for recreation or competition. Being involved includes anything from tossing a baseball to increase muscle strength and memory, to learning to surf, to joining a competitive sports team.

Marines at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington, D.C. actively participate in the WAR program and will often integrate their program's activities with physical therapy at the Military Advanced Training Center, or MATC. Corporal Ballard Hall and LCpl. Thomas Mooney, as seen below tossing the football, are both benefiting from the



WALTER REED ARMY MEDICAL CENTER, Washington, D.C. -- Corporal Ballard Hall (left), throws a football with a fellow Marine, LCpl. Thomas Mooney (right), to improve his balancing ability at the Military Advanced Training Center, September 17. *Photo by Capt. Jill Leyden*

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WAR program. Mooney, a cancer survivor, is also reconditioning his body to eventually return to active duty. He hopes that he will be up to his full strength soon and back into his military occupational specialty as an infantryman. Right now, with his future up in the air, having the opportunity to recondition his body, side-by-side with another Marine, contributes to his overall recovery.

For more information on the Wounded Warrior Regiment's Warrior Athlete Reconditioning program sports camps, go to www.woundedwarriorregiment.org or call the Sergeant Merlin German Wounded Warrior Call Center at 1.877.487.6299.

Warrior Care Month:

Recognizing and Appreciating Service Members and Their Families

Aquita Brown, public affairs

Since 2007, the Wounded Warrior Regiment has assumed responsibility of all non-medical care for wounded, ill and injured Marines and sailors and their families. The mission of the WWR is to provide and facilitate assistance to WII Marines, sailors, attached to or in direct support of Marine units, and their family members, throughout the phases of recovery.

During November, we welcome everyone to join us in celebrating Warrior Care Month. Warrior Care Month is designed to increase awareness of the WWR and Navy Safe Harbor, the services we provide and to recognize our WII Marines and sailors, and caregivers/families. In order to highlight the accomplishments of WII Marines, Sailors and their families, the 2010 Warrior Care Month goal is to recognize and appreciate the service and sacrifice of WII warriors and those who care for them."

Throughout November, the WWR will feature motivational stories of service members who have overcome their disability to be successful in their new normal. Focusing on ability provides the psychological and emotional support to encourage healing and a quicker adaptation to injury and enables WII service members to thrive.

"November is Warrior Care Month and the Navy and Marine Corps is putting a spotlight on what our outstanding WII Marines and sailors, families, and staff do each day," said Col. John Mayer, Commanding Officer, WWR. "Across the WWR, every month is Warrior Care Month and we are honored to be so closely involved in the recovery and transition of our WII service members."

For more information about Warrior Care Month call the Sergeant Merlin German Call Center at 1.877.487.6299 or go to www.woundedwarriorregiment.org.

A Caregiver's Story

Erika Slaton, family readiness officer

March 11, 2008 is a day that Sharon Martinez, mother of Marine Lance Cpl. Michael Martinez, will never forget. Martinez distinctively remembers the call that her husband received; her son was seriously injured in Afghanistan. She was caught in a whirl of emotions. "In the back of my mind, I knew that it could happen," said Mrs. Martinez, "but you don't expect it. I just wanted to know if my son was alive or not." During combat operations, her son was struck by an improvised explosive device which subsequently resulted in amputations on both of his legs.

Family has always been an important factor in the Martinez household. Anxious to see her son, Mrs. Martinez began contacting other family members to join her son at



Washington, D.C. -- Lance Cpl. Michael Martinez accompanies his mother Sharon Martinez to the Lone Sailor Awards Dinner held on September 15, 2010 at the National Building Museum.

the hospital. Even though she was working part-time, she walked out of her company's front door and never looked back. "I'm thankful that my husband and I are retired. Many of the other families I've talked with are young with small children and they don't have the means to walk away from a job." Martinez also understood that for those Marines and families who have challenges and need help through the recovery process, the Wounded Warrior Regiment was there to assist.

Since that time, Mrs. Martinez has been at her son's side, taking him to numerous physical therapy and rehabilitation appointments and assisting him with daily living activities. "My faith is what makes it so much easier for me and my family, said Mrs. Martinez. "Without it, I couldn't have handled it."

Various benevolent organizations have been established to help support families and caregivers like Mrs. Martinez who have willingly sacrificed their incomes in order to take care of a recovering service member. Mortgage and car payments are still due. Utility bills are still expected to be paid. While some people find it difficult to accept help from others, during times of tremendous stress and uncertainty, many organizations can help ease a family's financial concerns.

To obtain more information about family or financial resources call the Wounded Warrior Regiment Call Center at 1-877-487-6299.

Meeting the Challenge on the Road to Recovery

By Sheila Galvin, PhD, LCSW, MedCell, Licensed Clinical Consultant

Being diagnosed with a medical condition or physical injury begins an uncertain journey, particularly, if there is an overload of new information. Being cared for by multiple medical specialists can heighten concerns, which can leave one feeling disconnected and confused.

As a medical provider within the military medical system, my advice during this time would be to keep an open mind and consider all possibilities as you work to understand a medical diagnosis. As each provider brings to the table their own strengths, practice styles and abilities, recognize there may be conflicting medical opinions regarding the best course of action for care. Select the provider who speaks your language, understands your concerns, and has the patience to answer hard questions. How will your new medical condition affect your personal and professional life? How can you adapt and plan for a quality life?

Consider seeking opportunities for alternative, non-traditional approaches to complement your medical treatment plan. Experiences such as acupuncture, massage therapy, Tai Chi, yoga and Pilates can bring additional healing benefits and may lead you through to the next stage of your recovery. Remember the importance of sleep, adequate nutrition, not smoking, and reducing stressors, which will alleviate many of



WALTER REED ARMY MEDICAL CENTER, Washington, D.C. -- Sergeant Maj. John Ploskonka Jr. joins wounded, ill and injured Marines, their families and caregivers for a day of yoga September 23. The Exalted Warrior Foundation facilitated the yoga instruction for WII service members, their families and caregivers. Faced with the demands of physical, mental and emotional recovery, yoga allows additional healing benefits for WII service members and their loved ones. *Photo by Aquita Brown*

the complications that arise from being wounded, ill or injured. Keep an open mind and consider this holistic approach to achieve renewed wellness with every facet of your mind, body, and spirit. Much like the warriors of long ago, draw on your warrior skills to persevere and overcome adversity.

Your Tool Box for Recovery should contain a strong belief in yourself. Listen to your inner voice and maintain positive self-talk as you problem solve. Remember that what made you physically and mentally

strong before will have the ability to make you strong again. Dig deep to recapture the feeling of believing you can overcome, no matter what the physical challenge, this may open the door for positive change. Surround yourself with winners – fellow Marines demonstrate all is not lost simply because there has been change. Choose with resolve to attack the problems you can control, striving to achieve your personal best at whatever level this new you may be. “Doing nothing, achieves nothing.” You hold the keys to achieve your highest level of personal wellness and continued success.

Wounded Warrior Regiment Completes Poll on Wounded, Ill, and Injured Employment

By Erica Flores, Future Initiative and Transformation Team

In June, the Wounded Warrior Regiment conducted a Rapid Action Poll to gauge the employment interests of wounded, ill and injured Marines. Results showed that for WII veteran Marines, the type of work they do is most important to them, with salary coming in as a close second. The poll found that WII veteran Marines are interested in careers in protective services (i.e., law enforcement, firefighter, security), business and financial operations (i.e., management, business owner), and construction and extraction (i.e., welding, heavy machine operators). It also showed they prefer to use online employment websites and networking when looking for employment opportunities, and are interested in using self-paced, online employment toolboxes. These findings support the recently- developed WWR Employment Toolbox that was designed to provide step-by-step assistance, links to authoritative websites and employment tools, and the opportunity to link directly to WWR Education or Employment Specialists for individualized support.

The Toolbox will launch in the near future. Once released, the Employment Toolbox will be found on the Wounded Warrior Regiment website: www.woundedwarriorregiment.org.

Providing Work Experience for Wounded, Ill and Injured Marines

By Major Brian Bilski, Transition Cell

Operation Warfighter provides unpaid internships with federal agencies to all active duty and reserve component wounded, ill and injured Marines who are on active duty. Through this program Marines in a medical hold status have a great opportunity to develop professional job skills, and gain valuable federal government work experience that will prepare them for the future. The program simultaneously enables participating federal agencies to avail themselves of the considerable talent and dedication of these recovering Marines.

This program was developed to positively impact the wellness and recovery of wounded warriors in transition by using their free time to prepare them for (re)employment, whether back to duty or into the civilian workforce. For Marines who transition out of the Marine Corps, the program helps them build their resumes, explore employment interests, develop job and interview skills, and gain valuable federal government work experience. For Marines returning to duty, the program keeps their skill sets active and offers the opportunity for additional training and experience that can benefit the military and the Warfighter.

In addition to career benefits, the OWF program has tremendous physical, psychological and social benefits for all recuperating Marines. Operation Warfighter encourages productive activity, and provides an opportunity for Marines to move forward in the transition process. The program shifts an individual's focus from limitations to abilities, encouraging a "can do" attitude.

After completing the internship, there are no promises of employment with the agency for which the Marine worked. However, after visits with human resource representatives, if the Marine excels and proves to be a good fit for the organization the opportunity of employment does exist. Using the Veterans' Recruitment Appointment, a manager is allowed to fill positions quickly by appointing Veterans with 30% greater disability rating to positions for which they are qualified, up to and including GS-11 or equivalent, without issuing a vacancy announcement.

The Wounded Soul

By Chaplain Gordon D. Ritchie, WWR

He spoke through glazed eyes, "Chaplain, I can never be forgiven." I've heard this before from returning warriors who find themselves faced with guilt and remorse of what they have seen, done or did not do in the theater of war. Now health care professionals are recognizing what the church has sought to heal for centuries. It is called the moral wounds of war. Dr. Brett Litz, a clinical psychologist, professor and counselor for the Department of Veterans Affairs and his colleagues define this moral injury as "perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations." People who experience such an event suffer a "spiritual IED" to the soul which can result in a "moral concussion."

How do we treat this moral concussion? Research is showing that talking with a compassionate "benevolent moral authority" is not only mentally therapeutic but also spiritually healing. Healing also occurs by making amends, giving back to society or performing charitable acts. Spiritual disciplines like prayer, mediation, reading Holy Scriptures, confession, attrition and absolution also pour a healing salve of forgiveness and redemption over the soul. A thoughtful and intentional exploration of literature and teachings regarding the problem of evil, morality and injustice in the world helps bring into focus the blurred realities of their world.

Science is only beginning to recognize what spiritualists have known since the beginning of time. "The lasting impact of morally injurious experience in war remains chiefly unaddressed," according to the experts. There are some things that medicine and technology cannot heal, where scalpel cannot reach and therapy cannot alter. It is the spiritual realm of imperative matters - matters of the heart. Your chaplains, priests, rabbis, pastors or imams are all individuals who are available to provide this spiritual support.

THE WOUNDED WARRIOR REGIMENT

The Wounded Warrior Regiment stood up in April 2007 and immediately began to assume responsibilities for non-medical Wounded Warrior care. The mission of the WWR is to provide and facilitate assistance to WII Marines, Sailors attached to or indirect support of Marine units, and their family members, throughout the phases of recovery. The Regiment Headquarters element, located in Quantico, Virginia, coordinates the operations of two Wounded Warrior Battalions located at Camp Pendleton, California, and Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. The Regimental Headquarters provides unity of command and unity of effort through a single commander who provides guidance, direction, and oversight to the Marine Corps WII non-medical care process and ensures continuous improvements to care management and the seamless transition of recovering Marines.

For assistance, information, and referral services, contact the Sergeant Merlin German Wounded Warrior Call Center at 1-877-487-6299. The Call Center is available 24/7 to ensure Marines, Marine veterans, and their families are supported throughout the phases of recovery at all geographic locations.

Command Element

Col. John L. Mayer, Commanding Officer

Col. Jay J. Krail, Executive Officer

SgtMaj. John P. Ploskonka, Sergeant Major

www.woundedwarriorregiment.org

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