



# The Wounded Warrior Voice

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## **WHAT'S NEW: AW2 Symposium 2008 Wrap-up**

In June, the AW2 Program held its fourth AW2 Symposium in Indianapolis. For this event, AW2 brought together more than 70 severely wounded Soldiers, Family members and caregivers, to identify the most important issues to be addressed to improve wounded Soldier care. The AW2

Symposium is an important part of the Army's overall mission to improve care for wounded Soldiers and their Families.

At the end of the week all of the focus groups came together and presented their top two issues. All of the delegates then voted on the top five overall issues, which were presented to Army leadership.

The top issues were:

- alternative treatment options for wounded warriors
- support groups and counseling for wounded warrior Families
  
- continuing on Active Duty (COAD)/Continuing on Active Reserve (COAR) process
  
- treatment of COAD/COAR Soldiers by the Physical Evaluation Board (PEB)
  
- the eligibility criteria for Warrior Transition Units (WTUs)

This year, for the first time, children/teens were involved in the AW2 Symposium process and the teens presented their top recommendations, which were:

- expand teen participation at camps similar to Operation Purple
- incorporate previous camp attendees in new waves of camps/conferences to serve as mentors or group leaders
- develop an AW2 Teen website similar to MYSPACE
- for future conferences, forward an email copy or advance list of weekly camp activities

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### **WHATS NEW: AW2 Symposium's Photo Slideshow**

Please click on the link below to view the photo slideshow of Soldiers, Families and AW2 Advocates from this year's AW2 Symposium.

[www.hulsephoto.com/slideshows/AW2-08%20-%20Presentation/](http://www.hulsephoto.com/slideshows/AW2-08%20-%20Presentation/)

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### **CAREERS: AW2 Career Program Experts Ready to Serve Soldiers/Families**

AW2 Advocates provide personalized support to ensure that Soldiers and Families receive the appropriate benefits and entitlements for the next phases of their lives. AW2 continues to evolve and grow in order to address the changing needs of AW2 Soldiers and Families as they progress through their recovery and transition into their life post-injury. The AW2 leadership has assembled a team of subject matter experts to assist Soldiers and their Families in meeting career or educational needs.

This team, the AW2 Career and Education Branch, was developed to serve as a resource to enhance the AW2 Advocate's ability to help Soldiers and Families with employment and educational goals.

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### **EDUCATION: The Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities**

*by Scott Cox, AW2 Career Coordinator*

The Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV), now available this summer at four universities, will offer business-focused training to AW2 Soldiers disabled as a result of their

service supporting GWOT operations (including Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom) since September 11, 2001. The four universities (listed below) have committed to a three-phase standardized EBV program format, ensuring that all participants receive a consistent, high-quality experience. The program will integrate world-class faculty, entrepreneurs, disability experts and business professionals in to an educational program that focuses on training veterans in the competencies associated with small business ownership.

The EBV program (<http://whitman.syr.edu/EBV/about.asp>) will be entirely free for the participating veterans, including travel and accommodations. Points of contact at the four institutions are:

Randy Blass, PhD (Program Director), Florida State University

Website: <http://cob.fsu.edu/man/ebv.cfm>

Email/Phone: [rblass@cob.fsu.edu](mailto:rblass@cob.fsu.edu), (850) 644-7859

Richard Lester, PhD (Director of Academic Entrepreneurship Programs), Texas Agricultural and Mechanical University

Website: <http://mays.tamu.edu/>, ([Mays Online Newsletter](#))

Email/Phone: [rlester@mays.tamu.edu](mailto:rlester@mays.tamu.edu), (979) 862-7091

Hasmik Stepanian, University of California at Los Angeles-Anderson

Website: <http://www.anderson.ucla.edu/x20207.xml>

Email/Phone: [ebv@anderson.ucla.edu](mailto:ebv@anderson.ucla.edu), (310) 206-7476

Barb Buske, Office of the Dean (EBV Coordinator), Syracuse University

Website: <http://www.anderson.ucla.edu/x20079.xml>

Email/Phone: [ebvinfo@syr.edu](mailto:ebvinfo@syr.edu), (315) 443-8736

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## **EDUCATION: Army and Kansas University Program Educates and Trains AW2 Soldiers for Continued Army Service**

*by Scott Cox, AW2 Career Coordinator*

The Army and the University of Kansas program, known as the KU Initiative, will allow wounded Soldiers to earn a master's degree at the school and to apply what they have learned inside the Army's own academic community. This initiative has moved significant procedural mountains in its forward press to help the AW2 Soldier reintegrate within or transition from the Army after the severe and traumatic injuries they incurred.

A significant milestone has now been reached—seven AW2 Soldiers have been accepted at KU and have completed orientation for the Fall 2008 Semester. One additional AW2 Soldier will be starting in January 2009. These AW2 Soldiers will complete advanced degrees in history, supply chain management, technology management, international relations, and other academic areas over a period of two years. The on-site AW2 Advocate, Connie Poppino, reports the AW2 Soldiers are settling in well into their new surroundings.

As we move forward with this Army initiative, significant behind the scenes efforts are underway to make this a recurring, fully funded, and formalized program. In the mean time, we are also beginning the process to identify candidates for the Fall 2009 class. For more information on eligibility criteria and the initiative, contact Scott Cox at [scott.cox4@us.army.mil](mailto:scott.cox4@us.army.mil) or (703) 325-6925

and help us press forward in identifying good candidates for this wonderful opportunity.

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### **EDUCATION: Purple Heart Foundation Offers Free Online Job Training**

The Military Order of the Purple Heart Service Foundation, a nonprofit organization, pays disabled veterans \$11 an hour to take 600 hours of at-home, online training that leads to jobs allowing them to work from home. The 15-week program is accredited by Northern Virginia Community College. The jobs pay \$15 to \$22 an hour, plus benefits, in the information industry (market researchers, data managers, hot-line responders, website order processors, help-desk managers, customer-care/service/administration coordinators, and billing clerks).

To qualify, veterans must have a disability rating from the Department of Veterans Affairs and a copy of their DD-214. A Purple Heart award is not required. Visit [www.purpleheartfoundation.org/job\\_training.asp](http://www.purpleheartfoundation.org/job_training.asp) or call (800) 720-9596 for more information.

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### **MONEY MATTERS: Servicemembers Group Life Insurance Premiums Decrease**

As of July 1, 2008, the new premium rate for basic SGLI will be 6.5 cents per \$1,000 per month, down from 7 cents per \$1,000 per month. This translates into a 7% savings, and service members with the maximum \$400,000 of coverage will see their monthly premium reduced from \$28 to \$26 (service members are also covered against severe traumatic injury for one additional dollar each month). For more information, visit [www.insurance.va.gov/sgliSite/SGLI/sgliPremiums.htm](http://www.insurance.va.gov/sgliSite/SGLI/sgliPremiums.htm).

According to Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Dr. James Peake, "This reduction in SGLI premiums makes life insurance even more affordable for today's military service members. With many of them putting their lives at risk against terrorism, life insurance coverage is more important than ever. It provides peace of mind to every member of the uniformed services that their family will be provided for in the event something should happen to them." VA believes that this premium reduction will help maintain the nearly universal participation in the program.

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### **FAMILY: Sesame Street Tour Continues through November**

The nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street, [Sesame Workshop™](#), and the United Service Organizations present "The Sesame Street Experience for Military Families." The free tour has been visiting military installations across the country and continues through November. The tour includes a live character performance with Sesame Street friends, giveaways and outreach materials from "Talk, Listen, Connect" and other partners. The tour is part of [Sesame's Workshop™](#) "Talk, Listen, Connect: Deployments, Homecomings, Changes" initiative. [Sesame Workshop™](#) developed "Talk, Listen, Connect" to help military Families with young children between the ages of two and five build a sense of stability and resiliency during times of separation and change. Over 250,000 DVDs have been distributed to date. Visit [www.sesamestreet.org/tlc](http://www.sesamestreet.org/tlc) for the most up to date tour information.

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### **OPPORTUNITIES: SCUBA, Weddings, Horseback Riding, TV Role, and Homes**

Are you looking to meet other AW2 Soldiers and Family members at local, regional, or national events? Some exciting events include:

- **Dive Pirates Foundation** (nationwide): Charitable foundation trains, equips and takes wounded

Soldiers SCUBA diving in the Caribbean. For more information, visit [www.divepirates.org](http://www.divepirates.org) or call (832) 212-1967. For an application, click [www.divepirates.org/pdf/Dive\\_Pirates\\_Application.pdf](http://www.divepirates.org/pdf/Dive_Pirates_Application.pdf)

- **Dream Weddings** (nationwide): Mark Burnett Productions and DreamWorks Television are doing a new docu/drama series where they give deserving people the wedding of their dreams. For more information, visit [www.myspace.com/weddingdaytv](http://www.myspace.com/weddingdaytv). If you are planning to marry this year, please contact Angela Mogg, Casting Assoc. at (310) 903-5410 or [amogg@markburnettprod.com](mailto:amogg@markburnettprod.com)
- **Horses Help Therapeutic Riding Program** (Phoenix, AZ): visit [www.horseshelp.org/therapeutic-horsemanship/therapeutic-riding.aspx](http://www.horseshelp.org/therapeutic-horsemanship/therapeutic-riding.aspx) or call (602) 569-6056
- **NARHA Horses for Heroes Therapeutic Horseback Riding**: The North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) Horses for Heroes Task Force created a national program with the NARHA therapeutic riding centers and the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide veterans the opportunity for therapeutic horseback riding in their hometowns. The program has developed into a joint effort between NARHA centers (which provide the instructor expertise and horses) and the Veteran's Administration (which refers eligible veterans to the facilities). There are 35 NARHA facilities in 18 states working with their local VA offices to provide services to wounded Soldiers. For more information, please visit [www.narha.org](http://www.narha.org), contact Jama Rice (NARHA) at (800) 369-RIDE or [jrice@narha.org](mailto:jrice@narha.org), or Larry Long (Veterans Affairs) at (202) 273-8479 or [lonlar@va.gov](mailto:lonlar@va.gov).
- **Star on "All My Children"** : "All My Children," an ABC daytime show, is seeking a disabled Iraq or Afghanistan war veteran in his 20's or 30's to play a character who is involved in a war/love story. They want a real injured veteran to play this role, not an actor. The story will be handled with dignity and honor. The show tapes in New York City. The chosen veteran will be paid for expenses and given a salary, and he will be required to travel to and from New York. The length of time for this role is to be determined. If you are a Soldier interested, please send or email a recent photo and a brief description ASAP. If you mail, please mark the envelope VETERAN. The contact information is: Judy Blye Wilson, Casting Director, All My Children—AMC, 320 W. 66th Street, Basement Level, New York, NY 10023, p. (212) 456-0802, f. (212) 456-0822, or [Judy.wilson@abc.com](mailto:Judy.wilson@abc.com)
- **America Responds With Love ® Provides Homes for Wounded Veterans**: [America Responds With Love ®](http://AmericaRespondsWithLove.com) , a national 501(c)3 non-profit organization, has a home in Luzerne County in northeastern Pennsylvania for sale at a substantial discount for a wounded veteran (a disability rating from the VA of 80% or greater and has a medical need for this type of housing). The house is built with a variety of disabled accessible features--wider doorways, levers instead of knobs on doors, lower countertops, etc.

They would like to build similar homes throughout the United States to allow wounded veterans (with a variety of disability ratings from the VA) to live in the communities of their choice. If more recent veterans do not have VA ratings but there is a medical need for this type of housing, [America Responds With Love ®](http://AmericaRespondsWithLove.com) is open to working with the wounded veterans regardless of the ratings. For more information, contact (321) 263-7422 or P.O. Box 5000, Valley Forge, PA, 19482 or visit [www.respondwithlove.org/site/arwl/section.php?id=740](http://www.respondwithlove.org/site/arwl/section.php?id=740), [www.respondwithlove.org/site/arwl/section.php?id=597](http://www.respondwithlove.org/site/arwl/section.php?id=597), and [www.respondwithlove.org/site/arwl/section.php?id=672](http://www.respondwithlove.org/site/arwl/section.php?id=672).

**AW2 SOLDIER STORIES: CPT (R) Halfaker's Company is a 100 Strong**  
by *Douglas Miller, AW2 Advocate*

As Soldiers move up through the ranks, they aspire to leadership positions: corporals become squad leaders, lieutenants become platoon leaders, and captains become company commanders. Today, AW2 Soldier, CPT (retired) Dawn Halfaker leads a very successful company. But this company wasn't what she had in mind when she graduated from West Point. In June 2004, Halfaker was seriously wounded by a rocket propelled grenade when it hit her vehicle in Baqouba, Iraq. She lost her right arm, and the story of that incident, as well as her treatment and rehabilitation, has been well documented in the media. Less well known is her more recent success in leading a company.

In January 2006 she founded Halfaker Associates, a Washington, D.C. based consulting company focused on support for Homeland Security and National Security in the areas of Force Protection, Antiterrorism, CBRN Defense, Emergency and Consequence Management, Physical and Border Security, Environmental Security, and Program Management. This summer the company hired its 100<sup>th</sup> employee. For more information, visit [www.halfaker.com/](http://www.halfaker.com/).

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**AW2 SOLDIER STORIES: CPT Scott Smiley Wins ESPY Award**

AW2 Soldier CPT Scott Smiley was named "Best Outdoor Athlete" by the 2008 ESPN ESPY awards which honored outstanding athletes this month, for climbing 14,410-feet to the summit of Mount Rainier in Washington state last year.

CPT Smiley, the 2007 "Army Times" Soldier of the Year, was blinded by a suicide blast in Mosul, Iraq in April 2005. CPT Smiley is continuing to serve in the Army, pursuing a master's in business administration at Duke University in North Carolina, and slated to teach cadets at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., after finishing his master's in 2009. Smiley started mountain climbing after he was injured when he was offered the opportunity to reach the summit of Mount Rainer as part of [Camp Patriot \(www.camppatriot.org/\)](http://www.camppatriot.org/), a nonprofit that takes disabled veterans on outdoor adventures.

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**AW2 SOLDIER STORIES: CPT Dennis DJ Skelton Takes Command**

On June 5, AW2 Soldier CPT Dennis "DJ" Skelton took command of the E Company, 229<sup>th</sup> Military Intelligence Battalion at the Presidio of Monterey. Skelton previously worked with Deputy Secretary England in implementing AW2 and the Department of Defense's Severely Injured Center. England was the distinguished speaker at the change-of-command ceremony held on Soldier Field at the Presidio of Monterey.

Skelton, who was severely injured in Fallujah in September 2004, continues to defy the odds. During his recovery at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, CPT Skelton worked for England, testified before Congress several times as an advocate of Wounded Warrior programs and founded a non-profit company, [Paradox Sports \(www.paradoxsports.org/\)](http://www.paradoxsports.org/), which provides inspiration, opportunities and adaptive equipment to the disabled community. Skelton made the decision to remain in the Army after his experience in Fallujah and is now, once again, pursuing his Army career as a company

commander.

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**FEEDBACK: Submit Your View to AW2**

The U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2) needs your input to meet the needs of wounded warriors, Families, and caregivers. Your feedback will help the AW2 Director to effect positive changes and improvements in the services currently provided to severely wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers, Families, and caregivers. Click here [aw2portal.com/Feedback.aspx](http://aw2portal.com/Feedback.aspx) to provide your feedback today.

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**FEEDBACK: Quality Assurance Specialists are Coming to Visit You**

AW2 Quality Assurance Specialists, Bill Years and Donald Owens, are working on future site visits to VAMCs, MTFs, WTUs, and SFACs during the upcoming year. They will meet with wounded warriors, Families, caregivers, and unit Commanders to ensure AW2 Soldiers are receiving the best quality of care possible. For more information, contact Bill Years at (703) 325-0633 or email [william.years@conus.army.mil](mailto:william.years@conus.army.mil), Donald Owens at (703) 325-0640 or email [donald.owens6@conus.army.mil](mailto:donald.owens6@conus.army.mil), or SFC Ronny Cunningham at (703) 325-0630 or email [ronny.cunningham@conus.army.mil](mailto:ronny.cunningham@conus.army.mil).

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