



## Wounded Warrior Voice

### AW2 HEADLINES

[AW2 Community Support Network: September Update](#)

[VA Expands Pilot Program](#)

[AW2 Symposium Highlights](#)

[Army's Wounded Recommend Five Areas for Improvement and Leaders Prepare for Action](#)

[Leadership on Training, Education, and Employment](#)

[AW2 Community Support Exhibit Hall Showcased a Variety of Services](#)

[Media Coverage of Symposium Sheds Light on Wounded and Army's Efforts](#)

[NMFA Hosts Purple Camps](#)

[AER Financial Assistance Available](#)

[Documentary Features Wounded Warriors](#)

[WTC Symposium Blogs](#)

[Blog Update](#)

## FROM THE DESK OF COL GADSON: Saving Lives and Honoring the Hispanic Community

During the month of September, one important topic is emphasized: suicide prevention. Throughout the Army community, significant steps have been taken and valuable resources are provided to break the stigma of not speaking up and saving a person's life. Suicide is 100 percent preventable. We in the AW2 community will continue to be fully engaged and committed to knowing and caring for our fellow Soldiers, Veterans, and Families. Asking for help is a sign of strength. Every positive outcome starts with one person reaching out. We are all survivors and we want to continue to tip the scale in our favor. No one should reach the point where he or she thinks suicide is the only option. Saving lives is a commitment that my leadership and I have pledged, but cannot do alone. I'm asking you to stand up, vow to stop suicide, and prevent suicide from taking the lives of those in our community.

For more information on suicide prevention, please visit <http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/suicide/default.asp>.

While it is important to address serious issues that affect the AW2 community, we need to remember to highlight positive aspects of our community also. The last two weeks of this month we begin a significant observance. From September 15 through October 15, the Army observes National Hispanic Heritage Month. I am very proud of the important contributions Hispanics have made. They have played a crucial role in shaping the cultural development of the United States and the Army. A tri-signed memorandum from Army leadership was established to thank members of the Hispanic community who have valiantly served in the Army. I want to go a step further and specifically thank the Hispanic Americans in the AW2 community. Your contributions as well as sacrifices, achievements, and unwavering dedication to serving this country is proven daily.

To read the letter and learn more about Hispanics in U.S. Army, visit <http://usarmy.vo.llnwd.net/e2/c/downloads/220195.pdf>.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT NETWORK: September Update

**By SSG Emily Anderson, WTC Stratcom**

Earlier this year, the AW2 Community Support Network took on an ambitious goal of increasing its community organizations to 300. We are currently at 252, and as we wind down the final months of 2011, we want to reiterate our focus to add as many organizations to the AW2 Community Support Network as possible. AW2 encourages organizations who

demonstrate their support for AW2 Soldiers, Veterans, and Families. Most of these organizations are posted on the AW2 website, and we are working on posting those that registered recently. Please continue to visit the AW2 Community Support Network at <http://www.AW2army.mil/supporters/index.html> to stay up-to-date on additions to our network.

To nominate an organization that seeks to assist AW2 Soldiers, Veterans, and Families, please contact AW2 at (703) 325-0587 or [AW2communitysupportstratcom@conus.army.mil](mailto:AW2communitysupportstratcom@conus.army.mil).

## VA Program Expands VLER Pilot

***By Jane Dulin, AW2 VA Liaison***

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is expanding its pilot for the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER), which enables sharing of Veterans' health records. The expansion of the VLER pilot program will allow more Veterans and facilities to participate in this exciting new technology. It will keep health care providers informed, improve continuity and timeliness of care, and eliminate gaps in health care information. Veterans are invited to sign up for the program.

VLER is a multi-faceted business and technology initiative that includes a portfolio of health, benefits, personnel, and administrative information-sharing capabilities. This pilot expansion is designed to share Veterans' health information electronically, safely, and privately between VA, Department of Defense (DOD), and selected private health care facilities that are members of the secure Nationwide Health Information Network. VA is on track to implement health information exchange at 11 VA medical centers and to partner with both DOD and private health care entities by later this year.

This expansion will enable authorized users to access health information and will provide seamless service to America's servicemembers and Veterans.

VA's goal is to have 50,000 signed authorizations from Veterans who are VA patients to participate in the pilot by the end of the fiscal year. In addition to other ongoing efforts to share benefits and administrative data, the pilot is an initial step toward a larger capability which will become available throughout VA. VA will expand this pilot to provide these services to ervicemembers and Veterans nationwide.

Current existing sites include:

- San Diego VA Medical Center and Kaiser Permanente in San Diego, California, operating since winter 2009
- Hampton VA Medical Center in Hampton, Virginia and MedVirginia in Richmond, Virginia, operating since fall 2010
- Spokane VA Medical Center and Inland Northwest Health Services in Spokane, Washington, operating since spring 2011
- Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center and MedVirginia in Richmond, Virginia, operating since spring 2011
- Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center in Indianapolis, Indiana and additional hospitals in Indiana, operating since summer 2011

Expansion sites for VLER include:

- Grand Junction VA Medical Center in Grand Junction, Colorado, in addition to Utah hospitals, first in Moab through the Utah Health Information Network, by fall 2011
- Asheville VA Medical Center and Western North Carolina Health Network in Asheville, North Carolina, by fall 2011
- VA Western New York Healthcare System in Buffalo, New York and Buffalo area hospitals through the HEALTHeLINK Health Information Exchange, by fall 2011
- Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center in Charleston, South Carolina and Charleston area hospitals through the South Carolina Health Information Exchange, by fall 2011
- Minneapolis VA Health Care System in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Minnesota hospitals through the Community Health Information Collaborative Health Information Exchange, by fall 2011
- VA Puget Sound Health Care System in Seattle, Washington, and MultiCare sites, by fall 2011

To find out more about VLER, Veterans may call toll-free 1-877-771-VLER (8537).

# AW2 Symposium Highlights

## Army's Wounded Recommend Five Areas for Improvement and Leaders Prepare for Action

Eighty-four wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers, Veterans, and their Family members prioritized the top issues facing the Army's wounded warriors. This year, the delegates at the annual AW2

Symposium selected these issues to be addressed, and forwarded to the appropriate Army leaders for resolution.

- Service-connected surgeries for wounded warriors
- Customer service at Veteran Affairs medical facilities
- Advocate for wounded warrior Families and caregivers
- Warrior Transition Unit (WTU) cadre selection
- Concurrent payment of Veteran's Administration (VA) entitlements and Army retirement benefits to medically retired Veterans

"The AW2 Symposium focuses on issues related to the improvement of warrior care—for Soldiers who are recovering today, and for those who will follow," said AW2 Director COL Gregory D. Gadson. "The best way to improve the system is by listening to those who have been through it. That's what this event is all about, and it's just one element of the broader Army effort to support all Soldiers who become wounded, ill or injured throughout their recovery."

Issues raised at previous AW2 Symposiums that have been resolved range from expanded facilities to treat traumatic brain injuries, to a stipend for primary caregivers of severely wounded service members to the creation of the AW2 Community Support Network and a \$10,000 increase in Veterans Affairs (VA) adaptive housing benefits.

The top issues were chosen from more than 50 topics that were discussed in focus groups on topics including medical, Family, Soldier support, Warrior Transition Units (WTUs) and Veteran Affairs.

## Leadership on Training, Education, and Employment

Warrior Transition Command (WTC) Commanding General BG Darryl A. Williams and WTC Command Sergeant Major CSM Benjamin H. Scott Jr. spent three days at the AW2 Symposium listening to delegates. They, along with COL Gregory D. Gadson and SGM Robert Gallagher, had lunch with Family members and caregivers on Wednesday and with wounded warriors on Thursday.

"I have to say—this group is passionate about their chance to make a difference," said Williams. "These people are excited to be here and have an opportunity to help shape the future in a positive way. They were especially excited and interested in resiliency training. I let them know that training, education, and employment are my three top priorities for WTU and AW2 Soldiers, Veterans, and Families."

Visit the WTC blog to read BG William's post about the AW2 Symposium at <http://WTC.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/07/commanders-drumbeat-a-soft-place-to-fall/>.

## AW2 Community Support Exhibit Hall Showcased a Variety of Services

This year, 25 organizations participated in the Community Support Exhibit Hall at the AW2 Symposium. These organizations provide a wide variety of services to AW2 Soldiers, Veterans, and Families, including flights for medical treatment, recreational activities, and counseling services. This year's exhibitors included:

- Air Compassions for Veterans <http://www.aircompassionforveterans.org>
- America Adopts a Soldier <http://www.americasadoptasoldier.org>
- America's VetDogs <http://www.VetDogs.org>
- Bancroft <http://www.bancroft.org>
- Bob Woodruff Foundation <http://www.remind.org>
- Children of Fallen Soldiers Relief Fund, Inc. <http://www.childrenoffallensoldiersrelieffund.org>
- DHI/Immigration and Customs Enforcement <http://www.ice.org>
- Disabled Sports USA <http://www.dsusa.org>
- DOD CAP Wounded Service member Initiative <http://cap.tricare.mil.wsm>
- Freedom Guide Dogs for the Blind <http://www.freedomguidedogs.org>
- Give an Hour <http://www.giveanhour.org>
- Humana Military Healthcare Services <http://www.humana-military.com>
- Iraq Star Foundation <http://www.iraqstar.org>
- Lakeshore Foundation <http://www.lakeshore.org>
- National Resource Directory <http://www.NRD.gov>
- Naval Air Systems Command <http://hawctsd.navair.navy.mil>
- NISH/AbilityOne <http://www.abilityone.gov>
- Northrop Grumman Corporation <http://www.northropgrumman.com>
- Operation Homefront-FL <http://www.operationhomefront.net/fl>
- Raytheon <http://www.rayjobs.com/military>
- Segs4Vets <http://www.segs4vets.org>
- Shepherd Center/SHARE Initiative <http://www.shepard.org/share>
- Tempered Steel, Inc. <http://www.TemperedSteelInc.org>
- U.S. Olympic Committee, Paralympic Military Program <http://www.usparalympics.org/military>
- USO <http://www.USO.org>

For more information on the Community Support Exhibit Hall, visit the blog entry at <http://AW2armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/07/it-is-from-the-heart/>

To learn more about the AW2 Community Support Network, visit [http://WTC.army.mil/AW2/community\\_support/index.html](http://WTC.army.mil/AW2/community_support/index.html)

To recommend an organization, contact the AW2 Community Support Network Coordinator at [AW2communitysupportnetwork@conus.army.mil](mailto:AW2communitysupportnetwork@conus.army.mil)

## Media Coverage of Symposium Sheds Light on Wounded and Army's Efforts

WTC Stratcom hosted a press conference at the AW2 Symposium to share the importance of Soldier, Veteran, and Family care with the Orlando community. This year, the press conference featured three speakers: AW2 Director COL Gregory D. Gadson, AW2 Veteran Taylor Njagu, and AW2 spouse Sarah Gannaway.

AW2 spouse Sarah Gannaway discussed her husband's recovery and their decision to stay in the Army. "When my husband was found unfit for duty, we never considered taking medical retirement," she said. "If the Army was willing to have us, we wanted to stay in, so we applied for Continuation On Active Duty (COAD) and were approved. Before my Soldier was injured, he was given permission to move to a new career field, and we were amazed at how his new branch management was both willing to accommodate his needs and thoughtful in how they assigned him new jobs. The only part of my husband's Army life that his branch couldn't accommodate was housing."

AW2 Veteran Taylor Njagu discussed his struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder and the assistance AW2 provided in finding a government career for him after his retirement. "When my military career was over, I found myself trying to cope with retirement and the need to find a new job in the civilian workforce," he said. "This transition was challenging and overwhelming, and I desperately needed some assistance. My AW2 Advocate helped me through some psychological challenges and was very proactive. Then, when I was ready to go back to work, I connected with an AW2 career coordinator, who was instrumental in helping me organize and tailor my résumé appropriately for civilian employers."

The Symposium received favorable media coverage. To see and read some of the news coverage on the AW2 Symposium, visit:

- Orlando Business Journal: <http://www.bizjournals.com/orlando/news/2011/07/19/panel->

[focuses-on-work-force-re-entry.html](http://www.dodlive.mil/focuses-on-work-force-re-entry.html)

•DMA: [http://www.army.mil/article/61862/Symposium\\_discusses\\_ways\\_to\\_improve\\_warrior\\_care/](http://www.army.mil/article/61862/Symposium_discusses_ways_to_improve_warrior_care/)

• U.S. Medicine <http://www.usmedicine.com/articles/advocate-returns-to-the-army-to-support-soldiers-needing-medical-care.html>

## NMFA Hosts Operation Purple Camps for AW2 Children

While the AW2 Symposium delegates engaged in focus groups, AW2 kids participated in Operation Purple®, an urban adventure camp hosted by the National Military Family Association. Kids ages 5 to 17 spent time bonding with each other, discussing their feelings about their parents' injuries, and sharing stories about living with a wounded warrior. In addition, they got to have lots of fun—they went tubing, rock climbing, zip lining, and to Universal Orlando® Resort.

"Talking with other teens that have been in the same position, or gone through the same things I have, has been wonderful," said AW2 kid Victoria Nail. "Keeping in touch with my new friends is going to be fun. I hope that they feel like they can come to me with any Family related issues. I now have a support system of friends that I have never had before."

To read more about Victoria's experience visit the AW2 blog at <http://AW2armylive.dodlive.mil/?s=victoria+nail>.

To read more about Operation Purple® camp at the 2011 AW2 Symposium, visit the AW2 blog at <http://AW2armylive.dodlive.mil/tag/2011-AW2-symposium/>

To find out about other Operation Purple® camps visit [http://www.nmfa.org/site/PageServer?pagename=op\\_default](http://www.nmfa.org/site/PageServer?pagename=op_default)

## AER Financial Assistance Available

Army Emergency Relief (AER) provides financial assistance to AW2 Soldiers, Veterans, and Families. 83 AER locations provide an array of services including emergency transportation, rent, food, and clothing. For more information visit [aerhq.org](http://aerhq.org) and to read the letter from AER Headquarters in full visit [hosting-source.bm23.com/7600/public/AER\\_Letter.pdf](http://hosting-source.bm23.com/7600/public/AER_Letter.pdf).

Additional tax information can be located at <http://www.dfas.mil/militarypay/taxinformation.html>.

## Documentary Features Wounded Warriors

The documentary film, "Wounded Warrior's Resilience" premiered at the 9/11 Tenth Anniversary Summit: Remembrance, Renewal, Resilience at the Newseum in Washington D.C. on September 8, 2011. The film honors men and women from all services, Activity Duty, Guard, and Reserve. It highlights the extraordinary sacrifice and resilience of our brave men and women in uniform who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11. It featured several wounded warriors including Army COL. Greg Gadson and Army LT. Tyson Quink. The film is available at <http://nspyr.com/>.

## Read More on the AW2 Symposium Blogs

Once again, WTC and AW2 blogged live from the Symposium—as well as tweeted and facebooked. To read these entries featuring comments from attendees and more AW2 blogs, visit <http://AW2.armylive.dodlive.mil/>

• Learning, Understanding, and New Friends Through the AW2 Symposium Experience <http://AW2.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/07/learning-understanding-and-new-friends-through-the-aw2-symposium-experience>

- Tough Love and the Battle Back Home <http://AW2.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/07/tough-love-and-the-battle-back-home/>
  - S-O-L-D-I-E-R-S. Soldiers We Are <http://AW2.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/07/tough-love-and-the-battle-back-home/>
  - Seventh AW2 Symposium Brought More People Together to Globally Impact Lives <http://AW2.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/07/seventh-AW2-symposium-brought-more-people-together-to-globally-impact-lives/>
  - Camp Wewa Welcomes AW2 Director and the Symposium's Operation Purple® <http://AW2.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/07/camp-wewa-welcomes-AW2-director-and-the-2011-symposium%E2%80%99s-operation-purple%C2%AE/>
  - One Eye, Five Kids, and Endless Possibilities <http://AW2.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/07/one-eye-five-kids-and-endless-possibilities/>
  - Army Gathers Recommendations for Improvements: <http://AW2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/06/20/army-gathers-recommendations-for-improvements/>
  - Speaking Out and Gaining Hope—A Guardsman Spouse's Story <http://AW2.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/07/speaking-out-and-gaining-hope-a-guardsman-spouses-story/>
  - Commander's Drumbeat: A Soft Place to Fall <http://WTC.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/07/commanders-drumbeat-a-soft-place-to-fall/>
  - It is From the Heart <http://AW2.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/07/it-is-from-the-heart/>
  - Identify Your Pooh Bear <http://AW2.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/07/identify-your-pooh-bear/>
  - Wounded Warriors Speak Up to Improve Warrior Care <http://AW2.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/07/wounded-warriors-speak-up-to-improve-warrior-care/>
- For more information, please visit <http://www.WTC.army.mil/AW2/index.html> or contact [warriorcarecommunications@conus.army.mil](mailto:warriorcarecommunications@conus.army.mil) or 1-877-393-9113.

## THE BLOG UPDATE: September 2011

Education and Training Program Pays off for Warriors in Transition <http://WTC.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/09/education-and-training-program-pays-off-for-warriors-in-transition/>

Commander's Drumbeat: Fort Stewart-Success Built on Teamwork <http://WTC.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/09/commander%E2%80%99s-drumbeat-fort-stewart%E2%80%93success-built-on-teamwork-2/>

Commander's Drumbeat: VCSA Kicks Off Warrior Care and Transition Program Training Conference <http://WTC.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/08/bg-williams-drumbeat-%E2%80%93vcsa-kicks-of-wtc-training-conference//>

Commander's Drumbeat: Partnerin to Face Our Challenges- Warrio Care and Transition Program Training Conference <http://WTC.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/08/commander%E2%80%99s-drumbeat-partnering-to-face-our-challenges-%E2%80%93warrior-care-and-transition-program-training-conference/>

Commander's Drumbeat: One More Round <http://WTC.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/08/commander%E2%80%99s-drumbeat-one-more-round/>

Senior Noncommissioned Officers Discuss Way Ahead During Training Conference <http://WTC.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/08/senior-noncommissioned-officers-discuss-way-ahead-during-training-conference/>

Making the Most of What You Have

<http://WTC.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/08/making-the-most-of-what-you-have/>

Nine Eleven Summit

<http://WTC.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/09/nine-eleven-summit/>

Adaptive Sports Paves the Road to Recovery for Soldiers

<http://WTC.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/09/adaptive-sports-paves-the-road-to-recovery-for-soldiers/>

Education and Training Program Pays off for Warrior in Transition

<http://WTC.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/09/education-and-training-program-pays-off-for-warriors-in-transition/>

A Life Remembered

<http://AW2.armylive.dodlive.mil/2011/08/a-life-remembered/>

Welcome to the AW2 Community Support Network

[http://www.wtc.army.mil/aw2/community\\_support/index.html](http://www.wtc.army.mil/aw2/community_support/index.html)

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U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2)

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