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Operation War Fighter Internships Assist Transitioning Soldiers with Civilian Careers

Alexandria, Va. – Across the Army, wounded, ill and injured soldiers assigned to Warrior Transition Units (WTUs) prepare for transition – some back to their units but many to the civilian world. An essential requirement for these ‘future’ civilians is starting a new career away from the Army. Approximately 50 percent of soldiers assigned to WTUs will ultimately undergo this transition; and, most are eager to gain skills in preparation of joining the civilian ranks.

“Throughout November, the Army observes Warrior Care Month, to reaffirm a commitment to quality health care, education and careers for our nation’s wounded, ill and injured Service Members. “The theme for this year is “*Success through Transition – Education, Employment, and Entrepreneurship*’. As our Soldiers transition to new civilian careers, our Army Team must work together for success.”

Securing a job is high on the priority list of most transitioning soldiers.

It’s not an easy step for a young infantryman with limited non-Army employment experience to transition from carrying a ruck sack and a M-16 rifle to becoming a valuable federal agency employee; however, with assistance from willing federal agency partners, scores of WTU soldiers are in the process of making the jump.

“Many of our soldiers are taking advantage of the ‘*Operation War Fighter*’ (OWF) internship program that links them with a federal agencies in their area as they fine tune skills each will need to compete for federal government and private sector jobs once they complete their military obligation,” said Michael Robinson Transition Coordinator with the Ft. Carson WTU. “I have 26 Soldiers now involved in the OWF internship program. Among those, eight have received permanent positions.”

Robinson isn’t stopping there. As a transition coordinator for one of the Army’s largest WTUs, he has many eager soldiers wanting to pursue civilian careers. His relationship with numerous federal agencies is helping place soldiers in jobs in Colorado and several Western states. And word of mouth around the WTU has brought more prospective OWF interns.

“Most recently Spc. Chauvonne Foston has hired on as a hydrologic technician in New Mexico and Spc. Brendan Duffy is now working as environmental technician; Lakewood, Colo.,” he said.

Among those appreciative of Robinson’s effort is Spc. David Spell.



“Mr. Robinson hooked me up and I’m very grateful for his hard work in securing an OWF internship with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS),” said Spell. “I really owe it all to him and tell everyone at the WTU to work with him to line up an internship. I’ll likely transition out of the Army in the next 7-15 months but the experience I’ll get from working with DHS during that time will make me highly employable – either with DHS or another federal agency.”

Spell started his OWF internship two weeks ago in the information technology and logistics area. Currently he’s working full-time inputting data but is ready to take on any additional responsibilities his DHS supervisor sends his way. Before his OWF internship, Spell had an internship on post at Ft. Carson but it wasn’t keeping him busy so he looked to Robinson for more challenges.

“My goal is to have an outstanding resume with real world work experience by the time I leave the WTU. Homeland Security is helping me make this happen and nothing is going to hold me back,” he said.

Spell, a 20-year old infantryman, seriously injured his back during combative drills during Basic Training in April 2011. Despite having two bulging discs in his back that were protruding toward his stomach, he managed to graduate Basic and moved on to his first assignment in Germany. Unfortunately, his back pain continued to worsen. He was assigned to the Ft. Carson WTU in August and has undergone extensive physical therapy and chiropractic care. Spell may eventually require surgery.

“I’m only 20 and have ‘*soldiered on*’ since my injury. While in Germany I competed for the German Proficiency Badge but wasn’t physically able to complete all the physical tasks. As a Soldier that’s what we do and I’m taking that dedication and commitment to DHS,” said Spell. “This is serious stuff. I have a wife, child and a baby due in January and I will support my family. The sky is the limit on my abilities and if you show me a task, I will accomplish the mission. I’m a soldier!”

Any Soldier that is medically cleared can participate in OWF.

“Our goal is to offer the soldier a chance to work for a civilian run organization to help he/she prepare for employment in the civilian sector,” said Robinson. “The effort helps them gain valuable experience that each can add to their resumes. Of course, promoting, equipping and building skill sets ultimately builds confidence for that soldier.

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Currently about 10,000 wounded, ill or injured Soldiers are assigned to Warrior Transition Units and Community Based Warrior Transition Units, and 87 percent of Soldiers assigned to a WTU have deployed at some point in their careers. The Army supports 29 Warrior Transition Units and 9 Community-Based Warrior Transition Units.

To learn more about the Warrior Transition Command and Warrior Care Month activities and programs taking place, check local web sites and installation and community newspapers. Follow the month-long observance on Warrior Transition Command website and blog, and share your thoughts on Facebook and Twitter.



Warrior Transition Command: <http://www.wtc.army.mil/>

Warrior Care Month: http://www.wtc.army.mil/about_us/warrior_care_month_2012.html

Warrior Transition Command Blogs: <http://wtc.armylive.dodlive.mil/tag/commanders-drumbeat/>

Warrior Transition Command Videos: http://www.wtc.army.mil/press_room/videos.html

Warrior Transition Command Twitter: <http://twitter.com/armyWTC>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/armyAW2>

Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/armywtc/>

Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2): <http://www.wtc.army.mil/aw2/index.html>

Army Wounded Warrior Blogs: <http://AW2.armylive.dodlive.mil>