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THE CONCERT

The Wounds of War

A Tribute to the Brave Servicemen and Women Injured in the Line of Duty

This year, we will pay special tribute to those who have been seriously wounded in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Due to remarkable developments in technology, and the speed in treating soldiers on the battlefield, many more are surviving what would have been deadly injuries in previous wars. While several thousand military personnel have died serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, more than twenty-five thousand have survived, but have sustained very serious injuries. In at least 10,000 cases, the soldiers' injuries are so severe that they can no longer see active duty.

Click on the links below to read and share compelling stories.

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The Story of Ted and Sarah Wade



Sgt. Ted Wade was stationed in Afghanistan and then Fallujah, Iraq in a regiment that patrolled searing for insurgents. Three times his convoy was hit by IEDs, but each time he managed to escape without wounds. Then, on February 14, 2004, Ted was hit again. The IED exploded underneath him. Ted lost his right arm above the elbow and sustained a traumatic brain injury. He was in a coma and faced grim chances of survival when his fiancée Sarah flew to his side in Germany – and searched for signs that Ted wanted to live.

Sarah says, "At the hospital I sat by his bedside and held his limp hand in an agony of fear and uncertainty. I was desperate to know. Did he want us to let him go or did he want to fight? I began to talk to him. I told him it was OK to let go ... whatever he wanted. I didn't know ... what was best ..."

Ted and Sarah did fight for his life – courageously and together. Sarah has had to advocate for him every step of the way. Many times the doctors were not hopeful. Often Sarah was the only person who could see that Ted was making progress. They were transferred to a variety of facilities, doctors and therapists. Ted was "retired" from the Army and suffered a drop in benefits. Sarah had to quit college and her job to care for him. Now, three years later, they continue to struggle physically, financially and emotionally – living in a sort of limbo. They do not give

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TAPS PERFORMANCE



General Colin L. Powell, USA (Ret.) will reflect on the meaning and mission of Memorial Day on the 2007 National Memorial Day Concert.

REFLECTIONS

"My loving son, I miss you very much ... It is so hard to believe you are gone ... Everyday I pray and think of you. Your Captain came to see us. What a wonderful man. The letters from your fellow soldiers were so touching. Forever my love I know you are at peace. Keep watch over your brothers and sisters in arms. Love always."

Mother of Ryan D. Christensen

up, and yet they do not dare to think of the big picture. Life is day to day.

On this year's program, co-host [Gary Sinise](#) and acclaimed actress [Bonnie Hunt](#) will share Ted and Sarah's inspiring story of struggle and determination as they continue to face the challenges of the wounds of war.

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The Extended Healing Process

On the [2004 National Memorial Day Concert](#), we shared a story on the wounded that featured Sgt. Eric Castro, who lost a leg in Iraq, and "Milkshake Man" Jim Mayer, a Vietnam vet who lost his legs in a landmine explosion. Since the Iraq War began, Jim has logged countless hours at Walter Reed Army Medical Hospital, visiting the soldiers there, listening to their stories, bringing them milkshakes and giving them hope. He was recently recognized for his 500th peer visit at Walter Reed.

In a recent conversation with the producers of the National Memorial Day Concert, Jim talked about TBI (traumatic brain injury), which has become a hallmark injury of the current conflicts. He emphasized the extended healing process and the uncertainties related to this injury. Not only can treatment be relentless and long-term, the outcome for the patient is unknowable. Often the spouse, parent and sometimes siblings have to quit jobs, school and daily life as they knew it to care for the soldier. They are uprooted from their communities, often facing transfers to multiple facilities, sometimes to several cities around the country, making it very difficult to hold a steady job or gather a support network. And yet, as with anyone facing a crisis, they need help with everyday activities, such as rides to appointments, assistance with in-home care, meals and childcare. Once home, they need more – sometimes just simple things like someone to cut the grass. In some cases, the recovering soldiers need jobs. And in every case they need to feel appreciated. Considering the magnitude of this disruption to their lives, these soldiers and families need our emotional and practical support – today and for many years to come.

Although Jim Mayer has gained recognition primarily through his volunteer work, he has been a member of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs staff since 1974 and currently is an outreach official in the Seamless Transition Office, working to ensure that, as combat veterans separate from military service, they can move seamlessly into VA programs.

More about Traumatic Brain Injury

[Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center](#)

The mission of the DVBIC is to serve active duty military, their dependents and veterans with TBD through state-of-the-art medical care, innovative clinical research initiatives and educational programs.

[National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke](#)

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Stress Resulting from Trauma

Another long-term issue for many soldiers returning from the home front is the struggle with Post Traumatic Stress. Symptoms include depression, nightmares and sleep troubles, panic attacks, flashbacks, alcohol and drug abuse, and marital difficulties. There are a growing number of resources nationwide that address this concern.

To learn more about Post Traumatic Stress, visit:

[National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder](#)

[VA Vet Center Home Page](#) (Readjustment Counseling Service)

On this web site, visitors can enter a zip code and find the nearest VA Vet Center where treatment for veterans and their families is available free of charge.

[National Institute on Mental Health](#)



Resources for Helping Wounded Soldiers and their Families

Although much more needs to be done to support our wounded soldiers and their families, many organizations are making a valiant effort to address their concerns. If you are in need of support or would like to contribute to the effort yourself, here are several worthy organizations that can help.

Any Soldier, Inc.

For those wanting to send support to a soldier in harm's way, this website provides information on what to send, who to send it to and how to send it. Started in August 2003 as a simple family effort to help the soldiers in one Army unit, the effort was expanded on January 1, 2004 due to overwhelming requests to include any member of any of the Armed Forces stationed in areas that are in harm's way.

American Red Cross

The American Red Cross offers many opportunities for volunteers to help military families or work at a military hospital. Local chapters help volunteers find rewarding activities that fit their schedules. The Red Cross needs people of all skill levels and provides training, if needed.

VA Voluntary Service

The Department of Veterans Affairs Volunteer Service (VAS), one of the largest centralized volunteer programs in the federal government, was founded in 1946 to assist veterans while they are cared for by VA health care facilities. VAS volunteers assist patients by augmenting staff with end of life care programs, foster care, community-based volunteer programs, hospital wards, nursing homes, and outreach centers. The VAS website offers many ways to join the effort.

Hire Vets First – Employer Zone

Hire Vets First is a comprehensive career website for hiring veterans of America's military, where managers, human resources specialists, and veterans can find the resources they need to match employment opportunities with knowledge, skills and abilities.

Hire Vets First – REALLifelines

REALlifelines is dedicated to helping injured veterans return to fulfilling, productive civilian lives. The organization has created a network of resources to address the professional and educational goals of veterans while they deal with the realities of rehabilitation and recovery.

U.S.O.

The USO offers many ways for you to get involved personally or as a company through volunteering and contributing. With troops stationed all over the world, and in need of support, the USO provides a means to have a direct and positive impact on their lives.

Wounded Warrior Project

The Wounded Warrior Project serves wounded, active duty serviceman and their families as the soldiers are rehabilitated and adjust to civilian life.

Heroes to Hometowns

Heroes to Hometown welcomes back service members who can no longer serve in the military because of injuries sustained, helping them to reintegrate with support from national and state networks, such as American Legion State Adjutants, and coordination of resources,

Fisher House Foundation

Supporting America's military in their time of need, Fisher House Foundation provides a "home away from home" that enables family members to be close to a loved one at the most stressful time – during hospitalization for an illness, disease or injury. Fisher House helps families of patients receiving care at major military and VA medical centers throughout the country and overseas.

DAV Transition Service Program

This program helps service men and women make the all-important transition back to civilian life. DAV representatives conduct or participate in pre-discharge transition assistance briefings, review service

medical records, and confer with Rating Specialists, physicians and others. They also assist in completion of applications and prosecution of benefits claims for benefits.

DAV Charitable Service Trust

This trust supports physical and psychological rehabilitation programs, meets the special needs of veterans with specific disabilities – such as amputation and blindness – and aids and shelters homeless veterans.

Sentinels of Freedom

Sentinels of Freedom gives injured veterans the gift of time — helping them readjust to civilian life and their new physical challenges while finding life paths that best suit their abilities, interests and needs. Recipients receiving assistance with housing, transportation, employment and education and are connected to a team of caring volunteers who provide guidance, mentoring and friendship during a four-year program.

Yellow Ribbon Fund

Long-term rehabilitation at any hospital is not easy. Yellow Ribbon Fund volunteers arrange opportunities for injured soldiers at Walter Reed and Bethesda Naval Hospital and their families to enjoy the local community, taking them to sporting events and other outings. In addition, the mentoring and internship program gives veterans a chance to learn job skills at a local company or technical institution.

Operation Second Chance

Operation Second Chance provides support for soldiers at Marines at Walter Reed and assists them when they transition back to duty or to civilian life. This includes aiding in rehabilitation and recovery, assisting in the modification of housing to accommodate disabled veterans and helping families in any way needed.

Department of Veterans Affairs

If you're a veteran or volunteer looking for a VA facility in your area, visit the Department of Veterans Affairs Web site's Facilities Locator & Directory.

Hope for the Warriors™

The mission of Hope for the Warriors™ is to enhance the quality of life for U.S. service members and their families nationwide who have been adversely affected by injuries or death in the line of duty. Hope for the Warriors™ actively seeks to ensure that the sacrifices of wounded and fallen warriors and their families are never forgotten, nor their needs unmet, particularly with regard to the short- and long-term care of the severely injured. Fundraising projects include the Run for the Warriors and Team Wounded Warrior. Special programs include Spouses' Scholarships, A Warrior's Wish™, Hope-N-Comfort Bears, Wounded Warrior Barracks/Spouses Support Group and Warrior House transitional, adapted living quarters and Immediate Needs Grants for transportation and other necessities

MILITARY SITES OFFERING ASSISTANCE

Military Severely Injured Center

This one-stop web site lists employees interested in helping severely injured veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and provides a tool box for veterans seeking employment, including resume creation, a skills translator, salary calculator and job fair information. It also provides links to additional transition, rehabilitation and employment resources.

Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2)

This program provides support and advice for severely wounded, ill and injured soldiers and their families during medical treatment, rehabilitation and transition. Advocates cut through red tap to navigate federal, state and private benefit systems and link soldiers to selected financial, educational, employment, legal and medical resources.

Marine For Life

The mission of the Marine For Life program is to provide transition assistance to Marines who honorably leave active service and return to civilian life, and to support injured Marines and their families. The program taps into the network of Marine veterans and Marine-friendly businesses, organizations and individuals. Assistance is provided with employment, education, housing, childcare, veterans benefits and other support services.

[America Supports You](#)

American Supports You provides a variety of resources for Americans wanting to show support for our military — whether by sending a care package, donating airline miles, contributing to scholarship funds or supporting wounded servicemen and women. The site lists more than 150 non-profit organizations dedicated to helping our troops and their families.

[The Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund](#)

The Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund provides financial grants and other assistance to wounded Marines, sailors and their families.

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[Share Your Story](#)

For those who have been affected by the wounds of war, sharing their stories can be painful, especially because they feel isolated from those who do not experience the ramifications of war on a daily basis. Yet sharing these experiences can also have a powerful healing affect and can help the wider population understand the severe challenges the wounded and their families face. The [Sharing Your Stories](#) section of this website offers some help in voicing painful memories.

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