



WOUNDED WARRIOR

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During this season of joy and reflection, Areetha and I, as well as Dr. Todd Fore, our executive director, and Chief Master Sgt. Ruben Gonzalez, our command chief, and his wife, Adalia, welcome the opportunity to wish you and your family the peace and warmth that we share because of the sacrifices you have made for our nation.

I assure you that your achievements and sacrifices have not been in vain nor have they gone unnoticed. From the highest level in our nation you will hear echoed the heartfelt gratitude for your selfless devotion to making this nation more secure for everyone.

The perseverance that all our wounded, ill and injured Airmen demonstrate daily serves as an inspiration to all of us. Your strength and determination epitomizes the fortitude of the men and women serving in our nation's Air Force today. You deserve – and will receive – our very best support as you continue your life journey.

Our wish for you and your family is a happy holiday season, and a new year of health, peace and happiness. I look forward to our continued partnership, and I feel honored to be part of your Air Force family.

Maj. Gen. A.J. Stewart
Commander, Air Force Personnel Center



Clockwise from top left: Dr. Todd Fore, executive director; Chief Master Sgt. Ruben Gonzalez, command chief; Maj. Gen. A.J. Stewart, commander; Areetha Carter-Stewart; and Adalia Gonzalez.

Send your comments, feedback

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Commentary:

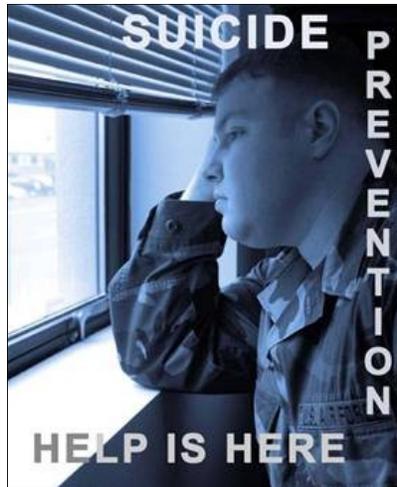
Observation, intervention key to suicide prevention

by Chief Master Sgt. Richard Simonsen
Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling Senior
Enlisted Leader

JOINT BASE ANACOSTIA-BOLLING, D.C. -- By nature, I am not the most observant person. I never notice my wife's change of hair color or style, I am never certain if the outfit is new or not, and I could not tell you the last time the kids took a bath. That last sentence took me over an hour to write because I am not even aware of the things I don't observe. But all that changes during college football season! I know exactly what time and what channel College Game Day comes on. I can tell you if my alma mater the University of Maryland Terrapins is on television and who they are playing.

So I can be very observant when something is important to me. And there is nothing more important than the people in my life. We are all in this military family and we have a crisis in our total force. Our active duty, reserve, guard, civilian employees and family members are killing themselves at an alarming rate. No service is spared the horrible scourge of suicide.

The good news is that all of us can be part of the solution. Each of you is an early warning sensor able to spot the risk



factors and the warning signs of suicidal ideations.

According to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, there are many warning signs to look for in our friends and co-workers. These include talking about not wanting to be around anymore, giving away possessions, depression, anxiety, reckless behavior and an increased use of alcohol and drugs. Additionally, there are risk factors that raise the likelihood of a suicide attempt. These include major health, occupational, legal, financial or relationship issues.

Other risk factors include a sense of isolation and a perceived stigma associated with asking for help. This is where we come in as good wingmen, shipmates and battle buddies. It

requires all of us to be observant of those around us to look for differences in personality or behavior. We can remove the stigma of asking for help by being helpful ourselves. If you do get a sense that your friend or coworker may be suicidal, it is an emergency that requires immediate intervention.

The Air Force uses the ACE acronym in suicide prevention. "A" is Ask your wingman. It may take courage, but calmly and firmly ask the question. Just say it: "Are you thinking of killing yourself?" "C" is Care for your wingman. Calmly and safely control the situation without using force; remove any means that could be used for self-injury without putting yourself in harm's way; and actively listen to show understanding and produce relief. "E" is Escort your wingman. Never leave him or her alone; escort your wingman to the chain of command, chaplain, mental health professional, to their primary care provider or to the nearest emergency room. Additionally, you, as an intervener, can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255.

Similarly, the Navy uses the ACT acronym standing for Ask, Care and Treat. Whether you use ACE or ACT, it is important to take your intuition seriously. It is an emergency that requires immediate action. We must get involved by being direct and nonjudgmental. Ask and then listen! Do not be sworn to secrecy. Offer hope, not advice, and get help.

People are much more important than who wins a football game. Paying attention and intervening may save a life.

The Air Force uses the ACE acronym in suicide prevention:

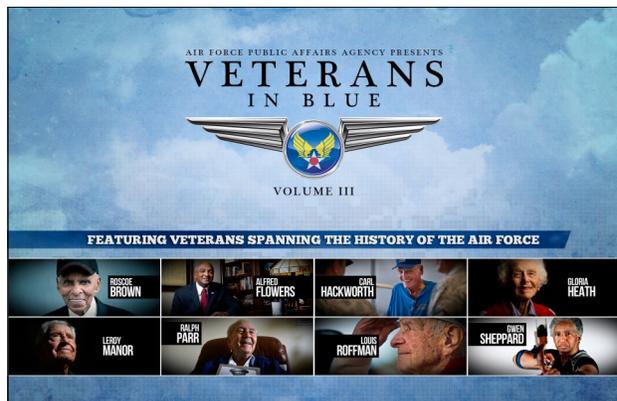
A = Ask your wingman
C = Care for your wingman
E = Escort your wingman

19 stories of heroism told in 'Veterans in Blue'

WASHINGTON -- "Let me not mourn for the men who have died fighting, but rather let me be glad that such heroes have lived," said Gen. George S. Patton.

For decades Airmen have answered the call to serve and protect the nation's interests, its people and the cherished freedoms that underpin it all, risking their lives for others, and thus, becoming heroes in the eyes of those they protected.

From WWII to Korea to Vietnam to Iraq, 19 stories of service and heroism at war are captured in the third volume of "Veterans in Blue," formerly known as "Pioneers in Blue."



Launching Veteran's Day, the new displays join those presently hanging in the Pentagon's A-Ring on the 5th floor

[Read More](#)

Wounded warriors attend Stand Up for Heroes event

Five Air Force wounded warriors and four caregivers traveled to New York City in early November to attend the Stand Up For Heroes event sponsored by the Bob Woodruff Foundation.

The 6th Annual Stand Up For Heroes gala honored injured service members, veterans and their families by offering support through entertainment. The event was part of the New York Comedy Festival and served as a fundraising event for The Bob Woodruff Foundation. The foundation offers services to injured heroes such as job training, career placement and

counseling to help service men and women cope with combat stress.

Air Force attendees included Master Sgt. Christopher Aguilera and his wife, Lisa; Master Sgt. James Davis and his wife, Katharine; Tech. Sgt. Joseph Deslauriers and his wife, Lisa; Tech. Sgt. Ada Bauer and her husband, Stephen; and Staff Sgt. Russell Logan.

Among the entertainers were comedians Robin Williams, Ricky Gervais, Jon Stewart, Mike Birbiglia, and Patton Oswalt. The event also featured musical performances by John Mayer, Bruce Springsteen and

Roger Waters who performed with a band comprised of military veterans.

Before the events, spouses received makeovers from Christian Dior, and their clothes were donated from The Limited.

The amount of money raised during the gala has not been released yet; however, the five previous events have raised more than \$10 million in all to support wounded warriors and their families.

For more information on Stand Up for Heroes and the Bob Woodruff Foundation, visit the foundation's website at <http://remind.org/>.



Five Air Force wounded warriors and four caregivers traveled to New York City in early November to attend the Stand Up For Heroes event sponsored by the Bob Woodruff Foundation. (Courtesy photo)

Services and Resources

One of the newest and most comprehensive websites for transitioning service members, [Hero2Hired](#) was originally created to make it easy for Reserve Component service members to connect to and find jobs with military-friendly companies. It is now available to all transitioning service members. H2H also offers career exploration tools, military-to-civilian skills translations, education and training resources, as well as a mobile app.



If someone you know is homeless, contact the nearest [local homeless assistance agency](#) to get help. Agencies are listed by state, and can help people find temporary or permanent housing options, as well as connect people with local food banks and health-care programs.



Anger is one of the main concerns of service members returning from deployment, according to [afterdeployment.org](#). Problems can include irritability to rage. Most of the time things calm down by themselves, but if you are finding anger is interfering with your adjustment to work or with your relationships, then this program can help. Take an assessment to get feedback on how you are doing or jump into the workshops to learn about how to manage anger. Check out the videos of others who are dealing with anger and explore the e-library for in-depth information.

Air Force Wounded Warriors can receive expedited processing of disability claims from Social Security. Benefits available through Social Security are different than those from the Department of Veterans Affairs and require a separate application. The expedited process is used for military service members who become disabled while on active military service on or after Oct. 1, 2001, regardless of where the disability occurs. Visit the [Social Security Administration's](#) website for more information.

Writing your story can be a good form of therapy

Fellow wounded warriors,

I need your help and input! Shortly after I was wounded two years ago, someone asked me to write my version of what happened to be published in a newsletter. It took me about six months and plenty of pages to put it all down. When I was done, it felt better than any therapy session.

It helped my friends, family, co-workers, and other people in my career field understand what I really went through because I couldn't always articulate it. Plus, one day, I'll be able to pass it to my kids and it'll have more details than my memory allows.

I would like to compile wounded warrior stories for the Air Force Historian's office. How we earned our Purple Hearts is a story the Air Force should maintain. In my opinion, I wanted to share my story for the people who lost their lives, and whose stories ended that day.

These stories won't be published, but archived. There's no timeline or suspense because I know this is something that takes time. I think our stories are important for current and later generations -- maybe a little more so than the facts and figures compiled each year.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or anything at all. My email is jordanlindeke@gmail.com. Thank you for your help!



Maj. Jordan Lindeke
Air Force wounded warrior

Special events

Warrior lauded at Packers game

The Green Bay Packers and WPS Health Insurance paid tribute to Staff Sgt. Kevin Parke, an Air Force wounded warrior, during a recent Packers-St. Louis Cardinals game thanks to Operation Fan Mail.

The operation recognizes families with an active-duty service member during each Packers game.

Parke grew up in Spring Lake Park, Minn., and his late mother was from Milltown, Wis. He is currently an explosive ordnance disposal technician for the 96th Explosive Ordnance Flight, 96th Civil Engineer Group at the Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

In 2003, Parke joined the Air Force and was soon deployed to Bagram Air Base in



(Courtesy of Matt Becker/Packers.com)

Afghanistan. Parke's most recent deployment was to Afghanistan's Helmand Province, where he was part of a three-person team who disarmed 78 improvised explosive devices. His team was the target of IED explosions on three separate occasions while traveling in armored transport vehicles. He sustained injuries including a traumatic brain injury, a herniated back disc and post-traumatic stress. Parke has received multiple awards for his service, including two Purple Hearts.

Accompanying Parke to the football game were his father, Kent; his uncle, Lloyd Thorsbakken; and his friend, Cole Traynor.



Warrior places 3rd in golf tournament

Retired Master Sgt. Kenneth Gestring, an Air Force wounded warrior, recently placed third in the Warrior Open Golf Tournament hosted by the G. W. Bush Presidential Center near Dallas. Gestring scored 77 in Round 1, and 84 in Round 2 of the tournament. Twenty-two golfers took part in the event. For more details, click [here](#).

Do you need to update your contact information?

NOTE - Updates should be provided to: AFW2 Program Office, AFPC Disabilities Branch, DEERS, DFAS, and the VA.

AFW2 Program Office – Call **800-581-9437** or via email: wounded.warrior@us.af.mil

AFPC Disabilities Branch for people on the Temporary Disability Retired List – Email disability@us.af.mil

DEERS – Updating info in DEERS is accomplished in one of three ways:

Call **800-538-9552**

Visit a military base ID card issuance facility

Visit the website at: <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect/faces/index.jspx?>

DFAS – Online at “myPay” website: <https://mypay.dfas.mil>

VA – Call **800-827-1000** or visit their website at www.va.gov for the nearest VA office

