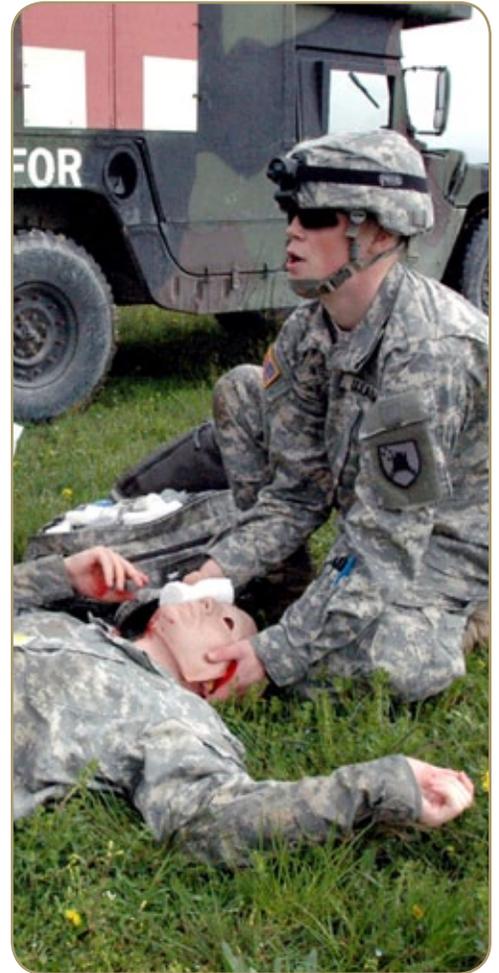




Resetting Reserve Component Units: Taking Care of Soldiers and Families



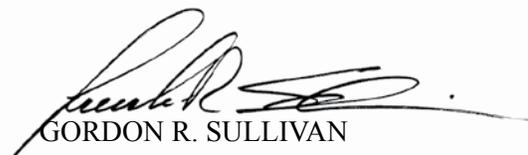


29 July 2011

In late September 1776, General George Washington wrote a letter to the Continental Congress with several urgent requests from the battlefield. Over the previous several weeks, a vast British force had repeatedly defeated the Americans and, only days earlier, seized New York City. Morale was lower than ever, but Washington feared an even bigger catastrophe: the term of service for most of his army was due to expire before the year’s end, and he desperately needed volunteers. He pleaded with Congress to support his force properly, pointing out that Soldiers and families who elect to “forsake the Sweets of domestic enjoyments” to serve the nation should never have to face ruin at home when “every Member of the community is equally Interested and benefitted by [their] Labours.”¹

Nearly 235 years later, Washington’s words are still timely. In a military era seemingly dominated by advanced technologies such as smart bombs, unmanned drone strikes and cyber attacks, it is sometimes easy to overlook the fact that war, by its very nature, is a profoundly human endeavor. Counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, in particular, have proved yet again that there is no substitute for American landpower—boots on the ground. Moreover, during the last decade, America’s military could not have enjoyed the successes it has had without the sustained contribution of its reserve component as an operational force; the far-reaching operational experience ingrained within the ranks of the Army National Guard and Army Reserve must be preserved. Likewise, the Army must preserve the resolute spirit of its men and women and sustain the resilience of every one of its volunteer Soldiers—the Army’s most important resource.

This newest installment of AUSA’s signature Torchbearer series explores numerous initiatives that the Army’s senior leadership—active and reserve—have implemented to sustain and preserve the reserve component Soldier and family. We examine how each program not only benefits individual Soldiers and family members directly but also improves the Army’s total preparedness and overall capability. We also highlight several areas in which critical support is still needed from the executive and legislative branches of the federal and state governments. We hope that you will continue to look to AUSA for thoughtful analysis of contemporary national security issues.



GORDON R. SULLIVAN

General, USA Retired

President, AUSA

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¹ George Washington, “To the President of Congress, Colonel Morris’s, on the Heights of Harlem, September 24, 1776,” *The Writings of George Washington From the Original Manuscript Sources: Volume 6*, Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library.



Executive Summary

We have learned a lot about support to our Soldiers, their families and employers over the past decade. It is critical that we work to ensure our force is employed, that they are physically and mentally fit and that we understand the stresses that we ask them to endure, whether deployed or at home. It is vital that we continue to fund Soldier and family outreach programs.

Major General Raymond Carpenter
Acting Director, Army National Guard²

American security strategy in the past decade has called for the capacity to fight two regional land wars simultaneously. The U.S. Army has, in fact, had to meet precisely this demand for many years—demand that has compelled rapid transformation of the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve into a fully operational force. Approximately half of the Army’s capability resides in the reserve component (RC). It is essential that the Army take significant steps today to assure access to the RC because current and future operational flexibility has come to require all components’ uninterrupted integration in the modern, rotational force generating process.

The unprecedented pace of repeated RC deployments has made resetting the force—returning units, Soldiers and families to the level of readiness necessary for future missions—a formidable challenge. During reset, these Soldiers need to assimilate back into their local communities by reuniting with family, having timely and predictable access to health care-related resources, engaging successfully with the civilian workforce and pursuing educational opportunities. Both the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve have instituted a variety of programs and initiatives during the past ten years to ameliorate these challenges and take care of Soldiers and their families; these efforts have made the RC’s contributions much more sustainable and have greatly facilitated the Army’s retention of the invaluable experience found today within its ranks.

In some cases, the reserve component has tailored Army-wide programs to its own needs, and in other instances it has developed its own new services. These efforts vary widely in their methods, but all aim to improve Soldier preparedness in one or more of three main areas: family resilience, physical and psychological wellness and career and educational support. Programs include but are not limited to:

- **Strong Bonds.** Strong Bonds events create healthy environments in which Army families strengthen relationships and reconnect with one another.
- **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program.** Reserve component-specific Yellow Ribbon events introduce returning Soldiers and their families to local resources that help with stress management, parenting, money management, health, education, career opportunities and much more.
- **Deployment Cycle Support Program.** Initiatives such as New Hampshire’s hybrid military–civilian partnership integrate local support with National Guard resources under a single administrative umbrella.
- **Army Strong Community Centers.** The Army Reserve is bringing to communities far from Army facilities scaled levels of the support traditionally available only on active Army installations.
- **Comprehensive Soldier Fitness.** All Soldiers and many families confidentially self-assess and strengthen core areas of psychological and emotional wellness.
- **Army Wounded Warrior Program.** Soldiers receive one-on-one guidance throughout the recovery process, develop a long-term career strategy and access the many resources to which they are entitled.
- **Reserve Component Medical Readiness.** Both the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve are executing coordinated medical readiness strategies to maximize unit readiness and meet operational demands.

² Testimony before the Defense Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee, 11 May 2011.

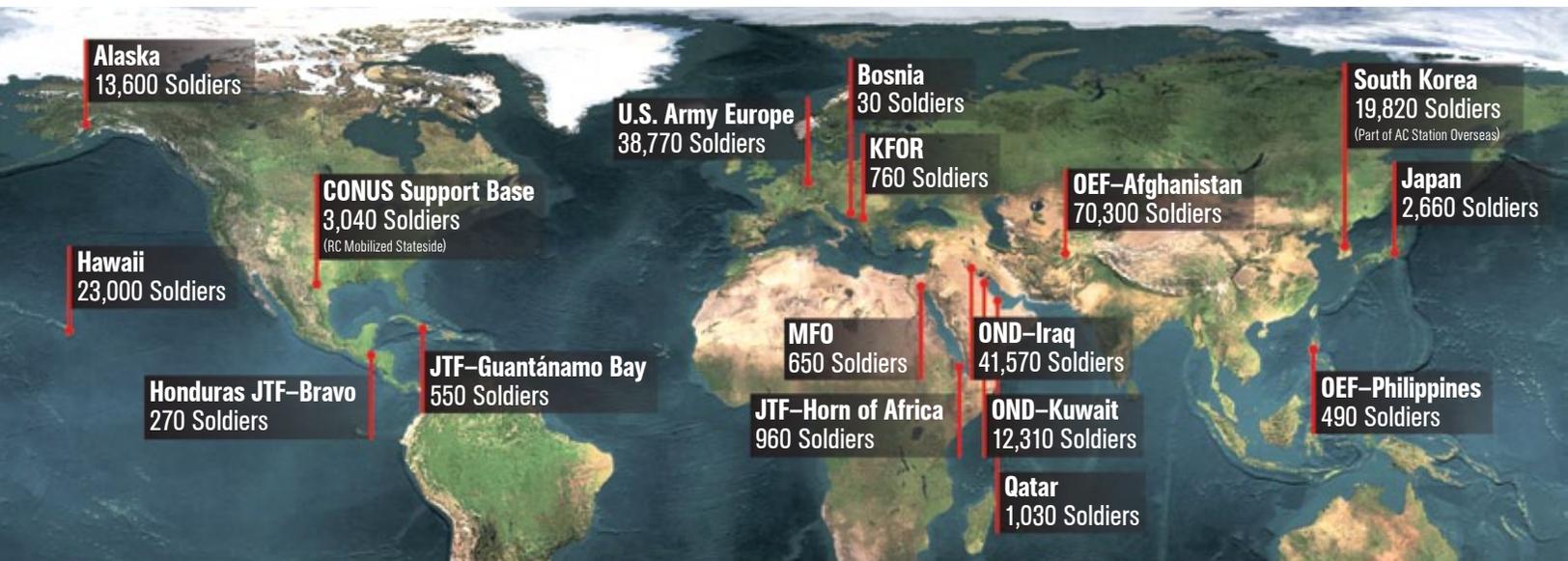


- **Job Connection Education Program.** A new National Guard initiative offers Soldiers civilian career counseling, helps job candidates strengthen their résumés and follows up candidates' applications with employers.
- **Employment Partnership of the Armed Forces.** Begun as an Army Reserve initiative in 2008, EPAF is now a joint effort with the Army National Guard; full-time EPAF program support managers and a vast online jobs database connect reserve component Soldiers and families to employers who need their skills.

Together, these efforts not only build stronger and more resilient Soldiers and families but also maximize the readiness of today's operational reserve component that has proved to be critical for sustaining the Army's missions overseas. Soldiers and their families benefit from the Army's direct support, achieving levels of personal stability and prosperity that they might never have attained otherwise, and a more stable and more professionally developed cadre of Soldiers makes the reserve component more enduring as an operational force.

More improvements to Soldier readiness and total wellness remain. In the past several years, Congress has supported Army reset programs adequately, but funding must not slow at the peak of demand. In the short term, several programs listed above have proven records of immediate success and are poised for nationwide expansion. In the long term, the Army's dependence on its reserve component requires that broader steps be taken to prevent any lapse in RC availability. Congress must resource sufficient Army endstrength to prevent undue strain on Soldiers, authorize annual defense budgets predictably so that the Army can execute multiyear wellness plans without interruption and reexamine procedures and processes that obstruct Soldiers' transition between active and reserve status. In addition, Congress must continue its support for Soldier and family resilience programs, continue to improve post-deployment transitional health care and expand opportunities for collaboration between civilian employers and Soldier employees.

Soldiers deserve a quality of life commensurate with the quality of their service. The Army has already invested heavily in a variety of successful programs aimed at sustaining its people and substantially improving immediate and future total force readiness. The ultimate success of these programs is contingent upon full, timely and predictable funding. Current events ebb and flow; Soldiers and their families live with the effects caused by these events forever.



U.S. Army Global Commitments

as of
19 July 2011

AC Stationed Overseas
105,730 Soldiers

AC Stationed Stateside
465,380 Soldiers

Other Operations & Exercises
4,810 Soldiers

242,830 Soldiers deployed/forward stationed in nearly 80 countries overseas
(Includes active component stationed overseas)

Army Personnel Strength

	Component	RC Authorized for Mobilization / On Current Orders
Active (AC)	571,110	N/A
Reserve (RC)		
USAR	205,450	16,360
ARNG	360,800	40,120
	1,137,360	



Resetting Reserve Component Units: Taking Care of Soldiers and Families

We know [Soldier and family] readiness is inextricably linked to mission readiness, recruitment and retention . . . appropriate resourcing will allow us to assess structure requirements, staffing needs and develop effective processes that ensure the consistent delivery of programs and services.

Lieutenant General Jack C. Stultz, Jr.
Chief, Army Reserve/Commanding General,
United States Army Reserve Command³

Introduction

In the past decade, the U.S. Army has prevailed in some of the most daunting tasks in its history. Soldiers—active, Guard and Reserve—have demonstrated spirit, sacrifice and sheer determination in protecting America’s vital interests and supporting friends and allies around the world. However, the strain of the first decade of 21st century conflict has had a profound effect on Soldiers of all components and their families. For the Army the human toll of recent military engagements has been steep and shows no signs of abating.

Resetting the force—returning units, Soldiers and families to a level of readiness necessary for future missions—remains a formidable challenge requiring an enduring level of commitment from the executive and legislative branches of government. Reset encompasses tasks to reintegrate Soldiers and their families and then organize, man, equip and train a unit. It is predicated on the concept of providing Soldiers and their families an opportunity to recover from the cumulative effects of a sustained operational tempo. The Army’s reset plan for all components strives to revitalize Soldiers and their families by reestablishing and strengthening relationships following deployments. This reset plan—including identifying and applying lessons learned over a decade—is an imperative that endures not only as long as the Army is deployed but also an additional two to three years after major deployments end.

The unprecedented pace of repeated deployments creates significant health, career, educational and relationship challenges for Soldiers of all components and their families. The high number and intensity of

Did you know?

- More than **1.1 million** Soldiers have deployed in the past decade, along with **30,000** civilians.
- More than **4,000** Soldiers have sacrificed their lives for the United States, leaving behind more than **25,000** surviving family members.
- Some **28,000** Soldiers have been wounded; **7,500** of them require long-term care.
- Approximately **242,000** Soldiers are presently deployed to almost 80 countries.

Source: 2011 Army Posture Statement

Note: Reset also includes comprehensive efforts to repair, replace and recapitalize equipment affected by the harsh environments of war. In addition, reset includes critical skills training and professional development training at home station following lengthy deployments. This report, however, focuses primarily on the human dimension of reserve component reset.

recent operational commitments have strained not only the Army’s active component (AC) forces but also its reserve component (RC) forces. No longer a strategic reserve, the Army’s RC (the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve) has evolved into an operational force, providing combat, combat support and combat service support forces to combatant commanders—on a rotational basis similar to that of its AC counterpart. In fact, the RC fulfills most of the critical wartime

³ Fiscal Year 2011 Budget testimony before the Readiness Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, 27 April 2010.



requirements for medical support, transportation, engineering, civil affairs, information operations and other logistical functions. After nearly ten years supporting the warfight in Afghanistan and Iraq, Army RC forces are a battle-tested, seasoned and trusted part of the total force.

RC Soldiers and family members face some unique reset challenges caused by extended distances from reserve centers and readiness centers, civilian career responsibilities and the RC's evolving role as an operational force. During reset, RC Soldiers need to assimilate back into their local communities by reuniting with family, having timely and predictable access to health care-related resources, engaging successfully with the civilian workforce and pursuing educational opportunities. Such reintegration is not only beneficial for Soldiers and their families but also of vital importance for the overall readiness of the RC and, ultimately, the entire Army. The Army National Guard has instituted a variety of programs and initiatives during the past ten years to ameliorate these challenges and take care of Soldiers and their families; the Army Reserve has both developed and adapted service delivery models tailored to meet the needs of geographically dispersed Soldiers. Will resources continue to be available now and in the years ahead to sustain reserve component Soldiers and family members?

Army Force Generation

In 2006, the Secretary of the Army approved implementation of a new force generation model called Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN). A rotational and progressive readiness model that maximizes Total Force integration, ARFORGEN fundamentally transformed

the Army's Cold War-era, tiered readiness construct for force generation into a sustainable and more efficient process. Currently, ARFORGEN is defined as the structured progression of unit readiness over time, resulting in recurring periods of availability of trained, ready and cohesive units. These units are prepared for operational deployment in support of combatant commanders and in response to other Army requirements.

Originally envisioned as a "supply-based model," ARFORGEN has yet to be fully realized because, since its implementation, the demand for warfighting capabilities has exceeded sustainable supply. It has, however, enabled the Army to successfully satisfy the high demand for conventional ground forces throughout the current conflicts. When fully implemented in Fiscal Year 2012, the supply-based ARFORGEN process should help to posture the Army to accomplish both emerging and enduring operational requirements.

The critical contribution of the reserve component to supply-based ARFORGEN is fundamental to meeting the nation's security requirements and reestablishing operational depth and strategic flexibility. Approximately half of the Army's capability resides in the reserve component. Their units, including division headquarters, brigade combat teams, functional and multifunctional brigades and other combat support and combat service support units, are integral to achieving not only mission requirements but also surge packages required by the nation. With assured access to the RC, the Army can move toward restoring the operational depth and the strategic flexibility necessary to support combatant commander requirements at a tempo that is sustainable for the all-volunteer force. The positive impact of RC Soldier and family programs and initiatives is expected to increase over the next several years as wartime demands lessen. In sum, if the programs receive continued executive and legislative support and resolve, then the effects of back-to-back deployments and the inability to meet emerging operational requirements should dissipate over time.

Reset in the Family

As the tempo and operational significance of RC unit deployments have continued to increase, the burden has not been felt any more deeply than within the families of RC Soldiers. The Army recognizes that resilient, ready Soldiers come from resilient, ready



families built on strong relationships. The following programs are by no means the only efforts that the RC is making to reset families. Rather, the initiatives featured below are examples of four very different ways in which the RC provides families with reset-related services. The first is an example of how the RC is implementing a popular Army-wide family wellness program; the second is a program developed specifically to address the challenges unique to RC families; the third is a narrower example of how one state's National Guard has developed many local partners to solve RC-specific reset problems; the fourth is an Army Reserve-led initiative, still in its infancy, that breaks the existing paradigm by assigning support coordinators among the communities that the RC needs to serve.

Strong Bonds. One of the best ways in which the Army is helping to strengthen families is through the Strong Bonds training program. Since its modest beginnings with one unit in 1999, the Strong Bonds program has assisted commanders in increasing individual resilience among Soldiers by strengthening Army families, which strengthens the Army organization as well.

Strong Bonds training events are designed to be accessible to every Soldier. Essentially, the Army conducts expenses-paid getaway events, coordinated by unit chaplains, to provide safe, healthy environments where participants can openly discuss the stresses of relocation, deployments, military lifestyle challenges and more. They are conducted in an offsite retreat format to encourage attendees to participate freely, to maximize effect. Soldiers and families attend with others in their units on similar deployment schedules. Participants interact with one another in small group activities and breakout sessions where they can share experiences, identify common bonds and build friendships. The atmosphere is intended to provide a relaxed hiatus—a place where Soldiers and families can focus solely on relationships with one another.

However, the Strong Bonds training program is much more than just a couples retreat. An important element of the program's success is its versatility; the Army offers at least one Strong Bonds program (and, for many, more than one) for every Soldier; this includes four unique types of Strong Bonds retreat events: Strong Bonds Single Soldier, Strong Bonds for

Couples, Strong Bonds for Families and Strong Bonds for Pre- and Redeployment. These events are part of a strategic plan for the Army to manage today's difficult operational demands.

Strong Bonds Single Soldier events assist Soldiers in making positive choices early. (About 40 percent of the Army's Soldiers are single, and many of them will marry while on active duty.) The program encourages sound decisionmaking in relationships and encourages them to incorporate emotions such as loneliness, homesickness or apprehension about deployment into

"The Strong Bonds Marriage Retreat literally jump-started our marriage. My husband and I attended the weekend retreat cautiously but optimistic. The seminars were not only enlightening but extremely informative. The presenters were not mechanical or out of touch. They were heartfelt, sincere and extremely knowledgeable on the various topics covered. I was truly touched by the attention to the civilian spouses. I was truly blessed by the topics covered such as communication danger signs, safety building blocks in the marriage, deployment and its effect on the military families and problem solving techniques.

"At the Strong Bonds retreat, I looked around the room and saw a lot of hurt in the marriages, especially with the spouses whose husbands spent a lot of time away from their family. However, towards the end of the Strong Bonds retreat, I saw something markedly different. There was hope. Hope in having tools to build and support military marriages and families. Hope in knowing there was an avenue to reconnect with your spouse. Hope in having a venue to learn about how to build a stronger marriage. This truly was a weekend full of knowledge and support that many of the spouses needed.

"The military did not let me down. It is helping us to save our marriage through the Strong Bonds Retreat and the tools we were provided. I am truly grateful for your recommendation that we attend the Strong Bonds Marriage Retreat and the opportunity it provided me and my husband to have hope in the future of our marriage."

Excerpt of a letter from a recent Army Reserve Strong Bonds event attendee

Source: Army Reserve



War-weary, especially after a mortar attack on his Humvee in Iraq, Jim Williams, a first sergeant in the Tennessee Army National Guard, was not quite the same guy as when he had left his home in Granville. His wife, Vanessa, who had been awaiting his return for 18 months, had also changed. She had become more independent by solo-parenting their newborn daughter and two-year-old son. When Jim and Vanessa were finally together again, the result was “major problems and animosity,” Vanessa said. “We had a major communication breakdown. We needed anything that we could do to help improve our relationship and understand each other.” The Williams couple attended a Strong Bonds retreat in fall 2010 in mountainous Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

Vanessa Williams says the conference improved her marriage 100 percent. Not only did the Soldiers discuss wartime memories and how those affected their marriages, but she was surprised at how the conference addressed relevant topics. “I can tell you that in our group, we would all go back again. We had a great time and great experience. I really recommend this to other couples, even if you have a great marriage. We couldn’t have asked for a better experience. It was life changing.”

Colonel Michael “Dennis” France and his wife, Su-

san, attended the same retreat. Although the France couple had been married for nearly 30 years, they still learned new techniques for talking to each other. Dennis served in the first Gulf War in 1990 and most recently served 13 months in Afghanistan. Susan said that even though she takes military life in stride, she was still caught off-guard when her husband returned with issues from his most recent deployment. She agreed to go to the retreat because she thought it sounded like fun, but her expectations were low.

“I was really surprised at how well done it was,” Susan said. “There are different aspects of the Soldier’s life at work and life at home. They brought that to my attention. It seemed like he came home tight-lipped and was not easy to talk to. That’s his personality to begin with, but this conference made him open up and talk and think about what had happened.”

Dennis France said he is practicing what he learned. He discovered that Susan had changed their banking system and other aspects of home life. The retreat taught him how to be more flexible and accepting of her changes. “One thing I noticed is that she’s more independent and a stronger person. . . . It’s made us a lot stronger.”

Source: Army National Guard

their conversations. Strong Bonds for Couples events are aimed at improving communication within relationships and fostering recognition of the stressors such as long separations and frequent relocations that challenge Army couples. Strong Bonds for Families events welcome children to attend with their parents and have become popular among the Army’s 35,000 single-parent families. These events focus on building and maintaining closeness among family members during the trials of repeated absences and reunions and also aim to prevent families from becoming overwhelmed by the unique challenges that confront them. Strong Bonds for Pre- and Redeployment events unite unit members of varying family backgrounds to help them learn how to transition more effectively between times of separation and togetherness.

Unit chaplains across the country host Strong Bonds training events frequently, coordinating with unit commanders so that training schedules are not negatively affected. The user-friendly Strong Bonds

website permits potential attendees to search all upcoming events and, in many cases, register for events online. Visitors to the website can also directly e-mail individual event hosts (the unit chaplains) with questions.

The Strong Bonds program started small but has grown rapidly. In its first year of operation, the program hosted 90 couples at four pilot events in Hawaii. In 2004, Title 10 of the U.S. Code was amended to expressly permit command funding for chaplain-led programs designed to build and maintain a strong family structure, after which Strong Bonds gained momentum. In 2010, this funding support permitted the Army National Guard and Army Reserve to sponsor more than 300 Strong Bonds events each that supported more than 30,000 Soldiers and family members, and the program will continue to expand through 2011. Across the Army, the program is growing exponentially; more than 5,000 Strong Bonds events for all components will be held over the course of 2011—nearly twice as many as were held in the previous year.



The Army is in the midst of a five-year study evaluating the effectiveness of the various Strong Bonds training program branches and their impact on the lives of the participants. Preliminary results are demonstrating a 50 percent reduction in the divorce rate and an increase in marital satisfaction reported among participants. The Army's efforts to help single Soldiers, couples and families build healthier relationships seem to be paying off handsomely. More than 90 percent of participants in both Single Soldier and Couples events have reported that the experience is helpful and appreciated. Such success led the Army Family Action Plan to recognize Strong Bonds as the number one family program in its 2011 outbrief to the Army Chief of Staff.

These successes are working both ways. Soldiers and families benefit directly from interaction with one another and by building stronger relationships with units, chaplains and other resources. The program is helping many families both to prevent relationship problems from becoming crises and to create healthy environments for children. The Army benefits, too: Soldiers with stable families supporting them can stay better focused on their missions, and Soldier readiness and retention rates have improved. Overall, the Strong Bonds program continues to provide meaningful, relevant and engaging relationship enrichment to Soldiers and their families.

Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. In addition to family relationship-building efforts like the Strong Bonds program, the reserve component has its own large-scale initiative that matches Soldiers and families with other resilience-building resources. Congress mandated the creation of the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program in 2008 to help National Guard and Reserve servicemembers and their families connect with local resources before, during and after deployments, especially during the reintegration phase that occurs in the months after servicemembers return home.

Unlike Strong Bonds events, which are possible only when Soldiers are at home, Yellow Ribbon events occur throughout "pre-, during and post-" deployment phases. Army National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers are required to attend the most important events that are held at the 30-day, 60-day and 90-day post-deployment points. The purpose of these events is to provide information about and access to the many



services that support Soldier and family health and well-being throughout the deployment cycle. Events provide interactive and informative seminars on a broad range of resources and potential family issues. This includes a mix of large-group sessions and smaller breakout sessions with time for attendees to speak one-on-one with service providers and fellow Soldiers and family members.

Topics covered in the seminars run the gamut of family needs. Typical events provide tips on communication, stress management, parenting skills, money management, health, education, career opportunities and many other areas. The program also maintains relationships with many other federal and nonfederal entities and, via these events, provides access or referral to support services for housing stabilization, family support, mental health, substance abuse, traumatic brain injury and other issues. Yellow Ribbon events are primary vehicles for the Army to communicate with Soldiers and families about current benefits and the resources available to help them through the challenges of reintegration.





Yellow Ribbon event organizers strongly encourage Soldiers to attend with their families. In fact, events held in the “during” phase of deployment, while Soldiers are away, specifically aim to reach family members, and event planners tailor the retreats to address issues likely to arise within families during this period. In many cases, child care is available, and often child or youth programs are included as part of an event. Because of the geographic dispersion of RC Soldiers and families, attendees should seek out events hosted near their locations regardless of whether that event is hosted by their own unit or service. Like Strong Bonds events, Yellow Ribbon events are easy to find and are supported by a user-friendly website that permits potential attendees to locate upcoming events in their location, identify the type of event and make contact with event organizers.

Thanks to its congressional mandate, the Yellow Ribbon program is expanding. In 2010, the Army National Guard and Army Reserve hosted 1,774 Yellow Ribbon events across the country. These events served nearly 300,000 people, split almost evenly between Soldiers and family members. This represents about a 50 percent jump in total attendance since 2009.

Early program growth has done much to expand the physical size and reach of Yellow Ribbon services, and future growth will improve the program in more qualitative ways. In September 2010, Yellow Ribbon held its inaugural internal conference, revealingly entitled “Good to Great,” which gathered an audience of more than 600 event planners, senior policymakers, senior officers, Yellow Ribbon program managers and others to explore ways in which the Yellow Ribbon event experience can improve. More immediately significant, however, was Yellow Ribbon’s November 2010 compilation of an official “Cadre of Speakers,” a pool of highly effective and skillful presenters who have been evaluated as well qualified to deliver high-quality, engaging and fun seminar experiences on the broad range of topics covered in typical Yellow Ribbon events. This means that future Yellow Ribbon events will feature new speakers and will be able to offer attendees new lessons and the latest information without becoming repetitive.

Like the Strong Bonds program, the positive effects of the Yellow Ribbon program to date illustrate

One mental health professional who attended a recent Army Reserve Yellow Ribbon event said this about the program:

“As a psychologist with almost 30 years of experience, I am moved at the thoughtful interventions visible in the creation of the program and in the events. [Event organizers] have taken so many steps to intervene in the way [they] plan and hold an event, from the minute the Soldiers and families arrive to the minute they leave. I wish my [Post-Traumatic Stress] patients had gotten to experience the Yellow Ribbon Program instead of suffering with symptoms for years before reaching out to me. The timeliness of the Yellow Ribbon Program is great for the families.”

Source: Army Reserve

Yellow Ribbon programs, now in all 50 states, three territories and the District of Columbia, were mandated by the National Guard Bureau in 2010. Following the success of earlier reintegration efforts in his state, Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Thompson, a chaplain and the deputy director of the Oregon National Guard Yellow Ribbon program, said the program has a positive effect on all aspects of a Soldier’s life. In particular, he hopes that the added focus on resilience, in combination with Oregon’s existing reintegration program, will help Soldiers develop the inner strength and character they need to transition from the battlefield to life at home. “If we get resilience going like we are hoping, it will give Soldiers internal strength to weather the deployment cycle,” he said.

Source: Oregon National Guard

how the Army’s family resilience initiatives advance mutually reinforcing objectives. On one hand, Soldiers reasonably expect sensible and available opportunities for their families throughout the deployment cycle. On the other hand, Soldiers’ confidence that their families are being well provided for and empowered by the Army boosts their morale and has important practical advantages, making them better able to perform their duties during forward deployment and more likely to remain in the Army. Recent Defense Management Data Center findings from a study of tens of thousands of RC



Soldiers show that participants in the Yellow Ribbon program's events find them to be "very effective" compared to similar programs.

Deployment Cycle Support Program. Not all successful models of RC family support are based on a one-size-fits-all national effort. State-based National Guard units, in particular, are ideally positioned to lead singular state and local partnerships that encompass a more comprehensive approach to the integration of total Soldier and family wellness. One of these, a hybrid venture known as the New Hampshire Deployment Cycle Support Program (DCSP), demonstrates why such a model for RC family support is valuable.

DCSP bills itself as a military–civilian, public–private partnership for supporting deploying servicemembers and their families. It is a care coordination program that manages military and civilian provider groups in the delivery of services to New Hampshire veterans, servicemembers and families. The key innovation realized by DCSP is that it has marshaled resources from both military and civilian infrastructure to create a single entity capable of providing timely, predictable delivery of the many services available to the Soldiers and families who need them.

DCSP is managed primarily by its "military leadership team," but the term is something of a misnomer because this leadership panel represents a collection of diverse capabilities. Among the leadership team members are the joint chief of staff of the state National Guard, the associate commissioner of the state's Department of Health and Human Services and directors of local Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) Medical Centers. This structure has permitted the creation of issues-based Military and Civilian Priority Committees to address specific problems. For example, the program's mandate has enabled the creation of a State Suicide Prevention Council which has drawn attention to a critical issue by participating in the development of a State Suicide Prevention Plan. The program has also partnered with the academic community, as the University of New Hampshire has been helping by conducting in-depth program evaluations.

These semiformal partnerships combine to help meet an impressive range of needs for Soldiers and families. Skilled clinicians from the civilian social services network arrange or provide the program's



care coordination services, which include all of the following: counseling for personal, marital, children's and mental health needs; employment services such as résumé preparation, career counseling and job placement; access to trained community childcare workers, emergency respite and help for children coping with adjustment difficulties; help navigating the health care system; and housing assistance such as financial counseling and negotiation with landlords and lenders.

The history of DCSP reveals more keys to its achievements. Between 2004 and 2006, a large number of New Hampshire National Guard Soldiers deployed overseas in support of the global war on terror, and upon the Soldiers' return, the local National Guard partnered with some state civilian agencies to host a reunion and reintegration event. At approximately the same time, the nonprofit Easter Seals organization in New Hampshire received a substantial donation to use toward supporting the state's servicemembers. The support of private philanthropy provided the timely, predictable and sustainable funding necessary to drive lasting cooperation among the Army and local civilian social services. It has also permitted the provision of new services not otherwise available. For example, because of the nature of its private funding, DCSP is able to help Army families with emergency funds for such expenses as food, housing, fuel, medical bills and even transportation and automotive repairs; thus, in some cases, DCSP is able to meet needs where no government funding exists.

DCSP realized that no single existing agency or platform was ideally suited by itself to meet all Soldier and family reset needs. The program is successful largely because adequate funding is available—in this



Needs Filled by DCSP Structural Model

DCSP facilitates the efficient delivery of available resources by:

- employing care coordinators with knowledge of all available assets;
- integrating coordination of resources into the Army's training and deployment cycle;
- overcoming bureaucratic obstacles;
- developing issues-based, interagency collaboration;
- partnering with nonprofit support to provide emergency funds; and
- fully respecting client confidentiality.

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness New Hampshire

case, to a great degree reliant on private philanthropy—to ensure access to a foundation of family resources. The nature of this baseline level of support encourages interagency cooperation and the building of partnerships that deliver the support effectively.

Collaboration among the New Hampshire National Guard, the state's social services agencies and private philanthropy continues to grow, and for good reason. In an August 2010 survey, 100 percent of DCSP program beneficiaries questioned reported that the care coordinators had treated their families with dignity and respect; 99 percent said that their care coordinators showed understanding and respect for their military experiences; and 96 percent agreed that DCSP provided assistance quickly and with little red tape. The program has recently expanded and now has more than 70 trained care coordinators in the state helping to provide and arrange DCSP services. Five social services agencies now subcontract with Easter Seals, and all program leaders continue to meet and liaise regularly with the military leadership team. All in all, DCSP has proved to be an excellent example of how government and civilian resources can be coordinated efficiently with existing Army programs to meet the needs of RC Soldiers and families in timely, predictable and reliable ways.

Army Strong Community Centers. Many active component Soldiers and families live on or very near major Army installations because of their full-time

status; this is not true of most RC families, who are more likely to live a long distance from the nearest military installation. Consequently, when most RC Soldiers deploy, their families are geographically far removed from the support infrastructure available on military bases. Efficient receipt of the help that all Army families need during deployment can be impractical for them. Army Strong Community Centers (ASCCs), an Army Reserve initiative, are based on a breakthrough concept that aims to streamline customer access to resources.

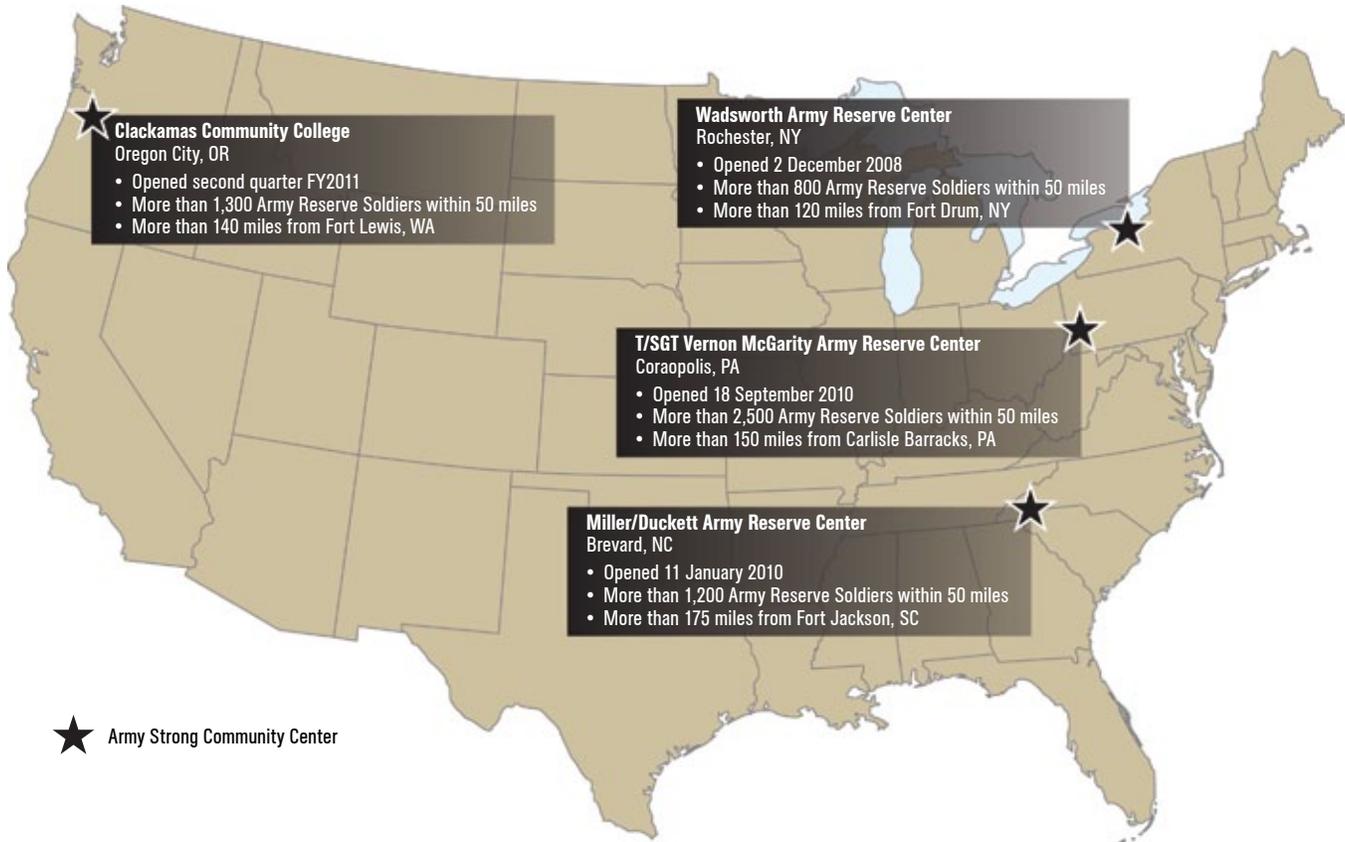
To meet the challenge, the Army Reserve has opened four pilot Army Strong Community Centers. For families unable to go to existing Army installations for help, the Army is taking the installations to them. These ASCC facilities provide professional assistance and access to the support resources previously available only at large installations. The first ASCC facility opened in Rochester, New York, in 2008. Since then, three more have opened, in Brevard, North Carolina; Coraopolis, Pennsylvania; and in early 2011, Oregon City, Oregon. These locations were chosen because of their proximity to communities that are home to large numbers of RC Soldiers and families but are some distance—all at least 120 miles—from the nearest major military installations.

The single greatest impact that the ASCC facilities are having so far is their ability to offer personal, face-to-face contact with families. For those who live some distance from military installations, much can be accomplished via phone and the Internet, but not every problem can be solved easily by Soldiers or families alone without the intervention of professionals. ASCC staff are sensitive to the specific problems that military families face, and regardless of the exact problem, they strive to give personalized service to every client, working one-on-one until resolutions are found. Among the most common issues that ASCC personnel handle with their clients are:

- TRICARE (the military's health care program);
- child and youth programs and services;
- GI Bill and education information;
- retirement; and
- coping with the loss of loved ones.



Army Strong Community Center Locations



Additionally, centers offer considerable onsite resources of their own such as computers and lending libraries. Children’s play spaces permit mothers and fathers to interact personally with ASCC personnel during their visits.

For now, ASCC is funded by the Army Reserve alone, but its services are fully available to members of all services. Approximately a third of ASCC clients are from active duty families, and in addition to the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve, the centers also serve the active Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and their reserve components.

The newest ASCC facility to open, in Oregon City, Oregon, began operating in February 2011; by the time the center celebrated its official grand opening in May, it had already served 207 families. The ASCC program has proved to be extremely effective by linking needs to existing resources in a cost-effective manner. ASCC

facilities need to employ only a few personnel, and communities continue to partner in support of Soldiers and families.

It remains unclear whether budget constraints will limit the growth of the program, but more ASCC facilities are planned. Many communities that are a moderate distance from existing Army installations could benefit immensely from the expansion of the ASCC program and its successful integration of existing community assets with Army resources. Every military family should have access to the same kind of strong support currently available on military installations because both the Army and individual Soldiers and families benefit from this support. Families need places to turn when challenged by the rigors of deployment, and the Army needs to recruit and retain strong, ready Soldiers with foundations in strong families. ASCC facilities are proving to be a cost-effective method for achieving both goals.



When Laura's husband joined the Army Reserve, she thought that his obligation of one weekend a month and two weeks a year would be the only time that she would have to deal with his absence.

"I thought that's the way it was going to be until retirement," she said during a recent DoDLive Blogger's Roundtable. But Laura would soon discover that her husband's military obligation would be more than a few weekends of training.

"We heard on the radio that Iraq had invaded Kuwait, and he turned to me and said, 'I'll have to go.' I laughed at him and said, 'No, you won't, they don't send Reserve Soldiers.' That was in August, and by Thanksgiving he was gone."

From that point on, Laura felt very much separated from the support structure of a large military installation that she could turn to when her husband was on active duty.

"There was very little communication. We lived two hours from his Reserve center. We had four children at home. They had their Family Readiness Group [FRG] meetings during the week, and that made it impossible for me to get to those meetings. We didn't have such a thing as a virtual Family Readiness Group. I knew that there was benefit in belonging to an FRG, but it was just too difficult to go out on the week nights, school nights, with our kids," she recounted.

When her husband, Lieutenant General Jack C. Stultz, Jr., was named Chief of the Army Reserve in 2006, Laura knew what her mission was going to be: to make life easier for all military families. Since then, she has spearheaded the Army Strong Community Center (ASCC) pilot program—establishing four facilities in the span of five years. These facilities include professionals who assist with everything from TRICARE, to ID cards, to day care and even emergencies. The ASCC facilities are designed to house the support of a large installation within the rural communities of the country.

"Everywhere we go, people tell us that they want face-to-face contact. Every single problem cannot be solved online. That would be wonderful if you could just have everybody get on the computer and all their issues be solved instantly, but that just doesn't happen," says Laura Stultz.

"If I had a dream, I would wish for tons of money, and I could put these in every state. But I know the financial constraints that this country has right now. Everybody in the military is saying we need to do more with less. I don't think that making do with less means not taking care of our families."

Source: Jessica L. Tozer, DoDLive,
<http://www.dodlive.mil/index.php/2011/05/family-focus-friday-army-strong-community-centers/>.

Resetting Soldier Health and Building Resilience

Even the strongest RC Soldiers and families have discovered that they can benefit immensely from the Army's family support initiatives, especially during and immediately after forward deployments. But tens of thousands of Soldiers bear physical scars of their experiences and struggle to overcome new trauma upon their return from overseas. Countless strong men and women discover suddenly that they must fight new emotional or mental battles that modern science is only beginning to understand. Army-wide initiatives such as Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) and the Army Wounded Warrior (AW2) Program are two examples of the physical and psychological wellness initiatives that are making RC Soldiers more resilient and better prepared for their futures. The RC has also developed its own highly successful, creative strategies unique to the needs of the RC Soldier.

Comprehensive Soldier Fitness. Resilience—the ability to bounce back from stress and trauma—has long been a key attribute of American Soldiers and families. But resilience in the Army today is being severely challenged by the demands of a decade at war, including, for many, frequent and repeated overseas deployments. CSF is a deliberate, proactive long-term strategy that prepares the entire Army community (including Soldiers of all components, family members and civilians) to thrive psychologically and emotionally in the modern era of protracted conflict.

CSF is designed to help develop five dimensions of strength—physical, emotional, social, family and spiritual—to create a more resilient force. All Soldiers and many family members use the Global Assessment Tool (GAT), a confidential survey-based instrument, to self-assess the five dimensions of fitness listed above. Twenty Comprehensive Resilience Modules, online



Oregon recently benefitted from the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program’s Resilience Training Assistance (RTA) Course. The RTA training was held 14–16 March 2011 at the Oregon Military Academy in Monmouth. Approximately 40 Oregon National Guard Soldiers took part in the course, which focused on coping skills that can be used both on and off the battlefield.

“We all come to points in our life when we get overwhelmed with events,” said Oregon National Guard State Command Sergeant Major Brunk Conley. “There are all kinds of stressors, and it’s okay to have adversity in your life—it’s unavoidable, but it’s how you handle the adversity that is the important part.”

The training is based on the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program, the goal of which is to improve performance in combat and reduce problems such as depression, post-combat stress disorder and suicide after combat. The approach is based on positive psychology that aims to emphasize resilience and give Soldiers tools to cope with negative thoughts.

Combat stress causes many Soldiers to experience a heightened sense of alertness, a reaction suitable

for combat but often tough to temper at home. During the training, Master Resilience Trainers (MRTs) teach Soldiers to slow down their thought processes and examine their choices before making a decision. “We are teaching people to slow down the activating event that caused them to think a certain way and not act in the heat of the moment,” said Moore.

The impact of the recent training became much more real for one of the Master Resilience Trainers when he faced a personal tragedy—his father’s suicide. “I know [the training] works because I have used it in my life,” said Master Sergeant Chris Anderson, Resilience Program Manager. Anderson said the trainers are not experts, but they equip Soldiers with skills to help themselves or seek outside assistance if necessary.

The challenge, said Anderson, is reaching all of the Soldiers; the goal in the National Guard is to have each one of more than 3,600 MRTs train at least 20 Resilience Training Assistants. “If we could teach everyone, it would be a completely different Army.”

Source: Oregon National Guard

mini-training courses, are available for Soldiers to use (voluntarily) to improve their resilience skills in any areas indicated by their GAT results. In addition, the Master Resilience Trainer Course is a 10-day “train-the-trainer” event in which local commanders select noncommissioned officers to learn a new role as a primary resilience trainer within their units. Over time these Master Trainers will help institutionalize resilience training throughout the force so that every Soldier’s career includes exposure to resilience training at every milestone. The objective of making resilience training widespread and institutionalized is to improve Soldier performance in combat while also preventing and reducing incidents of depression, post-traumatic stress and suicide.⁴

The first stages of implementation of the proactive CSF strategy are beginning to take effect in the RC, where the program is being warmly embraced. For example, as of July 2011, more than 248,400 Army National Guard Soldiers and more than 181,000 Army Reservists had completed the GAT survey;

approximately 1,200 Army National Guard and 1,200 Army Reserve family members had also completed the survey. Soldiers and civilians who have received resilience training overwhelmingly support it because of the value-added skills and core competencies inherent in the program.

The CSF strategy is vitally important across the Army as a truly sustainable prevention model aimed at the entire force. It enables every Soldier and family to make honest self-evaluations without concern for their confidentiality—a step that has to be the foundation of any successful resilience approach. It also allows each Soldier to access helpful follow-up resources in a personal, customized way to apply solutions in the areas of personal fitness that need the most improvement. CSF is already taking root in the RC and will remain important as a comprehensive, holistic approach to total Soldier wellness, preparing men and women for the personal struggles that occur throughout the entire deployment cycle.

⁴ See AUSA’s Torchbearer Issue Paper “Building Resilience: Comprehensive Soldier Fitness,” April 2010, http://www.ausa.org/publications/ilw/Documents/TBIP_CompreSoldierFitness.pdf.



U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program. Comprehensive Soldier Fitness is a major initiative by which the RC is taking steps to keep Soldiers and families physically and psychologically ready for future battles. But thousands of Soldiers still return from combat deployments with permanent injuries. For them, the physical and psychological trauma endured during deployment is followed by a different sort of trauma upon their return to the United States. Many require a combination of long-term recovery and rehabilitation, transition to a new career and acceptance into a community that understands their experiences and values them. The well-known Army Wounded Warrior Program for all components is evolving to better meet the needs of RC veteran warriors more appropriately and reliably by addressing a full range of recovery-related needs.

AW2 is the Army's official program to aid and advocate for severely wounded, ill and injured Soldiers, veterans and families wherever they are located. The AW2 program supports these Soldiers and families from the moment the Soldier returns from the battlefield all the way through his or her recovery and transition, even into veteran status. The goal of the AW2 program is to help rebuild and restore the independence of the Soldier. In keeping with the Army's theme that recovery is only one short phase in a Soldier's lifetime of service, Soldiers who are enrolled in the AW2 program are known as Warriors in Transition.⁵

In practice, each eligible Soldier is assigned a member of the AW2 staff, known as an advocate, who initiates contact with the Soldier and family. The job of a Soldier's advocate is to guide the Soldier and his or her family through all stages of the Wounded Warrior Lifecycle. The advocate is present to offer advice and assistance throughout the medical treatment phase and coordinates with other health professionals to help the Soldier and family determine a plan of action for continuing Army service or transitioning into the civilian community. (For RC Soldiers, the advocate might help inform decisions about future employment goals by researching and comparing possible future income levels among different career paths.) The advocate assists as the Soldier's disability is evaluated, supports

Army National Guard Soldier Alden Jones turned to the Wounded Warrior program after suffering a serious training injury. He joined a Warrior Transition Unit based in Concord, Massachusetts, and began preparing to become a veterans' service officer—an ombudsman who helps veterans connect with the Department of Veterans' Affairs to ensure they receive necessary help and benefits.

Jones' story is a prime example of how the Army is finding important new uses for the special experiences of wounded Soldiers. Jones said his position is rewarding, but one he never knew existed before he was injured and needed help himself. "Until I got injured I didn't even know there was a job like this. I didn't know about veteran's service officers or anything. I knew the veterans' home was here," he said. "I never thought about working here or anything."

With the assistance of the Wounded Warrior program, Jones refused to let his physical limitations get the better of him and has new objectives that he is equipped to pursue. Now he is volunteering his time while he trains for his next job—hopefully at the Vermont Veterans' Home. "What I've done for years is work construction and carpentry and stuff like that. I can't do that anymore, so I really needed to find another job. This is a great opportunity here," Jones concluded.

Source: Army National Guard

the execution of the Soldier's transition plan and maintains contact with the Soldier and family as they move to the next phase of their lives.

This system is particularly successful because experienced, knowledgeable advocates provide personalized, local support at every critical moment throughout a Soldier's recovery regardless of his or her location or military status. Advocates work in all 50 states, in the territories of Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands and in the District of Columbia. This means that Soldiers and families receive the same support whether the recovery happens at a major military medical center or at a family's local medical facility;

⁵ See AUSA's Defense Report 08-3, "Warrior Care and Transition Program: Making Good on a Promise," October 2008, <http://www.ousa.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/ILW%20Web-ExclusivePubs/Defense%20Reports/DR08-3.pdf>.



The Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE) for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury is the “open front door” of the Defense Department for Soldiers and families who need help with psychological health (PH) and traumatic brain injury (TBI)-related issues.

One of DCoE’s most useful resources is its 24/7 Outreach Center. As a chief resource bank on these topics, the Outreach Center serves as a central source of information on PH and TBI for Soldiers, families, caregivers, educators, researchers and others. The Outreach Center is an excellent reference through which people can get their questions answered effectively and be directed to relevant and timely resources. In 2010, the Outreach Center responded to more than 4,660 contacts; more than 20 of these inquiries were from servicemembers in crisis.

The Outreach Center can be reached by phone toll-free at 866-966-1020, by e-mail at resources@dcoeoutreach.org or by live online chat via DCoE’s website at www.dcoe.health.mil/24-7help.aspx.

Another innovative program that has grown enormously in recent months is DCoE’s Real Warriors Campaign, which spreads the stories of real servicemembers who sought treatment for their wellness challenges, got the help they needed and now maintain successful military or civilian careers. Since its founding in 2009, the Real Warriors Campaign has partnered with 129 other organizations that help spread the word and reinforce the program’s credibility among Soldiers and families. During its 2010–2011 season, the National Football League (NFL) Players Association partnered with the campaign to produce game-day events in which NFL players joined Soldiers and families not only to watch games but also to discuss challenges of reintegration into civilian life that the two communities have in common. In 2010, the campaign generated major media coverage and was featured by CNN, the Associated Press and the Today Show.

Source: Defense Centers of Excellence

RC Soldiers have the same access to an advocate’s assistance no matter how far they might live from a particular medical facility or parent unit’s headquarters. Especially innovative are the means by which advocates can help Soldiers and families identify new opportunities in their lives about which they might have had no previous knowledge.

Like many of the other successful Soldier support programs available today, AW2 is less about actually providing new resources than it is about coordinating existing resources and increasing awareness about new opportunities. What is especially valuable about the program for RC Soldiers is that its personalized service helps overcome bureaucratic obstacles associated with recovery and guarantees that every Soldier receives quality care and attention. As an experienced specialist, the advocate not only has a broad range of information to share with client Soldiers and families—about their benefits, civilian career opportunities, training and education, coordination with government agencies and more—but can also anticipate families’ questions and needs even before they think to address them or before crises emerge. Just as valuable is the personal connection the advocate makes with families during this process, because firsthand knowledge of a Soldier’s skills and future plans can, for example, help prospective employers identify experienced veterans who possess a particular skill set.

Reserve Component Medical Readiness. In October 2002, AUSA noted in its Torchbearer National Security Report *How “Well” is Army Well-being?* that RC deployment health and readiness issues were significant. The RC funding gap alone—a medical and dental readiness shortfall of more than \$45 million—severely limited the ability of RC Soldiers to meet medical and dental readiness requirements. The Army National Guard and the Army Reserve have launched a number of efforts during the past decade to address these issues, each in its own way.

Building **Army National Guard** medical readiness is as different and unique as each of the 54 states and territories. The Army National Guard has created a strategic plan that supports various approaches to building medical and dental readiness for an operational force that has yielded some of the highest levels of medical readiness in its history, and it has created a full-time team in each of the states and territories to supervise the execution of this plan. Each state’s Deputy State Surgeon heads its team and manages medical readiness operations; also essential to each team are the medical readiness noncommissioned officers in battalion- and brigade-level organizations who provide feedback and track medical readiness issues on behalf of the



commanders. Crucial to the management and tracking of identified Soldiers with medical issues are the national contracted case managers and administrative assistants who ensure that Soldiers are cared for when medical issues limit worldwide deployability.

The Army National Guard establishes medical readiness by conducting Soldiers' periodic health assessments (PHAs) and annual dental assessments to determine if any temporary or permanent conditions would prevent them from being able to deploy worldwide. These are completed by state-level Army National Guard medical forces, under a national contract system or by locally contracted providers. State medical planners have full flexibility to use the method that best meets their operational and funding needs.

Units on alert and units with mobilization orders qualify for dental treatment and 180 days of early TRICARE benefits, ensuring not only that individual Soldiers receive necessary care but also that overall unit readiness is maximized. The standardization of medical requirements for mobilization ensures that Soldiers with medical issues are identified and treatment is provided. Additionally, Army National Guard Soldiers now receive a post-deployment PHA and dental exam (and treatment, if warranted) to ensure that Soldiers meet Medical Readiness Code standards prior to demobilization.

The **Army Reserve** has also launched a number of efforts to address key medical and dental issues facing the force. Army Reserve Soldiers receive necessary medical and dental exams and screenings primarily through a national contract system known as the Reserve Health Readiness Program (RHRP).

RHRP provides medical and dental readiness services that include PHAs, dental examinations and x-rays, limited dental treatment, immunizations, vision services, audio services, laboratory services, physical examinations, post-deployment health reassessments, occupational health services, vaccine storage and distribution and other services. To provide this wide range of medical, dental and behavioral health services, RHRP uses a nationwide network of more than 36,000 private providers of various disciplines from the Logistics Health, Inc., contract network. Since its inception, RHRP has been instrumental in increasing overall readiness in the Army Reserve.

Recently, the Army Reserve launched a Medical Management Activity, collocated with Army Reserve Medical Command in Pinellas Park, Florida, to help address a growing number of Medically Non-Ready (MNR) Army Reserve Soldiers. The goal of this effort is:

- to provide rapid profile review of selected permanent profiles that designate a Soldier as MNR;
- to ensure that Soldiers receive appropriate care; and
- to increase the overall medical readiness of the force.

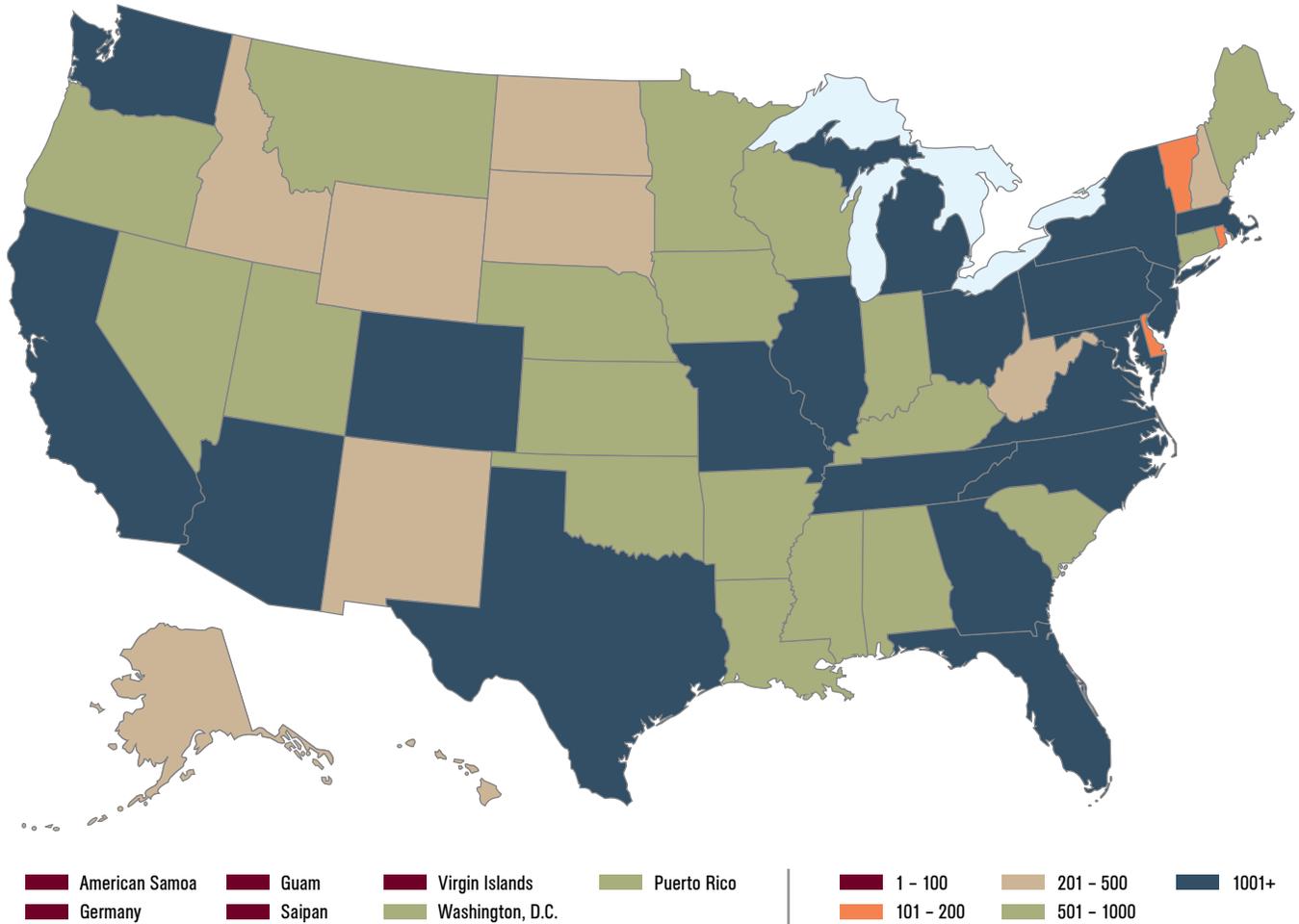
Thus, the RC has steadily improved its processes for the regular provision of medical services in recent years via new organizational methods and the judicious use of new technology. The full effects of these transformations are only now beginning to be fully realized, but it is clear that by moving toward more reliable, more accessible and more immediate provision of services, the steep demand for RC medical services is being met more completely, thereby enhancing unit readiness across the board.

“To improve transparency, visibility and accountability, we have deployed an online tracking tool to allow for consistent automated tracking of all [medically non-ready] Soldiers,” said Lieutenant Colonel Linda Moore, an Army Reserve Nurse Corps officer supporting the effort in Pinellas Park, Florida. “This will provide an accurate status of MNR Soldiers to our leaders, commanders and administrative personnel and to Soldiers going through the process.”

Source: Army Reserve



Reserve Health Readiness Program Provider Distribution



Boots-on-the-Ground Initiatives. Like some of the most successful family reset and reintegration programs, state- and local-level initiatives conceived by RC Soldiers are improving access to physical and psychological wellness services in a timely, predictable and appropriate manner. In some ways, such local boots-on-the-ground campaigns can be more effective and better suited than national or Army-wide efforts simply because they are better tuned to the availability of practical community resources.

Oregon was seeing approximately 30 percent of its Soldiers return with psychological wellness issues. The broad success of the Oregon National Guard Reintegration Team is one example of how great an impact these local programs can have in support of Soldiers who need assistance with health-related problems.

Their model is sustainable and repeatable in other locales as well.

The Reintegration Team bills itself as a group of “traffic cops” who are positioned as the hub of a large wheel of available resources. They provide easy and accurate referral to all levels of agencies and support networks for post-mobilized National Guard Soldiers, coordinate with commanders and service providers to conduct workshops and seminars at critical junctures in the post-mobilization process and provide a single information source for all Soldiers, families and commanders in the reset process.

The Reintegration Team concept started from the premise that Soldier reset and reintegration is an ongoing process and an integral part of overall Soldier



readiness that has no end date. One of the most useful of the team's coordination efforts has been the creation of a central help desk designed to ensure accurate, easy assistance for a host of Soldier problems. It is invaluable for saving time and helping Soldiers and veterans cut through red tape and get assistance in a timely and predictable way. The flagship feature of the help desk

On 28 July 2004, Master Sergeant Vince Jacques dangled upside-down in a Humvee in Iraq, his legs trapped under the dashboard. Miraculously, he had survived the IED blast, but one of "his boys" was not so lucky. Private First Class Kenny Leisten, his driver, was dead. His gunner, Private First Class Ben Ring, was seriously wounded. Jacques' injuries prevented him from returning to combat with his unit, the 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry, so he was sent home to recover.

Jacques said adjusting to life after the deployment was tough. "I felt like we were just dumped off and had to fend for ourselves," said Jacques. "I spent three weeks looking for a doctor who could help a fellow Soldier who lost his arm in combat."

After the deployment, on another day that would change his life forever, Jacques met at a local brew pub with several fellow Soldiers to discuss how to help others with post-deployment adjustment. Within days, they met with Brigadier General Mike Caldwell, Deputy Director of State Affairs for the Oregon Military Department, and Colonel Scott McCrae, who had lost his son in Iraq during the same deployment Jacques was on.

In February 2005, the Oregon National Guard Reintegration Team was formed. "Colonel McCrae wanted to make it so that the Soldiers who returned could have something his son never had," Jacques said.

is its toll-free telephone helpline, which is manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In most weeks, the helpline receives an average of 40–75 assistance calls.

A large number of the services that Soldiers and veterans can access via the helpline provide direct assistance for physical and psychological wellness. Helpline staffers are prepared to put callers in immediate contact with the Suicide Prevention Hotline and other professional crisis assistants. Many other callers learn through the helpline that the team has developed primary points of contact at numerous support agencies. By calling the helpline, Soldiers can be referred directly to representatives of the TRICARE program, state and federal departments of veterans' affairs, VA hospitals, veterans' centers, county veterans' service officers, the local employment department and many others. Until the Reintegration Team created this resource, it was unlikely that a Soldier or family could have found as many helpful avenues for assistance so

The team became a united force in helping Soldiers with any needs that may arise after a deployment. "We just wanted to help our buddies and it went crazy from there," said Jacques.

Since the program's inception in 2005, it has evolved from five individuals trying to cover the needs of Soldiers across the state of Oregon into an elaborate network of resources helping thousands of service-members.

"We are, in effect, a highly networked 'help desk' where we act as 'traffic cops' to direct Soldiers and Airmen to the right place," said McCrae. The program now has regional area managers and other specialists ready to respond throughout Oregon with reintegration assets brought together through biannual summits. The program has some of the largest veteran career and benefit fairs in the nation, Jacques said.

"We organize people from different places and pull them together to give everyone a common direction," said Don Weber, a regional area manager for Portland Metro and North Coast.

The Reintegration Team also has a 24-hour hotline to help veterans.

"We can respond to any crisis in any area," Weber said.

Source: Oregon National Guard



quickly. To date, the Reintegration Team has delivered assistance to at least 4,500 Soldiers—an impressive number, given its start as a local, grassroots campaign.

The rapid expansion of the Reintegration Team’s networking efforts across the northwest region and its outreach to thousands of Soldiers and veterans have made it an ideal vehicle for connecting employers with career seekers. In addition to all of the physical and psychological wellness-related partnerships that the team has developed, it has also signed memoranda of understanding with such support agencies as the Oregon Employment Department, WorkSource Oregon and the U.S. Department of Labor. The team’s capabilities in this area have grown into a distinct campaign called the Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP). In addition to making a large number of career and educational resources available via its helpline and website, the team now uses its visibility to host a job vacancy board. At any given time, approximately 175 area employers use the job board to list job openings; the total number of open job listings is usually in the low hundreds. Additionally, CTAP has facilitated 315 hires through direct referrals between employment candidates and employers. These numbers continue to grow.⁶

Resetting Soldiers’ Civilian Career Opportunities

RC Soldiers and families face truly unique challenges to the stability of their careers because of the nature of their service. Unlike active component Soldiers, when members of the Army National Guard or Army Reserve are called upon to deploy, they have to arrange extended absences from their civilian careers. The structure and schedule of training alone can cause tensions between employers and employees because of RC Soldiers’ frequent, short absences; when Soldiers have to go to war on extended deployments, their civilian career tracks can be severely disrupted.

Soldiers of today’s operational RC are experienced leaders, flexible, adaptable, resilient and accustomed to leveraging changing circumstances for their benefit—all valuable professional skills reinforced during forward deployment. But in too many instances, Soldiers



return from operational overseas deployments (where they held important responsibilities and had a clear sense of purpose) without a sound career plan. This is unhealthy for Soldiers and families, and it is also unhealthy for the Army. For the other phases of reset to function—that is, for Soldiers to succeed in their family relationships and to remain physically and psychologically well—they need to be gainfully employed or pursuing their education. This need is particularly strong within the RC community, which provides the majority of the Army’s specialized services such as medical support, engineering and logistics and therefore depends highly on the maintenance of a skilled, innovative force.

The RC employs several major initiatives geared toward assisting its Soldiers through the civilian employment process. The successes of these programs, like the programs aimed at augmenting Soldiers’ family health and physical health, illustrate the power of a holistic approach to Soldier wellness and provide strong evidence that such investment mutually reinforces the objectives and interest of both the Army and its individual Soldiers.

Job Connection Education Program. Offered by the Army National Guard, the Job Connection Education Program (JCEP) exists to help National Guard servicemembers and their spouses who are unemployed or underemployed to find careers. JCEP’s objective is to help program participants identify aptitudes and abilities honed in the military, arrive at a plan for

⁶ For information about other Army National Guard resilience efforts at the state level, see AUSA’s Torchbearer Issue Paper “The Army National Guard’s Path to Greater Resilience,” December 2010, [http://www.ausa.org/publications/ilw/Documents/TBIP_Resilience_PRESS%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.ausa.org/publications/ilw/Documents/TBIP_Resilience_PRESS%20(2).pdf).



transferring those skills to a civilian job setting and assist participants in understanding and mastering key job-search resources and services.

JCEP provides training and career counseling services on or near National Guard installations; helps job seekers self-assess their abilities and experiences; and offers candidates the means to practice their job-search skills, polish their résumés and search for available jobs. In many ways, personal interaction and encouragement provided to candidates is the most important assistance that anyone could offer, but JCEP also delivers substantial benefits to Soldiers' families and communities.

JCEP personnel are dedicated specialists in the fields of training and development specifically for job seekers. When program participants set foot in a JCEP office, the many types of personalized support they can expect include:

- one-on-one counseling;
- résumé review and mock interviews;
- relevant workforce training;
- online job search training and assistance; and
- education assistance for those who prefer to obtain degrees or trade certifications.

In addition, other JCEP personnel—known as business advisors—work behind the scenes. Their job is not only to contact prospective employers to explain the JCEP program and the many ways in which they can benefit by hiring servicemembers but also to follow up with local businesses' human resources managers on behalf of job candidates, ensuring that they have received complete applications from JCEP participants and, perhaps, putting in a good word. The JCEP website hosts a "For Employers" page that explains how employers can qualify for a federal tax credit by hiring disabled veterans, lists the "Top Ten Reasons Why Members of the Guard and Reserve Make Good Employees" and provides other useful information. JCEP advisors come to know the program participants well through repeated, frequent personal contact and are well-positioned to act as Soldiers' advocates.

JCEP opened its doors in late March 2010; two pilot offices are operational so far, serving locations in Texas near Fort Worth's Sandage Armory and Houston's

Westheimer Armory. The National Guard plans to open JCEP offices and provide the program's full services in additional states and territories. Even though the national economy has not been at full strength in recent years and the job climate has been tough, JCEP has already put more than 400 of its program participants to work. These successful Soldiers have a wide variety of backgrounds and are now employed in a broad range of professions, and by sharing their stories, they continue to draw enthusiastic attention to the program. JCEP has been extremely successful on a small scale to date, demonstrating how even small, local Soldier reset programs can have a disproportionately large impact on Soldier wellness.

Employment Partnership of the Armed Forces.

Another key program that supports reintegration efforts for RC Soldiers' careers—much larger and with much greater reach than JCEP—is the Employer Partnership of the Armed Forces (EPAF). A joint effort of the National Guard and Reserve, EPAF is managed by the Employer Partnership Office located at Army Reserve Headquarters. This program provides America's finest employees with a direct link to some of America's finest employees: servicemembers and their families. Through the partnership, servicemembers can leverage their military training and experience for career opportunities in today's civilian job market with national, regional and local Employer Partners.

Probably the single most powerful resource made available to Soldiers through EPAF is its vast online database of job opportunities. Through the EPAF website, Soldiers can conduct job searches by Military

EPAF's first partner, Inova Healthcare, worked with the Army Reserve to address a critical shortage of x-ray, respiratory and surgical technicians. Owning 60 percent of the Army's medical structure, the Army Reserve was able to locate qualified technicians quickly. Inova has since initiated its own program—Military Medicine—with a primary strategy of hiring reserve component or former active duty Soldiers. That is their first choice for hiring, and it has already saved them over a million dollars because the candidates are prescreened through the military.

Source: Army Reserve



Occupational Specialty, civilian job title and location. At present, the online database hosts more than 500,000 jobs, and it continues to grow. The partnership has linked up with more than 1,000 employers who are currently hiring.

In addition, EPAF has 25 full-time program support managers (PSMs) whose role is similar to that of a recruiter. PSMs liaise with human resources departments of Employer Partners across the country, communicate information about job fairs and hiring events, and work with servicemembers and their families to improve their skills in interviewing, résumé writing and completing applications for employment. PSMs are distributed geographically across the United States, each assigned as the EPAF representative for one or more states. Their phone numbers and e-mail addresses are all posted in the “About” section of the main EPAF website. They are best able to help Soldiers and families meet their personal employment objectives when they build personal relationships with their clients.

EPAF has grown exponentially since its founding. It began as the Army Reserve Employment Partnership Initiative in 2008, and though it is still managed from the headquarters of the Army Reserve, it now serves many more customers. By mid-2010, EPAF had already partnered with 480 of the Fortune 500 companies in the United States.

The ultimate effect of employment assistance programs for RC Soldiers such as EPAF is truly a “triple-win” scenario. First, Soldiers and their families benefit directly from their new career prospects, achieving higher levels of personal stability and prosperity. Second, employers benefit by receiving self-reliant, drug-free, skilled, disciplined leaders into their work force. RC Soldiers excel at teamwork and know how to execute projects faithfully to successful completion, and in many instances, their experience during forward deployments exposes them to cutting-edge methods and technology that make them valuable to civilian employers. Third, a more stable and more professionally developed cadre of RC Soldiers empowered by employment-related reset programs makes the reserve component more enduring as an operational force. That is, by investing in Soldiers’ success as professional civilians, the Army is actually buying more resilient, more ready and more capable



Soldiers whose experience becomes invaluable during future mobilizations.

Guard Apprenticeship Program Initiative. In December 2010, the Army National Guard officially partnered with the U.S. Department of Labor to launch the Guard Apprenticeship Program Initiative (GAPI), to be administered locally by states. The aim of this civilian employment assistance effort is to bridge the gaps (real and perceived) between Soldiers’ military training and the application of their training in civilian employment.

GAPI is an “earn-as-you-learn” program that permits National Guard Soldiers to obtain apprenticeship certifications that allow their skills to be much more easily translated into the requirements sought by civilian employers. Many trades’ civilian license or certificate requirements take between 2,000 and 6,000 clock hours of instructional time and on-the-job training to complete. With its Department of Labor partnership, GAPI permits Soldiers to count some or all of their military experience (and, in some cases, previous civilian experience) toward these requirements, significantly reducing the amount of additional time and expense needed for Soldiers to become licensed in civilian trades. In some cases, Soldiers can be rewarded with the equivalent of up to two years of credit toward their civilian apprenticeship requirements.

Already, more than 100 Military Occupational Specialties qualify for apprenticeship credit. Many of these fall within the range of services most often provided by reserve component Soldiers, such as engineering and medical support, and the list of approved trades is likely to grow as the program gains momentum.



Additionally, GAPI was designed to be compatible with Soldiers' GI Bill education benefits. The GI Bill offers assistance not only for college expenses but also for some types of on-the-job training, and Soldiers may be able to draw from benefits guaranteed by the GI Bill as they participate in the GAPI program. There will be options for Soldiers to continue training in fields related to their existing skill sets or in entirely new fields. As states implement GAPI, their education support offices and Department of Labor personnel can point Soldiers to the new opportunities.

GAPI is yet another example of how Soldiers, employers and the Army all stand to gain immensely from an initiative aimed mainly at making better, more efficient use of existing educational resources. Soldiers benefit in the long term by becoming experts in their trades and by building qualifications that will permit them to make substantially higher incomes and have many more career prospects in the civilian sector than if they did not gain the certifications required in their fields. Employers get highly qualified workers who are accustomed to working as members of teams and performing well in a wide range of circumstances. The Army is rewarded by building more resilient Soldiers who are healthier at home and more experienced upon their return to active duty in future deployments.

In sum, the Army National Guard and Army Reserve have maximized their resources to achieve significant outcomes related to Soldier and family resilience in the reset phase. Programs initiated and executed by the RC—such as Strong Bonds retreats, Yellow Ribbon events and ASCC community centers—were bringing the Army's many resources to the doorsteps of families who need them most, and in states such as

New Hampshire, the Army has built strong partnerships with other effective, local service providers. Army-wide initiatives such as Comprehensive Soldier Fitness and the Army Wounded Warrior Program have proved to be helpful to RC Soldiers in innovative ways alongside the state- and local-level efforts led by elements of the RC that greatly enable efficient access to assistance. Further, the RC has developed new career and educational assistance projects that are growing rapidly and are already producing results out of proportion to their investments. Together, these efforts not only build stronger and more resilient Soldiers and families but also maximize the readiness of today's operational force. A strong economy and effective RC employment programs are critical for sustaining the Army's domestic and overseas missions.

What Is Needed

The Army's reserve component Soldiers deserve a quality of life that is commensurate with the unsurpassed quality of their service. The key to successful delivery of the support that RC Soldiers and families need is timely and predictable funding for services.

Though the RC has excelled in challenging circumstances, far-reaching second- and third-order effects could have lasting consequences years down the road. For example, the Army is learning that RC Soldiers who exhibit no ill health symptoms immediately after deployment sometimes see symptoms manifested many months or years later. Even after the Army Force Generation process meets its goals and crosses the threshold that establishes a sustainable force generation cycle next year, a need for timely and predictable reset services for the RC will continue for years to come.

The Army generally and its reserve component specifically have myriad programs that address both short- and long-term RC Soldier and family readiness needs. Some have proved highly effective by immediately improving timely access to resources that meet urgent near-term needs. Others take a longer view of Soldier readiness but already exhibit substantial rewards. In the past five years, Congress has adequately resourced these programs. That said, sustaining an all-volunteer force will always require adequate, timely and predictable funding.



In the short term, the RC is leading numerous initiatives—some already underway but many still in their early stages—that significantly improve RC Soldiers’ quality of life. Among those with the most potential for successful, rapid expansion are the Army National Guard’s Job Connection Education Program, the Army Reserve’s Army Strong Community Centers and RC partnerships at state and local levels such as New Hampshire’s Deployment Cycle Support Program. These models all have short but proven records of immediate success, are widely repeatable in their structures and require relatively few additional personnel to expand to new locations. In all cases, their prospects for expansion are limited mainly by the availability of funding.

In the long term, senior leadership both inside and outside of DoD must continue to embrace a philosophical shift toward understanding the profession of arms as a lifelong experience with lifelong consequences. Soldier and family wellness programs are crucial for sustaining the readiness and availability of an all-volunteer force; any lapse creates challenges that are not easily reversed later. The RC today plays a key operational role, and the Army’s assured access to the RC is irreplaceable in current and future policy. Strong institutional support for family wellness reinforces positive attitudes among highly experienced, highly skilled RC Soldiers and helps the Army retain them. Strong families who benefit from the Army’s programs are good examples for recruits who will become the backbone of tomorrow’s operational RC in all the special services it provides. A more flexible, adaptable Soldier and family support network ultimately allows all Soldiers to better focus on the professional excellence upon which future victories depend.

What Must Be Done

Military service should never cause the degradation of quality of life for the Soldiers and families who make tremendous sacrifices to perform it. The administration and Congress are to be commended for their roles in recent, substantial improvements to reserve component quality of life, but much more work remains to be done. Even in a time of fiscal constraint, the total wellness of the Army’s people—its most important element—is and must continue to be an enduring commitment. Full,

timely and predictable funding of Army quality-of-life programs is nonnegotiable.

The administration and Congress must:

- fully fund an operational force of 700,000 to sustain the Army’s daily mission requirements throughout the ARFORGEN process (AUSA Resolution 11-08);
- sustain the operationalized RC in the long term and alleviate the strain on the RC by authorizing endstrength levels of at least 371,000 for the Army National Guard and 215,000 for the Army Reserve, thereby retaining a highly ready operational force and sustainable dwell time between deployments for Soldiers and families (AUSA Resolution 11-08);
- authorize and appropriate annual funding in a timely and predictable manner to allow the RC to deliver its total wellness services without disruption and enlarge them according to multiyear strategies (AUSA Resolution 11-07);
- grant RC Soldiers and families compensation and benefits equal to those of active component Soldiers while on active duty status (AUSA Resolution 11-03);
- remove impediments limiting or prohibiting nonprofit organizations’ support for Soldiers and families and encourage public recognition of those organizations’ support (AUSA Resolution 11-01);
- encourage employers to craft long-term civilian career opportunities for RC Soldiers by creating tax incentives to retain mobilized RC Soldiers as employees (AUSA Resolution 11-03);





- create parity between federal Title 10 and state-funded Title 32 Montgomery GI Bill education benefits for Active Guard Reserve (AGR) Soldiers (AUSA Resolution 11-03); and
- expand opportunities for RC Soldiers to apply their military experience to civilian trade license requirements and expand the availability of GI Bill benefits for civilian apprenticeships and on-the-job training.

Congress must:

- fully fund the RC’s family-building programs, particularly the Strong Bonds and Yellow Ribbon programs, that are already well positioned to meet RC families’ unique needs (AUSA Resolution 11-01);
- resource the extension of the Army Reserve’s Army Strong Community Centers to more locations where RC families live but which are distant from Army installations;
- fully support the RC’s implementation of Comprehensive Soldier Fitness, Master Resilience Training and other Soldier resilience initiatives within the force (AUSA Resolution 11-09);
- fully fund programs such as the Army Wounded Warrior Program that assist injured RC Soldiers and families with reintegration into civilian life and employment (AUSA Resolution 11-05);
- fund the Army’s health care system to provide continuous post-deployment transitional care for injured RC Soldiers until the VA system can assume responsibility for them (AUSA Resolution 11-05);

- enact legislation to provide veteran status for RC Soldiers after the equivalent of six years of continuous service (AUSA Resolution 11-03); and
- resource the expansion of the Job Connection Education Program nationwide.

The Department of Defense must:

- sustain and assure access to the existing operational capacity of today’s RC;
- build greater flexibility into RC Soldiers’ lifetimes of service and retain the RC’s experience by enabling seamless transition between active and reserve duty status;
- continue to improve RC readiness by providing medical and dental treatment for RC Soldiers upon notification of deployment to ensure that they are deployable (AUSA Resolution 11-05);
- keep RC Soldiers’ chains of command intact and involved in the Soldier wellness process after deployments and throughout the reset phase;
- persist in integrating RC Soldier and family resilience programs with units’ training and pre-deployment schedules; and
- reinforce the successes of initiatives such as the Real Warriors Campaign and continue encouraging RC Soldiers and families to make use of existing support.

States and communities should:

- construct new support mechanisms similar to New Hampshire’s Deployment Cycle Support Program based on partnerships between civilian services and Army RC reset resources to resolve mutual needs;
- amend training requirements for skilled trade licenses and certificates to credit relevant RC military experience; and
- waive or reimburse undergraduate tuition and fees when RC Soldiers are mobilized; provide academic leave for Soldiers who are mobilized during an academic term; refund dormitory and certain other fees; and provide priority placement for class enrollment upon Soldiers’ return (AUSA Resolution 11-03).



Torchbearer Message

The past decade of persistent conflict required rapid transformation of the Army's reserve component from its Cold War role as a strategic reserve into an enduring operational role as an integral element of the Total Force. Sustained, elevated demand on the RC has necessitated a corresponding increase in the Army's efforts to return Soldiers and families to a high state of readiness for future missions.

The RC has been very successful in recent years in meeting the reset requirements of its Soldiers and families, via both the implementation of Army-wide programs that meet the resilience needs of all Soldiers and several of its own initiatives aimed at overcoming challenges specific to RC service. A wide range of resources exist today to meet the urgent requirements faced immediately by RC Soldiers and families and also to overcome more distant obstacles that threaten assured access to the RC in the future. All are significantly improving individual and family total wellness and ultimately sustaining the expeditionary capability of the entire Army.

The Army's reset programs vary widely in their methods—and some are truly groundbreaking—but all aim to improve RC Soldier preparedness in one or more of the following areas: family resilience, physical and psychological wellness and career and educational support. Strong backing from the legislative and executive branches in recent years has yielded substantial progress in all of these measures of RC Soldier readiness and has largely met the climbing demand for resources during long wars. RC Soldiers and families are receiving consistent support commensurate with their service, building stronger relationships with one another, accessing appropriate health care when it is needed and developing better civilian career opportunities that make their families more secure. Many others benefit from such strong support, too: the Army is better able to retain the experience of its veteran RC Soldiers and obtain specialized expertise from the civilian sector; civilian employers need the skills of Soldier employees who are proven to succeed under stress, are experienced at teamwork, excel as leaders and are drug-free; and communities welcome self-reliant and harmonious families.

Even as the RC's deployment tempo decreases, the need for reset will continue for years to come. To sustain the progress already achieved and to continue meeting demand, funding for the RC's reset programs must endure; in fact, the early successes of several young programs suggest that they are ripe for rapid expansion because they deliver maximum force readiness gains at minimal extra cost. Of particular strategic importance are the RC's numerous efforts to institutionalize resilience skills in the long term through Comprehensive Soldier Fitness and through family programs such as Strong Bonds. However, new models of resource delivery are proving to be highly efficient as well. In particular, the Army Reserve's Army Strong Community Centers break conventional boundaries by bringing the Army's resources right to the places where RC families need them, and the New Hampshire National Guard's Deployment Cycle Support Program has created unprecedented partnerships among the RC and civilian resources. These programs and others are already highly effective at sustaining the readiness of RC Soldiers and families, but they need a steady stream of funding for several years as demand for support resources peaks. Achieving a rebalanced Army requires full support of these efforts and others, such as retaining an operational force of 700,000 ready Soldiers and increasing dwell time between deployments to sustainable levels for active and reserve components.

Recent conflicts, peacekeeping missions and humanitarian emergencies have proved that the capability that resides predominantly in the RC today is central to the Army's endurance and its ability to fulfill its requirements across the spectrum of likely contingencies. The resources that the Army is devoting to the resilience of its RC Soldiers and families are dramatically improving the overall readiness of these elements and are part of the Army's long-term sustainment strategy. Reliable funding and timely, predictable availability of RC reset services ultimately improve the Army's ability to meet the security needs of the nation.

My priority is to make sure that we fund these wars, that we take care of our people and their families.

Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
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**Institute of Land Warfare
Association of the United States Army**

2425 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22201-3385

800-336-4570

www.ausa.org