

# Your Well-Being Information Resource

## Well-Being Liaison Office (WBLO)



# FLO Notes



***A Family Like No Other – Providing For A Relevant And Ready Army***

Volume 18, Issue 4

[www.armyfamiliesonline.org](http://www.armyfamiliesonline.org)

April 2005

## WBLO Chief's Corner

### Honoring a tradition of volunteerism

A people immersed in a culture of change, where the only certainty is uncertainty, stability is where we want to go, transformation occurs while we fight, and every day is a new day ... this is the Army. We are an Army full of challenges for those who are up to them, crammed with opportunity, and rife with adventure.

While we are in a culture of change we also have the unique ability to mitigate our risk through the greatness of our people. In other words, this is a great institution to be a part of.

Army families provide a strong foundation for service to this country because they embody the long tradition of volunteerism, which is one of the cornerstones of this nation's greatness. And when you add the Army's culture of service to this great nation of ours, it can seem a bit humbling.

We celebrate this robust culture of volunteerism during National Volunteer Week – April 17 through 23. This is a time for us all to say thanks for all you do as a volunteer in the Army community. We couldn't get along without our entire volunteer force – Soldiers, civilians, family members, extended families, and youth. They make this country strong, which in turn makes our Army stronger.

Additionally, we are planning for Military Spouse Day (May 6), a day in

which we will recognize the “profound importance of spouse commitment to the readiness and Well-Being of servicemembers on active duty and in the National Guard and reserve.” These are the exact words from President Ronald Reagan's Proclamation dated 1984 when he first set aside a day to pay tribute to the Military Spouse.

These two events have an important role in our ability to thank the great people of this Army for their service.

Recognition from the Army's senior leadership is important, but more importantly each Army community across proponents and components provides a backdrop for our gratitude. To those of you who have volunteered and those who have followed your Soldier's path through war, countless separations and the unknown beyond ... thank you. Thank you for what you do and thanks for the strength you provide this Army.

### Take time to recognize volunteers

National Volunteer Week is an annual event sponsored by the Points of Light Foundation, and is being celebrated this year from April 17 through 23. This event is about thanking one of America's most valuable assets – our volunteers – and calling the public's attention to all that they do to improve our communities.

The 2005 theme is “Inspire By Example” because it truly reflects the power volunteers have to inspire the people they help, as well as, to inspire others to serve.

During the past year roughly 64.5 million people volunteered in some capacity – up from 63.8 million for the

same time period in 2003.

This year the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation is asking you to recognize your volunteers' achievement by joining the thousands of organizations working to deliver the President's Volunteer Service Award to deserving volunteers during National Volunteer Week and throughout the year. The foundation has dedicated a Web page to providing information about the President's Volunteer Service Award, and many other ways to recognize volunteerism – [www.pointsoflight.org/programs/seasons/nvw/recognize.cfm](http://www.pointsoflight.org/programs/seasons/nvw/recognize.cfm).

Additionally, the foundation has put together a 2005 National Volunteer Week tool kit that may be downloaded from the foundation's Web site – at [www.pointsoflight.org/programs/seasons/nvw/tools.cfm](http://www.pointsoflight.org/programs/seasons/nvw/tools.cfm). This tool kit will help you plan and publicize your recognition activities on the local, state and national levels.

National Volunteer Week began in 1974 when President Richard Nixon signed an executive order establishing the week as an annual celebration of volunteering. Since then, every U.S. President has signed a proclamation



promoting National Volunteer Week. Additionally, governors, mayors and other elected officials make public statements and sign proclamations in support of National Volunteer Week.

For more information about National Volunteer Week, contact Kisha James at (202) 729-8168 or via e-mail to [VolunteerWeek@PointsofLight.org](mailto:VolunteerWeek@PointsofLight.org).

## Dollar Days coming to a commissary near you

As if bringing customers an average savings of 30 percent or more isn't enough, Dollar Days are coming to commissaries in April.

"Dollar stores are a growing trend in commercial retail stores and we want to get in on all the fun as well as offering customers even greater bargains," said Patrick B. Nixon, chief executive officer and acting director of the Defense Commissary Agency.

Commissaries in the United States kick off the new "Dollar Days" sales event during the first two weeks of April with plans for a repeat performance the first two weeks of August. Items throughout the store will feature dollar pricing. Commissaries in Europe and the Far East will also participate in Dollar Days but the timeframe may not coincide with U.S. stores.

## Vets Centers offer grief counseling to military families

In an unprecedented expansion of its traditional client base, the Department of Veterans Affairs is offering grief counseling to families of servicemembers who die while on active duty.

VA's Office of Readjustment Counseling offers the counseling services at its 206 community-based Vet Centers throughout the United States, including Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Greg Harms, program analyst for the counseling program, said 412 military family members – from spouses to children to siblings, parents and even grandparents – have taken advantage of the program as they struggle to cope with the loss of their 276 servicemembers. Most were killed during deploy-

ments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Expanding its services to serve veterans' families represents "quite a leap and a real innovation" for VA, acknowledged Charles Flora, associate program director. But he calls the offering of bereavement counseling to family members "a natural extension of what we already do for veterans."

Who, Flora asked, is more deserving of VA assistance than families who have sacrificed their husbands, wives, children, brothers, sisters or grandchildren in support of their country?

The program also serves families of reservists and National Guardsmen who die while activated for federal duty.

Some families seek the VA's counseling services immediately after learning of their loved ones' loss, while others wait until later, often after an important milestone such as a birthday, holiday or the one-year anniversary of the death has passed, Harms said.

"Everyone grieves differently. It runs the full gamut," he said. "There are no standard operating procedures for grief."

As a result, services offered run the full range, from one- or two-time visits to weekly sessions, depending on the family member's needs.

Regardless of the level of help needed, the VA service offers all its clients a common variable: a safe, caring environment where a professional bereavement counselor helps them work through the emotional and psychological issues associated with their loss.

"They're looking for support, looking for someone they can talk to who will listen and understand," Harms said. "A lot of what people need," added Flora, "is a place where they can sit down, take a breath and tell their story in a calm place where they can put things into perspective."

While all grief counselors are able to provide that service, the Vet Centers provide something many clients call a big plus: More than half the staff at the Vet Centers are veterans themselves who understand the military lifestyle as well as the tremendous sacrifice the



families have made.

Counselors go out of their way to respond to families' needs, often meeting with them the same day they're contacted. They keep clinics open late to accommodate families' schedules and network with other service organizations to reach families in need. And in some cases, they even make home visits for families who might otherwise not be able to tap into their services.

"We've made a science of overcoming every obstacle to care," Flora said.

No medical diagnosis is required to seek help, and services are completely confidential. The only way a counselor can share information on a case is with written permission of the family member. "There's guaranteed clinical confidentiality," Harms said.

Flora said he considers the services the Vet Centers provides grieving military families "a sacred trust" that reflects the VA's commitment to veterans and their families. "We're meeting these families at one of the most traumatic points in their lives and helping to assist the family as it rebuilds itself," he said. "This is sacred business."

Referrals for grief counseling come through military casualty assistance offices, the VA and veterans service organizations. The largest number of referrals comes from TAPS, the non-profit Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, which offers what Harms calls "incredible peer-to-peer support" but no professional bereavement counseling services.

Families requesting more information or services can also contact the VA's Readjustment Counseling Service directly at (202) 273-9116 or via e-mail to [vet.center@hq.med.va.gov](mailto:vet.center@hq.med.va.gov).

## Fixes on the way for Soldier pay problem

The Army's senior civilian vowed to push efforts to resolve soldiers' pay issues during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing in early March.

Responding to one senator's concern about a Soldier who'd been wrongfully docked for travel and other expenses after he'd lost an arm during military duty in Iraq, Secretary of the Army Francis J. Harvey noted, "it's disturb-

ing that these things happen, and they shouldn't happen."

The goal and intent during distribution of any Soldier's pay, Harvey said, "is perfection," noting he "didn't want to see any wounded Soldier have any problems with pay."

Harvey said the Army has expanded its telephone assistance hotlines to help Soldiers resolve pay problems. He cited recent statistics that say 75 percent of Soldier pay issues are resolved in one day.

"Our objective is 90 percent the first day," Harvey said, noting the end state goal is "zero" pay problems.

Harvey also said he'd support an initiative that would allow wounded National Guard and reserve Soldiers to keep their combat pay while they're hospitalized.

Harvey emphasized that the Army was "taking actions" to fix any soldier pay problems. "We're going to take care of this," the secretary said.

## Awards program offers \$50,000 in grants for volunteer organizations

Are you part of a volunteer group helping military families?

Are you serving families of service men and women deployed in the global war against terrorism?

Are you striving to improve the quality of life for families whose loved ones are serving in Iraq or Afghanistan?

Does your group have an idea or plan that needs support?

If the answer to these questions is yes, then your organization may qualify for this awards program.

Newman's Own, Fisher House, and the Military Times Media Group join in announcing the 6th Annual Newman's Own Award. Volunteer organizations are invited to compete for a share of \$50,000 in grants. Just provide information on your innovative plan that improves the quality of life for military families and their communities, and your organization could be awarded funding for implementing the plan.

Judges will rank all the submissions, and the one deemed most outstanding will receive a \$10,000 grant. The remaining \$40,000 will be allocated to other organizations by the judges. Keep in mind that the judges are looking for those good ideas that capture the spirit of volunteerism – organizations should primarily be those with volunteers rather than paid professional staffs.

Army Family Readiness Groups, Navy Ombudsmen, Marine Corps Key Network Volunteers, Air Force Family Support Centers are all examples of organizations working to support military families. However, there are many others.

To be eligible, the organization must support an Active Duty, National Guard, or Reserve unit(s) or installation(s) and be tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code; or a private organization as defined in Department of Defense Instruction 1000.15 – [www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/i100015\\_102397/i100015p.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/i100015_102397/i100015p.pdf) – dated October 23, 1997; or a volunteer organization such as a Family Readiness Group or Center, an Ombudsmen or Key Volunteer Network. All organizations must be approved for operation on a Department of Defense installation by the installation commander. Applications must be received by April 30, 2005.

The Newman's Own Award is jointly funded through the sale of Newman's Own products at military commissaries worldwide, Fisher House Foundation and Military Times Media Group. World War II veteran and actor Paul Newman donates all his profits from the sale of Newman's Own products to charitable and educational causes. Since 1982, he has donated over \$150 million to thousands of charities.

Last year 18 organizations were presented Newman's Own awards, the following five Army organizations were among the recipients:

- "Handy Man Hotline Materials," a part of the Connecticut National Guard Family Program that reduces stressors on families of deployed Guardsmen by having everyday household problems

diagnosed and repaired or referred to competent businesses at no cost for the labor received a \$4,000 grant;

- "Camp Wonderland," sponsored by the Missouri National Guard Wonderland Foundation, a single one-week camp session for 95 special-needs campers received a \$4,000 grant.

- "Operation Gratitude," a California National Guard-affiliated nonprofit, all-volunteer organization that sends care packages and letters of support to service members deployed overseas received a \$3,000 grant;

- "Glory Boots" and "Pay It Forward," both programs of the Mothers of Military Support of the 81st Armor Brigade, Fort Lewis, Wash. received a \$2,000 grant;

- "Road Dawg Support," sponsored by the Family Readiness Group of the 846th Transportation Company, a North Carolina Army Reserve unit was named as an honorable mention.

For more information, visit the Fisher House Foundation's Web site – [www.fisherhouse.org](http://www.fisherhouse.org) – or call 1-888-294-8560. All entries must be received by April 30, 2005.



## OTF recognizes Soldiers' efforts, sacrifices

Operation Tribute to Freedom (OTF) is a Department of the Army, Community Relations and Outreach program designed to help honor Soldiers and provide them with opportunities to thank the American people for their continued support. OTF makes these connections possible with our Speakers Service, Soldiers News Service, Special Events, and Soldier Homecoming Support.

Everyday, Soldiers fighting the Global War on Terrorism risk their lives in operations that help secure the freedom of all American people. Whether they are veterans of the Iraq or Afghanistan

**FLO Notes'** articles are for information only and are not an endorsement of referenced sites or any products/services offered therein. Well-Being Liaison Office, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, ATTN: DAPE-HRP-FLO, 300 Army Pentagon, Washington, DC 20310-0300. Call toll-free: **1-800-833-6622** (in all states including Alaska and Hawaii; also Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands), or call (703) 696-5393, DSN: 426-5393. Address e-mail to [ArmyFamily.Link@hqda.army.mil](mailto:ArmyFamily.Link@hqda.army.mil) and visit **Army Families Online** — [www.armyfamiliesonline.org](http://www.armyfamiliesonline.org).

wars, there is only one operation that matters when they return home – Operation Tribute to Freedom, which is designed to honor Soldiers and give them opportunities to thank the American people for their support.

Just as Soldiers vow to never leave a fallen comrade, Operation Tribute to Freedom refuses to leave a Soldier's story untold. By working with Army Public Affairs Officers around the country, OTF identifies ongoing media, speaking, and recognition opportunities to ensure that homecomings last longer than one day and that American Soldiers stay connected with the American public.

The OTF Homecoming Support Service, Soldier News Service, and Speaker and Recognition Services provide resources and opportunities that enable PAOs and event coordinators to help Soldiers tell their stories. No audience is too big or too small. Your support of Operation Tribute to Freedom will help the American people better understand the Global War on Terrorism – one Soldier's story at a time.

Operation Tribute to Freedom can be found on the Internet at [www.army.mil/OTF](http://www.army.mil/OTF).

**Who Can Participate:** Soldiers can share their experiences and thank the American People by volunteering to speak at or participate in special events. Soldiers and their leaders can also share their stories of courage and sacrifice with the Operation Tribute to Freedom team through their local Public Affairs office. OTF staff will engage various media and entertainment organizations to share these stories with a broader audience.

The American people can recognize Soldiers at their events, invite Soldiers to speak about their experiences, and support Soldiers and their families.

Services provided by OTF include:

- **Speakers Service** – Soldiers volunteer to speak on the Operation Tribute to Freedom Web site and are kept in our database to fill future requests and/or attend recognition events. Event coordinators use this website to invite Soldiers to speak at their events 30-90 days in advance. The OTF team matches speakers with events within approximately a 45-mile radius. We provide support materials including OTF banners, brochures and talking points.

- **Soldier Homecoming Support** –

Operation Tribute to Freedom assists units and family readiness groups in preparing meaningful homecomings. This includes assistance with requesting military assets, coordinating participation of local organizations and representatives, providing sample press releases and national visibility on the OTF Web site. OTF conveys the overwhelming support provided by communities and FRGs to Army Leadership.

- **Soldier Recognition Events** – Operation Tribute to Freedom supports the planning of special events designed to honor our nation's military. OTF provides assistance in requesting and coordinating Army participation and assets for these events.

For more information, contact the Operation Tribute to Freedom staff via e-mail to [TributetoFreedom@hqda.army.mil](mailto:TributetoFreedom@hqda.army.mil), or by phone a (703) 693-7641.

Additionally, OTF has four regional branch offices located in Chicago; New York; Tampa, Fla., and Los Angeles. Contact information for each branch office is available on the OTF Web site.

## One ID card for active- and reserve-components

The DoD has begun issuing new military ID cards that do not distinguish between active-duty and reserve Soldiers.

Before, military ID cards were nearly identical except that they clearly identified an individual as "Active," "National Guard" or "Reserve." The distinction was made to limit commissary privileges for reserve-component Soldiers, who were authorized for only 24 shopping days at a commissary per calendar year.

The 2004 Defense Authorization Act did away with the commissary restriction, effectively eliminating a need for separate ID cards. The old ID cards will be phased out over the next 2-and-a-half years.

## Anheuser-Busch offers free park admission

Anheuser-Busch Companies, Inc., recently announced its "Heroes Salute" program will honor Soldiers and their families by offering free single-day

admission to its SeaWorld and Busch Gardens parks to active-duty, as well as active reserve-component Soldiers, and as many as three direct dependents.

The program will run through Dec. 31. Soldiers need only register, either online at [www.herosalute.com](http://www.herosalute.com) or in the entrance plaza of participating parks, and show a Department of Defense photo ID.

As many as three direct dependents are also entitled to free admission. Dependents may take advantage of the offer without their servicemember, however an adult must accompany minor dependents.

For more information, visit [www.herosalute.com](http://www.herosalute.com).

## Well-Being Liaison Office

Army Well-Being now has a presence on Army Knowledge Online (AKO) – [www.us.army.mil](http://www.us.army.mil). Well-Being's AKO page serves as another resource for constituents of Army Well-Being. The page can be found at <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/page/136225>, or under the "Personnel" group in the "Army Organizations" group. Presently past issues of *FLO Notes*, as well as *Army Well-Being* magazine are available in the Well-Being Knowledge Center link on the Well-Being AKO page. Future issues of both publications will also be posted here, as well as on their present location on the Well-Being Liaison Office's Army Families Online Web site – [www.army.families.org](http://www.army.families.org). *FLO Notes* is available via e-mail subscription to registered users of Army Families Online.



Due to budgetary restrictions, *FLO Notes* is currently sent via direct mail to senior Army spouses only. However we continue to receive requests from Army spouses who serve as Family Readiness Group leaders asking if they can receive them by mail. With the addition of the Well-Being page and Knowledge Center on AKO, we now have an additional outlet to provide *FLO Notes*.

Please help us spread the word.