

What is the R&DA Wounded Warrior Transition Program (WWTP)?

By James Fagan, Executive Director R&DA

The R&DA WWTP is an effort dedicated to assisting military injured in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and to help their families during the period that their loved ones are recuperating from their injuries in order to return to the military or to transition into civilian life. First of all, the R&DA membership supports our efforts in this area since it is the right thing to do. Secondly, our involvement is far greater than others since our business interests are in supporting the US military in peace and in war. We want to provide assistance where other programs fail and to provide employment where possible.

The WWTP encompasses many elements at this time, and I want to briefly discuss some of these segments which will be articulated in a comprehensive website and program in the future. The following summarizes some of our activities:

UNDERSTANDING THE NEED. We have had the privilege to visit with wounded military at our meetings. Also, the program spokespersons who work with the wounded and injured military have addressed programs and individual and collective needs at Walter Reed Medical Center. These presentations are inspiring and allow us to understand the positive sacrifice being made every day and the difficult task faced by the wounded and their families. There are few dry eyes after hearing their stories and meeting with these heroes.

SUPPORTING THE HOSPITALIZED. Although many celebrities visit the military in their hospital, what is more meaningful to those hospitalized is a visit by those who have no agenda. That would be us! We visit to listen, to talk about military food, or if you had military service, to share your stories. We are there to let them know that we care. This is missionary work! This gives spirit to those facing a long rehabilitation or the fear of being medically retired from the service. R&DA sponsors visits to all hospitals.

SUPPORTING THE FAMILIES. The family members suffer with the wounded warriors. They are located near a hospital, far from home and family, to support their loved ones. They face so many unknowns, and in

most cases have children to nurture. R&DA assists in little ways, such as, providing pre-paid telephone cards so they can afford to talk to supporting family in their home state. It may be assisting with child care so they and their wounded warrior can go to dinner and a movie one day. We must always remember that injuries also affect those not in the military.

EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE. Many of our wounded will be forced to leave the service since they are not 100% able to remain in the military. We assist them in giving preference for such individuals in our places of business. These former military bring team work, dedication, and great skills to any company who can offer employment to them. We want to ensure that anyone you do hire is fully qualified to do the job, but we do ask that you consider these individuals.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE. A lot of programs exist to assist these deserving individuals. Would it surprise you to know that there are gaps in the support that they critically need? A recently medically retired enlisted soldier was relegated to becoming SGT Mom after losing his legs in combat. He was happy in his new role, but was unable to handle the laundry since the equipment at home was a top loading washer, and he could load and unload it. R&DA members provided the needed equipment! There are many similar cases that we come across and feel that we can assist.

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS. Oftentimes the need is an individual need that can be fulfilled easily. A soldier may need to get to a shopping mall, the post exchange, or to do a personal errand. He or she may just need someone to talk with, and we can assist in these matters as well.

FUND RAISING. To do the many things we would like to do to show our support we also need to raise funds. We are doing this on a specific program basis and in a general manner to create a funding base that will allow us to fulfill, legitimate needs when existing programs fail the warrior or their family. This is clearly a higher calling for many of us. Many of you have seen the flyer for the Walter Reed Picnic on September 15th. We have collected funds to support this function and food donations to meet the needs for more than 600 personnel. There is a lot still to be done, but we are on our way.

The Chairman of the R&DA Board of Directors will be soliciting funds from R&DA members and their suppliers to support approved expenditures in

these areas. You will see more of this in the future. We will be asking for your donations and some individuals and companies have already donated funds, for which we are extremely grateful.

R&DA will recognize all donations in a positive manner and print the donor listing by category on both the website and in the programs of all future meetings.

Hopefully, R&DA members can ensure that our military sacrifices are never forgotten.