

BRIEFS

Army Launches Wounded Soldier Hotline

By Armed Forces Press Service

Army officials launched a new hotline to help wounded warriors and their family members to get information or assistance with medical or other issues. The "Wounded Soldier and Family Hotline," 800-984-8523, also will help Army leaders improve services to wounded soldiers and their families, officials said.

"We have designed this call center to be able to collectively hear what the soldiers say about their health care issues, so as issues are raised, we can identify systemic faults or problematic areas and senior leaders can better allocate resources," said Maj. Gen. Sean J. Byrne, commander of U.S. Army Human Resources Command.

"It's all about serving our wounded and injured soldiers and their families," he added. "If we can find a way to improve our system, we will. It's that simple."

In a statement, Army officials acknowledged that many soldiers wounded in the Global War on Terror and their families are "enduring hardships in navigating through our medical care system."

Care of wounded soldiers has been in the spotlight since a February series of articles in the Washington Post revealed shortcomings in outpatient care at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, here. Since then, the hospital's commander was relieved, Army Secretary Francis J. Harvey resigned, and the service's surgeon general submitted his retirement request over the issue.

Officials stressed that the hotline is not intended to circumvent the chain of command, but is "another step in the direction of improvement."

The Wounded Soldier and Family Hotline can be reached from 7 a.m. to 7



p.m. Monday through Friday at (800) 984-8523. As additional personnel are trained to receive calls and refer them to the proper organization or agency for resolution, the hotline hours of operation will expand to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, officials said.

Website Connects Families

A new website, www.websites-forheroes.com, launched last November by former Marine Corps sergeant, Terry L. Gniffke, of Caliber Media, and Michael Sawtell, CEO of DigitalPost Interactive, enables military service members and their families to communicate with one another for free through a personalized, private website.

Private contributors send donations to the website managers, who then use that money to create and maintain a personal, password-protected website for one military family to stay connected for one year.

Donors do not know which family they are sponsoring because that information is kept anonymous. Donors can also send partial sponsorships, which will be grouped with other partial sponsorships to

enable a military family to receive their own website.

Military families can sign up through the website on a first-come, first-served basis for the opportunity to receive a private website.

For more information regarding Websites for Heroes, visit online at www.websitesforheroes.com.

Proposed 3% Hike in Pay in '08

The Department of Defense has submitted to Congress their request for a 3 percent increase in military pay in 2008, effective January 1, 2008.

Under the 2007 Authorization Act, senior enlisted personnel, senior warrant officers and senior commissioned officers who have up to 40 years of service receive a time-in-service raise.

