

TRICARE Blog Just What the Doctor Ordered

A new weekly TRICARE blog intends to address current issues, beneficiaries' concerns and to keep visitors up-to-date on the happenings at TRICARE.

The blog, found at www.health.mil/tmablog, has recently covered topics from screening children of deployed parents for stress to issues surrounding benefit delivery in the Philippines. Army Maj. Gen. Elder Granger, deputy director, TRICARE Management Activity (TMA) says he hopes beneficiaries will take advantage of the interactive feature that allows readers to post comments.

"We're constantly seeking new avenues to communicate and interact with beneficiaries," says Granger. "Blogging is a 21st century way to get information out and respond to the need for information and assistance from our TRICARE beneficiaries."

Those interested in the weekly blogs can sign up for e-alerts by clicking on the "little red envelope" at www.tricare.mil.

Business Assistance for Spouses

Starting a business requires cold, hard cash and moral support, both of which are now available to military spouses through a Virginia-based organization.

"Military Spouse Business Association will help military spouses with the tangibles of financial and business resources and the intangibles of motivation, encouragement, support and recognition," says Lanette Lepper, a co-founder of the organization, and a military spouse who owns her own business.

The organization now offers military spouses who own their own businesses networking opportunities as well as financial and other resources. The organization's web site offers what the

founders call the "Red, White and Blue Pages," a directory of military spouse-owned businesses, which enables military spouses to find other military spouses in their geographical or professional areas.

The Military Spouse Business Association is a new supporter of America Supports You, a Defense Department program connecting citizens and companies with service members and their families serving at home and abroad <http://milspousebiz.org/>

Soldiers Project Offers Free Mental Health Help

A volunteer group of licensed mental health professionals now offers free and confidential counseling to service members of Iraq/ Afghanistan conflicts and their families in a growing number of cities nationwide.

The Soldiers Project is a Los Angeles-based private response to addressing the surge of need for psychosocial services among service members and their families. The project has spawned similar groups in New York, Chicago and Seattle, and organizers hope to spread to more locations across the country.

More than half of the estimated 300,000 military service members who are suffering from depression, post-traumatic stress disorders, and traumatic brain injury are going without treatment because of the gaps in mental health care and stigma issues, according to RAND Corporation's 500-page independent study on the prevalence of psychological injuries.

"The gap widens every day when you consider the barriers to access, including the red tape, long waiting lists, proximity of VA facilities to client's homes, and the escalating need due to continued high intensity combat, longer term and multiple deployments, and the lack of therapists trained in treating combat trauma," says Dr. Judith Broder, Director of The Soldiers



U.S. Navy Senior Chief Master at Arms Rudy Johnson hula hoops with his daughter Aug. 8, 2008, onboard the forward-deployed amphibious assault ship USS Essex during Gator Cruise 2008 in the Pacific Ocean. A Gator Cruise is an invitation for Sailors to invite family and friends aboard to experience life aboard a U.S. Naval Vessel. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Karl R. Bergman)

Project. "We narrow the gap by breaking down the hurdles to care," she says.

"Appointments are made within 24 to 48 hours of a call and with a therapist who lives close to the client's home. There is no paperwork or reporting (within the law) and services are confidential, so clients feel fewer stigmas about seeking and receiving therapy. Our counselors are trained in combat trauma and have a peer support network. Services are offered for free and for as long as our clients need therapy."

And the project has expanded its focus to include extended family members of the service member. "The people who come back need to find a way back and the way they find their way back is through their families' and community's help," says Broder.

The Soldiers Project recently organized a training conference, Hidden Wounds of War: Pathways to Healing, to encourage and train more mental health professionals to initiate projects in their own areas.

www.the-soldiers-project.org ●