



# Warrior and Family Care™

*Healing with Honor*

The USO's mission to lift the spirits of America's troops and families hasn't changed since our founding in 1941, but the challenges facing our men and women in uniform and their families continually do and the USO adapts to meet their changing needs. Throughout the USO's history, going back to World War II, the USO has supported healing heroes during and after major conflicts. Over the last decade, the widespread use of body armor, rapid evacuation from the battlefield, and advances in military medicine are resulting in many more service members returning home having survived injuries that in past conflicts would have been fatal. More than 40,000 service members have been visibly wounded in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and some estimate more than 300,000 troops suffer from invisible wounds, such as post-traumatic stress or traumatic brain injury. These wounded, ill and injured service men and women and their families face many difficult challenges upon their return, and the USO is doing all we can to sustain their hope for the happy and fulfilling future they so richly deserve. As such, the USO has developed a comprehensive long-term program, USO Warrior and Family Care, to support the continuum of care that will give these warriors the best chance for healing with honor, and provide the support their families and caregivers so urgently need.

As the first wounded troops began to come home in the earliest days of the war in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, many USO Centers, like USO Metropolitan Washington, with caring staff and volunteers around the world, especially those near major military medical facilities, stepped in to support those men and women and their families. The USO embedded a Center in the Contingency Aeromedical Staging Facility (CASF) at Ramstein Air Base in Germany in 2003 to support troops being prepped for transit to the United States. In 2008, the USO built the USO Warrior Center at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (LRMC) in Germany to further its commitment to America's wounded, ill and injured troops. Our volunteers and staff provide a caring and compassionate presence at a time when emotions like fear and uncertainty are all encompassing. Our USO teams in Europe and stateside use knowledge and resources to respond to their needs. From aiding in communication, assisting with travel and lodging arrangements, providing essential items such as toiletries and clothing to doing simple things like lending a caring ear, the USO is committed to making one of the darkest times in a family's life as positive as it can possibly be.

In addition to USO Warrior and Family Care, the USO's \$100 million fundraising campaign, Operation Enduring Care, will fund the construction of two USO Warrior and Family Centers, one at Fort Belvoir Community Hospital in Virginia and the other at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland; endow these two centers, and support USO programs to support these troops, their families and caregivers, as well as families of the fallen.

USO's support of wounded, ill and injured troops, their families and caregivers continues today and has expanded to encompass many critical facets of life, including physical and recreational activities, mental health support, family strengthening, education and employment training, career opportunities, and community reintegration support. In order to support wounded, ill and injured troops, their families and caregivers, USO Warrior and Family Care contains multiple programs and partnerships with best-in-class organizations.

## **Physical Health & Recreation**

Health and wellness are critical to the mental and emotional well-being of our warrior community. It allows these men and women to return to the vigorous physical activity that was their norm prior to their injury. These men and women learn the important lesson that they can accomplish almost anything they set out to do.

**Ride 2 Recovery:** The USO partners with Ride 2 Recovery to help improve the health and wellness of wounded troops through Spinning® and outdoor cycling activities. These multi-day rides are not just an opportunity for wounded, ill and injured service members to test their physical limits, but to prove they can conquer even the toughest physical and mental challenges. The riders share the road and their life experiences with each other. Whether it's climbing a steep mountain or racing across a flat road with their bicycle adapted to fit one leg, one arm or whatever their physical challenge might be, Ride 2 Recovery participants conquer their fears and prove they are a warrior even away from the battlefield. In 2011, in partnership with Ride 2 Recovery, the USO supported six rides for healing heroes along with building 100 adaptive bicycles. Eight rides are scheduled for 2012.

**Rivers of Recovery:** In partnership with the nonprofit organization, Rivers of Recovery, the USO offers fishing retreats to wounded, ill or injured female service members and couples. These excursions are more than time away from the stresses of multiple doctors' appointments and adjusting to life as a wounded, ill or injured service member. Instructors use fly fishing to help participants bond with one another, share experiences and further their recovery. The simple act of creating a lure and catching a fish can bring couples closer and similarly break down the walls often put up by female wounded service members. In 2012, the USO will partner with Rivers of Recovery to offer six events.

**Warrior Games:** The USO is collaborating with the Department of Defense and the US Olympic Committee to support the Warrior Games in 2012 for the third straight year. These games are an annual competitive sports event for more than 200 wounded, ill and injured athletes from the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force and Special Operations Command. Each year, the USO proudly supports the athletes who compete with their visible and invisible wounds in seven competitive sports events held at the United States Olympic Committee in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The games are more than medals and records – they represent pride, sacrifice, courage and teamwork.

## **Mental Health Programs**

USO provides a continuum of care from the battlefield to the community to provide service members, families and caregivers a broad array of programs to help them throughout each stage of their recovery.

**USO Centers:** Immediately after 9/11/2001 and the start of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, USO Centers around the world began to play a crucial role in the recovery and reintegration of our nation's healing heroes and their families. Through local community support, celebrity visits, field trips, concerts, dinners and other impactful events, USO staff and volunteers have worked tirelessly to ensure that all who have served and sacrificed know just how much America appreciates them. USO Centers near major military medical facilities, such as USO of Metropolitan Washington supporting the two major medical facilities in the nation's capital, USO Europe supporting Landstuhl Regional Medical Center and USO San Antonio supporting the Brooke Army Medical Center, focus on important programs and activities designed to combat against stress and despair. Around the globe, USO Centers help healing heroes and their families reintegrate into society and their "new normal."

**Behavioral Health Initiative:** The USO, in collaboration with the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury and TriWest Healthcare Alliance, launched a pilot program at

four centers in an effort to raise awareness of available resources for service members and families under stress. The USO's part in supporting these challenges is to aid in early intervention efforts and suicide prevention through identifying, engaging, and supporting. In July 2010, the initiative was expanded throughout TriWest's territory. In October 2010 a pilot program was launched with Health Net to include USO centers on the East coast. Future plans to expand within the USO and overseas are underway.

**Contingency Aeromedical Staging Facility (CASF) USO:** In April 2003, the USO embedded a USO Center within the Contingency Aeromedical Staging Facility (CASF) at Ramstein Air Base. CASF USO provides a critical home-away-from-home environment for the wounded staged for transport to the United States following medical treatment at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. Whether it is a hot meal, fresh clothing or a friendly smile, the staff and volunteers of the CASF USO let our nation's heroes know that America is here to support them.

**USO Warrior Center:** For many wounded and injured warriors, Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (LRMC) is the first stop in their medical evacuation back home to the United States and the first time they become aware of their wounds and the new, unknown future that lies before them. The USO Warrior Center at Landstuhl provides a comforting shoulder to lean on in the difficult days and weeks after sustaining those injuries. During a warrior's brief time as an outpatient at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, the USO Warrior Center offers the compassion and care of home, with a comfortable "living room" style lounge furnished with reclining sofas, cable television, a fully equipped kitchen, cyber cafe, telephone stations and multiple gaming centers. The USO Warrior Center staff and volunteers work tirelessly to support the thousands of wounded, ill and injured who transition through Germany before returning to the United States for additional medical care or rejoining their units on the battlefield after recuperating from wounds or injuries treatable at LRMC.

**USO Caregivers Conference:** The USO recognizes that caregivers and spouses of wounded, ill and injured service members play a large role in the recovery of their loved one. At times, caregivers also need to know they are not alone during their family's transition. Caregivers Conferences address the common concerns that many families have during their recovery. Topics ranging from resiliency, compassion fatigue, sexual intimacy after injury, children's grief, suicide and depression are just a handful of topics that subject matter experts address during our conferences. The USO has hosted two of these conferences and will host two more in 2012.

**USO Day Rooms:** When the comforts of home are not readily available, USO Dayrooms can be a temporary home or respite for the wounded, families and medical support staff. USO Day Rooms are located at military hospitals and medical facilities throughout the U.S. and overseas. Each of the rooms is equipped with TVs, furniture, gaming systems, refrigerators and other comfort necessities.

**USO Warrior and Family Centers (Fort Belvoir, Virginia and Bethesda, Maryland):** Construction will soon begin at the USO Warrior and Family Centers at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland and construction of the USO Warrior and Family Center has already begun adjacent to the Community Hospital at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. These two new centers will play an integral role in the USO's service delivery and that of other best-in-class organizations and military partners. They will join our other USO Centers worldwide in comfort and support for our nation's military and their families by offering a caring environment where the healing that has begun can accelerate. They will be a focal point for support, a place of respite and recreation, a peaceful environment to bring family together, and an opportunity to prepare for a happy and fulfilling life ahead. Men and women wrestling with the aftermath of combat will be able to embrace their roles as parents and spouses, and learn how to reunite as a family in the face of change. On the challenging journey toward recovery, these centers will be important structures to help build hope and confidence.

## **Family Strengthening Programs**

Family strengthening programs focus on an extraordinary group of unknown heroes – the selfless family members and caregivers who watch over our nation’s wounded, ill and injured warriors, and the families of the fallen.

**NMFA Healing Adventures Retreats for Wounded Warrior Families:** The USO partners with the National Military Family Association Healing Adventures Camps to bring together families who have a parent who is wounded, ill or injured to participate in a four-day camp experience. Each camp focuses on activities and seminars for families to “learn to play together” after a difficult and long recovery process. We are planning three Healing Adventures Retreats in 2012.

**Stronger Families – Oxygen Couples Seminar:** The *Oxygen* program is designed to help wounded, injured, or ill couples strengthen their relationship and work on tough issues in a fun and non-threatening environment. Couples learn how to improve their communication, better understand each other’s needs, resolve conflict, rekindle romance and find renewed hope. With the assistance of the Army’s Wounded Warrior Program, Navy Safe Harbor the and Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment, the USO is hosting six couples workshops throughout the country in 2012.

**Taking Care of You:** Entertainer and educator Trevor Romain and his foundation, The Trevor Romain Foundation, have teamed up with USO to support military children who are dealing with a “new normal”. “Taking Care of You” kits are distributed to children of wounded, ill, or injured troops. In 2012, Romain will distribute 7,000 kits as he tours military installations worldwide. Tour stops will include visits with active duty parents who are wounded, ill, or injured, helping them to relate to their children as they both begin to live in their “new normal.”

**Families of the Fallen:** The USO is committed to supporting the families of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice through our centers and partnerships with organizations, such as TAPS (Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors) and Fisher House, as well as the support received at various centers throughout the United States. We have supported every dignified transfer at Dover Air Force Base since March 1991. USO Centers are located in the heart of Dover Air Force Base as well as inside the Air Force Mortuary Affairs complex, enabling us to personally and compassionately support bereaved families, military personnel/honor guard teams from every branch supporting dignified transfers and mortuary personnel. The USO also worked with the Department of Defense and Dover Air Force Base Commands to open the Center for the Families of the Fallen located near the mortuary in 2010. The center is a place for families to gather in privacy, furnished with sitting areas, meditation and meeting rooms, a playroom and kitchen. The USO also supports the operations of the Fisher House for Families of the Fallen, where families can stay as they await the arrival of their loved ones. Additionally, the USO works 24/7 to coordinate with USO Centers across the country to support and comfort families traveling to and from Dover, meeting the myriad needs of those who have just received tragic news about their loved ones only hours earlier. Fallen heroes can arrive at Dover at any time. No matter what the hour, the USO has been there and will continue to be there for every flight.

**TAPS Good Grief Camps:** The USO, in partnership with the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), will host grief camps throughout 2012 for families of the fallen. Good Grief Camps provide children and teenagers with a safe and supportive atmosphere to participate in activities, learn grief coping skills, establish and identify support systems, and create awareness that they are not alone in the grief of their loved one. To date, we have hosted six Good Grief Camps for 676 families.

## **Education, Employment and Community Reintegration**

These programs support wounded warriors and their families as they transition into the civilian workforce. Veteran unemployment can be dramatically reduced by knowledge and opportunity while building self-esteem.

**Career Opportunity Days:** The USO, in collaboration with Hire Heroes USA and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, offers Career Opportunity Days (CODs) for wounded, ill and injured troops, spouses and caregivers. A COD is a non-traditional career fair where each employer connects with 7-10 troops based on interest and background. Employers conduct mock interviews and provide feedback. The use of mock interviews provides an additional level of support for transitioning service members to meet with employers offering positions. In 2011, six CODs were held with nearly 300 attendees. Of the attendees, 31 received job offers and 10 were confirmed hires. These CODs are limited to 25 employers and 100 service member attendees to ensure the size and magnitude of these events does not overwhelm the troops. Career fairs are overwhelming to most people in general, and many of these men and women have anxiety as a result of post traumatic stress, so it is our goal to ensure their experience is positive and impactful. We will offer 14 Career Opportunity Days in 2012.

**Hire Heroes USA/USO Workshops:** The USO, in partnership with Hire Heroes USA, hosts transition workshops for wounded, ill and injured service members, their spouses, and caregivers. The workshops are led by OEF/OIF veterans, including some who were wounded themselves. Hire Heroes USA focuses on resume writing, interview skills, professional work practices and translating prior military experience into a civilian career. The USO and Hire Heroes USA hosted workshops at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia and Fort Carson, Colorado in 2011. We have scheduled 22 workshops in 2012 for Fort Bragg and Camp Lejeune in North Carolina in addition to our previous workshop locations. These workshops complement the existing transition assistance offered by the military, Department of Defense and Department of Labor to provide yet another tool in the toolbox for transitioning service members. Employers attend these workshops and conduct mock interviews to provide a civilian perspective on what employers are looking for in new employees.

**Purpose Driven Rehab:** In collaboration with Pros vs. GI Joes, a nonprofit organization, the USO will support 20 Purpose Driven Rehab (PDR) programs in 2012. This program offers wounded warriors an opportunity to “intern” for a career in event planning and logistics. Participants gain a sense of purpose, drive and resiliency. Warriors are given the opportunity to manage the Pro vs. GI Joe Toy Hauler RV at some of the biggest sporting events in the world, setting up gaming systems for large scale tailgates and interacting with the crowd. These events build confidence, leadership skills and support the wounded on their continued road to recovery.

For years, the USO has produced a powerful Public Service Announcement program, educating America about the USO and the tremendous service of our nation’s troops and their families. As part of our commitment to educate the American people about the invisible wounds of war, the USO has launched a Public Service Announcement (PSA) about these life-changing issues. More than 300,000 American troops suffer from invisible wounds - post traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. “Portraits” is a documentary style PSA that features service members who proudly answered the call to duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, and now live with invisible wounds. These stories and more can be viewed at [www.USOInvisibleWounds.org](http://www.USOInvisibleWounds.org).

**Program Contact:** Susan Thomas, 703-908-6429 or [stthomas@uso.org](mailto:stthomas@uso.org)

**Media Contact:** Gayle Fishel, 703-908-6433 or [gfishel@uso.org](mailto:gfishel@uso.org)