

AMERICA'S Heroes

Mother Of Wounded Soldier Spreads Word Of Support

(NAPSA)—Rosie Babin did not choose to be an expert on support for severely wounded soldiers.

But when her son was severely wounded in March 2003 during the first days of the war in Iraq that choice was made for her.

Cpl. Alan Babin, a combat medic, was moving to provide aid to a fellow soldier when he was struck by enemy fire, resulting in extensive and severe internal injuries. Since then, he has undergone more than 70 surgeries—all with his family by his side.

“We were forced to figure everything out on our own, with only the assistance of friends and family back home,” said Rosie Babin, mother and caregiver.

A lot has changed since then.

In 2004, the U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2) was established to provide personalized support to severely wounded, injured and ill soldiers and their families. This year, AW2 marks five years of support to wounded soldiers and their families.

After the Army established AW2, Rosie Babin saw a noticeable difference.

“I literally went from being highly stressed out one hour because of a \$70,000-plus invoice we received to being totally at peace and feeling hope when the AW2 Advocate took it over and had it handled.”

More than 120 AW2 Advocates provide personalized support to soldiers and families across the country and beyond for as long as it takes. This support can take the form of connecting soldiers and families with full benefits, educational opportunities, financial and career counseling, or assistance in continuing to serve in the Army.

Today, Babin says it's not about how AW2 can assist her family, it's about how she can share her



Rosie Babin, left, became an expert on support for wounded soldiers after her son Alan, bottom, was severely wounded in Iraq.

knowledge and experiences with other families.

This year, Rosie Babin was a delegate representing AW2 soldiers and families at the 2009 Army Family Action Plan conference. The conference identifies issues impacting soldiers and families and briefs those concerns to Army leadership. For Babin to attend the conference, she needed to coordinate for the care of her son in her absence. With the progress she saw at week's end, Babin said it was well worth the effort.

“I departed reinspired to continue sharing our six-year experience with what works and what improvements can be made. I'm thankful that today the AW2 program exists and severely wounded soldiers and their families always have a place to turn to in the Army even after they leave the service.”

To help spread the word and honor five years of support to severely wounded, injured and ill soldiers and their families, AW2 is launching the AW2 Affiliate Program. Organizations wishing to show their support of severely wounded soldiers and their families should contact AW2 through its Web site at www.aw2.army.mil or call (800) 237-1336.