

America's Heroes

New Avenue To Support Wounded Warriors

(NAPSA)—If it weren't for Frankie, Army Sergeant Allen Hill would have a harder time getting out of bed in the morning. Frankie is a caregiver of a different sort—one with four legs.

"With Frankie by his side, Allen has started participating in his life again," said Hill's wife, Gina. "Frankie is a yellow lab, and she has become his best friend."

People often ask how they can support wounded warriors and are unsure how to get started. The U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2) recently launched the AW2 Community Support Network to connect local organizations with severely wounded, ill and injured soldiers and veterans living in their hometowns, veterans like Hill.

Hill received Frankie from Puppies Behind Bars, a member of the AW2 Community Support Network.

"The support community organizations provide AW2 soldiers, veterans and their families is priceless," said AW2 director Colonel Jim Rice. "The services they offer go above and beyond the government benefits—they help wounded warriors rebuild confidence through outdoor activities, offer employment opportunities, and build and modify houses to meet physical limitations."

Local support is the core of the AW2 program, which has more than 120 AW2 Advocates across the country providing personalized support to severely wounded soldiers, veterans and their families for as long as it takes. This support includes connecting soldiers and families with full benefits, recreation activities or assistance in continuing to serve in the Army. The AW2 Community Support Network helps local organizations connect with individual AW2 soldiers and veterans who need their support.



Photo by Mike Parker

America's wounded warriors have a resource that can help them transition to civilian life.

"The service dogs are placed with veterans who are struggling with invisible wounds," said Gina Hill. "These dogs are specifically trained to help them manage their PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and TBI (traumatic brain injury) related symptoms. The bond these two have is unbelievable and was almost immediate. She is able to help him through flashbacks, nightmares and many other difficult situations."

More than 70 percent of AW2 wounded warriors have medically retired and are transitioning to civilian life. As they move forward with their new goals, the support of their neighbors and communities can make all the difference in their long-term success.

For more information on the Army Wounded Warrior Program and the AW2 Community Support Network, please visit www.AW2.army.mil. Organizations interested in joining the AW2 Community Support Network can call toll-free (800) 237-1336 or e-mail AW2CommunitySupportNetwork@conus.army.mil.