

U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

contact: paoci@eur.army.mil
phone: 49-6221-57-5815 / DSN 370-5815
fax: 49-6221-57-6376 / DSN 370-6376



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Warrior Transition Unit cadre provides motivation, morale while helping wounded Soldiers recuperate

By Spc. Fabian Ortega

U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany – The staff of the Kaiserslautern Warrior Transition Unit on Kleber Kaserne here shifted its focus from rehabilitating and reintegrating wounded Soldiers to lifting their spirits for a day.



SPC FABIAN ORTEGA

Cadre, patients and Family members at the Warrior Transition Unit on Kleber Kaserne in Kaiserslautern, Germany mingle during a Thanksgiving luncheon, Nov. 25. The event was just one of the ways the WTU staff provides events to lift patients' spirits as they recuperate at the unit.

The facility's cadre put together a Thanksgiving lunch for 42 of its wounded Soldiers at the WTU center November 25.

“We wanted to celebrate a little fellowship and allow the staff an opportunity to give to the warriors on a personal level,” said Maj. Joel B. Neuenschwander, the WTU commander.

With the help from Family Readiness Group members and the Kaiserslautern Army

Community Service's Soldier and Family Assistance Center, the WTU provided a traditional Thanksgiving Day meal.

An oven-roasted turkey, sweet potatoes, baked ham, chocolate brownies and assortment of veggies were the highlights of the feast.

“The Thanksgiving meal lets the Soldiers know that we're thinking about them and their healing process during the holidays,” said Staff Sgt. Richard Craft, a WTU cadre member and platoon sergeant.

While the staff members' full-time mission is helping the WTU patients through their individual treatment plans, events such as the holiday get-together offer the staff opportunities to express their compassion on a more personal level, Craft said.

Pvt. Kyle L. Ward said the Thanksgiving meal was another example of how the WTU staff demonstrates that the patients' well-being is their top priority.

“(The WTU and SFAC staffs) like to do that for us a lot. They like helping out the Soldiers, and they've put together quite a few luncheons for us,” said Ward, who came to the WTU in January after tearing the anterior cruciate ligament and meniscus in his left knee.

Ward's recovery has been long and as he prepares to move to a new unit back in the U.S., he said his WTU squad leader has kept him motivated.

“I think a big part of your healing is staying motivated and having a positive outlook,” Ward said. “If you have a lack of motivation, it's going to be hard everywhere you go, and that's what a lot of Soldiers struggle with.”

Craft said the WTU cadre goes to great lengths to ensure Soldiers medical needs are tended to and their medical, behavioral, social, career or personal goals are met.

Neuenschwander said many Soldiers who are assigned to a WTU have illnesses or injuries that require complex medical care. At WTUs Soldiers get help with treatment, rehabilitation, retraining or medical discharge from the Army.

“Some of (the Soldiers) will be returned to the force after they complete their complex care and their medical treatment plan,” the major said. “Some of them have conditions which will require a medical evaluation board and they are either determined fit for duty or they are separated.”

The WTU comprises Soldiers from different units throughout U.S. Army Europe, and fostering an environment that builds unit cohesion and camaraderie is important for their successful rehabilitation there, said Neuenschwander.

“The sign of a good organization in the Army is the way we embrace our brothers and sisters in arms and take care of them. We do that on a professional level, but also on a personal level. This is more the personal side of our professionalism that we get to share with the Soldiers.”

