

INTREPID VOICES

Newsletter | July 2022 | Publication of the Defense Intrepid Network for TBI & Brain Health

It Takes a Team: Update on Intrepid Network Formalization



NICoE Director CAPT Carlos Williams (second from left) visits Eglin Air Force Base. CAPT Williams also visited the Intrepid Spirit Center (ISC) Camp Pendleton, the ISC Fort Campbell, and the ISC Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

A lot of activity is underway to formalize the Defense Intrepid Network for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Brain Health and accomplishing its main objectives:

1. Ensure consistent high quality patient care and outcomes for TBI and associated health conditions for the interdisciplinary care model across the Intrepid Network and Military Health System (MHS).
2. Strengthen and expand access to the Intrepid Network's highly effective clinical care model, multisite research, and education.
3. Provide more effective support for TBI care and the interdisciplinary programs across the MHS.
4. Ensure research priorities are aligned with the need of the warfighter, maximize multisite research, and expand partnership to usher highly effective research into practice.
5. Improve clinical and administrative operations across the Intrepid Network and support other TBI clinics.

This summer, CAPT Carlos Williams, director of the National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE), Dr. Louis French, deputy director operations, and Mr. Eddy Bueno, deputy director for administration, have been making rounds with Intrepid Network sites to meet with hospital directors and market leaders to plan for the transition and to discuss the

future of caring for unique populations.

Key network documents that support the development of a comprehensive framework are also moving forward. This includes the establishment of a board of directors; an inclusive governance process which will be the foundation of establishing Intrepid Network clinical care, research, administration, and education policies; and standard operating procedures. A concept of operations to ensure standards across the Intrepid Network, a Defense Health Agency (DHA) policy, and a program objective memorandum have also been submitted to ensure resources. These documents are currently in coordination with the DHA.

Formalization not only means we can achieve our objective but also a line item will be added to the fiscal year defense plan for DHA. We are now a part of the long-term strategy for DHA and leadership sees a future for the program, said CAPT Williams.

At the same time, the Intrepid Network continues to expand initiatives that ensure our unique interdisciplinary care model is aligned with the clinical and educational needs of our patients, the Department of Defense, and the U.S. government.

Program standardization does not mean that all sites are the same. Each site has its own unique nuances according to its population and market. It *does* mean that services, metrics and outcomes are consistent no matter which site a patient goes to receive care.

Educational Opportunities

AUG
17

TBI and Social Determinants of Health, a Traumatic Brain Injury Center of Excellence Quarterly Education Series virtual webinar with the following guest lecturers: Paul B. Perrin, Ph.D.; Bridget Cotner, Ph.D.; and Megan Moore, Ph.D. 1300-1530 ET.

AUG
30

DEI Council Meeting, to hear from the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Subcommittees about current projects. 1200-1300 ET in the NICoE Auditorium.

Fort Carson Opens Intrepid Spirit Center Building

Service members have a new building to receive treatment for traumatic brain injury (TBI) and other invisible wounds of war. The new location of the Intrepid Spirit Center (ISC) Fort Carson officially opened June 27 and welcomed patients June 28.

The new building replaces two trailers, creating a firm point to send people and a solid presence on post, said Cmdr. Selena Bobula, director of the ISC Fort Carson. It will also support better research collaboration and accessibility since all staff are now under one roof.

"It's a beautiful space," Bobula emphasized. "Now we can provide an absolutely relaxing and healing environment for service members and their families to enjoy."

Additional benefits of the new building include:

- Doubling the number of patients who can be treated at one time in the clinic's Integrated Rehabilitation Outpatient Course (IROC). So far, IROC has provided care to over 300 patients in seven years.
- A new state-of-the-art Bertec system, which is a seamless dome that covers a patient's entire visual field, to better test and treat balance issues.
- Dedicated spaces for vision therapy and massage therapy, and larger rooms for music and art therapies.
- New weight equipment for patients to better train for the Army Combat Fitness Test.
- A new open space, "Central Park," which offers views of the Colorado mountains as patients practice yoga and tai chi. The space will also be used for mindfulness and attention exercises and dual-tasking activities for patients with sensory auditory processing disorder and during cognitive communication training in speech therapy, said Lt. Cmdr. Courtney Wood, speech-language pathologist at the center.

By enhancing the workspaces and capabilities of staff, the new building supports the Defense Intrepid Network for TBI and Brain Health's holistic, patient-centered interdisciplinary model of care.

One of Bobula's goals as director will be adding more services, including a peak performance cognitive group, a chronic pain group, and expanded family support. In addition to IROC, the center currently maintains a sleep gym group and anger group. The sleep group is a combination of cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia and relaxation response training. The curriculum helps patients manage behavioral barriers to sleep and improve a patient's ability to regulate their nervous system. The anger management group offers psychoeducation and strategies to improve irritability management.

"It is a critical milestone," said CAPT Carlos Williams, director of the National Intrepid Center of Excellence. "It's the 9th Intrepid Spirit Center building to open, continuing the mission of the Department of Defense to fulfill the Congress mandate to establish a comprehensive plan for programs to prevent, diagnose, treat, and rehabilitate service members with TBI, PTSD, and other mental health conditions. Although the Fort Carson TBI clinic has been operating for 13 years, this building represents a location in the DHA market to call home."



The ISC Fort Carson ribbon-cutting was July 13. Front row from left: Brig. Gen. Darrin Cox, Maj. Gen. David Hodne, Gen. Richard Cody (Ret.), Lt. Col. George Lambos, and Dr. Barclay Butler. Back row from left: Cmdr. Selena Bobula, Col. Edward Mandril, CAPT Carlos Williams, Mr. David Winters, and Mr. Ted Harms.



Gen. Richard Cody (Ret.), Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund Board Member, speaks at the ribbon cutting ceremony on July 13.

PATIENT POPULATION

Home to 150,000 beneficiaries within the Colorado market that include soldiers, airmen, infantry, special forces, cadets, veterans, and dependents:

- The 4th Infantry Division
- 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne)
- 13th Air Support Operations Squadron (ASOS)
- United States Air Force Academy
- Peterson Space Force Base
- U.S. Northern Command and the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD)
- Schriever Space Force Base
- World Class Athlete Program
- 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team
- 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team
- 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team
- 4th Combat Aviation Brigade
- Divisional Artillery Command
- 4th Sustainment Brigade
- 4th Security Force Assistance Brigade
- 1st Space Brigade
- 71st Ordnance Group

The Continuum of Caring, Healing and Thriving Supports Service Members from Pre-TBI to Post-TBI

The Intrepid Network's Continuum of Caring, Healing and Thriving is a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach to address the full continuum of traumatic brain injury (TBI), behavior health, and brain health. To ensure a medical ready force, we must start our engagement prior to a service member having their first event (pre-TBI).

"We know the service members at highest risk for TBI and associated conditions and recognize the importance of preparing them for the careers they go into," said CAPT Carlos Williams, director of the NICoE.

During this pre-TBI phase, we must use foundational tools such as education, integrative health, and other best practices to build resilience and when possible prevent the event or complications altogether, said CAPT Williams.

As part of the Continuum, the goal is to partner with the operational community and others in the TBI clinical, research, and academic space to educate service members and their families about TBI, its effect on brain function, and activities that can help restore the brain immediately after a TBI, and even after having persistent or worsening symptoms for many years. This aligns with the five lines of effort for the Warfighter Brain Health Initiative that supports prevention and establishes resilience in the pre-TBI state, said Dr. Thomas DeGraba, chief innovations officer for the NICoE.

The five lines of effort are:

- Optimize cognitive and physical performance
- Identify, monitor, and mitigate brain exposures
- Prevent, recognize, and minimize the effect of TBI
- Reduce or eliminate long-term/late effects
- Advance warfighter brain health science

Elements of the integrative health services that are a part of the Intrepid Network's patient-centric interdisciplinary care model should be taught to service members during training. These include yoga, meditation, breath work, art therapy, and more.

Behavioral health techniques help process fragmented trauma memories and are practices that can be used life-long to address future trauma and build resiliency, said Dr. DeGraba.

"We know this works," said CAPT Williams. "Our model of care, which helps people with TBI who have not responded to any other treatment, can be taught to service members who have never stepped through our doors."

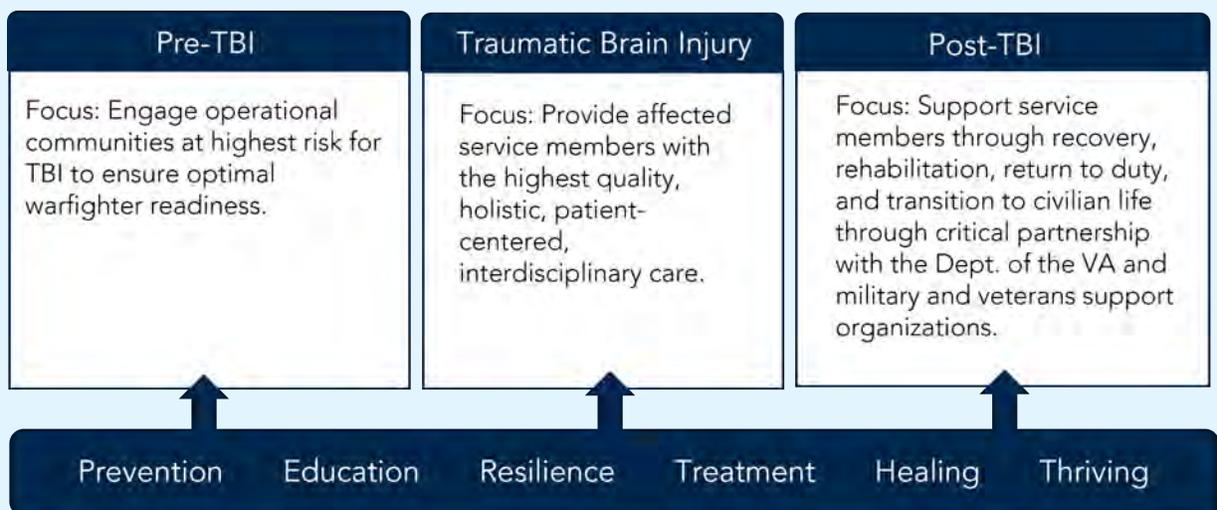
For patients inside the Intrepid Network, the interdisciplinary program provides an opportunity to engage in skills-based training and education to enhance their trajectory of recovery.

After the event and receiving treatment, the Continuum will help to facilitate recovery and the transition to full duty or civilian life through a network of partnerships across the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, non-governmental military and veterans support organizations, academia, industry, and the TBI community.

These partners can provide top quality follow-up care, case management, and peer support groups to assist in healing and thriving.

"Any organization that offers resources to our beneficiaries, we hope to identify them and help our members take advantage of those resources. Simply put, the Continuum ensures that we prepare for, treat when needed, and continue to support lifelong recovery so that no one is left behind," said CAPT Williams.

CONTINUUM OF CARING, HEALING AND THRIVING



Partnerships are the foundation of the Continuum

Help for the Helpers: New Resources for TBI Caregivers

TBI caregivers are a key part of a patient's recovery team both in the health care setting and at home, however they can sometimes experience fatigue and burnout. In some cases, the service member is a different person from the one the caregiver knew before the injury, and life may never be the same.

On average, caregivers provide care for seven years, with many spending more than 10 hours a day to help their loved one, according to TBI: A Guide for Caregivers provided by the Traumatic Brain Injury Center of Excellence (TBICoE).

Responsibilities may include managing daily tasks and routines, coordinating treatment from providers in the military health system, and advocating for excellent care.

Because of this, many caregivers struggle with time and financial hardship, poor mental and physical health, poor sleep, and disrupted family life. Children in these families report high rates of medical and behavioral symptoms.

To address this, the NICoE hosts 12 education/therapy sessions specifically for family members during the last week of the Intensive Outpatient Program. Family members meet with staff, including social workers, therapists, and wellness coordinators, alone or with their family member who is being treated.

Caregivers are equipped with information to not only understand TBI and how it affects their loved one, but how to take care of themselves as well. These education sessions are replicated across the Intrepid Network as part of the Family Program.

One session for families that is offered at the NICoE is with Art Therapist Adrienne Stamper. "In an art therapy family session, the service members are given the opportunity to share their artwork with their family,"

said Stamper. "By doing so, the service member is able to visibly show his loved ones what he has not been able to tell them in words. This tends to be a significant moment on both sides, yielding a deeper sense of connection, understanding, and empathy. The therapist then invites the family to create an abstract 'family portrait'

using color symbolism to create a unified whole out of all the individual members. Through the process of working together, the family gains insights about their relationship dynamics and finds the beauty and value in each other."

By equipping caregivers with knowledge and support, we help them, and our patients live a better life.



"In one family session, after the service member explained his mask to his wife, with tears in both of their eyes, she stated, 'You just told me more in 20 words than you have in 20 years.'"

– Adrienne Stamper, art therapist at the NICoE

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR CAREGIVERS

- The NICoE partners with the TBICoE to provide resources and other informational materials. In June, TBICoE released five new fact sheets covering topics from the 2021 caregiver guide. Download here: health.mil/TBICaregivers.
- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs offers a caregiver support program to help address the emotional and physical burdens carried by spouses, children, close family, and friends. <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/>
- The Department of Defense has resources as well. <https://warriorcare.dodlive.mil/>

Get to Know the New Director of the Intrepid Spirit Center Fort Belvoir

New Intrepid Spirit Center (ISC) Fort Belvoir Director Dr. Patricia J. Hantsch brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise about the treatment of brain injuries to her new role. She is looking forward to working alongside other ISCs and enabling her team to leverage new treatment options and research collaboration to continue to provide exceptional patient outcomes.

Q What is your professional background?

A *I received a medical degree from Rush Medical College and completed a preliminary medicine internship at St. Joseph Hospital in Chicago, Ill. Following residency training in physical medicine and rehabilitation at the Medical College of Wisconsin, I pursued a fellowship in Brain Injury Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine. For 22 ½ years I practiced at Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital in Chicago where I served as medical director for the brain injury rehabilitation program, established a comprehensive interdisciplinary outpatient spasticity program, and served as clinical associate professor in the Department of Neurology and Rehabilitation at the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine with responsibility for directing resident and medical student education in brain injury and spasticity. I am board-certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation with subspecialty board certification in brain injury medicine.*

Q How do you think that experience will equip and help you to succeed in this role?

A *I have dedicated my entire career to the treatment of individuals suffering from brain injury and associated comorbidities. I have expertise in the treatment of brain injuries of all etiologies, from mild to severe, throughout the continuum of care.*

Q What drew you to apply for this role and the mission of treating service members with TBI, PTSD, and other invisible wounds of war?

A *I have several family members and friends who have served our country in the military or in government roles. Since brain injury is one of the signature injuries of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, serving as the ISC director is a way to utilize my expertise in brain injury to serve as well.*

Q What is something unique that you offer to this role?

A *I have twice served as a grant reviewer for the Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems program sponsored by the United States Department of Education/National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. I also have expertise in spasticity management.*

Q What are your short- and long-term goals as director?

A *One of my short-term goals is to explore complementary medicine treatment options that are currently not offered in our program that may enhance patient satisfaction and promote recovery.*

My long-term goal for the ISC at Fort Belvoir is to provide additional research and training opportunities to help our team continue to provide exceptional patient outcomes.

Q What are you most excited about or looking forward to in this role?

A *I am really looking forward to the opportunity to learn more about each of the Intrepid Network programs and to strengthen the clinical and research collaboration across the TBI community.*



ISC Camp Pendleton Occupational Therapy Makes Changes

Submitted by: Magdalena Juarez MS, OTR/L, CBIS, Cognitive Health Group, Occupational Therapy Dept., ISC Camp Pendleton

The Intrepid Spirit Center Camp Pendleton occupational therapy department has been busy. During COVID, the team transitioned care from in-person to virtual. Today, that program has evolved to a hybrid model, which increases access to care for remote patients.

In addition, as various providers rotated out of the clinic, there was a need to improve patient outcomes, reduce length of stay, and streamline the cognitive rehabilitation process. To better meet these needs, the Cognitive Health Group (CHG) was created.

CHG is a four-week multi-disciplinary group that provides education, strategies, and cognitive exercises to mild traumatic brain injury patients. It is co-led by occupational therapy, speech therapy, and music therapy and is provided once a week.

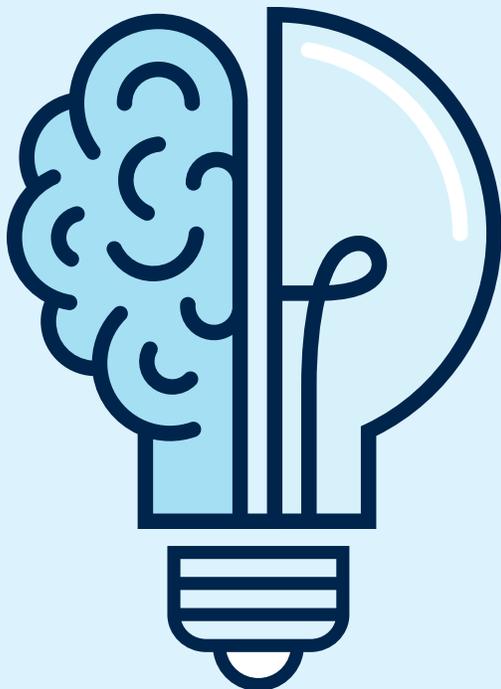
Alongside the CHG, the clinic introduced a new tier system. This tier system identifies the most common barriers to cognitive rehab recovery, which are primary symptoms. These include chronic pain,



headaches, dizziness, poor sleep, and mental health concerns. Research shows that by addressing primary symptoms first, cognition naturally begins to improve. So, when patients enroll for the CHG, care is streamlined with a more condensed approach while allowing schedules to remain open, so patients have time to address primary symptoms.

So far, patient feedback has been positive.

COGNITIVE HEALTH GROUP WEEKLY TOPICS



WEEK

1

Attention pyramid, awareness hierarchy, types of distractions, attention strategies, and mindfulness.

WEEK

2

Memory model, internal memory strategies with a musical component, memory exercise, and holistic ways to improve cognition.

WEEK

3

Executive functioning (EF) wheel, EF strategies, alternative ways to enhance EF through music.

WEEK

4

Word finding, name recall, functional difficulties scale, an introduction to research, and final feedback.

Farewell to NICoE Deputy Director for Administration

After 10 years at the National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE), Mr. Eddy Bueno, deputy director for administration, is retiring in August.

In this role, he has served as the principal advisor to the director on all matters related to NICoE administration. He's been responsible for direct management of the organization's major administrative, resource, information technology, and logistics programs. He was additionally charged with development of plans, policies, goals, and objectives for the NICoE.

“

“If you look deep enough, you will find healthy humor is in almost every difficult situation. Just one of my keys to maintaining sanity throughout the years.”

– Eddy Bueno

”

Prior to joining the NICoE in September 2012, Mr. Bueno spent six years at the Department of the Navy, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED). He most recently served as the Director of Wounded Warrior Programs, where he directed the development and management of Navy Medicine programs in support of wounded warriors and their families across the Navy and Marine Corps enterprises.

Mr. Bueno previously served as Program Manager and Executive Program Manager, leading the development and monitoring of policies and guidelines to ensure the seamless delivery of quality health care to Navy and Marine Corps beneficiaries worldwide. While at BUMED, he developed an enterprise-wide health care quality assessment tool, encompassing the monitoring of access to care, health care provider encounters, health care facilities, and ancillary services.

Mr. Bueno has also served as Executive Director of the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center, working as principal advisor to the Commanding Officer and managing the operations of the Organizational Development, Resource Management, and Administrative Support Services Directorates. With more than



Mr. Bueno has more than 40 years of combined active duty and government health care management experience. His humor, commitment, and endless knowledge will be greatly missed.

20 years served in the Navy and 40 years of combined active duty and government health care management experience, Mr. Bueno provided a vast wealth of knowledge and proven leadership to NICoE Directorate operations. His many contributions have been critical to the successes enjoyed by the NICoE and in building the foundation for the Intrepid Network.

“Mr. Bueno will be truly missed here at NICoE,” said CAPT Williams. “His tremendous knowledge, understanding, and professionalism have been invaluable to me as the director. I fondly recall when I first took over as director and he mentioned he would be retiring soon. I remember going to him and asking if he would give me at least a year, and he's given me two. I am grateful to have served with him; he has been a trusted advisor and confidant. I truly live my life eternally in the Red for all he has done for me and in helping to build and transform the Intrepid Network. Fair Winds and Following Seas, Shipmate, you stand relieved ... we have the watch.”



Around the Network



FORT BRAGG WELCOMES SERVICE DOG

The Intrepid Spirit Center **Fort Bragg** is proud to announce a new family member, Stripe. Stripe started his tour of duty on March 6 through the generosity of a non-governmental organization. Stripe brings a smile, and some extra hair to all those he meets.



WORKSHOP AT FORT BELVOIR FOSTERS COLLABORATION AMONG AGENCIES

In April, the Department of Defense (DOD), VA Vision Center of Excellence, and Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences hosted a workshop for clinical, research, and administrative leaders from the Defense Intrepid Network, DOD, the Veterans Health Agency, and civilian colleagues. The group discussed current and future research and collaborated on the topic of visual dysfunctions associated with traumatic brain injury. The group established an initial consensus and mapped a prospective study design. This effort will continue to develop with the support of the broader clinical community.



Photo from left to right: Col. Daniel Moore; Carl R. Darnal, Army Medical Center hospital commander; Staff Sgt. Shannon Innerarity, ISC Fort Hood non-commissioned officer in charge (NCOIC); Retired Gen. Peter Chiarelli; Dr. Scot D. Engel, ISC Fort Hood director; and Sgt. First Class Jacqueline Lopez-Monge, NCOIC deputy commander surgical services.

FORMER ARMY CHIEF VISITS FORT HOOD

In May, Ret. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, the 32nd Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, visited **Fort Hood** for a leadership professional development seminar. While there, he visited the Intrepid Spirit Center. "I was really excited to see the Intrepid Spirit Center and to see what it's doing to take care of people with post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury," Chiarelli said.



Photo credit: Mr. Ralph Sanchez, family readiness officer, Camp Pendleton

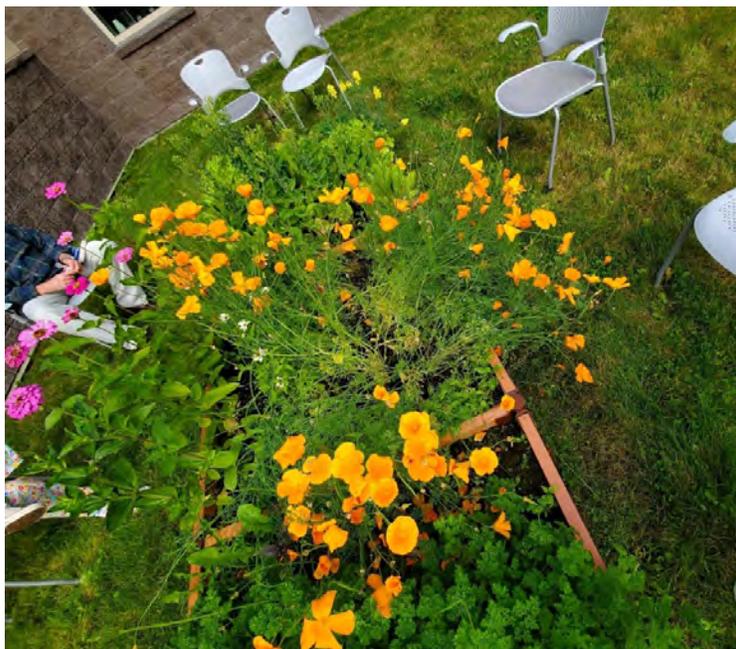
PERFORMER RECEIVES AWARD FOR HONORING ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDERS

Capt. Peter Roberts, commanding officer (left) **Camp Pendleton** presents Hospital Corpsman Second Class Petty Officer (Surface Warfare / Air Warfare) Grace Layugan Reveles, leading petty officer (right) of the Intrepid Spirit Center Camp Pendleton, with the Commanding Officer's Award of Excellence Coin for her vocal performance of a Filipino folk song during an Asian American Pacific Islander Month celebration on June 2.

Around the Network - continued

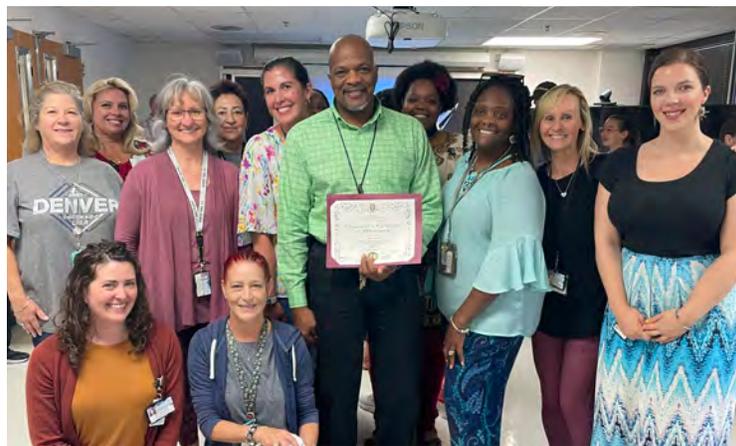
UPDATES FROM ALASKA

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson TBI Clinic recently completed its 8th intensive outpatient program (AWARE—Artic Warrior Active Recovery Endeavor) since starting Fall 2020. In addition, the clinic treated 103 new acute concussion patients in the last six months, with 72 (69%) fully cleared and returned to duty (no profile and passed automated neuropsychological assessment metrics (ANAM)), and the remaining 31 are still being actively seen and on a profile. Fifteen of the 31 have been cognitively cleared by ANAM. The TBI occupational therapist and certified occupational therapy assistant completed 42 buffalo concussion treadmill tests in the past 90 days, expediting recovery for 18 service members.



ALASKA GARDENING LAB AIDS IN CONCUSSION RECOVERY

The newly created Alaskan Gardening Lab anticipates 96 patient visits over the next four months. This group meets weekly to address the emotional, physical, and mental aspects of recovery from a mild traumatic brain injury and helps achieve goals such as balance, mindfulness, stress management, and coordination.



Mr. Terry James (center), director of the Intrepid Spirit Center Fort Campbell, with staff.

ISC FORT CAMPBELL DIRECTOR RECOGNIZED FOR QUICK ACTION

Blanchfield Army Community Hospital recognized Mr. Terry James (center), director of the Intrepid Spirit Center (ISC) **Fort Campbell**, as its civilian of the month in May. He was praised for his ability to problem solve in March to maximize readiness when 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division required automated neuropsychological assessment metrics as a pre-deployment mandatory element and staffing was very low at the time.



Photo credit: Justin Moeller of BACH Public Affairs

ISC FORT CAMPBELL MEDICAL DIRECTOR PROMOTED TO MAJOR

Col. Vincent Myers (right), commander of Blanchfield Army Community Hospital, Maj. Nicholas Spinuzza, incoming medical director of ISC **Fort Campbell** (middle), and Mrs. Spinuzza (left) pose for a photo during Maj. Spinuzza's promotion ceremony on June 14.

Around the Network - continued



Members of the Atlanta Falcons NFL team pose with 96 Medical Group (MDG) and Intrepid Spirit Center Eglin (ISC) staff: Family Nurse Practitioner Scott Neuser (white coat, middle), Col Casstevens (3rd from right), Col. Laura Lewis (ISC director, 5th from left) and Col Gregory Coleman (commander, 96 MDG, 4th from right).

ATLANTA FALCONS VISIT EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE

In June, the **Intrepid Spirit Center Eglin Air Force Base** hosted the Atlanta Falcons of the National Football League (NFL). The group included Steve Cannon, AMB Sports and Entertainment CEO; Arthur Smith, head coach; Terry Fontenot, general manager; Kyle Pitts, tight end; Richie Grant, safety; Felipe Franks, quarterback and tight end; Frank Darby, wide receiver; and Danielle Renner, community relations staff.

INTREPID SPIRIT CENTER PROVIDER SAVES FELLOW ATHLETE'S LIFE

Family Nurse Practitioner Scott Neuser was participating in **Eglin Air Force Base's** Annual Memorial Day Gate-to-Gate run when he heard a cry for help and spotted a runner who had collapsed. Unable to detect a pulse, Mr. Neuser immediately began lifesaving chest compressions until 96th Medical Group emergency responders arrived on the scene and transported the patient to a local hospital. Thanks to Mr. Neuser and Team Eglin's prompt response, the patient survived. On June 10, Col. Casstevens, the operational medical readiness squadron commander at 96th Medical Group, presented Mr. Neuser with a commanders coin in appreciation of his off-duty lifesaving efforts.

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE STAFF ASSIST WITH RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

Intrepid Spirit Center Eglin Air Force Base Research Director Dr. Angus Scrimgeour and Clinical Research Coordinator Amanda Thomas assisted the 96th Medical Group with the 1st Annual Regional Research Symposium on June 10 at the University of Florida Research and Engineering and Educational Facility, Shalimar, Fla.

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY RESEARCHER AT FORT BELVOIR IS HONORED

The Department of Research Programs at **Fort Belvoir** Community Hospital awarded the inaugural Col. Peter J. Weina Award for Excellence in Research to Principal Investigator, Navy Cmdr. Christina L. La Croix, DO, for her diverse portfolio of traumatic brain injury-related research protocols and the immense potential it has to influence the future of brain injury medicine. Dr. La Croix currently serves as the interim medical director and interim behavioral health service chief, as well as the director of research, at the Intrepid Spirit Center of Fort Belvoir. Dr. La Croix's study, "LIMBIC-CENC Study 1: Prospective Longitudinal Study on Late Neurologic Effects of Combat," is one of many large-scale trials included in the Long-Term Impact of Military-Relevant Brain Injury Consortium – Chronic Effects of Neurotrauma Consortium. The goal is to establish a database to provide needed empirical information on the chronic and late-life effects of mild traumatic brain injury, including those that may stem from neurodegeneration. In addition, this research aims to identify predictors of and early, preclinical evidence of neurodegeneration, to assist in the prognosis, development, and targeted application of neuroprotective therapy.



From left to right: Cmdr. Christina L. La Croix, FBCH Interim Medical Director and Interim Behavioral Health Service Chief, Director of Research, Intrepid Spirit Center Fort Belvoir; Caitlin Jones, MS, Clinical Research Program Manager, The Geneva Foundation and Intrepid Spirit Center Fort Belvoir; Alexis Robinson, Research Assistant; Gumana Ali, Research Assistant.



Intrepid Network Patient Testimonials



"The TBI clinic [at **Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson**] has given me the VERY BEST medical service that I have received in 18 years of service."

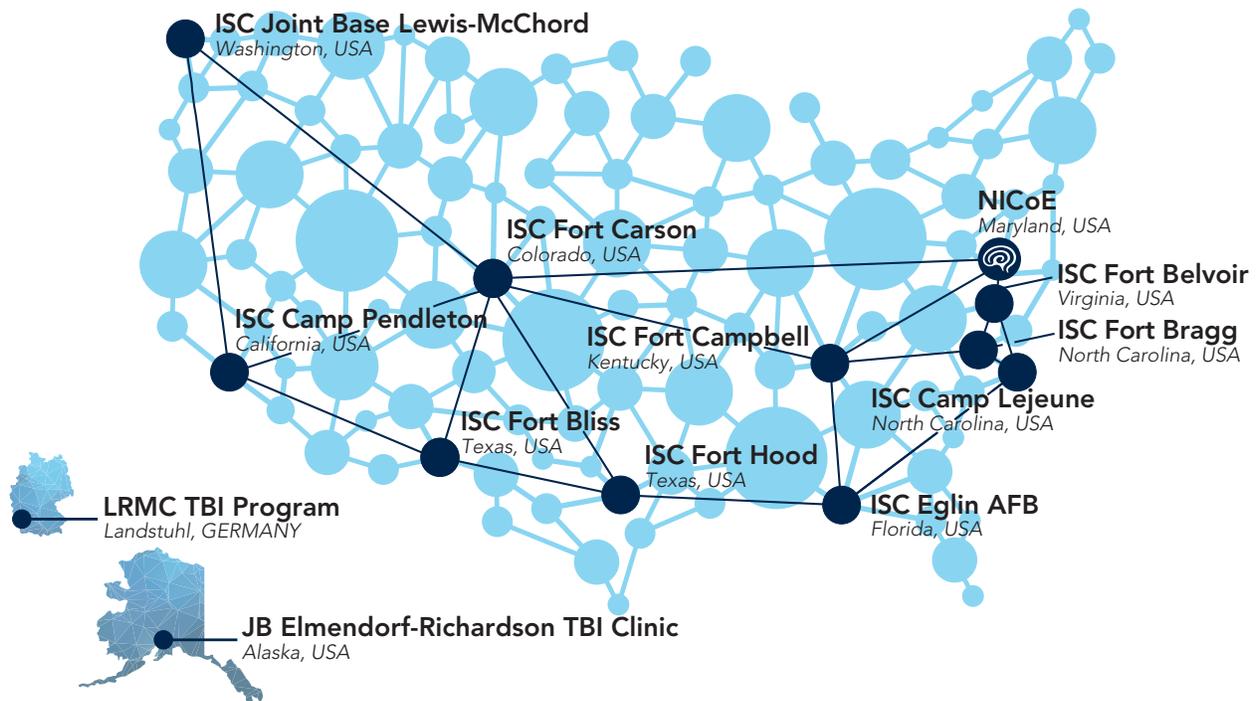
"100% of my pain has been reduced. Before I got [to the **NICoE**], I thought I would be in a wheelchair in 5 years, and throughout my week my pain is close to zero."

"These guys are excellent [at **Eglin Air Force Base**]. The rest of the military needs to model their system after them."

"I feel like I have more rounds in the clip to combat the enemy within. I am more open and optimistic with the new tools I have [from the **Fort Hood Intensive Outpatient Program**]."



Defense Intrepid Network for TBI and Brain Health



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