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Honoring the lifesavers *18th annual Angels of the Battlefield award ceremony*

By **Otis Toussaint**
U.S. Army Medical Command

The Armed Services YMCA hosted the 18th Annual Angels of the Battlefield Award Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia. The event is dedicated to recognizing the brave men and women who serve as medics, corpsmen, and pararescuemen, those who are often the unsung heroes in the line of duty, risking their lives to save others on the battlefield and beyond. Among the awardees this year is Sgt. 1st Class Tyler Twigg, an example of compassion, skill, and unwavering commitment to his fellow soldiers and civilians alike.

SFC Tyler Twigg: A lifesaver in every moment

The story of Twigg reflects the essence of an Angel of the Battlefield. Whether in the heat of a combat zone or responding to a crisis at home, his medical expertise made the difference between life and death. As a combat medic, Twigg's mission extends beyond the battlefield, as he continuously exemplifies the highest standards of Army medicine.

While stationed at Fort Moore, Georgia, Twigg used the skills he honed during his deployments and garrison training, to save the life of a civilian who was choking. This incident may have taken place far from the frontlines, but it demonstrated that the readiness of an Army medic is constant. A central focus of the ceremony was the recognition of readiness, a key principle within Army medicine. Readiness involves being prepared to act in any situation, whether in combat or during routine activities. Twigg's service exemplifies this principle through his consistent ability to respond swiftly and effectively in critical situations.

Combat ready care at the point of need

In his years of service, Twigg has earned a reputation for remaining calm in the most challenging circumstances. From his deployments in Afghanistan to his time at Fort Moore, his actions have consistently demonstrated his character and competence, inspiring trust.

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USA Olympic team chiropractor treats service members at a naval hospital

By **Christopher Jones**
Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms

Chiropractor Carrie J. Belleson spends her days balancing the unique medical needs of two high-performing groups – those trained for the battlefield and those competing in global sports arenas.

When she's not busy traveling the globe providing chiropractic care for members of USA Olympic teams, Belleson can be found treating Sailors and Marines at Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms.

Belleson's path to working with military service members at Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) Twentynine Palms began through a chance connection.

"Back in 2021, I connected with someone who knew the chiropractor here," Belleson recalled. "I was curious about what it was like to work with active-duty service members. It turned out he was leaving as his active-duty wife was retiring. He then introduced me to the contracting company and the rest is history."

Since joining, Belleson's expertise in sports medicine has translated seamlessly into her chiropractic care for service members, aligning with NMRTC Twentynine Palms's mission of maintaining readiness of warfighters and the Naval Hospital's mission of delivering world-class care.

"It was a smooth transition bringing my sports medicine background to the military," she said. "The end goal looks a little different, but Marines and Sailors strive to maintain a state



U.S. Navy photo by Christopher C. Jones, NHTP/NMRTC Twentynine Palms public affairs officer

Carrie J. Belleson, a chiropractor at Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms, displays her United States Olympic Team flag. The flag was signed by the USA Olympic Swimming Team and staff and was given to Belleson as a keepsake.

of readiness, and this includes taking care of their musculoskeletal health. I typically see a lot of spinal pain when working with active-duty. The physical demand can be very high as this is a major training facility for the military. It is important to return the active service member to full duty and back to their role to stay in the fight."

Drawing on her experience with athletes, Belleson applies many of the same chiropractic techniques she uses for Olympians, but adapts them to the military environment.

"The techniques are often very sim-

ilar, but it can be the timing and frequency of treatment that differ," she explained. "During a competition, an athlete often needs to recover and be ready to perform at a very high level again, sometimes even later that day."

Belleson has been part of the medical staff for USA Olympic teams, including USA Swimming and USA Fencing, since 2019. Her introduction to Olympic athletes came through a mentor and boss, Dr. Kevin Rindal.

"Dr. Rindal previously worked with

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The U.S. Army Surgeon General's nested priority of maintaining combat-ready medical forces underscores the importance of realistic and threat-informed training that ensures both tactical and technical proficiency. Twigg embodies this consistent focus on readiness, ensuring he is prepared to handle the most challenging medical emergencies, regardless of location. He was recognized for a recent incident at Fort Moore, where Twigg intervened to save a choking civilian, demonstrating that readiness extends beyond the battlefield. His ability to apply his skills in everyday situations reflects the Army's emphasis on preparedness, ensuring that medics are always ready to respond, no matter the environment.

Training that saves lives: Readiness at its core

Another critical message of the event focused on the importance of

training. In Twigg's case, his extensive preparation has been a cornerstone of his success as a combat medic. From his Airborne qualifications to his constant medical training, Twigg has continually sought out opportunities to enhance his skills. This dedication has paid off time and again when lives were at stake.

Twigg's swift response in a critical situation at Fort Moore was not just a lucky instinct, but the result of years of rigorous preparation. Every drill, every lesson, and every experience in the field contributed to his ability to act decisively when it mattered most. This is the power of training in the Army's medical ranks – it builds readiness that doesn't just prepare soldiers for combat, but also for everyday crises.

A guardian on the battlefield and beyond

As much as Twigg is a soldier, he is equally a guardian of life. Twigg's

competence and character are key factors that inspire trust among his fellow soldiers. This trust is a crucial element in the relationship between medics and those they care for, particularly in combat situations where lives are on the line. Twigg's technical expertise, coupled with his calm demeanor, ensures that his fellow soldiers feel secure knowing that their health and safety are in capable hands.

A legacy of service and selflessness

Twigg has built a legacy of service and selflessness over the course of his career. His actions, whether in combat zones or on military bases, reflect a deep commitment to saving lives and caring for others. Twigg's service is not limited to providing medical care during emergencies; he is also a mentor to younger medics, passing on his knowledge and experience to ensure that the next generation of Army medical professionals are prepared to meet

the challenges of their roles.

The ceremony also acknowledged Twigg's selflessness. His dedication to the well-being of his fellow soldiers and the civilians he encounters exemplifies the values of Army medicine. His actions demonstrate a commitment to serving others and this selflessness has earned him widespread respect within the Army community.

The 18th Annual Angels of the Battlefield Award Ceremony served as an opportunity to recognize the exceptional contributions of military medical personnel like Twigg. Through his extensive training and unwavering commitment to saving lives, Twigg has demonstrated the critical role that Army medics play in ensuring the health and wellness of soldiers, both on and off the battlefield. His recognition at the ceremony honors not only his individual achievements but also the broader values of readiness, trust, service, and leadership that define Army medical professionals.

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Photo by Otis Toussaint

In Washington, D.C., the Armed Services YMCA hosted the 18th Annual Angels of the Battlefield Award Ceremony, honoring courageous medics, corpsmen, and pararescuemen. Among the awardees, Sgt. 1st Class Tyler Twigg was recognized for his exceptional skill and compassion, highlighted by his recent lifesaving actions during a choking incident at Fort Moore. He received his award from Lt. Gen. Mary Izaguirre, the U.S. Army Surgeon General and Commanding General, U.S. Army Medical Command, and Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy Sprunger, USAMEDCOM Command Sergeant Major.

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Cutting teeth on triage and tactical combat casualty care aboard the USS Iwo Jima

By Petty Officer 2nd Class
Travis Decker
Naval Medical Forces Atlantic

NORFOLK, VA. – Did you know the role of a Dental officer extends far beyond maintaining oral health? Dental officers also serve as triage officers in times of crisis. They practice trauma evaluation skills by classifying patients into triage categories, performing triage and surgical support duties at battalion aid and battle dressing stations, stations located near a combat area for giving first aid to the wounded.

Recently, 30 Sailors and soldiers participated in triage and tactical casualty combat care (TCCC) training aboard USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7), equipping Navy and Army medical professionals with critical trauma response skills needed in crisis situations.

The group was composed of more than 15 trainers, including Simulation Center Staff, that trained 20 dentists from the Navy and Army, two physicians, a medical administration officer, a chaplain, and 10 hospital corpsmen.

The triage training program originated from a partnership between Dr. Mary Sturgeon, a Veterans Affairs dentist at the Simulation Learning, Evaluation, Assessment, and Research Network (SimLEARN), the Veteran's Health Administration program for simulation in health care training, and Cmdr. Daniel Honl, an oral and maxillofacial surgeon at Navy Medicine



U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Levi Decker
Sailors, Soldiers and educators take an environmental portrait after dental officer triage training aboard the Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7), Oct. 17, 2024. Over the course of three days, Army and Navy dental officers from Iwo Jima, Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) Portsmouth and Fort Gregg-Adams Dental Clinic Command conducted mass casualty, tactical combat casualty care, and triage training.



U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Levi Decker
Capt. Jose Pedroza, the regional senior dental officer assigned to Naval Medical Forces Atlantic (NMFL), uses a stethoscope to examine a simulation manikin during dental officer triage training aboard the Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7), Oct. 17.

Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) Great Lakes, who previously led similar sessions for other medical personnel. Their collaborative approach provided dental officers and corpsmen with essential trauma first-responder skills that prepare them for various mission scenarios.

"In this training we had eight brand new dental officers reporting to us as their first command," said Cmdr. Blaze Negrón, the senior dental officer assigned to Iwo Jima. "We're preparing them for any roles that they could possibly have in their day-to-day, as well as in support of operational medicine. Because of this training program they're much more confident to engage in those evolutions and see what areas they can develop."

This training is part of a Navy Medicine-wide pilot program through a partnership with NMRTC Great Lakes and Lovell Veteran's Affairs Healthcare Facility designed to cover a broad spectrum of casualty care to better provide healthcare ashore, the sea, and the front lines. "We cast our net wide, addressing different aspects of trauma response," Negrón explained. "Through this experience, these dental

officers will become even more valuable to overall medical response efforts in a crisis."

Capt. José Pedroza, the senior regional dental officer assigned to Naval Medical Forces Atlantic (NMFL), noted that students achieved TCCC Level 1 certification and 24 hours of continuing education. "This joint training went well," Pedroza said. "Skill stations were created to address triage, and included the Walking Blood Bank, and mass casualty scenarios."

Ultimately the Emergent Care Training with Medical Simulated Modules training highlights the collaboration between Navy and Army medical teams, fostering interoperable readiness and teamwork. The joint effort also underscores the role of dental officers as adaptable first responders capable of providing emergency care under intense, real-world conditions. By immersing the trainees in hands-on exercises, the event emphasized both tactical and medical readiness, preparing the participants to support and sustain a rapid response in crises, whether during humanitarian missions or on the battlefield.

NMFL, headquartered in Portsmouth,

Virginia, delivers operationally focused medical expertise and capabilities to meet Fleet, Marine and Joint Force requirements by providing equipment, sustainment and maintenance of medical forces during combat operations and public health crises. NMFL provides oversight for 21 NMRTCs, logistics, and public health and dental services throughout the U.S. East Coast, U.S. Gulf Coast, Cuba, Europe, and the Middle East.

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• **Chiropractor** (Continued from front page)

the USA Swimming Team for the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio. He brought me to the USA Swim Medical Symposium in 2019 where I met the medical director, Keenan Robinson,” Belleson shared. “I was invited to work my first domestic event in 2020. I was ecstatic for the opportunity to work with USA Swimming.”

Belleson fulfills different medical needs depending on which USA Olympic team she is working with.

“I don’t know that I have a favorite, but I do have a different role with each team,” said Belleson. “When traveling with the USA Swimming Team, we have a bigger medical staff consisting of medical doctors, athletic trainers, chiropractors, physical therapists, massage therapists, and nutritionists, and the number of athletes is generally higher. It is such an honor to be part of the USA Swimming medical team. It is an integrated collaborative team and we all play a role in helping these athletes perform at their best. I always come away from events with more knowledge from the diverse practitioners around me.”

In contrast, her role with the USA Fencing Team often involves working solo.

“When traveling with the USA Fencing Team, I’m usually the only provider, acting more as an athletic trainer. It’s my responsibility to respond to and manage acute injury and illness,” Belleson shared, highlighting the increased level of responsibility is this role.

Belleson’s work with the USA Swimming and Fencing Teams has taken her to some of the most prestigious sporting events around the globe.

“I traveled with USA Swimming to the 2021 Short Course World Championships in Abu Dhabi, the 2022 World Championships in Budapest, Hungary, and the 2023 World Championships in Fukuoka, Japan. I also was at the 2024 Olympics in Paris,” she said proudly.

Her involvement with the USA Fencing Team has also taken her to various World Cups in Serbia, Bulgaria, and Georgia.

One of her most cherished memories with the USA Swimming Team came during the final night of swimming at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

“The medical staff joined the rest of the team and cheered on our final events from the stands,” Belleson recalled. “Getting to celebrate a silver medal and two gold medals along with two new world records was an amazing experience.”

Belleson has also been recognized by her athletes and peers for her contributions. A signed flag from the USA



U.S. Navy photo by Christopher C. Jones, NHTP/NMRTC Twentynine Palms public affairs officer
Carrie J. Belleson, a chiropractor at Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms, demonstrates the techniques she uses to treat service members on U.S. Navy Lt. Kathryn P. McMurtray.

Swimming Team and staff, which was given to her as a keepsake, remains one of her most prized possessions.

“It is probably my favorite thing from the Olympics,” she said cheerfully.

Despite the high stakes of working with Olympic athletes, Belleson finds that both military personnel and elite athletes share a common drive.

“I also enjoy working with motivated people, and athletes are some of the most motivated people there are,” said Belleson. “But I believe everyone is an athlete, whether a person is working toward a gold medal or taking a walk outside. Helping people return to activities they love gives me a lot of joy.”

Belleson’s move from the world of sports medicine to the military setting at

Twentynine Palms has been successful, thanks in part to the support of her colleagues.

“I’m very fortunate to have a lot of support from Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms and my contracting company,” she expressed. “Before taking this position, I discussed my involvement with Team USA, and I received nothing but understanding and support.”

At the hospital, Belleson appreciates the integrated approach to patient care, where she collaborates with other health-care providers.

“I have always enjoyed working in an integrated setting,” she said. “I am constantly learning from the people and providers around me.”

Her passion for chiropractic care and helping others stems from her own experiences with holistic medicine growing up.

“I always knew I wanted to help people but didn’t know the specific avenue,” she explained. “I grew up around chiropractic care, and I know how much holistic medicine played a role in my own health. My chiropractor was usually the first person I

would see when I had an injury.”

Belleson’s journey into sports medicine began after a high school knee injury led her to therapy.

“This initiated my pathway into the Athletic Training Education Program at Winona State University,” she recalled.

It wasn’t until her aunt and mentor, Jody Love, encouraged her to shadow sports chiropractors that she decided to pursue her graduate studies at the chiropractic school at Northwestern Health Sciences University in Minnesota. She graduated in 2014 and continued her training through a Chiropractic Sports Medicine Residency Program at Southern California University of Health Sciences.

Through the residency program, Belleson had the opportunity to work with national sports organizations like USA Fencing, which led her to begin traveling with them in 2017.

Despite her busy travel schedule, Belleson has embraced her new life in the desert and the community at Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms.

“I have really enjoyed exploring the area,” she said. “There is so much to do locally and within a three to four hour drive. I enjoy getting outside as much as possible and working at the hospital. There’s a great team here.”

For Belleson, the opportunity to serve the military in her unique way has been deeply rewarding.

“Both of my grandfathers served during WWII, and my dad served in Vietnam,” she shared. “There was a time when I considered joining the military, but I continued with my education. I’m so glad I was able to eventually give back in this way.”

Looking ahead, Belleson is excited about working at sporting events in the near future.

“I’m excited to keep working with Team USA this year,” she said. “I have a few fencing World Cups coming up before the holidays.”

Belleson advised those with dreams of starting a chiropractic career in military or sports settings to seek out diverse experiences and learn from various professionals.

“I have dreamt about working at the Olympics for a long time. I remember sitting in class my sophomore year of college, listening to my professors share their experiences working at past Olympic Games,” Belleson reflected. “I didn’t know if it was attainable, but I remember feeling inspired. My advice would be to shadow as many different providers as you can and ask a lot of questions. There are many different pathways, and my specific route has not been traditional.”

Through her work at Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms and with USA Olympic teams, Belleson continues to make an impact by helping people – whether they’re Olympic athletes or military service members – return to doing what they do best.

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Exercising and enhancing combat medical readiness in the heart of NATO

By Robert Helton

Landstuhl Regional Medical Center

LANDSTUHL, Germany — More than seven decades of Landstuhl Regional Medical Center’s legacy is built on the foundation of excellence in military medicine, providing health-care to our larger military community while maintaining a ready medical force of soldiers poised and postured to move, shoot, and communicate as well as provide medical care in an event of a large-scale combat operation on the NATO’s eastern flank.

To hone those complex battlefield and medical skills in a realistic environment, LRMC and its network of combat medics from the Baumholder and Wiesbaden health clinics converged upon an urban training site in Germany to conduct a first-of-its-kind, multi-clinic, combined field training exercise Sept. 26, 2024.

More than 70 soldiers from LRMC’s Medical Readiness Battalion, the European Medical Simulation Center, 44th Expeditionary Signal Battalion-Enhanced along with detachments from the 421st Multi-Functional Medical Battalion, 254th Combat Operational Stress Control and 94th Veterinary Detachment took part in the training.

“It was an incredible event demonstrating the effectiveness of collaborating with other LRMC health clinics along with units across the Medical Readiness Command, Europe and our supported battalions at Baumholder to facilitate a demanding and realistic training for our soldiers,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Max Smith, commander of Baumholder Army Health Clinic.

According to exercise planners, for the individual combat medic, this event served to build their confidence in the ability to perform warfighting tasks,

broaden the scope of understanding of field medicine, and to validate their proficiency in executing those tasks.

“We are tasked to train ourselves and our soldiers to fight, in tough, realistic environments, and to meet those standards and maintain our skills. This team, comprised of several different units, worked together to provide that caliber of training,” said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Kaleb Richardson, the lead training facilitator and Baumholder Army Health Clinic Detachment Sergeant. “I was encouraged by the high spirit of our soldiers, rising to the challenges presented by the European Medical Simulation Center team, and provided by the beautiful rainy Baumholder weather. These troops brought the intensity honing their craft to answer the call.”



Photo by Travis Jones

U.S. Army Soldiers, assigned to various units within the Kaiserslautern military community, participate in a combined field training exercise in Baumholder, Germany, Sept. 26, 2024. The exercise focused on prolonged field care, patient hold, and tactical combat casualty care.

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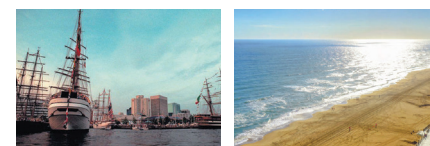
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