



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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NOTE: You can view, download and print the Real Warriors Campaign™ custom campaign ads and posters developed for the individual branches of the military by going to <http://www.realwarriors.net/materials>. Campaign ads are available in 8½” x 11” format, and posters are available in 18” x 24” format.

Commissaries partner with DoD to promote psychological care for veterans, families

*By Kevin L. Robinson,
DeCA public affairs specialist*

FORT LEE, Va. – Army Reserve Staff Sgt. Megan Krause had deployed to Iraq and returned without any injury, or so she thought. Marine Sgt. Josh Hopper had been wounded by a roadside bomb during his second tour to Iraq, but his scars ran deeper than even he could imagine.

Both Krause and Hopper were suffering from post-traumatic-stress syndrome. They are among the service members profiled in candid videos posted on <http://www.realwarriors.net> as part of the Real Warriors Partnership Campaign. The Defense Commissary Agency is partnering with Real Warriors to help promote their Web site as a meeting place for service members, veterans and their families to begin seeking psychological care.

“This campaign looks to open doors for our warriors and let them know it’s OK to ask for and receive much-needed assistance,” said DeCA Director and CEO Philip E. Sakowitz Jr. “We are proud to do our part in supporting this noble initiative. As a member of the military community we have an inherent responsibility to lend a helping hand.”

Through this partnership, DeCA will:

- Print and distribute posters to each of its 254 commissaries to be displayed for at least two weeks;

- Distribute reusable shopping bags that bear the Real Warriors logo, Web site, and outreach telephone number to each commissary for use during newcomer briefings, health fairs and other outreach events; and
- Place a Web link on <http://www.commissaries.com> that connects DeCA's site to the Real Warriors site.

The Real Warriors Campaign, launched in the spring of 2009 by the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury, looks to erase the stigma that there is something wrong with people who seek psychological healthcare. The campaign Web site features stories of service members who asked for help and moved forward with successful military and civilian careers.

"I think it takes real strength for anyone to get help for psychological issues," said Hopper in his profile video on the Real Warrior Web site. "... You're branded as, 'Oh, he's the tough guy. ... the chip's been put on your shoulder that those kinds of things aren't supposed to bother you ..."

The call for help goes beyond those who need help, but also includes information on what to expect when service members return from their deployments, and how their families, friends and employers can support and encourage them to get the help they need.

In her video, Krause said it took her fellow soldiers to convince her that she needed help; she didn't realize how badly she was suffering from PTSD. "It wasn't until I got the emotional help that I needed that I was able to fix the rest of my problems."

Through the Real Warriors Campaign, the Defense Centers of Excellence has set up a 24-hour call center staffed by health resource consultants to provide confidential answers, tools and resources about psychological health and traumatic brain injury. The center can be reached toll-free at 866-966-1020 or via e-mail at resources@dcoeoutreach.org.

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About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$3,300 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family*

readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.