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Soldiers Learn about Change, Choice, and Redeveloping Trust After Trauma

Elizabeth Power Addresses the Issue of Trauma Among Wounded at Recent AW2P Symposium

BALTIMORE, July 23 /PRNewswire/ -- An estimated 35,000 to 53,000 soldiers have been wounded in action in Iraq. Modern medical advances mean fewer injured soldiers die. That fact creates new problems as injured troops return home. At a recent Army Wounded Warrior (AW2P) Symposium in Irvine, CA, Elizabeth Power, M.Ed., of Baltimore's Sidran Institute opened the proceedings by addressing trauma among war wounded.

"Returning to civilian life with combat-related injuries creates tremendous stress and is traumatic at more than one level," said Power, a noted speaker on the issue of coping with change as well as disability issues. "It impacts soldiers who have been injured and also impacts their families."

Power presented AW2P delegates with a simple premise: they may not have chosen the changes they face, but choice is where their newfound power is.

"Use the same self-discipline you used to become a soldier," she proposed, "to develop practical compassion for yourself. Offer yourself -- and those around you -- RICH relationships with Respect, Information, Connection, and Hope." RICH relationships, the hallmark of Sidran's Risking Connection training model, drive recovery for individuals impacted by trauma.

The U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program provides severely wounded soldiers and their families with a system of advocacy and follow-up with personal support to assist them as they return to duty, or to civilian life.

Power pointed out that healing occurs in relationships, and that all the relationships in which soldiers and their families are involved need the support of many others during the adaptation and healing process. She stressed that the development of trust -- in self, others, and one's surroundings -- is a process that relies on (a) self-directed training and exercise of choice, (b) awareness for the potential of the "victim trap" and (c) the "special identity" problem.

"The number of men and women coming home from war with injuries," she said, "positions people with disabilities to overcome the limits of the ADA, the stigma employers have about people who are different, and the dissociation of society from the impact of war on the soldiers it sends to fight."

Sidran's Risking Connection model is a relational model that incorporates a trauma-informed perspective considering events across an individual's lifetime. It acknowledges traumatic events every individual

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experiences as well as distinct traumatic events specific situations highlight, such as combat injuries. RICH relationships reduce the distance among those who offer support and help and those who receive it. The model also teaches practical skills in self-care for those in a relationship with the war injured.

"While you may not have chosen the changes you now face," Ms. Power concluded, "you can choose how you handle them, one choice at a time, so that you redevelop trust -- and this is true for both soldiers and those around them."

For more information on Ms. Power, contact speakers@sidranspeakers.com; for information about Sidran Institute, visit their website at <http://www.sidran.org/>.

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