

# Wounded warriors put skills to good use

WTB, Habitat for Humanity join forces

BY J.M. SIMPSON

The sound of hammers meeting the heads of nails and wood resounded throughout Founder's Circle in Central Tacoma last week.

"It's good to be out here working with people from the Habitat for Humanity," Staff Sgt. George Hudgeons said as he measured a piece of wood.

"Helping to build a couple of homes for poor families is a great way to give something back."

For a third time in as many years, Joint Base Lewis-McChord's (JBLM) Warrior Transition Battalion (WTB) joined forces with Tacoma/Pierce County Habitat for Humanity to build homes for low-income families.

Approximately 70 warriors took part in a three-day build that resulted in the framing of two single-story, 1,200 square feet, three bedroom homes.

"Working with these Soldiers is wonderful," Nick Zolle, a construction site supervisor with Habitat for Humanity, said.

"Besides working hard and doing great work, these Soldiers always have a smile on their faces."

The source of the smiles is premised on the mission statements of the WTB and Habitat for Humanity. Both organizations emphasize a positive attitude while confronting challenges.

Founded on the belief that every man, woman and child should have a decent, affordable and safe place to live, Habitat for Humanity International, a nondenominational Christian housing ministry, has built over 400,000 homes nationwide.

At the core of its success are volunteers.

"The Soldiers who have volunteered to work here are just wonderful," Maureen Fife, the CEO of the Tacoma/Pierce County Habitat for Humanity, said as several Soldiers walked by carrying sheets of plywood.

"My heart is full of gratitude for all they have done and do now."

As Fife talked, Spc. Stan Buch, Spc. Doug Van Pelt, Spc. Michael Ballard and Capt. Christopher Lum sawed and then nailed large pieces of plywood into place.

"This is good work," Ballard said. "I did this work before I joined the Army, and it is great to be giving back to the community."

Since 2007, the Army has created 29 Warrior

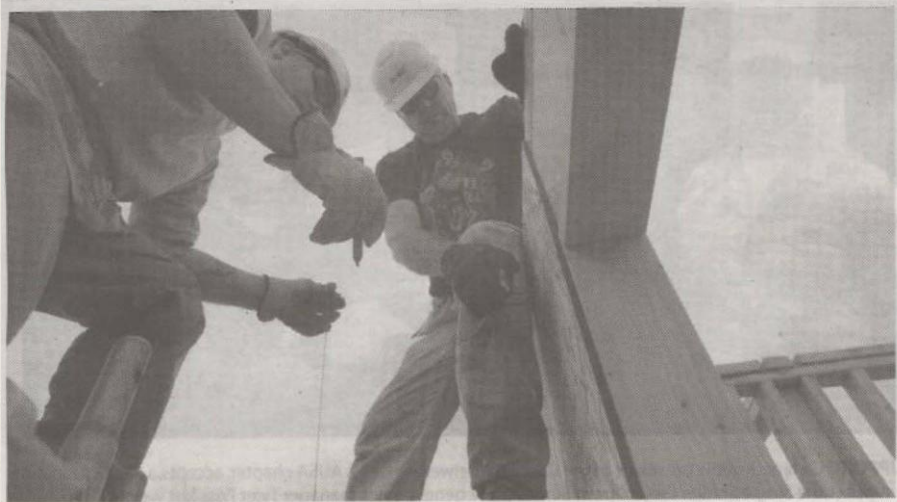
Transition Units designed to provide medical care, advocacy and leadership for Soldiers and their families transitioning back to regular duty and civilian life.

The mission of each Soldier assigned to the WTB is to heal and either return to duty or continue serving this country as a veteran in their community.

At Founder's Circle last week, the relationship between Habitat for Humanity and the WTB was premised on respect and dedication to helping those less fortunate.

"We are humbled and honored to be working with the Warrior Transitioned Battalion," Fife continued as Buch, Van Pelt, Ballard and Lum nailed another portion of an exterior wall.

"These Soldiers continue to give, and their actions have my greatest admiration and respect. They are heroes."



J.M. Simpson

**WALL MARKINGS:** Spc. Stan Buch and Spc. Doug Van Pelt, both of the Warrior Transition Battalion, take measurements. The WTB partnered with Habitat for Humanity in building homes for the poor.