

# YELLOW RIBBON UPDATE



Fall 2006 Vol. 3

**The Yellow Ribbon Fund's Mission: Welcoming our Injured Service Members into our Community**

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Yellow Ribbon Fund, Inc.,  
10415 Armory Ave.  
Kensington, MD, 20895



## Six Months of Solid Progress

In the first six months of our second year we have seen many changes, and our message has been spread wider in our community and throughout the country. We received a great honor and recognition in the military community as well.



Photo by Marie Wood

Pictured with Brenda Cullen are (left to right): Iraqi veterans and Walter Reed patients Captain Brian Jantzen, 82nd Airborne, U.S. Army, Captain Jim Ollinger, 82nd Airborne, U.S. Army, and Jim Bugg, Chairman of the Yellow Ribbon Fund.

### Our message spreads in our community

SportsTalk 980, the Greater Washington Society of CPAs, and Brenda Cullen, Mrs. District of Columbia, have taken the Yellow Ribbon Fund message farther and wider in the Washington Metropolitan Area. In publicizing its 980 Open, the station introduced the Yellow Ribbon Fund to sports fans throughout the listening area. Brenda Cullen made appearances on our behalf, and she took our message to the Mrs. America Pageant in Tucson, Arizona on September 6.

### Support throughout the country

Bob Schieffer, in his Memorial Day editorial on CBS' Face the Nation, mentioned supporting the injured troops through the Yellow Ribbon Fund as a great way to honor dead American heroes. Using our website created and developed by Robert Ciconte, people from all over the country researched our efforts and made contributions. Foundations and individuals from every part of the country have selected our Fund as the best way to help the troops.



Photo courtesy of CBS



Photo courtesy of James Lee of the Army Times.

General Peter Pace, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Mrs. Lynne Pace present the Newman's Own Award to Chairman Jim Bugg for the Yellow Ribbon Fund.

### Recognition in the military community

The Fisher Foundation and the Military Times Media Group sponsor an annual competition funded by the Newman's Own Foundation. A panel of expert judges, including the wives of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, select the best volunteer organizations in the country providing support for our troops. Over 120 organizations applied, and 12 were selected. The Yellow Ribbon Fund is proud of this honor, and the \$5,000 grant for injured servicemen and women.



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## Natasha McKinnon—Women Soldiers are Targets Too

When you first meet Army Specialist Natasha McKinnon you are struck by her soft-spoken, unobtrusive manner. You also see that she is in a wheel chair. Natasha is one of the 460 amputees resulting from combat operations, 356 who have been treated at Walter Reed since the war began, and one of 19 women amputees.

McKinnon, 23, hails from the city of Ashtabula. She set her sights on becoming a veterinarian and started college, but was forced to drop out when her money ran dry.

That's where the military came in. She decided to use her service in the army to help pay for her education, and found herself in January of 2003 undergoing basic training in Fort Jackson, S.C. with this goal in mind.

Her second post was Fort Lee in Virginia, where she was sent for advanced training. As an independent young woman who likes to take care of herself, she found the military rewarding: "I liked the fact that I was a soldier and that I was earning money on my own," she said. She was also earning credits going to school while in the military, taking courses in weaponry and other military-related subjects. She also enjoyed supervising other soldiers, and participating in flag folding ceremonies in the honor guard at military burials.

It wasn't long before she found herself headed to Iraq, an entirely different world. "I didn't know what to expect," she remembers. "I had to rely on my leaders who helped me in the 249th Quartermaster Company of Fort Bragg, NC." She remembers the hot, dry heat was very different from what she was used to in Ohio. And, or course, the ever-present sand, which was difficult to endure at times.

Sometimes she found herself in southern Iraq near Kuwait driving Humvees and trucks at night. Sometimes she drove in the northwest section of Iraq.

One particular October day she had a premonition, what she calls "a funny feeling." Then she matter-of-factly recounts what happened next: She could feel the vibration at the bottom of the vehicle and she saw the blast. She knew she was hit – her foot felt a burning sensation and she saw blood on the floorboard. Her training as a combat medic caused her to remain calm as four



Photo courtesy of the McKinnon family

soldiers ran toward her and lifted her onto a stretcher. She was put to sleep in the hospital in Baghdad and woke up to shocking news: a nurse told her that her left leg below the knee had to be amputated.

That wasn't the end of the damage she sustained from the explosion. The blast sprinkled shrapnel in her other leg, with

pieces as large as one and a half inches lodged in her calf.

McKinnon arrived at Walter Reed in October 2005 and since that time she has dealt with a number of ongoing physical challenges. Besides the amputation she had a fractured femur bone that had to heal. She also suffered from annoying neuromas, nerves that grow up underneath and skin and muscle tissues that get coiled.

Like many other amputees, McKinnon has also dealt with phantom pain, the pain that makes a patient feel the lost limb is still attached and hurting. The support of Walter Reed's therapists and other women amputees, including three she befriended, helped her through difficult times. On November 17, 2005, her 23rd birthday, she was awarded the Purple Heart.

McKinnon feels gratitude from the support she has received from the American public. "Calls and cards have come from schools and teachers and have brightened up my day." Also, having her mother, brother, Dad and little niece come and visit has also helped.

Her mother, Janet McKinnon, was able to get Natasha's medicines and other needed supplies with help from a rental car from the Yellow Ribbon Fund.

McKinnon is working hard in therapy and hopes to leave Walter Reed by the end of the year. In the fall she wants to continue the horseback riding course that is considered therapy. She took her first course last spring. She still has big plans, which include continuing her education, earning a B.S. in zoology, and then going on to veterinary school.

As to getting used to walking with a prosthetic leg, it's not easy. She is on her fourth leg. "It's challenging, but I like challenges and I am just taking one day at a time."

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*Specialist Natasha McKinnon gave us permission to publish this story and the accompanying picture.*

## The Work Goes On

*"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."*

—Winston Churchill

The spirit of giving is deeply felt in the hearts of Yellow Ribbon Fund volunteers. We really don't care who gets the credit, as long as the returning wounded soldiers are helped. We are only limited by the funds we raise and by the number of volunteers who step forward.

We started helping injured service members when we raised \$240,000 for the Semper Fi Fund in the fall of 2004. This money was designated to help the injured Marines recuperating in the Bethesda Naval Hospital.

But then we then we realized that ALL injured Service Members and their families needed help, especially the amputees at Walter Reed Army Hospital here in Washington, D.C.

According to Dr. Michael Wagner, head of the Medical Family Assistance Center at Walter Reed, "When a soldier goes to war his family goes to war." Families are burdened with added expenses when they come to visit loved ones in Washington, San Antonio, Tampa, or wherever the wounded go for treatment. The Yellow Ribbon Fund was organized to provide a little relief from such burdens by offering taxi vouchers, rental cars, hotel rooms and apartments.

We know our limitations – we are not the VA, nor are we the DOD — but we can do things they cannot do such as lend a hand, or put an arm around someone's shoulder who has been hurt fighting for our freedom. Yellow Ribbon Fund volunteers try to complement other organizations that help service members and their families while they're in the hospitals. Our primary goal is to help the injured get out of the hospital and into the community.

The YRF's Mentorship and Internship Program is helping service members transition to civilian life by identifying local businesses who will take an injured person into their company for training or as an intern. Many discharged service members will need to change careers so they can use exposure to new opportunities.

We know that our work will continue to be needed for quite a while. We intend to keep up the good fight and let our deserving families and soldiers know we are there for them, as long as they need us. I want to thank our volunteers for their time and help. I especially appreciate the generous donations totaling over \$600,000 that you have offered to help these deserving men and women who given so much to their country.

Chairman

**"The Yellow Ribbon Fund has provided invaluable help to my family as well as my son with your offer of a rental car and hotel rooms. You have made Cade's long recovery much for bearable."**



Susan Hinkhouse with her son Corporal Cade Hinkhouse.

Photo by Marie Wood

**"I wanted to acknowledge the Yellow Ribbon Fund as one of those few organizations I have noticed in which the monies donated by the public actually make it 'to the hands' of these guys and gals (and their families) out risking their lives on the front lines in this Global War on Terrorism."**

**1 Lt Tanya Meadows  
Polytrauma Military DOD Liaison  
Minneapolis VAMC**

## How You Can Help

The Yellow Ribbon Fund needs volunteers to provide help to families and mentors, through the Community Internship Program, to offer our service members guidance and an opportunity to use their free time to learn job skills with a local company. Please fill out and detach the form below and mail to:

The Yellow Ribbon Fund, 10415 Armory Avenue, Kensington, MD 20895  
or fax to 301-692-1990

The Yellow Ribbon Fund, Inc. is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

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I want to help the Yellow Ribbon Fund as a:

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- Community Volunteer
- Donor

Enclosed is my check for \_\_\_\_\_

Visit our website,  
[www.YellowRibbonFund.org](http://www.YellowRibbonFund.org), to learn more

# We welcome support...

We thank our wonderful contributors, over 500 who have donated more than \$600,000, plus substantial in-kind contributions to the Yellow Ribbon Fund. We welcome all to go to our website, [www.YellowRibbonFund.org](http://www.YellowRibbonFund.org), to see how the money is spent.

We started out “local” in the Washington metropolitan community, and we started out “personal.” We have not used professional fundraisers. We will soon have our first “fundraiser” event, a simple party hosted at home by two of our generous volunteers, and we have been the means chosen by two local organizations to benefit the troops.

## ...from the community

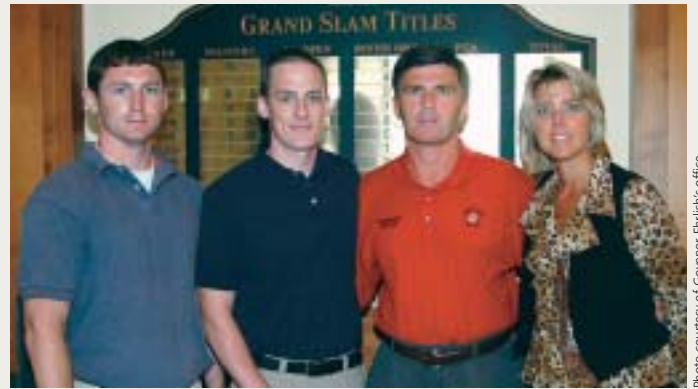
We thank the Carl M. Freeman Foundation not only for its grant but also for its guidance as we learn about governing and managing our organization. We also offer special thanks to our in-kind program donors: Fitzgerald Auto Malls/Nextcar Rentals, Holiday Inns of Georgetown and Arlington, Rock Creek Springs Apartments and Corona Apartments.

We could not provide our program to the troops and their families in such an efficient manner with out generous in-kind services donors: Beatboxmedia.com (website), Furey, Doolan & Abell (legal services), Dyer and Associates, P.C. (office space), Tate & Tryon (accounting services) and the Carl M. Freeman Foundation, Inc. (governance and management training). Volunteers who have provided significant help in organizing, governing and maintaining our organization include Denis Neill (governance and management services), John Leyes (management and financial services), Ed Quinn (fundraising and governance), Jim Bugg, Sr. (fundraising and governance), John L. Adams (program initiation), and Robert Cicone (website creation and management).

This summer, the GWSCPA, supported by Payroll Network, Inc., offered over 30 injured soldiers and Marines an opportunity to participate in their annual golf tournament, and provided contributions to the Yellow Ribbon Fund. SportsTalk 980 extended our name and reputation in the local community by making the Yellow Ribbon Fund the vehicle through which the entire proceeds of its annual tournament will benefit the troops. One locally based group anchors our national effort: UNIFI and its associated companies and foundations, The Acacia Foundation, Ameritas Charitable Foundation, and the Union Central Life Insurance Company.

## ...and throughout the country

Special thanks to Bob Schieffer, CBS newscaster and a member of our community. In his Memorial Day editorial, Bob framed this question “What better way for Americans to honor the dead than by remembering the wounded?” And he answered it by identifying the Walter Reed Society and the Yellow Ribbon Fund. This simple gesture put us in the homes of thousands throughout the United States. If you have not seen the video, please go to our website, [www.YellowRibbonFund.org](http://www.YellowRibbonFund.org), and use the internet link to read Bob’s comments and see the video.



Maryland Governor Bob Ehrlich and First Lady Kendall Ehrlich show their support for injured service members by appearing at the SportsTalk 980 Golf Tournament on July 24, 2006 with (from left) Captain Brian Jantzen, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, U.S. Army and Captain Jim Ollinger, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, U.S. Army, Governor Ehrlich and Kendall Ehrlich.

We are very pleased to have been selected as one of the 12 volunteer organizations to receive Newman’s Own Award. The Fisher House Foundation and the Military Media Group sponsored and judged this competition of 120 organizations like ours. The training provided by the Carl M. Freeman Foundation was key to our success.

We offer special thanks to the staff at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the National Naval Medical Center who prefer not to be named. They were the inspiration for our programs and they remain our constant companions and advisors, making our programs better and improving our governance. When foundations and individuals ask them about helping the troops, they mention the Yellow Ribbon Fund as one of the programs that is most responsive to the needs of the troops.

Finally, we thank all the troops who recognize our good works. They have helped us raise awareness to the cause; they continue to volunteer while in the hospital. We want to thank two leaders; Command Sergeant Major Brent Jurgersen and LT Eivin Forseth

We have been honored by special grants from the Frank D. Jr. and Marie Kelly Gorham Foundation, Albuquerque, New Mexico, the Harold and Kayrita Anderson Foundation, Atlanta, Georgia and David J. Cherry, Dallas, Texas. These major donors researched the best way to support the injured service members and selected the Yellow Ribbon Fund. We have also been honored by very significant contributions from Bruce and Genette Lieb, Scarsdale, New York, and Jack C. Taylor, St. Louis, Missouri.



Christine Schei and her daughter Annika enjoyed the Barnum and Bailey and Ringling Brothers Circus last Spring thanks to the generous donation of tickets from Ned Krause, Mike Du Four, Neil Cullen and Brian Lemek as well as transportation and support from YRF volunteer Melanie Kaplan. Christine is the mother of Spec. Eric Schei, U.S. Army, who was injured in Iraq and who is now recovering in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Photo by Marie Wood

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Jack C. Taylor,  
*St. Louis, Missouri*

## Warfighter Appreciation Program

Yellow Ribbon Fund volunteers stay in regular contact with the families we help. We take them out to ball games and we get together for other social occasions. We take service members hunting, fishing and golfing. We cooperate with other organizations, such as Team River Runner for kayaking, Healing Waters for fly fishing, and Ducks Unlimited for hunting. We take families on tours of museums and other local attractions.

Local businessmen who have special seats at local sporting events have donated those seats to baseball, football, hockey, and

basketball games. Our contributors have also provided tickets to circus, ice skating, and other performances and special exhibitions and events at local arenas. Other volunteers visit the lodging facilities at the hospitals to play video games with the service members. Still others care for children so that an injured service member and his or her spouse can get a night out.

One of our volunteers, John Leyes, had a great name for the program that includes these activities: the Warfighter Appreciation Program. It fits.



Photos by Marie Wood

Becky Perl, (second from left) has led countless guided tours of Hillwood, the mansion of Marjorie Merriweather Post, including the families of servicemembers. Pictured left to right are: Sunshine Jeane, wife of Staff Sgt. James Jeane, Becky, and Yellow Ribbon Fund volunteers Bea Hessick and Kathy Everngam.

### Jim Estes and Matt Kayson teach golf as rehabilitation

Jim Estes, PGA Director of Instruction, Olney Golf Park, founded a program to incorporate golf instruction into the rehabilitation programs. Jim and Matt Kayson, PGA Golf Professional, Armed Forces Retirement Home Golf Club, teach many soldiers, sailors and marines at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Both pros teamed up with other Yellow Ribbon Fund volunteers to enable injured

servicemen to participate in two local golf tournaments, the Greater Washington Society of CPAs Tournament and the SportsTalk 980 Open. All the participating soldiers and Marines expressed appreciation for this opportunity to be part of our community.



Pictured at the 18th annual Greater Washington Society of CPAs golf tournament, which donated proceeds from the tournament to the YRF are: (left to right) Jim Bugg, YRF Chairman, Sgt. Major Brent Jurgensen, Matt Kayson, PGA golf Professional, and Denis Neill, YRF volunteer.



Matt Trotter and David Millstein, sophomores at Landon School in Bethesda, Maryland, enjoyed many Sunday afternoons last spring playing Xbox games with service members staying at Walter Reed. In this picture they compete in a fierce battle with Private First Class Jaimie Kirkklis (center).



Golf pro, Jim Estes

### Mentorship and Internship Program Notes

- Sgt. Benjamin Crowley completed an internship program at WJLA ABC Channel 7 TV station. "I really enjoyed the program — it improved my skills in the fields of photography and video editing, which I plan to pursue in graduate school."
- Sgt. Timothy Lunceford, who repaired Blackhawk helicopters in the Army, is our second intern with the Aviation Division of the Maryland State Police.
- John Kiyonaga is mentoring Capt. James Ollinger who plans to attend law school in finding the right paralegal internship.
- John Leyes is mentoring Spec. George Romero in an internship at Wheaton Dodge, the second placement at that dealership.



Sgt. Lunceford at work on a Maryland State Police helicopter.

## Robert Bartlett—The Long Road Back

*Corporal Robert Bartlett endured severe facial injuries from an IED blast in Iraq, but his positive attitude and spirit have sustained him and inspired others during his long road to recovery. Here is his story:*

On May 3 of 2005, Army Specialist Robert Bartlett was finishing up a routine reconnaissance patrol in southeast Baghdad when a roadside bomb ripped through the Humvee he was driving. Bartlett remembers hearing the bomb explode, seeing the shrapnel hit the vehicle, then feeling like someone “hit me with a sledgehammer.” “Time just stops,” he adds.

The explosion blew him sideways, flipping over his vehicle and killing his buddy, Staff Sgt. William Brooks. Bartlett, along with Private Todd Bishop, a gunner, was severely injured. He could smell the diesel fuel and burnt flesh. “I was thinking we were going to die here,” he thought. He did die – twice, but doctors brought him back.

Bartlett sustained severe injuries because of the blast, which blew off part of his jaw, nose, and face. It took out his left eye and burnt his mouth and hands. He would survive, as would Bishop, because of the protective armor he was wearing and the quick action of a fourth soldier in the Humvee, Staff Sgt. Edwin Greer, who managed to drive the still-running vehicle out of the kill zone.

When Bartlett arrived at camp to receive emergency medical treatment he tried walking out of the vehicle, but with a collapsed lung and internal bleeding, he almost fell. Cardiac arrest from suffocation led the Baghdad medical team to perform a tracheotomy on him to bring him back and a chopper flew him to the Army hospital where he was stabilized. Landstuhl, Germany, is where he received the first of many operations, and then he was transferred to Walter Reed in Washington.

It has been a long road back for Bartlett, and he died again while at Walter Reed when he stopped breathing during a CT scan. The doctors there revived him with a breathing tube.

Since staying at Walter Reed he has endured over 26 surgeries, including having his mouth wired shut, titanium bolts implanted to hold his shattered jaw together, two bone implants, skin and bone grafts, and eye revisions. He is still facing more surgeries, at least 12 of them, at Walter Reed and Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland.



*Robert Bartlett in Iraq before his accident.*

Bartlett’s journey to Iraq evolved from the events of September 11th. He owned a construction company in Phoenix but his company, along with the economy, suffered after the attack and only survived until May 2002. He decided to enlist in the Army, which he did in April 2003, and was sent to Fort Benning where he trained as a sniper. The training was a natural for Bartlett, who loved to hunt growing up. He notes that “snipers are very important in Iraq and you get to know your sniper partner better than anyone, even, if you’re married, your wife.

When Bartlett decided to join the Army he was really just following a family tradition. Both grandfathers fought in World War II. Dad Chuck is a Vietnam Vet who was injured in the Tet offensive and spent a year in an Army hospital.

Both he and his father are quite aware of the contrast between the way the public is treating today’s veterans and what his father’s generation of soldiers faced when returning from fighting in Vietnam.

Bartlett feels the American people often don’t hear the full picture of what is going on in Iraq. “The Army sometimes acts like the Peace Corps in a combat zone, putting in sewers and constructing roads and other buildings, but these positive actions sometimes have to be hidden for the safety of the schools and roads.” He adds, “None of us want war – the soldier doesn’t, but we are doing our job.”

Bartlett remains upbeat. “I do what the doctors tell me to do — I don’t smoke any more.” He and his girlfriend, who teaches at a school for the deaf in Arizona, plan to marry in March of 2007. Then he plans on pursuing a career as a firefighter.

According to his sister, Dr. Heather Bartlett, a pediatric cardiologist in Ohio, Robert is very thankful for the support of his friends and family through his recovery. “If you ask, he’ll tell you he’d go through all of this again; nothing could replace the lasting relationships he has formed, or the rich experiences he experienced.” Included in his gratitude is the Yellow Ribbon Fund: “Thanks to the Yellow Ribbon Fund my family is able to come and take care of me during my surgeries. Thank you Yellow Ribbon Fund!”

Thank you, Robert, for what you have done for all of us.

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*Corporal Robert Bartlett gave us permission to publish this story and the accompanying picture.*



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## What We Do

The Board, staff and volunteers of the Yellow Ribbon Fund are very grateful to the more than 500 individuals, foundations and corporations that have helped us *Welcome Our Injured Service Members Into Our Community*. Your money has been spent as follows:

1. The service members and their families told us that their most immediate need is transportation to break the isolation of the hospitals. The Yellow Ribbon Fund has issued over 2,270 taxi vouchers for service members and their families in the last 18 months. Mothers, fathers, spouses and children often travel long distances to care for their injured sons, daughters, spouses and parents. Many cannot afford to leave the hospital. The Yellow Ribbon Fund has provided the use of over 330 free rental cars to these families over the last 18 months, thanks to **Fitzgerald AutoMalls** and **NextCar Rentals**.
2. The Fisher Houses at Walter Reed and Bethesda Naval are often full to capacity, as are other accommodations offered at the hospitals. The Yellow Ribbon Fund complements these facilities with free hotel rooms and apartments. In the last 18 months over 150 families of injured service members have spent over 700 free nights at hotels provided by the Yellow Ribbon Fund, thanks in large part to **Donohoe Hospitality Service** and the **Holiday Inns of Georgetown and Arlington**. Your contributions pay for rooms at other hotels.
3. We have two apartments, and we have just rented a third apartment, for use by the families of injured service members. We are seeking a partner for the Yellow Ribbon Fund to provide the funds to make this third apartment a Joint Project between that partner and the Yellow Ribbon Fund. We have already provided our two apartments to 25 families in the last 18 months.
4. Our contributors have provided hundreds of tickets to local baseball, football, basketball, hockey and other games and events in the local area.
5. We have offered mentorship and internship opportunities to over 90 individual servicemen and women. We are always looking for more volunteers to help us in the Mentorship and Internship Program.

## WAYS of GIVING

When Private First Class Adam Gabler, a member of the 2nd Infantry Division at Fort Lewis, Washington, died on July 16, 2006 his family decided to ask friends and relatives for something to ensure he had a meaningful legacy. Adam's uncle, Jed TenHoeve, helped to set up the Yellow Ribbon Fund. Jed encouraged Adam's mother, his sister Cynthia TenHoeve Gabler, and Adam's father, Robert Lynn Gabler, himself a United States Navy veteran, to honor Adam's memory by asking for donations to the Yellow Ribbon Fund in Adam's name. As of this writing close to \$3,000 has been sent to the Yellow Ribbon Fund from family members and friends, helping other young men and women as they recover during their stay at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the National Naval Medical Center.