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Open house highlights ways to increase functionality

By Jeff Troth, MEDDAC PAO

The Fort Carson Warrior Recovery Center held an Open House March 10 as part of its Brain Injury Awareness Month observance. The WRC uses therapy and education to treat those who have had a brain injury.

"Many of the stations at our open house required people to dual task, to challenge them a little bit," said U.S. Public Health Service Commander Alicia Souvignier, officer in charge of WRC rehabilitation. "We had attendees do a physical task, while at the same time gave them cognitive challenges and maybe throw in a little vision task as well. This way we are challenging them on multiple facets."

The tasks at the open house are the same ones that are used to help WRC patients regain their functionality.

"Most of our patients come here to improve their performance," said USPHS Lt. Commander Narisa Tappitake, occupational therapist. "They might have memory issues or headaches that get in the way of their concentration so we use functional activities. These include cognitive tasks, physical scanning tests, balance activities and interactive tests."

One attendee, a retired lieutenant colonel who had multiple traumatic brain injuries during his 28 years of military service, has been taking advantage of the services the WRC offers for almost 18 months.

"When you are on active duty you don't really think about your injuries, you just carry on and do your job," he said. "But, when you retire you find out that you have a lot of issues especially after multiple combat tours and several training injuries."

When the retired officer first came to the WRC he enrolled in the integrated Rehabilitation Outpatient Course. This provides patients education and skills that allow them to be in control of their lives.

He said that he is now able to use strategies he learned at the Warrior Recovery Center in everyday situations. When driving and someone cuts him off, instead of getting upset at the other driver he is able to “center”. He will look at Pikes Peak or take a drink of coffee and everything becomes fine.

The open house was just one activity the Warrior Recovery Center hosted in partnership with members of the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center for Brain Injury Awareness Month. They also participated at a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math night at Patriot Elementary School and on March 24 WRC staff will hold a Lunch and Learn class on “Creativity and the Playful Brain” at Evans Army Community Hospital. WRC staff will be at the Fort Carson Exchange March 31 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. with an exhibit of the services they offer.

“There are a lot of Soldiers in this area and I think they could benefit greatly from the WRC,” said the retired lieutenant colonel. “This place is great for anyone that has had any kind of TBI or concussion and people need to check this place out. The Warrior Recovery Center will get you back on track and get you to where you want to be.”

For more information about Traumatic Brain Injury and recovery, the WRC or DVBIC, call 719-526-4911.



During the Warrior Recovery Center’s Open House for Brain Injury Awareness Month a visitor plays catch while standing on a tilting platform. (Photo by Jeff Troth)



Visitors learn techniques to manage headaches during the Warrior Recovery Center's Open House for Brain Injury Awareness Month. (Photo by Jeff Troth)



Art therapy is part of the Warrior Recovery Center's treatment plan for patients who have suffered a brain injury. (Photo by Jeff Troth)