

Army breaks ground on new Rehab Center

By *Nelia Schrum*



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Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Richard Cody discusses plans for the National Armed Forces Physical and Rehabilitation Center, The Center for the Intrepid, with financial donor Kenneth Fisher.
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FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas (Army News Service, Sept. 26, 2005) -- Wounded warriors and military leaders broke ground Sept. 22 for what is to be the nation's premiere rehabilitation center for amputees.

The \$40-million facility will be privately funded and located adjacent to Brooke Army Medical Center, along with two new 21-bedroom Fisher Houses.

Arnold Fisher, who serves as the honorary chairman of the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund and his son, Ken Fisher, who serves as the chairman of the Fisher House Foundation, participated in the groundbreaking along with Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Richard Cody, Army Surgeon General Lt. Gen. Kevin Kiley and Brooke Army Medical Center Commander Brig. Gen. James Gilman.

Center to open in 16 months

The rehabilitation center and lodging complex have a projected completion date of January 2007. They will serve wounded troops and veterans who have sustained severe injuries requiring extensive medical care and therapy. The Fisher Houses will provide lodging for the families of the wounded warriors as their loved ones work their way through the recovery process. The houses will be constructed adjacent to the rehabilitation center.

The Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund and its sister organization, the Fisher House Foundation, are non-

profit organizations dedicated to supporting the men and women of the United States Armed Forces and their families.

Arnold Fisher, a Soldier who served in Korea, said that the wounded service members had made substantial sacrifices.

"I know what these kids have given up and I know we need to stand behind them and we need them to know that we stand behind them," Arnold Fisher said, adding that the esprit de corps, love of country and excitement about getting back to their units were inspirational.

The Fishers said that the Army's surgeon general assisted them in making the National Armed Forces Rehabilitation Center a reality by getting the Department of Defense to give the project a green light and provide a proffer for the land.

Fisher: 'Center funds not charity'

Arnold Fisher said the gift to the military from the foundations was not charity; it was something America owes the military.

"When you are successful, you don't just take; you give back," Fisher said.

Arnold's son, Ken Fisher, runs the Fisher House Foundation that currently operates 33 Fisher Houses at military installations and at Veterans Administration hospitals. The foundation currently has six houses under construction. The houses offer psychological first aid for the wounded, providing a stress-free living environment and peer support during the recovery process.

Ken Fisher said the two 21-bedroom houses to be built at BAMC would run about \$5.1 million and would support the work of the Center for the Intrepid. The houses will be the largest ever built by the foundation and will triple the capacity of the existing Fisher Houses at BAMC serving wounded warriors he called the "greatest national treasure."

Denzel's donation helped launch project

A wounded Soldier who made a passing comment to Ken Fisher about wishing he could have his entire family with him as he recovered was the inspiration for expansion of the BAMC Fisher Houses.

The BAMC Fisher Houses have stayed full with a waiting list while more than 2,000 wounded have come to the hospital for care.

He said the state-of-the-art rehabilitation complex would enhance the world-class health care provided at BAMC.

"This is about supporting these young men and women and their desire to defend this nation against hostile forces," said Ken Fisher. "This is important to show them this country supports them and doesn't take them for granted -- that there are organizations back home that are there for them."

Ken Fisher said that the generosity of Denzel Washington and his family helped form the cornerstone for the expansion project.

Cody: 'payback for patriotism'

The Army's vice chief of staff said that the contributions of the Fishers and their foundations are from the heart and out of deep respect and pride for America's service men and women.

Predicting that the Center for the Intrepid would be the world's finest rehabilitation center, Cody said the groundbreaking ceremony provided a chance to reflect on the contributions made by military members.

"Every time our nation calls, American servicemen and women answer undaunted, with selfless courage and unwavering determination," Cody said, adding that, many of the recovering wounded now faced a new battle as they recover from their injuries.

"Time and time again, I am met by Soldiers saying not, 'look what I have given for my country,' but rather, 'what more can I give for my country.'"

Americans working with the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund and Fisher House Foundation know the stories of the wounded service members Cody said. The groundbreaking provides the nation a place where a small measure of the enduring patriotism of the wounded warriors might be paid back.

Cody said the passion that Arnold Fisher and his associates feel for the military transcends charity.

"His boundless drive and determination are comparable to what drives our Soldiers to answer their nation's call to duty, live by the Army values and embody the Warrior Ethos," Cody said. "It's not surprising if you know that Arnold himself was a Soldier -- a very good Soldier."

Plans include pool, track, climbing wall, lab

The Center for the Intrepid will serve military patients injured in the Global War on Terrorism. Many of these patients have suffered limb-loss. The new 60,000 square foot Center will provide those with severe extremity injuries and amputees the best opportunity to regain their ability to live and work productively. The facility will include a pool, indoor running track, and two-story climbing wall.

Space for clinical research to improve prosthetic designs is also built in. The planning and execution for the project is being managed in cooperation with the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Secretary of the Army, and the Surgeons General of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, who are responsible for the medical care of all members of the military community.

(Editor's note: Nelia Schrum serves with Brooke Army Medical Center Public Affairs.)

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