

WTB intern making a difference at Corps of Engineers

BY RACHEL PARKS
Sentinel Staff

Soldiers of the Warrior Transition Brigade continue to showcase their dynamic skills in offices across Fort Hood through the Operation Warfighter Program and other internships with Department of the Army offices. Sergeant Maj. Robin Wallace, Company B, WTB, is one of the latest additions to the internship program, taking part in the design process for the Fort Hood Medical Center Replacement Project with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Wallace has served 30 years in the Army. The majority of the time was spent with the U.S. Army Reserve. Her time in the military and the civilian sector equipped her with some unique skills that came to the attention of the Corps of Engineers.

"I've had a background in construction," Wallace said. "I'm a licensed electrician and fire alarm (technician) for the state of Texas. For the military, I've done biomedical repair ... I've done cabling, fire alarm, security and fiber optics."

Chris Krause, the acting construction manager for the Corps of Engineers Hospital Project Office, said he was happy to discover Wallace was interested in an internship as the new office was standing up on Fort Hood.

"The Corps of Engineers is basically setting up a brand new office here for the hospital," he said. "We look for the best talent that we can find, especially somebody with the specialized skills. We actually were missing that talent for a fire alarm and people who had actually done the work in the field before, hands on work, we were missing that on our staff for fire alarm

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Anjna O'Connor, the Corps of Engineers Hospital Project director, said Wallace brings a wealth of talent to the internship, but she will also be gaining a first-hand look at the workings of the Corps.

"She's going to get to see the design phase and actually have input into the design," she said. "And then when we start construction, she will be doing the quality assurance on the parts that pertain to her, and she'll have had first-hand knowledge on what needs to be constructed because she was there for the design phase as well."

Wallace has been a Corps of Engineers intern for approximately a month. "So far, I've mostly been reviewing the prints and specs," she said. "Just going over the materials and seeing what the project is about."

Krause said Wallace will play a critical role in the design of the \$534 million dollar project, the largest Department of Defense contract financed by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

"Sergeant major is really going to be looking at the drawings and make sure the government is getting what it's paying for," he said. Because the design of the new hospital is expected to continue for the next year, Wallace will also spend time at the Corps of Engineers Central Texas Area Office on Fort Hood.

"To help her see the construction side of the Corps, we're going to send her to the Central Texas Area Office to get her trained up on how we operate in the field," Krause added.

So far, Wallace has nothing but positive feedback about the internship program.

"I'm liking it so far but I'm ready to get my boots dirty," she said. "I think it's awesome. I get a chance to learn a new skill set that hopefully later will develop into a job. I think it's a good opportunity for a lot of Soldiers."

O'Connor said it's also a great opportunity for the Corps employees, and gives them a chance to learn more about the military.

"For us, it's really advantageous for us to have Soldiers working side by side with civilians," she said.

"A lot of our civilians have not worked with military before."

"It does help our new employees; it also brings up why we're building the hospi-



Photos by Rachel Parks, Sentinel Staff

Sergeant Maj. Robin Wallace, WTB intern, and Chris Krause, acting construction manager of the Hospital Project Office, Corps of Engineers, look at the 35-percent design package of the new Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center. Design work will continue on the new hospital for the next year.

tal," Krause added. "It's for the Soldiers, and the more green-suiters we have around just reemphasizes that every single day. It reminds them of the importance of the hospital."

Sergeant 1st Class Kevin Burgin, the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the WTB Vocational Reintegration Program, said the internship serves three purposes.

"The first thing is helping the Soldiers heal by doing these unpaid internships. Second, they're also gaining the specialized experience and then thirdly, hopefully at the end, if it does work out and they're qualified for a position and there's a position available for them, they step right into a job."

Wallace said the internship has improved her outlook on her future as she begins transi-

tioning out of the military. "Everyone knows when you're sitting around it doesn't help you heal," she said.

O'Connor said it has been a pleasure to take part in the internship program. "As the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, we are part of the Army. We should be doing this. It's another way to take care of our Soldiers."

Wallace is not only helping on the new hospital project, she is blazing a trail for other wounded warriors. "Sergeant major is going to be the pace setter for this, hopefully expanding throughout the Corps and into other transition warrior units. She's going to be a critical part for the expansion of this program," Burgin added.

Construction on the hospital infrastructure is expected to begin in six to eight months.

The new hospital should be open to receive patients in 2015.



Sergeant Maj. Robin Wallace, WTB intern, and Chris Krause, acting construction manager of the Hospital Project Office, Corps of Engineers, look at the 35-percent design package of the new Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center. Wallace is using her construction expertise to review plans.

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