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## 'Operation Mend' heals wounded service members at UCLA

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Staff Sgt. Shejal Pulivarti



LOS ANGELES (Army News Service, Nov. 5, 2013) -- Vice Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. John F. Campbell visited "Operation Mend," Nov. 1, to gain insight and knowledge into the groundbreaking program that provides wounded military personnel with specialized medical care.

Operation Mend, part of the University of California Los Angeles, Medical Center, was established in 2007, to partner with the U.S. military to heal wounded service members by delivering leading-edge patient care, research, and education; and by using the best medicine and technology available.

"The program provides specialty services [and] shares the expertise that UCLA has in various clinical disciplines with wounded warriors to optimize their care and get them back on their feet," said Dr. Christopher Crisera, executive medical director, UCLA Operation Mend.

The program is adaptive to each individual patient's case and encompasses all avenues of recovery.

"We can give a complete set of services, which is a really holistic package of taking care of their family, their psychosocial well being and their physical well being," said Ronald Katz, founder, UCLA Operation Mend. "We feel an extraordinary duty to take care of these folks, and every day, they teach us that we're right."

Since the program's inception, the team at Operation Mend has worked with approximately 93 service members with a range of injuries. They have performed more than 300 procedures, and expanded their services to encompass more than 15 clinical disciplines.

"They've drastically improved my quality of life. I'm now able to do things I used to be able to do and want to do. It has helped me move forward," said Jay Barclay, a retired Army captain and patient at Operation Mend.

After learning about the extent of Operations Mend's contributions, Campbell thanked each of the organization's

leadership.

"This program is quite special and there is a debt to our wounded we can never repay. I'm amazed at the work you are capable of doing and the assistance you've provided the men and women of our military," Campbell said.

After learning of the details of the program, Campbell met with two Operation Mend patients. He spent some time with the Soldiers and learned their stories. Both Soldiers expressed their gratitude toward Operation Mend.

"I'm very lucky, and very happy, and pleased with everything that Operation Mend has done for me," said Joey Paulk, a retired Army specialist, and Operation Mend patient. "I've experienced so much more life (than) I probably would have, had I not had the procedures."

The eye-opening visit planted seeds of further collaboration and partnership.

"In this time of constrained resources it's even more vital to sustain these kinds of partnerships," Campbell said. "I'm committed as the vice chief of the Army to get the word out and help enhance this program anyway I can."

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