



Family and MWR

PERSPECTIVES

SUMMER 2010

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MG Reuben D. Jones discusses strategies with LTG Rick Lynch at the Family and MWR Command HQ in Alexandria, VA.

Photo illustration by Rob McIlwaine

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Commanding General's Letter MG Reuben D. Jones

People First, Mission Always

Welcome to the second edition of the Family and MWR Perspectives Magazine. As the Commanding General of the Army's Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command, I am very passionate and committed to ensure the total Army Community (Soldiers, Civilians, Families, and Retirees) receive the best possible programs and services to enhance their strength and resilience. One approach is to proactively develop, maintain and incorporate our support of resiliency within our plans. We must optimize their ability to adapt to stress and promote total wellness of mind, body, and spirit.

We will provide the best care, support and services for the Army Community by improving quality of life through initiatives such as the Installation Management Campaign Plan, the Army Family Covenant, Army Community Covenant, the Army Family Action Plan and the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program. The Family and MWR programs and services we provide promote resiliency and serve as an outlet for the Army Community to deal with the daily pressures of a military lifestyle.

The strain of multiple deployments and other stress factors may continue into the future. We, as the Family and MWR providers, must think of new ideas to enhance resiliency initiatives.

Together, as one team, we can make a huge difference for those Soldiers, Families, Civilians and Retirees who sacrifice so much to defend our nation and our freedom. They deserve the best and that is exactly what we will provide to them. Give it your best effort!



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Reuben D. Jones".

Reuben D. Jones
Major General, USA
Commanding

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Army's Entertainment Summit Brings Music Industry Pros Together

By Rob McIlvaine

FMWRC Public Affairs

The Army Entertainment Division recently brought music industry professionals to a round table at the Family and MWR Command for advice on producing quality, cost-effective entertainment.

"We've asked you to come here today because we're looking to do things better for the Soldiers," AED Program Manager, Tim Higdon, told 26 promoters, agents and DoD partners in the entertainment industry, as well as three IMCOM garrison and region representatives.

AED wants to make sure Soldiers have the opportunity to be entertained by Soldiers, wants to coordinate opportunities with entertainment resources, streamline the process for execution of available options, explore best practices from industry perspectives, provide expertise and formulated action steps for garrisons, enhance current partnerships and expand options for most efficient and effective delivery methods.

In short, AED wants to emphasize the "business" in show business.

Gathered together with AED personnel were, among others, DoD partners COL Ed Shock of Armed Forces Entertainment, Karen Fritz of Navy Entertainment and Bernie Rone of the United Service Organization (USO), and industry pros Theresa Randleman of T-Rose Entertainment, Glenn Smith of Glenn Smith Presents, Helen McCue of the Boston Comedy Festival, Terri Elander of Missoula Children's Theater, Eric Lambert of APCA (Association for the Promotion of Campus Activities), Alycia Lerer of Lerer Media, Al Wash of Al Wash Entertainment, Ari Nisman of Degy Booking International, Douglas Hall of Talent Plus and Dwayne Ulloa of AKA Productions.

"Stress on our Soldiers and Families

involved in war and the accumulated stress of nearly nine years of persistent conflict is what keeps the Chief of Staff, GEN George Casey awake at night," FMWRC Deputy to the Commanding General, J.C. Abney told the gathered entertainment pros.

"We have the Army Family Covenant, health counseling, CYSS, but in times of deployment or downtime, the Soldiers and their Families also need entertainment. Our goal is to deliver a quality of life commensurate to the service they are providing those of us lucky enough to have freedom and remain safe in our homes at night," Abney said.

Soldier-generated entertainment traces its origins back to the American Revolution and the Civil War, with camp shows springing up in companies, battalions and other units with volunteer Soldier entertainers.

In 1917, Irving Berlin provided rallying and rousing patriotic music for Soldiers and civilians as troop entertainment became an essential morale booster during World War I.

During World War II, draftees provided the talent and inspiration of Berlin's Broadway Soldier Show, "This Is The Army." By 1943, Special Services companies prepared scripts for musical revues in booklets entitled "Soldier Shows Blueprint Specials – By the Men... for the Men in the Service."

Today, AED is the largest producer of live entertainment in the world, with Army community theaters staging more than 900 productions annually for audiences totaling a quarter of a million.

Soldiers carry on the tradition of "entertainment for the Soldier, by the Soldier" through the *Soldier Show*, the Army



AED Program Manager, Tim Higdon, listens as COL Ed Shock of Armed Forces Entertainment, makes a point about what Soldiers and their Families are looking for in entertainment.

Photo by Rob McIlvaine, FMWRC Public Affairs

theater touring company *BRAVO!*, the *Army Concert Tour*, the *USA Express* top-40 show band, the *Battle of the Bands*, *Operation Rising Star*, *Festival of the Arts*, and *Stars of Tomorrow* competitions as part of the Army's Family and MWR program.

"We need the advice of you industry professionals on how we're doing, so today has been set up as a brainstorming session," Higdon said.

Joe Leavell, Family and MWR Community Recreation's talent coordinator, mentioned how the program has expanded over the past two years, but with fewer dollars to provide more shows.

"We're looking for best practices so we can tell MG Reuben D. Jones, FMWRC Commanding General, that we're delivering on the promise of the Army Family Covenant," Leavell said.

"To that end, we've taken *USA Express* downrange and continue to explore possibilities of how to produce it better. *Operation Rising Star*, which is similar to FOX's *American Idol*, is another idea we created to give Soldiers a sense of community. And the *Battle of the Bands*, something we haven't had in a few years, is being brought back. These and others add up to 132 productions a year and a lot of what we do is for free, thanks to 200,000 volunteer hours that speak to the quality of our programs," Leavell said.

Glenn Smith, international promoter, gave everyone in the room another reason for why they gathered together.

"In this business, we're always thinking about the Soldier. After listening to Mr. Abney's introduction about the Army Family Covenant, I have to say that we had no clue about the Family left behind when their husband, wife, son or daughter go downrange to fight. So I want to thank you for this inspiration," Smith said.

Smith has promoted and produced concerts in 44 states and 13 countries, including more than 100 military installations around the world. Specializing in diversity and "revenue generating commercial shows," he's had "landmark" tours and engagements with such performers as Garth Brooks, Selena, The Jonas Brothers, Patti LaBelle, Christina Aguilera, Casting Crowns and Will Smith. In 2008, he was nominated



Sugarland, the award-winning country duo of Jennifer Nettles and Christian Bush, bow to the enthusiastic audience at Redstone Arsenal, Ala. as the night ends during the first in a series of the 2009 Army Concert Tour.

Photo by Rob McIlvaine, FMWRC Public Affairs

as "Promoter of the Year" at the Academy of Country Music Awards on national television.

In the afternoon, the DoD partners, industry pros and FMWRC representatives broke into two workshops—one led by Tim Higdon, the other by Joe Leavell.

Ari Nisman, CEO of Degy Booking International, spoke first.

"If the Army takes too long to book an act, the act will go somewhere else," Nisman said. "So you have to shorten the reaction time by empowering subject matter experts who can make quick decisions on talent and venue use."

Nisman's company provides and buys entertainment for venues, festivals, colleges, fairs, military bases and corporations around the world. The company also maintains a current, exclusive client base of more than 50 music acts and a handful of celebrities and speaking programs.

Others quickly agreed this is necessary.

"With the shorter reaction time, though, we would need advanced notice to find sponsors and promote the show," said Kristen McManus, Deputy Chief of Marketing,

FMWRC.

"As an agent, I want to see my acts out there working so rather than looking at an isolated venue, such as a garrison, I want to find other clubs near there where I can book my acts," Nisman said.

"The Army has to have a point of contact, a centralized agency program. We need a team in place who can make something happen, one go-to person who has the authority to make things happen," Higdon emphasized.

Many of the industry pros echoed each other, pointing out that venues, such as garrison clubs, need a consistent program, week in and week out.

"You need to stick to a genre and present it at the same time each week," Nisman said. Adding that this will ensure customers come back. If there's a comedy night or a blues night every Wednesday, then don't change it. Otherwise, they will look elsewhere to plan ahead for their nights out.

Leavell, the Army's talent coordinator, described how the "entertainment" may also be used to carry a message.

"Up until now, we've been formulating

many initiatives, such as the *I.A.M. Strong Tour*,” Leavell said. “Sponsored by the Army’s G-1, this tour was recently delivered to 24 locations in just over eight days in Europe with the message that the Army is concerned about Families and their coping mechanisms.”

“The *Comics on Duty* tour for the FMWRC Business Program’s clubs and theater environments has four comedians delivering clean comedy at 27 garrisons,” he continued. “This is a DoD partnership with the *That Guy* campaign and Navy Entertainment.”

AED has numerous ideas in the development stage: *Rhythm and Rhyme* incorporates the spoken word with jazz, blues and new soul; *Game Show Dance Party* incorporates a trivia show with DJ and dance; *Theatre Entertainment Program* (TENT) is intended to connect with colleges and universities and provide a platform for showcasing Soldier talent, partnering with the Army Band for combos in theatre; and To The Fallen Records, a Warriors in Transition Unit entertainment program, featuring veterans and active duty military performing for Soldiers.

The venues exist and are being used. They just need to be used more effectively.

The Army has 120 installations across the world with more than 150 food and beverage opportunities for small to medium live entertainment events. In the continental U.S. there are 32 garrisons able to provide large scale outdoor events regularly, and outside the U.S. every garrison has this capability.

Connecting them with talent constantly and consistently is the issue.

Leavell explained that AED has been brainstorming other ideas which need input, such as the *Breaking Artist Tour*.

“I believe this is an excellent opportunity where the Army can go to the major recording labels and say, ‘you’re already breaking in artists. We could bring them into our demographic at many installations and build your circuit through our clubs, like the Java Cafes springing up.’ We just need your help in making this kind of thing happen,” Leavell said.

“We’re hoping to create an event within this type of atmosphere at Ft. Knox and the

City of Monterey, Calif., but can you put your heads together to figure out how we can get sponsors involved who can provide service to our Soldiers and Families,” Leavell asked.

“Information sharing is key,” Higdon echoed what became the theme of the day.

One important outcome of sharing would be a consistent pay scale for all the acts.

“Right now the branches of the military pay different prices for the same talent. So many performers just don’t do that branch. This makes it difficult for us to book our acts,” Nisman said.

“We need to level the field so we can have across-the-board, consistent ticket sales at military outlets,” Higdon said.

Douglas Hall brought 11 years of entertainment experience as a booker, promoter and venue consultant to TalentPlus Entertainment in 2007. Currently heads a team of agents all major accounts.

“I develop tours for performers who really don’t care if they’re working a club or casino that pays a different price. They only care that they’re getting the opportunity to perform for a set price. They understand perfectly that some venues pay more than others. But with me, they see one face and one check. With the military, though, they see one venue, each offering a different price,” Hall said.

Hall suggested that an online blog could be developed with a password for all the partners where they could share facts and ideas.

“This online communications could provide a talk board so everyone knows what the others are doing and can facilitate the packaging of opportunities, to set up those phone calls and make a tour happen. By the same token, this talk board could help each other not make the same mistakes,” Hall said.

Another improvement cited by the industry pros was the fact that the Army isn’t properly selling themselves.

“You need to sell your demo to the industry. Tell them that these are your demographics, that these people are the buyers,” Hall added.

Alycia Lerer of Lerer Media has worked for more than 25 years in the entertainment

industry, including senior level management experience at Time Warner. Her affiliations with celebrities, public relations firms, media outlets and marketing professionals allow her to produce events within the clients’ needs.

“If you sell to the Soldier, you get the Family and then you get the friends of the Family,” Lerer said.

“Up until now, we’ve been raising the flag, telling people we’re the Army, and hoping that’s enough. What we need to do is sell the Army better by describing better who we are and what we can provide you,” Higdon summed up.

Glenn Smith offered one final idea.

“I’ve been sitting here in front of one of your posters advertising the Operation Rising Star and not at all sure what it was about. It didn’t say anything to me. What you need to do is work with some of the stars you’ve been booking for the Army Concert Tour and put them at the top to draw in the reader. Or, set up a deal where someone like Jerry Jones is on the poster and have your singer perform at half time. But keep the message simple,” Smith said.

In the past, AED has wanted to film stars looking into a camera for a PSA and reading paragraphs of text.

“You can’t do that. You have to catch them in the moment, like when they’re coming off stage, they can point at the camera and give one line that will excite people and make them want to be a part of the experience,” Smith said.

MG Reuben D. Jones, Commanding General, FMWRC, thanked the industry professionals as he said, “We have 1.2 million Soldiers making this venue as big as a city. I want to bring things of value to our fighting men and women and their Families.”

“The work you’ve done today and the ideas you’ve offered is most appreciated, but we’ll do this again to make sure we’re getting better. After all, Soldiers and Families are my focus and because of you we can provide the entertainment and do things right by them.”

The group plans to reconvene, either in November as the *Soldier Show* ends its tour, or at the *Operation Rising Star* event later this year.



The foundation of any brand begins with its customers.

Whether you are a Soldier, a Family member, a Retiree or a Civilian, Family and MWR is focused on connecting with you in the most relevant manner. We're revisiting our current programs to ensure they meet your needs now and throughout your relationship with the Army.

Providing you with the right resources and excellent customer service is our priority. We believe that wherever you see MWR, you should see Soldiers, Families, Retirees and Civilians.

Visit ArmyMWR.com and learn how MWR connects to you.

FOR **SOLDIERS**

FOR **FAMILIES**

FOR **RETIREES**

FOR **CIVILIANS**