

THE JRTC AND FORT POLK

GUARDIAN

Thursday, Sept. 30, 2021 Vol. 48. No. 39



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Suicide prevention program showcases brilliance of resilience

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FORT POLK, La. — Hoping to pierce the armor some Soldiers build between their pain and the tools and support they need, the Army Substance Abuse and Prevention suicide prevention program hosted guest speaker Ty Howard Sept. 28 at Fort Polk's Bayou Theater.

Before introducing Howard, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk Brig. Gen. David S. Doyle, told the audience attending the program that it was a fantastic opportunity to listen to someone who knows the struggles inherent in military service.

"He (Howard) has done some incredible work on building resilience and is going to share some of his thoughts on what we can do at Fort Polk to help our Soldiers and Families grow and maintain their own resiliency," he said. "Every one of us will have times in our lives when we won't feel like we are fully equipped to confront the challenges before us. That's not a sign of weakness, it's just part of being human. So listen to what Ty Howard has to say and walk away today with some tools that you can put in your life kit to enable you to be successful or help someone else in their time of need," he said.

Doyle thanked Howard for his support of Soldiers and told him by providing the tools of resiliency to those attending the program he was helping successfully accomplish the Army's mission.

Howard, a veteran who went on to become an entrepreneur and business leader, best-selling author and motivational speaker, brought his honesty and optimism to the concept of resiliency by using stories from his own past that include his struggles with grief, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide and more.

"I'm trying to give the audience the tools they need to successfully cope with the — sometimes traumatizing — curve balls life can unexpectedly throw their way," he said.

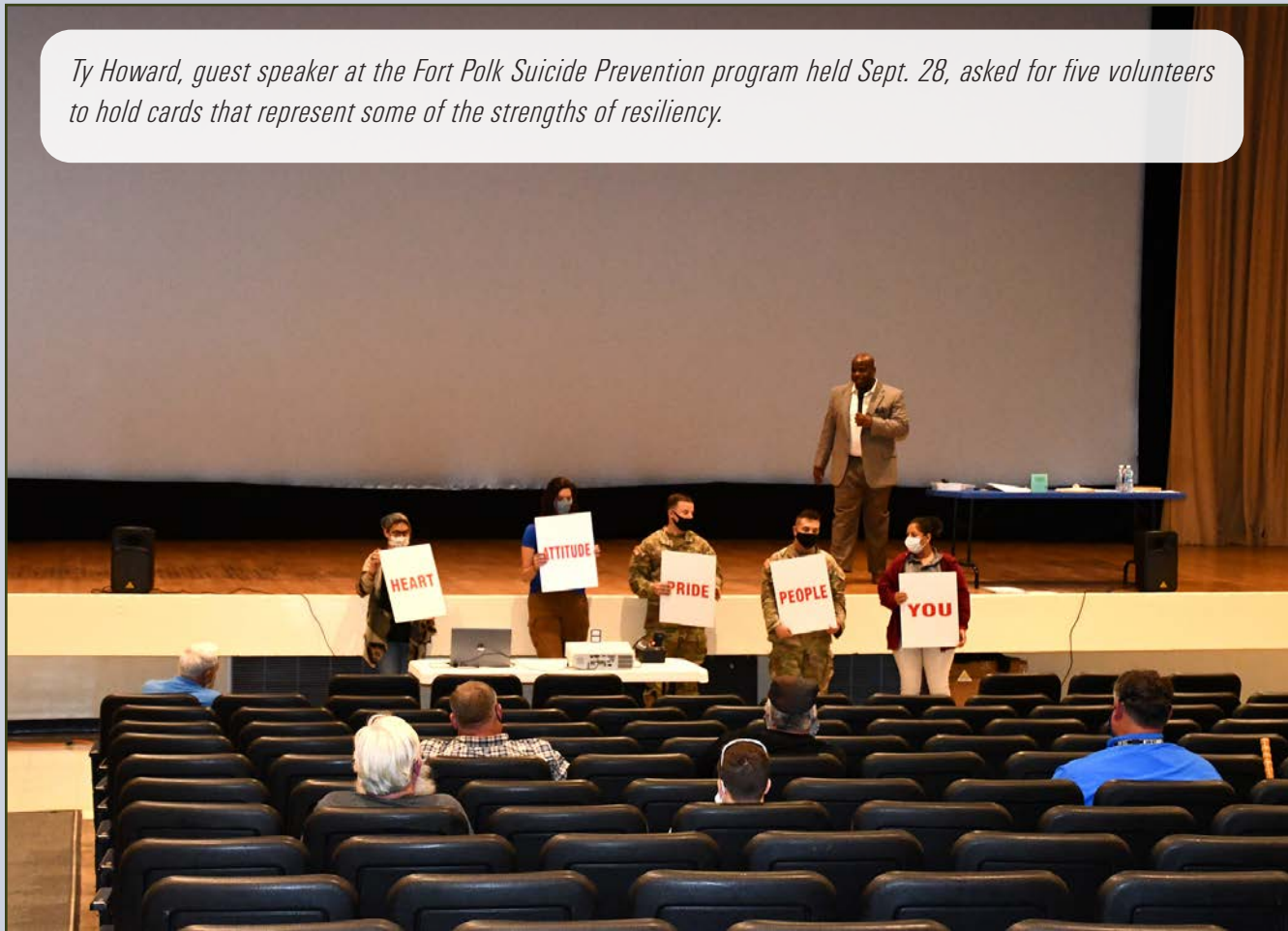
Howard said taking part in suicide prevention programs like this one is his passion.

"I believe that doing this work can help not only Soldiers, but also other members of the Fort Polk community who carry the heavy thoughts of suicide," he said.

Howard said partnering with ASAP is important because it brings a different perspective about, not only the mission Soldiers work toward, but their mental health as they train.

"The military has come a long way in the last 20 years in helping Soldiers and supporting them with their social and mental health," he said. "Resiliency saves lives — Soldiers, Family members, communities — when you learn how to cope it can make a world of difference in perspective and life in general."

Ty Howard, guest speaker at the Fort Polk Suicide Prevention program held Sept. 28, asked for five volunteers to hold cards that represent some of the strengths of resiliency.



John Pilgrim, suicide prevention program manager, said the program focuses on resilience and being mindful of your own issues while also showing compassion for those who may be struggling around you.

"We want those attending the program to walk away with the motivation to look inside themselves and reflect on their thought processes," he said.

Pilgrim said audience feedback has been favorable.

"We have had positive feedback about the things they have learned from Howard's presentation," he said.

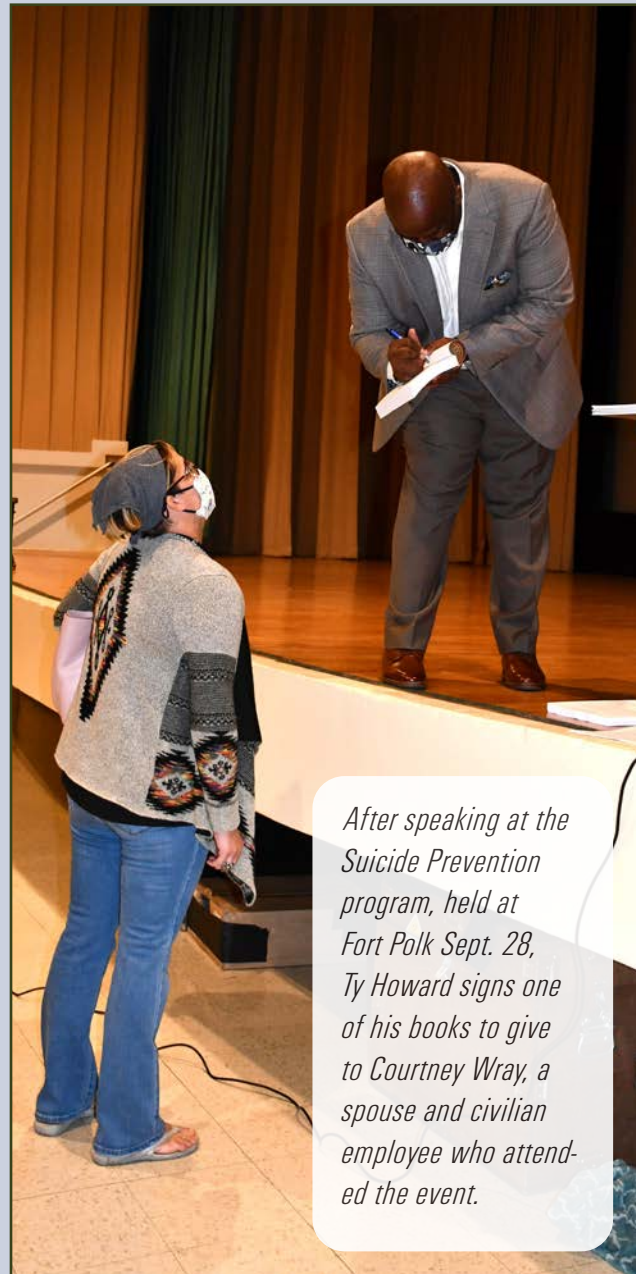
Courtney Wray, spouse and civilian employee, said she attended the Suicide Prevention Program because it is one of the best ways to get such an important message to the largest amount of people.

"Honestly, this has been one of the best presentations I've attended. I think it gave the audience a different perspective, something to make them think in a way they possible haven't before," she said.

Wray said she took notes because the way Howard presented his point of view on resilience spoke to her.

"He focused on the importance of nourishing yourself and knowing your worth. I think people have lost sight of how important they are and don't focus on things like how to make themselves happy, have an attitude of gratitude and be kind to themselves during the grieving process. I hadn't ever put the thought processes he discussed into words. He made me think and it all made sense to me," she said.

Howard left the audience with the fol-



After speaking at the Suicide Prevention program, held at Fort Polk Sept. 28, Ty Howard signs one of his books to give to Courtney Wray, a spouse and civilian employee who attended the event.

lowing words that he used as a focal point throughout his presentation.

"There is brilliance in your resilience and resilience saves lives," he said.