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## **Tennessee National Guard Starts New Fitness Initiative**

**SMYRNA, Tenn.**— The Tennessee National Guard launched the pilot program of GRIT, Guard Readiness Improvement Training, at the Volunteer Training Site in Smyrna in May.

Maj. Gen. (Retired) Jeff Holmes, Tennessee’s former adjutant general, asked Sgt. 1st Class Ken Weichert, to update a version of what was once called “Warrior Fit Camp.” Holmes said it was highly successful, but it needed to be updated to be more comprehensive.

GRIT is a program created by Weichert, a Master Fitness and Master Resilience Trainer, that promotes a holistic lifestyle: physical, mental, sleep, and spiritual readiness to improve our Soldier’s preparedness.

“GRIT is a course that helps Guardsmen optimize human performance through physical, mental, nutritional, spiritual, and sleep readiness training. The results are intended to improve Army Combat Fitness Test scores, reduce BMI, increase morale, and take back to their units,” said Weichert.

GRIT is a high-energy, 12-day program where Guardsmen motivate each other in small groups led by trained coaches. One of the coaches, Maj. Lauren Price said, “I wanted this opportunity to grow myself as far as the other three domains besides just the physical readiness. This is what the coursework does.”

“This course is quite uplifting,” said Spc. Carl Rickets, a soldier from the 301st Troop Command in Nashville. “Most of us are here to better ourselves, and I think we can all take it back to our units as well. ‘Sgt. Ken’ has a lot of experience. I’m learning more and I hope to better myself.”

“One of the awesome things is that the motivation is very high. The energy. This has been a very good balance of classwork, and physical activity. It’s been a good balance to keep us energized. I look forward to seeing it succeed,” said Price.

Weichert’s students have mentioned their level of motivation and self-discipline has improved during the program. “I wanted to work on mindfulness in my fitness,” said Spc. Sanyah Smith, a soldier from the 208th Medical Detachment in Smyrna. “GRIT has been a very good experience - very inspiring. It’s not like you’re hearing from somebody and you’re like ‘You don’t practice what you preach.’ Here, they actually do. So, it’s very motivating.”

“I like the GRIT program because it focuses on the holistic part of the person,” said Chaplain



(Col.) Mark Phillips. “It looks at the spiritual aspect which to me is very critical. I think that’s the foundation of everything they do. Hope, drive, motivation, integrity, and patriotism are facets of this program.”

Weichert is a Master Fitness Trainer and Master Resilience Trainer. He has provided numerous fitness programs to over one million military and family members across the country. He currently serves as the Tennessee National Guard Program Director for the GRIT.

Tennessee Guardsmen who would like to improve their physical readiness receive command priority. The program is voluntary and will be provided once a quarter at the Volunteer Training Site in Smyrna. GRIT will be expanding to new centers in East and West Tennessee in 2025.



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Maj. Lauren Price, 230th Sustainment Brigade, Chattanooga is a mentor for the GRIT program.



1st Lt. Cody Riley, a Tennessee Guardsman from the Medical Detachment in Smyrna, stretches a pulled muscle.



Sgt. 1st Class Ken Weichert is the creator and lead instructor of GRIT, Guard Readiness Improvement Training.



Soldiers in the GRIT program practice hand and release pushups.



Soldiers in the GRIT program work on their runtime.



Guard Readiness Improvement Training, GRIT, was conceived by Sgt. 1st Class Ken Weichert, promotes a holistic lifestyle: physical, mental, sleep, and spiritual readiness.