

# Working for Wounded Warriors



*Veterans receive training on a Hydraulic Excavator Simulator System at the PolyTraumatic Rehabilitation Center at Hunter Holmes Mcguire VA Medical Center in Richmond, Va. The goal is to train to become a heavy equipment operator while rehabilitating.*

Recently the PolyTraumatic Rehabilitation Center at Hunter Holmes Mcguire VA Medical Center in Richmond, Va., at the request of Jean Reaves, of Senator Kay Hagan's office, hosted a tour to Caterpillar employees. While touring the facility, they met with Dr. Shane McNamee, chief of physical medicine and rehabilitation at the Department of Veterans Affairs, who is leading a program designed to accelerate rehabilitation and job placement for wounded veterans. Dr. McNamee has implemented some leading edge techniques and procedures to get these warriors back in the workforce. During a discussion, one of the ideas that came up was the opportunity for some of these warriors to find employment operating heavy equipment.

While tossing around ideas for training in the heavy equipment field, Cat® Simulators came up as a possible solution. Simulator training provides a way for operators to gain familiarization and understanding of machine controls and applications; and learn proper operating procedures before training on actual machines. The simulated environment affords a safe place to learn and make mistakes without harm to personnel, machines or the job site. The group agreed that obtaining a simulation trainer was the right first step for the program.

The ball began rolling with a call to Caterpillar, eventually leading to Ken Pflederer, CEO of Simformotion™ LLC, the licensee for Cat Simulators. Pflederer was so moved by the project that he agreed to participate immediately. Pflederer says, “The opportunity to give back to the veterans that protect and serve our country is an honor. Our ability to design and manufacture training simulators is a freedom we might not have someplace else.”

A Cat Hydraulic Excavator Simulator System was prepared for shipment to the PolyTraumatic Rehab Center. Along with the simulator, Simformotion’s instructor, Paul Darcangelo, arrived on site in order to train more than 10 Occupational, Physical, Kinesthetic and Speech Therapists. Darcangelo also had the opportunity to show the Secretary of Veteran Affairs, Eric Shinseki, the proper techniques of excavator operation. Therapists will begin interested polytrauma veterans on a 50-100 hour training program on the excavator simulator. As the vets ready for work on real iron, the rehab center turned to Cat dealer Carter Machinery for access to

machines. Tim Stoudnour, Construction Operations Manager at Carter Machinery, graciously extended a review and examination of different equipment to the delivery team, so that the team could design specific therapy models oriented to equipment entry and exit.

Working together, teams at Caterpillar, Simformotion and the rehab center are helping create new opportunities for training and enabling wounded veterans to find satisfying careers in heavy equipment.



*Wounded veterans have the opportunity to learn transferable job skills on a heavy equipment simulator while recovering at the PolyTraumatic Rehabilitation Center at Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond, Va. The simulator provides a safe way to learn and train in the safety of a virtual environment. The Warriors will train to find employment as heavy equipment operators. The PC-based simulation trainer pictured is a Cat Simulators Hydraulic Excavator.*

