

Resiliency key to speaker's fate

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Jared Estes, front right, motivational speaker, leads the pack of 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade troops during a unit run April 24 to kick off the unit's last Dauntless Week on Fort Leonard Wood. With Estes at the front is Col. Andy Munera, 4th MEB commander, and the brigade staff team. While at the 4th MEB, Estes presented his "Fire Back" seminar to the 4th MEB troops. Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Patton, 4th MEB Public

Affairs

By Staff Sgt. Kelly Malone

Special to GUIDON

The 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade welcomed inspirational speaker Jared Estes on April 24. Estes told Soldiers his story of resilience and overcoming tragedy.

"There are two messages for the troops that Jared carries," said Col. Andy Munera, commander, 4th MEB. "One is resilience, and the second is the downside to drunk driving."

Estes' story began more than three years ago in Kansas when a drunk driver traveling at a high rate of speed slammed into the back of the car in which he, his wife of only six months and two of their friends were riding.

There was a massive explosion and, after awaking from a two-week coma, Estes learned more than 50 percent of his body was burned and his wife didn't survive.

It was the driver's third drunk driving conviction.

Estes sat in the courtroom during the driver's trial, and said he didn't think the driver was a bad person, just that he made a lot of bad choices.

"When his family was arguing for less jail time, it almost sounded like they were arguing on my behalf," Estes said during his presentation. "It was obvious that the best thing that could happen to this guy was for him to go away for a long time."

One Soldier said he was heavily impacted after hearing Estes speak about his life lesson regarding making good choices.

"It makes you think a lot about the choices of what you do after work," said Pfc. Anthony Le, bridge crew member, 50th Multi Role Bridge Company, 5th Engineer Battalion. "The safety briefs we always get before the weekend starts usually go in one ear and out the other. Just listening to Jared, it makes them stick in your head."

Estes espoused several other life lessons during his visit, including attitude.

Spc. Zachary Lacy, military police officer, 988th Military Police Company, 92nd Military Police Battalion, said his attitude about self-pity changed after listening to Estes' presentation.

"People in the military do have a lot of self-pity, because they get a ticket or are about to get an Article 15, so they start feeling sorry for themselves," Lacy said. "This man actually went through a whole-life change, lost his wife and could have died in that car accident, and he still doesn't have self-pity for himself."

To kick off the day of positive messages, Estes joined Munera, along with the brigade's senior noncommissioned officer, Command Sgt. Maj. Jon Stanley, and all of the 4th MEB troops on an early morning unit run.

"It means the world to me to have done that run today," Estes told the troops throughout the day. "It was like a bucket list, amazing moment for me."

Estes repeatedly told the Soldiers they were his heroes.

"For me, I feel like I was forced into a really dark place and forced to find my way out," Estes said.

"You guys, I believe, are the models of true courage and true perseverance, because you signed up to go into those dark places, and you were going to have to find your way out," he added.

Estes looks different than he used to with his scars and prosthetic ear, which he said showed him his hardest life lesson: "letting go" of who he used to be and accepting the new Jared.

Estes said we all have something in our lives we are struggling with.

"Not everyone's scars are on the outside," Estes said.

(Editor's note: Malone is a journalist assigned to the 4th MEB Public Affairs.)

