



Venea King and Grace Siplon practice for the drama departments newest production 'Welcome Home, Jenny Sutter'.

## Drama department stages 'Welcome Home, Jenny Sutter'

LINDA CUMMINS  
Multimedia Staff  
lcummins@unca.edu

UNC Asheville's newest theater production follows former United States Marine Jenny Sutter heads to the most unmilitary post left on Earth to do the one thing no one else can — heal herself.

Slab City, a decommissioned military outpost consisting of sand, slab foundations and an assortment of society's outcasts provides the healing ground for Sutter in a new theatrical production at Belk Theater.

In order to bring military authenticity to the production, the drama team worked with former Marine Caitlin Kelleher, who is now a junior health and wellness promotion student at UNC Asheville.

"I did some stage combat stuff with them," Kelleher said. "There is

a scene in the play where the main character has a post traumatic stress disorder reaction and she dives onto another actor to cover them, they go down hard, they land on the wooden stage floor."

Sutter's PTSD becomes ignited by an IED explosion that blew up her leg while serving in Iraq. The cast had many questions about the ways PTSD manifests physically, and is something the director Lise Kloepfel intends upon being authentic about, Kelleher said.

As the veteran liaison and advisor, Kelleher led a bootcamp workout with the cast.

"They were really great sports. I did some of the yelling at them like a drill instructor. Taught them how to stand at the position of attention, how to hold their bodies at attention," Kelleher said. "When they were calling me ma'am it was real-

ly hard not to laugh. It was funny."

Kloepfel said that having a student veteran serve as an adviser on the production was incredibly valuable to the process.

"Even though the play is fictional, the character's experiences are very real," Kloepfel said, "We aspire to honor this truth."

Kelleher advised the cast on everything military: uniforms, marching, even haircuts.

"There's a scene when two Marines walk out onto stage in-step so we practiced how to do that and the difference is noticeable. One of the guys in the play has to actually get a high and tight haircut for the play," Kelleher said.

Venea King, a junior psychology student, plays Sutter and is relatively new to the drama scene. This is her first lead role, with two other productions under her belt.

"I really enjoy the character Jenny," King said. "I did a little research before, much more after I got the part."

Part of King's research dealt with the acting process.

"I looked up the play to see what other people have done. I found a really good character analysis where each actor in the play was talking about their character and what it was like to play them," King said.

The other part of King's research dealt with the healing process Sutter endured.

"I've done research on amputees, how they think day to day, what it feels like to have a prosthetic limb and their body movements," King said.

The costume department cast her

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17