



# Two Frederick County Schools Earn State's Purple Star Designation for Supporting Military Families

By Erickson Barnes, USAG Public Affairs

Whittier Elementary and West Frederick Middle School have become the first schools in Frederick County to receive the Maryland Purple Star School designation, a recognition awarded by the Maryland State Board of Education for outstanding support of military-connected students and their families.

The designation, announced in April, acknowledges schools that demonstrate a strong commitment to easing the educational and social-emotional transitions faced by children in military families. The honor was lauded by Maryland State Superintendent Dr. Carey M. Wright, who commended both school communities for understanding the unique challenges faced by military-connected students and fostering inclusive, supportive environments.

The achievement was largely driven by Andrea Bridgewater-McCarthy, the School Liaison Officer for Fort Detrick Child and Youth Services, who led the multi-month effort to guide schools through the rigorous application process.

"Colonel Chung expressed interest in pursuing a Purple Star School designation during my immersion briefing, and I immediately began organizing efforts to support schools in meeting the criteria," Bridgewater-McCarthy said. "I was so excited that these schools were on board and willing to do the work to get this designation."

The initiative began with a joint meeting on Nov. 1, 2024, held at Fort Detrick. Attendees included school administrators, board of education members, and staff from Whittier and West Frederick. Bridgewater-McCarthy shared the origins of the Purple Star designation, stemming from the Military Child Education Coalition's SETS study and a Memorandum of Agreement signed by 12



Whittier Elementary and West Frederick Middle School have become the first schools in Frederick County to receive the Maryland Purple Star School designation, a recognition awarded by the Maryland State Board of Education for outstanding support of military-connected students and their families. The designation is valid for two years and was formally recognized at the Maryland State Board of Education meeting on April 29. (Photo by Lanessa Hill, USAG Fort Detrick Public Affairs)

Maryland districts, including Frederick County. However, only two counties achieved the designation in 2024.

"I emphasized that signing an agreement is one thing, but taking action is what truly makes a difference," she said.

To qualify, schools had to meet four key criteria: appointing a military liaison, creating dedicated online resources, implement-

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ing a peer-led transition program, and providing staff training on military culture.

At Whittier Elementary, Special Education Program Assistant Randi Gonzalez was named the school's Military Liaison.

"The Purple Star designation is a meaningful recognition of Whittier Elementary School's deep commitment to supporting our military-connected students and families," Gonzalez said. "It's more than a symbol, it's a representation of our community's resilience and inclusivity."

West Frederick Middle School appointed counselor Rayven Mitchell to serve as its military liaison. Both liaisons received training in MIC3 — the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission — and now serve as welcome coordinators for new military families.

Bridgewater-McCarthy also helped both schools develop a comprehensive online resource webpage featuring registration guidance, academic support information, transportation and meal details, and contact points for school and district support services. Each school customized their page to reflect their individual communities.

In addition, both schools launched a peer-led transition program, often referred to as a Youth Sponsorship Program on Army installations, that offers campus tours, assigned student ambassadors, and ongoing support for newly enrolled military-connected students. Bridgewater-McCarthy facilitated training for both school and CYS staff.

Educator workshops on military culture and social-emotional needs of military-connected students were also conducted at



**Fort Detrick School Liaison Officer (SLO), Ms. Andrea Bridgewater-McCarthy stands with faculty and staff of West Frederick Middle School at the recent Purple Star Designation program hosted by the Maryland Dept. of Education. (Photo by Lanessa Hill, USAG Public Affairs)**

both schools. Staff participated in professional development sessions, including training on MIC3.

"The schools really worked with me to make this a reality," Bridgewater-McCarthy said. "I really commend Whittier and West Frederick for their hard work. They stuck with it, and I couldn't be prouder."

The designation is valid for two years and was formally recognized at the Maryland State Board of Education meeting on April 29.

## **Forest Glen Annex welcomes Engine 754, increasing readiness**

**By Lanessa Hill, USAG Public Affairs**

Forest Glen Annex Fire and Emergency Services celebrated the arrival and dedication of Engine 754, a brand new Pierce Pumper, with a push ceremony on April 18.

This addition to the fleet at Forest Glen represents not only an upgrade in equipment, but also the department's unwavering commitment to the safety and protection of our community, the federal government, and taxpayers.

The tradition of the fire engine push ceremony dates back to the days of horse drawn fire apparatus. Upon returning from a call, firefighters would have to manually push their fire wagons back into the station, since horses couldn't reverse with the heavy equipment.

The ceremony serves as a symbolic gesture to honor the historical significance and evolution of firefighting equipment, incorporating community and developmental unity in welcoming new engines into service.

This state-of-the-art pumper will enhance the department's ability to respond to emergencies swiftly and efficiently, providing an even higher level of service to those they protect.



**Forest Glen Annex Fire and Emergency Services celebrated the arrival and dedication of Engine 754, a brand new Pierce Pumper, with a push ceremony on April 18. (Photo by Lanessa Hill, USAG Public Affairs)**



## Fort Detrick celebrates Month of the Military Child



April is Month of The Military Child. It's also a month that the Department of Defense recognizes as Child Abuse Prevention Month. To kick off the month, Fort Detrick Garrison Commander Col. Chris Chung signed a Child Abuse Prevention Month proclamation and held a story time with children on post, April 1, at the community center. Representatives from Frederick County Public Libraries sang songs and danced with everyone, entertaining those in attendance. Throughout the month of April, Fort Detrick's Family and MWR held numerous events and activities for children and families. (Photos by Lanessa Hill, USAG Fort Detrick Public Affairs)

### MoMC Celebrated at Maryland Government House

Fort Detrick Garrison Commander Col. Christopher Chung and Fort Detrick School Liaison Officer Andrea Bridgewater-McCarthy, pictured here with Anthony Woods, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families, attended a reception at the Maryland Government House, April 24, celebrating the Month of the Military Child. The event was hosted by First Lady Moore and the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families. (Courtesy photo)



# Four DHA R&D-MRDC Soldiers Earn Coveted Expert Field Medical Badge

By Paul Lagasse, USAMRDC PAO

Four Soldiers from the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense and U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense earned the prestigious Expert Field Medical Badge following a grueling five-day competition earlier this month at Fort Walker, Virginia that tested their combat skills as well as their ability to deliver cutting-edge life-saving medical care in a variety of austere scenarios – vital skills for ensuring our forces remain resilient, adaptable, and lethal.

Brig. Gen. Lance Raney, commanding general of Medical Readiness Command-East, pinned the EFMB on Capt. Seung Choi and Capt. James Terrell of USAMRICD and Staff Sgt. David Anandzi and Capt. Kayla Fantone of USAMRIID at a ceremony following the competition on April 2. Fantone had the additional distinction of getting perfect scores on all her tests – popularly referred to as earning the EFMB with “No Blood.”

A total of seven Defense Health Agency Research and Development-Medical Research and Development Command teammates from USAMRIID, USAMRICD, and the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research competed in the event, which consists of an expert physical fitness assessment, a written test, a 12-mile ruck march, exercises for evaluating evacuation and warrior skills and day and night land navigation exercises. The Army's Medical Center of Excellence, which developed the EFMB tests, describes their purpose as measuring “a Soldier's physical fitness and ability to perform to standards of excellent in a broad spectrum of critical medical, evacuation and warrior skills.”

The EFMB is notoriously hard to earn; the overall pass rate is typically less than 30%. Earning the badge is a demonstration of the recipients' achievement of a high standard of readiness.

“EFMB testing is designed to be stressful,” says Choi, a research biochemist who earned the EFMB on his first attempt. “It's often just you and a stone-faced grad-

er while you navigate and perform the tasks in front of you. It could be warm and sunny outside, but the air is cold and stiff, the testing area is completely silent, and you find yourself second-guessing your approach, your knowledge, and your instincts. There's almost no room for error, and any little mistake could potentially be your last.”

The competitors singled out the cadre for praise for their support throughout the training and competition weeks. The sharing of knowledge and expertise among peers is an important technique for improving Warfighter resilience, adaptability, and lethality.

“The instructors really wanted all of us to succeed,” says Terrell, a research biochemist for whom this was his second attempt to earn the badge. “They spent lots of extra time with us in study halls, and if anybody had any questions, they were out there with us. They were also at

the testing site 24/7. It's not like they went to a hotel or back to their house every night. They were going through it with us, which was really cool.”

Fantone, a microbiologist who earned the EFMB on her first attempt, says that having a good attitude, being open to learning and putting in a lot of effort are crucial for improving the odds of success – characteristics that are vital for meeting the Army's high standards of readiness for both individuals as well as at the unit level.

“The EFMB will humble you and find your weaknesses,” says Fantone. “But that's what I like about it. It was fun because you actually learn your weaknesses as well as your strengths out there, and discover what you need to work on.”

A common theme among EFMB competitors is how the experience energizes them to tackle the next career challenge and continue honing and improving their Warfighter and medical skill sets, such as pursuing Air Assault, Airborne, or Ranger badges.

“You get such a drive to do it while you're there, you have to forget about everything else,” says Anandzi, the NCO In Charge of USAMRIID's Pathology Division. “There is so much to remember in such a short period of time that once you start to realize that you can actually do this, then it's like oxygen. You just want to go back and just keep it. You practice so much that you can't get it out of your head afterward!”

Following the award ceremony, MRDC's Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Dills presented Anandzi, Choi, Fantone, and Terrell with the Sergeant Major's and Commander's Coins for their accomplishments.

“I think everybody who went through the competition had a rewarding experience,” says Terrell. “It didn't seem to me like any of the Soldiers who didn't earn the badge had any reservations about going again. All of them had the shared mentality of, ‘I will definitely be back!’”



**Capt. James Terrell and Capt. Seung Choi of the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense, second and third from left, catch their breath with colleagues from the USAMRICD cadre after completing the 12-mile ruck march portion of the Expert Medical Field Badge competition at Fort Walker, Virginia earlier this month. Terrell and Choi both received the prestigious EFMB at a ceremony following completion of the march . (Photo by Paul Lagasse, MRDC Public Affairs )**



# Indoor POOL

Summer Season

Memorial Day Weekend  
Thru Labor Day Weekend

**POOL  
OPENS  
24 MAY**

## Mission/Lap Swim (for Service Members)

Starting 28 May  
Mondays and Wednesdays  
0600 to 0800 (No Fee)

- \$3 Day Pass
- \$50 Individual Season Pass
- \$100 Family Season Pass

## Snack Shack Available

Credit Card Payments Only

## Open Swim

We will be open weekends only for  
Recreational/Open Swim  
24 May through 12 June  
---and again---  
18 August through 1 September

## Summer Open Swim

13 June to 15 August

Wednesdays-Fridays  
1000 to 1600

Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays  
1100 to 1800

**Odom Fitness Center Pool, 1507 Porter St  
301-619-2498**





# When one door closes, another opens ... and it's the same with pools

**By Lanessa Hill, USAG PAO**

The Fort Detrick outdoor pool will be closed for the entire summer of 2025.

The pool was repaired numerous times in the past, but now requires full renovation. The existing liner, which has been in place for a very long time, is failing, causing numerous safety concerns. The liner will be removed and replaced, and the flooring will be resurfaced.

These are just two of the projects associated with the renovation that Fort Detrick's

Directorate of Public Works plans to begin soon. It is a big project with many external factors that could affect the work, so no re-opening date has been set.

Swimming in an outdoor pool is something many people look forward to each year, but the command must ensure a safe experience for customers. Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation has worked hard to provide an alternative option at the indoor pool inside Odom Fitness Center.

"We understand this isn't ideal," said Stacy Fagan, Director of DFMWR, "but we are purchasing new recreational enhancements for fun at the indoor pool, and we will adjust pricing for pool passes."

Pool passes are available for purchase beginning May 6, by visiting the Odom Fitness Center. Costs for the 2025 season are:

**\$3 day per person**

**\$50 annual pass for individuals**

**\$100 annual family pass**

## MG Lodi Hosts Fort Detrick Volunteer Recognition Ceremony



Maj. Gen. Paula Lodi and Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Dills, U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command, hosted Fort Detrick's Volunteer Recognition Ceremony, April 25, at the Community Activity Center on post. The check presented during the event represents a savings of \$347,560.79, directly attributed to volunteer hours served at Fort Detrick and Forest Glen Annex.

### Military Volunteers of the Year:

Sgt. Maj. Robert Wall

SPC3 Jenade Pearson

### Civilian Volunteer of the Year:

Kathy Benderev

### Family Member Volunteer of the Year:

Marilyn Gail Reichard

(Photos by USAMRDC Public Affairs)



# Army major earns black belt, stays combat ready with jiu-jitsu

By C.J. Lovelace, AMLC Public Affairs

Maj. Chris Wright, an operations officer at U.S. Army Medical Logistics Command, recently earned his black belt in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, or BJJ, a combat sport he's grown to love thanks, in part, to opportunities afforded by the Army.

"Since that initial introduction to combatives, it's just been a part of my life," Wright said.

The 44-year-old from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, trains regularly and competes regionally, including taking first place in two different divisions at a recent competition in Hagerstown, Maryland.

"I just found out that blackbelts don't have to pay to compete," Wright laughed, also emphasizing that knowledge sharing with fellow fighters is a key training benefit. "You build relationships with these guys, train with them as they come up and see them get out there and learn from their matches. That's what I really enjoy."

Wright, a former high school wrestler, trained on his own for about a decade while serving in the Army National Guard, but his journey into more advanced combat sports truly kicked off in 2011, following his commission into the Medical Service Corps from West Virginia University's ROTC program.

Wright's first assignment as an active-duty officer took him to Fort Stewart, Georgia, where he learned about an Army combatives course that emphasized jiu-jitsu techniques, a ground-fighting style using grappling and submission holds.

Although he came up short of earning a spot on the all-Army combatives team roster in his first tournament, the competition lit a fire in Wright for BJJ. He later got his shot to train and compete as an alternate for the 3rd Infantry Division Team in the prestigious Lacerda Cup, an Army-wide combatives tournament that tests a Soldier's skills in grappling, striking and endurance.

Through 2016, including a deployment to Afghanistan in 2013, Wright continued to train and work to get better on the mat. However, life circumstances and work obligations forced him to pull back on his BJJ ambitions a bit until he arrived at Fort Detrick in 2020.

After completing additional schooling and a stint in detachment command for the U.S. Army Medical Materiel Agency, Wright returned to his passion and began training more regularly at a BJJ gym a short drive from his home in south-central Pennsylvania.

His instructor and coach there helped reignite that fire to fight, encouraging Wright to get back into competitions.

He quickly found success with numerous podium finishes over the past few months, including a third-place finish in his first ever International Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Federation event in Virginia in early March.

Wright said fighting gets his competitive juices flowing and provides "that feeling that I think we all need" as Soldiers.



**Maj. Chris Wright, center, stands on the podium after winning his division at a Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu tournament in Hagerstown, Maryland. Wright, an operations officer with U.S. Army Medical Logistics Command, was promoted to black belt in the ground-fighting style martial art in December 2024. (Photos courtesy Maj. Chris Wright )**

"It also gives you an opportunity to zero in your focus," he said. "When I'm training, that's all I focus on. In a fight, you don't have time to think about anything other than that moment and how to beat your opponent."

Wright said he loves the one-on-one aspect of combat sports, specifically that you must learn from your mistakes and be accountable to ultimately improve.

"There's no excuses; nowhere for you to go," he said, compared to a team sport. "It's just you and someone else out there."

That someone else in one of his most recent tournaments – with what are called "absolute" matches, where weight is not used in class restrictions – was a 5-foot-11, 300-pound opponent.

"I felt like I was fighting a bear," Wright laughed. "I learned that day that my defensive strategies worked. I made it to the end and survived a bear attack."

Wright said that skill of being adaptable and calm under pressure in high-stress and self-defense situations is vital for military and first responders alike.

"It's part of what we do; it's our livelihood," he said. "We're all Soldiers and warriors first, no matter our MOS, whatever our job ... we still have that responsibility – to fight and win – no matter what."

Headquartered at Fort Detrick, AMLC serves as the Army's Life Cycle Management Command for medical materiel (Class VIII), delivering medical logistics, sustainment and materiel readiness from the strategic support area to the forward tactical edge to increase survivability and sustain fighting strength.



# News - Events - Training

## Road, walking path closures near Beasley, Davis

A construction project will impact pedestrian and vehicle traffic near Beasley Drive starting April 21, lasting until mid-June 2025. Please treat all areas with posted signs as off limit areas.

### Pedestrian Closures:

- The Beasley Drive exercise and walking path will be closed 24/7 for the project duration.
- The sidewalk and area behind Building 375 will be closed for approximately three weeks (exact dates will be announced later).

### Road Closures:

- Davis Drive: Fully closed for the project duration.

- Beasley Drive: Closed Mon-Fri, 7 a.m. – 3 p.m.

## Deceptive online targeting and recruitment

Current and former federal employees should beware of virtual approaches and understand the potential consequences of engaging. U.S. clearance holders are further reminded of their legal obligations to protect classified data, even after departing USG service.

[This linked product](#) provides indicators of potential online targeting by malicious actors, mitigation strategies for employees and employers, additional resources, and reporting information.

For FMWR News and Events, visit [www.detrick.armymwr.com](http://www.detrick.armymwr.com), Instagram us at #DetrickMWR, and like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/DetrickMWR](http://www.facebook.com/DetrickMWR).



## Flying Cows and Military Appreciation

Fort Detrick kicked off game 12 for the Frederick Flying Cows in their first Military Appreciation Night on Sat. April 12 at the Woodsboro Bank Arena. Garrison Commander, Col. Chris Chung led with welcoming remarks followed by our color guard and the National Anthem sung by Sgt. Lauren Pechev. The Cows went on to win their 12th straight game, defeating Jersey Shore Breaks with a score of 140 -108.

(Photos by Lanessa Hill, USAG Public Affairs)

