

Press Release

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Fort Drum Public Affairs

Fort Drum welcomes community members to guided tour, presenting Army training, history and more

FORT DRUM, N.Y. -- Dozens of community members gathered outside the Mountain Training Group complex April 29, where Soldiers demonstrated their skills on the rappelling tower during the Around and About Fort Drum Tour.

A helicopter passed overhead, while a group Soldiers enrolled in the Air Assault Course marched out of a classroom – coincidental but as if on cue to show visitors the constant training operations at Fort Drum.

First Sgt. Daniel Fields, MTG senior enlisted adviser, spoke to attendees about the MTG mission and the classes that the cadre provide to service members, to include the Air Assault Course, Rappel Master Course and Mountain Operations Course.

“When you think about outreach activities and interacting with the public, I think we do that well,” he said. “But inviting people to come out here and see for themselves what we do as an all-volunteer force, it further connects the community with Fort Drum.”

The rappel tower is visible from Route 26, which prompted someone to ask Fields during a previous tour why they never see any training on it when they drive down the road.

“I was able to explain to her our course schedule, and all the different training that happens here before Soldiers get to the rappel tower,” he said. “There’s also the fact that all the action is on the side of the tower you can’t see from the road.”

In addition to the military demonstration from the Mountain Training Group cadre, attendees toured Hays Hall, Memorial Park, and LeRay Mansion.

The biannual Around and About tour began last year for community members to see some historical sites on post, learn about training and recreational activities, and gain a better perspective of what it is like to live and work at Fort Drum.

Col. Matthew Myer, Fort Drum garrison commander, welcomed the group at the 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Museum, and answered questions.

“Having an installation here in the North Country is a wonderful gift, and it is supremely a blessing for us to be here among all these great communities,” he said.

As the Army celebrates 250 years of service, the 10th Mountain Division (LI) is honoring its own history this year. It was 40 years ago when the division reactivated and called Fort Drum its home.

Jim Capone was among those newly arrived Soldiers at Fort Drum, assigned to the 10th Medical Battalion in 1985.

Capone lived in Watertown before he enlisted in the Army and was first stationed in West Germany.

“Ironically, they brought me back here,” he said. “So, I knew what this place was like going all the way back to Camp Drum. That’s why I wanted to come on the tour and see how it looks now.”

Capone recalled being housed in old World War II buildings on South Post, and having to march everywhere they went.

Now living in Syracuse, Capone said he has remained current about the 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum from news reports, but this was his first time back on post.

“Even before I joined the Army, I took a job here out of high school back in 1981 helping the masons build some brick buildings,” he said. “So, it’s really nice to see how much has changed.”

Nathan Hilliard also made his first visit back to Fort Drum, having served with 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, from 2006 until 2012.

“We moved back to the area, and I wanted to show my kids where it all began,” he said. “This is my first time stepping foot back on post.”

Hilliard said he spent a lot of time on deployment while stationed here, so the tour gave him a different perspective of the installation he never saw before.

“Everything seems to have changed,” he said. “It’s only been about 10 years, but so much stuff is new and so much is different than when I was last here.”

He toured Memorial Park for the first time, where 10th Mountain Division (LI) units often conduct ceremonies.

“All of our ceremonies were on the field behind Magrath (Sports Complex),” Hilliard said. “I mean, during my time here it was just constantly being deployed, so we didn’t really get to put our footprint in. But seeing it now, I like the way everything looks.”

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Photo Captions:

1 - Community members learn about the Mountain Training Group complex at Fort Drum and the courses that cadre provide service members April 29 during the Around and About Fort Drum Tour. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

2 - Capt. Kendall Woodard, 10th Mountain Division (LI) Public Affairs, guides visitors through Hays Hall and highlights the history displayed throughout the division headquarters April 29 during the Around and About Fort Drum Tour. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

3 - Kent Bolke, 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Museum director, provides a historical perspective of the installation and the division April 29 during the Around and About Fort Drum Tour. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

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