Press Release

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Community tour offers ‘then and now’ glimpse into life at Fort Drum

FORT DRUM, N.Y. -- Community members explored the rich history of Fort Drum and the 10th Mountain Division (LI), while also getting an insider’s view of life on post during an installation tour on Oct. 22.

Most mornings for Soldiers begin with physical training, so the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade’s Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F) facility was an ideal first stop on the Around and About Fort Drum Tour.

Mark Taysom, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade H2F program director, welcomed visitors inside where Soldiers were enrolled in a 40-hour Basic Fitness Leader course in which lessons include strength and conditioning, injury prevention, functional movement patterns, and coaching development.

“It’s our award-winning class where Soldiers learn about every domain of human performance,” he said.

Taysom said the H2F program provides Soldiers with support and easy access to a team of strength and conditioning coaches, occupational therapists, registered dietitians, athletic trainers, and cognitive performance specialists.

“The secret sauce with H2F is that we’re all here together in this one building,” he said. “So, there’s the holistic approach where we look at the Soldiers from all different angles.”

Taysom shared a story about a Soldier who was in good physical condition, and trained hard with the H2F staff, but he kept falling short on his two-mile run goal. Taysom said they were able to determine a rare mineral deficiency that was easy to correct.

“He was able to improve his run time by four minutes in just a couple of weeks, without having to do anything else regarding his training or diet,” he said. “That really shows the kind of impact H2F can have.”

Taysom said the Army H2F program is the largest initiative in sports medicine, and it has been a game-changer for Soldiers.

“H2F is changing the culture and changing the narrative of exercise, human performance, and well-being for Soldiers,” he said.

Rebecca Shultz, a Carthage resident, said she was impressed by the level of training Soldiers can receive at these facilities.

“It’s really amazing to see how they are helping Soldiers from a holistic point of view so that they are well-rounded and their needs are taken care of physically, mentally and spiritually,” she said. “I think it’s wonderful that this is available for our Soldiers.”

The tour group visited the 1st Lt. John A. McCown Mountain Training Group area and met with 1st Sgt. Dan Fields to learn about training opportunities for 10th Mountain Division (LI) Soldiers.

“We are the advocates, the subject-matter experts, and the eyes and ears for the 10th Mountain Division when it comes to cold-weather training, mountaineering training, and light infantry tactics,” he said. “This is, essentially, our division’s schoolhouse where they can learn about their craft. It enables the division to execute their mission, wherever they go, a little bit more effectively and efficiently.”

The MTG cadre instructs Soldiers on the Air Assault Course, Rappel Master Course, Mountain Operations Course, and other cold-weather and mountaineer courses.

Attendees figuratively traveled back in time, before there was a 10th Mountain Division or Fort Drum, during a tour of LeRay Mansion. Dr. Laurie Rush, Fort Drum Cultural Resources manager, provided insight into the original landowners and how they contributed to the development of this part of the North Country.

The tour group also visited The Peak, which serves as Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation’s premiere event venue for military and civilian functions such as business meetings, formal dinners, informational sessions, and community gatherings. The Peak features three conference rooms, six ballrooms, The Pinnacle Lounge and The Ridge Sports Bar and meeting space.

They also received a sneak peak of the new coffeehouse before its grand opening. Abby Shutter, The Peak manager, said it will offer a great selection of coffee, seasonal beverages, and snacks.

“After seeing what Soldiers are doing to improve their physical fitness and military skills, ending the tour at The Peak showed community members what FMWR does to support service members and their families in a more social environment,” she said. “First with the renovations, new name, and new look at The Peak, and now with the addition of the much-anticipated coffeehouse, Sip of Glory, we welcome the entire Fort Drum community to stop in and see what we have to offer.”

Shultz said her daughter lives on post, but she had never seen much of Fort Drum before the tour.

“Fort Drum has always been in our backyard, but I know nothing about it or where anything is,” she said. “I thought it was time for me to learn. I was a teacher for many years and now I work for the town of Wilna. A lot of community members come in and want to know certain things about Fort Drum, and I feel I can be more helpful now.”

Shultz said it was a perfect day for the tour, too, with fall foliage at its peak.

“You couldn’t have asked for a better day, with all the colors everywhere you look,” she said. “Especially at LeRay Mansion, there were views everywhere. I am so happy I signed up for the tour.”

Liz Bonisteel said she has attended a few functions at The Peak before, but she had never seen much of Fort Drum until now.

“It was so interesting to see how lovely it is, and how special it is to the military community,” she said. “I mean, it sounds pretty trite to say, but it is awesome. It really is a city all in itself. You almost want an aerial view just to see everything.”

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Media with questions regarding this press release should contact Fort Drum Public Affairs, Katie Wright, 315-772-9043 or katherine.e.wright12.civ@army.mil

Photo Captions –

Tour 1: Community members learn about the cargo loads that Soldiers use to practice sling load operations during the Air Assault Course at the 1st Lt. John A. McCown Mountain Training Group. This one of several stops Oct. 22 during the Around and About Fort Drum Tour. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

Tour 2: Mark Taysom, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F) program director, welcomes visitors into the Owl’s Den as they tour the Falcon H2F facility at Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield on Oct. 22 during the Around and About Fort Drum Tour. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

Tour 3: Abby Shutter, The Peak manager, offers community members a sneak peek of the Sip of Glory coffeehouse inside The Peak on Oct. 22 during the Around and About Fort Drum Tour. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)