

THE JRTC AND FORT POLK

# GUARDIAN

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## Inside:

- Housing Assistance Office .... page 1
- Celebrating NCO of the Year .... page 3
- Quality of life conference .... page 5
- Unit Ministry Team training .... page 6



## QUALITY OF LIFE LINES OF EFFORT



HOUSING



CHILD CARE



HEALTH CARE



SPOUSE  
EMPLOYMENT

# Army Housing supports interests of Soldiers, Families

By **ANGIE THORNE**  
Public Affairs Office

FORT POLK, La. — Home is a roof over your head, but it's also a place to relax and recharge before heading out to face the world again.

Between frequent moves, deployments and training, that can be especially true for Soldiers and their Families. For that reason, one of the last things they should have to think about are housing issues.

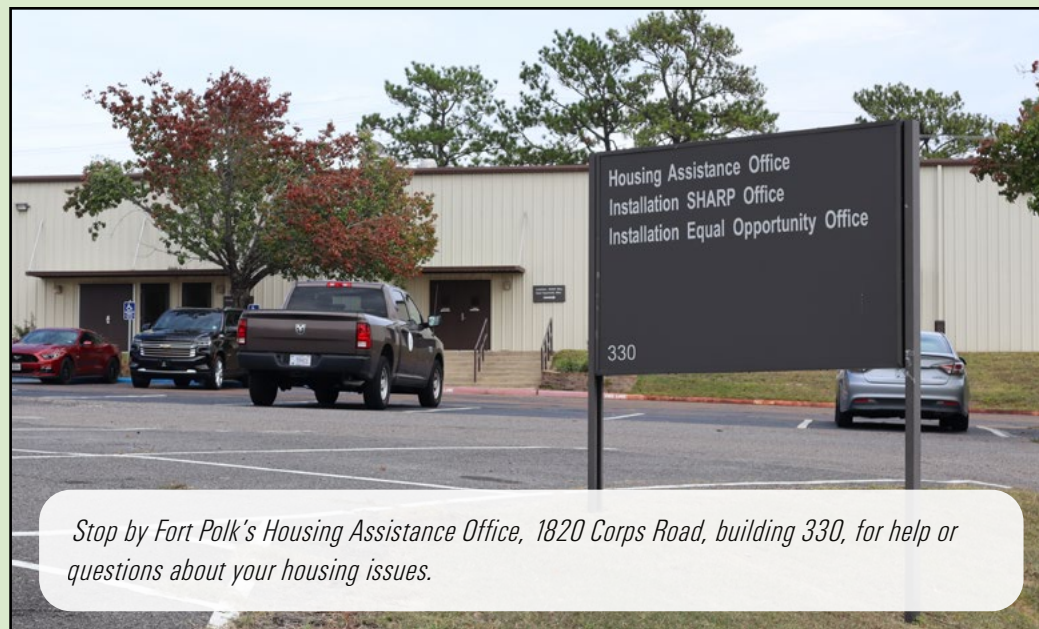
Fort Polk's Housing Assistance Office, 1820 Corps Road, building 330, helps deal with those housing challenges and provides government oversight for all Fort Polk housing. The office is run by Betty Beinkemper, Fort Polk's housing manager.

The office's oversight includes barracks for Soldiers, Corvias housing, InterContinental Hotels Group and concerns Soldiers and Families may encounter on Fort Polk or when renting off post.

"We are the advocate for Soldiers and Families on and off the installation when it comes to housing issues with Corvias, local real estate agents and more," said Beinkemper.

Wesley Fairchild, installation housing manager, said the office's first priority is to provide the best possible service, support and housing available to Soldiers and Family members, as well as civilians living in Fort Polk housing.

"We strive to take care of all Sol-



*Stop by Fort Polk's Housing Assistance Office, 1820 Corps Road, building 330, for help or questions about your housing issues.*

diers and tenants equally, regardless of rank or position," Fairchild said.

Fairchild inspects a house when a tenant moves out, as does Corvias.

"I look at the condition of the unit, its serviceability, the structure and anything that could affect environmental, health or safety," Fairchild said.

A copy of his report is sent to Corvias and paired with their maintenance inspection to address between-occupancy maintenance. Once maintenance is completed, Fairchild inspects the home again before a new tenant moves in.

Conflict resolution is another service the Army Housing Office offers.

"If there is an unresolved issue between the Soldier and Corvias, we act as the liaison between

them, based on the situation. We can assist the two sides coming together for the best viable solution," Fairchild said. "That could include anything from the property manager fixing an ongoing maintenance issue to the Soldiers violating the lease agreement. Those are not the only scenarios, but we are there to help regardless of the situation. We strive for the ideal outcome that ends with both parties happy with the solution."

The concerns of housing residents are a priority for the Housing Assistance office.

"We work with the resident, Corvias, U.S. Army Garrison and unit leadership to resolve any issues," Beinkemper said.

Fairchild said his most important task is taking care of Soldiers and their Families.

Please see **Housing**, page 2



## JRTC and Fort Polk

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Joint Readiness Training Center  
and Fort Polk

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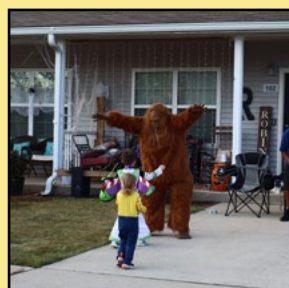
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For more information on Fort Polk units and happenings visit the [@JRTCandFortPolk](https://www.facebook.com/JRTCandFortPolk) Facebook page.



**Cover photo:** The Fort Polk community were out in droves as Halloween night ushered in witches, superheroes, Barbies and monsters — especially hairy ones. Kids and Families wandered neighborhoods and gathered candy, and monsters got hugs accordingly. (Photo by Angie Thorne)



# Housing

Continued from page 1

"I get a true sense of satisfaction when they are happy and taken care of," Fairchild said.

Garland Richardson, installation housing manager, said the office is a source of information in reference to all things housing.

"It's information that Corvias may not be able to provide such as a Soldier's basic allowance for housing. Some Soldiers don't even know about BAH or if they qualify," Richardson said. "The housing office is here to advise them, answer their questions and even assist them with completing the required documents to request BAH authorization."

In addition to inspecting privatized housing on Fort Polk, housing inspectors like Richardson also inspect the barracks.

"This is to ensure our service members and their Families are living in housing that is adequately maintained and meeting the standards set forth by the Army," Richardson said. "The services we provide contributes greatly to the health, welfare and quality of life for our men and women in uniform, their Family members and the Fort Polk community."

Beinkemper said one of her biggest goals is to clear the way for military Families moving to Fort Polk to make their transition smooth.

"Often, as soon as they get their household goods delivered, the Soldier is headed to the box (Fort Polk's training area) for training. I want them to have the best home that we (Corvias and Army housing as a partnership) can provide for them," Beinkemper said. "We need to offer them the peace of mind that comes with their Family living in a safe and adequate home. Those kinds of worries should be the last thing our Soldiers are concerned about while training for the mission."

For more information call the Housing Assistance Office at (337) 531-6000.



*Garland Richardson, Housing Assistance Office installation housing manager, explains some of the many things he looks for when inspecting a home. The list includes checking for working water, lighting, appliances and water heaters.*



*Before*



*Work in progress in Palmetto Terrace.*

*Under construction*



*Finished*



# Fort Polk combat medic **wins** Noncommissioned Officer of Year

By JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES  
BJACH PAO

FORT POLK, La. — Sgt. Garrett Paulson, a combat medic from Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, returned to the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk as the U.S. Army Noncommissioned Officer of the Year following the inaugural Best Squad Competition Sept. 29 through Oct. 7 at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

According to [www.army.mil/bestsquad/](http://www.army.mil/bestsquad/), the week-long competition assessed each squad on technical and tactical proficiencies, ability to work as a disciplined and cohesive team, as well as their performance in a multitude of fitness, combat and weapons qualification lanes and scenarios.

Afterwards, the top four teams traveled to Washington D.C. to conduct board-style interviews that tested their knowledge and professionalism in front of top Army leaders.

Paulson attributes his success to his unit leadership, his Best Squad team and the opportunities afforded to him while stationed at JRTC and Fort Polk.

Going into the competitions at the regional and major command level, Paulson didn't initially know the event was also for Soldier and NCO of the Year.

"During the Best Squad Competition, we were graded individually and as a team on every event," Paulson said. "The difference between this year's Soldier and NCO of the Year and previous years is that they all came in by themselves. They didn't have a team. They were graded on Soldier tasks, battle drills and individual fitness. Everything was based on what they could do by themselves. This year the squad element not only focused on what we could do as individuals but how do our teams react to that? How do you keep your teams motivated throughout the competition? It was interesting."

For Paulson, his team was always at the forefront of his mind, and motivation going into the competition.

"I wanted to win at U.S. Army Medical Command and move on to the Army competition for them," Paulson said. "Two weeks before the competition at Fort Bragg I was digging for the internal motivation and mental intensity to compete at the Army level. I had personal motivators for the regional and MEDCOM competitions; first for my family, next for the team and a personal grudge about moving beyond my past."

Paulson had something to prove to himself in the beginning.

By the time he got to the Army competition, he was there as part of a team, with nothing to prove. It was all about putting everything out there to get top four.

Sgt. Conner Crisafi, a combat medic at Evans

*Sgt. Garrett Paulson, U.S. Army Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, is a combat medic assigned to Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.*



JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES/BJACH PAO

Army Community Hospital, Fort Carson, Colorado, was a member of the U.S. Army Medical Command Best Squad team with Paulson.

"Sgt. Paulson is the best teammate a Soldier could ask for. He is someone I can always count on," Crisafi said. "If I'm having any issues at all, he is there for me. When I started these competitions I was a specialist. Now I am an NCO and Sgt. Paulson is who I emulate. Sgt. Paulson is a great leader, teammate and friend."

Crisafi said Paulson deserves to be the NCO of the Year.

"In my opinion, Sgt. Paulson is the best of the best," he said. "He was always able to provide 'hip pocket training' on the things he learned throughout his career. He always upheld all the Army Values, and embodied leadership attributes, competencies, and the NCO Creed. During all the competitions and hard days of training, he always kept our team's morale high."

Paulson and Crisafi's team was unique be-

cause they were comprised of Soldiers from across MEDCOM.

"The majority of the teams we competed against were organic to one unit. We are in an interesting position," Paulson said. "It would have been extremely challenging to put together a group of five people from one military treatment facility logistically. And the impact on patient care would have been detrimental to our mission."

Paulson said his success is a direct reflection on his team and their ability to come together.

Spc. Callen Workman, an orthopedic technician at Kenner Army Health Clinic, Fort Lee, Virginia, was a member of the MEDCOM Best Squad Team and said Paulson is the best NCO he's ever worked with.

"I can't think of anyone else who is a better representation of what it means to be an NCO and the Army NCO of the Year," Callen said. "Training and competing with him as my team

Please see **Wins**, page 4



# Wins

Continued from page 3

leader was my favorite experience in the army so far. He's shown us all how to communicate and execute effectively under stressful and complicated conditions."

Workman said Paulson's confidence never wavered.

"As a junior enlisted member of the team, he helped me learn what I could bring to the table," he said. "He showed the utmost respect to all of us while doing it. He knows what he's doing and far outperformed his competition."

Paulson believes his team was the top team out there.

"I truly believe we were a top four team," he said. "Our team was great and I think everyone underestimated the MEDCOM team. Barring an injury, I think we could have won it all. Even the Soldier who was injured won the junior enlisted marksmanship award for the entire competition."

BJACH and JRTC and Fort Polk prioritize training, readiness, and opportunities for Soldiers to excel.

"I think being stationed at the JRTC and Fort Polk gave me the platform to succeed," he said. "BJACH and MEDCOM specifically gave me the opportunity."

The competition helped his team prepare for what a combat medic is required to do outside of a hospital setting.

"The scenarios we encountered required us to be technical and tactical experts," Paulson said. "Three of the five of us had only ever served in a hospital. The competition highlights that 68Ws (Army combat medical specialists) are much more versatile than we are often given credit for."

Paulson wanted to rally his fellow Soldiers at BJACH.

"I promised everyone at BJACH that I was going to win," he said. "I didn't know what I was going to win, but I told them I wasn't coming back without at least one big win for them, the hospital and for MEDCOM."

Paulson said he couldn't have done it without the support of his unit.

"There were so many people involved who supported me throughout this competition. From the commander and command sergeant major to some of our most junior Soldiers who supported me whether they realized it or not," he said. "Others had to pick up the slack while I was off training and competing. I want them to see that Fort Polk offers the best training environment that I've ever seen. The number of schools and training they are willing to send you to, if you want it, is unreal. I was hoping people could see me and know they can pursue these opportunities and that our unit will support it."

Paulson said based on talking to others

throughout the competition and across the Army there is no better place than JRTC and Fort Polk for Soldiers to build their resume and enhance their careers.

Sgt. 1st Class Timothy McCoolle, senior enlisted advisor to the deputy commander of nursing at Reynolds Army Health Clinic, Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and member of the MEDCOM team, said the best squad competition with Paulson was the highlight of his career.

"When I first met Sgt. Paulson after the regional competition, he knew deep inside that he was going to go all the way," he said. "He would tell us he was competing to win it all. I believe that confidence helped the team realize what we were capable of and helped us win at MEDCOM and give 100% at the Department of the Army level. Besides his determination to succeed, he deserves this title, NCO of the Year, because he truly is a great NCO. He's a very confident, competent and caring NCO that accomplishes his mission and has the welfare of his squad as a priority. He took every opportunity he could to train our squad and improve the team."

McCoolle learned a lot from Paulson.

"I've been in the clinical setting for a few years now and my tactical skills weren't as good as Sgt. Paulson's," McCoolle said. "As the squad leader, I would rely on his expertise for those situations. He taught me what determination and proper preparation can achieve and has inspired me. I hope to stay friends with Sgt. Paulson after all of this is done."

Paulson is unsure exactly what his future holds as the NCO of the Year.

"I know I'm going to be a little busy," he

said. "I know there are plans being made. I don't want to guess at what that is, but I am excited."

Paulson doesn't know what it means for his career in the long term either.

"For me, personally, I'm going to look for my next mountain," he said. "I think when you accomplish something this significant you will lose all momentum if you don't shift quickly to something else. I am shifting quickly to the Expert Field Medical Badge, then I might slow down a little for the holidays, and hopefully by then will know what the Army has instore for me."

Paulson wants to help others and share his experiences with anyone who will listen.

"With all of the engagements I'll be doing over the next few months on some pretty large platforms, I'm going to take the opportunity to talk about mental health stuff," he said. "Your defining moments aren't generally your darkest moments. They aren't around forever, and once you work through it there is almost always something better on the other side."

Paulson is at peace with his past.

He said teamwork and leadership are what the Army is all about.

"You've got to be able to rely on the people around you and trust that they have your best interests in mind," he said. "I've had a lot of good conversations with a lot of senior members of the military since winning NCO of the Year that may have reenergized my focus. There are things I can do as an NCO that will positively affect Soldiers lives and careers that I can't do if I follow the plan I was considering before I earned this prestigious honor."

**Interested in helping Army Community Hospital, Bayne-Jones improve YOUR patient experience?**

Join the **Patient and Family Partnership Council (PFPC)**

**How can you help the council?**

When you or your family member visited our one of our clinics, did you think there were things we could have done better?

Do you have specific suggestions that would improve patients' experiences?

Do you have ideas about the kind of information that would be helpful to receive prior to a hospital visit?

If you are interested in joining or for more information:

Please contact us at the

Patient Advocacy Link:

[Usarmy.polk.medcom-bjach.list.patient-advocate@health.mil](mailto:Usarmy.polk.medcom-bjach.list.patient-advocate@health.mil)

(POC: BJACH Patient Advocate 531-3880/531-3628)

**We Work Best When We Work Together!**



# Conference highlights quality of life at Fort Polk

By **CHUCK CANNON**  
Public Affairs Office

FORT POLK, La. – Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk leadership hosted a quality of life conference Oct. 29 at the installation's Warrior Center.

More than 100 Soldiers, Family members and Department of the Army civilians attended the conference which highlighted advancements made in the JRTC and Fort Polk's quality of life, as well as a look ahead at other projects slated for the post identified as one of four Army installations to receive special quality of life improvements.

"We had great participation from our units, chain of command, spouses and community," Col. Sam Smith, Fort Polk garrison commander, said. "We have made great strides in quality of life programs."

Brig. Gen. David W. Gardner, commander, JRTC and Fort Polk, shared with those in attendance his quality of life priorities: education, housing, childcare, health care, Army spouse employment and Family Morale, Welfare and Recreation. They support his priorities: care for people, build readiness and succeed in JRTC and Fort Polk campaigns.

Presentations were given by the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation, the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, the Directorate of Public Works, and Housing, to include privatized accompanied housing and barracks.

"We are committed to improving quality of life initiatives for our Soldiers, Families, Retirees and community," Smith said. "Critical initiatives we continue to prioritize are barracks, family housing, childcare and development, on-base shopping and services, employment and recreation."

Breakout sessions after each presentation allowed groups of five to eight attendees the opportunity to discuss the specific areas and come up with suggestions for improvements.

The groups then shared their suggestions with leadership, who acknowledged the suggestions and promised to see which might be viable.

"We received some good feedback and are reviewing to determine how we can prioritize the ideas, programs and initiatives with the resourcing," Smith said.

This is the second quality of life conference held at Fort Polk.



*During the Oct. 29 quality of life conference, Soldiers, Family members and Department of the Army civilians held breakout sessions after each presentation to discuss and suggest areas of improvement.*



CHUCK CANNON/EGUARDIAN



# Unit Ministry Teams on Fort Polk congregate to train

By Spc. KELLY ACEVEDO  
Public Affairs Office

FORT POLK, La. — The chaplain corps is an integral part of the Army. Chaplains aid Soldiers in need of support, emotional guidance and spiritual challenges. Their help is not limited to Soldiers; chaplains support military families as well. Unit Ministry Teams across the Army are crucial to winning the wars of our nation. This month, UMTs across Fort Polk gathered for hands-on training in live scenarios that UMTs face in battle.

The UMT at the Joint Readiness Training center's Operations Group organized the field training exercise for UMT's on Fort Polk to develop operational religious support readiness and capability. Chaplain (Maj.) Erik Alfson and his team of religious affairs specialists noncommissioned officers prepared two months in advance.

The exercise was designed to improve the confidence of chaplains and religious affairs specialists, estimate prioritization of religious support in real life scenarios and reassess land navigation and communications in an operational environment.

"A lot of our training is done in chapels through power points, so it's great to get out in the field," Alfson said.

UMTs are essential for missions within their units. They work alongside commanders, informing them on Soldiers needs on a need-to-know basis "Commanders recognize chaplains serve as a sensor. The great thing we see here at JRTC is that UMTs are actively employed by their commanders to be able to keep a finger on the pulse of the unit and provide care to Soldiers," Alfson said.

Alfson and his team began the exercise with a demonstration on how UMTs should prepare for land navigation. They introduced a new approach to effectively get to destinations which began with how a map is taken care of.

UMTs folded their maps to focus on the area they would cover. They then laminated their maps with clear acetate covers and used cardboard cut outs as a base. Tape was used to seal the map in. Once finished, Soldiers were ready to plot their points to begin the course.

The course consisted of four stations. Each station tested UMTs on their ability to support a unit down rage.

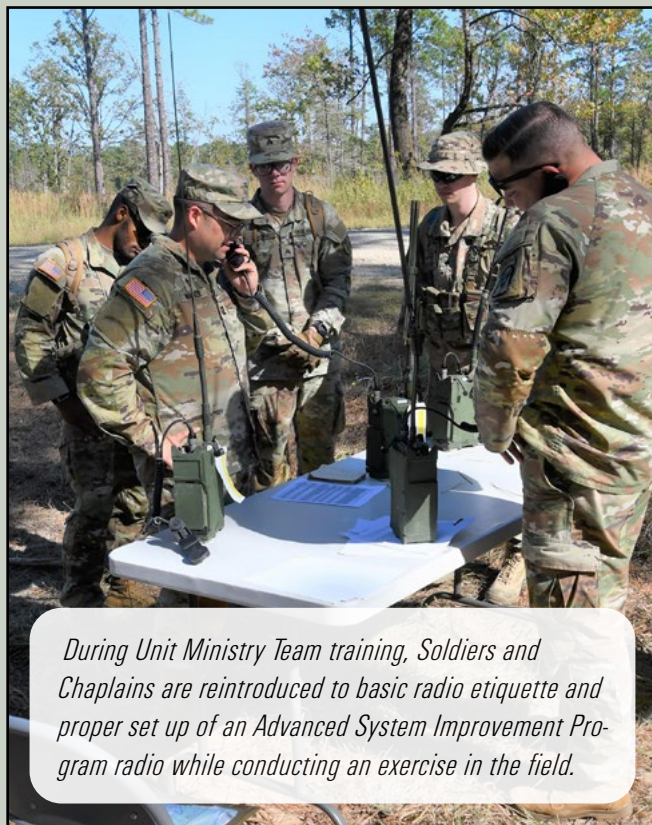
The first station was an advisement lane. This tested how UMTs advised the executive officer and refined their plan based on the scenario given to them.

The second station was a field service lane. UMTs needed to provide religious services, sacraments and religious rites according to their own faith and tradition.

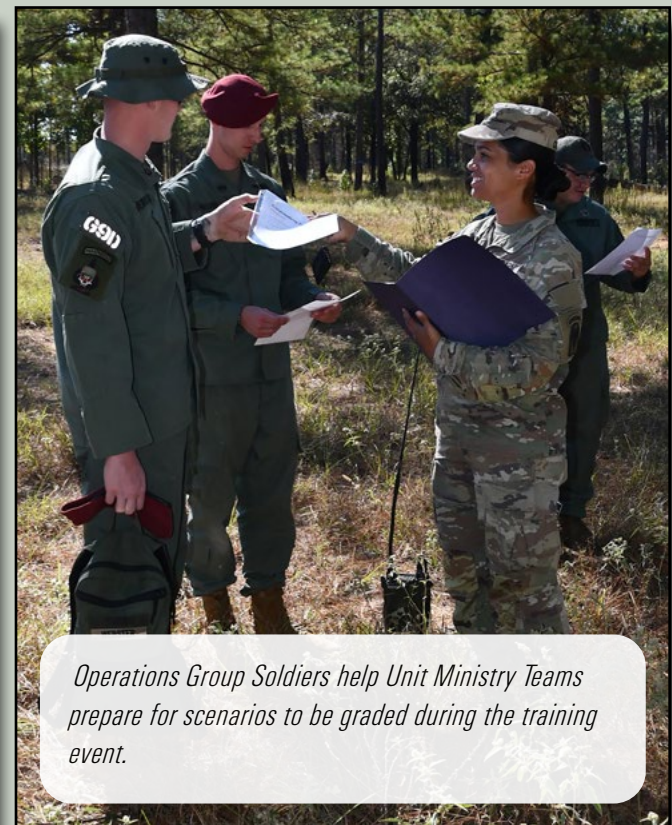
The third station was a counseling lane. UMTs were tested on how they assessed the needs of a unit that experienced numerous



*Fort Polk's Unit Ministry Team plot points before they begin a land navigation exercise during UMT training to improve navigation skills in the field Oct. 22.*



*During Unit Ministry Team training, Soldiers and Chaplains are reintroduced to basic radio etiquette and proper set up of an Advanced System Improvement Program radio while conducting an exercise in the field.*



*Operations Group Soldiers help Unit Ministry Teams prepare for scenarios to be graded during the training event.*

losses and how they triaged while identifying the needs of Soldiers. This lane helped improve confidentiality and assess UMTs ability to counsel Soldiers struggling emotionally and spiritually in a combat environment.

The fourth and final station was a communications and reporting lane. UMTs had to properly put an Advanced System Improvement Program radio into operation, send a religious support update to a brigade UMT and properly call up for medical evacuation. This reintroduction of radios was to improve radio etiquette and practice problem solving.

Upon completion of the course, the UMTs made their way back to the start line for an after action review. This discussion was to evaluate one another as a group, assess standards and present different approaches to better such

training for the future.

Alfson hopes this new approach to train helped UMT Soldiers develop priorities of religious support to deliver ministry at the right place at the right time and improve confidence.

"That's what they're trained to do — screen Soldiers and maintain confidentiality. Soldiers need to know that whenever they talk to a UMT, whatever they say is between them and that's valuable to chaplains because I can only talk to one person at a time, but my religious support specialist can help me assess needs," Alfson said.

Alfson hopes UMTs across the Army train in field environments to exercise tactical and operational skills. Integrating hands on training will only maximize UMTs efficiency when supporting Soldiers and units.



# Denning of IMCOM's Readiness Directorate wins Dellamonica Award

By **STEPHEN WARNS**  
Joint Base San Antonio Public Affairs

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas — Shane Denning, Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security Army Airfield manager at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, is the U.S. Army Installation Management Command representative to win the Army Materiel Command's 2021 Louis Dellamonica Award for Outstanding Personnel of the Year.

Denning, who has served as airfield manager for the past two years, said he was surprised to win the award presented in September.

The award honors outstanding work that contributes to the AMC mission.

"I was 100 percent surprised at winning the award," said Denning. "I had no idea I would win, much less be nominated. To be recognized for making that kind of a contribution in such a short amount of time is extremely humbling."

Mark Leslie, director of Fort Polk's DPTMS, nominated Denning for the award based on his leadership qualities.

"Shane understands and knows where to insert himself as a leader and when to let the very smart subject matter experts do their jobs," Leslie said. "To me, that's the essence of mission command."

"He has a clear vision, nested with the senior and garrison commander on how to best support the vital JRTC and Fort Polk mission. He instituted counseling, inventories, as well as leader and subordinate accountability, as well as a healthy reward and recognition program. Basically, he took this airfield from a performing and contributing member of the team to a new level of performance in regard to customer and employee satisfaction," Leslie added.

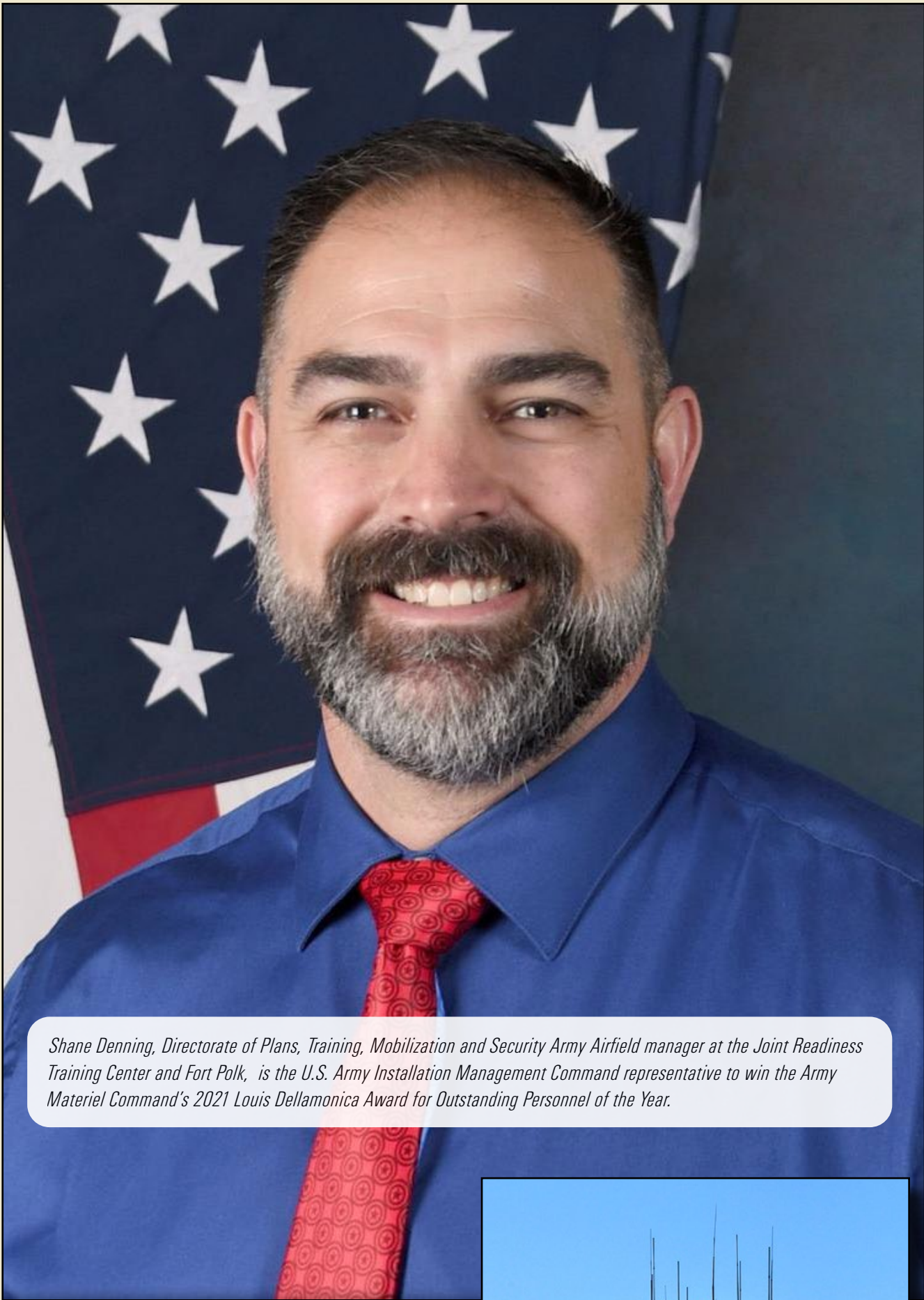
Denning praised the diverse work environment at Fort Polk.

"Ultimately, the recognition at the AMC level is insane, and it could open more professional opportunities for me in the future, but more importantly, it also tells everybody that we have some very solid leadership and managers at Fort Polk."

"There are so many opportunities for professional and personal growth based on the nature and diversity of the JRTC, and how we support IMCOM and the garrison. Winning the Dellamonica Award just highlights that," Denning added.

Nominees are judged on how their initiatives measurably improve their work environment and AMC's mission, how they motivate and inspire fellow employees to improve or increase the quality of their own work, and how well they are viewed by peers, subordinates and supervisors.

The award is named in honor of Louis Dellamonica, a general engineer whose 65-year career at Hawthorne Army Depot, Nevada, ex-



*Shane Denning, Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security Army Airfield manager at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, is the U.S. Army Installation Management Command representative to win the Army Materiel Command's 2021 Louis Dellamonica Award for Outstanding Personnel of the Year.*

emplified integrity, innovation, leadership and outstanding dedication to the AMC mission.

"I want to accentuate the importance and value of this award," said AMC commander Gen. Ed Daly, who presided over the awards ceremony at the command's headquarters in September. "This is a highly prestigious award and the individuals who receive it have demonstrated how important they are to our Army."

Daly thanked the recipients for "the great work you and your teams have done and continue to do for our Army and our nation. You make AMC what it is today."



*Fort Polk Army Airfield air control tower.*

STEPHEN WARNS/JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO

KEITH HOUIN/GUARDIAN



# Fort Polk hosts Heritage Family Reunion

By **CHUCK CANNON**  
Public Affairs Office

FORT POLK, La. — More than 80 years ago, as the United States prepared to join the Allied powers in the World War II battle against Germany and the Axis powers, Army leaders determined the need to develop tactics before heading to Europe for what promised to be a lengthy campaign against a well-trained foe.

To facilitate the training that required a rural environment and thousands of acres, those leaders looked to central Louisiana and its sandy, hilly, forested terrain.

However, it would require removing hundreds of families from those same lands and relocating them.

To honor those families, who often gave up all of their personal possessions for the good of the country, the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk hosted its 15th Annual Fall Heritage Reunion Oct. 29 at the installation's Main Post Chapel.

Brig. Gen. David W. Gardner, commander, JRTC and Fort Polk, welcomed the more than 50 family members and friends who attended the event.

"We are all proud to serve at an installation with such a rich history," Gardner said. "An installation that for more than 80 years has been at the forefront of the Army's premier training, readying our nation's Soldiers to face our enemies."

In January 1941 the Federal government exercised its authority to acquire land that would eventually pave the way for Camp Polk and Peason Ridge. In the process, more than 300 families were deeply impacted, defining their lives for generations.

"It is important to recognize that those sacrifices would lay the foundation of what would become the Army's Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk," Gardner said. "We know that Fort Polk has been of vital importance to our Army and our nation during World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Panama, Operation Desert Storm, the Balkans, and most recently, in combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan."

The Joint Readiness Training Center provides relevant, realistic training — a crucible experience. The Army is able to provide this training — training that has save countless American lives — because of the available lands here.

"For that we are indebted to you, the Heritage Families," Gardner said.

Gardner told those Family members in attendance that their roots — cemeteries, homestead foundations, favorite streams and groves — would always remain.

"They will never become shopping malls, man-made lakes or cul-de-sacs or townhouses," Gardner said, drawing a round of applause. "Our annual Heritage Day and the



CHUCK CANNON/ eGUARDIAN



Heritage Program will ensure we do not forget your sacrifices."

Bill Nash, president of the Heritage Reunion, said none of those who attended the event could understand what their forefathers went through.

"Some of them had to be removed by force," Nash said. "It was a difficult time, and I'm thankful Fort Polk has seen fit to honor those who gave up their homes and livelihoods."

Marvin Self, 95, visited relatives during his summers growing up. He remembered the area as being destitute.

"All we had to eat was what we raised," Self said. "There were no stores out here. You had to go all the way to Leesville to find a store."

When the Civilian Conservation Corps set up a camp in the area, Self said residents were able to see movies for the first time.

"I think about those times and I'm thankful I'm still alive," Self said. "Most of them have passed on and it's important we remind our kids what it was like back then."



*Brig. Gen. David W. Gardner, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general spoke at the Heritage Family Reunion Oct. 29 at Fort Polk's Main Post Chapel. Heritage families gathered to talk, remember and tour former homesteads.*





## Red Ribbon Week proclamation

*Fort Polk garrison commander, Col. Sam Smith, signed a proclamation for Red Ribbon Week Oct. 21. Red Ribbon Week is recognized Oct. 23-31 and is the oldest and largest drug prevention program in the nation. This year's theme was "Celebrate Life, Live Drug Free."*



## Thanking volunteers of quarter

*The volunteer of the quarter ceremony was held Nov. 2 at the Warrior Center. Military and civilian volunteers received certificates of appreciation for their hard work and volunteer efforts.*





# Mental Wellness in the Workplace

With many full-time employees dedicating at least 1/3 of their day to their jobs, creating healthy work habits and routines can be instrumental in supporting and increasing one's mental wellness. Below are a few helpful hacks for prioritizing a healthy mindset and lifestyle in the workplace.

## Create a Comfortable Work Environment

A comfortable and inviting workspace can be essential in easing anxiety and increasing productivity. Consider creating a warm environment by adding additional lighting with a small lamp if needed and choosing 2 or 3 personal items such as a picture of loved ones to personalize your space. If you are a remote or teleworker, ensure that you are implementing healthy working ergonomics by utilizing a designated work area and practicing healthy posture.



## Remain Active

Prioritizing physical movement during one's workday can be integral in increasing and supporting mental wellness by improving one's overall health. While it may be tempting to work through lunch on a busy day, consider going for a short walk or practicing stretching movements during breaks for work. In addition, electing to stand intermittently while working can reduce and alleviate pain, lower blood sugar and the risk of heart disease, and improve overall mood.



## Get Organized

When poor organization or an unclear vision exist, it is common to experience feelings of burnout or being overwhelmed. To combat this, be sure to maintain a clean and organized workspace. Implementing a work plan with daily goals and reminders, as well as using detailed and coordinated filing habits can be instrumental in promoting organization and increasing one's mental wellness.



## Maintain Connections

Feelings of solitude can often manifest when we fail to maintain valuable connections with others. Consider instituting weekly lunch breaks with a colleague or setting aside the first or last moments of your workday to check in with others. Maintaining connections can be instrumental in creating a support system for both yourself, and others who may be experiencing a difficult time.





# Welcome food **safety** as guest to Thanksgiving dinner

## PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

FORT POLK, La. — The holidays are here. That means decorations, fun gatherings and, of course, the delicious meal everyone looks forward to on Thanksgiving day.

However, with the season comes the holiday rush. Although people try to stay on track and manage their time wisely, it doesn't always happen. Striving to get everything done can be overwhelming. That's when the mishandling of food and food-borne diseases can occur. So this year, get ahead of the holiday chaos to ensure your loved ones eat a safe and delicious meal.

Here are a few tips to consider if you don't want to tackle an upset stomach after your holiday smorgasbord.

### **Proper ways to thaw a turkey:**

#### **(1) Turkey thawed in a fridge:**

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water after handling raw meat or poultry. This helps prevent the spread of bacteria and other foodborne illnesses. To prevent the spread of common conditions like the flu and common cold, you should also wash your hands before eating and after using the bathroom.

- Never leave a turkey out on the counter at room temperature to thaw. It's best if it is placed in a container in the refrigerator.

- Raw turkey should be stored in the freezer until you are ready to thaw it. Make sure your freezer is at zero degrees Fahrenheit or below. Don't store a turkey in a place where the temperature is not monitored, such as in a car trunk, a basement, the back porch, or in snow.

- Keep your turkey in its original wrapping and place it in a container before putting it in the refrigerator. The container will prevent the turkey's juice from dripping on other food.

- Allow about 24 hours of thawing for each 4 to 5 pounds of turkey.

- Turkey and other meat can remain in the refrigerator after being thawed and will last one to two days before cooking.

#### **(2) Turkey thawed in cold water:**

- Turkey should be in a leak-proof plastic bag before you place it in the sink. The bag will prevent the turkey's juice from spreading in the kitchen. It will also prevent the turkey from absorbing water, which can make your cooked turkey runny.

- Make sure your turkey is fully covered with cold tap water.

- Change the water every 30 minutes.

- Allow about 30 minutes of thawing for each pound of turkey.

- A turkey thawed in cold water must be cooked immediately after thawing.

#### **(3) Turkey thawed in a microwave:**

- Follow the microwave manufacturer's instructions for thawing turkeys.

- A turkey thawed in the microwave must be



cooked immediately after thawing.

### **Cooking a turkey and other foods in the same vicinity:**

- Handle your turkey the right way — clean, separate, cook and chill — to prevent the spread of bacteria.

- Cook your turkey and stuffing thoroughly, to 165 degrees Fahrenheit.

- If you plan to bake, do not eat raw dough or batter and use pasteurized eggs in dishes that call for raw eggs.

- All poultry should be cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit.

- Ground meat should be cooked to 160 degrees Fahrenheit.

- Keep raw meat, poultry and seafood separate from other food. Use respective cutting boards, plates and utensils for raw and cooked food. Never place cooked food back on the same plate or cutting board that held raw food.

### **Proper handling of cooked food:**

- If you're serving food that has been sitting out, be sure to reheat it to 165 degrees Fahrenheit. This is especially important for dishes like casseroles or turkey stuffing.

- Keep hot food hot and cold food cold. Hot foods should be kept at an internal temperature of 140 degrees Fahrenheit or above, while cold foods should be kept at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below. Be sure to also refrigerate leftovers promptly.

### **Preserving leftovers:**

- Refrigerate leftovers at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or colder within two hours of cooking to prevent food poisoning. Slice or divide big cuts of meat, such as a roast turkey, into small quantities for refrigeration so they can cool

quickly. Reheat all leftovers to at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit before serving.

- Cooked turkey and dishes made with turkey, such as a casserole, can be stored in the refrigerator for three to four days.

- Always refrigerate leftovers within two hours, or one hour if exposed to temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit (like a hot car or picnic).

### **Tips for pregnant woman to follow, but the best medical advice you can receive is from your doctor.**

- Do not eat or drink raw or unpasteurized milk and products made with it, such as soft cheeses. They can contain harmful germs, including listeria because they were contaminated during cheese-making. Do not eat soft cheeses such as queso fresco, brie, camembert, feta, goat cheese, or blue-veined cheese if they are made from raw or unpasteurized milk.

- Processed cheeses, cream cheese, mozzarella and hard cheeses are safer choices.

- Don't drink raw or unpasteurized juice and cider.

- Be careful with seafood. Do not eat smoked seafood that was sold refrigerated unless it is in a cooked dish, such as a casserole. Instead, choose shelf-stable smoked seafood in pouches or cans that do not need refrigeration.

- Avoid certain holiday beverages. Drinking any type of alcohol can affect your baby's growth and development and cause fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. Don't drink holiday punches and eggnogs that contain alcohol. Avoid eggnog entirely unless you know it doesn't contain alcohol and is pasteurized or made with pasteurized eggs and milk.



# Main Post Exchange hosts Halloween costume fashion show

The Fort Polk Main Exchange hosted a Halloween costume fashion show Oct. 22. Parents and children eager to show off their costumes before Halloween night signed up to walk the runway in an atmosphere of spooky and spirited fun. Winners included Matthew Fine (third place), Rigley Vance (second place) and Leon Meyer (first place). Prizes included gift cards up to \$50. The judges for the event were Garrison Command Sgt. Maj. Stephen Nielson, Michelle Myers, Exchange food court manager, and Tammar Tracey, Exchange general manager. The master of ceremonies for the fashion show was Tonya Yancey, Exchange main store manager.





# Proud mama, emotionally unprepared to say goodbye...

By JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES  
BJACH PAO

FORT POLK, La. — As moms and dads, we have the amazing opportunity to raise children. We have an obligation to provide a safe and secure environment for them. We house them, feed them, and try our best to teach them to be successful and productive members of society. We love them and nurture them and help them become the best humans they can be. It's our job to give them a moral compass to make good choices and to do what is right.

Over the years, as we've maneuvered through some of life's challenges, I would joke with my son that he didn't come with a manual. I admit I wasn't always the perfect mother. I know I have made my fair share of mistakes, but I did my best. I was there at every practice, every game, and every milestone. One thing that is certain, I love my son more than I've ever loved anyone or anything in my entire life.

From the moment my son was born, I realized what true love really was. I knew the moment I first held him in my arms that I would lay down my life for his if necessary. My son always came first. I used to joke with my husband that someday he'd be the center of attention again (I guess that time is now – watch out dude!).

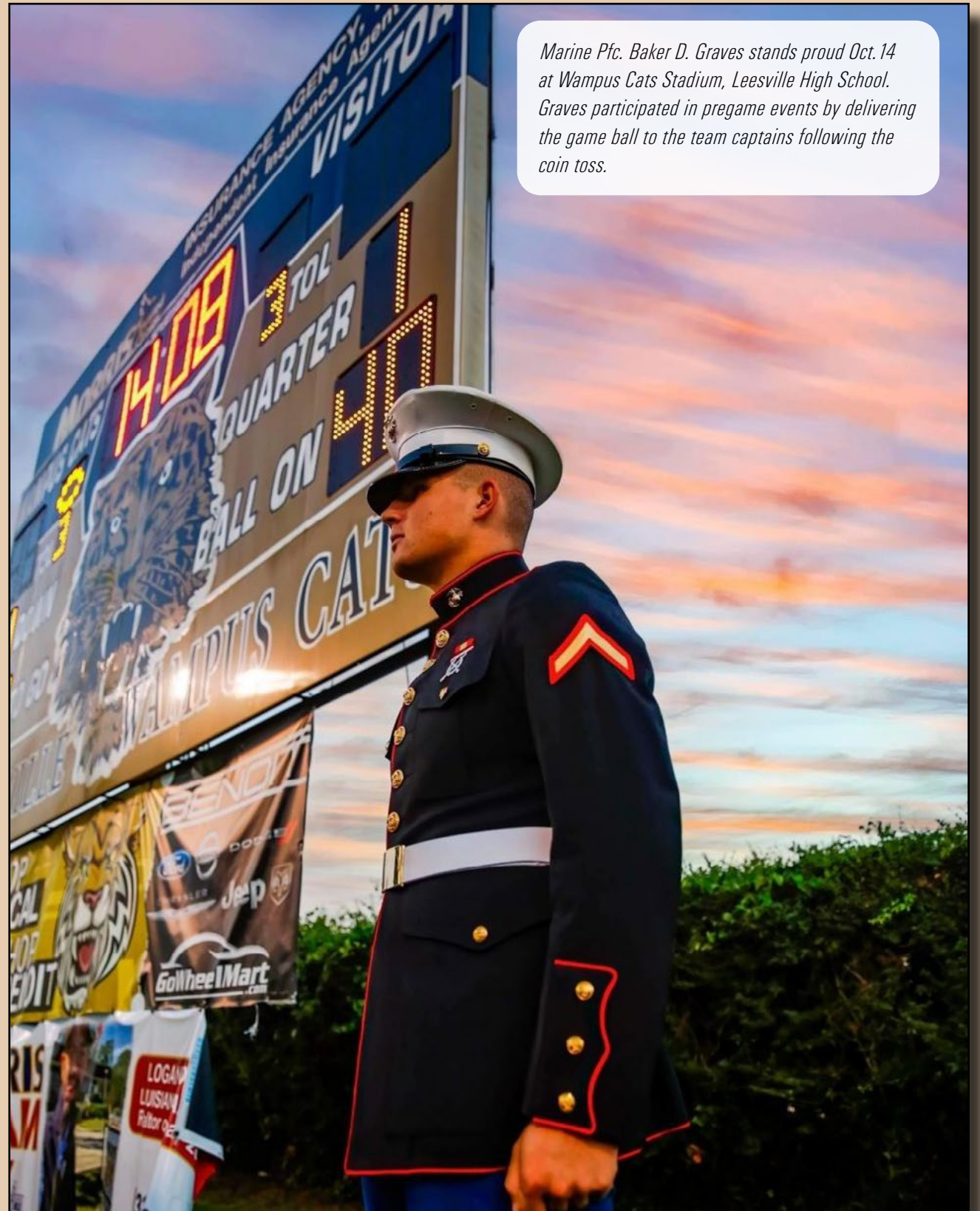
Life is an interesting thing. We make choices and follow paths that seemed like no big deal at the time. But then your kid follows that same path.

I joined the military after college. I was kind of floating around and thought I was lacking some discipline in my life. After a quick conversation with an Army recruiter, I was swearing in days later for a student loan repayment option on my contract.

I went to basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and was assigned there for my first duty station. I will always have fond memories of Fort Leonard Wood for several reasons, but primarily because I met my husband there.

We were both assigned to the 463rd Military Police Company. He was a military police officer, and I was a personnel specialist. I screwed up his promotion to specialist with a waiver by miscalculating the previous months waivers in May of 1997. This caused him to be erroneously promoted, then demoted back to private first class in the same week. He jokes that he married me as a form of payback. Twenty-six years later we're still together and happily married so maybe there was a little more to it than an error in the S-1 shop.

My husband joined the Army right after high school and spent 22 years on active duty. He deployed five times and he was a drill sergeant for three years. I spent two deployments alone, but once I had my son, he was my "ride



*Marine Pfc. Baker D. Graves stands proud Oct. 14 at Wampus Cats Stadium, Leesville High School. Graves participated in pregame events by delivering the game ball to the team captains following the coin toss.*

COURTESY RICKIE SMITH/HIGH OCTANE PHOTOGRAPHY

or die" deployment buddy. Whenever daddy had to go away, we had each other and that made it easier.

I remember one day when my son was about five years old he said, "Mommy, when I grow up I want to be a private." I remember asking him, "Don't you want to be a sergeant, like daddy, or a lieutenant like our friend Chris Housel (I think he's a major in the 16th Military Police Brigade now)?" I even tried to convince him to be a dentist, "You know you can be a Soldier and a dentist in the Army," I'd remind him hopefully.

But his answer was always the same, "No mama, I want to be a private."

And today he is a private; Marine Pfc. Graves.

For most of my son's life growing up, the military always seemed to be his path. He never wavered from his pursuit to join the mili-

tary. Even his extracurricular activities were based on his goal of a military career.

He loved being a scout and earned the rank of Eagle with the Boy Scouts of America. He continued with venture scouting and enjoyed high adventure trips to Philmont Scout Ranch and paddled over 60 miles at Swamp Base.

In high school, he went to state in powerlifting and played football because he said the team had the most intense workouts. He even did four years as a Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps cadet.

At the end of his junior year he said, "Mom, I'm joining the Marines!"

As an Army veteran, I tried to convince him in to join the Army. We discussed college and reserve officer training opportunities. I even tried to get him to think about dentistry

Please see **Goodbye**, page 14



# Goodbye

Continued from page 13

again. His mind was made up. He raised his right hand and spent one Saturday a month during his senior year working out and training with his recruiter and other “poolees” in Lake Charles, Louisiana. (According to <https://www.marineparents.com/>, a “poolee” is an individual who has already signed up to become a Marine but has not yet left for the 13 weeks of recruit training at boot camp in San Diego or Parris Island.)

You know what they don’t tell you in that parent manual they don’t give to you? Watching your child leave home is tough! Putting my son on a plane to go to the United States Marine Corps School of Infantry at Camp Geiger, North Carolina, was probably the hardest thing I’ve ever done in my life.

I served in the Army, and though I never deployed, I was prepared to go if asked to do so. I watched my husband deploy more times than I want to think about. It was difficult, but my mindset was that it was his job, he’s good at his job and he’ll be ok. Thankfully he was. He and every one of his Soldiers miraculously all came home safely from every deployment. They all have some scars, both physical and mental, but they all came home. Not all military families are so lucky. I spent four years working in the casualty assistance center at Fort Carson, Colorado, from 2009-2012 and I often think of those families whose Soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation.

Now my son is a Marine!

He’s an infantryman and hopes to become a special operator.

No one told me in that parent manual how much of an emotional roller coaster it is when your children grow up and move out to pursue their own lives.

We are so proud! He completed bootcamp at the U.S. Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina, in September. We were there for his graduation (that was disrupted slightly due to Hurricane Ian. We wore matching shirts and held up signs. It was incredible.

Bootcamp was tough; no phone calls or email. It was old school handwritten letters or nothing. But the MCRD Parris Island website and social media pages were very informative and so was our son’s recruiter. We knew when graduation was, that he’d get 10 days of leave and might have the opportunity to do some hometown recruiting (I think the Marines call it recruiter assistant duty).

What the website and social media pages didn’t say was how fast that leave would fly by.

That non-existent parent manual didn’t say how fast our son’s childhood would fly by either.

That roller coaster of emotions brought us

(don’t tell my husband I included him here) to tears as we left our one and only child at the airport to continue his training. Walking away from the terminal were two blubbering idiots, so proud, yet so sad because we honestly don’t know when we’ll get to see or hug him again. Worried, about him doing well in training, making the right choices and wondering where he’ll be stationed.

Stressed out thinking about world events and knowing he may be called to deploy at some point in the future.

You see, joining the military and knowing you may have to fight or go to war is one thing. Being married to a Soldier and knowing they may deploy is another. But watching your child follow in that same path is totally different.

Remember I said this is what he always wanted to do. You’d think I’d be mentally and emotionally prepared. You’d think my husband, a former drill sergeant, who trained countless Soldiers during his time on the trail would be prepared.

We weren’t! We’re not!

Deep down I know it will be all right.

I know my son will be an excellent Marine, a productive adult, and will accomplish any goal he sets for himself. I know some day he will make a great husband and father. But when I look at him I see a kid. I see my kid and it’s difficult to reconcile in my mind my kid is now an adult. He is a Marine and is out on his own adventure. This is his journey, one in which I

have no part.

I guess if I had to write that parental manual no one gets when their child is born, I would tell every parent:

Soak it in!

Enjoy every minute!

Take off early for the practices and games.

Go camping, take trips, spend time making memories with your children.

Don’t blink!

Because before you know it, it will be your child’s turn to leave the nest, to live their best lives and have their own adventures.

**Editor’s Note:** This story is dedicated to every parent, past, present, and future. Letting our children go is the most difficult part of childrearing that no one tells us about. To my own parents and in-laws, thank you supporting us throughout our military careers.

Every parent must let their children go and will face their own emotional challenge. But to my fellow military moms, as our children go off to serve our nation, we can take solace in the fact they are of among the very few willing to stand up for and preserve our freedom. Thank you for raising them and letting them shoulder that burden for our country.

Jean Graves is the Public Affairs Officer at Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital. The views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the United States Government, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Army, the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, or Bayne-Jones Army

## PROTECT YOURSELF!



### It’s safe to get your flu and COVID vaccine at the same time.

TRICARE.mil/flu



Did you know it’s safe to get your seasonal flu shot and COVID-19 vaccination or booster at the same time? Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital patients can schedule an appointment to get their recommended vaccines using the MHS GENESIS patient portal or by contacting (337) 531-3011.



Throngs of **trick-or-treaters** enjoy thrills, chills Halloween night





# Exceptional Family Member Program hosts Halloween **bash**

Fort Polk's Army Community Service hosted a Spooktacular Boo Bash Oct. 21 for members of the Fort Polk community's Exceptional Family Member Program.



COURTESY EFMP



Welcome to the U.S. Army Enterprise EFMP!

## The **HOW TO** Guide for Using E-EFMP

**Step 1:** Go to the E-EFMP website: <https://EFMP.army.mil>. Service Member creates a new E-EFMP account using DS Login. Two-factor authentication used; enter the six-digit code sent to your email address to finish logging into the system.

**Step 2:** Navigate to "EFMP Actions" tab and select "Begin New Package".  
*\*Family members are not able to initiate EFMP Actions. Must be initiated by the Service Member.*

**Step 3:** Select the appropriate EFMP Action: EFMP Enrollment, EFMP Renewal, or Family Member Travel Screening (FMTS). Select FMTS ONLY if you have Assignment Instructions (AI) or Request for Orders (RFO).

**Step 4:** Answer all prompts and questions, do not leave areas blank. For Enrollment or Renewal, select which family member or members the package is for. For FMTS, complete questions and prompts for all family members.

**Step 5:** Select Submit Package once completed. For FMTS, a Digital Signature is required.

### Additional Information

- Each package submitted displays an ID, associated installations, current status, and a button to access the application.
- A "History" icon available for each package to access the full package history from start to finish.
- You will need to create a DS Logon. Please visit the link below to create one:
  - <https://myaccess.dmdc.osd.mil/identitymanagement/registration.do?execution=e1s1>
- You must also make sure your Milconnect is updated.

**For E-EFMP Assistance, Please Contact:**

**EFMP Family Support:** (337) 531-7456/2840 -or- **Medical EFMP:** (337) 531-3002





**End of soccer season**

*The Fort Polk Child and Youth Services sports program soccer season came to an end Oct. 29 as Family members watched their soccer players compete one last time on the overcast day. Muddy fields didn't put a damper on the fun as games were concluded, picnics enjoyed and awards handed out.*



ANGIE THORNE/GUARDIAN



**Haunted house horrors**

*Fort Polk's Child and Youth Services hosted a haunted house Oct. 29 and 31 at the Warrior Fitness Center. Screams of fear were in line with the spirit of the event as the Fort Polk community wandered through darkened halls filled with scenes from their worst nightmares.*



ANGIE THORNE/GUARDIAN



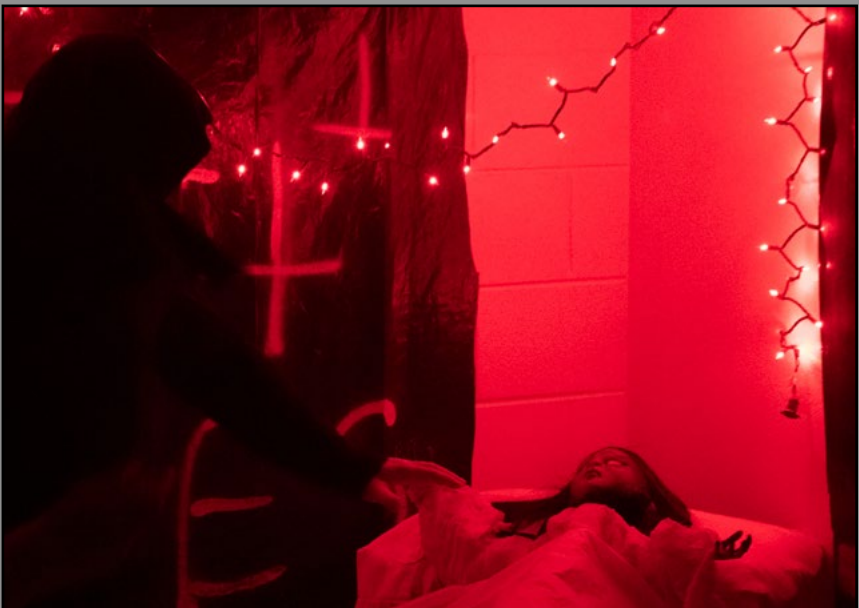


# Engineers eagerly embark on eerie Halloween efforts, eek!

Fort Polk's 46th Engineer Battalion went all out for Halloween fun Oct. 27 with a trunk-or-treat and a haunted house built by the engineers for their Soldiers and Families to enjoy.



COURTESY 46th ENGINEER BATTALION







JEFF ENGLAND/PAO

### Food court ribbon cutting

There's a new choice when it comes to eating lunch on Fort Polk. The grand opening of "Get2Crackin" took place Nov. 1 at the Main Post Exchange food court. Now you can enjoy feeding your hunger with seafood galore.






**ARMY COMMUNITY SERVICE**  
**ACS**  
Real-Life Solutions for Successful Army Living

## Mobilization Deployment & Stability Support Operations

### Training Schedule (November 2022)

<p><b>Key Contact</b></p> <p>Nov 7 • 5 - 6:30 pm Nov 8 • 1 - 2:30 pm</p> <p><b>CFRR</b></p> <p>Nov 9 • 9 am - 12 pm</p> <p><b>Virtual Emergency Preparedness</b></p> <p>Nov 17 • 9 am - 12 pm</p>	<p><b>Informal Funds</b></p> <p>Nov 14 • 5 - 6:30 pm Nov 15 • 1 - 2:30 pm</p> <p><b>Care Team</b></p> <p>Nov 23 • 9 am - 12 pm</p>
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**\*No childcare provided for classroom training at this time.**

**RSVP Required**  
ALL classes held at ACS  
**FortPolkMDSSO@army.mil**  
1591 Bell Richard Ave., Bldg 920  
Fort Polk, Louisiana 71459  
(337) 531-9743



# Turkey Bowl

BN-Level Flag Football Tournament

## November 22

## Anvil Field

## 1pm Kick -Off




Food Provided By BENOIT Motors Starting at 12pm

Come out and watch Fort Polk Battalions battle it out on the gridiron to see who has the best flag football team around!

- **Event is free and open to all members of the Fort Polk Community: Soldiers, Families, DOD Civilians, and Retirees**
- **Enjoy yard games, food, and other activities while supporting your unit**



To Register call 337-531-7669 or visit [polk.armymwr.com](http://polk.armymwr.com)



## Veterans Day Ceremony

Fort Polk's Veterans Day Ceremony will take place Nov. 10 at the 5th Aviation hanger at 10 a.m.

## Volunteer classes

Army Community Service, 1591 Bell Richard Ave., building 920, hosts Volunteer Management Information System classes.

Classes are scheduled for the first Friday of each month from 10-11 a.m. The focus will be on teaching how to create necessary accounts, find volunteer positions and track your hours. The next class is Nov. 4.

For more information call (337) 531-1941.

## Fort Polk pet care

The Veterinary Treatment Facility is open Monday through Wednesday from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. and Friday from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. All pets on post are to be registered and microchipped.

Register in person or by email. Your

pets should also be up to date on all mandatory and recommended vaccines. For more information call (337) 531-1322.

## Anger management

Fort Polk Army Community Service, 1591 Bell Richard Ave., building 920, hosts an Anger, Stress and Crisis Management class.

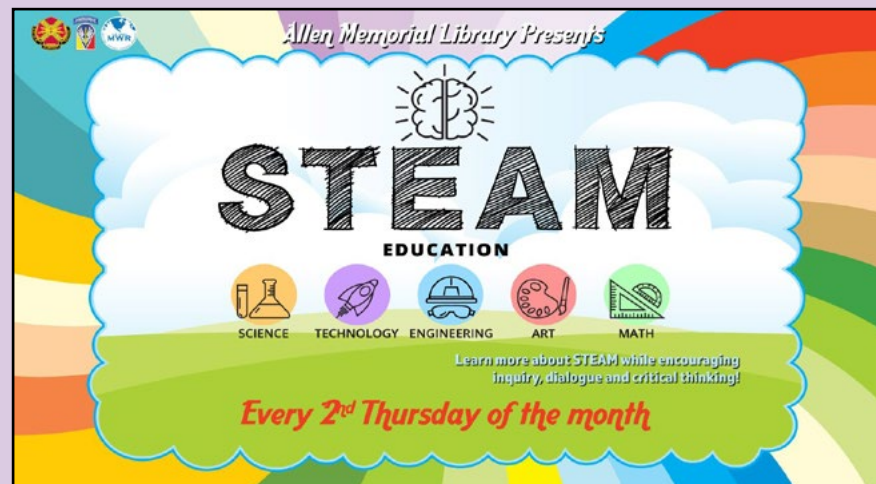
The class helps people learn to identify triggers and potential stressors, along with positive methods of coping.

The next class is 11 a.m.-noon Dec. 12. If you are interested, call (337) 531-0636/1938.

## Career classes

Fort Polk Army Community Service, 1591 Bell Richard Ave., building 920, hosts the Stars Are Lined Up For Military Spouses For Federal Careers classes. The next class is Dec. 6. from 10-11:30 a.m.

If you are interested, call (337) 531-6922 to register.



# #FortPolkThingsToDo

**Nov. 12:** Sugar Day Festival, Alexandria.

Kent House, 3601 Bayou Rapids Road, hosts the 29th annual Sugar Day. This tradition includes arts and crafts vendors, tours, demonstrators, open hearth cooking, period music, and the lighting of a reproduction 1800s sugar mill to demonstrate the process of cooking cane syrup and making sugar. The Kent House preserves, interprets and promotes its site to educate the public about the history and culture of central Louisiana between 1795 and 1855; and Sugar Day is one way to bring the past to the local community.

<http://kenthouse.org/>

**Nov. 12:** Fort Fest, Many.

Make plans to visit Fort Jesup State Historic Site for Fort Fest 2022. The arts, crafts and heritage Festival is held from 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at Fort Jesup State Historic Site. There are fun activities for all ages. See living history demonstrations, classic cars and vendors selling a variety of arts and crafts. It's a great time to do some early Christmas shopping to buy unique gifts.

<https://www.lastateparks.com/historic-sites/fort-jesup-state-historic-site>

**Nov. 12-13:** Flea Fest, Lake Charles.

Flea Fest is a truly unique market and festival that features acres of anything and everything. Flea Fest's offerings include antiques, retro and vintage items, handcrafted items, toys, collectibles, unique clothing, art work, comic books, furniture, gifts, unique jewelry,

plants, a farmers market and many other flea market style goods.

<https://www.fleafest.com/>

**Through Nov. 13:** State Fair of Louisiana, Shreveport.

The 116th edition of the State Fair of Louisiana is held at the state fairgrounds in Shreveport. Gates open at 10 a.m. Admission is \$12 and up. This fair features unique fair foods, live music, Louisiana's largest display of carnival rides, free shows and attractions.

[www.statefairloisiana.com](http://www.statefairloisiana.com)

**Nov. 19-Jan. 6:** Natchitoches Christmas Festival, Natchitoches.

Named after a Native American tribe, Natchitoches (pronounced Nack-a-tish) is the oldest permanent settlement in the Louisiana Purchase Territory. Since 1927, it's been home to one of the oldest community-based holiday celebrations in the country. Starting as a one-day festival, the Natchitoches Christmas Festival has evolved into a six-week long Christmas Season event. The Festival begins on the Saturday before Thanksgiving and concludes on Jan. 6, the Epiphany. More than 300,000 lights and 100 plus set pieces are on display every night at dusk.

<https://www.natchitocheschristmas.com/>

**Nov. 26-Dec. 25:** Dark Woods Christmas, Natchitoches.

Dark Woods' Christmas in the Park provides the perfect setting for family holiday memories. This event runs select dates from Black

Friday through Christmas Day. Experience the sights, sounds and smells of a hometown holiday while taking a leisurely stroll through more than 250,000 dazzling LED twinkling lights. Gather the whole family for homemade doughnuts and gourmet hot chocolate. Plus, enjoy other seasonal favorites like caramel apples, campfire s'mores, Natchitoches meat pies and other delectable treats. There is interactive fun for kids, uplifting holiday music, nightly entertainment including special meet and greet locations for the kids to see Mr. and Mrs. Claus and other holiday character favorites.

<https://www.darkwoodschristmas.com/>

**Anytime:** Creole Nature Trail, Sulphur. Nicknamed "Louisiana's Outback," the 180-mile Creole Nature Trail All-American Road is a driving trail like no other.

Beginning in Lake Charles and neighboring Sulphur, drivers are taken south through the swamplands where alligators blend in seamlessly with the scenery, and wading shorebirds rest between migratory flights.

The region sits at the confluence of two flyways — the routes birds take between North and South America seasonally — which means that visitors can see a phenomenal display of feathered friends along the trail. Download the Creole Nature Trail smartphone app by searching "Creole" in the App Store or on Google Play.

<https://www.visitlakecharles.org/creole-nature-trail/things-to-do/>





# Soldiers punished, separated for UCMJ violations

## OSJA

FORT POLK, La. — The preamble to the Manual for Courts-Martial states, “The purpose of military law is to promote justice, to assist in maintaining good order and discipline in the armed forces, to promote efficiency and effectiveness in the military establishment, and thereby strengthen the national security of the United States.” At the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, the commanding general and subordinate commanders take good order and discipline seriously.

Across Fort Polk, the following disciplinary issues continue to be prevalent: Driving under the influence of alcohol, wrongful use/possession of controlled substances, fraternization, sexual assault and underage drinking.

Below are the most recent examples of adverse legal actions for units within the Fort Polk jurisdiction.

- A first lieutenant assigned to 519th Military Police Battalion received a permanently filed General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand for fraternizing with a junior enlisted Soldier and interfering with an administrative investigation.

- A specialist assigned to 519th Military Police Battalion received a permanently filed GOMOR for engaging in an inappropriate relationship with a commissioned officer and interfering with an administrative investigation.

- Eight Soldiers from units across Fort Polk received permanently filed GOMORs for driving while under the influence of alcohol.

- Three Soldiers assigned to 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment received permanently filed GOMORs for domestic violence.

- A specialist assigned to 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment was separated from the Army with an other than honorable conditions discharge. An OTH discharge may cause a loss of benefits and could lead to significant difficulty in obtaining civilian employment.

- A specialist assigned to 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry regiment was separated from the

Army with an other than honorable conditions discharge for sexual assault.

- A private assigned to 5th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment was separated from the Army with a general characterization of service for wrongful use of marijuana.

- A staff sergeant assigned to 3rd Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment received a field grade 15 for failure to report and falling asleep while on staff duty. They received a punishment of reduction to the grade of E-5, forfeiture of \$1,841 pay per month for one month, suspended for 180 days, extra duty for 45 days and restriction for 45 days.

- A specialist assigned to 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment received a field grade Article 15 for wrongful use of marijuana. They received a punishment of reduction to E-3, extra duty for 45 days and restriction for 45 days.

- A sergeant assigned to 115th Field Hospital received a field grade Article 15 for wrongful use of marijuana. They received a punishment of reduction to the grade of E-4, extra duty for 45 days, and restriction for 45 days.

- A specialist assigned to 115th Field Hospital received a field grade Article 15 for wrongful use of cocaine. They received a punishment of reduction to the grade of E-1, extra duty for 45 days and restriction for 45 days.



# Check VIN numbers

The Directorate of Emergency Services Traffic Division will release the following vehicles to Family Morale, Welfare and Recreation for disposal, if they remain unclaimed. Vehicles are listed with the last four of their VIN number. If one of these vehicles belongs to you, please contact the Fort Polk Police Traffic Division at (337) 531-1806, 6675 or 2677.

2010	Nissan	Altima	6499
2016	Chevrolet	Malibu	5420
2006	Ford	F150	6507
2015	Ford	Escape	8502
2004	Infinity	Q35	8469
2012	Kia	Optima	1405
2011	Nissan	Sentra	4417
2009	Honda	Civic	3562
UNK	Baja Warrior	Mini bike	UNK
1997	Dodge	1500	3720
2012	Dodge	Avenger	0247
2016	Jeep	Cherokee	7670
2006	Ford	Focus	5525
2018	Toyota	Corolla	9110
2012	Chevrolet	Malibu	7822
2008	Mitsubishi	Galant	1159
2013	Dodge	Dart	1997
2003	Honda	Accord	6673
2003	Jeep	Liberty	3545
2001	Ford	F150	0450
2004	Ford	Mustang	4127
2004	Harley	MC	D569
2008	BMW	328i	9559
1999	Toyota	Corolla	6433
2013	Audi	A6	7319
2011	Hyundai	Elantra	4018
2007	BMW	650i	2192

