

GUARDIAN



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Spotlighting Fort Johnson **engineer** for Engineers Week

By **PORSHA AUZENNE**
Public Affairs Office

FORT JOHNSON, La. — Engineers Week, Feb. 18-24, celebrates how engineers make a difference in our world.

From engineers in the U.S. Armed Forces to those in the civilian world, no matter in the field of civil, aerospace or industrial, the world has been effectively improved thanks to their problem-solving and innovation.

In honor of Engineers Week, the Guardian sat down with Kajun Miller, a civil engineer who is now the project branch management chief at Fort Johnson's Directorate of Public Works.

Miller, who graduated from the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in 2020, started work in consulting as a design and project engineer in the wastewater industry before moving to Louisiana from Indiana.

"My family and I moved here almost two years ago and I began working at Fort Johnson shortly after making my one-and-a-half year tenure," said Miller. "It is a privilege to be able to serve the Soldiers and families of Fort Johnson by providing my experience and expertise on projects that continually impact infrastructure readiness and quality of life."

Miller articulated how engineering consists of problem-solving and the direct impact it has on communities.

"Engineering is making a difference in the lives of the those we serve," said Miller. "We get to solve



Kajun Miller, project branch management chief at Fort Johnson's Directorate of Public Works, stands near road construction at the intersection of Texas Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue Feb. 21. (U.S. Army photo by Porsha Auzenne)

problems that improve the quality and ease of life for everyone. It may seem far fetched to some, but every problem set for an engineer, regardless of their field, comes from an end user who wants a better experience and to make life easier for themselves and their Families."

Miller, while expressing engineering comes with challenges, stated improving morale for Soldiers and Families is what makes the field equally rewarding.

"With the needs and wants of communities changing so often, it makes finding a solution something that requires immense attention to detail and expertise. This is why serving with DPW is also a privilege — our mission is to ensure that

skills and proficiency are applied to provide infrastructure and services, which allow our Soldiers to be ready for the challenges and changes of the future," said Miller. "Not only do we aim to assist in training and preparing our Soldiers, we also strive to provide a healthy, enjoyable home for them and their Families."

Outside of his daily work as an engineer, Miller relayed the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Miller, along with his wife, serve as student youth pastors at their local church in Anacoco.

Fort Johnson, according to Miller, has provided the opportunity for him and his Family to remain close to the community he now calls home.



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Cover photo: *In the aftermath of a jump onto Donnelly Drop Zone, US Army Pfc. David Hanson recovers his parachute during Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center training in Alaska. (Photo courtesy of Department of Defense.)*

Check out different take on new personnel orientation

By MELISSA BOX
Management Analyst

Fort Johnson, La. — Orientation for new personnel at United States Army Garrison Fort Johnson occurs monthly and is facilitated by the Directorate of Human Resources.

Orientation is a chance for newly appointed personnel to become acquainted with the installation and have their questions answered firsthand by the subject matter experts in particular areas.

USAG personnel are visited by a representative from directorates on Fort Johnson throughout the day, and learn what each directorate is responsible for.

Bobbie Parks, workforce development officer, facilitates the day-long training and is with the participants every step of the way, ensuring they are welcomed and informed.

This process sets new Fort Johnson employees up for success in their new roles. Parks explains the onboarding process, which ranges from the importance of individual development plans and Defense Performance Management and Appraisal Program input to navigating useful websites and links available for professional training.

“We want to invest in, as well as try to retain Fort Johnson employees. But if not, we want the employee to be able to say they received the best training they could while here.” Parks said, “It is imperative that supervisors lead, train, build and challenge their employees.”

Customer service training is part of the orientation. This training is facilitated by Fort



Johnson employees volunteering to share their passion for serving others. The content of the class focuses on the importance of listening to customers and responding to their individual needs. Participants are asked what good customer service looks like to them. January's class was vocal about the significance of customer service and had numerous examples of great customer service at Fort Johnson. One participant shared that it's not always what happens in the moment, sometimes it's the follow-up that makes you stop and think, “Hey, they didn't have to do that, but they did!”

Clifton Hill, a new employee with DHR's, Transition Assistance Program, liked the Installation Management Command customer pledge and that employees sign it. However,

Hill said just because people sign something, doesn't mean they are going to implement it. He equated this idea to borrowing money from a bank.

“When you sign the loan paperwork, you have every intention of following through with the payments, but what if something else comes up down the road, and it gets pushed aside?” Hill asked.

Fort Johnson doesn't just talk the talk when it comes to customers and the pledge. Each year garrison leadership resigns the pledge as a continuing commitment to the workforce that service to customers is at the forefront of the mission. “It's like married couples who have vow renewals. It reminds them of the promise they made to each other,” Parks said.

Sign up as **sponsor** to help support incoming spouses

By ANGIE THORNE
Public Affairs Office

FORT JOHNSON, La. — Fort Johnson's Army Community Service is working to launch a new spouse sponsorship program called Spouse-2-Spouse.

The mission is to give inbound spouses the opportunity to become familiar with their new environment. It will also give them a chance to meet and connect with others, before, during and after their arrival to Fort Johnson.

ACS is currently looking for spouses who are excited about Fort Johnson to help prepare inbound spouses and set them up for a successful transition. ACS will provide training and access to important information and resources for the spouse sponsors to share with spouses new to the installation.

The purpose of this new initiative is to provide the incoming spouses/Families, with a sense of belonging to the Fort Johnson Family, cultivate new friendships and improve morale.

The spouse sponsors will also receive volunteer hours for the work they perform.



Lucianne Buch, ACS Family Programs manager, said she is excited about bringing the Spouse-2-Spouse program to life.

“This program will provide new spouses the ability to hit the ground running. Having an actual person waiting to provide them with resources and information is so much better than

a Google search,” Buch said. “Their sponsor will also be able to make them feel like they are part of the Fort Johnson Family, which is crucial to their transition.”

For more information about the new program or to sign up as a sponsor, call 337-531-1941.

FORMER LEAD SINGER OF
THE NEWSBOYS

John James



Aussie 'misfit' brings message of hope, resilience

By CHUCK CANNON
Public Affairs Office

FORT JOHNSON, La. — John James, former lead singer and co-founder of the Christian rock group The Newsboys, will bring his message of hope and resilience to the Fort Johnson Family March 4-6.

James and The Newsboys, who came to the United States from Australia more than 35 years ago, took a leap of faith when they left their homes Down Under.

"We were a band of misfits who started in a garage in Australia," James said. "We annoyed the heck out of neighbors, and one day just decided to go to America."

Acknowledging he and his fellow band members were a dysfunctional lot from fractured or torn families, James said most of them were high school dropouts.

"To look at us, I'd guess you'd say the deck was stacked against us," James said. "We figured we'd just be a statistic and never expected to amount to anything more in life. There seemed to be no hope for a band of misfits like us."

That changed with the move to America.

"There was a drive inside of us that was crazy enough to step out of the boat and go for it," he said. "When we first arrived in America we had no record contract, no bookings, no confidence, nothing. We were crazy enough to step out and come to America with a fundamental call — or conviction — to bring a message of hope."

In the early days in their new home, the band worked a lot in public schools.

"We used our platform of music to share our message," James said. "We were kind of like a bunch of Steve Irwins on steroids. We really connected with the kids in school. We talked about suicide, bullying, 101 things that kids back then were dealing with."

The band's message was simple, yet effective: You do not have to stay a victim.

"Life has a tendency to throw curveballs at us that can knock us to the ground," James said. "Welcome to life. No one is immune to that but it's how you respond: Are you going to have a victim mentality and say I'm going to give up, or do you get up, change your

thinking and surround yourself with good people who can stretch you, mold you, and slap you around the ears when you need it, and good old-fashion hard work."

It took the band a few years to become a commercial success.

"We put in hard work and after many years we were thankful for the rewards with our music," he said. "We eventually had record contracts, Grammy nominations and No. 1 songs, and were fortunate and blessed to fill the biggest arenas in this nation."

James said he remembered standing on a stage, looking at an arena filled with fans, and thinking, "Crikey, how can this happen to someone like me? How can I be part of something like this? I was voted most likely to never succeed in anything in life."

The music platform gave James a stage and credibility that has opened doors, whether in business circles or schools. He and his wife, Tanya, work in facilities with folks suffering

from addictions. Those addictions include substance abuse and other forms of illness.

In the past few years a new door has opened up for James with the Army. He and Tanya visit Army installations as part of the Army's Spiritual Resilience Program.

"We're thankful we can come in and bring a different perspective," James said. "We're mindful always of the importance of a healthy body, a healthy mind and a healthy soul. But there is a fourth 'healthy' that's often overlooked — the spiritual element. So people might ask, 'To be spiritual, do I have to be overtly religious?' That's absolutely not true."

Folks might also ask what a rock 'n' roll singer from Australia has in common with a Soldier.

"There are fundamental building stones that transcend most everything," James explained. "I'm able to draw so many wonderful parallels to my journey and success as a broken dysfunctional kid, to going on to being a part of one of the all-time successful young bands to come from Australia."

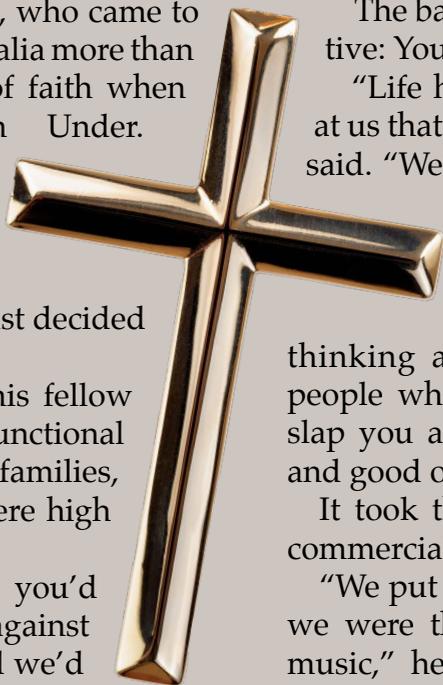
James can also talk to the other side — the traps that can come with fame and success, and affect a person's character, ego, sexuality, Family life and marriage.

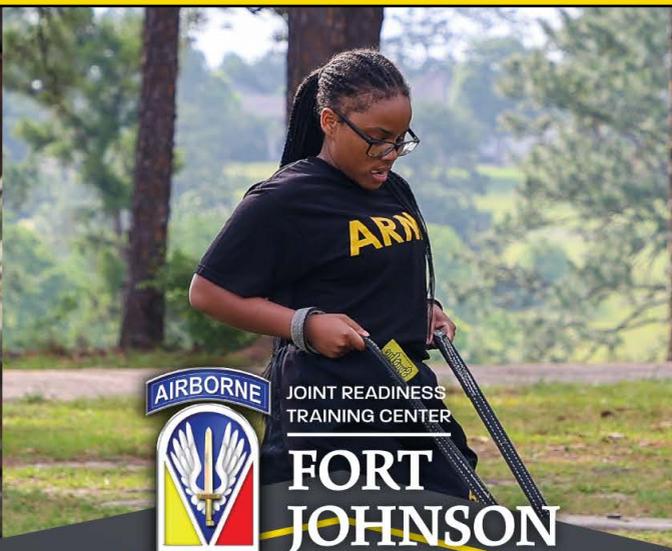
"At the height of success I got a fast-tracked lesson on how we can fall prey to those pressures," he said. "As a Soldier, you don't want to reach your goals and in the process destroy your Family life or marriage."

"We're very thankful to Army for this opportunity and looking forward to it," James said.

James will be at the Bayou Theater from from 1:30-3 p.m. March 5 and 6 and at the Main Post Chapel from 6-7:30 p.m. March 6.

For more information call 337-531-2669.





Join us for the

AER KICKOFF 2024

Since 1942, Army Emergency Relief has been the conduit through which Soldiers provide financial support to their fellow Soldiers. The annual campaign is held three months of every year, and is the only fundraising the Army may conduct Armywide. The campaign's purpose is to fully inform 100% of all active-duty and retired Soldiers and their Family members (including spouses and children of deceased Soldiers) about the types of financial assistance available from AER and provide the opportunity for Soldiers to donate.

KICKOFF EVENTS TAKE PLACE MARCH 1

CAMPAIGN TAKES PLACE MARCH 1-MAY 15

2-MILE KICKOFF FUN RUN @ 6:30 A.M. WARRIOR CENTER

(Open to the community. Dress code is civilian attire.)

FAMILY MOVIE KICKOFF NIGHT @ 5:30 P.M. WARRIOR LANES BOWLING CENTER

(Open to the community.)



Donate and help a Soldier out today!
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SCAN ME





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Your feedback can make a BIG DIFFERENCE in the quality of life for Army families.

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TENANT SATISFACTION SURVEY

04 March 2024 - 18 April, 2024

*Completely confidential

We are investing significantly in housing improvements to ensure quality living conditions are provided to our Soldiers and families. Survey feedback will guide the Army's efforts to provide quality, safe and secure housing.

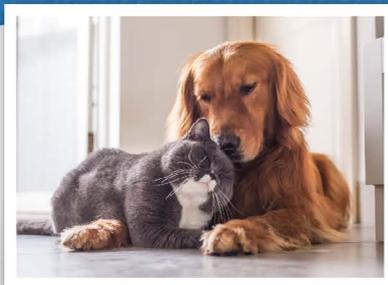


The completely confidential survey will be emailed from ArmyHousingSurvey@celassociates.com. For additional questions, please contact your local Army Housing Office.

OMB Control Number: 0704-0553. OMB Expiration date: 05/31/2025

WINTER SAFETY TIPS

TIP #7



Bring potted plants and pets indoors. Limit outside time for pets and keep them bundled up. Know the temperature threshold for plants and, if possible, cover them up before cold weather sets in to help retain heat.

New lactation pod provides comfort, privacy for Fort Johnson mothers

By PORSHA AUZENNE
Public Affairs Office

FORT JOHNSON, La. — A ribbon cutting ceremony was held to inaugurate the new “Momma Pod” Feb. 15 at the Fort Johnson Main Post Exchange. The Momma Pod, a solo lactation pod, is a compact, mobile nursing room on wheels produced by BrighterBooth. The pod is spacious and comes with comfortable seating, a fully furnished interior, mirror, table coat hook, power outlets and locking door. Along with the opaque windows, breastfeeding parents also have the utmost privacy.

Allison Harrison, ambassador of Fort Johnson’s Global Military Lactation Community chapter, talked about the non-profit organization’s journey and mission.

“The Fort Johnson chapter of the Global Military Lactation Community began in 2021 in response to a lack of up-to-date and quality educational resources for breastfeeding parents on the installation,” Harrison said. “We wanted to provide an informational and supportive group for these parents working through any challenges they may face.”

Military Families that choose to breastfeed often face addition hurdles due to either their balancing of active-duty service with breastfeeding and pumping or having less familiar support by being stationed away from Family or having spouses gone for military duty while trying to juggle this season of life. “Unfortunately, Louisiana ranks among the lowest for breastfeeding rates in the nation, and it’s often difficult for our new parents to find support in the local community,” Harrison said. “We started as a small group that met monthly in parks to a vast social media presence where new parents can find the most up to date information on lactation health as well as receive both professional and peer support when concerns arise.”

Last spring, the Fort Johnson chapter of the Global Military Lactation Community hosted the only “Big Latch” event in the state, with the help of Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, to promote awareness for the benefits of breastfeeding.

Harrison hopes the chapter continues be known installation wide so as many new parents as possible can be reached.

“Having the addition of the Momma Pod is monumental. This allows mothers a place to nurse if they want privacy or a calm environment for an overstimulated infant. It also tells them that they matter. That their



From left: Paige and Wren Swinderman, Allison Harrison, Maj. Lesli Thomas, Severine Conaway, Tammar Tracy, Marilyn Ingram and Jennifer Ryan gather to cut the ribbon for the new Momma Pod at the Fort Johnson Main Exchange Feb. 15. (U.S. Army photo by Porsha Auzenne)

choice to breastfeed their child is supported and respected,” said Harrison.

Tammar Tracey, Fort Johnson Exchange general manager, expressed how the lactation pod will improve quality of life for breastfeeding parents.

“Bringing the Momma Pod to Fort Johnson means we listen to our customers,” Tracey said. “We may not always be able to achieve all requests or suggestions, but we diligently work with the assistance of the local Women, Infants and Children office to bring in services that are important to the military family.”

Paige Swinderman, a mother who attended the ceremony with her infant son, said the Momma Pod is an exciting addition to the Main Exchange. “It’s great. If my son is hungry, I don’t have to go out to the car or a bathroom. I get to have both privacy and comfort.”

The lactation pod is available for use during Fort Johnson Main Exchange hours and is situated across from the alteration shop.



The ribbon to Fort Johnson’s new lactation pod is cut. (U.S. Army photo by Porsha Auzenne)



The lactation pod interior, complete with seating, electrical outlets and lighting. (U.S. Army photo by Porsha Auzenne)

SUPPORTING SOLDIERS AND THEIR FAMILIES SINCE 1942

TO DONATE VISIT

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2024

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Fort Johnson will
begin a 100%
third-party
inspection for all
Corvias homes.**



**Door hangers with additional
information will be dispersed
to residents.**

The mandate is noted in the National Defense Authorization, which requires the Secretary of Defense to “establish and implement a uniform code of basic housing standards for safety, comfort, and habitability for privatized military housing, informed by a nationally recognized, consensus-based, model property maintenance code,” and to submit a Department of Defense plan to contract with qualified home inspectors to conduct a thorough inspection and assessment of the structural integrity and habitability of each unit of privatized military housing using the uniform code. Section 3051 further requires the Secretaries of the Military Departments to conduct “inspection and assessments of privatized military housing units” using the DoD plan and the established uniform code. Section 2818 of the NDAA (Public Law 116-283) requires the SecDef to expand the uniform code and the housing inspection and assessment “to include Government-owned and Government-controlled military family housing located inside or outside the United States and occupied by members of the Armed Forces of such military family housing.

For more information call the Army Housing Office at
337-531-6000

Fort Johnson laughs with Drew Hernandez

Drew Hernandez, known for his comedic brand "A Combat Veteran," met with the Fort Johnson community Feb. 16. Hernandez stopped at the 519th Military Police Battalion headquarters to engage with Soldiers and held a meet-and-greet at Fort Johnson's Class Six. Hernandez concluded his visit to Louisiana by performing in DeRidder Feb. 17. His Louisiana show sold more than 3,000 tickets. (U.S. Army photos by Antoine Aaron)



WELCOME HOME
204TH
MILITARY POLICE COMPANY

One hundred and twenty certified military police officers were sent to bases in Germany and Italy to provide law enforcement support for the garrisons of Wiesbaden, Soerslautern, Baumholder and Vicenza. While there, the unit covered all law enforcement functions of the Military Police branch to include traffic enforcement, access control point operations, disturbance calls, responding to traffic accidents, security patrols and community policing. Soldiers spent nine months on rotation supporting over 100,000 soldiers, families, and civilians across four unique installations.

Soldiers from the 204th Military Police Company returned home from deployment Feb. 9. Part of the 519th Military Police Battalion, the group deployed in May 2023 in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve.

home.army.mil

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AND PREPARATION WORKSHOPS

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ACS Building 920**

**Preparing for a
Hiring Event
Workshop**

10 a.m.-12 p.m.

**Feb. 22
June 20**



Hiring Event

10 a.m.-1 p.m.

**Feb. 27
June 25**

HOW TO BE MORE ACTIVE

✓ MOVE MORE

Adults should get a weekly total of at least



150

MINUTES
of moderate aerobic activity
(water aerobics, social dancing,
gardening)

OR



75

MINUTES
of vigorous aerobic activity
(running, swimming laps,
jumping rope)

Or a combination of both, spread throughout the week.

BE STRONG

Include muscle-strengthening activity (like resistance or weight training) at least twice a week.

ADD INTENSITY

Increase time, distance, amount or effort for more benefits.

SIT LESS

Get up and move throughout the day.

KIDS & TEENS

should get at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day, including play and structured activities.



Learn more at heart.org/lifes8

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TIPS FOR SUCCESS



SET GOALS

Set realistic goals and make small, lasting changes to prime yourself for success.



KEEP GOING

Once you reach these goals, don't stop. Gradually increase your activity and intensity to gain even more health benefits.



WALK MORE

There are many ways to get active. You may find walking the easiest way to start.



STAY ACTIVE

Not only can it help you feel, think, sleep and live better, staying active also improves overall quality of life. Every active minute counts toward your goal.



ADD IT UP

Find ways to move more throughout your daily routine, whether it's at work, on your commute or at home. Every active minute counts toward your goal.



MAKE A HABIT

Do something active every day at about the same time so it becomes a regular habit. Put it on your schedule so you're less likely to miss a day.

HOW TO EAT BETTER

✓ CREATE A HEALTHY EATING PATTERN

Make smart choices and swaps to build an overall healthy eating style. Watch calories and eat smaller portions.

ENJOY

vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, legumes, nuts, plant-based proteins, lean animal proteins, skinless poultry, fish and seafood.



LIMIT

sweetened drinks, alcohol, sodium, red and processed meats, refined carbohydrates like added sugars and processed grain foods, full-fat dairy products, highly processed foods, tropical oils like coconut and palm.



AVOID

trans fat and partially hydrogenated oils (found in some commercial baked goods and fried foods).



TIPS FOR SUCCESS



WATCH CALORIES

Eat only as many calories as you use up through physical activity. Understand serving sizes and keep portions reasonable.



COOK AT HOME

Take control over the nutritional content of your food by learning healthy preparation methods.



LOOK FOR THE HEART-CHECK

The Heart-Check mark helps you find foods that can be part of a healthy eating plan.



IN NEED OF INSPIRATION?

The American Heart Association has hundreds of heart-healthy recipes to choose from.

✓ READ NUTRITION LABELS

Nutrition Facts	
Amount per serving	
Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)	
Calories	230
Total Fat 8g	16%
Saturated Fat 1g	2%
Trans Fat 0g	0%

Learning how to read and understand food labels can help you make healthier choices.

When you have more than one choice, compare nutrition facts. Choose products with lower amounts of sodium, saturated fat and added sugars.

Learn more at heart.org/lifes8

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HOW TO MANAGE BLOOD PRESSURE

✓ UNDERSTAND READINGS

Make smart choices and swaps to build an overall healthy eating style. Watch calories and eat smaller portions.

Blood pressure is typically recorded as two numbers, written as a ratio like this:

117
76

Read as "117 over 76" millimeters of mercury.

SYSTOLIC

The top number, the higher of the two numbers, measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats (when the heart muscle contracts).

DIASTOLIC

The bottom number, the lower of the two numbers, measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart is resting between heart beats.

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC MM HG (UPPER #)	and	DIASTOLIC MM HG (LOWER #)
Normal	Lower than 120	and	Lower than 80
Elevated Blood Pressure	120 -129	and	80
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1	130 -139	or	80 -89
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2	140 or higher	or	90 or higher
Hypertensive Crisis (Consult your doctor immediately)	Higher than 180	and/or	Higher than 120

✓ TRACK LEVELS



A diagnosis of high blood pressure must be confirmed with a health care professional. Any unusually low blood pressure readings should also be evaluated.

Health care professionals can take blood pressure readings and provide recommendations.

Learn more at heart.org/lifes8

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TIPS FOR SUCCESS



EAT SMART

Eat a healthy diet of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, legumes, nuts, plant-based proteins, lean animal proteins like fish and seafood.

Limit sugary foods and drinks, red or processed meats, salty foods, refined carbohydrates and highly processed foods.



MOVE MORE

Physical activity helps control blood pressure, weight and stress levels.



MANAGE WEIGHT

If you're overweight, even a slight weight loss can reduce high blood pressure.



NO NICOTINE

Every time you smoke, vape or use tobacco, the nicotine can cause a temporary increase in blood pressure.



SLEEP WELL

Short sleep (less than 7 hours) and poor-quality sleep are associated with high blood pressure.

HOW TO MANAGE BLOOD SUGAR

✓ UNDERSTAND BLOOD GLUCOSE

The first step to managing your blood sugar is to understand what makes blood sugar levels rise

GLUCOSE INSULIN

The carbohydrates and sugars in what you eat and drink turns into glucose (sugar) in the stomach and digestive system. Glucose can then enter the bloodstream.

Insulin is a hormone made in the pancreas that helps the body's cells take up glucose from blood and lower blood sugar levels.

In Type 2 diabetes, glucose builds up in the blood instead of going into cells because:

The body develops "insulin resistance" and can't use the insulin it makes efficiently.

The pancreas gradually loses its ability to produce insulin.

The result can be a high blood glucose level.

✓ TRACK LEVELS

Health care professionals can take blood glucose readings and provide recommendations. If you're diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, you will need to monitor your blood sugar level regularly.

Visit KnowDiabetesbyHeart.org to learn how to manage your risk for heart disease and stroke if you have diabetes.

Fasting Blood Glucose	Diagnosis	What It Means
Lower than 100 mg/dl	Normal	Healthy range
100 to 125 mg/dl	Prediabetes (impaired fasting glucose)	At increased risk of developing diabetes.
126 mg/dl or higher	Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2 diabetes)	At increased risk of heart disease or stroke.

Learn more at heart.org/lifes8

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TIPS FOR SUCCESS



EAT SMART

Eat a healthy diet of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, legumes, nuts, plant-based proteins, lean animal proteins like fish and seafood.

Limit sugary foods and drinks, red or processed meats, salty foods, refined carbohydrates and highly processed foods.



MOVE MORE

Being physically active can lower your risk of developing diabetes and help you manage the disease if you already have it.



MANAGE WEIGHT

Stay at a healthy weight to help prevent, delay or manage diabetes



NO NICOTINE

Smoking, vaping, exposure to secondhand smoke or using tobacco can increase your risk of heart disease, stroke, many cancers and other chronic diseases. It may also make prediabetes and diabetes harder to manage.

MPs help Mardi Gras make grand entrance in Poland

By **MARCUS FICHTL**
Army News

POZNAN, Poland — Fleur-de-lis, Humvees and more than 6,000 beads brought Mardi Gras to Poland this Carnival season.

The 773rd Military Police Battalion from the Louisiana National Guard turned the main road at U.S. Army Garrison Poland's Camp Kosciuszko into "Rue de Poznan" Feb. 9.

Dozens of Polish students lined the road as a procession of Humvees decked out in Mardi Gras regalia became makeshift floats, and the Polish Air Force band brought the jazz-drenched sounds of Bourbon Street. Participants were also able to taste the fare of the regions at a "Taste of Louisiana" experience featuring gumbo, jambalaya and king cake. The event brought the final conversion of the Army's home on the Eastern Flank into an enclave of the American South.

Leading the parade and dressed in the traditional colors of purple, green and gold was Command Sgt. Maj. Verdis Walker, the battalion's senior enlisted advisor and native of Haughton, Louisiana — a town just outside of Shreveport.

The parade was his last hurrah. After a 34-year career, first as an Army band member and then as a military policeman, Walker is hanging up his Army greens.

"I joined on accident," said Walker, who was one minute pledging a fraternity at his college and the next finding himself in the recruiting office. "The day I was supposed to meet my sponsor, he said he was going to drill, so I tagged along and while I was there I auditioned for the Louisiana Guard band."

He got the gig.

Thirteen years later he was given the opportunity to become an MP, and stand up a new company — the 39th MP Company. "Now I'm the battalion sergeant major and the 39th is one of my companies," he laughed.

Walker said the Bulldogs, which the 773rd MP Bn. is affectionately nicknamed, have spent the past year providing law enforcement support to the U.S. military stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea. But a special opportunity arose when the battalion began partnering with a local school.

So he sent some of his troops, hard chargers like Sgt. Eryka Bell, to Poznan's Da Vinci Primary School. There she spearheaded the Bulldog's relationship with the kids.

"Mardi Gras means family to me," said Bell. "And these kids became an extension of that family."

Valida Yusifzada, a Da Vinci Primary teacher agreed. She said the students built real bonds over the year, and that Mardi Gras celebration was a marvel to the senses and an exclamation point to months of partnership.

"The kids were so happy, so excited," she said. Yusifzada added the food spread the Bulldogs put on was impressive. Particularly the king cake, a cinnamon, danish-like pastry that traditionally hides a baby figurine. The finder of which is destined for a year of good luck.

Yusifzada didn't find the figurine in her cake, but this new friendship didn't need luck to succeed.

"Even though we're different countries, we're not that different," Walker said. "At the end of the day they're not just seeing American Soldiers, they're seeing people who enjoy celebration, food and living life — people just like them."



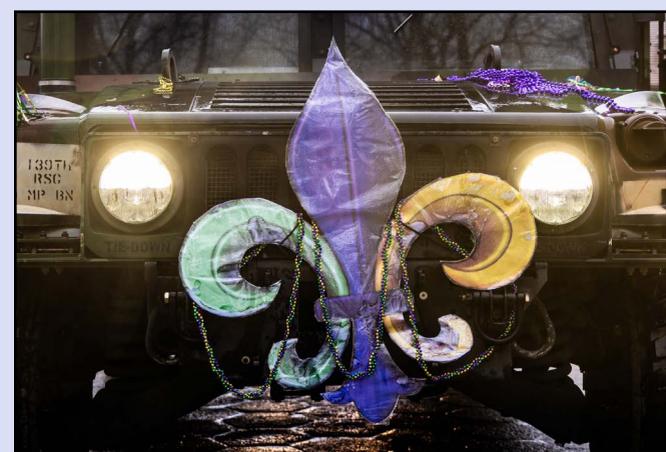
Polish elementary school students collect beads during a Mardi Gras parade across Camp Kosciuszko in Poznan, Poland, Feb. 9. The event was hosted by the 773rd Military Police Battalion. The unit has spent the past year providing security and law enforcement capabilities to U.S. Army Garrison Poland. (U.S. Army photo by Marcus Fichtl)



Lt. Col. Doris Reed, commander, 773rd Military Police Battalion, dressed in her Mardi Gras best, helps a Polish elementary school student put on a mask at Camp Kosciuszko in Poznan, Poland, Feb. 9. (U.S. Army photo by Marcus Fichtl)



Command Sgt. Maj. Verdis Walker, 773rd Military Police Battalion senior enlisted advisor, and Haughton, Louisiana native, leads the very first Mardi Gras parade across Camp Kosciuszko in Poznan, Poland, Feb. 9. (U.S. Army photo by Marcus Fichtl)



A Humvee is seen adorned with a Fleur-de-lis in traditional Mardi Gras colors during a Mardi Gras celebration at Camp Kosciuszko in Poznan, Poland, Feb. 9. (U.S. Army photo by Marcus Fichtl)

Writer sees life through lens, finds solace through photography

By ANTOINE AARON
Public Affairs Office

FORT JOHNSON, La. — As I reflect on my journey through life, I can't help but acknowledge the profound impact photography has had on my mental health and overall well-being.

From battling stress and depression to finding solace and purpose, my camera has been my trusty companion, capturing moments of beauty and helping me navigate the complexities of existence.

Growing up, I struggled with inner demons that often left me feeling lost and disconnected from the world around me. When I discovered photography I found a way to channel my emotions constructively; I found a sanctuary where I could express myself freely, without judgment or expectation.

Photography became more than just a hobby; it became a lifeline — a means of coping with the challenges life threw my way. Behind the lens, I learned to appreciate the

beauty in the mundane, discovering comfort in the simplicity of raindrops on a window or the play of light and shadow on a city street.

Perhaps the most significant impact photography has on my mental health is its ability to provide a sense of purpose and direction. In moments of despair, when it felt like the world was closing in, my camera offered me a reason to get out of bed in the morning. Whether it was exploring new creative styles of shooting or documenting the human experience, each click of the shutter reminded me that there was still beauty to be found in the world, even in the darkest of times.

Some of those times occurred in the military. Going on deployments and fighting in wars left a lasting toll on my mental health, as well as many other young service members around me. Mixing those experiences with the baggage life can bring, whether old or new, can catapult you into depression and despair.

As a veteran, long past my days of service, I still know this feeling all too well.

When times get tough, photography

continues to serve as a form of therapy for me.

But what I want people, especially service members, to understand is photography can allow them to confront their emotions and process them in a healthy way. Instead of bottling up their feelings, they can capture them, transforming them into something tangible and meaningful.

I encourage them to pick up a camera or even their phone and give it a try because, for me, each photograph became a visual journal — a testament to one's journey through life. To me, photography is more than just snapping pictures.

Photography is self-care.

Photography is community interaction.

Photography is seeing beauty in the world.

Photography is being in the moment.

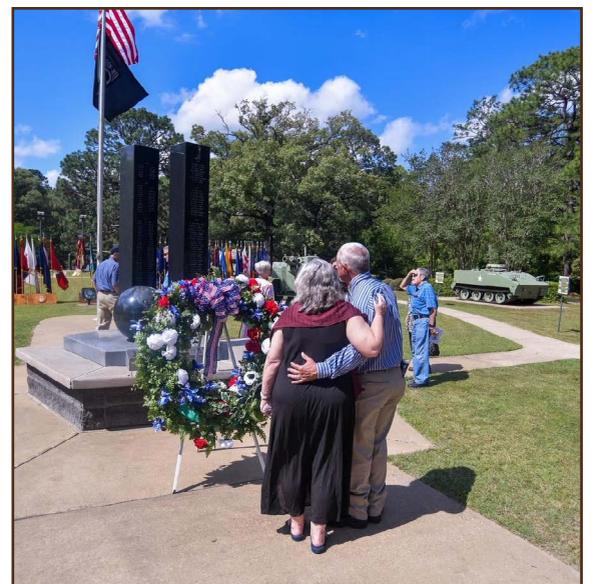
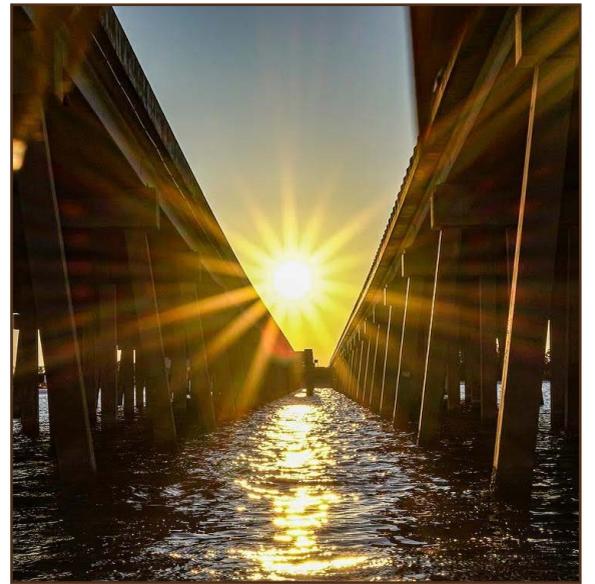
Photography is mindfulness.

Photography is confidence.

Photography is me!



COMMENTARY



**It's almost time for
the FY24 Army
Housing Tenant
Satisfaction Survey.**

Are you in?

Opt in from your cell phone now to receive your survey via text message when it becomes available in March.*



*U.S. phone numbers only at this time

The survey is being conducted online and is being administered through a third party, CEL & Associates, Inc. (CEL). All households living in privatized or government managed Army Housing are invited to participate in the survey, and this is your opportunity to provide feedback on your housing and community. Households will also receive the survey via email but only one survey per household can be submitted. All surveys submitted are confidential and anonymous. For more information contact your Housing Office or management office for privatized housing.



337-531-6000



OMB CONTROL NUMBER: 0704-0553 OMB EXPIRATION DATE: 05/31/2025



CALLING ALL MILITARY SPOUSES!

▶ How do I take the survey?

The **2024 Active-Duty Spouses Survey** is open March 4-Apr. 18. It assesses the impact of military life on spouses and their Families. Unlike many surveys about military Family life, this survey is a representative sample and is authorized by the Department of Defense. This is our opportunity to share what is working and what is not working in this military life we all live. It will take about 10 minutes!

- 1** Scan the QR Code in the bottom left corner
- 2** Click the **"DON'T HAVE A TICKET"** button
- 3** Put your 10-digit **BENEFICIARY DOD ID NUMBER** found on the back of your military ID card. This ensures only military spouses are the ones completing the survey and completing it on time. All surveys are anonymous
- 4** Put in your date of birth and click the **"GET MY TICKET NUMBER"** button
- 5** Click **"START SURVEY"**



Scan to take the survey or visit **DODSURVEYS.MIL**

Check VIN numbers

The Directorate of Emergency Services Traffic Division will release the following vehicles to MWR 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 Johnson Police Traffic Division at 337-531-1806, 6675 or 2675.

1994	Ford	F250	3432
1997	Dodge	1500	3720
2003	Nissan	Maxima	6157
2014	Chevrolet	Cruze	0491
2002	Pontiac	Grand Prix	1285
1995	Dodge	1500	8277
2016	Jeep	Patriot	9883
2005	Buick	LaSaber	7593
2001	GMC	Yukon	6444
2010	Hyundai	Genesis	5409
Unknown	Unknown	Utility trailer	N/A
2000	Ford	Mustang	8551
2016	Hyundai	Elantra	3891
2008	Yamaha	R6	5446
2016	Yamaha	R3	2153
UNK	UNK	Boat trailer	UNK
UNK	UNK	Kayak trailer	UNK
UNK	UNK	Boat trailer	UNK
UNK	UNK	M/C trailer	UNK



ARMY COMMUNITY SERVICE ARMY FINANCIAL LITERACY PROGRAM

DTG	Financial Literacy Classes	Location
Every Wednesday 8:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Refresher Course	ACS, Bldg. 920
1st Wednesday of each month 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	Prepare Finances for vesting in the TSP	ACS, Bldg. 920
1st Wednesday of each month 2:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Prepare Finances for Continuation Pay Under Blended Retirement System	ACS, Bldg. 920
2nd Wednesday of each month 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	Prepare Finances for a Deployment	ACS, Bldg. 920
2nd Wednesday of each month 2:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Prepare Finances for Return From Deployment	ACS, Bldg. 920
2nd Wednesday of each month 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM	Prepare Finances for a PCS	ACS, Bldg. 920
3rd Wednesday of each month 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm	Prepare Finances for a Marriage	ACS, Bldg. 920
3rd Wednesday of each month 2:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Prepare Finances for Welcoming a New Child	ACS, Bldg. 920
4th Wednesday of each month 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	Prepare Finances for Divorce	ACS, Bldg. 920
4th Wednesday of each month 2:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Prepare Finances for a Disabling Sickness or Condition	ACS, Bldg. 920
4th Wednesday of each month 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM	Prepare Finances for a Promotion	ACS, Bldg. 920

RSVP Required: Please call ACS at 337.531.1957/1958

TURKEY HUNT MARCH 30

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is hosting their annual Youth Turkey Hunt March 30. Ten slots are available for active-duty military dependent youth ages 10-17. LDWF will hold a random lottery drawing in mid-March.

Applications can be filled out at the link below:

[Click here for application form](#)

Applicants must bring their own gun and gear. Application must be filled out by active-duty military parent or legal guardian assigned to Fort Johnson. If active-duty member is deployed, spouses may sign up their youth. Please submit completed application via email to klegleu@wlf.la.gov. Applications due no later than Feb. 29. All youth must purchase a \$5 Youth Hunting License and download/print turkey tags at www.wlf.la.gov/page/lottery-hunts.

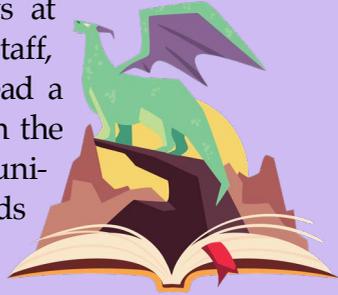
For more information please call LDWF at 337-491-2575.



BRIEFS

Story time

The Allen Memorial Library hosts Story Time Tuesdays and Fridays at 11:30 a.m. Library staff, or a special guest, read a story to children from the Fort Johnson community. After listening, kids participate in a craft.



For more information call 337-531-2665.

Commander golf scramble

Swing into the new year at Warrior Hills Golf Course! The monthly garrison commander's golf scramble takes place March 1 starting at noon.

Register by calling 337-531-4661.

Monthly bass tournament

Reel in the big one March 2 at Toledo Bend Army Recreation Park! Check-in is at first light. Participants will weigh in at 3 p.m. This event is open to the public.



For more information call 318-565-4235.

Military spouse market

Come out to the Warrior Center March 2 and support Fort Johnson Spouses. From 9 a.m.-3 p.m., the military spouse owned business market will be open for shopping. From delicious sweets to scented candles, there is a little something for everyone!

<https://johnson.armymwr.com/calendar/event/hbb-market/6383749/87190>

Amazing Race

Join us in this installation-wide scavenger hunt March 2. Navigate through various Fort Johnson facilities with your team in search of clues that will lead you to victory! Categories consist of Family, Soldier and bike teams. Family & Soldier teams will compete via vehicle and bike teams will pedal their hearts out.



[Register here!](#)

Second Sunday brunch

Join the Forge Bar and Grill for its monthly Sunday brunch March 10. From 10 a.m.-2 p.m. guests can enjoy a wide selection of breakfast and

lunch items as well as their favorite morning cocktails.

For more information call 337-531-7668.

Outdoor movie night

Come out to Headquarters Field March 15 for an outdoor movie night complete with complimentary popcorn and drinks! Military spouse-owned businesses will set up shop as well as an evening full of fun activities. Event opens at 6:30 p.m. and movie begins at 7:30 p.m.



<https://johnson.armymwr.com/calendar/event/outdoor-movie-night/6224915/83168>

Cars and coffee

Join the Auto Skills Center for discussion about cars around a hot cup of coffee. Takes place every third Saturday from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. The next Cars and Coffee event is scheduled for March 16.

For more information call 337-531-6149.



FORT JOHNSON THINGS TO DO

Feb. 29: Stroke of Creativity Lake Charles, La.

Dive into the enchanting world of pointillism with our upcoming workshop: "Stroke of Creativity: Painting at the Museum!" Join us for an unforgettable experience led by Ashley Royer. In this workshop, guests will have the opportunity to explore the intricate technique of pointillism while painting their very own rendition of the majestic Sallier Oak.

All experience levels are welcome. Supplies are provided.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/942599310856702>



March 2: Relay for Life Lake Charles, La.

Welcome to the Relay For Life community! We celebrate our survivors, remember those we have lost and fight back as a community to end cancer.

At Relay For Life, you'll find community members taking turns walking around a track lined with luminaria bags. You'll have the opportunity to cheer for local survivors (or participate as a survivor) in our first lap of the day. Caregivers of cancer patients (currently or previously diagnosed) will then be invited to join the survivors.

<https://www.visitlakecharles.org/event/relay-for-life-relay-like-a-rockstar/44824/>

March 2: Louisiana Food Truck Festival Slidell, La.

As the name implies, this festival features dozens of food trucks offering a wide variety of unique food selections, all competing for "Best of the Fest." In addition to a bevy of food choices, enjoy live music, free face painting, and vendors offering a wide variety of products such as jewelry, clothing, candles, sweet treats and more.



<https://www.visitthenorthshore.com/event/louisiana-food-truck-festival/9612/>

March 9: Black Heritage Festival 2024 Lake Charles, La.

The 2024 Black Heritage Festival is underway. Bring out the entire family as we educate and celebrate the rich, dynamic, and wonderful

African American culture and heritage. The festival hosts food trucks, food vendors, merchandise vendors, live musical performances, empowerment sessions, dance performances, band performances, a kids zone, black pot cook off, health fair and more.

Admission is free.

<https://www.visitlakecharles.org/event/black-heritage-festival-2024/46510/>

March 17: Celtic Bayou Festival Lafayette, La.

Celtic Bayou Festival is a family-friendly festival held annually in March to celebrate St. Patrick's Day in the heart of Cajun country with traditional and modern Celtic music, Lenten crawfish boil, whiskey tasting, Celtic vendors, and much more! Come on out for some good ole craic et laissez les bons temps rouler!

<https://www.exploreloisiana.com/events/festivals/celtic-bayou-festival>



PERFORMANCE PLAN

MEAL PREP MENU



MONDAY

Beef & broccoli w/ steamed rice
 Pesto pasta w/ steamed asparagus
 Grilled chicken breast, brown rice
 and carrots



TUESDAY

Roasted turkey, mashed potatoes
 and green beans
 Herb baked chicken, roasted
 potatoes and mixed veggies



WEDNESDAY

Caribbean chicken w/ green beans
 Turkey yakisoba w/ asparagus



THURSDAY

Spaghetti w/ meat sauce
 Pesto pasta w/ steamed carrots



FRIDAY

Beef & broccoli w/ brown rice
 General Tso's chicken, rice
 and broccoli



Meal card holders use their MEC w/ CAC and BAS Soldiers pay \$7.00 (standard lunch rate).

Request meals at point of sale (restaurant). Soldiers can request two meals per day and no more than 14 meals per week.

Average calories per entree: 450-800

Entrees include:
 Side salad, fresh fruit, chips, dessert, flatware and more!

Starting Feb. 12 at Geronimo Warrior Restaurant and Patriot Warrior Restaurant
Now available for Soldiers!