



# FORGING THE

# WARRIOR SPIRIT

## THE JRTC & FORT POLK GUARDIAN

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Home of Heroes @ Fort Polk, LA

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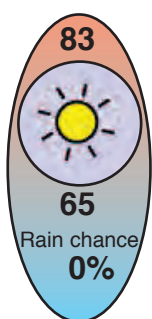


JRTC OPERATIONS GROUP

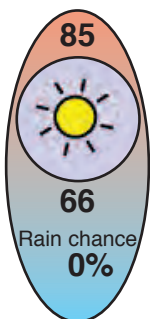
### FORSCOM CG visits JRTC, 'Bastogne' Soldiers

Gen. Michael X. Garrett, commander, United States Forces Command, visits with Soldiers from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) "Bastogne" during Rotation 20-10 at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, Sept. 15. The JRTC is the culminating crucible where individual and collective training is put to the test in a realistic, rigorous and relevant scenario, using the world class opposing forces of the 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment (Airborne), that prepares brigade combat teams to fight the nation's wars and defeat its enemies.

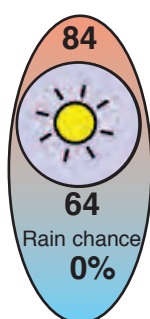
### Weekend weather



Saturday



Sunday



Monday

### Inside the Guardian

Time to fish ..... 3    Virtual school ..... 8

Help for suicide ..... 5    Hurricane recovery .... 9

Bradford shines ..... 7    Newest MWDs ..... 11



# Viewpoint

## In our view

Guardian staff asked the JRTC and Fort Polk community, "What's the most challenging part of virtual learning?" Here are their responses:



**Melissa Baugh:** "The internet itself. It's been a struggle to get the service we need for them to do the work they need to do."



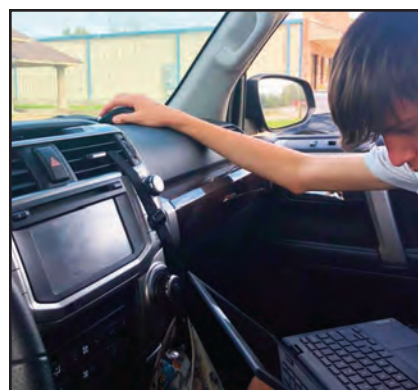
**Orianna Alfred:** "Trying to get access codes and logging in. It's a process with a lot of steps. There is a pin for everything. It's overwhelming to remember the passwords."



**Kasey Johnston:** "It's been challenging to keep my 2 year old occupied long enough for my son to get his work done. Otherwise, it's been seamless."



**Tiffany Campbell:** "My daughter Alyssa is in eighth grade. She does online private school, not virtual learning through the public schools. The most challenging part is keeping her on task and off Youtube."



**Birgitt Thurman:** "Trying to find WiFi. As a DeRidder parent, I've had to take my son, Noah, to Rosepine and the Beauregard Parish Library for internet connectivity."



**Connor Johnston, 6:** "Nothing ... maybe the internet."



**Hayley Newton:** "My daughter Remi (pictured) is in 4th grade. The biggest challenge is the lack of directions. Tons of links and documents with little instruction on exactly what is expected to be turned in and what is 'just a guide'."



## Guardian

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For more information on Fort Polk units and happenings visit the following Facebook pages: [@JRTCOperationsGrp](https://www.facebook.com/JRTCOperationsGrp), [@BayneJonesACH](https://www.facebook.com/BayneJonesACH) or [@fortpolkmwr](https://www.facebook.com/fortpolkmwr).



## Briefs

### DG app

The Army's new Digital Garrison mobile app is now available for Fort Polk. The DG app, which can be downloaded on Android and Apple devices, gives users access to resources about their local exchange, Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs, facility information, direct links to on-post housing entities and other services.

The app is portable among numerous installations.

Users can customize the app to meet their needs, and it is set to receive improvements through daily updates.

The local JRTC and Fort Polk app is no longer in use as the new Digital Garrison mobile app replaces it.



### e-Guardian email list

If you're interested in receiving the weekly e-Guardian to your inbox, then please send your personal email address to [kimberly.k.reischling.civ@mail.mil](mailto:kimberly.k.reischling.civ@mail.mil), and you'll be placed on the distribution list.

### ASP inventory

The Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk Ammunition Supply Point is closed for quarterly inventory Tuesday through Thursday. The ASP re-opens for business Sept. 25 at 7:30 a.m.

Customers are asked to plan accordingly.

For more information call Bonnie J. Edwards at 531-0950 or Jerry Jacobs at 531-4793.

### R2 Lunch and learn

The R2 Performance Center hosts its Brown Bag Lunch and Learn the first Wednesday of each month through Dec. 2.

The upcoming session is: Work/Life Balance vs Work/Life Integration which begins Oct. 7.

The workshop is held from noon to 12:45 p.m. at the R2 Performance Center, bldg 2380, at 8148 Alabama Ave.

The event is open to Soldiers, Family members and Department of the Army civilians interested in discussing performance and resilience skills, effective communication, and building trust, cohesion and positive relationships in the workplace.

This is a first-come, first-served opportunity to all that are interested.

**Note:** Due to current COVID-19 protective posture, only 11 seats are available.



*The Fort Polk Fire Station's ladder truck provides access to buildings up to seven stories tall, making it a vital weapon in the DES arsenal.*

ANGIE THORNE / GUARDIAN

## Ladder truck essential tool in DES arsenal

By **ANGIE THORNE**

Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. — Fires happen. When they do, it's crucial to have the equipment necessary to deploy at a moment's notice to save lives and property.

Charlie Strickland, Directorate of Emergency Services Fort Polk Fire Station battalion chief, said one of the most important tools Fort Polk's Fire Station has readily available is a ladder truck.

Strickland was the incident commander on scene during the most recent fire on the installation.

During the fire, Strickland said they used a ground monitor — a device used on large fires in which large amounts of water are required — that was putting out 500 gallons of water per minute.

"We were also using the fire monitor attached

to our engine that can fire a controllable high-capacity water jet at a fire. It was putting out 500 gallons of water per minute. In addition, there were firefighters with two landlines on the fire with 400 gallons of water per minute," he said.

The problem was firefighters couldn't get water on the fire based on where they were positioned.

"The streams of water were arching over the fire. We couldn't get a direct stream. If I wanted to get water on the fire, I had to cut back our pressure. When you do that, you are losing volume, so I'm not getting as much water as I needed to put out the fire," he said.

Strickland said that can happen when you are called to a fire in a cul de sac with cars parked on the street.

"We don't always have the luxury to set up exactly where we need to hit the fire perfectly with

Please see **Ladder**, page 6

## Catfish Derby offers youth anglers Family fun, prizes

**GUARDIAN STAFF**

FORT POLK, La. — Young fishermen and women from Fort Polk will encircle the installation's Youth Catfish Pond Sept. 26 for the annual Catfish Derby.

First cast is 7 a.m. and the derby concludes at 11 a.m.

Youth must be age 15 or younger to participate, and there is a recommended limit of six fish per child. Masks and social distancing rules are mandatory and the activities are limited to a maximum of 250 people at a time.

Anglers should bring their own fishing equipment.

Prizes will be awarded to youth who catch a tagged fish. Winners will get to pick a prize of their choice in the order in which they bring their tag to the check-in area. Prizes will also be raffled



throughout the event.

Parking will be in the Allen Memorial Library parking lot on Colorado Avenue, across from the Fort Polk Veterinary Treatment Facility. No parking will be allowed along Louisiana, Colorado or Utah avenues. Wyoming Avenue will be closed to through traffic.

The Youth Fishing Pond will be closed to fishing beginning Thursday to prepare for the event.

For more information contact Amy Brennan at [amy.c.brennan3.ctr@mail.mil](mailto:amy.c.brennan3.ctr@mail.mil) or call 531-2093.



## CoS asks force to fight against harmful behaviors

By DEVON SUITS  
Army News Service

WASHINGTON — Army Chief of Staff Gen. James C. McConville asked Army personnel Sept. 9 to unite as a cohesive team and step in to prevent suicide, racism and sexual harassment/assault among the ranks.

Negative behaviors continually harm the force by breaking the Army's trust with the American people, McConville said during the Virtual Maneuver Warfighter Conference.

As the embodiment of diversity in the U.S., Soldiers must continue to set the example and help others. Coalescing to combat against these harmful behaviors ties into the Army's core philosophy of "people first and winning matters," McConville said.



McConville

"If we have an Army that is a cohesive team, where everyone treats everyone with respect and takes care of each other ... everything else will follow," he said. "And I would argue that if everyone treats others with respect, it would eliminate sexual assault/harassment and racism throughout the force."

In addition to stopping malicious acts, Soldiers should also step in to support anyone harboring thoughts of suicide, he said.

"We have to connect with people. We have to connect squad leaders to their Soldiers ... (and) to their Families, especially with COVID-19 and social distancing where we are seeing Soldiers become isolated," he said. "We are seeing some Soldiers that don't have a support system. I need (the Army's) help on that. We have to push this down to the lowest level."

The philosophy of winning matters connects to readiness and lethality, said Gen. Michael Garrett, commander of U.S. Army Forces Command.

The Army will need its "tanks to be able to acquire, engage and move on to the next target faster than the adversary," Garrett said. "Our field artillery crews will need to be excellent in their actions to deliver accurate and timely fires."

The foundation of lethality starts with each Soldier, Garrett emphasized.

"Our investment in (each Soldier) and our care of him or her is what drives them to be everything that we need ... (and) be successful," said Garrett, as he reinforced the chief of staff's desire for a cohesive team.

It is up to every leader to set the example and provide proper training to ensure each Soldier feels empowered to intervene when necessary, Garrett added. Equally, each Soldier should take the time to learn more about their coworkers and connect on a deeper level.

### Great power competition

In his remarks, McConville also mentioned the Army has shifted its focus from counter-insur-



Army Chief of Staff Gen. James C. McConville asked all Army personnel Sept. 9 to unite as a cohesive team and step in to prevent suicide, racism and sexual harassment/assault among the ranks. In the photo, Soldiers attend Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention, or SHARP, training at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

gency operations to an era of great power competition against a near-peer threat like China and Russia.

**"If we have an Army that is a cohesive team, where everyone treats everyone with respect and takes care of each other ... everything else will follow ... it would eliminate sexual assault/harassment and racism throughout the force."**

Gen. JAMES C. MCCONVILLE  
Army Chief of Staff

Part of the Army's refinement efforts is tied to the improvement of doctrine. The force is currently evaluating its Multi-Domain Operations construct, which envisions the way the Army will fight across the land, sea, air, cyber and space domains.

"Great power competition does not mean great power conflict," said McConville, adding that the Army continues to modernize the force to remain competitive in a multi-domain battlespace.

Along with MDO, the force is also providing input to the Joint All Domain Command and Control concept.

The concept will allow the Army to group all command and control information under a non-linear product to bolster sensor and shooter capabilities.

In addition to improved doctrine, the Army is reevaluating the way it engages with a near-peer competitor using a Multi-Domain Task Force capability.

"We're in the process of experimenting and designing this organization," he said. The MDTF will "operate below the level of armed conflict and be in a position to deter or fight and win" if called upon to support.

The MDTF will be capable of providing long-range precision effects, support intelligence or information operations, and provide aid to Army cyber and space capabilities.

Long-range effects could penetrate a competitor's air and missile defense systems or other critical systems to help degrade an adversary's anti-access and area-denial capabilities, he said.



# Strong connectedness enhances quality of life

## ARMY RESILIENCE DIRECTORATE

WASHINGTON — Most people have friends, family members or colleagues they talk to on a daily basis, but how many of those people do they feel close to? Strong connectedness — the level of closeness a person feels to others — not only enhances quality of life, it can also save lives.

During September — Suicide Prevention Month — the Department of Defense is focusing on connectedness, using the slogan “Connect To Protect” to highlight how social connections and a sense of belonging can be a protective factor against suicide.

“Having that ‘connectedness’ with a friend or family member gives us the comfort of knowing we are not alone in (a difficult situation),” said Master Sgt. Kevin Edmondson, noncommissioned officer in charge, R2I and Training Division, Army Resilience Directorate. “(That) there is someone who we trust to have our best interest at heart, to provide us with the best advice they can provide, or sometimes it’s just having the ability to reach out and talk to ... someone that will listen without judging.”

But how are connections built with others? How does someone build the meaningful, close relationships that enhance their daily lives and serve as the foundation of support when they are going through tough times?

Authentic connection goes beyond acquaintance-level interactions, said Dr. Doreen Marshall, vice president of Mission Engagement at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

“When we are promoting connections or connectedness, we are talking about being vulnerable with someone else, being able to express feelings, being able to also receive that from another person,” she said.

Showing your authentic self, including your struggles and imperfections — in other words being vulnerable — is key to building close con-

nections with others. Being vulnerable is often seen as weakness, but according to Marshall, it’s the opposite.

“It’s actually hard to be vulnerable. It takes tremendous courage and strength to show vulnerability,” Marshall said.

Having the courage to risk showing vulnerability is especially needed of leaders in the Army.

“It’s important when someone in a position of power, or who has status, is able to show some vulnerability,” Marshall said. “When people are speaking out about their own mental health it gives the rest of us permission to do it because they are doing it in a very public way.”

“It’s hard to connect with someone who appears not to have any challenges. It is in our humanness that we are able to (connect).”

By being open about their own struggles, showing vulnerability and forming connections, leaders model this behavior for others and create an environment where their Soldiers, Family and friends feel closer to them and are not afraid to open up and talk about their own struggles.

“Transparency in Army leaders helps (Soldiers) realize that we are human, and we also experience challenges,” Edmondson said. “Many Soldiers believe that once you achieve a certain rank then all of the problems of the world go away — that’s not the case at all. Ask any Army leader and I’m sure everyone can provide a situation where they needed to seek assistance from a friend or professional to deal with a challenging situation.”

A first step leaders and Soldiers can take to

create closeness and connection with others is by moving beyond surface-level interactions and inviting deeper conversations. Marshall encourages people to be proactive when inviting these conversations, as fellow Soldiers, leaders or family members who are struggling may not necessarily come to them first.

“When you are struggling with depression, it’s hard to see that there are people out there to help you, it’s hard to engage help,” said Marshall.

Try the following tips to deepen your connections and have “real conversations” with others:

- Don’t just ask how someone is doing, ask “How are you feeling?” or “How are you coping?”

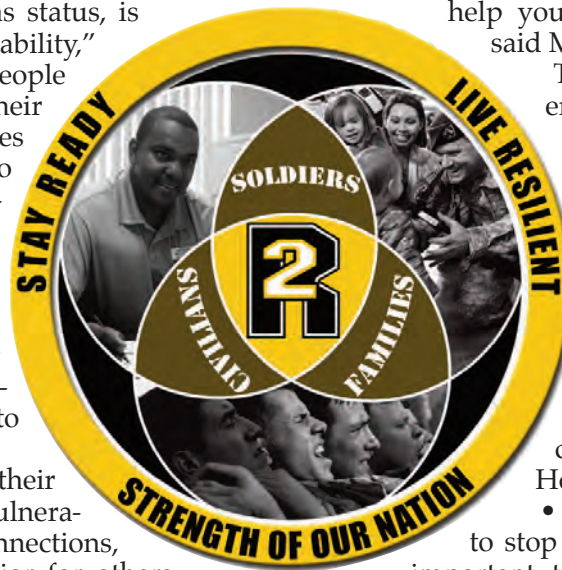
- Put yourself out there. Reach out to someone struggling and ask, “What can I do to help you?” “How can I make this easier for you? How can I get involved?”

- Make space in your busy life to stop and listen, say “This sounds important to you, and I want to hear more about how you are feeling.”

- Don’t necessarily give advice (unless asked), but instead ask people for their perspective, say “What do you think you need in this situation?”

- Share your own struggles. Everyone is impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, so it is an opportunity to find moments of shared vulnerability with others.

If you’re struggling with your mental health, talk to your primary care provider for a professional referral. If you’re in crisis or are concerned for a loved one, call the Military Crisis Line at (800) 273-8255 and press 1. If it’s a life-threatening situation go to the nearest emergency room or call 9-1-1.



## Suicide impacts everyone — but DoD Warrior Care there to help

### DoD WARRIOR CARE

WASHINGTON — Suicide affects everyone, and with more knowledge about suicide prevention, many are able to get help themselves or for a loved one.

The Department of Defense Warrior Care Recovery Coordination Program focuses on the recovery and reintegration of wounded, ill or injured service members, military care givers and their families. Many across the nation are feeling the stress, disconnectedness and financial insecurity that COVID-19 has brought, and for some this increases the risk of suicide. Warrior Care and the Department of Suicide Prevention Office provides the knowledge and resources to help prevent suicide.

When loved ones begin experiencing signs of excessive moodiness or sadness, change in personality or appearance and dangerous harmful behavior, it is a sign that help is needed. Social connectedness and a sense of belonging improve mental, physical and emotional well-being.

To some, it may seem hard to stay connected when they are told to practice social distancing and remain isolated while recovering from COVID-19, but it is possible. Warrior Care Recov-

ery Coordination programs provide virtual support forums and virtual wellness activities to keep you and your family feeling connected and active.

While those who commit suicide never know how it affects their families and friends, this final act deeply impacts those they leave behind. Suicide is associated with increased risk for mental health concerns for survivors based on the type and length of relationship with the person who committed suicide.

These include suicidal thoughts, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress increase. Postvention is an intervention that takes place after a suicide occurs; its purpose is to help those affected to recover and heal. Postvention serves as a positive step toward preventing the negative effects of suicide exposure.

Due to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 guidelines, most people are practicing social distancing, wearing masks and quarantining at home, but help to deal with suicide ideation remains available.

The DSPO provides suicide prevention outreach and educational information for the Military Community. The National Resource Directory provides an archive of resources for service

members, veterans and military families, including suicide prevention and postvention resources. There are also 24/7 free, confidential services such as the Veteran Crisis Line or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, or Military OneSource’s 24/7 Call Center. Support is available to service members, veterans, military caregivers and military families.

The SARS-CoV-2 virus and associated COVID-19 disease has upended daily lives and routines. With the sudden change in the social environment, going from face-to-face interaction to very limited interaction can affect your mental health and that of your loved ones. Finding healthy ways to cope with stress during this time will help everyone to remain strong.

“The DoD Warrior Care program touches on every aspect of the recovering service member’s transition, including education and employment opportunities, therapeutic recreational involvement and support for military care givers,” said Sandra Mason, program director, Warrior Care Recovery Coordination Program. “Remember: You are not alone!”

If you or someone you know is in crisis, contact the Veteran/Military Crisis Line for immediate assistance at (800) 273-8255 (press 1).



# Ladder

Continued from page 3

a monitor," he said.

That's when he called in the ladder truck.

Capt. Jesse Jackson, lead firefighter and remote ladder truck operator on the scene, said the ladder truck differs from other engines in the fire station's arsenal, not only because it has a ladder that can reach a seven-story building, such as Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, but it also has a large nozzle on the end of the ladder that allows for 360-degree directional water flow.

"I can point that nozzle anywhere I want to within 110 feet of that truck with up to 80 PSI (pound-force per square inch)," he said.

Jackson controlled the ladder pump remotely and was able to reposition the ladder and pump where the fire was burning the hottest.

"I have three levers and three switches that help me control that ladder pump as far as directing the water where it's needed most. The controls are located on the back of the truck, away from the fire and I was as safe as I could be," he said.

By this point, the roof had caved in and fire fighters couldn't get eyes on the fire to direct where the water stream needed to go.

"We already had a vent — the removal of heat, smoke and fire gasses from a structure to reduce injury to citizens and fire fighters. The vent (the roof) was caving in. Everyone was accounted for and I wasn't putting anyone inside. We were trying to do the best we could to keep it from crossing over to other buildings in the duplex," he said. "We had a water curtain — a sheet or wall of water — set up to keep the fire from spreading to the other occupants' homes," he said.

A firefighter climbed the ladder truck to get a bird's eye view of what was going on because Strickland said he couldn't safely put people on the roof to get him that information.

"We needed to get a visual on the fire and have him feed us the information we needed so we could use the pump on the end of the ladder to remotely aim water down into the fire," said Strickland. "As soon as we got the ladder truck in position, within two minutes, the majority of the fire was out."

Strickland said had they not had that ladder truck, they would have lost not only the homes where the fire originated, but also the other homes in that duplex.

Jackson said the fire station has used the ladder truck in many other fires on post.

"We had another fire with similar circumstances, but the entire top

floor of the building was on fire. We were called into that fire late — 30 to 45 minutes after it started. There was no way to save that structure, but we kept it from spreading further," he said.

That's one of the reasons Strickland said the ladder truck is ready for action each time the fire station is notified that there is a possible fire in progress.

"Though still at the station, the ladder truck is manned and ready to go if needed at any point. If we get to a fire and it requires considerable work to extinguish, the ladder truck is called in. When it gets to the fire, we hold it in reserve while trying to put the fire out with our other fire engines. If we think we have the fire under control without engaging the ladder truck, even though it's there, we won't call it in. But if we put firefighters on a roof or the roof vents, there is a good chance we are going to use that truck," he said.

Strickland said the Fort Polk ladder truck is a 2001 model.

"We are a bit behind in the technology available on the newest trucks. As an example, if we were only talking about replacing the fire pump on the ladder truck, we are conservatively seven pumps behind the newest pump available on the market right now," he said.

As old as the truck is, Strickland said the ladder truck is irreplaceable to the Fort Polk community. Fighting fires is just the beginning of the truck's usefulness to Fort Polk.

"It's not just about what it's designed to do, it's also about what else we can use it for," he said.

Strickland said Fort Polk firefighters have cultivated the uses of the truck and, over the years, come up with their own plans and procedures.

"We use that truck like a crescent wrench. It's a tool in our toolbox and we use every tool we have to its maximum capabilities," he said. "When it comes down to it, it's probably one of the most useful trucks we have in our fleet. The size of the truck and the amount of equipment we can put on it is impressive. It's a jack of all trades because it can do a little bit of everything."

Strickland said if a rescue truck goes down, they can call in the ladder truck to perform the rescue; if an engine goes down, the ladder truck can fight a structural fire; if someone gets hung up in a tree or on a water tower, they will use the ladder truck to get them down; it can be used for any predicament on the installation.

"That being said, we don't use it unless we have to. We have contin-



*Capt. Jesse Jackson, lead fire fighter and remote ladder truck operator at the scene of Fort Polk's most recent fire, shows off the remote knobs and levers he uses to control the ladder and nozzle on the Fort Polk's ladder truck.*

ANGIE THORNE / GUARDIAN

gency plans for every situation and do our best to take care of this truck so we have it when we need it. I'd rather have it and not need it than need it and not have it," he said.

With the ladder's capability to reach 110 feet, Strickland said there is no other way to get the commanding general or garrison commander out of their offices in case of a fire at bldg 350.

"It's the same scenario at BJACH. We have a designated parking spot for that truck at the hospital. It's not only a necessary means of escape, it's also the only way we can get water up to the seventh floor and extend a hose line," he said. "The same would be true in providing a secondary escape route for air traffic controllers at the air field. We have used the truck to save people trapped on the red and white tower closest to BJACH."

Another use is in a mass decontamination scenario. Strickland said nobody wants to hear that the ladder truck can and has been used in hazardous materials situations for

an emergency gross decontamination because that's not what it's designed for, but that doesn't mean it's any less viable a choice in that situation.

"It takes an hour to set up a tent to decontaminate people. It takes five minutes to set up this truck and begin getting the hazardous material off of them. I think it was in 2002, we had an anthrax scare and we used it for that purpose. We set up and as people came out of what was the old commissary, they went under a deluge of water from our ladder truck and into a safe area," he said.

Jackson said it's conceivable that you could have 4,000 people decontaminated before the decontamination tent was set up.

No matter what the ladder truck is used for, Jackson said it is essential when it comes to saving the lives of Soldiers, civilians and firefighters.

"That's what it's built for. It's like a huge insurance policy for Fort Polk," he said.



# Parkway Elementary educator named Louisiana Principal of Year

By **JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES**

Public affairs specialist

FORT POLK, La. — Dione Bradford, principal, Parkway Elementary School was honored recently at the Cecil J. Picard Educator of Excellence Gala by the Louisiana Department of Education as the 2021 Principal of the Year.

Bradford, the daughter of a retired Army officer and two Louisiana educators, will work to build networks among principals across the state and represent the state at the regional and national levels. As winner of the coveted title, Bradford said she plans to bridge gaps and build relationships across the state to benefit all students in Louisiana.

The Louisiana Department of Education honors students, teachers and principals annually in partnership with Dream Teachers and the Louisiana Association of Principals. The nomination process begins each school year with nomination packets due in mid-October. The competition for principal of the year is stiff. There are 70 school districts in the state of Louisiana. Each district nominates three principals who exemplify excellence in education at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Of the 210 individuals nominated, the field is narrowed to nine finalists and one winner is selected from each category. Of those finalists, one principal is selected as the overall winner.

Vernon Parish School Board Superintendent James Williams said winning this honor is a tremendous achievement and a testament to Bradford's dedication to children, parents and stakeholders.

He said Bradford exemplified the characteristics of a hardworking and dedicated employee from the beginning.

"Ms. Bradford is a very deserving recipient for the State of Louisiana Principal of the Year," he said. "Ms. Bradford works tirelessly to strive for continued and consistent academic improvement when it comes to accountability for her school. She has very high expectations for her students, faculty and staff at Parkway Elementary. She leads by example and truly loves her students, staff and school. She has spent her entire life helping children."

According to Bradford's biography on the Department of Education's award write up, the leadership she provides to Parkway continues to set the standard for academic achievement. Consistently receiving high ratings, the school was recognized last year for Top Gains of 10.1 growth points and the most growth in the district with a school

performance increase of 9.6 points.

What this means is that at Parkway, each student increased overall test scores and performance between third and fourth grade, said Tiffany Koch, School Liaison Officer for the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk. This distinction is reflected by two components of performance standards that resulted in increased end of year test scores and student growth.

"As an educator by trade this an amazing accomplishment for Ms. Bradford," Koch said. "It showcases her leadership and how she leads her staff with the mantra that at Parkway: Everyone is Loved, Everyone Learns and Everyone Grows. It's an absolute honor to work with such a dedicated leader and educator as we provide quality education for our military Families during their time here at Fort Polk"

With nearly 600 students, Parkway is more than 90% military affiliated and on average gains and loses five to seven students monthly. Despite the challenges of a transient population, Bradford remains resilient and ensures that a notable learning impact is made for all students. Bradford said the majority of Parkway's staff is also military affiliated.

"They get it, they understand that kids serve too and their Families need support in ways that maybe they don't need in other areas of the state," she said.

She explained that the military counselors and staff work hard to ensure that the transition of military students as they move in and out of the district is a smooth one.

Col. Ryan Roseberry, Fort Polk garrison commander, said education for military children is one of the most important issues for incoming Army personnel.

"Education is the number one quality of life issue for our military Families and knowing that our principal at Parkway Elementary is the Principal of the Year is a big lift for our Families and their confidence in our school system," he said.

Bradford said she wanted to be a dentist growing up. As the daughter of two teachers, she thought she'd be the one to break tradition and take a new path.

She discovered her love for the educational growth and development of children while a student at Deridder High School. She had a part-time job helping out at the Mother Goose Day Care center.

"I fell in love with those kids and what I was able to do working at that day care center during the summers," Bradford said. "My freshman year at Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge, I



CHUCK CANNON / COMMAND INFORMATION OFFICER

*Dione Bradford, principal, Parkway Elementary School and the Louisiana Principal of the Year for 2021, visits with Sofia Borquez, 7, daughter of Sgt. 1st Class Manuel Borquez, 5th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, and Jasmine Borquez, Aug. 25.*

changed my major from biology to education."

Her father, Stacy Bradford, a former communications officer and Army retiree, began his teaching career at South Polk Elementary School when Dione was a third grader in Deridder.

"I've watched Dione grown into who she is," Stacy, now a fourth grade teacher at Parkway, said. "She was destined for something like this. She's always had a great attitude, she always does her very best and she has always reached for excellence."

He said not only does she strive for personal excellence, she encourages and pushes those around her

to maximize their full potential. "I think the state made a very good choice in her selection because she is an all-around great person to work with and to work for," he said.

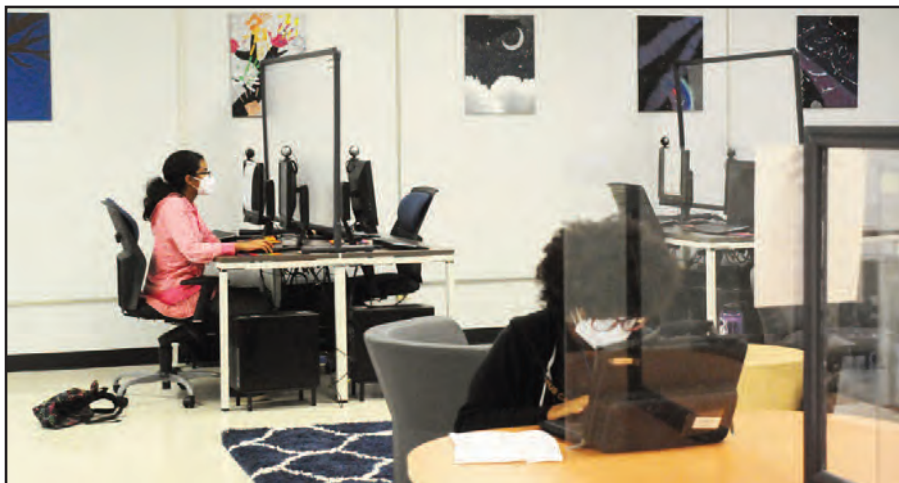
Bradford said she began teaching third grade at West Leesville Elementary. A photo of her first class, she affectionately refers to as the original Bradford's Best, is proudly displayed in her office.

"In 2002, when I was 21 years old, I got the keys to room 21, and I had 21 students in my first class," she said. "I am the same Dione Bradford today. Those poor babies in that picture, they didn't know

Please see **POY**, page 8



# Students benefit from Fort Polk's temporary Wi-Fi hotspots



*Simone Perry, 13, (left) an eighth grade student at Leesville Junior High School, and her sister, Sarah Perry, 15, a student at Leesville High School, work on assignments for virtual school Sept. 15 at a temporary Wi-Fi hotspot located at Fort Polk's Siegfried Youth Center. Hotspots were provided in several locations to help students with virtual schooling. The aftermath of Hurricane Laura left internet service spotty in many areas.*



*Grant Baugh, 10, a fifth grade student at Vernon Middle School, watches a science video about lab safety for virtual school Sept. 15 at a temporary Wi-Fi hotspot located at Fort Polk's Education Center as his mom, Melissa Baugh, looks on.*



*Connor Johnston, 6, a first grade student at Parkway Elementary School, (left) takes advantage of a temporary hotspot at Fort Polk's Education Center as he shows his mom, Kasey Johnston, information about a writer's workshop he is taking part in for virtual school Sept. 15.*

ANGIE THORNE / GUARDIAN

## POY

Continued from page 7

that I was learning right alongside them, but I made sure they knew that each and every one of them was special and had potential and that they were the best."

She still refers to her students as Bradford's Best because she encourages all of her students to do their best in school and in everything they do.

"Every student is top notch," she said.

She continued in the classroom for 14 years and completed a master's degree in Educational Leadership from McNeese State University before joining the administrative staff at South Polk Elementary School as the assistant principal in 2016.

When the school closed its doors and was replaced by Parkway Elementary, she continued as assistant principal until her promotion in 2017.

Being Principal of the Year is more than just honoring the individual, Bradford said.

"The title will allow me to bring light to Parkway and our district," she said. "Vernon Parish is always in the top five and this is our opportunity to put our district in the spotlight. We have the

hardest working teachers in the state. We are at the top of our game in Vernon Parish."

Bradford was nominated by her peers in Vernon Parish as Elementary School Principal of the Year. In addition to a banana split she treated herself to and the trophy she received, the principal of the year title provides a platform and voice to share successes with other school principals, build networks and work to improve the quality of education for every child in the state. She said she will have the opportunity to explore Louisiana, meet with other school administrators and travel to Washington, D.C.

Bradford vouches for the educational standards and the highly qualified faculty and staff in Vernon Parish.

"If you are looking for a district that puts people first, that adheres to Tier 1 curriculum, this is the school district for you," she said. "If it becomes a community and school effort, we will continue to get better. It is a team effort. When we say our stakeholders mean the world to us in Vernon Parish, we mean that."

Bradford said she defines stakeholders as the students, parents, teachers, district leaders and community members who work hard every day.

"When you are talking about our district, you are talking about all of us. We all have a vested interest in the success of our schools and our students," she said.

Bradford attributes her win to her team. She said her relationship with the JRTC and Fort Polk leadership is strong.

"This honor is the current reality for our school and our district," she said. "This is an opportunity to highlight the strides made together, for the love of the kids that made this possible. This recognition is about changing attitudes. Bradford said win or lose, the passion for education and for students is what motivates and drives her every day.

**Editor's note:** To learn more about Tier 1 curriculum, educational initiatives in Louisiana as well as the Teacher and Principal of the Year competition visit the Department of Education website at [www.louisianabelieves.com](http://www.louisianabelieves.com).



# JRTC, Fort Polk continues Hurricane Laura recovery efforts

GUARDIAN STAFF

FORT POLK, La. — More than three weeks after Hurricane Laura slammed into the south Louisiana coast and crashed through Fort Polk with 130 mph winds, the scars are still visible across the installation.

Splintered trees, tarps on roofs and sporadic power outages continue to remind Fort Polk residents and workers of the storm's strength.

But despite these visible reminders, the resiliency and tenacity of the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk team continues to make daily headway, continuing day-to-day operations and the primary mission: Preparing infantry brigade combat teams to survive and win against the nation's enemies.

The following improvements of note have been realized since Laura's arrival on Aug. 28:

- **Golf Course Running Trail.** Directorate of Public Works Forestry mobilized equipment to remove trees on the golf course trail. They are currently (safely) removing hanging limbs with the man lift near the power lines. The task was complete as of Sept. 13.

- **Marion-Bonner Running Trail (North Fort Running Trail).** Trail opened for use Sept. 12. DPW Operations and Maintenance Division, with The City of Leesville, began removing felled and dangerous trees from Marion Bonner Park.

- **Perimeter Fence.** Pride Industries continued to execute fence repairs and performing assessment for material procurement for cleared areas. Pride has removed trees and made temporary repairs to the perimeter fencing behind Range 23 and Range 23A. This effort completed temporary repairs for the perimeter fence. The current schedule consists of permanent repairs along La. Hwy 467, from Access Control Point 2 to Castor Gate.

- **Signage.** Directional signs are scheduled for completion today. Facility identification signage is approximately 87% complete with anticipated completion by Oct. 17.

- **Tree removal.** Tree removal efforts continue at Siegfried Youth Center until complete. Upon completion of the South Fort effort, DPW will address the 161 trees on North Fort once 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) moves into the box for Rotation 20-10.

- **Building damage assessment.** The Corps of Engineers assessed 54 facilities since arrival on Sept. 8 identified as sustaining major damage. DPW personnel are continuing to assess garrison facilities for damage, and have assessed 1,280 facilities since Aug. 28. Preliminary estimates so far have the damage assessment at more than \$10 million. This value will increase as more facilities are inspected and estimates refined. Estimated completion date for assessments is today.

- **Housing.** Corvias and the installation housing assistance office have assessed 1,465 homes which received damage from Hurricane Laura. The insurance estimator teams began assessment for insurance claims on Sept. 11. Munie, a tree and debris removal company, is continuing green debris cleanup in all three neighborhoods. Munie is at 90% complete on debris cleanup in all areas and the large stumps and hanging limbs are pending, with an estimated 50 large trees and limbs remaining. Corvias will have all neighborhoods complete by Sept. 25. The USAG-Housing Assistance Office is continuing between occupan-



CHUCK CANNON / GUARDIAN



cy maintenance of homes in preparation for incoming Families.

- **Pest Control.** Sunday, the DPW Environmental and Natural Resource Management Division contractor utilized backpack sprayers along the military working dog kennels and foliage to address the mosquito problem.

**Top:** Extensive damage was done to the roofs of housing on Fort Polk during Hurricane Laura.

**Middle:** Downed power lines litter the roadside leading to Polk Army Air Field.

**Right:** The perimeter fence of the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk was damaged in numerous places by falling trees, the result of Hurricane Laura's 130 miles per hour winds.





# In these difficult times, do you know what your child is thinking?

By **GLADYS MOSBY**

ACS Family Advocacy program specialist

FORT POLK, La. — This year has been stacked with record-breaking events. As adults it's hard to comprehend the reality and the why of all of the things happening at a rapid pace from COVID-19, the economic state of the nation, virtual classrooms, wearing masks, understanding the multiple hurricanes occurring in towns, communities and neighboring locations and more.

All of these things and the resulting impacts, along with the changes being taken to address and get through them, can leave even the most resilient individual confused, perplexed and in wonderment about the way ahead.

What about children? How are they coping? What are they saying—or not saying—that really needs to be heard?

Simple tips on addressing these concerns are presented very well in the following article published by the American Psychological Association. (2015, November 1). How to talk to children about difficult news, found at [www.apa.org/topics/talking-children](http://www.apa.org/topics/talking-children).

Children's lives are touched by trauma on a regular basis, no matter how much parents or teachers try to keep the "bad things" away. Instead of shielding children from the dangers, violence or tragedies around us, adults should talk to kids about what is happening. The conversation may not seem easy, but taking a proactive stance, discussing difficult events in age-appropriate language can help a child feel safer and more secure.

As much as adults may try to avoid difficult topics, children often learn or know when something sad or scary happens. If adults don't talk to them about it, a child may overestimate what is wrong or misunderstand adults' silence. Be the first to bring up the difficult topic. When parents tackle difficult conversations, they let their children know that they are available and supportive.

## Guide the conversation

- Think about what you want to say. It's OK to practice in your head, to a mirror or with another adult. Some advanced planning may make the discussion easier. You won't have to think about it off the top of your head.



- Find a quiet moment. Perhaps this is after dinner or while making the next day's lunch. This is a time and place where your children can be the center of your attention.

- Find out what they know. For example, if there was a shooting at a school or a bomb set off in another country, ask them "What have you heard about this?" And then listen. Listen. Listen. And listen more.

- Share your feelings with your child. It is OK to acknowledge your feelings with your children. They see you are human. They also get a chance to see that even though upset, you can pull yourself together and continue on. Parents hear it often: Be a role model. This applies to emotions, too.

- Tell the truth. Lay out the facts at a level they can understand. You do not need to give graphic details. For young children, you may need to have a conversation about what death means (no longer feel anything, not hungry, thirsty, scared or hurting; they will never see them again, but can hold their memories in our hearts and heads.)

- Say, "I don't know." Sometimes the answer to the question is "I don't know." "Why did the bad people do this?" "I don't know," fits.

- Above all, reassure. At the end of the conversation, reassure your children that you will do

everything you know how to do to keep them safe and to watch out for them. Reassure them that you will be available to answer any questions or talk about this topic again in the future. Reassure them that they are loved.

## Take care of yourself

Talking about and experiencing difficult news and tragedies can be exhausting. Don't forget to take care of yourself:

- Turn off the news.
- Take a break.
- Engage in physical activity.
- Do something that will lift your spirits and those of your family.

## Seek professional help

These tips and strategies can help you guide your children through the current crisis. If you are feeling stuck, overwhelmed or your child shows persistent signs of stress or agitation, you may want to consider talking to someone who could help.

A licensed mental health professional such as a psychologist can assist you in develop and appropriate strategy for moving forward.

The Fort Polk Family Advocacy Program provides information and education on marriage, parenting, crisis intervention, new parent support services and victim advocacy. Call 531-1938 for more information.

# Soldier's service honors memory of sister that died on 9/11

By **Maj. JEAN KRATZER**

Task Force Spartan

UNDISCLOSED LOCATION — After 32 years of service, New York National Guard Lt. Col. Michael Rodriguez says he still puts on his military uniform to honor his sister, who was killed in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center towers in New York 19 years ago.

"The weekend before the twin towers were attacked, we were playing volleyball with her family in Rockaway, Queens, and that would be it, the last time I would see her," said Rodriguez, who is on his third deployment to the Middle East with the 42nd Infantry Division.

His older sister, Lisa King-Johnson, 34, and the mother of two girls, worked for Keefe, Bruyette & Woods, on the 89th floor south tower.

"I remember that morning so clearly when the towers collapsed. A friend called me and asked if I was OK. I had no clue what she was talking

about," he remembered.

Rodriguez lived in Brooklyn at the time and had worked at the World Trade Center five months before the attacks.

"She told me the towers were hit by planes and on fire. I immediately left my apartment and took the subway to Manhattan and stopped on Wall Street. I kept trying to call her; she wasn't answering," he said. "After I hung up the phone, I looked up, and people were running and screaming away from the rubble."

Rodriguez knew the only way he could help search for his sister was to report to the Lexington Armory, where he was a platoon leader for Bravo Company, 105th Infantry Regiment under the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

Roughly two platoons from Bravo Company deployed further downtown in two public buses.

"Our mission was to assist the New York Police Department and to help assist with security and recovery efforts. I knew this was the only

way I could try to find her," said Rodriguez.

Her body was found roughly 10 days after the collapse of the tower.

"She was a fantastic mother and an incredible artist. She loved to sketch, and she made a name for herself in the corporate world," he said.

"Our family felt fortunate for all the time we had with her through the years, but we were also grateful that we were able to bury her properly and have that closure," Rodriguez said.

In 2003, while Rodriguez was deployed to Iraq, he was asked to speak about the loss of his sister at a 9/11 remembrance event.

Rodriguez said he was able to find purpose in despair after the loss of Lisa and found meaning in serving his country. "It was personal going to Iraq; the uniform has always been a part of my healing. Facing her loss has helped me cope, but being a part of the Army also became a way of being a part of my sister's passing and doing my part to fight for her," he said.



# AAFES Briefs

## Clothing plan increase

Soldiers at Fort Polk can purchase up to \$1,000 in qualifying merchandise on their Military Star Military Clothing Plan interest free, doubling the plan's original credit limit of \$500. The increase comes as the Exchange rolls out the new Army Green Service Uniform, expected to be available in most stateside Army Military Clothing stores by December and at overseas locations by March 2021.

## Holiday shopping

Military shoppers looking to get a head start on holiday shopping while avoiding crowds can turn to the Army and Air Force Exchange Service 12 Weeks of Savings. Through Nov. 25, shoppers will find Black Friday prices in-store and on **ShopMyExchange.com** on electronics, clothing, jewelry, sporting goods and more. New deals and specials will roll out each Friday for 12 weeks.

Military shoppers can find these weekly deals by picking up the sales flier at their local Exchange or by visiting **ShopMyExchange.com** and clicking on Weekly Ad.

Veterans using their Exchange benefit can take advantage of 12 Weeks of Savings too. Veterans can find out more about their shopping benefits at Exchange's community Hub page at <https://bit.ly/Vets4Life>.

## Operation Fun

The Army and Air Force Exchange Service and The Walt Disney Studios are helping military Families create magic moments at home with Operation Fun, a series of free online movie screenings and weekly virtual activities.

Military Families can access everything the campaign has to offer through the Exchange's XKids interactive community Hub page at **ShopMyExchange.com/XKids**, or check out the Exchange Facebook page for a video breakdown of activities from the Exchange XKids.

The fun kicks off with PixarFest, a celebration running through the end of September. Kids can log on to the Hub every Sunday to find a new Pixar-themed activity sheet, along with other activities and videos. A military-exclusive online screening of "Toy Story 4" is scheduled for 3 p.m. Sept. 25. Operation Fun movie streams can be accessed from the Hub and are open to authorized shoppers with a **ShopMyExchange.com** account, though the number of viewers who can tune in at once is limited. Movies are available for streaming for 48 hours so Families around the world can join the fun.

## Home for holidays

With the swipe of a card, shoppers at Fort Polk and U.S. military installations worldwide will get a chance to win their share of \$25,000 in cash during the Military Star card's Home for the Holidays sweepstakes.



MWD Orca



MWD Grimm

Sgt. KRISTINA M. VANDERZANDEN / 50th MWD DETACHMENT

## MWD add to ranks

*The two newest members of the 50th Military Working Dog Detachment, 519th Military Police Battalion, are Grimm (left) and Orca. Both MWDs are 2-year-old German Shepherds and recent graduates of*

*the dog training school at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas. Grimm's specialty is explosives detection, while Orca's is narcotics detection. Both canines are also trained to work patrol.*

# Soldiers punished for UCMJ violations

## OSJA

FORT POLK, La. — For an Army to be successful, the Manual for Courts-Martial says good order and discipline must be maintained. It states those are some of its purposes, along with promoting justice, efficiency and effectiveness in the military establishment and strengthening the national security of the U.S.

The commanding general and subordinate commanders at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk take good order and discipline seriously. Across Fort Polk, the following disciplinary issues continue to be prevalent: Breaking quarantine and isolation orders, violating General Order No. 1, driving under the influence of alcohol, wrongful use/possession of controlled substances, fraternization, sexual assault and domestic abuse.

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

- A sergeant, assigned to 317th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), was separated under Chapter 14-12c (Commission of a Serious Offense) for driving under the influence of alcohol. The Soldier's service was characterized as General Under Honorable Conditions. Generally, this characterization of service results in the loss of a service member's educational benefits.

- A specialist, assigned to 3rd Squadron, 89th

Cavalry Regiment, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div (LI), was punished under Article 15 for wrongfully using Tetrahydrocannabinol, a Schedule 1 controlled substance, in violation of Article 112a, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to E-3, suspended, to be automatically remitted if not vacated on or before March 17; forfeiture of \$1,085 pay for one-month; extra-duty for 45 days; restriction for 45 days.

- A specialist, assigned to 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div (LI), was punished under Article 15 for failing to report in violation of Article 86, UCMJ. The Soldier was sentenced to restriction for 14-days.

- A private first class, assigned to 5th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div (LI), was punished under Article 15 for failing to obey a lawful order in violation of Article 92, UCMJ. The Soldier was sentenced to a reduction to E-2; 14 days of extra-duty; 14 days of restriction; and an oral reprimand.

- A private first class, assigned to 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div (LI), was punished under Article 15 for failing to report on five separate occasions, and disobeyed a lawful order from a commissioned officer on three separate occasions, in violation of Article 86 and 91, UCMJ. The Soldier was sentenced to a reduction to E-2; forfeiture of \$1,085 pay for one-month; extra-duty for 45 days; and restriction for 45 days.

