



# FORGING THE WARRIOR SPIRIT

## THE JRTC & FORT POLK GUARDIAN

Vol. 47, No. 30

Home of Heroes @ Fort Polk, LA

July 24, 2020

### Task Force Ramrod leading way at West Point

By CAPT. SAMANTHA BROWN

3rd BCT, 10th MTN Div

WEST POINT, N.Y. — Task Force Ramrod Soldiers are ready to accomplish the mission, with Lt. Col. Andrew K. Sinden, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment and Task Force Ramrod commander, leading the way.

Various units from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division and across the Army have joined forces to support The U.S. Military Academy at West Point's cadet summer training. TF Ramrod has deployed more than 1,000 Soldiers to train 3,000 West Point cadets — future Army officers.

The success of this mission is attributed to the unyielding efforts of Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank and the Fort Polk community. Units from across the installation provided resources and support for COVID-19 screening and testing, keeping TF Ramrod's combat power healthy and strong. They also provided training equipment for Soldiers during controlled monitoring at the intermediate staging base, which proved to be instrumental in preparation for the United State Military Academy at West Point's cadet summer training. Fort Polk set the stage for TF Ramrod to exceed the standard.

The task force is conducting individual and crew level certification training, helping cadets become more proficient each day. The training includes team live fire exercises, weapons qualification ranges, land navigation, expert field medal badge training and expert infantry/expert Soldier badge training.

Task Force Ramrod Soldiers will continue to



*Soldiers with 2nd Bn, 2nd Infantry Regiment and 5th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment teach West Point cadets about the sound of artillery on the call for fire lane. At the end of training, the cadets observed more than 700 artillery rounds.*

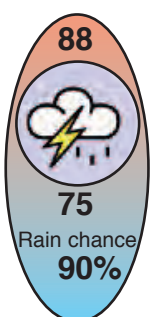
SGT SEITH KLOOSTER/3RD BCT, 10TH MTN DIV

make a positive impact across the Army, as they instill the basic Soldier fundamentals into the future leaders of the Army. Please follow TF Ram-

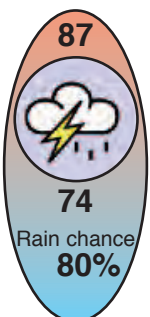
rod on their Facebook page.

Please see TF Ramrod, page 5

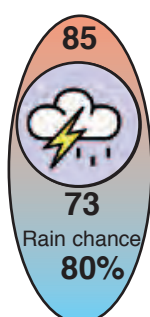
### Weekend weather



Friday



Saturday



Sunday

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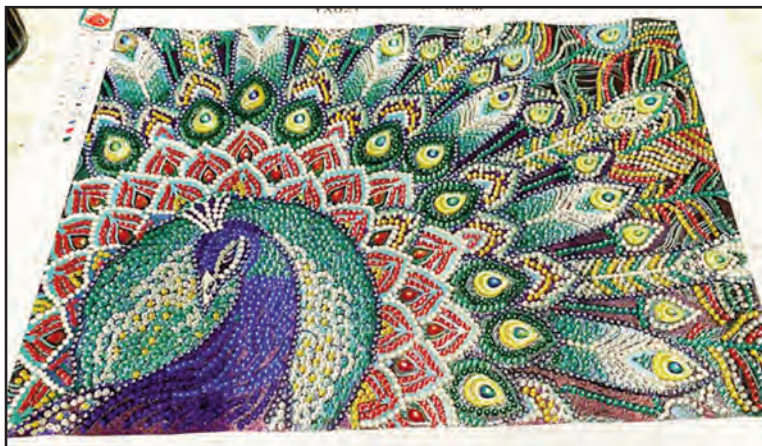
# Viewpoint

## In our view

Guardian staff asked the JRTC and Fort Polk community:  
"What new skill, hobby or activity have you picked up to pass time during the pandemic?"  
Here are their responses:



**Meagan Risch:** "I bake and sell bread, and I've been honing my homesteading skills."



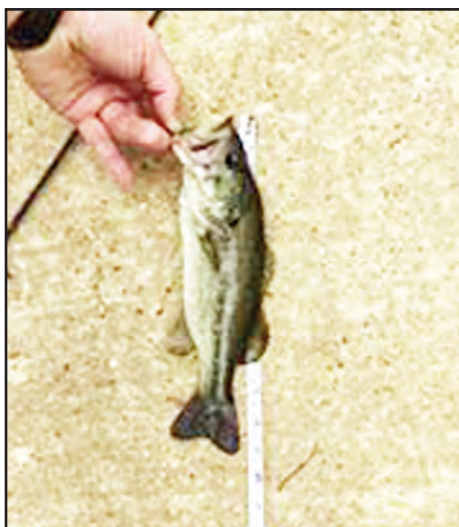
**Heather Pagella Gant:** "I picked up diamond painting. You basically stick little resin 'diamonds' onto an adhesive surface with a special applicator tool. The adhesive surface has either letters or symbols printed on it so you know where to place the pieces. It's pretty much like a paint by number — except with 'diamonds'."



**Dennis Roberson Jr.:** "I've been putting my wife through COVID boot camp. (Disclaimer: this picture was just for fun.)"



**Jasmine Borquez:** "We've learned to sew and taught our daughter."



**Thomas Moore:** "It isn't a new hobby, but this is one that helps pass the time."



**Veronica Lopez:** "I've picked up wood burning. I love art; drawing has always been something I loved."



## Guardian

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



## Briefs

### Vehicle release

The Directorate of Emergency Services Traffic Section will release the following vehicles to a towing company for disposal on Aug. 19, if they remain unclaimed. Vehicles are listed with the last four numbers of their VIN number.

If one of these vehicles belongs to you, please contact the Fort Polk Police Traffic Section at 531-1806/2677.

2002	Pontiac	Bonneville	3776
2003	Chevrolet	Cavalier	7798
2002	Pontiac	Firebird	4585
2002	Ford	Taurus	0589
2005	Nissan	Sentra	7413
2010	Chevrolet	Malibu	9609
1999	Jeep	Cherokee	5435
2002	Nissan	Altima	5680
2012	Toyota	Tacoma	0296
2007	Pontiac	Grand Prix	1872
2005	Mitsubishi	Galant GTS	8409
2007	Toyota	Camry	7497
2008	Ford	F250	1075
2002	Subaru	Impreza	6083

### R2 performance center

The R2 Performance Center hosts a brown-bag "Lunch and Learn: Building Trust in the Workplace" the first Wednesday of each month beginning Aug. 5 (runs through Dec. 2).

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

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

Slots are first come, first served. Due to COVID-19 protective posture, only 11 seats are available. For more details or to register call 531-2427.

### 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 for non-government email users.

### BOSS events

Listed below are upcoming and free Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers events:

Today — Cooking demonstration class; 6 p.m. at the Warrior Center

July 26 — Mini golf and go-karts; at 1 p.m. at Klubs and Karts

For more information call 531-1948.

## Forging the Warrior Spirit

### CG: 'Curl, Gardner reflect world famous JRTC motto'

**Editor's note:** Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commander, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, made the following remarks on the occasion of the JRTC Operations Group change of command ceremony July 16.

FORT POLK, La. — ALL THE WAY and Good morning to the Family and Friends of the Joint Readiness Training Center's Operations Group. Thank you for joining us today for this Army tradition — the Change of Command, in front of one of the most legendary headquarters in the Army — our Operations Group.

For those watching on-line, thank you for participating despite COVID-19 conditions — your support to the Gardner and Curl Families is greatly appreciated.

SMA (R) Gates; The Gardner Family in New York, New Jersey and Florida; the Curl Family in Wellsville, NY; distinguished members of our surrounding communities; Commanders and CSMs; Soldiers and Families of JRTC and Fort Polk — thank you for joining us as Col. Dave Gardner passes the Operations Group colors to Col. Jason Curl. I am honored this morning to speak about these two officer; both reflect the world famous, JRTC motto — Forging the Warrior Spirit.

Today is unique — we proudly call them ours — Fort Polk's — but this professional team is the U.S. Army's, Operations Group — for the past two years, Col. Dave Gardner and this incredible Team have enhanced the readiness of the Army.

Dave Gardner: Call-sign: OSCAR-6; JRTC salutes you. Soldiers want to be in the Operations Group, 509th Geronimo, and the 353rd Tiger Battalion because of your leadership. Thanks for your positive, professional style — always pushing JRTC and Fort Polk forward. You are an outstanding role model and an engaged Army leader.

To be selected as the Commander of the Operations Group — the COG — is an incredible pro-

fessional honor. This officer is selected from across all of the Brigade Commanders in the Army to lead the effort to train our Infantry Brigade Combat Teams — to develop training rotations that are as close to combat as the U.S. Army can create. As you review Dave Gardner's bio, it is evident why he was our JRTC COG for the last 24-months, having served in multiple divisions, commanded with distinction at the company, battalion and BCT levels — in both Light and Heavy formations — and having deployed for multiple combat tours. Dave Gardner was the officer that could best lead the effort in Forging the Warrior Spirit at JRTC.

Col. Gardner would often describe JRTC as the "Antidote to America's First Battles" — every Leader and the over 80,000 Soldiers that entered the Box during Dave's 16 rotations as the COG — would step forward and state that the Operations Group provided them with world-class training, a realistic and aggressive opposing force, and Observer Coach Trainers that were personally invested in helping formations to build combat readiness in their rotation — that they as American Soldiers felt confident in the rigorous level of training at JRTC preparing them to win in America's next first battle.

Dave was given the responsibility by two Chiefs of Staff of the Army and two FORSCOM Commanders to enhance the training realism in the Box — to ensure that Soldiers, Leaders and Units were challenged in a Crucible training event — and to bring Rigor to the Box in order to maintain the combat readiness of our IBCTs. A doctrinal expert and a brilliant trainer, who fought at 2 CTCs as a BCT Commander, Dave brought rigor to JRTC. He developed the concept of Acceslerated RSOI — increasing unit time in the Box, he expanded the Peason Ridge live fire exercise to a multi-echeloned BCT live fire, he

Please see **Warriors**, page 6

## JRTC Ops Gp hosts change of command

By **ANGIE THORNE**

Public affairs specialist

FORT POLK, La. — The Joint Readiness Training Center Operations Group change of command ceremony took place July 16 in front of Ops Grp headquarters — also known as the glass house.

Col. David W. Gardner, outgoing commander, relinquished command to Col. Jason A. Curl, incoming commander.

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, JRTC and Fort Polk commanding general, presided over the change of command.

Gardner said the observer coach trainers, instructors and Geronimo paratroopers of Operations Group want to be here (at JRTC).

"They are not only getting their Ph.D. in decisive action war fighting, they are helping those with whom they work to navigate and learn from the crucible training experience at the Joint

Readiness Training Center," he said. "Although we do not know where our nation's next war might be, the men and women of our Army must be ready."

Gardner said the Soldiers and leadership that make up Operations Group are the best.

"Operations Group is proud JRTC is the premier crucible training experience. We prepare units to fight and win in the most complex environment. We are inspiring professionals; we are trusted and respected," he said.

Frank welcomed Curl to JRTC as the right colonel to be the next commander of Operations Group.

Curl thanked Gardner for turning over an outstanding JRTC Operations Group.

"I am honored and humbled to join your ranks. Throughout my 25-year career, I've been extremely impressed with the professionalism and dedication of this organization. I look forward to furthering that legacy together," he said.



## New Quality of Life Task Force tackling six priorities to help Soldiers, Families

By JOSEPH LACDAN

Army News

WASHINGTON — The Army's new Quality of Life Task Force has reached full operational capability, the service announced July 16, as it continues to tackle six priorities to improve conditions for Soldiers and their Families.

Some examples include the Army approving assignment incentive pay for Soldiers stationed at some locations in Alaska and working to improve educational opportunities like advanced high school courses through virtual education at Fort Irwin, California, and Fort Polk, Louisiana, said Lt. Gen. Jason Evans, the Army's G-9.

Another priority includes increasing access to child care. The Army will open 10 new child development centers by fiscal year 2025, said Evans.

Evans and other Army leaders make up the task force, which was formally chartered in March to also improve housing, health care, spouse employment, permanent change-of-station moves and upgrading the quality of living for Soldiers stationed in remote locations.

"We're focused on making life better for Soldiers and Families wherever the Army takes them," Evans said during the task force's first media event to discuss its ongoing efforts. "We still have more work to do."

Through the help of the task force, child youth services have also provided incentives for care providers and added 100 more of them in the past year, Evans said.

Additionally, the Army will expand the Army Fee Assistance program, which provides financial aid to military Families to offset civilian child-care costs when on-post child care is not available or suitable. The service has been testing a pilot program in Maryland and Virginia to increase the number of civilian child-care providers by expediting the certification process.

Helen Roadarmel, program manager for the Army's Child, Youth and School Services, said about 77% of the Army's CDCs have reopened after being closed due to the COVID-19 virus.

Children of care providers and mission-essential workers will receive first priority for enrollment, followed by single and dual military parents and service members with working spouses. During the pandemic, centers remained open on a limited basis with priority given to Families of mission-essential personnel.

### Housing inspectors

Despite challenges under the COVID-19 conditions, task force leaders remained confident they could continue improving quality of life standards for Army Families.

To address the service's top quality-of-life priority — housing — the Army has hired an additional 114 workers to provide quality assurance and help oversee privatized housing inspections.

"I can tell you that with great confidence that the Army had a much better oversight and management of the product that the partners are providing to our Soldiers and their Families," said Greg Jackson, chief of the Army Housing Division. "At the installation level, the housing of-

*Family members arrive at the Fort McCoy Child Development Center on June 16, at Fort McCoy, Wis. The center, along with the Fort McCoy School Age Center/Youth Center, reopened June 15 after closing for the installation's COVID-19 pandemic response. The Army announced the full operational capability of its Quality of Life Task Force July 16. One of the task force's priorities includes increasing access to the Army's CDCs.*



fices have been equipped and trained and are continuing to be trained on providing quality assurance."

During PCS moves, Maj. Gen. Michel Russell, the assistant G-4, said the Army's installation transportation offices track the health of contracted movers and ensure that Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines are followed. The speed and efficiency of moves are monitored and appointments are tracked.

"Quality of life is something that can't be done overnight and it certainly has been a challenge in 2020 because of COVID-19," Evans said. "We've worked hard to continue to provide critical quality of life resources for Soldiers and Families."

More than 5% of all work orders will be randomly inspected. Jackson said home inspections would include more than a simple visual examination.

A thorough evaluation of the functionality of home systems will be implemented including air conditioning, heating and electrical.

Housing officers received special training on how to identify and locate different mold conditions and how to remove them, Jackson said. He added that Army housing has been working to solve any potential problems with homes before a resident moves into a facility.

To further keep residents informed, a mobile application is being developed that allows barracks and housing tenants to track work orders and gain access to the fall 2019 housing survey results.

In February, the Defense Department released

the Military Housing Privatization Initiative Tenant Bill of Rights to help residents identify their entitlements as well as standardize customer service at each duty station.

Army Materiel Command and Army Installation Management Command lead the effort to improve the quality of Army housing, along with representatives from the Army staff and each of the service's major commands.

If residents still have concerns, they can call a resident hotline as well as report problems through a Soldier's chain of command.

### Spousal employment

To help Army spouses find adequate employment, the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act increased the reimbursable amount for spouse relicensing costs to \$1,000.

However, spouses still face challenges when transitioning to another state during PCS moves. Spouses who received a professional license in one state often must re-license or earn another certification in the new state at a cost.

"What we need there is reciprocity," Evans said. "Then, all of the states can adapt that. We have the governors that have been engaged in this; and to some degree, some of them have the laws implemented for state licensing and reciprocity, but it's not across the board. This is one thing we'd like to see happen."

The Civilian Employment Assignment Tool has also expanded its reach to help spouses, who are non-appropriated fund employees, make a non-competitive transfer to other duty stations at the same pay grade and skill level.



# Swinney takes cyclic control of 5th Aviation Regiment

By **CHUCK CANNON**

Command information officer

FORT POLK, La. — Fort Polk's 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment welcomed Lt. Col. JD Swinney as its new commander during a change of command ceremony July 23, at the unit's hangar on Fort Polk's Polk Army Airfield.

Swinney replaced Lt. Col. Connie M. Lane, who took command July 20, 2019, and is headed to an assignment in Washington.

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commander, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, was the ceremony's guest speaker. He addressed the relevance of the 1st Bn, 5th Avn Reg motto: No Mission Denied.

"Anyone familiar with the mission of this battalion will immediately recognize the linkage between this historical motto and the professional approach to duty that all Soldiers in this battalion execute on a daily basis," Frank said. "The companies within 1-5 Aviation reflect the same approach to their mission that Lt. Col. Connie Lane has since taking command of this unit two years ago."

Frank thanked Lane's spouse, Lt. Col. Shoshannah Lane, herself an AH-64 Apache helicopter pilot, and their daughter, Lilly, for their support.

"The Lanes are an Army Aviation power couple," he said. "Sho, thank you for your professional example; you and Connie have spent countless hours discussing ways to improve the quality of life for our Soldiers and Army Families stationed here at Fort Polk."

Frank welcomed Swinney and his Family: Spouse Liz and daughters Mili and Cora.

"JD has an incredible Army career," he said. "He is absolutely the right leader in our Army to take the colors of this storied formation and maximize the ability of 1-5 Aviation to contribute to operations at the Joint Readiness Training Center."

Frank said Swinney embodies the Warrior Ethos and will lead 1st Bn, 5th Avn Reg from the front.

"We are proud to have you join the ranks of the historic 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment — the Diamondbacks," he said.

Lane was next to the podium and reflected on his two years at the helm of 1st Bn, 5th Avn Reg. He said the opportunity to lead what he considers the most unique and diverse aviation battalion in the Army has been the highlight of his military career.

"Despite being here for two years, there is always something new to discover about this battalion," he said. "There is no other aviation battalion in the Army like you."

Lane said the missions of each company in the battalion, from VIP flights, to rotational support, to medical evacuations, contributed to the unit's diversity and uniqueness. He highlighted the role of Charlie Company's Cajun Dustoff as the battalion's "No. 1" mission.

"Without you, the box could not be the rigorous test of an Infantry Brigade Combat Team that it is today," he said. "You are the unsung heroes of the JRTC and Fort Polk. You are the best — and most utilized — MEDEVAC unit in the Army."

Lane said he is humbled to have served with 1st Bn, 5th Avn Reg, and will reflect on the unit's



*Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commander, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk (right) passes the 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment colors to incoming 1st Bn, 5th Avn Reg commander Lt. Col. JD Swinney during a change of command ceremony at Fort Polk Army Airfield July 23. Swinney replaces outgoing commander Lt. Col. Connie M. Lane.*

accomplishments proudly for the rest of his life.

"The Diamondback legacy is recorded in deeds, not words," he said. "I could not have asked for a better team or command experience."

Swinney thanked Frank for the chance to command the regiment. He recalled that Fort Polk has always been special to he and his spouse as this is where they met, and where he began his aviation career.

"Needless to say, my Family and I couldn't be happier to come home to God's country," he said. "We won't let the team down."

The 1st Bn, 5th Avn Reg conducts general support aviation operations and provides administrative support for Headquarters, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, and the Fort Polk Army Garrison, to train Soldiers, grow leaders and support the validation of units as they prepare to deploy, fight and win the nation's wars.

The unit's history has included several name and mission changes since it was constituted on July 20, 1940 as the 5th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop assigned to the 5th Division at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana.

Names through the years included: 5th Reconnaissance Troop, Mechanized; 5th Mechanized Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop; 5th Reconnaissance Company; Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 5th Aviation Battalion; and Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 5th Avn Bn.

In 1975, HHD, 5th Avn Bn began its ties to Fort Polk when it was redesignated as the Aviation Company, 5th Infantry Division, and activated at Fort Polk. Since joining Fort Polk, the unit has been known as HHC, 5th Avn Bn and HHC, 1st Bn, 5th Avn assigned to the 5th Infantry Division, before earning its current name in 2018.

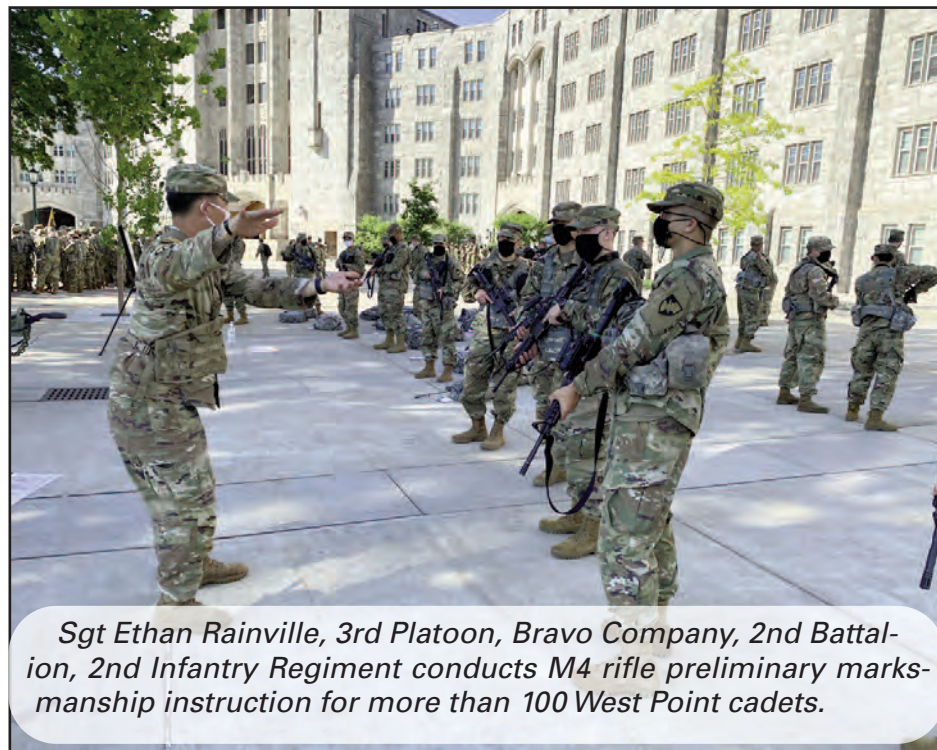


# TF Ramrod

Continued from page 1



*Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment runs MK-19 and integrated target acquisition system training for West Point cadets.*



*Sgt Ethan Rainville, 3rd Platoon, Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment conducts M4 rifle preliminary marksmanship instruction for more than 100 West Point cadets.*

SGT. SETH KLOOSTER / J FSO 2-2-N

# Warriors

Continued from page 3

designed demanding rotations that placed a robust and enhanced Geronimo OPFOR Battalion in the Box.

And the greatest contribution a JRTC COG can have, Dave Gardner challenged every leader and Soldier in the Box, from BCT Commander to the Javelin Gunner in a Weapons Squad. He inspired and mentored multiple generations of Army leaders and Soldiers in every rotation.

Dave spent many long nights in the JOC, in TACs, and often in TOCs talking to BCT Commanders about the next operation — but, he was at his best when talking to and mentoring Soldiers, because at his core, he is a Soldier's Leader. Col. Dave Gardner has provided us with the vision of how JRTC will remain viable and build readiness for the Army well into the 21st Century — this is his legacy.

But Dave did not make this demanding journey on his own — he was joined by his wife Eeve and their children, Jack and Emily.

Eeve has been exceptional; through her tireless efforts she has improved the quality of life our Soldiers and Army Families stationed here at Fort Polk. The training tempo in the Operations Group can be relentless, but Eeve's tremendous support to spouses and Families will be the aspect of her volunteer service to JRTC that she will be remembered for.

As an accomplished and published editorial writer, Eeve's insights regarding the challenges of

obtaining quality education for the children of our Army Families was critical as Fort Polk has become a Quality of Life installation.

Eeve, thank you for all of your contributions to Fort Polk, you will be missed by the entire community.

As Team Gardner departs Fort Polk enroute to Fort Hood, Texas, JRTC wishes you the best.

Today we welcome to JRTC and Fort Polk, another great combat leader and warfighter — Col. Jason Curl, along with his spouse Becky, and children Adrienne, Alex, and Allison.

Jason has an incredible Army career having served in multiple divisions and combat zones. He commanded a squadron in the 101st Airborne Division, and most recently commanded the Falcon Brigade Combat Team in the 82nd Airborne Division.

Jason Curl is absolutely the right colonel in our Army to be the COG, having successfully led his Airborne Brigade through a demanding training strategy, maintaining a constant globally deployable posture, and preparing 2/82 for the brigade's deployment to Operation Iraqi Resolve.

Jason embodies the Warrior Ethos and will lead our effort at JRTC from the front — training lethal, Infantry Brigade Combat Teams that are Ready Now. Jason we are proud to have you join the ranks of the historic Operations Group. Welcome to you, Becky, and your Family.

In closing, the Soldiers in the Op-



ANGIE THORNE / GUARDIAN

*Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general, passes the JRTC Operations Group colors to incoming commander Col. Jason A. Curl at a change of command ceremony held July 16 in front of Operations Group Headquarters. Curl replaces outgoing commander Col. Dave Gardner.*

erations Group have made significant contributions towards building readiness within the Army. They stand with their new commander, Col. Jason Curl, at the Army's most storied training center — the Joint Readiness Training Center — pre-

pared to build readiness in formations across the United States Army.

**Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank**  
Commander, JRTC and Fort Polk  
FORGING THE WARRIOR SPIRIT!

ALL THE WAY!



# Joseph memorialized, JRTC village renamed JOSEFGORD

GUARDIAN STAFF

FORT POLK, La. — The Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk's training "box" is made up of several fictional towns; one of these towns, Tofani, has been renamed after Maj. Trevor Joseph, the 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment pilot and C company commander who was tragically killed in a helicopter mishap Sept. 26, 2019, during a life-saving medical evacuation mission.

Now called Josefgord, the training town is home to the memorial plaque dedicated to Joseph on July 18.

In attendance, while maintaining social distance, were Joseph's family members; the 1st Bn, 5th Avn Reg; members of JRTC's Operations Group; 1st Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment Soldiers; and the command group.

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commander, JRTC and Fort Polk; Col. David W. Gardner, then com-

mander, JRTC Ops Group; and Lt. Col. Connie Lane, then commander of 1st Bn, 5th Avn Reg, revealed the plaque during the ceremony.

Joseph was commissioned in 2008 as a medical services officer and began his exceptional service to the Army as a pilot.

Joseph took command of Charlie Company, 1st Bn 5th Avn Reg, also called Cajun Dustoff, in July 2018. During the course of his career, Joseph deployed to Afghanistan twice — once in 2010 and again in 2017.

Among his awards and decorations are the Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal with Valor, two Army Commendation Medals, Army Achievement Medal, Parachutist Badge and the Senior Service Medal.

Joseph was also the first inductee into the Leesville Wall of Heroes. Leesville Mayor Rick Allen said Joseph's death was part of the inspiration to create the wall.



*Maj. Joseph's plaque is admired by his parents, Nancy and Peter Joseph, and others after Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commander, JRTC and Fort Polk; Col. David W. Gardner, commander, JRTC Operations Group; and Lt. Col. Connie Lane, 1st Bn, 5th Avn Reg commander, reveal the memorial plaque on July 18.*

## MHS addresses sleep in the military through sleep studies

HEALTH.MIL

WASHINGTON — Sleep complications are common in the military, from the early-rise culture that can disrupt normal sleeping patterns to bouts of insomnia resulting from night operations, early morning physical therapy workouts, sustained combat operations and other such disruptions. Researchers and doctors within the Military Health System work to address these concerns and improve the efficiency of service members suffering from sleep complications.

Lt. Col. (Dr.) Vincent Capaldi, sleep medicine consultant to the surgeon general and chief of behavioral biology at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in Silver Spring, Maryland, stressed the importance of the military perspective when addressing sleep concerns in service members.

Capaldi pointed out that while proper sleep is necessary for mission effectiveness in the field, 62% of service members sleep less than six hours a night on average — resulting in chronic sleep deprivation and insomnia.

"When people are chronically sleep deprived and do a sleep study in the civilian sector, we found that they're being diagnosed with narcolepsy at significantly higher rates compared to those diagnosed in the Military Health System," Capaldi said. "We're able to take a more nuanced approach in the MHS to evaluate what's causing their difficulty and prevent a misdiagnosis that can result in a service member getting medically boarded."

Doctors at Walter Reed use a variety of techniques to diagnose sleeping problems. Chief of sleep medicine, Lt. Col. (Dr.) Meagan Rizzo, stated that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, using respiratory sleep tests have been temporarily halted to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19. Rizzo did note that Walter Reed's Sleep Laboratory is still open for some in-lab diagnostic sleep studies.

The laboratory also offers sleep tests that patients take home and bring back for further study.

"Home sleep tests can be good at picking up moderate and severe obstructive sleep apnea in high-risk patients," Rizzo said. "It's a good starting point, and something we can use while our labs are closed to still offer insight into sleep remotely."

The home sleep tests can lead to further testing, like the multiple sleep latency test, administered through a medical device comparable to an activity tracking device that patients wear on their wrists at home to track sleep and check for signs of narcolepsy. Overnight pulse oximetry is also offered, which measures a patient's pulse and the oxygen content in their blood to make sure that oxygen levels don't drop too low during sleep.

Military medical professionals recognize that there are also military concerns that contribute to diagnosing sleep problems, like post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. Lt. Col. (Dr.) Scott Williams, director for medicine at Fort Belvoir Community Hospital in Virginia, explained the link between these conditions:

"When you disrupt the brain either because of PTSD or TBI, it lowers a patient's arousal threshold, making it easier to wake them up. Someone who might otherwise sleep through a snoring episode or mild sleep apnea, now wake up."

Gradually treating TBI and PTSD can have positive effects on the resulting sleep complications. But Carla York, who specializes in behavioral sleep medicine at Walter Reed, stated that treating one does not always eliminate the other.

"As we improve sleep, we can improve management of a psychiatric condition like PTSD, but we often find that even when there's an improvement in PTSD symptoms, sleep problems like insomnia can still persist," York said. "So thinking about a psychiatric diagnosis and a sleep problem as being the same thing isn't helpful. We

have to treat both conditions concurrently for optimal improvement."

WRNMMC, FBCH, and other military medical treatment facilities use cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia, or CBT-i, to treat patients with chronic insomnia. CBT-i uses stimulus control, sleep hygiene, sleep restriction, relaxation training and cognitive therapy to provide patients with tools and resources to better manage their sleep. The Department of Veterans Affairs also offers a free mobile app called CBT-i Coach that walks patients through some of these techniques.

WRAIR's sleep research has resulted in exploring treatment options like transcranial electrical stimulation, which Capaldi hopes will help patients get to slow-wave sleep faster and sleep more efficiently.

Capaldi's team is exploring the use of pharmacological treatments that target orexin, a protein-like molecule in the brain that regulates wakefulness. These efforts focus on the use of orexin receptor antagonists to allow service members to get to sleep quickly and wake without the grogginess of prescribed sleep aids. In 2004, WRAIR invented and subsequently licensed a caffeinated gum — Military Energy Gum. MEG is available in first strike rations for the military and sold commercially since 2012.

Capaldi hopes that through research and clinical efforts in the military medical community, proper sleep and the methods to get that sleep will be prioritized in military culture.

"Cognitive dominance is critical for success in the battlefield of today and tomorrow. Sleep is ammunition for the brain, necessary for the maintenance of sustained vigilance and cognitive dominance," Capaldi said. "We would never send service members into the field and say they don't need to bring water along with them, so we have to reverse the culture within our military that views sleep as a liability instead of an asset to help service members keep their brains in the fight."



# Yarborough Mile refocuses Geronimo on upcoming rotation

By Capt. MATHEW SULLIVAN

1st Bn, 509th Inf Reg

FORT POLK, La. — On the morning of July 17, the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment completed the grueling "Yarborough Mile".

The Yarborough Mile is an arduous course that stretches through undulating terrain near the 1st Bn, 509th Inf Reg footprint. For a little more than 3 miles, platoons navigate their way through thick brush, waist-deep streams, concertina wire and treacherous mud.

Additionally, the platoons must utilize team work and critical thinking to carry pickets, Composition-4 explosives, a mortar tube, five-gallon water cans and a 55-gallon drum through the course. This adds to the overall difficulty and serves to refocus Geronimo on its upcoming mission, which is to provide exceptional training to the next rotational unit — 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division — as it tackles the Joint Readiness Training Center crucible training.

Third Platoon, Able Company secured its fourth consecutive win of the biannual event. When asked what his biggest takeaway is, Spc. Azael Estrada of 3rd Platoon said, "It's a great team-building exercise. It demonstrates who the best of the best is, and it also shows who has been training the hardest."

While being physically fit is certainly a prerequisite for completing the Yarborough Mile, it takes a cohesive team to win it.

"While the foundation of our platoon is built on physical fitness, my guys also have a winning attitude and an immense amount of heart" said Staff Sgt. Mitchell Clarke, the platoon sergeant for 3rd Platoon.

The Yarborough Mile is named for Lt. Gen. William Yarborough, recognized as the "Father of the modern Green Berets" for not only establishing the precursor to what would become the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, but also being one of the main proponents for adopting the green beret as the official headgear for Special Forces Soldiers.

With the completion of the Yarborough Mile, the paratroopers of Geronimo are reinvigorated and ready to get to work preparing for the upcoming rotation. In August, they will prey upon the rotational training unit and demonstrate why they are the "Most Hated Unit in the Army."



*Spc. Isaiah Ortiz of Pathfinder Company leads his team through a creek.*



*Spc. Tucker McKibbin from Baker Company carries a 55-gallon drum up a muddy embankment.*



*Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commander, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk (far right); Lt. Col. Henry Moltz, commander, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment (center); and Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Bennett catch their breath at the finish line of the Yarborough Mile.*

CAPT. MATHEW SULLIVAN / 1ST BN, 509TH INF REG

## Justice Beat: Punishment, separations meted out to Soldiers

OSJA

FORT POLK, La. — The commanding general and subordinate commanders at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk take good order and discipline seriously.

However, certain disciplinary issues continue to be prevalent across Fort Polk, such as breaking quarantine or isolation orders; violating General Order No. 1; driving under the influence of alcohol; wrongful use or possession of controlled substances; fraternization; and sexual assault.

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

- A major, assigned to 115th Field Hospital, 32nd Hospital Center, was issued a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand for engaging in extramarital sexual conduct with another officer.

The CG directed filing the reprimand in the Officer's Army Military Human Resource Record.

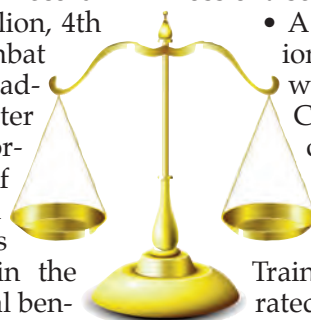
- A private, assigned to 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, was administratively separated under Chapter 13-2e, with a General (Under Honorable Conditions) characterization of service for two-time Army Physical Fitness Test failure. Generally, this characterization of service results in the loss of a service member's educational benefits.

- A private, assigned to 2nd Bn, 4th Inf Reg, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div, was administratively separated under Chapter 14-12c, with a General (Under Honorable Conditions) characterization of service for being absent without leave. Generally,

ally, this characterization of service results in the loss of a service member's educational benefits.

- A staff sergeant, assigned to 3rd Battalion, 353rd Regiment, Operations Group, was administratively separated under Chapter 14-12b, with an honorable characterization of service for patterns of misconduct.

- A staff sergeant, assigned to Operations Groups, Joint Readiness Training Center, was administratively separated under Chapter 10, with an Other Than Honorable characterization of service for wrongful use and possession of controlled substances. Generally, An OTH characterization of service results in reduction to the lowest enlisted grade and the loss of a majority of a service member's VA benefits.





## GUARDIAN STAFF

Guardian /9  
July 24, 2020



# Fort Polk's MPC meets challenge of COVID-19 with hybrid VBS

By **ANGIE THORNE**

Public affairs specialist

FORT POLK, La. — Some ways of life have changed in this challenging time — hugs; shaking hands; standing close to one another; large gatherings at parties, concerts, festivals and church.

Fort Polk's Main Post Chapel has had to take that reality and find creative ways to continue supporting and connecting with its congregation. The perfect example is Vacation Bible School.

Chrissa M. Gross, Fort Polk's religious education director, said before the pandemic restrictions began, the church had already planned a couple of VBS events to which the congregation, especially the kids, were looking forward. Those events had to be cancelled.

"I think people went through a grieving period over what has been lost due to the pandemic," she said.

Gross said that sadness is what motivated the Main Post Chapel's religious education team to focus on coming up with an alternative VBS.

"We wanted to figure out what we were capable of offering to our congregation based on the technical equipment we have. A hybrid VBS program was the result," she said.

The Main Post Chapel staff created a VBS program that combines chapel-sponsored online content with supported Family-based activities.

"The VBS is partially online via a closed Facebook page or Youtube video link, whichever each Family prefers to use. The online content is portable and can be easily accessed through a smart device such as a phone," she said.

Brianna Roberts and her children have taken advantage of the virtual VBS and the fact that they can take it anywhere.

"My boys have both loved doing the VBS at home. We are visiting family right now and being able to continue learning God's word has been amazing," she said.

Gross and her team held an adult VBS for parents July 7-11 to deliver the basic schedule for new content.

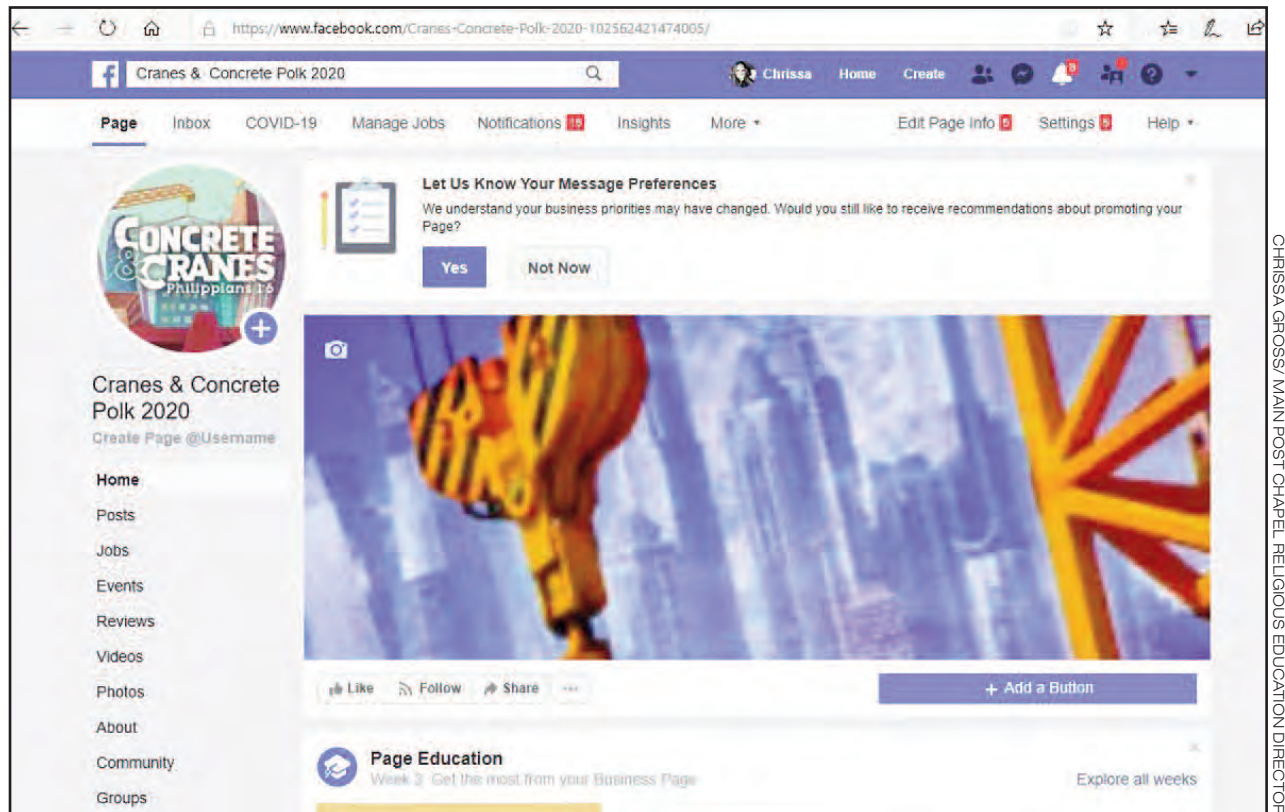
"This allowed us to equip parents with the information they needed to help guide their children through the virtual VBS," she said. "It also gave us a chance to connect with them on a larger scale as we guided them through the lessons we would be teaching their kids. It resulted with parents gaining the skills to walk their kids through the age appropriate devotionals at home, while making a spiritual connection."

The online VBS program for kids began July 14 and will actively continue publishing content until Aug. 14. The content will remain up through the end of August, said Gross. Sessions are held Tuesdays and Thursdays for grades pre-K through sixth.

Content includes crafts, music and dancing, and Bible stories delivered with age appropriate content. The VBS content also includes virtual field trips.

Gross said her religious education team has partnered with community members and Soldiers for tours. The religious education team also figured out how to mesh each tour with the overall lessons being learned at VBS. The Bible themes woven into the VBS content include topics that touch on Jesus as a strong foundation.

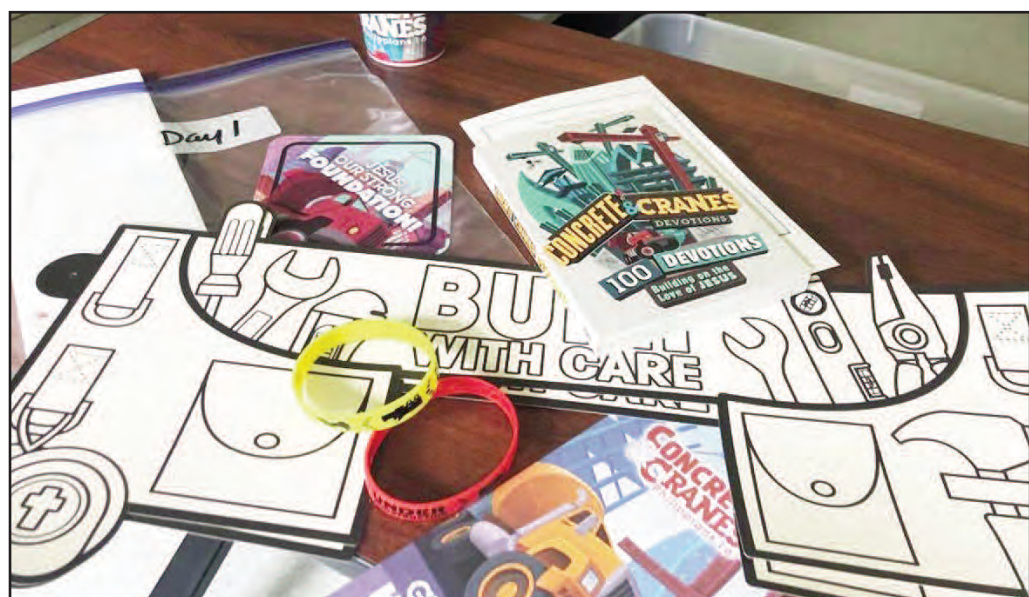
Please see **VBS**, page 11



The Fort Polk Main Post Chapel *Cranes & Concrete Polk 2020* hybrid Vacation Bible School page has pictures and information about the VBS program.



Norman Malinowski (left), 6, his brother, Edmond (center, 4, and sister, Beatrix, 8, work on crafts while watching the Fort Polk Main Post Chapel hybrid Vacation Bible School lesson online.



These are a few of the fun things found in the take home VBS goodie bags.



# VBS

Continued from page 10

"We use the foundations of love, forgiveness, worth, promise and life to connect the underlying truths of the Christian faith," said Gross.

Some past tours included "46th Engineers clearing the way for a foundation" and "When things go boom! Building a foundation with a limestone quarry in Missouri." The next tour, scheduled for July 27, is "Bonding together with the 46th Engineers," which deals with welding.

The August schedule is all about safely getting outside and having fun.

VBS is hosting a scavenger hunt Aug. 3-7. Posts throughout the installation are marked with task for the child to complete. Gross said each Family gets their own code for the scavenger hunts.

"We have built five websites coordinating back to the curriculum that have scan code sites (QR codes). Families visit the site, find the scan code, interact with the website and complete the task associated with it," she said. "Then, they put the photos of completed tasks on the group page for scavenger hunts, and they tag it with their code. We are monitoring on the other end. Families that complete all the tasks get a pizza dinner delivered to their home to celebrate a successful mission," she said.

Held Aug. 10-14 is an anvil hunt for VBS kids. Gross said the hunt incorporates the "tools of the faith at home option" by building on God's tools. This lesson was designed for Families that are not confined indoors.

Gross said she, the church staff and volunteers miss hearing little feet in the chapel. "We can't play big, crazy or fun games at VBS or dance and sing with the kiddos," she said.

However, Gross said there have also been some benefits to providing a virtual VBS. "Not only are we supporting Families during this difficult time, but we have also been able to discuss with parents how to provide spiritual leadership within the home and what resources are available to them," she said.

Gross said her team worked hard to gather the materials kids would need to participate in the virtual VBS. Once the kits were filled with VBS goodies, chaplains delivered them to participating Families.

"We physically delivered kits to homes as far as Rosepine and Anacoco. The bags had craft supplies, stickers, bracelets, activity booklets and more. It was just a bag full of fun," she said.

Another benefit to the hybrid VBS was a flexible schedule.

"Families are better able to access and participate in VBS on a convenient schedule that works for them," said Gross. "If a Family has missed a couple of weeks of the virtual VBS, they have the opportunity to join in anytime and catch up, because the registration and content is based on a revolving timeline. It's a huge benefit, especially to Families just getting to Fort Polk due to a permanent change of station. The virtual VBS is a great way for new Families to plug in and connect to the Fort Polk chapel community."

Gross said many people are thankful for the hybrid VBS program and the support of the church in these tough times.

"It allows kids to see familiar faces and interact with us through the computer, as well as encouraging Families to do the VBS activities together. That's something they don't normally get to do. It's been an incredible journey; and so far,



Becky Ardrade, Catholic religious education coordinator, films a Bible lesson for the Main Post Chapel's hybrid Vacation Bible School July 22.



Jackson Roberts (left), 6, and his brother Liam, 5, work on their VBS lessons from home.

we've had a positive response," she said.

Catharine Malinowski and her Family are participating in VBS.

"We are taking things one day at a time, but we are loving VBS. It triggers a whole day of new play, and we are building forts and singing the songs every day," she said.

Gross said creating this experience has been unexpected, trying and fun all at the same time.



Carrie Portwood, Protestant religious education coordinator, films a hybrid VBS lesson at the Main Post Chapel July 22.

"I am convinced we serve the best at Fort Polk, and we strive as a religious education team to deliver relevant content that will empower them to live life with the values of their faith," she said.



# Army teaches Guardian editor to find silver linings

By **CHRISTY GRAHAM**

Guardian editor

FORT POLK, La. — I'm not sure that I could ever pick the single greatest lesson I learned from my time in the Army. Teamwork, communication, integrity — these are a few that I know I would name. Another, the one I'd like to focus on, deals with resiliency. The Army taught me to always find the silver lining, regardless of the situation.

Early morning physical training, for the most part, wasn't a bummer for me. I enjoy working out, so it was never the bane of my existence. But, I'm not perfect. There were nights where I stayed up late and found myself far too exhausted for a run the following morning. In those moments, I'd remind myself that the Army was the only career where "playing outside with my friends" was a part of my job. Granted, the standard 4-mile run and tire PT wasn't exactly a playdate, but I had the mental skills to view them that way, and I benefitted from those perspective shifts.

During our latest nights working in the motor-pool, catching up on overdue services, we would all pitch in and order pizza. I called these our pizza parties, despite the saddening lack of streamers and balloons. At first, my fellow mechanics were probably a little peeved by my positivity; but in the end, I think we all realized that we were lucky to work in a group that felt like family. We knew that the only way that was possible — that familial feeling — was from the late nights and extra time we spent working with each other and getting to know each other at our best and our worst.

Being exposed to cold weather, however, is a harder moment for me to find that silver lining. I loathe feeling cold. At some point, it becomes physically painful and nothing but time and warmth can fix that. During a weapons qualification event in basic training, it happened to storm the entire day. We were wet and growing colder by each passing moment. I remember being in an unsupported prone position with my weapon, shivering while I had to blow water out of my iron site between each shot. I know that all of my emotions were on display during that qualification — I likely had the meanest looking mug on the range. I was upset at the rain for making the event harder and colder.

It wasn't until the next day that I found the positive aspect in that situation; and yes, it is better late than never. Not only did I still manage to qualify despite the inconveniences from the weather, but I had my first gritty basic training experience. I got down into the mud, withstood the coldness, focused my breathing to still my shivering and my shot and I did what Soldiers are meant to do — overcome and meet standards. All throughout training, I was waiting for a single moment to make me feel like a Soldier, and I believe that was one of the first junctures that had me feeling like I could fill the boots I had been issued. Had we qualified on a perfectly



*Levi Graham, 3, holds down his sister, Lucine, 6, as they wrestle and have fun.*

clear day, I may not have had that critical moment in my growth as a Soldier.

I've been out of the Army for a little over six years, and those mental ninja skills are still a habit. Today, as I continue to survive and work during another day of quarantine, I'm relying heavily on those skills. While working on another article for work, my eldest kids (Lucine, 6; and Levi, 3) decided that they not only needed to be right next to mom, but they also needed to have a wrestling match.

There was no convincing them that they should probably find another spot in the house to play. They were adamant that they missed me — even though we've been locked in our house for nearly a week — and they needed to play near me. I didn't have the spare time to stop my work project each time I needed the kids to listen, so I endeavored to find the silver lining and hope that it helped me overcome. In that moment, I

chose to tell myself that at least my selective listening skills were getting better. At the beginning of our quarantine, I had a hard time concentrating with the sound of "Frozen" playing in the background; in just a few days, I felt like I had gotten far better at avoiding the endless distractions. I was managing to maintain my output, and I continued to manage the inconveniences in front of me.

One of the harder quarantine pills to swallow has been the amount of television my kids have watched. I know this might sound a little silly, but I focus a lot of energy on keeping my kids entertained with healthier activities. TV may not be the worst thing in the world, but I didn't intend on hiring it as my quarantine babysitter. I started to feel pretty defeated as a mother. Between giving my hus-

band the time he needed to rest, keeping the house from exploding with toys and getting my work done, I sometimes found myself relying on screen time for my kids.

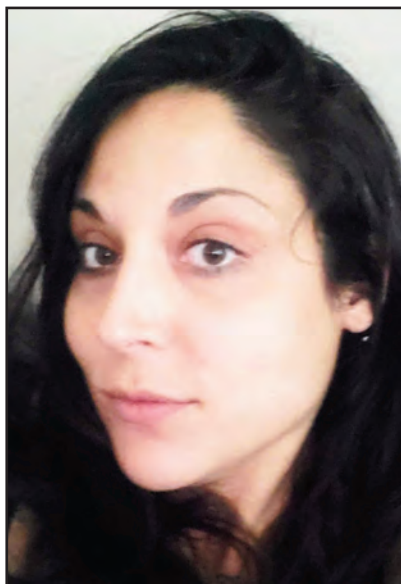
Where was my silver lining now? How could I even feel okay about looking for that silver lining with this one? First, I had to remind myself that it was good for my mental health to find a positive in the situation. Being honest with myself is important, but I didn't need to berate myself over the shortcoming. Secondly, always looking for the good is a behavior I want to model for my kids: I want them to know they can always look for the bright side.

Ultimately, it boiled down to picking movies and shows about which I felt good. If I couldn't be there to cuddle them as they watched something, then I put on a show where it taught positive socialization skills or had some academic theme. The show "Super Why" is an example of one of my go-to shows that emphasize literacy. If the day was coming to an end, I was exhausted and we had a bit of time before bedtime stories, then I picked movies that I felt were important for me to share with my kids — classics that no kid should go without watching. Titles like "The Princess Bride" and "The Never Ending Story" were some that we covered during quarantine. Not only did we engage during the movie, but the kids loved them so much they continued to ask questions for days after the viewing. So, maybe I could look over and see the zombie-like TV eyes a few times during quarantine, but I also built some great memories with my kids. I think I can feel pretty good about that.

I'll be the first to admit it; some of my silver linings are probably pretty stretched out and thin, but I still found them, and they helped. Also, I'd like to underscore a few other major positive aspects, such as the fact that I'm still able

to work during this pandemic and, despite my husband not feeling well, no one is in the hospital. We have been able to

manage at home; we might be looking forward to the day we can return to some normalcy, but we are still together and still overcoming.



**Graham**

## Commentary