



FORGING THE

WARRIOR SPIRIT

THE JRTC & FORT POLK GUARDIAN

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Home of Heroes @ Fort Polk, LA

Feb. 28, 2020



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COMMAND GROUP



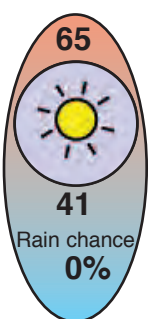
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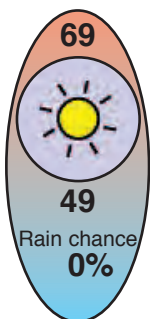
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Anvil Field Ready to Forge the Warrior Spirit

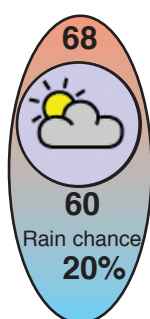
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Viewpoint

Author points to Europe as potential military 'flashpoint'

By Retired Lt. Col. MARK LESLIE
DES

Editor's note: This is the next in a series of book reviews by retired Lt. Col. Mark Leslie, Directorate of Emergency Services deputy director. The books are part of the Chief of Staff of the Army's Professional Reading List and can be found online at <https://history.army.mil/html/books/105/105-1-1/index.html>. In keeping with the Joint Readiness Training Center's motto of "Forging the Warrior Spirit," Leslie will rate each book by rating them using anvils, from one to five — this book received 4 anvils.

FORT POLK, La. —If you have not heard of George Friedman, the author of "Flashpoints — The Emerging Crisis in Europe," and are a military professional, you should have. But if you haven't, don't feel



Leslie

bad, I had not either until I picked up a copy of his book last year, "The Next 100 Years," and listened to it on a recent trip to New Orleans. Friedman is a Hungarian born U.S. geopolitical forecaster and strategist on international affairs. He is a wealth of information and highly regarded in the intelligence community for his ability to provide context, and his contributions to anticipate economic, social and political crisis world-wide, but especially in Europe. So, as I scoured the CSA's reading list for the next book to review, I was pleased to see his book, "Flashpoints," on the list.

I often think the Army at many levels remains focused on the Middle East as the only conflict zone worthy of consideration. While we spend a lot of time there, there is the rest of the world as a potential conflict zone. While other areas occasionally receive public attention, I think Europe is largely discounted as a potential conflict zone.

This is in stark contrast to the Army I entered in the 1980s when Europe was the tip of the spear. Friedman does an excellent job of telling us just how much of a mistake this is to not recognize the European continent as a potential future conflict zone. He divides the book



into three sections to make his point.

Part one: European Exceptionalism lays the foundation for the book and I will admit, it drags on in places and I was wondering when he would get to the point of the book and why the CSA had this on the reading list. Bear with it, in parts two and three you will realize just how valuable part one of the book is in helping us, the average reader, grasp what he lays on the table in parts two and three.

Part Two: Thirty-One years. In part two, the author does an exceptional job in laying out the period from World War I until World War II and how much this period in history has shaped the Europe of today. Not only the superficial things that we often consider, like borders and geography, but the psyche, culture, division and in many cases hatred that still lingers and is harbored by many Europeans. How these things impact and shape the feelings of not only citizens, but the policy of countries (and the European Union and it's many biases and weaknesses) is essential to understanding the Europe of today and the many potential flashpoints that Friedman brings to light in part three.

Part Three: Flashpoints. Friedman provides excellent analysis in this section of the book and surprised me with his conclusions. While he talks in depth about conflict zones in Europe since 1991, some still active, he doesn't consider them the actual "flashpoints" but rather as shaping elements to conflict zone.

He lays out "flashpoints" worthy of watching: The borderland between Germany and Russia, the Mediterranean flashpoint of massive population movement from North Africa and Turkey into Europe, and rising nationalism and economic interdependence. Friedman makes a point to say that while a general war would surprise him, the lack of significant conflict would surprise him even more. I tend to agree and think he is on to something here. We must continue to keep an eye on Europe.

I highly recommend this book for the military professional, especially those headed to an assignment in Europe in any capacity or mission. I wish I had read it when I was a joint staff officer in Europe. The context



and history of a continent and how it thinks is right here in this book and would have helped my approach on many initiatives.

More importantly, as the Army seeks to think more "near peer" — and that could mean Russia — future conflict zones we may find ourselves in could be in the terrain, geography, political climate and culture that Friedman puts into military perspective through the geopolitical lens.

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Author: George Friedman

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Guardian

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Briefs

Polk drill

Fort Polk will conduct a Force Protection Condition Elevation Drill March 6. Soldiers, employees, Families, residents, guests and visitors may see Soldiers with weapons responding to planned events as part of the drill.

Do not be alarmed; this is part of the drill. Any questions or inquiries should be directed to the Installation Antiterrorism Office at 531-6007 or the Warrior Operations Center at 531-4916.

OCS reunion

The United States Army Officer Candidate Schools Alumni Association has announced its 2020 Annual Reunion and Board of Directors elections. Registration is open. Visit www.ocsalumni.org/ for a schedule of events, administrative details, points of contact and updates. For further information contact Dan Johnson at (402) 981-1072, or email VP-Admin@ocsalumni.org.

SFAB recruiting

A Security Force Assistance Brigade recruiting team brief is held Wednesday at 9 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 3 p.m., and Thursday at 9 a.m. at the Fort Polk Berry Mission Training Complex After Action Review Theater.

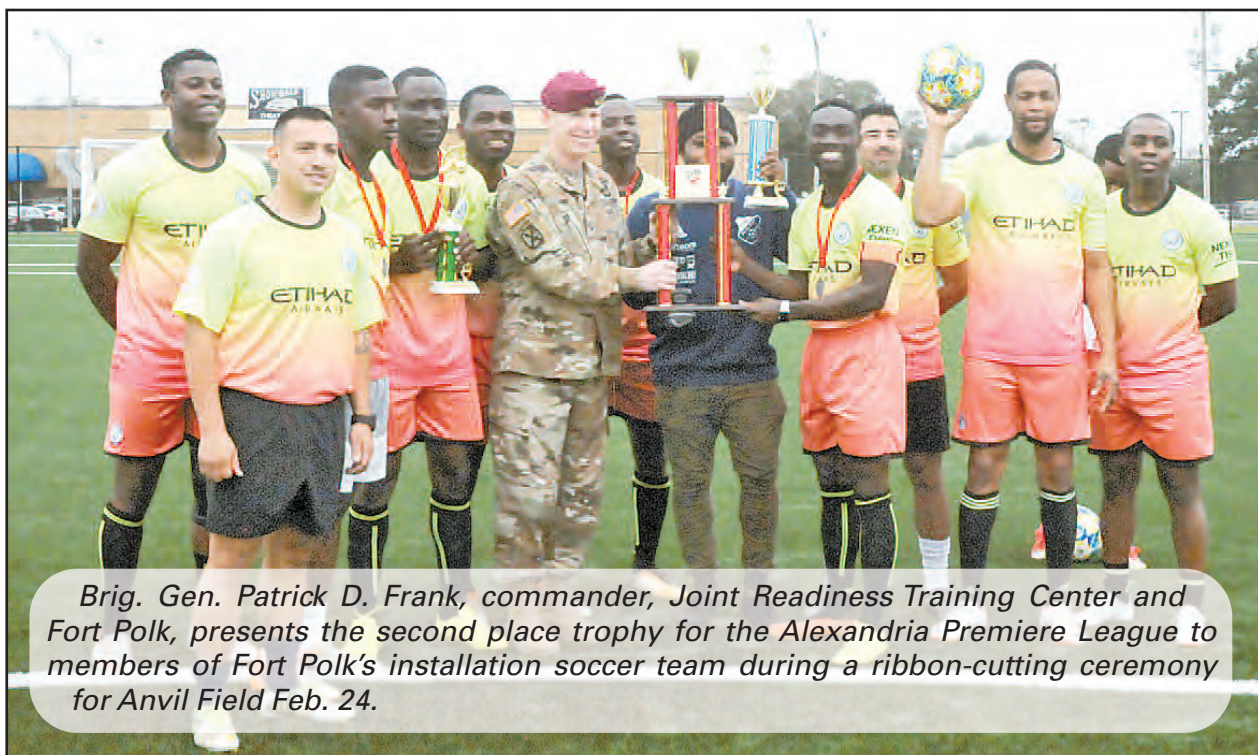
SFABs offer an opportunity for highly skilled Soldiers to join formations whose core mission is to train, advise, assist, accompany and enable operations with allied and partner nations to develop their security force capabilities.

Off limits areas

The following establishments in the Fort Polk, Leesville, Barksdale Air Force Base and Shreveport are off limits:

- Blackhawks Motorcycle Club, 2463 VFW Road, Leesville
- The Venue, 11810 Lake Charles Highway, Leesville
- American Legion Post 510, 703 North Gladys St., Leesville
- Banshees Motorcycle Club, 1330 and 1340 Rapides Ave., Alexandria
- BEAST Motorcycle Club, 3149 Davis Road, West Lake
- Pipes Emporium, 1304 Centenary Blvd., Shreveport
- Kokopellis, 400 Commerce St., Shreveport
- Lotus, 2001 East Texas St., Suite 3, Bossier City

American Legion Post 510 is the only American Legion Post designated as off limits.



Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commander, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, presents the second place trophy for the Alexandria Premiere League to members of Fort Polk's installation soccer team during a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Anvil Field Feb. 24.

Anvil Field opens for Soldier training, community play

By **ANGIE THORNE**

Guardian staff

FORT POLK, La. — The ribbon cutting ceremony for the opening of Anvil Field, the new turf field next to the Home of Heroes Recreation Center, took place Feb. 24.

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general, said as Soldiers ran past the field over the last few months during physical training they witnessed a transformation.

Frank said the field used to be an old beat up block with a PT field that had all sorts of depressions that could have caused injuries to Soldiers.

"It was a pretty rough field. What we see now is a state of the art platform for our Soldiers to get ready for the Army Combat Fitness Test, PT and combat. It's unbelievable," he said.

Frank said garrison command is working out the details of putting a second turf field on the Southern end of Fort Polk.

"We would like to have two PT fields for our Soldiers as they continue to forge the warrior spirit here at JRTC and Fort Polk," he said.

Frank said in addition to Soldier training, the field would be available for off duty activities.

"Soldiers are going to be drawn to this field like a magnet. There will be all sorts of pick up games out here including soccer, flag football and more. It will just be Soldiers enjoying a little bit of camaraderie and fun at Anvil Field," he said. "That's what this thing was designed for, both professional and personal use to ensure our Soldiers have a better quality of life."

Randy Behr, Fort Polk Sports, Fitness and Aquatics chief, said Anvil Field is a game changer.

"As far as the ACFT, this field was built for speed. It will help give us some good scores," he said.

Behr said the turf is built on two inches of sand combined with two inches of rubber that makes for a smooth and comfortable surface that

is built to last.

"There is even a professional drainage system set up underneath the field to combat Louisiana rains and keep the field in good condition," he said.

Behr said though Soldiers have priority when it comes to use of the field for training purposes, it is also a field that the community can use.

"There will be a lot of different things going on here. We even have new LED lights so Soldiers can play on the field for extended hours. I think it's going to be the highlight of Fort Polk," he said.

Scott Richards, Life Cycle Construction Services project manager, said this is the eighth field his company has completed for Army Installation Management Command at installations across the country.

Richards said there is a huge sense of appreciation knowing they are creating a facility that is second to none for the Soldiers and Families of Fort Polk.

"We are proud of this field," he said. "I've also been impressed with the support of MWR and Fort Polk command through every stage of the process. They have worked with us and gone above and beyond to make this field a reality."

Louis Acheampong, 5th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment, is a member of the Fort Polk Football Club. The soccer team plays against college level soccer teams in the Alexandria Premier League. They recently won second place in a tournament and brought their trophy's to show off and share with those in attendance at the ribbon cutting. Then they showcased some of their soccer moves on the new turf.

Acheampong said it is a beautiful field and smooth enough for them to run and play with ease and speed.

"We hope to be able to do all of our practices here, as well as have a pick up game for fun and stress relief once in a while, but we know it is going to be popular," he said.

For more information call 531-9710.

All-female Sapper team seeks title at annual competition

FORT LEONARD WOOD PAO

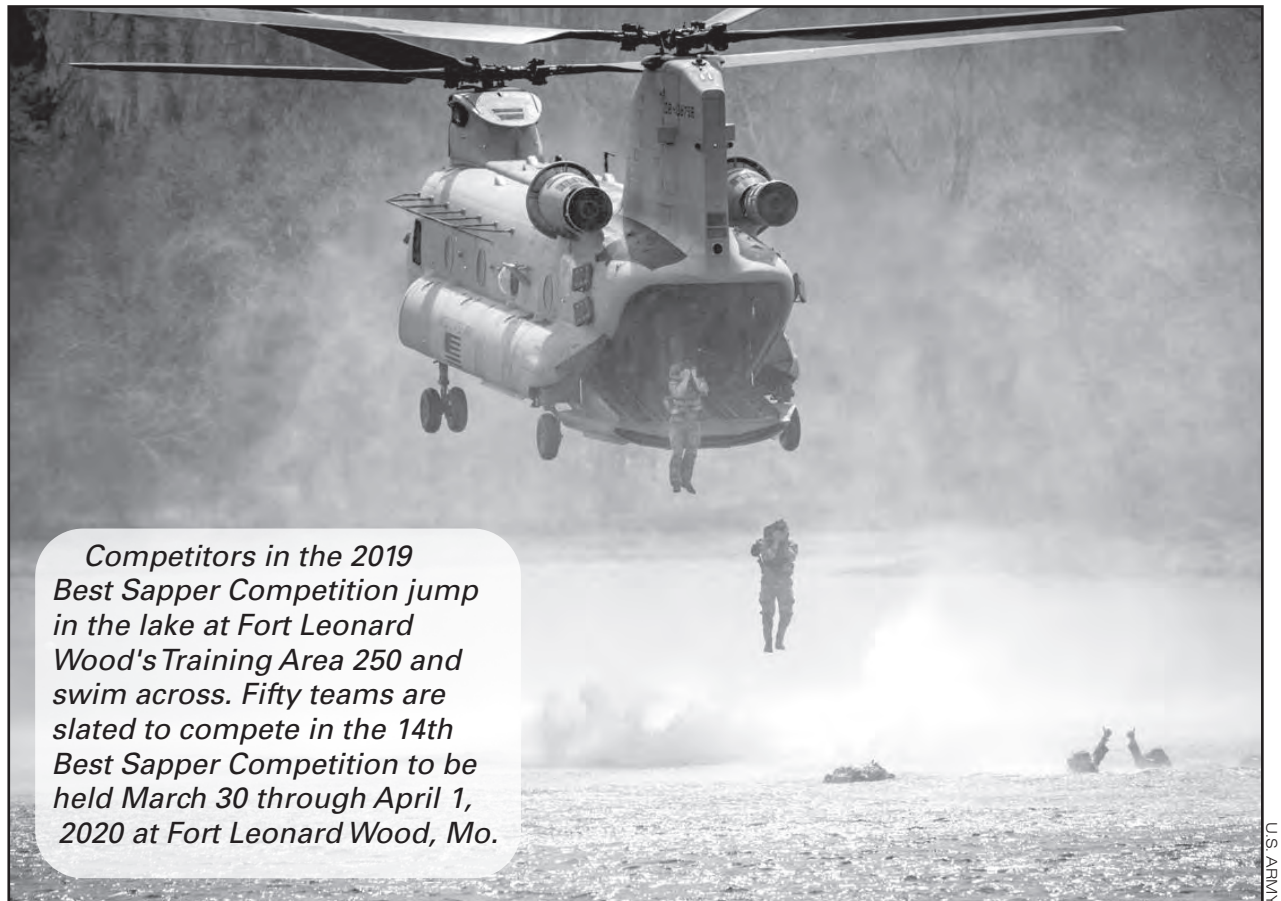
FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. — Fifty teams are slated to compete in the 14th Best Sapper Competition to be held March 30 through April 1 at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

Sappers will travel more than 50 miles in 50 hours through the rugged Ozarks during the grueling competition while carrying a rucksack that weighs more than 80 pounds and competing in a variety of events, testing them to their mental and physical breaking point.

The engineers will compete on limited amounts of sleep and will have to complete a series of combat engineer tasks including, demolition and land navigation, as well as jumping out of a helicopter into a lake.

Spectators are invited to watch as Capt. Hilary Thomas and 1st Lt. Alyvia Orsini, both with the 21st Brigade, 3rd Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), make Army history by being the first all-female team to compete in the Best Sapper Competition. Thomas is the first woman to hold both Sapper and Ranger tabs and the fifth woman overall to obtain a Ranger tab. Orsini holds a Sapper tab.

For more information about the competition, visit the BSC website: www.home.army.mil/wood/index.php/units-tenants/USAES/Sapper/BSC.



Competitors in the 2019 Best Sapper Competition jump in the lake at Fort Leonard Wood's Training Area 250 and swim across. Fifty teams are slated to compete in the 14th Best Sapper Competition to be held March 30 through April 1, 2020 at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

U.S. ARMY

Army astronaut swears in recruits in first-ever ceremony from space

By SEAN KIMMONS

Army News Service

FORT MEADE, Md. — An Army astronaut swore in nearly 1,000 recruits from space Feb. 26 as part of the first nationwide Oath of Enlistment ceremony from the International Space Station.

Col. Andrew Morgan, who has been at the station since July, administered the oath to future Soldiers located in over 150 locations across the country.

Morgan arrived at the space station on July 20 — the 50th anniversary of the moon landing. So far in his nine-month mission, he has conducted seven spacewalks, the first of which in August lasted more than six and a half hours.

The Ranger-tapped doctor with several years of experience in the Special Forces also said he expects to conduct nearly 300 different science experiments while on board with his crew.

Before the oath, Morgan told the recruits that although he now serves as an astronaut 250 miles above Earth, he once recited the same oath to become a Soldier.

"I made the decision when I was 18 years old to raise my right hand just like you're about to," he said.

"I am still a Soldier. I'm just serving in space on the ultimate high ground.

"I'm here as the direct result of the incredible opportunities I had in the Army and I'm a Soldier through and through."

Morgan then unzipped his blue NASA uniform to reveal a black t-shirt with "Army" in white and gold lettering.

Following the oath, Morgan answered questions from recruits during the 20-minute live broadcast event.

When asked about how he handled obstacles throughout his career, Morgan said to ignore the voice in your head that wants you to quit when facing a challenge.

"I'm here as the direct result of the incredible opportunities I had in the Army and I am a Soldier through and through."

Col. ANDREW MORGAN
NASA astronaut

"That is your signal that what you're doing is worth doing," he said. "You need to suppress that and drive on. I can't stress that enough. Things that are worth doing are difficult."

Before being selected to the astronaut program in 2013, Morgan graduated from the U.S. Military Academy where he was a member of its parachute team. He attended medical school and then served in the Special Forces, where he deployed in support of combat operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Africa.

Morgan credited the Army for offering him those variety of challenges to prove himself.

"If you ever find yourself bored or not finding

what you're interested in ... you're not looking hard enough," he said. "Keep looking because it's out there. There are so many opportunities."

He said the demanding, realistic training he encountered as a Soldier also helped ready him for the rigors of being in space.

"Those experiences hardened me," he said. "They gave me the grit I needed when I experienced tough training as an astronaut. We've had tough training as part of our preparation to be up here on the space station, but everything that I did in the military prepared me for this moment."

Another recruit asked how he has dealt with weightlessness in space, which, at first, Morgan said it felt like he was hanging upside down all the time.

"And I had that sensation for the first couple of days of just feeling a little bit disoriented all the time," he said. "But the body is extremely adaptable and within a couple of days, and certainly within a couple of weeks, it all starts to feel very normal. This just feels very natural to me now."

At the end of the event, Morgan said it he was humbled to share this unique experience with the Army's newest Soldiers.

"All of you have started an exciting journey that begins today and I am so proud of you and your decision to serve," he said. "This will certainly be one of the greatest memories of my time here ... on the space station."

Morgan then tossed small flags of each of the services that floated in the air and performed a backflip to show his microgravity environment.

Fort Polk housing changing, building better futures for Soldiers, Families

By **ANGIE THORNE**

Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. — Fort Polk housing is a top priority for Fort Polk's command — a quality of life initiative that impacts Soldier and Family Readiness. Issues with military housing have prompted congressional hearings and headlines in news media across the country.

Changes and improvements have been implemented on Fort Polk, including inspections of all housing, to include barracks, and an infusion of millions of dollars for renovations and construction of 70 new homes.

This is the result of a partnership between the Army, Fort Polk and Corvias — a privatized development, construction and property management company.

Housing Assistance Office

Providing government oversight for all Fort Polk housing is the Housing Assistance Office run by Betty Beinkemper, Fort Polk Garrison's housing manager. Oversight includes: Barracks, Corvias Family housing, InterContinental Hotels Group (privatized lodging on the installation) and concerns Soldiers and Families may encounter when renting off the installation.

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

Beinkemper said no matter how difficult the situation, their first priority is Fort Polk's Soldiers and Families.

"Though there are good things happening with housing, there are also some issues we must step in to correct. For example, if there is a problem in housing and the Family hasn't seen any satisfaction from Corvias, then it's our job to rectify the situation. That can mean small difficulties like an uncompleted work order to something that affects life, health or safety," she said.

Beinkemper said the concerns she sees on a

daily basis aren't any different than those on other installations.

"We will get complaints about noise or animals loose in the neighborhood, but we don't see major issues as often. When we do have an issue, we are quick to mediate with Corvias and resolve it as soon as possible to ensure the Family's quality of life is where it should be," she said.

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

"Often, as soon as they get their household goods delivered, the Soldier is headed to the box for training. I want them to have the best home that we (Corvias and Army housing as a partnership that works together) can provide for them," she said.

"A Soldier that comes to Fort Polk knows that he is going to be busy. We need to offer the Soldier peace of mind to know that he and his Family are living in a safe and adequate home. That should be the last thing our Soldiers worry about while training for the mission."

As part of the effort to provide the best housing for Soldiers and Family members, Beinkemper said there are new construction projects occurring on the installation to the tune of \$155 million.

"That money will be used for new homes, renovations and eventually all the roads will be paved in the housing areas. That's a huge plus for the residents. Currently Corvias is working on exterior renovations such as new roofs, painting and gutters. The next phase will be the demolition of older homes and construction of new homes," she said. "It's going to be a process but we are going to get there."

The first phase of the project began in Dogwood Terrace. The second phase (the biggest) takes place in Palmetto Terrace.

"Palmetto is one of the oldest housing areas on post. We are going to take the majority of that neighborhood down and rebuild it, she said.

Beinkemper said Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general, was instrumental in bringing the right people to the installation to make it happen.

"He has been a huge housing advocate. He is here for the Soldiers and their Families," she said.

Corvias

Danny Bartlett, Corvias Property Management facilities director, said Corvias provides Fort Polk with property management and housing construction services.

"What that means — at least the property management portion — is we work with the residents by finding them a home when they are coming to Fort Polk. We take care of their maintenance needs while they are living here and when they are moving out we try to help make the process as easy as we can. It think that gives people a good picture of what we do," he said.

Corvias, also provides maintenance of homes with pest control, trash and lawn mowing services.

Bartlett said even though Corvias manages and maintains many homes on Fort Polk, when issues arise they take each case personally and try to make sure residents are happy with the outcome.

"I meet with many residents on a one-on-one basis or I'll give them a phone call to discuss the issue to try to come up with the best decision for both Corvias and that resident," he said.

Bartlett said it's an exciting time for Corvias housing.

"We are in the middle of a \$15 million project. That's going toward 526 exterior renovations in Dogwood Terrace alone. Another 620 renovations are taking place in Maple Terrace. The renovations include new roofs, exterior paint, new trim, gutters and more. It's a complete facelift of the

Please see **Housing**, page 6



Army working improvements for Exceptional Family Member Program

By **JOE LACDAN**
Army News Service

FORT MEADE, Md. — To improve assignment and case coordination for Families enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program, the Army's Human Resources Command has been developing a web-based system where support staff and Families will be able to access cloud-based forms for faster processing.

Eventually the system will be able to link EFMP information with the Army's assignments process. It will also provide quicker access to EFMP data for Soldiers and their families.

Col. Steve Lewis, chief of the Army's Family Program Branch, G-9, calls it "stage 1" into making the system more efficient and accessible to EFMP families and plans to launch the system within the next year. Lewis testified at a House Armed Services Committee hearing Feb. 5 where EFMP military Families voiced their concerns about difficulties in navigating the system and getting needed healthcare.

Additionally, during town hall meetings with EFMP Families in the past year, Lewis learned that some families have hardships when transferring healthcare and educational services from one installation to another during permanent-change-of-station moves.

"As children move from school district to another school district and across various states, we are finding the individualized education plans that were established at prior sites aren't always being adopted and acted upon the same way in the new installation," Lewis said.

The Army recently launched initiatives to improve the program, including establishing the Army's Quality of Life Task Force, where Lewis serves as deputy director.

"The individuals and teams established to support the Army's Exceptional Family Member

Program share a unified purpose: To ensure a Soldier's assignment is fully capable of meeting the medical and educational needs of the Soldier's Family member," Lewis said during the Feb. 5 hearing.

Lewis said a key element in improving EFMP service will be communication. On Jan. 30, he attended a senior spouses' panel in Washington where he detailed the Army's long-term plans to improve services.

"We know we need to improve upon both the local marketing of the EFMP services from the Installation Management Command and connecting with Families and ensuring that they've got a very active web and social media presence," Lewis said.

The Army began its effort to revamp its EFMP process when then-Army Secretary Mark Esper ordered a comprehensive 13-question survey of more than 3,000 EFMP Families last May to identify "gaps and vulnerabilities" in the program. The survey, developed by the Army Public Health Center at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, queried Families on experiences during PCS moves and hurdles in the process, said Dr. Jill Brown, public health scientist at APHC.

"The survey allowed us an opportunity to recognize we have challenges in reaching out and engaging and communicating with Families to ensure they know what Family support services are available," Lewis said.

The findings revealed Families could find primary care faster than special needs healthcare. The survey also showed Soldiers wanted greater flexibility in their re-assignments. In response, the Army's Human Resources Command at Fort Knox, Kentucky, has directed career managers to find a minimum of at least two assignment options with services accommodating to special needs Family members prior to issuing assignment instructions. This allows the families to

conduct research on the locations and have a voice in the assignment process.

"For every assignment that Soldiers are considered, you've got a team of professionals within Human Resources Command, a team of professionals within the medical treatment facility," Lewis said. "And they really do (try) based on the medical condition that's described by the physician, to match that condition and the requirements to treat that condition to the availability of services at each MTF."

EFMP is a multi-agency effort that provides a comprehensive, coordinated approach for medical, educational, housing and community support for Families who have members with special needs. The program consists of healthcare providers, coordinators, assignments managers and educators who work with Families to find the educational and healthcare support that best fits their needs.

The Army currently has 119 full-time EFMP staff members to service 54,000 Families, including 55 system navigators that work within the Army Community Service offices. Lewis noted that the Army has an additional 80-90 staff members in the medical treatment facilities that include case coordinators. Within Child and Youth Services, school liaison officers help Families with special needs children address educational concerns.

"We know challenges remain and we have room to improve," Lewis said. "We must get this right."

Lewis said establishing the Quality of Life Task Force and the cloud-based data system will help the service achieve its broader people-based strategy.

"I think the most important measure of success is, 'did we get the assignment right?'" Lewis said. "Are the support capabilities in place to match that Family member?"

Housing

Continued from page 5

property and these homes will look brand new when they are done," he said.

In addition to the renovations, Bartlett said they were doing almost three and a half miles of road paving.

"Part of the paving is already completed in Palmetto Terrace (Bellrichard Avenue and Magnolia Street). Then we are going to pave all of Holmlund Street in Dogwood and move to Maple Terrace to pave Riverton Drive and Pendleton Drive," he said.

This is just the start. Moving into phase two, Bartlett said there is twice as much money — \$39 million. He said this money is very close to being approved by the Army.

"Upon final approval, that money will see transformations continue. The plan is to tear down some of the older homes and replace them with new homes. We will build 70 new homes. We will also replace about \$500,000 worth of appliances. We have \$350,000 set aside for tree trimming and landscaping projects and six more miles of roads. Finally, there will be 192 exterior renovations that will complete the work in Maple Terrace," he said. "The reality is we are changing the face of what Fort Polk looks like. It's going to have a major impact."

Bartlett said phase three — which also has to have final approval — is a concept that Corvias

has worked on with the general and garrison commander. "We have agreed to the scope of the project, but, if approved, will come after the \$39 million project," he said. "If we can get the green light on everything, our schedule to complete is probably by 2025."

Bartlett said between property management, upgrades and new construction, it's his opinion Corvias plays a large role in Soldier's and Family member's quality of life.

"I think it's our job to provide the best homes that we possibly can to make them comfortable while they are here. You can't say or do enough for the quality of life of the Soldiers that are out there putting themselves on the line for us each day," he said.

Bartlett said Corvias tries to help Families of deployed Soldiers with additional services such as a "honey do" program and giving them priority on work orders.

"We try to make it easier on that Family however we can. Again, providing the best quality of life is what we strive for," he said.

A military Family

The Connolly Family has lived in Dogwood Terrace for two years. The military Family is comprised of Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Connolly, his spouse Tabitha and their children Sabrina, 7 and Christopher, 2. Tabitha said living in Fort Polk

housing has been a positive experience for her Family. "It's an older home, but it's in good shape and I absolutely love how much space I have in my laundry room. It's humongous," she said.

"And I love our neighborhood and neighbors," she said. "All of our kids play together. Military Families move all the time and that can be difficult, so having those connections is wonderful. Living in a housing neighborhood like this really improves my Family's quality of life because it helps make us happy."

But even in the best of homes, problems arise. Connolly said Feb. 24 was one of those times.

"One of our toilets broke and there was water everywhere. I called the Corvias emergency maintenance number at 8 p.m. They got to my house, replaced the old toilet with a new one and were gone by 9:30 p.m. I was impressed that they fixed it so quickly," she said.

Connolly said she also loved that maintenance — without prompting from her — came to her house, tilled her backyard and put down seed so that she would have a beautiful, weed free lawn.

"I was so impressed by that. That hasn't happened at any other post we have lived at," she said.

For more information on housing renovations as they happen, watch for future editions of the Guardian.

Education expert tours schools, talks to students, Family members

By **ANGIE THORNE**

Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. — Education is pivotal to the quality of life of the Soldiers and Families of Fort Polk and, in turn, the success of its mission.

That's why parents of school age children were invited to an education discussion Feb. 20 at the Fort Polk Warrior Center's Commanding General's Pub.

Edith K. Pickens, a Highly Qualified Expert to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs and senior advisor for Workforce Development and Integration, led the event and encouraged parents to discuss their concerns.

Prior to the education discussion, Pickens spent time touring and observing local schools including Pickering High and Elementary schools, Rosepine High and Elementary schools, Parkway Elementary, Leesville High School, Leesville Junior High, Vernon Middle School and North Polk Elementary.

In addition to the tours, Pickens talked to school administrators, teachers and military students to get a better picture of the education available to Fort Polk's military families and the challenges they face.

Kim Moltz, an occupational therapist who works with military children, attended the event to advocate for special needs families.

"I think this is a great opportunity to share what we see every day when it comes to military children and the education they receive. I think this is a great opportunity for Families to make things better," said Moltz.

Maria McPherson, military spouse and point of contact for military students at Rosepine Elementary School, said she attended because she wanted to find out if there are new things happening in education, as well as share her own experiences.

"I want to discover if there is anything that will support schools and military students in this area," she said. "It's important for military Families who come and go to have access to the latest information. They may not understand the programs available when it comes to classes and courses their children take," she said.

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general, thanked those in attendance and said they were part of providing Fort Polk's message to senior leadership across the Army when it comes to positive changes in education.

Frank introduced Pickens and said she was at Fort Polk on behalf of Army leadership because education is probably the number one issue when it comes to quality of life.

"We want to listen to military families about what you hear from your kids, see in the schools and experience at parent/teacher conferences because that's where we are going to get the feedback we need about the quality of education our installation receives here at JRTC and Fort Polk," he said.

As the discussion got underway, it quickly highlighted a range of emotions ranging from sadness to sheer frustration. Fort Polk parents spent more than two hours tackling — with laser precision — the challenges of advocating for their children's education. They, as well as Fort Polk's leadership team, asked Pickens to listen to their concerns and take their issues to Army leadership.



ANGIE THORNE / GUARDIAN

Edith K. Pickens, a Highly Qualified Expert to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs and senior advisor for Workforce Development and Integration, listens to parent concerns at an education discussion held Feb. 20 at the Fort Polk Warrior Center's Commanding General's Pub.

Frank told Pickens that Fort Polk needs a dynamic change in education.

Some of the issues discussed included: Lack of special education programs; Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for special needs students not being met, changed or handled correctly; gifted programs not reaching full potential; teachers unprepared for Advanced Placement classes; bullying; and grade point average recalculations as military children come from different schools and bring scores down, which may detrimentally affect the college application processes.

After listening and interacting with parents and the Fort Polk leadership team, Pickens said the number one goal is to find a way to meet the needs of students.

"That could mean methods to make a curriculum more rigorous or offering a child additional help. No matter what the issue is, one of the hardest things to do is individualize and meet the different needs children bring to us. My time here this week has shown me that Fort Polk is committed to students and is focused on continuous improvement" she said. "One of the positives I saw as I had the opportunity to spend time here and talk with people in the district, schools, garrison and leadership, is a community that cares about students. I think the people here care about the kids and that is a huge asset. It gives us a lot to build on."

Pickens said she believes the issues brought to here attention can be addressed.

"There are many challenges in education today and we certainly heard some here tonight. It's not an easy fix, but the Fort Polk community is making education a priority and is committed to preparing our young people for their futures," she said.

Brittany Zelt, a military spouse and mother, attended the event because of issues she has observed at her daughter's school.

Zelt said her overall impression of the



Edith K. Pickens, a Highly Qualified Expert in education talks with parents and assures them she understands their issues.

discussion was that she wasn't alone in her concerns.

"No matter the age or school, we face a wide variety of educational challenges," said Zelt. "I feel like this event was a success. I'm hopeful; I feel like I have to be since this is my chance to make a positive change in my child's education. A year ago we weren't even having these conver-

Census questionnaires to be mailed March 12-20

GUARDIAN STAFF

FORT POLK, La. — From March 12-20, invitations to participate in the 2020 Census will start arriving at households across the country.

"The Census Bureau is ready for the nation to respond next month," said Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham. "Millions of Americans are applying for 2020 Census jobs, more than 270,000 local and national organizations are engaged, and in less than 30 days the majority of U.S. households will receive an invitation to respond to help ensure that every person in the U.S. is counted."

Dillingham said the 2020 Census is on mission, on schedule, and on budget to promote an accurate count. He added response is important because statistics from the census are used in distributing hundreds of billions of dollars in funding for school lunches, hospitals, roads and much more.

"The invitations will remind respondents to include everyone living in the household, whether they are related or not," he said. "This includes young children."

"Your response will impact communities for the next decade."

The Census Bureau has successfully tested its data collection systems, Dillingham said, and has built backup systems to support resilient operations, and is ready to receive responses from all around the country.

The invitation will include instructions on how to respond to the 2020 Census online or by phone. By April 1, most households will have received an invitation delivered either by mail or by a census taker.

In areas of the country that are less likely to respond online, a paper questionnaire will be included in the initial mailing to households. Reminder mailings will be sent to households that do not respond, and in the fourth mailing every household that has not yet responded will receive a paper questionnaire.

Once households receive invitations, they are asked to respond to the 2020 Census by using the provided Census ID. If a household is unable to enter the Census ID, people can still respond by providing an address. Whether people respond online, by phone or by mail, it is important to respond right away.

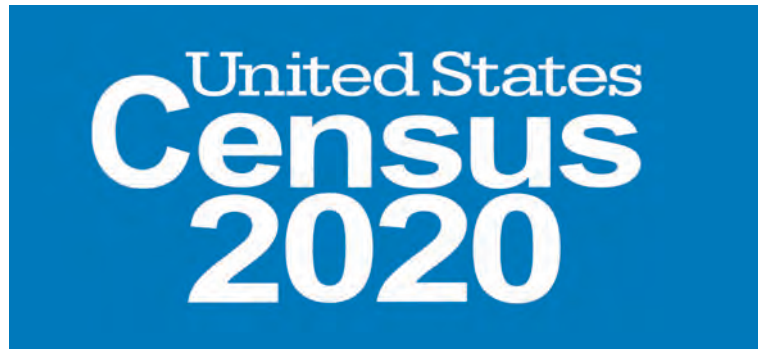
Below is a timeline of how and when the Census Bureau will invite households to complete the 2020 Census questionnaire:

- March 12-20: Initial invitations to respond online and by phone will be delivered by the U.S. Postal Service. Areas that are less likely to respond online will receive a paper questionnaire along with the invitation to respond online or over the phone.
- March 16-24: Reminder letters will be delivered.
- March 26-April 3: Reminder postcards will be delivered to households that have not responded.
- April 8-16: Reminder letters and paper questionnaires will be delivered to remaining households that have not responded.
- April 20-27: Final reminder postcards will be delivered to households that have not yet responded before census takers follow up in person.

If a household does not respond to any of the invitations, a census taker will follow up in per-

son sometime between May 13 and July 31. A sample of the 2020 Census paper questionnaire and preview of the online questionnaire is available, along with more information about when most people will receive their invitations in the mail, at www.2020census.gov.

The 2020 Census questionnaire is available online and by phone in English and 12 additional languages: Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese and Japanese. These 13 languages cover the language needs of more than 99% of U.S. households.



To help ensure a complete count of everyone, the Census Bureau will also provide video language guides, print language guides and language glossaries in 59 non-English languages, including American Sign Language, Braille and large print.

The U.S. Constitution mandates a census of the population every 10 years. Census statistics help determine the number of seats each state holds in the U.S. House of Representatives and how billions of dollars in federal funds are allocated to state and local communities for the next 10 years.

For more information about the 2020 Census, visit www.2020census.gov.

Census count of military, their Families important to local communities

By **LAWRENCE R. PIWKO**
Director, Human Resources

FORT POLK, La. — For cities and states across the country, active duty military, veterans and their families are an important part of community life — whether they live on base, in nearby towns or are deployed or stationed overseas.

But military families may not realize just how important they are when it comes to the 2020 Census. They should know that the 2020 Census will have an impact on their communities' political representation and billions of dollars in funding annually for the next 10 years to determine funding for infrastructure and critical public services such as hospitals, schools, emergency response services and road maintenance and construction. All are services that military members, veterans and their families use while they live in a community.

In mid-March, every household in the United States, including those of service members, veterans and their families living in the United States, will receive an invitation to respond to the 2020 Census. For the first time, people can respond to the census online, by phone or by mail.

The online option could be particularly popular with enlisted active duty military members, more than half of whom are younger than 25 years old, according to Department of Defense data from 2017.

How military members respond to the 2020 Census

Most military households are responsible for responding to the 2020 Census on their own if they are stationed or living in the United States. People will be counted where they live and sleep most of the time as of April 1 (Census Day). Remember to count everyone

who lives in your household, including young children, newborns and any relatives or others.

You will be counted in a military barracks in the United States if that's where you're staying on April 1. A military point of contact, sworn to protect your privacy, will distribute individual questionnaires, collect them when complete and return them to the Census Bureau. This is similar to how people living in other group quarter facilities such as college/university student housing respond as part of the Group Quarters data collection.

Special considerations for active-duty military

The Census Bureau has clear guidance to help active-duty military and veterans understand how to respond to the 2020 Census based on where they are on April 1.

If you are active duty:

- Deployed outside the United States while stationed in the United States, the Census Bureau will use administrative data from the Department of Defense to count you at your usual residence in the United States. Any family members living in the United States need to respond for themselves to a census questionnaire.

- Stationed outside the United States, the Census Bureau will use administrative data from DoD to count you and any dependents living with you overseas at your home state of record in the United States.

- Living in a household in the United States, you need to respond to a household census questionnaire and count everyone living there.

Responses to the 2020 Census are safe and secure. Federal law bars the Census Bureau from releasing personal census data to law enforcement, immigration agencies or other government agencies.

Community

Briefs

BJACH health fair

Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital will host a free health fair in the Main Post Exchange Saturday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. for Soldiers, retirees, Department of Defense civilians, contractors and their families. Representatives from the installation Army Wellness Center, the Veterans Administration and the BJACH Ombudsman will be on hand to answer questions.

School lunch menu

The following school lunch menu is for Vernon Parish schools for Monday through March 6. Meals are served with salad bar and choice of milk:

Monday: Steak finger basket, mashed potatoes and gravy, Italian green beans, peach and Jell-O cup, whole wheat roll.

Tuesday: Barbecue ribettes on a whole wheat bun, Cajun French fries, peas and carrots, pineapple chunks.

Wednesday: Fish burger or fish sticks, Bush's baked beans, oven bake fries, mixed fruit.

Thursday: Chicken and sausage gumbo, steamed rice, green beans, potato salad, peach crunch, ice cream, crackers.

March 6: Grilled cheese sandwich, vegetable soup, carrots/broccoli cup, apple wedges, chocolate pudding.

BJACH council meeting

The Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital Patient and Family Partnership Council meets Tuesday at 11 a.m. for BJACH staff who are beneficiaries and noon for non-BJACH employees in classroom 2 on BJACH's second floor near the emergency room.

The council seeks input from those who receive care at BJACH and its ancillary services.

Everyone is encouraged to attend and share their feedback.

Call 531-3628/3880 for more information.

Women veterans brunch

A Women Veterans Brunch, hosted by Veterans of Foreign Wars District 5, is held March 21 from 10 a.m.-noon at VFW Post 3106 in Leesville.

Guest speaker is Command Sgt. Major Ruth Drewitt, Joint Readiness Training Center Operations Group, Task Force Sustainment.

Groundbreaking for a Women Veterans Memorial is held at noon. Space is limited. Contact your local VFW to sign up.

Active duty Soldiers can call (337) 353-9136.



DFMWR movie night features 'Frozen 2'

DFMWR

FORT POLK, La. —Fort Polk's Directorate of Family Morale, Welfare and Recreation offers a wide array of programs and events for every member of the Family. You don't want to miss your chance to experience the fun to be had over the next few months.

Laser Tag

The Warrior Hills Golf Course brings you Laser Tag on the driving range. Test your tactical skills with your friends and family today from 5:30-8 p.m. Sessions are \$5 per eight-minute session or \$12 for three sessions and all ages are welcome. Refreshments are available on the deck while you wait. For more information call 531-4661.

Strongest Youth Competition

Does your child love to compete and show their strength? If so, sign them up for the Child and Youth Services Strongest Youth Competition held March 21 at 10 a.m. at Perez Field. Each age division competes for one youth to prove themselves the strongest of the group through a series of challenges.

Challenges include events such as a tire flip, flexed arm hang, log toss and more. Prizes are awarded to the champion of each age division and the runner up of the division, not per event.

This event is free and open to the public. Registration begins the day of the event at 9 a.m. at Perez Field.

For more information, call 531-6004.

Movie Night

The return of Movie Night is quickly approaching. Join the Fort Polk community at Headquarters Field March 28 for another great outdoor movie featuring "Frozen 2."

There will be free popcorn, candy, hot dogs, nachos, drinks and the signature MWR light up bracelets. Concessions open at 6:30 p.m. and the movie begins at 7:30 p.m. Be there early to grab your goodies and get a great seat.

Save the date for FreedomFest 2020!

The Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk's FreedomFest will be held July 18. Country music superstar Toby Keith will headline the event, which will include fireworks, static displays, salute to the nation, food vendors and children's activities.

Amazing Race

Join in the fun as the JRTC and Fort Polk stages its version of the Amazing Race. Participants will race around South Fort Polk and perform activities for clues to the next destination. Challenges include physical fitness and critical thinking activities.

Register at the Allen Memorial Library and/or the Home of Heroes Recreation Center. For more information call 531-2665.

Warrior Store

Don't forget to check out the Warrior Store. You'll find everything from Fort Polk hoodies, shirts and glassware to beautiful home decor. The boutique atmosphere offers something for everyone and new items are added monthly. The Warrior Store is open seven days a week, Thursday through Tuesday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. and Wednesdays from 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Warrior Lanes/Anvil Bar

As many of you know, the Warrior Lanes Bowling Center is still closed for repairs. However, the Anvil Bar is back in business.

The bar offers a variety of Louisiana themed specialty drinks for you to enjoy while you watch your favorite sports on one of the many big screen TVs.

The Anvil often hosts UFC Fights and other championship sporting events with no cover charge. The Anvil Bar is open Monday through Thursday from 4:30-10 p.m., Friday 4:30 p.m.- 1 a.m., Saturday from 11-1 a.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m.-10 p.m.

Follow the Anvil Bar on Facebook to keep up with the latest events happening at the bar.

For more information follow MWR on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, or visit www.polk.armymwr.com.

Parents, Family members line NPE driveway as students participate in happy, colorful Mardi Gras parade



Punishment handed down for UCMJ violations

OSJA

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

Across Fort Polk, the following disciplinary issues continue to be prevalent: Sexual assault, driving under the influence, wrongful use or possession of controlled substances, fraternization, inappropriate relationships and domestic violence. Below are recent examples of adverse legal actions for units within the Fort Polk jurisdiction:

- A sergeant, assigned to 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment (Airborne), was punished under Article 15 for making a false official statement, in violation of Article 107; having the spouse of a fellow noncommissioned officer at his house at 3 a.m.; and conduct prejudicial to the good order and discipline in the armed forces, in

violation of Article 134, Uniform Code of Military Justice. The service member was sentenced to a reduction to the grade of E-4, 45 days of extra duty, 45 days of restriction and an oral reprimand.

- A sergeant, assigned to 1st Bn, 509th Inf Reg (Abn), was administratively separated under Chapter 14-12c, with a General (Under Honorable Conditions) characterization of service for abusive sexual contact of a civilian. Generally, this characterization of service results in the loss of a service member’s Post 9/11 educational benefits.

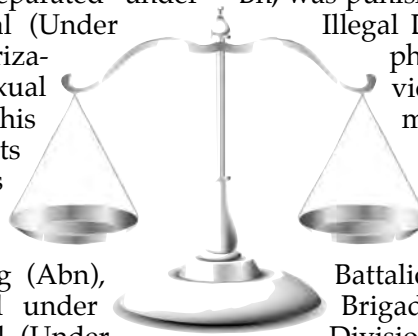
- A private first class, assigned to 1st Bn, 509th Inf Reg (Abn), was administratively separated under Chapter 14-12c, with a General (Under Honorable Conditions) characterization of service for sexually assaulting two soldiers. Generally, this characterization of service results in the loss of a service member’s Post 9/11 educational benefits.

- A private first class, assigned to 519th Military Police Battalion, was punished under Article 15 for testing positive for amphetamines and methamphetamines during a unit wide urinaly-

sis; and for wrongful possession of a controlled substance, in violation of Article 112a, UCMJ. The service member was sentenced to reduction to the grade of E-1, 30 days of extra-duty and 30 days of restriction.

- A private first class, assigned to 519th MP Bn, was punished under Article 15 for Misuse of Illegal Drugs. The soldier used Methamphetamine and Amphetamines, in violation of Article 112a. The service member was sentenced to reduction to E-1, forfeiture of \$866 pay, extra-duty for 30 days and restriction for 30 days.

- A private, assigned to 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 3d Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, was punished under Article 15 for attempting to strike and unlawfully strangle his wife, in violation of Article 128; for wrongfully communicating a threat, in violation of Article 115; and for wrongfully possessing an unregistered firearm, in violation of Article 92, UCMJ. The service member was sentenced to a reduction to the grade of E-1, forfeiture of \$866 pay per month for two months, 45 days of extra duty, 45 days of restriction and an oral reprimand.



Personal health: Spit smokeless tobacco out — for good

MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM

WASHINGTON — Smokeless tobacco use by service members is much higher than in the U.S. adult population. This fact concerns the military medical community. Users say it helps with alertness, and allows them to stay connected with peers. But evidence links products like snuff, dip and chewing tobacco to cancer and poor oral health. Such products also contain nicotine and are addictive.

To the Military Health System, using tobacco in any form poses a threat to readiness and the overall health of the force. Smokeless tobacco contains more than 30 chemicals that cause cancer. It’s not a safe alternative to other forms of tobacco, like cigarettes.

“We know nicotine helps with alertness. But smokeless tobacco products also have negative effects on dental, readiness and long-term health,” said U.S. Public Health Service Capt. Kimberly Elenberg, director of the Defense Health Agency’s Total Force Fitness office.

DoD’s tobacco education campaign, YouCanQuit2, urges tobacco users to assess their readiness to take action and make a plan to quit.

YouCanQuit2 provides resources to service members and beneficiaries on their journey to becoming tobacco free. Visit www.ycq2.org for more information.

“We’re providing them with education and support for quitting tobacco if they so choose,” Elenberg said. “This includes a 24/7 Live Chat for questions, support and encouragement, as well as an interactive savings calculator.”

YouCanQuit2 can help people quit in several ways. There are tips for writing a quit plan, and for managing cravings and stress. There’s information on prescription and over-the-counter products to help people quit. There are even ideas to prevent weight gain. Plus, care providers can order and print out campaign materials.

YouCanQuit2 has Instagram, Facebook and Twitter channels. All provide ideas on ways to quit.

TRICARE offers benefits aimed at quitting smokeless tobacco use. TRICARE-authorized providers can counsel beneficiaries age 18 and older who live in the United States or District of Columbia. Medicare recipients are not eligible.

Research shows that using a program and a product together increases chances of quitting for

good. As a result, coverage of tobacco cessation products is provided through military pharmacies or the TRICARE pharmacy home delivery program.

These products include Chantix, Zyban and nicotine replacement therapy, such as nasal sprays, inhalers, patches, gum and lozenges. There’s no cost, although brands vary by pharmacy and generics may be provided. A prescription is needed for all products from a TRICARE-authorized provider, even if the product can be bought over the counter. The minimum age is 18 and Medicare recipients are not eligible. None of these products are covered at retail pharmacies.

Coverage of products and counseling for service members and beneficiaries stationed overseas is provided for those enrolled in TRICARE PrimeA managed care option available in Prime Service Areas in the United States; you have an assigned primary care manager who provides most of your care.

The government has other help available. Mobile apps found at Smokefree.gov make support as close as the smartphone. Smokefree.gov also provides DipfreeTXT, a texting program for those who want to quit.

DES reminder: Register personal weapons, no motorcycle cuts

DES

FORT POLK, La. — The Fort Polk Directorate of Emergency Services wants to make visitors and residents of the installation aware that the wearing of motorcycle cuts is prohibited on Fort Polk.

Cuts are insignia on outer wear that include, but are not limited to rockers that identify club names and territories; club logos plus motorcycle club or rider club patches; a “1%” signifying outlaw intent; office or rank held within a club; or a side patch that often contains a club saying.

Soldiers and civilians may be cited for failure

to follow the guidelines governing motorcycle cuts in Fort Polk Regulation 190-5, Chapter 1-3.

Visitors and residents of Fort Polk are also reminded of the rules concerning privately owned firearms on Fort Polk. Privately owned firearms and ammunition are prohibited on Fort Polk. This includes possession, carrying, transportation, use or storage by any person while on the Fort Polk military reservation and Toledo Bend Recreation Site except as specifically authorized by an approved weapons registration. Concealed carry is prohibited.

Personnel residing on the installation have five business days from the time of arrival or acquisi-

tion of the firearm to register it at the Visitors Control Center. Visitors and guest of Fort Polk must register their firearms prior to entering the installation regardless of the reason for access.

Exchange customers that purchase a firearm must fill out FP Form 563 at the time of sale. This form is proof of registration for five days, after which the buyer must either remove the weapon from the installation or formally register it with the Visitors Control Center. Active-duty military and Family members must complete FP Form 563, have their company commander approve the form and then turn it in to the visitors control center to complete the registration process.

Soldiers may seek remission, cancellation of Army debts

By **BERNADINE LENAHA**
OSJA

FORT POLK, La. — Army Regulation 600-4 allows Soldiers to apply for remission or cancellation of their debts to the Army if these debts were incurred due to injustice or to end extreme hardship or undue suffering resulting from the recoupment of the indebtedness.

Injustice entails wrongs or misrepresentation on the part of the Government caused by persons acting in their official capacity. To prove an injustice took place, the Soldier must show that he did not know and could not have known of the payment errors. The Soldiers must also prove that he made appropriate inquiries to the proper authority but was informed that the payment was correct.

Hardship occurs when repayment would greatly affect the welfare of a Soldier, his or her Family members, or both.

Hardship also exists if repayment causes undue suffering to the Soldier and his Family. When applying for remission or cancellation for hardship, the Soldier acknowledges the debts as valid but that payment

would result in extreme hardship to the Soldier and his or her dependents. Soldiers seeking a remission or cancellation of indebtedness based on hardship must document their financial hardship with impact statements and full financial disclosure on their application. Expenses caused by excessively high standards of living or by mishandling of personal finances are not a basis for a hardship remission or cancellation of debt.

The type of debt that may be considered for remission or cancellation include, but are not limited to: Basic allowance for subsistence; basic allowance for housing; cost of living allowance; family separation allowance; excess leave; excess weight of household goods; temporary duty; and temporary lodging allowance.

Debts arising from liability established in a Financial Liability Investigation of Property Loss conducted under AR 735-5 may qualify for cancellation or remission of indebtedness under some circumstances.

Debts that will not be remitted or canceled include: When a Soldier's pay is not reduced promptly in connection with forfeiture of pay im-



posed by a court-martial sentence or under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice; debts incurred while not on active duty or in an active status; if a Soldier will receive less than an honorable discharge at time of separation; when a Soldier is held liable for damage or loss of property to another branch of service; when debts are due to loss of public funds obtained or converted to own use through fraud, larceny, embezzlement or other unlawful means; when debts are due to fines imposed by court-martial sentence; and when the

amount is \$150 or less and based on hardship only.

To request a remission or cancellation of a debt, Soldiers should complete and promptly submit a DA Form 3508, Application for Remission or Cancellation of Indebtedness. AR 600-4, paragraph 2-4 lists required and recommended enclosures.

If you are completing this application and need assistance, or if you just have any questions, please contact the Fort Polk Legal Assistance Office at 531-2580 to schedule an appointment with an attorney.

UNCLASSIFIED//FOUO

JRTC and Fort Polk

DoD Military Spouse Career Empowerment Expo

March 27th 2020, 9:00am – 3:00pm

The Warrior Center

Military Spouse Employment Partnership
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Military OneSource
The nation's leading military career resource

Morning Program:

- Guest Speakers from Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP), MilitaryOneSource, and a DoD Program Overview.

Afternoon Program:

- Lunch and Learn sessions with topics such as "Be Your Own Boss" and the "Federal Hiring Process."
- Additional sessions will include topics of "Not Finished Learning Yet," "Let's Get To Work," and much more!
- Career Coaches from MilitaryOneSource will answer questions about career paths, education benefits, and resume reviews.
- Hiring Fair and Resource Booths – 30 Employer tables and 10 Resource tables
- Free LinkedIn Professional Headshots.

Registration will be required for both morning and afternoon sessions.
Child care will be provided to all registered CYS hourly care children.

****Registration information will be published NLT March 5th 2020.**

***For more information contact Stacey Delgado/531-6922/Stacey.r.Delgado.civ@mail.mil

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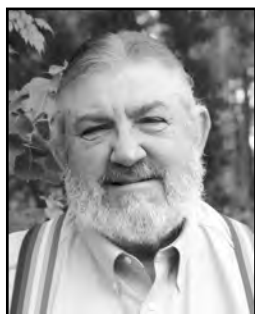
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Felines find food, family, freedom in Rosepine

By **CHUCK CANNON**

Command information officer

FORT POLK, La. — For those of you who have not yet “liked” the Facebook page titled “Chuck Cannon Photographer,” you most likely aren’t aware the menagerie of fel-



Cannon

lines who’ve adopted us as their forever home.

Actually, it was one who adopted Susan and I without first telling us that although she was just a small little girl, she al-

ready was in a motherly way.

In March, this small yellow short-haired female showed up on our back porch, hungry for both food and attention. As my softhearted spouse could not bear to see a suffering kitty, a little food was set out. The cat, eventually given the name Lurlene by the aforementioned Susan, quickly let us know that we now belonged to her. That was ce-

mented by the fact that shortly after Lurlene’s arrival, Susan came home to find the fuzzy feline lying on my belly as we watched TV on our couch.

We took Lurlene to the vet to make sure she was healthy, had her shots and was spayed so that we would have no surprises; alas, we were too late. The vet informed us that we were soon to be the proud grandparents of a litter of kittens.

Not long afterward Lurlene “presented” us with five grandcats. Homes were found for two of the newbies and we kept the others, increasing our cat population to four.

It wasn’t long before word quickly spread that the Cannon house in Rosepine was a great place to grab a free meal and porch to sleep on out of the rain.

As the majority of our visitors were feral, they would usually just sit by one of our bird feeders, grab a snack and move one.

That is until Billie showed up. Billie was even smaller than Lurlene when she arrived. Nothing but skin, bones and long gray hair, Billie was a little shy at first, but quickly learned that both Susan and I made good cuddling partners.



CHUCK CANNON / GUARDIAN

The Cannon feline family, from left: Mouse (runt of the litter); Lurlene, matriarch of the furry feline clan; Pinkie; and Mini Me, the only male of the group.

After checking the neighborhood to see if some had “misplaced” their kitten, we took Billie to the vet. No pregnancy this time, but the poor little thing was in bad shape — an eye and ear infection, crushed carpal joint on her right front leg and three of her four foot pads looked as if she had been dragged, leaving them raw. Fortunately, she was free of feline leukemia and AIDS, and her eye and feet showed signs of healing.

We let her bed down in a cage on our back porch to keep her separate from the indoor kitties and safe from any others critters who might pass by.

We did our best to keep her comfortable, but I’m sorry to report that poor little Billie had to be put down. Apparently she was in worse shape than we thought. If you heard sobs emanating from the Fort Polk Veterinary Treatment Facility on the morning of Dec. 23, it was yours truly. At least, as the kind folks at the VTF shared with me, Susan and I made her last month as nice as

possible and she knew that someone loved her.

So we’re back to Lurlene and the three grandcats: Mini Me, Pinkie and Mouse. They make us laugh, and at times, can be aggravating, but what children aren’t. They’ve also shown us what unconditional love is as they snuggle up to us on the couch while we watch TV, or lie between us in bed.

I often find my eyes watering a little as I watch them play, or snuggle with each other, and I think about little Billie, and wonder how someone could abandon such sweet pets. It was obvious from her loving nature that she had been someone’s pet, just as Lurlene had once belonged to someone who had abandoned her. Lurlene was lucky; she stumbled onto us quickly. Little Billie was not so lucky.

So, if you want to keep up with our furry feline friends, check out my page. And please, if you have a pet, don’t abandon them. Billie was as sweet as they come; she deserved better.

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Fort Polk Main Post Exchange offers community programs, events

MAIN POST EXCHANGE

FORT POLK, La. — The Fort Polk Exchange offers the following activities and events for Soldiers and their Families:

- Community Health Fair: 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Saturday. The Main Exchange partners with Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital for a health fair.

Visit more than 20 health booths, exercise equipment demonstrations, free samples, discounts at the Main Exchange and activities for the kids.

The Exchange has scheduled the following movies for Bayou Theater:

- Today — “The Rhythm Section,” rated R, 6 p.m.
- Saturday — “Spies in Disguise,” rated PG, 3 p.m., “The Turning,” rated PG-13, 6 p.m.
- Sunday — “Just Mercy,” rated PG-13, 3 p.m., “The Gentlemen,” rated R, 6 p.m.

Ticket prices are as follows: First run showing,

adults \$7.25, children \$5.75; regular showing, adults \$6.50, children \$4.25; regular 3D, adults \$8.50, children \$6.25. Bayou Theater is located at 7830 Mississippi Ave., bldg 930.

The Army and Air Force Exchange Service at Fort Polk provides Soldiers and the military community with the tools needed to stay ready and resilient in the new year.

Military shoppers can find the latest athletic apparel and shoes, fitness trackers and workout equipment — everything they need to live a BE FIT lifestyle — at the Fort Polk Exchange and at ShopMyExchange.com.

As part of its efforts to help Soldiers and their Family members BE FIT, Fort Polk Exchange restaurants offers better-for-you meals and snacks that support readiness and resiliency.

Online nutritional guides for Fort Polk Exchange restaurants are available at www.shopmyexchange.com/be-fit/nutrition.

Since Jan. 1, disabled Veterans, Purple Heart recipients, former prisoners of war and certain



caregivers were granted in-store shopping access with the Exchange. Honorably discharged Veterans can shop online through their earned online shopping benefit. For more information, visit ShopMyExchange.com/vets.

Applications accepted for turkey hunt

By AMY C. BRENNAN

DPW-ENRMD, Conservation Branch

FORT POLK, La. — Most people associate turkeys with the cool, colorful fall season. But if you're a turkey hunter, you know that spring is the best time to bag a bird.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has announced lottery applications for military dependents for the annual Fort Polk Youth Turkey Hunt. The hunt is scheduled for March 28.

Ten lottery slots are available for active-duty military dependent youths between the ages of 10 and 17 on the day of the hunt. The form must be filled out by an active-duty military parent or legal guardian assigned to Fort Polk. If the active-duty service member is deployed, spouses may sign up their youth.

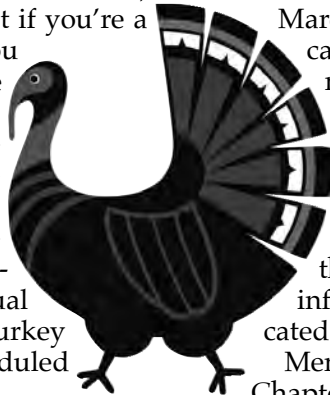
Applications must be submitted individually for one youth per form. Multiple applications will result in

disqualification. Selection will be conducted through a random lottery drawing administered by the LDWF in mid-March. Applications must be submitted no later than

March 7. Successful applicants will be notified by mail. Instructions for completing and submitting the form are within the application, which can be found at (home.army.mil/polk), then click on “here” in the information on the hunt located in the white box.

Members of the Louisiana Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation will guide participants selected for the turkey hunt. One additional adult may accompany the youth and guide, but may not hunt. Youths 16 to 17 years of age must comply with Louisiana's hunting license requirements. There is no charge to participate.

For more information, please contact the Fort Polk Game Enforcement Office at 531-5222 or LDWF at (337) 208-2208.



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Festivals

• Food festival

Check out the Louisiana Food and Music Festival Saturday at the Origin Bank River Market, 316 South Grand St., Monroe.

The festival highlights the rich culture and talent in the area. The music, food, musicians, artisans and chefs who keep the area vibrant join as a community and celebrate the Louisiana culture. A variety of food from around the world will be available. Enjoy a diverse range of activities and entertainment throughout the day, including shopping. Admission is free. For more information visit www.monroe-westmonroe.org.

• Black Heritage festival

The annual Black Heritage Festival takes place March 14 at the Lake Charles Civic Center, 900 Lakeshore Drive. The festival features live entertainment, mouthwatering food and great family fun. The focus is to bring together the cultures of Africa and Southwest Louisiana and highlight the best in the community by celebrating diversity, culture and education.

For more information call (337) 436-9588.

• Iowa Rabbit Festival

Celebrating the economic and culinary impact rabbits have in Southwest Louisiana, the annual Iowa Rabbit Festival is a one-of-a-kind event.

This family-friendly festival has it all: Great food, live music and tasty cook-offs. Don't miss this hare-raising good time at the Burton Coliseum Complex, 7001 Gulf Hwy, Lake Charles.

For more information visit www.iowarabbit-festival.org.

• Film festival

The annual Cane River Film Festival takes place at Northwestern State University's Russell Hall, 175 Sam Sibley Drive, Natchitoches, March 20-21. The mission of the festival is to showcase, nurture and support the emerging creative filmmakers. The festival builds a unique and powerful hub for filmmakers all over the World. This year's event highlights the

work of international and national student/independent filmmakers and Natchitoches' contribution to the film industry.

For more information visit www.caneriver-filmfestival.com.

• Crawfish festival

The Crawfish & Music Festival takes place at the Lake Charles Civic Center, 900 Lake Shore Drive, March 28 from 11 a.m.-9 p.m.

This festival brings you the best of Louisiana culture with great food, wonderful people and live music as you eat and dance the day away. This year the festival spices things up with a Zydeco jam session.

Bring your taste buds as there will be more than just crawfish, including your favorite Cajun treats and dishes available at the festival from various food vendors.

The admission-free carnival will be in full swing, offering fun for the entire family. There will be a kids zone and plenty of shopping opportunities for adults.

Tickets are \$12.24 per person.

For more information or to purchase tickets visit www.eventbrite.com/e/crawfish-music-festival-tickets.

Miscellaneous

• Azalea trail

Enjoy the Lafayette Historic Azalea Trail, a winding drive through historic districts, downtown, the university and oil center and neighborhood garden districts with grand boulevards for about 25 miles of the city's urban core. The official bloom season begins Sunday and extends thru March, but the date of the Azalea Trail event takes place March 7 from 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

This cultural floral attraction is a breathtaking display of color and beauty that has attracted thousands of visitors over the years.

Trolley rides are available March 7 and 14 (Stops and details on the website). Trolley rides are held from 9 a.m.-noon and last an hour. They begin at the Alexandre Mouton House

gardens, 1122 Lafayette St., at 9 a.m.

The azalea reception is held March 7 at the Vermilionville Living History Museum and Folk Life Park, 300 Fisher Road.

For more information visit www.azaleatrail.org.

• St. Patrick's Day parade

Now that Mardi Gras is over, if you haven't had enough of parades then you don't want to miss the 35th annual Wearin' of the Green St. Patrick's Day parade held March 14 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., 1800 South Acadian Thruway, Baton Rouge. There will be marching bands, bagpipers, festive floats, marching groups, dignitaries and more. For more information visit www.visitbatonrouge.com.

Clubs/groups

• Lose weight

Join Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) every Thursday at the Vernon Parish Library meeting room. Weigh in is 5-5:50 p.m. For more information call (337) 208-0896.

• Bass Masters

Join the Fort Polk Community Bass Masters. The club meets monthly on the Tuesday before each tournament. Meetings are held at 6 p.m. at the New Llano American Legion, Post 387, 500 Vernon St. The next meeting takes place Tuesday. The February tournament takes place at Toledo Bend Lake Saturday. The entry fee is \$40. For more information visit www.fortpolk-communitybassmasters.com.

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