



FORGING THE

WARRIOR SPIRIT

THE JRTC & FORT POLK GUARDIAN

Vol. 47, No. 40

Home of Heroes @ Fort Polk, LA

Oct. 9, 2020



JRTC COMMAND GROUP

Partnership of nations join forces for JRTC Rotation 21-01
 With the onset of Joint Readiness Training Center Rotation 21-01, participating Soldiers from Indonesia, Thailand and the United States put the final touches on preparations.
Above: A Soldier with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, conducts home station training before heading to JRTC and Fort Polk.
Above right: Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, Commander, JRTC and Fort Polk, welcomes an infantry company with the Indonesian Army.
Right: Soldiers with the Royal Thai Army receive marksmanship instruction from a JRTC Operations Group Soldier.

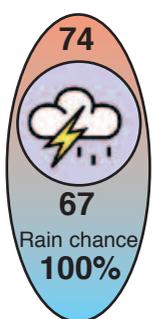


INDONESIAN COMPANY PAO

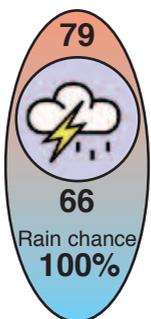


ROYAL THAI ARMY PAO

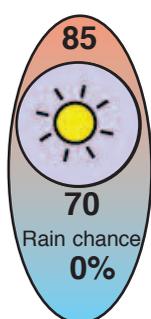
Weekend weather



Friday



Saturday



Sunday

Hurricane Delta

As Hurricane Delta approaches the Louisiana Gulf Coast, it's important that members of the JRTC and Fort Polk community heed watches and warnings, as well as guidance from local leaders. Be wary of driving through areas that are submerged in water, watch for downed power lines or trees, secure outdoor equipment and stay indoors if at all possible. For more information check the Digital App (available at your digital app store) or the JRTC and Fort Polk Facebook page.

Viewpoint

In our view

Guardian staff asked the JRTC and Fort Polk community, "What was something that was cool when you were younger but isn't anymore?" Here are their responses:



Pfc. Stephen Ashley: "I think a long car ride is something that isn't cool anymore."



Jessica Ballard (as a child): "Three words: Acid wash jeans!"

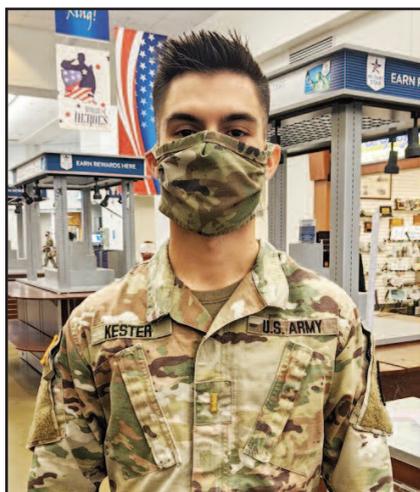


SpC. Elias Deleon: "I'd pick Pokemon as something that isn't cool anymore."

SpC. Bryce Grant: "I'd say sleeping outside all night."



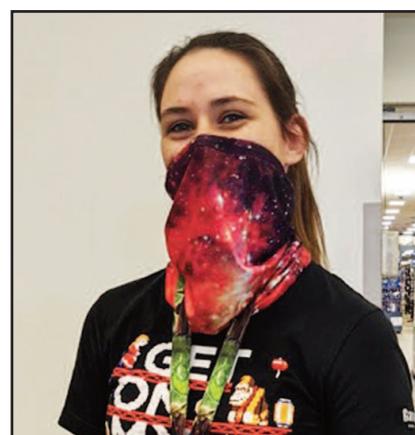
Ellis Hubbard: "Living with your parents is something that isn't cool. It was maybe normal before, but now it's weird to invite someone over to your parent's house."



2nd Lt. Jacob Kester: "Action figures aren't as cool anymore."



Shanda Sherman: "Pop rocks aren't popular anymore."



Courtney Smith: "I'd probably say those plastic, silly band bracelets. I'd also say riding your bike; I don't feel like kids really do that anymore."



Guardian

Editorial Staff

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank
Joint Readiness Training Center
and Fort Polk commanding general

Col. Ryan K. Roseberry
Garrison commander

Kim Reischling
Public affairs officer

Chuck Cannon
Command information officer

Christy Graham
Editor

Angie Thorne

T.C. Bradford

Keith Houin

Jean Clavette Graves
Staff writers

Editorial Offices
Building 4919, Magnolia Street
Fort Polk, LA 71459-5060

Voice (337) 531-4033

Fax (337) 531-1401

Email: Kimberly.K.Reischling.civ@mail.mil

Fort Polk Homepage
home.army.mil/polk/

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

NewScope

Briefs

Vehicle release

The Directorate of Emergency Services Traffic Section will release the following vehicles to a towing company for disposal on Nov. 12, 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 / 6675 / 2677.

1979	Chevrolet	El Camino	4767
1999	Honda	Accord	3691
2003	Subaru	Impreza	1948
1993	Chevrolet	1500	3861
2011	BMW	328i	1387
2002	Honda	Accord	1942
2007	Buick	Lucerne	9473
2015	Jeep	Renegade	5184
2000	Chevrolet	Impala	5933
2007	Chevrolet	Impala	1321
2004	Toyota	Corolla	7363

Lunch and learn

The R2 Performance Center's Lunch and Learn has been pushed to the right and will be held Wednesday from 12-12:45 p.m. Performance expert Jess Burgett presents this month's topic, "Work/Life Balance vs. Work/Life Integration."

Work is incredibly important, but what about the other areas of life? Can we realistically balance work with life, or is this goal even feasible?

Find ways to better manage and holistically view all aspects of your life to increase satisfaction, performances and relationships.

Limited seats are available. To RSVP, email Nicole Clasen at clasenn@magellan-federal.com. For addition details call 531-2427.

The R2 Performance Center is located at 8148 Alabama Ave., bldg 2380.

BOSS events

Listed below are upcoming Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers events in October:

Wednesday — BOSS meeting and pumpkin carving contest; 10 a.m. at the Home of Heroes Rec Center.

Oct. 16 — Leesville Tree Farm Massacre; 7 p.m. Ticket and transportation is \$10.

Oct. 23 — Outdoor movie night; 7 p.m. behind Glory Chapel

Oct. 28 — BOSS meeting and toy drive box distribution; 10 a.m. at the toy drive warehouse.



Col. Jody Dugai, commander, Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, addresses medical issues during an Army Family Action Plan topic discussion meeting at the Fort Polk Warrior Community Center Oct. 7. Dugai was joined by Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commander, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, Col. Ryan K. Roseberry, Fort Polk garrison commander and subject matter experts from across the installation during the meeting which asked residents for recommendations to be brought to the Army's AFAP Conference in November.

CHUCK CANNON / GUARDIAN

Polk residents recommend AFAP topics

By **CHUCK CANNON**

Command information officer

FORT POLK, La. — Education issues, quality of life and infrastructure improvements were the main topics of discussion during an Army Family Action Plan topic discussion meeting at Fort Polk's Warrior Community Center at 5:30 p.m. Oct. 7.

The event was broadcast live on the JRTC and Fort Polk Facebook page and featured input from subject matter experts from across the installation.

The information presented during the discussion will be used by participants at Fort Polk's AFAP Conference Oct. 28-29 to determine issues to submit to Army leadership.

There are five criteria for topics to be considered for sending forward to Army leaders:

- The issue must contribute positively to the Army goal of readiness and retention of quality Soldiers;
- The issue must have community-wide impact requiring action that addresses the total Army Family;
- The issue must be judged reasonable with consideration of fiscal and manpower requirements;
- The recommendation must have measurable objectives with an identified end project;
- The same issue can't have been addressed in the past three years.

Among the education concerns addressed was standardizing requirements from schools that serve military posts so students who accompany their family on PCS moves do not lose education credits.

"We are working those issues now, and that

would make a great topic to move forward," Tiffany Koch, Fort Polk school liaison officer, said.

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank outlined efforts being made to improve both on-post housing and quality of life issues.

Col. Jody Dugai, commander, Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, addressed medical issues, including access to medical records between military and civilian treatment facilities.

AFAP provides Active and Reserve component Soldiers, Army civilians, Family members, Survivors, and Retirees a voice in

shaping their standards of living by identifying issues and concerns for Army Senior Leadership resolution. Since its inception in 1983, the AFAP remains the only such partnership between a branch of the United States military and its constituents.

Information provided through the AFAP process gives commanders and leaders insight into current satisfaction detractors, quality of life needs, and expectations of Army constituents. Leadership uses the information to effect changes that improve standards of living and support programs. These changes foster a satisfied, informed, and resilient Army Community.

If you would like to submit an issue for consideration go to bldg 924, Family Readiness Center, 7960 Mississippi Ave., pick up a form, fill it out and return it by Oct. 27, or go to www.myarmyonesource.com and make your submission.

To learn more detail of the topics discussed during the meeting visit the JRTC and Fort Polk Facebook page at www.facebook.com/JRTCandFortPolk.



Army news

Locke perseveres to become first Black female academy grad

By **TERRI MOON CRONK**
Army News Service

WASHINGTON — The Army communications specialist had no idea what she was getting into when her battalion commander asked her if she wanted to go to the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York.

Stationed at Fort Polk, Louisiana, in 1976, now-retired Army Maj. Pat Locke had never heard of West Point, she said. But, when she learned she could get a college degree, the Detroit-born woman packed her belongings in a duffel bag and drove to the school the following day.

She laughs now, remembering when she told herself, "How bad could it be?"

Little did she know, but she joined a college that separated people into "males," and "non-males." Her class started with 119 women — 62 graduated.

Locke also became the first Black woman to become a Military Academy graduate by order of merit in her 1980 class. Today, graduates are listed alphabetically rather than by merit, she explained.

"It wasn't vastly different than life in the Army; but at Fort Polk, Louisiana, I was around a lot of people who looked like me. When I got to the academy, there were far fewer people that looked like me. That was the first rude awakening

when I got there," Locke said.

She said that being from Detroit she spoke differently and had to fight a language barrier.

"Few people could understand what I was saying, so that was a problem for me," she said. "That was the biggest thing I had to overcome."

Also, being at what had been an all-white-male school, she had to make an adjustment.

"I had to check my attitude because I said that, no matter what, I'm not leaving," she said.

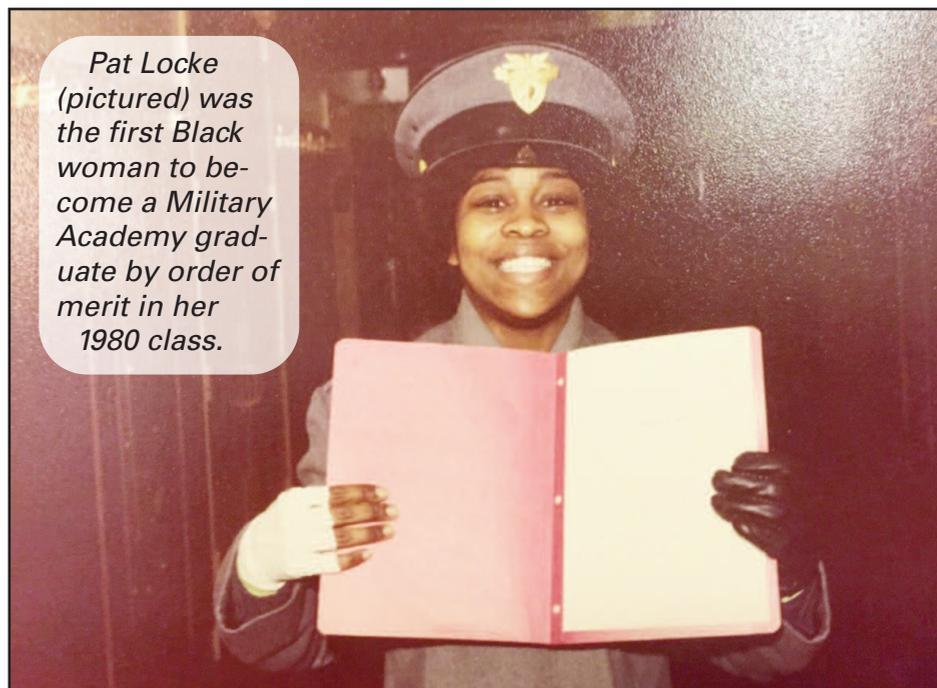
Locke said she was inspired to go to West Point by the battalion commander whom first approached her about West Point, and that she probably would not have pursued a college degree otherwise.

In her second year at the academy, she got help from a tactical officer who was a native New Yorker, to whom she could relate, she said.

"That's when I gained confidence in myself, and I'd learned to speak more clearly," she recalled.

Locke joked about probably forgetting any math she'd learned in high school, and she said her math professors pushed her.

"I felt like I learned five years of math in one year," she said. "I passed, and a lot of people were getting kicked out." Today, she tutors math for high school students who aspire to go to the Military Academy and are preparing for their SAT and ACT exams.



Pat Locke (pictured) was the first Black woman to become a Military Academy graduate by order of merit in her 1980 class.

ARMY NEWS SERVICE

In addition to teaching math for college entrance exams, Locke shares her wealth of experience with other young women coming into the academy. She currently volunteers as a member of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the services as well as recruits for the Military Academy as an admissions field representative.

"Most don't come (into the academy) as a fully-formed leader," she tells them.

"You come in with the raw materials of being a great leader, but you've got to shape it, pound it, knead it, bake it and sharpen it —

and sometimes that hurts."

A sense of patience is also required at the academy, she tells them.

"You are there to shape yourself into the best leader of character that you can be," she says.

"Everybody has to learn 'how to cooperate in order to graduate,'" Locke said. "That's what you learn at the academy, and you take that with you for the rest of your life. I cherish the times I can tell people about the academy and what they're going to get from it. I think all the services are better because we have women in them."

Participants vie for Army Best Soldier, NCO of Year titles virtually

By **THOMAS BRADING**
Army News Service

WASHINGTON — Twenty-two Soldiers representing 11 Army commands are battling online for the titles of Soldier and Non-commissioned officer of the Year during a first-ever virtual competition that aims to "adapt and overcome in a COVID-19 environment," said the Army's top enlisted Soldier.

"It's a competition unlike no other in Best Warrior Competition's 19-year history," said Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael A. Grinston who oversees the event. "We've undergone unprecedented steps to ensure the safety of our Soldiers, while still creating a positive environment to encourage competition and recognize the best."

Heading into the finals of BWC, each Soldier completed an Army Combat Fitness Test, a 12-mile foot march and a rifle qualification with their units. The finalists — 11 junior enlisted and 11 non-commissioned officers — were then tested on their knowledge, skills and abilities before

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Competitors in the Army National Guard 2020 Best Warrior Competition are recognized during opening ceremonies Sept. 13 at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Miss. Twenty-two Soldiers representing 11 Army commands are now battling for the titles of Soldier and NCO of the Year.

STAFF SGT. CONNIE JONES / ARMY NEWS SERVICE

Quality of Life: Millions invested in post housing

By **ANGIE THORNE**

Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. — Housing plays a huge part in the quality of life for Soldiers and Family members, which is why the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk and Corvias have partnered to improve Fort Polk housing over the course of a three-phase, multimillion dollar project.

The \$15 million phase-one development package began in April 2019 in Dogwood Terrace with renovations to 566 homes. Renovations included the replacement of roofs, some fascia rebuilding, stucco painting, gutter work and three miles of road paving. The Dogwood Terrace project is now complete at a cost of about 8 million dollars. The second part of the package focuses on Maple Terrace, which will involve similar exterior renovations to 580 homes while using the remainder of the \$15 million allocation.

Betty Beinkemper, U.S. Army garrison housing assistance office chief, said the Army and Corvias, Fort Polk's privatized housing partner, work together by sitting down and deciding what a housing area requires to return it to a standard that makes residents proud to come home.

"Dogwood Terrace is one of our older neighborhoods, so we knew it was time to begin our renovations. Now that they are complete, you can see and feel a huge difference when you ride through the neighborhood. We get feedback from residents about how proud they are of the upgrades to their neighborhood," she said.

The quality of life improvements from these renovations are important to the Soldiers and Families of Fort Polk, said Beinkemper.

"When Families come to Fort Polk, it is integral to offer them the best housing that we can. These types of renovations not only improve the look of the homes, but they extend the lifespan of the home for several years to come," she said.

Beinkemper said completing the renovations on time has been challenging due to issues like COVID-19 and Hurricane Laura.

"COVID-19 slowed down the construction process and closed down the neighborhood centers, but we adjusted and persevered by following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention safety measures and developing safe ways to continue work to get the job done," she said.

"Hurricane Laura also took a toll on older Maple Terrace homes that haven't been renovated yet, but we aren't seeing any major damage — that's a plus. Looking forward, roof renovations will begin in that neighborhood in the next few weeks. The new roofs in Dogwood Terrace saw very little damage," she said.

With this successful beginning, Beinkemper said she thinks the Fort Polk command team, garrison and Corvias have worked together as a team to improve housing for those Soldiers and Families. "That means so much," she said.

Wil Motta, Corvias operations director at Fort Polk, said Corvias is proud to be on the Fort Polk housing team renovating housing for the community.

"Renovations completed in the Dogwood Terrace neighborhood have added a welcoming atmosphere for service members and their Families, which is key for the quality of life initiative at Fort Polk," he said.

Motta said beyond renovations, their maintenance team is key to maintaining their residents'



From l to r: Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher M. Ausbun, garrison command sergeant major, Daniel Bartlett, Corvias Property Management facilities director, Col. Ryan K. Roseberry, Fort Polk garrison commander, Wil Motta, Corvias operations director, Liz Swinney, a Dogwood Terrace resident, Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general and Command Sgt. Maj. Michael C. Henry, post command sergeant major, gather as Swinney cuts the ribbon celebrating the completion of renovations in Fort Polk's Dogwood Terrace neighborhood Oct. 5.

homes and improving their quality of life on a daily basis.

"It's been a cohesive team effort to stay on top of work orders and make things happen. The most important part of our job is to serve our service members. We can't control COVID-19 or hurricanes, but we are laser focused on the well being of our service members and their Families," he said.

Motta said the work has the added benefit of extending the life of the houses.

"When you see the improvements that have been made by working with Fort Polk garrison command, the Army is ensuring that we can offer quality housing that feels like home," he said.

Besides renovations, Motta said Corvias understands how important places like their neighborhood centers and other amenities are to residents.

"We are currently working hand-in-hand with the Fort Polk garrison command to look into the possibility of safely reopening certain amenities in light of COVID-19," he said. "We want to be cautious and make sure we do that in a responsible way," he said.

Staff Sgt. Chris Eckelkamp, 46th Engineer Battalion, along with his spouse, Lauren, and their two children Carson, 6, and Taylor, 10, said they have been happy with the renovations and living conditions in Dogwood Terrace.

This is the first time in 11 years that the Eckelkamps have lived in on-post housing.

After experiencing both home ownership and renting off post, they decided to give on-post living a try when they moved to Fort Polk.

"Honestly, it's been a wonderful experience," said Lauren. "We think of our home as a safe haven, and Corvias helps us do that."

Lauren said they have had small issues with their home that she was surprised Corvias cared about. She said once there was a bird stuck in the hollow column of their house.

"We called them and explained that the bird was trapped, and it needed to get out. They im-

mediately sent someone out to help us free the bird," she said.

Then there were the more challenging issues, such as a leak from the garbage disposal and an air conditioner malfunction that flooded the front half of their home.

"We had to have the flooring pulled up and replaced. Another company brought in fans to start drying things and to keep us comfortable in the house while the renovations were taking place. They kept us up-to-date when people were coming out to work, answered all of our questions and took good care of us," she said. "On top of the new flooring, a couple of weeks later, we got a completely new air conditioning unit. That was important to us because our son, Carson, has severe eczema, which is worsened by the summer heat. I was happy that they handled it quickly, answered all of my questions and concerns and took care of my Family's well-being and comfort."

Having lived off post, the Eckelkamps said they realize how beneficial it is to have someone dependable, like Corvias, to deal with every day issues rather than negotiating with a random property owner that is hard to get in touch with, or bearing the full responsibility themselves for repairs.

"If you have to depend on a landlord to fix things, sometimes they won't get around to correcting the problem for a couple of weeks, but when I call Corvias — nine times out of 10 — somebody is here within a couple of hours, sometimes as fast as 20 minutes to fix whatever is broken," she said.

The Eckelkamps have lived in their Dogwood Terrace home for three years and, since the renovations began, Lauren said she has noticed many of their neighbors' homes have been painted and upgraded. The overall curb appeal of the neighborhood has gone up.

"A lot of work has been done on the older houses in the neighborhood. It's a cleaner and

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Housing

Continued from page 5

prettier place to live," she said.

Another benefit of living in Corvias housing is the community centers in each neighborhood, said Lauren.

"They play a huge role in our quality of life," she said. "The people that work at the centers have always been wonderful to my Family. They are friendly, happy, keep us well informed and are willing to help. Even during the COVID-19 quarantine, when they were closed, I would call them about needing new air conditioner filters or light bulbs and they would say, 'absolutely.' Within 20 minutes, what I needed would be sitting outside my door," she said.

Another Dogwood Terrace Family, Staff Sgt. Chad Withee, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, his spouse, Catherine, and their children, Jacob, 11, Tyson, 7 and Lillianna, 5, have great things to say about Fort Polk and Corvias.

As an Army Family, Catherine said Fort Polk has been one of the better duty stations — and homes — they have had.

"Corvias tends to respond quickly when you have an issue. Sometimes when I call the hotline to place a work order, they tell me they will call me back to schedule a time to work on the issue; but before that even happens, there's a maintenance worker knocking on the door to fix whatever is wrong," she said.

A roof leak at their home is the perfect example of Corvias working to correct issues in a professional manner, according to Catherine.

"We noticed water dripping into the entryway. They patched it so it wouldn't leak into the house until scheduled roof renovations could take place. After renovations were complete, we had no issue until six months later when Hurricane Laura hit and we had a minor leak. Even with all the damage to other homes, some more severe than ours, Corvias had someone out here repairing the roof the next day, and we haven't had any problems since that time. They have been really responsive to our needs," she said.

In addition to the Withee's roof, other renovations to their home included new siding and an exterior paint job.

"I think it looks really good. I like it," she said.

Catherine said not having to worry about the home they live in truly improves her Family's quality of life. "I know that if something goes wrong, it won't be this huge nightmare to get it fixed. That

makes it easier to move on with your daily life and takes the stress and pressure off of us when we have to deal with challenges, like my husband being out in the field or my kids getting sick," she said.

Another plus, as far as living in Corvias housing goes, are the community amenities, said Catherine.

"We've never lived anywhere else that has offered anything beyond a pool. The fact that they have laundry facilities, a gym, playgrounds and entertainment rooms, where kids can sit and watch movies or play with toys, has been wonderful," she said.

Sgt. Ethan Tharpe and his girls, Kaylin, 8, and Kielynn, 4, said that Corvias has been very good to his Family.

"I've never had any issues living on post or in the Dogwood Terrace community. We've been blessed," he said.

Though he has had small problems, such as a roof leaking, Tharpe said Corvias repaired the issue within 24 hours and checked in for the next three days to make sure it didn't continue to leak.

"When the hurricane came through in August, it blew the screens off the windows and a few shingles off the roof. Corvias was able to fix everything pretty quickly," he said. "The maintenance guys are always professional."

Regarding Corvias housing, Tharpe said he prefers life in on-post housing.

"I would rather have my kids safe and able to enjoy the amenities Corvias offers," he said. "I'm a single dad, and the folks at the community center have always been nice to my girls. They are kid friendly."

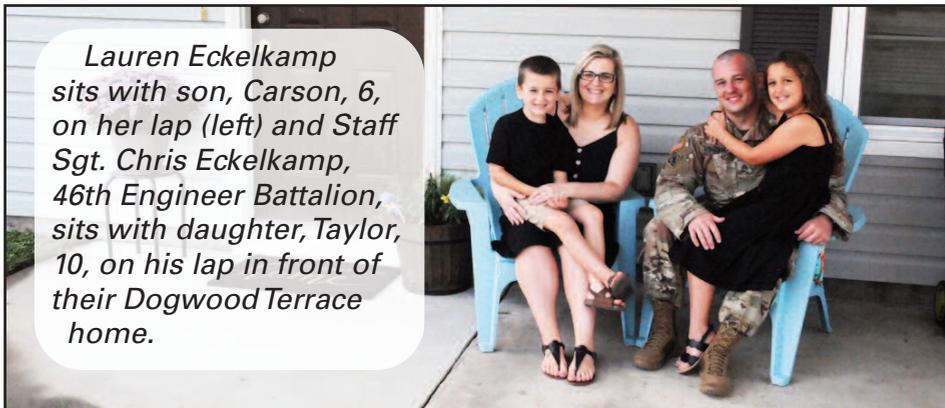
Tharpe said the Dogwood renovations are nice, but his quality of life has always been good in Corvias housing. "I've never had any issues," he said.

At a ribbon cutting held Oct. 5, celebrating the completion of the Dogwood Terrace renovations, Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, JRTC and Fort Polk commanding general, stood with the Fort Polk command team, Corvias team members and Liz Swinney, a Dogwood resident, to cut the ribbon and celebrate the successful completion of the Dogwood Terrace housing upgrades.

"The interiors of these homes were always nice, and now we have renovated the exteriors so that our Soldiers and Army Families can be proud of where they live. We want to continue seeing these kinds of improvements in our neighborhoods across Fort Polk," Frank said.



Catherine Withee stands with her children Tyson, 7, (left) Lillianna, 5, (middle) and Jacob, 11, as they do schoolwork.



Lauren Eckelkamp sits with son, Carson, 6, on her lap (left) and Staff Sgt. Chris Eckelkamp, 46th Engineer Battalion, sits with daughter, Taylor, 10, on his lap in front of their Dogwood Terrace home.



As a single dad, Sgt. Ethan Tharpe, 46th Engineer Battalion, has learned a thing or two about fixing hair for his daughters, Kaylin, 8, (left) and Kielynn, 4, in their Dogwood Terrace home, which recently underwent renovations.

Understanding Housing Assistance Office

GUARDIAN STAFF

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, Inter-Continental 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," she said.

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

Beinkemper said the concerns she sees on a daily basis aren't any different than those on other installations.

"Living on the installation is great for first time moves or the seasoned Family. We are like any other neighborhood with complaints about noise or animals but we don't see major issues. 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 our 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 rotations. 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.

For more information call 531-6000.

Summit highlights education as key to Fort Polk QoL

By **JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES**

Public affairs specialist

FORT POLK, La. — The Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk hosted an education summit with local, state and Department of the Army stakeholders at the Warrior Center on Tuesday. Representatives from the Vernon Parish School Board and Chamber of Commerce attended in person. Representatives from Installation Management Command, Forces Command, Louisiana State Department of Education, Louisiana State Legislature and Department of the Army participants joined the summit virtually through Microsoft Office Teams.

The summit focused on improving the quality of education in Vernon Parish for military children through the continued refinement of communication between students, teachers, parents, administrators, the school board and Army leadership.

Brig. Gen. Patrick Frank provided opening remarks for the summit about strides made in 2020 to improve quality of education in Vernon Parish. He discussed the North Polk Elementary School lease extension and a Louisiana Economic development grant earmarked to fix the school's air conditioning. He applauded the work completed by the installation and community partners to secure the Defense Community Infrastructure funding for use throughout the school district. Frank said housing and education are the biggest

factors for attracting high quality officers and noncommissioned officers to JRTC and Fort Polk. He lauded the participants for their attendance in pursuit of improved educational opportunities and to address parent concerns brought up at the education town hall in March.

Col. Ryan Roseberry, garrison commander said, "the biggest educational challenge faced by military children is that the educational rigor remains demanding and consistent throughout a child's academic journey. Our goal is to ensure students are well prepared and postured for higher learning at the university level." Roseberry, an active participant on the Vernon Parish School Board, said the primary goal of the summit was to address educational challenges and find resolutions to ensure children receive the best education possible.

The summit focused on 17 topics in three distinct areas: Student welfare, parental challenges and financial constraints. Each topic area was presented as a problem statement, allowing participants to discuss challenges, gaps and brainstorm ideas to meet student, parent and stakeholder expectations.

Participants examined Advanced Placement offerings, instructional rigor, availability of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education, textbooks, the gifted program and special education.

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Tiffany Koch, school liaison officer, facilitates the education summit on Tuesday.

ANGIE THORNE / GUARDIAN

Best

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a virtual board beginning Oct. 12 with sergeants major from across the Army.

Top honors will be claimed Oct. 13 during the Association of the United States Army's Annual Meeting and Exposition online. The event will be streamed live on the AUSA website and the Army's Facebook page.

Change of plans

On nearly any other timeline, the annual competition would have assembled the Army's finalists to

compete for bragging rights in person.

However, BWC organizers faced a challenge earlier this year: How to continue the competition in a COVID-19 environment? For Sgt. Maj. Jose G. Melendez, the Army's Strategic Operations Directorate sergeant major, one thing was clear — canceling the competition was never an option.

"We were going to overcome and execute this competition and highlight our great Soldiers," he said. In February, as the virus started catching worldwide attention, "we started to realize how quickly our environment was changing, too."

That's when event organizers hatched a few contingency plans — both on the ground and virtually. Their goal was to adhere to guidelines set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as by the Army secretary's plan to mit-

igate the virus.

"In previous years, we've been able to bring all competitors to a central location," Melendez said. The 2020 finals would have been no exception. "We were going to execute the competition at Fort Knox, Kentucky, with the 4th Cavalry Brigade."

As planning continued, teams worked concurrently in the field at Fort Knox and remotely. Around August, "we developed courses for our senior leaders to select from," said Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Wood, the competition's NCO in charge.

Competing in a virtual world

In the end, the call was made: Army finalists would go head-to-head remotely; but beforehand, the 11 Army commands would hold their respective competitions both virtually and in person, Wood said. For these commands, it was a case-by-case basis that relied on health protection conditions at the installations.

At Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, for instance, the Army Reserve BWC was carried out in person in early September. On the other hand, the U.S. Army Recruiting Command BWC was held virtually in late June.

"We have folks from across the continental United States that we're leveraging, and providing support to this competition," Melendez said.

"The 11 competing commands, and the Army as an entire enterprise, did a phenomenal job with a short amount of time. We turned (BWC) into a virtual and safe event to still recognize the Army's Soldier and NCO of the Year."

"We were going to overcome and execute this competition and highlight our great Soldiers."

Sgt. Maj. JOSE MELENDEZ
ASOD sergeant major

Modifying the annual competition was about more than the competition itself, Melendez said. It was an example of the Army's ability to adapt in an ever-changing world, similar to how the force plans to adjust on a multi-domain battlefield.

"This was in line with the vision and future of the Army that (the Army chief of staff) has outlined through 2028," Wood said. "The resilience, the lethality and the strategy that we have to deploy, fight and win decisively against any adversary anytime, anywhere."



SGT. SHAWN KEETON / ARMY NEWS SERVICE

Left: Spc. Aydin Chester, Kentucky National Guard, crosses a rope bridge during the obstacle course of the Army National Guard 2020 Best Warrior Competition Sept. 14. Twenty-two Soldiers representing 11 Army commands are now battling for the titles of Soldier and NCO of the Year for the Army.

Soldiers punished, separated for UCMJ violations

OSJA

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

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

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

- A staff sergeant, assigned to 519th Military Police Battalion, was separated under Chapter 14-12b for driving under the influence of alcohol on two separate occasions.

The Soldier was issued a General Under Honorable Conditions characterization of service.

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

- A sergeant, assigned to 317th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, was punished under Article 15 for fraternizing with enlisted Soldiers, in violation of Article 92, Uniform Code of Military Justice.

The Soldier was sentenced to a reduction to E-4; forfeiture of \$1317 pay for 2 months; 45 days of extra duty; 45 days of restriction; and an oral reprimand.

- A specialist, assigned to 1st Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment, was punished under Article 15 for being disrespectful in language to a commissioned officer and making a false official statement, in violation of Articles 89 and 107, UCMJ.

The Soldier was sentenced to a reduction to E-

3 and 14 days of extra duty.

- A specialist, assigned to 2-4 Infantry, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div, was punished under Article 15 for making a false official statement, in violation of Article 107, UCMJ. The Soldier was sentenced to 7 days of extra duty, suspended, automatically remitted if not vacated on or before Nov. 1.

- A private first class, assigned to 519th MP Bn, was punished under Article 15 for underage drinking, in violation of Article 92, UCMJ. The Soldier was sentenced to a reduction to E-2 and extra duty for nine days.

- A private, assigned to 1st Bn (Airborne), 509th Inf Reg, was punished under Article 15 for violating General Order No. 1 on five separate occasions by traveling outside of the 50-mile radius restriction and making a false official statement, in violation of Articles 92 and 107, UCMJ. The Soldier was sentenced to a reduction to E-2, 14 days of extra duty and 14 days of restriction.

Summit

Continued from page 7

Tiffany Koch, school liaison officer, said Fort Polk and the VPSB recognize a deficit in STEM curriculum and activities. "We have begun the procurement process for a Department of Defense STARBASE facility on the installation," she said.

DoD STARBASE is a premier educational program, sponsored by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. At DoD STARBASE, students participate in challenging "hands-on, minds-on" activities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. They interact with military personnel to explore careers and observe STEM applications in the real world. DoD STARBASE's primary focus is the program for fifth graders. The goal is to motivate them to explore STEM opportunities as they continue their education.

Teachers teaching out of field are another concern for Army Families and military leadership that directly affects the quality of AP, STEM and gifted program offerings. The group deliberated on different certification pathways for teachers in Louisiana and agreed the school district and installation would work together to recruit qualified educators.

The curriculum discussion also explored the Louisiana graduation standards, college versus vocational tract diplomas and the Jump Start Technical or the University Taylor Opportunity Program for Students. Alleviating parental frustration through the development of a streamline transcript audit process was also examined.

Koch said guidance counselors and their effective communication with incoming military Families is a priority for student welfare. She said the records transfer of special

education documents, high school transcripts and accommodation plans are challenges faced by military connected students. Koch said every school district is different and each state has different requirements.

"Without clear communication to parents about these differences, our military Families are often frustrated. The Military Interstate Child's Compact Commission helps address these transitional issues," she said.

She also addressed the lack of scholarship information and transparency of raw student data in the school district. A multidisciplinary team has been established to identify methods to increase quality and quantity of scholarship dissemination and to create an information-sharing agreement with the school board.

Behavioral specialists, extracurricular activities and educational specialists are also important to student welfare. Finding qualified personnel to fill critical positions is challenging. Logan Morris, president, Vernon Parish Chamber of Commerce, discussed an initiative for military spouses and the chamber's commitment to build networks and make critical introductions. He said they often receive inquiries from spouses about job opportunities and will work with VPSB to put qualified individuals in touch with the human resources department.

Morris said, "The Vernon Parish Chamber of commerce has been a committed partner with the Vernon Parish School Board for a number of years. In addition to supporting military spouse employment, we are also actively seeking other opportunities to improve and expand the



horizons for all students." He said the chamber understands the importance of quality education not only for making Fort Polk a station of choice for military personnel, but also for economic development and their ability to attract business and industry to the area.

Other key areas considered during the summit was parental challenges, the lack of parent-involvement programs, information dissemination disparities and spousal employment opportunities. Military parents want increased communication and transparency with the schools and opportunities to be more involved with their children's education.

Stacey Delgado, employment readiness program manager, has been working closely with the school board to assist military spouses with employment opportunities. She said "a new state law goes into effect January 2021 that will expedite military spouses' state credentialing.

Additionally, the Department of Defense has a program that will reimburse military spouses for licen-

sure and credentialing costs. She said this should make it easier for the school board to hire qualified military spouses to fill critical shortages in all areas.

Budgeting and financial concerns were the final key area of discussion during the summit. The group focused on impact aid, budget transparency and grants. The participants discussed finance opportunities available to the Vernon Parish School Board during the 2020-2021 school year. Takeaways from the summit will be used to apply for an out-of-cycle grant from the Department of Defense Education Activity to bridge identified capability gaps.

Roseberry said the event was highly successful and began the dialog necessary to resolve identified concerns and improve the educational experience of military-connected children. "The Education Summit was a great exchange of information and ideas among stakeholders from the Pentagon to Vernon Parish. This summit was the catalyst required to generate resources, support and resolution to many of our challenges," he said.

Briefs

POST CSM cycling ride

Would you like to start physically and mentally conditioning and build camaraderie and esprit de corps while biking with fellow Soldiers, Families and Department of the Army civilians with the post command sergeant major?

The Post CSM cycling ride (street biking) is the opportunity to enjoy an early morning event conducted in and around the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk community. The full route encompasses 25 miles over a course of light to moderate hills and through two Fort Polk housing communities. The ride is along public roadways through North and South Fort Polk with speed limits of 15 up to 50 mph. Cyclists meet at JRTC and Fort Polk headquarters, bldg. 350, (6661 Warrior Trail, Fort Polk) Saturdays at 6:30 a.m. for a 6:45 a.m. start (weather dependent).

Sign up by e-mailing Dakota.m.allen.mil@mail.mil or text (337) 423-6899.

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, and you'll be placed on the distribution list for non-government email users.

Incredibles screening

Military Families at Fort Polk and installations worldwide can tune into the Army and Air Force Exchange Service's Xkids Community Hub for a free online screening of "Incredibles 2" on Oct. 23.

DFMWR events

Oct. 16 — Movie Night: The Addams Family. The concessions open at 7 p.m. and the movie begins at 8 p.m. on Headquarters field.

Oct. 23 and 24 — Cosmic Golf; 8 — 11 p.m. at the Warrior Hills Golf Course. Schedule tee times Oct. 19 — 24 at the Warrior Hills Pro Shop.

Oct. 30 — The Haunted Circle drive-through; 5 — 8 p.m. on Washington Avenue, located between the Bayou Theatre and the fire station.

PX sweepstakes

Military dependent students (grades one — 12) with a B (3.0) grade point average are eligible to win a \$500, \$1,500 or \$2,000 Army and Air Force Exchange Service gift card. To enter, parents must bring their child's report card to a customer service representative before the Dec. 31 drawing.



NFPA urges caution around home fire safety

NFPA

QUINCY, Ma. — As the public largely remains at home in response to COVID-19, the National Fire Protection Association urges added caution around home fire safety.

According to NFPA, cooking, heating and electrical equipment are among the leading causes of home fires year-round. "We already see the majority of fires happening in homes," said Lorraine Carli, vice president of Outreach and Advocacy at NFPA. "As people spend more time at home and engage in activities that significantly contribute to the home fire problem, it's critical they recognize where potential hazards exist and what they can do to prevent fires."

Cooking is the leading cause of home fires and is responsible for nearly half of all reported home fires involving cooking equipment. Moreover, unattended cooking is the leading cause of home cooking fires, meaning that home cooking fires occur most often when people aren't keeping a close eye on what they're cooking.

"As many households are now dealing with unusual routines, such as kids home from school and parents working from home, there's greater potential for distracted cooking," said Carli.

NFPA statistics show that heating equipment is the second-leading cause of home fires, resulting in an average of 52,050 home fires each year. Electrical distribution or lighting equipment is involved in an annual average of 35,100 home fires.

"For much of the country, heating systems are still in use and in many cases, for more hours than usual," said Carli. "Also, with everyone at home, people may be using the same outlets to charge phones, laptops and other digital equip-

ment, which also presents a fire hazard."

With these concerns in mind, NFPA reminds the public to use best practices for staying fire-safe during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond:

Cooking

- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, boiling, grilling or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.

- If you are simmering, baking or roasting food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking and use a timer as a reminder that you are cooking.

- Keep anything that can catch fire — oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels or curtains — away from your stovetop.

- Make sure all handles are turned inward, so hot handles cannot be gripped and pots aren't knocked over and spilled.

- Be on alert — if you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol, refrain from using the stove or stovetop.

- If you have young children in your home, create a "kid-free zone" of at least 3 feet around the stove and areas where hot food or drink is prepared or carried.

Heating

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment, like the furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable space heater.

- Have a three-foot "kid-free zone" around open fires and space heaters.

- Never use your oven to heat your home.

- Remember to turn portable heaters off

Please see **Fire**, page 11

Fort Polk fire fighters host Fire Prevention Week events

The Fire Prevention Week parade circles the parking lot outside of the Fort Polk Child Development Center, bldg 744, on Tuesday.



CHRISTY GRAHAM/ GUARDIAN



COLE BREWER/ FIRE INSPECTOR

Sparky greets Parkway Elementary School students on Monday during a Fire Prevention Week parade. "Due to COVID-19, we had to use parades to reach the kids about fire safety," said Chad Estes, fire inspector.



CHRISTY GRAHAM/ GUARDIAN

Child Development Center kids and staff enjoy the Fort Polk fire fighter's Fire Prevention Week parade on the backside of bldg 701 on Tuesday.



COLE BREWER/ FIRE INSPECTOR

Fort Polk fire fighters hand out treat bags to children as they enter Fort Polk's Commissary on Monday, kickstarting this year's Fire Prevention Week.



COLE BREWER/ FIRE INSPECTOR

Fort Polk fire fighters demonstrate proper techniques to extinguish fires on Monday at the Fort Polk Main Post Exchange.



COLE BREWER/ FIRE INSPECTOR

Children practice putting out a simulated fire at Fort Polk's PX on Monday as Gregory the fire chief dog watches.

NO MORE, hotline address domestic abuse spike during COVID-19

NOMORE.ORG

NEW YORK, N.Y. — Reports from many cities and countries indicate that the COVID-19 crisis is leading to a significant spike in domestic violence, with several countries and cities citing more than double the usual number of calls to police, hotlines and support services. The National Domestic Violence Hotline (The Hotline) is hearing from many survivors how COVID-19 is being used by abusive partners to further control and abuse. In direct response, The NO MORE Foundation and The Hotline are significantly expanding their recently launched public awareness and action campaign.

Entitled #Listeningfromhome, the campaign aims to heighten people's awareness of domestic violence and encourage them to safely get help if they experience, hear or observe incidents of domestic abuse. In addition to an expanded social media effort, the campaign will now be included in over 50 U.S. markets.

Specifically, people who hear of a loved one or neighbor experiencing domestic violence are advised to:

- Contact The Hotline at (800) 799-7233 to get support.
- Call the police in case of an emergency.
- Learn more about all forms of abuse at nomore.org.

One in four women and one in nine men experience severe intimate partner physical violence, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. With many isolating at home to contain the spread of COVID-19, many victims of domestic violence are trapped with their abusers. Any external factors that add stress and financial strain can negatively impact survivors and create circumstances where their safety is further compromised.

"These are difficult times for everyone, even more so for victims of domestic abuse," said Ian Dallimore, Lamar Advertising vice president of digital growth. "The NO MORE message is such an important one during times like these. We are proud to support the efforts of the National Domestic Violence Hotline and to help raise awareness of the horrors of domestic abuse with our digital network."

"Like with COVID-19, the signs of domestic abuse are not always visible. However, now that people are home, they might hear more coming from their neighbors' homes than usual. We want



to enlist these people as allies in the effort to stop the epidemic of domestic violence — now, and beyond this immediate crisis," said Pamela Zabella, Global Executive Director of The NO MORE Foundation.

"Isolation is one of the strongest tactics an abuser can use, so building community around a survivor during COVID-19 is more important than ever before," said Katie Ray-Jones, Chief Executive Officer of the National Domestic Violence Hotline. "For those who know and care about survivors or for those who observe abuse, you can be a part of their safety plan. Whether you are a survivor or someone who cares about a survivor, the Advocates at The Hotline are here to help you understand the best ways to protect yourself and support those at risk."

"This is a moment in time we cannot miss; a moment to activate the nation to get 'Listening from Home' whilst 'Working from Home' and to point people towards the resources to help," said Nicky Bullard, Chairwoman and Chief Creative Officer, MRM McCann.

"During this critical time, it is important we check in with the family members, friends and neighbors this may impact," said Lyndsey Dearlove, head of UK SAYS NO MORE.

Fort Polk active duty members, retirees or military dependents, who are experiencing domestic violence, may call the Victim Advocacy Program

Hotline at (337) 424-7494 to speak with a victim advocate.

DV Awareness month events

During October, Fort Polk's Army Community Service Center Family Advocacy Program has the following fun, educational events scheduled to help raise awareness for domestic violence.

Virtual Wear Purple Day — Everyone is invited to wear purple on Thursday.

Individuals and groups are asked to participate virtually by sharing their pictures on the Fort Polk FAP's Facebook page, by Thursday.

2020 Virtual Run/Walk Challenge — This event takes place throughout October. The challenge is to complete 20,020 steps in 20 days.

Those in need of a pedometer can stop by ACS, bldg 920, 1591 Bell Richard Avenue or the Family Readiness Center, bldg 924, Mississippi Avenue.

Participants are asked to share their completion pictures to the Fort Polk FAP's Facebook page by Oct. 31.

For additional information call 531-1938.

Fire

Continued from page 9

when leaving the room or going to bed.

- Always use the right kind of fuel, specified by the manufacturer, for fuel burning space heaters.

- Install and maintain carbon monoxide (CO) alarms to avoid the risk of CO poisoning. If you smell gas in your gas heater, do not light the appliance.

Leave the home immediately and call your local fire department or gas company.

Electrical

- When charging smartphones and other digital devices, only use the charging cord that came with the device.

- Do not charge a device under your pillow, on your bed or on a couch.

- Only use one heat-producing appliance (such as a coffee maker, toaster or space heater) plugged into a receptacle outlet at a time.

- Major appliances (refrigerators, dryers, washers, stoves, air conditioners and microwave ovens) should be plugged directly into a wall receptacle outlet. Extension cords and plug strips should not be used.

- Check electrical cords to make sure they are not running across doorways or under carpets. Extension cords are intended for temporary use.

- Use a light bulb with the right number of watts. There should be a sticker that indicates the right number of watts.

In addition, smoke alarms should be located on every level of the home, in each bedroom and near all sleeping areas.

Test them monthly to make sure they're working. NFPA also strongly encourages households develop and practice a home escape plan to ensure that everyone knows what to do in a fire and can escape quickly and safely.

For a wealth of NFPA resources and information on home fire safety, visit www.nfpa.org/Public-Education.

Pumpkins, Fall Vibes at Fort Polk's annual Louisiana Hayride

By ANNABELLE ARCAND

MWR illustrator

FORT POLK, La. — With the changing colors, tidings of cooler temperatures and cozy bonfires also comes the fun of visiting local fall festivals. On Oct. 3, the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk Family Morale, Welfare and Recreation and its community members celebrated the fall season at the famous Louisiana Hayride festival.

The Directorate of FMWR dedicated this festival to celebrate the beginning of fall. Soldiers, Families and Department of Defense civilians were invited for unbeatable fall treats and outdoor entertainment.

Thousands of pumpkins in various shapes and sizes were waiting for creative makeovers from little artists, while local food vendors catered to every foodie's need with a variety of savory flavors.

October in Louisiana is not exactly sweater weather, but the cooler temperatures, with hints of the sun's rays, created the perfect atmosphere for outdoor pictures with a Polaroid camera for a vintage feel in a cozy photobooth. The youngest guests favored the cakewalk and the hay maze, while different bouncy houses and a bungee jump engaged the most active patrons and offered some energy release.

Another popular facility opened its doors to welcome visitors for some racing fun. Klubs and Karts honored the fall festivities with free use of the facility. Laser tag games were also available for young and old to enjoy.

The hayride was the most sought-after attraction, often followed by a visit to the Warrior



A young patron patiently awaits her balloon animal at Fort Polk's Louisiana Hayride festival on Oct. 3.

ANNABELLE ARCAND/MWR ILLUSTRATOR

Store, which brought out everything from apparel to rustic and fall inspired décor and ceramics — even snacks for furry friends.

A special thanks goes to the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club and Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program who spared no effort to help. Last but not least, a special thanks goes to the event's sponsors, which include Benoit Mo-

tors, USAA, Southwest Beverage, Papa John's Pizza, Christus Healthcare, Geico, Taboo Harley-Davidson, Barksdale Federal Credit Union and Upper Iowa University.

The MWR Marketing and Special Events team is proud to be part of such a great community, who followed Covid-19 guidance without hesitation.

SAFETY CORNER

AUTUMN = DEER STRIKES

As it starts getting darker in the mornings and temperatures start to cool down, the local deer population is moving around.

Vehicle operators need to watch out for deer. If there is one spotted along the roadway there is a good probability more deer are waiting inside the wood line to also cross.

Risk management countermeasures to avoid a "deer strike" include being watchful and aware. If a deer is spotted — slow down and give one long horn blast to frighten the deer away but do not swerve. Swerving can cause you to lose control of your vehicle. When dark, deer can be spotted because their eyes will reflect brightly from your vehicle headlights.



Always remain alert for deer and other animals along roadways

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1000 - 1300

Implementation of all COVID-19 mitigation procedures will be met to include proper social distancing IAW the current JRTC and Fort Polk Emergency Plan phase level at the time of the event, as well as ensuring the proper precautions are utilized in order to mitigate exposure IAW established Health Protection condition Levels. The event is free and limited to transitioning Soldiers, eligible Spouses and Veterans within the Fort Polk community. Face mask, social distancing and appointment required. Please call the SFL-TAP Center for an appointment and list of employers.

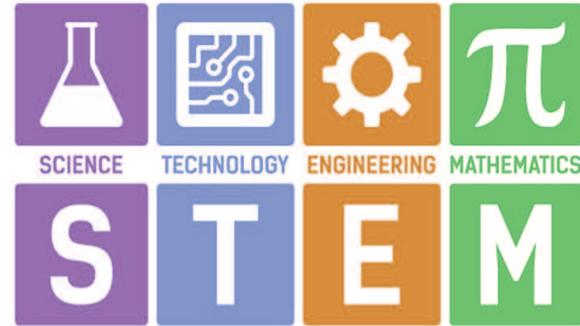


Please contact
Soldier for Life - Transition Assistance Program
for more information at (337) 531-1591 or email
usarmy.polk.imcom-central.mbx.sfl-tap@mail.mil

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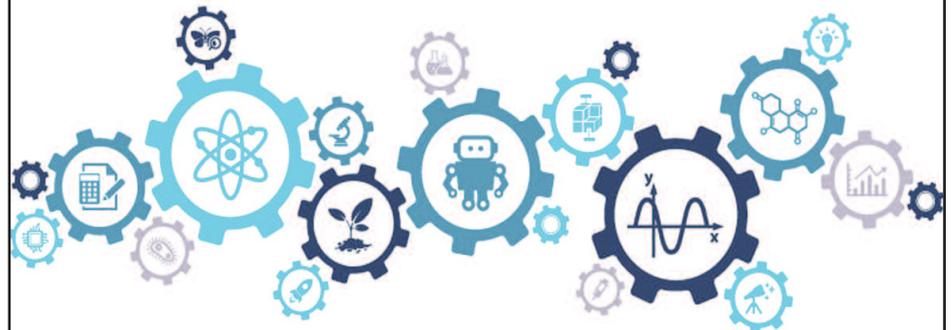


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