



FORGING THE

WARRIOR SPIRIT

THE JRTC & FORT POLK GUARDIAN

Vol. 47, No. 19

Home of Heroes @ Fort Polk, LA

May 8, 2020

115th Field Hospital deploys in support of TF Evacuare

By **CHUCK CANNON**

Command information officer

FORT POLK, La. — A deployment ceremony for Warrior medics with the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk's 115th Field Hospital, 32nd Hospital Center, was held May 6 at 11:30 a.m.

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commander, JRTC and Fort Polk, and Col. Lee Burnett, commander, 32nd HC, were guest speakers. Due to COVID-19 social-distancing and mask requirements, Families and fellow Soldiers were not in attendance.

The 115th FH will participate in CENTCOM's area of responsibility as part of Task Force Evacuare.

Burnett spoke first and thanked the Soldiers in the formation for heeding their country's call.

"Today you head overseas to support our fellow Soldiers and civilians as they endeavor to provide peace and security," he said.

Burnett said that in just a matter of weeks, the Soldiers deploying have undergone what would normally take months of preparation.

"I'd like to recognize that every Soldier here, to a person, whether the most junior enlisted or the most senior officer, willingly and proudly accepted this assignment," he said.

Burnett specifically highlighted the leadership shown by Lt. Col. Jason Marquart and Sgt. 1st Class Erik Regalado.

"When this mission came down, they both immediately stepped forward and took on this challenge," he said. "Every day they put their Soldiers and mission first. I am thankful we have such professional leaders and rest easy knowing

our Soldiers are guided by this stellar team."

Burnett also recognized the 1st Medical Brigade, the JRTC and Fort Polk, and the JRTC G3 team for their unwavering support and laser focus on the task force's success.

Burnett, who is slated to PCS during the summer and will not be at JRTC and Fort Polk when the TF Evacuare returns, took a moment to thank Marquart for his support.

"Since day one you've had a clear vision to ensure the entire hospital was trained and ready to take on any mission," he said. "You developed our young leaders and built this team into a hospital that has proven itself time and again — from our validation exercise at JRTC to the 115th MEDEX at NTC (National Training Center)."

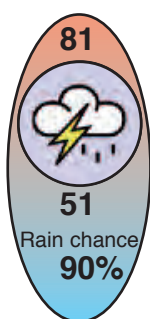
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Soldiers with the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk's 115th Field Hospital, 32nd Hospital Center, participate in a deployment ceremony prior to leaving to participate in Task For Evacuare May 6.

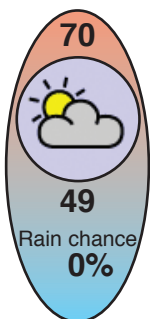


CHUCK CANNON / GUARDIAN

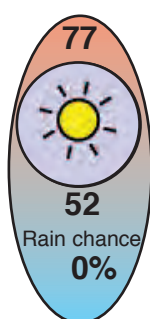
Weekend weather



Friday



Saturday



Sunday

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Viewpoint

In our view

Since it's Teacher Appreciation Week, Guardian staff asked local teachers, "What would you like to tell your students with the academic year over for 2020, and what are your suggestions for the kids for Mother's Day this year?" Here are their responses:



Rachel Jamison, fifth grade, Vernon Middle School: "I need all of my students to know how special you are! I miss you more than you know and I will always be here for you! With Mother's Day right around the corner, now is the time to just say 'thank you' for all she (mom) does — remember that a little kindness goes a long way! Love you all — Mrs. J!"



Rebekah Croney, Algebra 2 and Art, Leesville High School: "To all of my LHS students and athletes, I miss you, and I wish we could have enjoyed our spring semester together! For Mother's Day, I would make a homemade card and write a heartfelt note to the women in your life who support and love you. Go Cats!"



Jessica Kama, West Leesville Elementary School: "One thing I want my students to know is that even though we didn't get to finish the school year together, I am so incredibly proud of all they have accomplished this year. I love them and miss them so much! For Mother's Day, do something nice for your mom whether it's a foot or back massage, making her breakfast, not fighting with your siblings, or just even a big hug and an I love you mom!"



Kamilah Todd, Jobs for America's Graduates and Girls Powerlifting Coach, Leesville High School: "I want to send a message to the class of 2020: I am so proud of you. Remember to always have hope and dream big. Once a Wampus Cat, always a Wampus Cat."



Roxanna Jaiswal, 4th Grade, Parkway Elementary School: "The two most important things my students can do to prepare for next year is to read at least thirty minutes a day, and practice their multiplication facts. Reading is the fastest way to build vocabulary, and middle school curriculum is heavy with fractions. Students need quick recall of multiplication facts to be proficient. To celebrate Mother's Day, students should do their best to create something homemade for mom; and don't forget the hugs and kisses."



Nichole Williams, 7th and 8th Grade (Math), Rosepine High School: "The one thing I hope my students take away from my classroom is the math we learned and the laughter we had. For Mother's Day, give your mom a tight hug and a kiss. Those are the best gifts a mother could ask for."



Guardian

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

Briefs

COVID-19 Town Hall

A Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk COVID-19 Town Hall is held today at 12:30 p.m. The event is streamed live on the JRTC and Fort Polk Facebook page.

COVID-19 screening

Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital's COVID-19 drive-up screening hours are Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-11 a.m., on Texas Avenue next to the Berry Mission Training Center.

Drive-thru pharmacy

The Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital drive-thru pharmacy is open from 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, in the BJACH upper level parking lot. Follow the signs to drop off prescriptions or park for curbside delivery of previously called in or dropped off prescriptions. Call Kathy Ports at 531-3111 for more information.

Absentee voting

If you want to vote absentee visit **FVAP.gov** or stop by the Fort Polk Installation Voting Office at 920 Bell Richard Ave. Capt. Justin Smith is the installation voting assistance officer. Call him at 531-0886 or email justin.m.smith.12.mil@mail.mil.

SSA Inventory

The Supply Support Activity, (AY3), located in bldg. 4374, will be closed to conduct annual inventory from Monday through May 15. Customers are asked to plan accordingly. The SSA reopens for normal business May 18. For more information call Bonnie Edwards at 531-0950 or Darrian Gailes at 531-2243.

Garrison safety

The Fort Polk Garrison Safety Office reminds motorists that May is Motorcycle Safety Month. Safe riding practices and cooperation from motorists will help reduce the number of fatalities and injuries on the nation's highways.

The Fort Polk community is also reminded that in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, more people are spending time outdoors, including walking or jogging along area streets. Pedestrians are reminded to look both directions before crossing a street, then look once more. And motorists are reminded to avoid distractions while driving.

Residents are also reminded that June 1 is the start of hurricane season in Louisiana, so now is the time to make a

Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers participated in a Capture the Flag event at the Directorate of Family Morale, Welfare and Recreation paintball range prior to COVID-19 social distancing guidelines.



Soldiers embrace 'My Squad' using COVID-19

GUARDIAN STAFF

FORT POLK, La. — **Editor's note:** First introduced by Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston, "This is My Squad" is an inspiring concept across the Army.

Those at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk are engineering creative methods to embrace this initiative and encourage unit ownership, while also adhering to COVID-19 social-distancing guidelines.

Leaders need to propel Soldiers; they need to go the extra mile in training and leading each individual. In return, as the Soldiers cultivate a pride for their unit, that energy will be poured directly back into their teams, said Grinston.

In a motivational display, several NCOs on the installation wrote down their understanding of "This is My Squad," and detailed their efforts to embrace its tenets for Grinston to review.

Staff Sgt. David M. Mulcahy

All the way, Sergeant Major of the Army!



Mulcahy

My name is Staff Sgt. David Mulcahy. I entered the U.S. Army on Aug. 16, 2011 from Queensbury, New York.

I have served with 3rd Infantry Division (2012-2013), 173rd Airborne Brigade (2014-2016), 101st Airborne Division (2016-2018), and 1st Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment from April 2019.

"This is My Squad", to me, means a leader works for his/her Soldiers as much, or more, than they do for their leaders.

My squad has found opportunities for our Soldiers to focus on meaningful training in this

unique and challenging environment.

We use YouTube playlists on leadership, military history and tactics, as well as practice troop leading procedures and maneuvers in Call of Duty.

Team leaders within the squad also record their own classes and share them with their Soldiers to drive additional conversations.

This operational environment has had the added benefit of Soldiers' ability to focus on their individual physical fitness, to include the continuation of our company's thousand-pound club.

With more individualized plans being the focus, greater improvements are being made in our individual areas of weakness, while continuing to build esprit de corps even when we cannot physically be together.

For a team to be truly successful they have to come together like a Family.

Even though Soldiers are physically separated at this time, we are all still united by our Warrior Spirits, esprit de corps and our constant drive to be the best paratroopers we can be.

Geronimo, all the way!

Cpl. Bianca M. Ortiz

"This is My Squad" not only helps build cohesion among units throughout the Army, but also a stronger bond between single Soldiers in the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program.

Our BOSS program gives opportunities for single Soldiers to form friendships with others outside of their unit, whether it's meeting for the first time at a volunteer event, studying for the promotion board at the BOSS Study Nights or giving each other the confidence to jump out of a plane while skydiving.

Our BOSS program gives Soldiers the chance for their voices to be heard when it comes to planning BOSS events, quality-of-life concerns or if they just need a battle buddy to guide them in the right direction with an issue. At the beginning of April, we began to hold our BOSS

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COVID-19: Know symptoms and next steps to help ensure full recovery

MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

WASHINGTON — Sore throat, aching muscles, stuffy nose — are you feeling sick because of seasonal allergies, a cold or could your symptoms be a sign of COVID-19?

People may be concerned about catching the respiratory virus that leads to COVID-19 disease, and that's understandable.

Since the first reports in late December, about 3 million people around the world have tested positive. That number includes about 981,000 confirmed cases in the United States, as of April 28, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The good news is most people infected will recover without needing special medical treatment, according to the CDC. So there's no need to panic if you get sick. It is important knowing the next steps to help ensure a full recovery and avoid infecting others.

The main symptoms of COVID-19 are fever at or above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, cough and shortness of breath. The CDC says these symptoms can occur anywhere from two days to two weeks after becoming infected. Other symptoms may include muscle pain, headache, chills, sore throat and a loss of taste or smell.

Emergency warning signs that require immediate medical attention include trouble breathing, chest pain or pressure and bluish lips or face. The CDC advises anyone experiencing these symptoms to call 911. If possible, put on a face covering before medical help arrives.

Some people may become seriously ill from COVID-19 and have difficulty breathing. The virus may be especially dangerous for people who have chronic or long-term health conditions that affect the immune system. Those conditions include heart or lung disease, diabetes, treatment for cancer and HIV/AIDS.

For cases that are not emergencies, experts advise people to stay home. Don't go to a military treatment facility or urgent care clinic because that may expose others to the virus. Instead, contact the Military Health System Nurse Advice Line at (800) 874-2273. Registered nurses will screen for COVID-19 exposure or infection.

They will offer advice for self-care and coordinate virtual appointments with health care providers. When necessary, nurses may make re-



Sgt. Kate Cole, a medic with the 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), does a temperature check for Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska National Guard, as he enters Memorial Hall for an officer candidate commissioning ceremony March 20, at the Camp Ashland Training Site, Neb.

ferrals to visit health care providers in person.

"Virtual care has become valuable for health care providers and patients during the coronavirus pandemic," said U.S. Public Health Service Lt. Bobby Taylor, program manager for the MHS Nurse Advice Line.

"This resource allows you to practice social-distancing and still get the answers to your health questions and concerns."

The CDC offers advice for managing COVID-19 symptoms at home. It includes resting, staying hydrated and monitoring symptoms to make sure they don't get worse. Sick people also should isolate themselves from others, including family members. That may require staying in separate rooms and using separate bathrooms, if possible.

Health care providers can offer guidance for when sick people can stop isolating. Typical guidelines include at least seven days since symptoms first appeared, improvement of symptoms and at least three days with no fever, with-

out fever-reducing medications.

TRICARE beneficiaries can sign up for email updates and get the latest information on COVID-19, such as emergency and urgent care options and pharmacy home deliveries.

Health-care providers and military families at military treatment facilities receive CDC-based guidance on COVID-19 through the Defense Health Agency, said Col. (Dr.) Jennifer Kishimori, director of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear medical countermeasures policy in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs.

"We are working to communicate current CDC guidance for public health, hospital preparedness, patient evaluation, infection control, laboratory testing and health risk communication, in coordination with the Joint Staff," she said.

This guidance ensures any patient with a risk of infection receives the proper care and testing and that public health authorities are notified of all cases.

CDC maintains childhood immunization guidelines during COVID-19

MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

WASHINGTON — Immunizations remain a vital component of pediatric health care, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Immune systems are still developing in children and infants. Vaccinations produce antibodies to protect people from potentially deadly diseases, explained Ann M. Morse, a family nurse practitioner at the North-Atlantic Regional Vaccine Safety Hub, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth.

"Immunizations allow the immune system to recognize that germ, virus or bacteria and fight off that disease. It limits the severity of complica-

tions if exposed to the real disease," continued Morse.

Immunizations also protect public health through herd immunity by preventing a widespread outbreak of highly infectious diseases, such as measles or whooping cough. Despite the current climate of social-distancing, vaccine-preventable diseases continue to circulate. Individuals who have not been vaccinated and contract the disease could spread it to susceptible individuals, because those infected can be contagious up to a week before developing any symptoms, explained Morse. She added that if children stop receiving necessary vaccinations, herd immunity

decreases, then increasing the likelihood of potential viral outbreaks, like measles.

"If multiple individuals developed one or more different vaccine-preventable diseases, hospitals could again have decreased number of isolation rooms, critical care (ICU/CCU) beds, ventilators, protective coverings (masks, gowns, gloves, boots) and more," Morse explained. She added there is a variety of infant or childhood respiratory illnesses that show similar symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever, cough and body aches.

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Medics

Continued from page 1

Burnett said that proven track record is why Forces Command has recognized the 115th FH as the most-trained and ready hospital in the Army.

"That's why FORSCOM went to us first for Hurricane Dorian response, first for KFOR (Kosovo Force), and now first for CENTCOM — and not for just one task force, but two. That's unheard of. I cannot think of any other unit that has taken on more missions in more locations."

In closing, Burnett thanked the Soldiers for their dedication and devotion, as well as the Family members who were unable to attend.

"Each Soldier and Family member is making a personal sacrifice to ensure the success of this important mission," he said. "Some have temporarily put off school; others extended their service in the Army. You are a testament to our shared Army Values: Loyalty, duty, respect, selfless-service, honor, integrity and personal courage. You inspire me. I know you will do us proud and represent our country well."

Frank was next to address the deploying Soldiers. He said when he looked at the formation, he thought he was looking at a brigade combat team.

"That's how tough you look," he said. "If Geronimo — our world class OPFOR — were out there, they usually attack targets they think are soft targets. They would walk away from you."

Frank said the nation, Army and CENTCOM needed the Soldiers of the 115th FH, to go into theater and help U.S. service members and civilians.

"All of you are medical providers," he said. "You're all volunteers. This is an incredible formation. You couldn't be deploying with a better team."

If I was going to be in a field hospital setting, I'd want to be with this one," Frank said he couldn't be prouder of the 115th FH's Soldiers.

"I want to be in your formation," he said. "I don't think there is anything a Soldier can tell another Soldier that is more a point of pride than, 'I want to be in your formation.' That's how much I respect you and the job you've done to get ready for this mission."

Lt. Col. Jason Marquart, commander of the 115th FH, said the team would be not only supporting service members, but doing battle with COVID-19 — a new enemy they've not seen before.

"Fortunately, we have highly-trained medical people in our Army that are always ready and willing, so this deployment is a good opportunity to take these people and combine them in a time of need, just like we would do here in the United States," he said. "We will provide excellent care for anyone who needs it."

The 115th FH is unique in that many of the officers that make up the unit are assigned to hospitals throughout the U.S. to keep up their technical skills. The augmentees for the current deployment come from San Antonio and Fort Gordon, Georgia.

"When the time comes, these individuals, within 72 hours, left their homes, moved here and were prepared to go," Marquart said. "With the help of the team here at Fort Polk, they were completely mission-ready in a short time. This is truly a rapid deployment."

Sgt. 1st Class Lorianne Flipppo has deployed before, but this is her first time with a Family.

"I didn't have a husband and daughter the



Soldiers from the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk's 115th Field Hospital, 32nd Hospital Center, participate in a deployment ceremony May 6 prior to leaving in support of Task Force Evacuate.



Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commander, JRTC and Fort Polk, addresses Soldiers with the 115th FH, 32nd HC, during a deployment ceremony May 6. The medics are deploying in support of Task Force Evacuate.

first time," she said.

Flipppo said it is an honor to serve and she wants to make her husband and daughter proud.

"My daughter just turned 2, so I don't think she understands, but we gave a lot of hugs this morning (May 6), and I hope to see her soon on

FaceTime or some other mode," she said. "At least we have that now."

Flipppo said it's difficult juggling being a mom and Soldier. "But any mom who serves knows what that is like, and we try to do our best on both fronts," she said.

CHUCK CANNON / GUARDIAN

Squad

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2ND BN, 30TH INF REG, 3RD BCT, 10TH MTN DIV

Staff Sgt. Jake Reyes, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, teaches proper methods to clear, assemble, disassemble and perform functions checks on a M240B for his unit's battalion squad lethality competition, prior to COVID-19.

teleconference every Monday. During this time, BOSS representatives have planned our virtual competitions and weekly workouts to stay connected.

The JRTC and Fort Polk BOSS program runs through June 30. Our BOSS Strong competition consists of teams from each unit doing a daily workout to earn points and a chance to win a trophy for their accomplishment. BOSS Strong will give each Soldier a chance to bond with others by staying motivated and healthy.

Staff Sgt. Jake R. Reyes

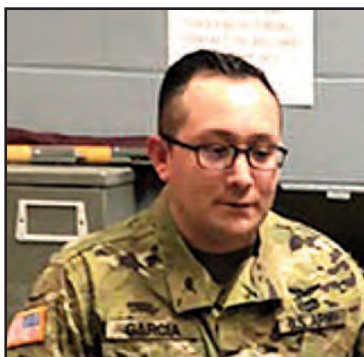
"This is my Squad" is having a sense of ownership and commitment to a group of Soldiers appointed under my responsibility. Maintaining a healthy relationship with my squad will build a cohesive team through trust.

As a leader, I set the standard to influence my Soldiers, wanting them to be able to say that I'm the type of leader that they desire to be when they are finally in my position. To maintain my

squad's mission effectiveness during the COVID-19 pandemic, we've conducted training via video teleconference calls, face-to-face interactions and homework assignments on Warrior tasks and drills. To ensure that my squad is maintaining physical fitness, we have adapted to the physical training restrictions by designing a physical training plan focused on individual weaknesses and utilized handmade equipment for our success on the new Army Combat Fitness Test.

Staff Sgt. Elin Garcia

My name is Staff Sgt. Elin Garcia. I serve as the flight operations platoon sergeant for 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment here at the JRTC. My platoon's mission is to coordinate the launch and recovery of life-saving MEDEVAC missions in support of rotational units, Fort Polk tenant units and our local community. I lead seven Soldiers who are also aviation operations specialists (15Ps). "This is my Squad" is engaged leader-



Garcia



Reyes

ship; I have to ensure that my Soldiers are successful, morale remains high and fitness is continually improved.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging, it has given us an opportunity to try different battle rhythms and virtual training techniques. We have been able to stay technically proficient while manning flight operations for our battalion, 24 hours a day, in spite of COVID-19.

I modified our duty cycle to provide minimal manning but maximum support for the mission. Additionally, we have incorporated the Facetime application to aid in communications when we conduct our daily sync.

I have integrated two new Soldiers into the platoon, since the COVID-19 pandemic started, by battle rostering an experienced 15P with our new Soldiers. I know that this experience, while challenging, will ultimately make my platoon stronger.

Sgt. Aaron J. Lawson

I believe that it is essential to take total ownership of the condition of the environment in which my Soldiers, my squad and my team serve. My squad includes my Soldiers, peers, leaders and those around me on whom I can extend my own personal influence.

It is my duty as a Soldier and noncommissioned officer to develop my squad and keep the integrity of their morale, mindset and safety to the best of my ability. It is also my duty to strive to be innovative and create solutions to problems whenever my team needs.

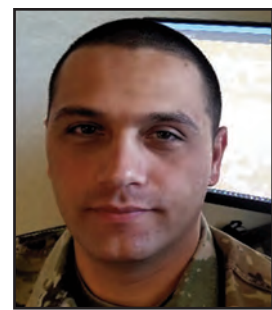
Upon the announcement of the COVID-19 restrictions, I used my experience as a software developer to ensure my team had an effective platform to conduct training within a virtual environment.

Several weeks later, the Department of Defense announced the Commercial Virtual Remote with Microsoft Teams. I immediately took advantage of the software and developed a plan for "Virtual SGT's Time" with scheduled training. I have extended this to Soldiers across the battalion and have been working to develop training plans with other leaders to effectively create a complete digital training environment. This is part of the way I decided to take ownership of the environment in which my squad serves.

Spc. McKayla S. Taylor

"This is My Squad" means using interpersonal communication with your Soldiers to build trust and self-awareness. It is because of my constant communication and involved leadership that my squad works so well together.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we rely on technology to stay connected. We conduct PT at an individual level and send screenshots of the workout to our group chat holding each other accountable and maintaining our competitiveness. We often use the "Nike Run Club" and "Nike Training" apps also.



Lawson



1ST BN 5TH AVN REG

Spc. McKayla S. Taylor, 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment, and her squad ruck marching, prior to COVID-19.

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Army researchers help design 3D-printed ventilators

By THOMAS BRADING

Army News Service

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. — To take on the shortage of ventilators caused by COVID-19, developers from the Army Research Laboratory are collaborating with civilian partners to manufacture low-cost, emergency ventilators suitable for 3D printing.

The hand-held gas ventilator, dubbed the Illinois RapidVent, is roughly the size of a water bottle. Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, the ventilator may also be ideal for Soldiers in battle, as it is portable, said Tonghun Lee, an Illinois-based researcher for the Combat Capabilities Development Command Army Research Laboratory.

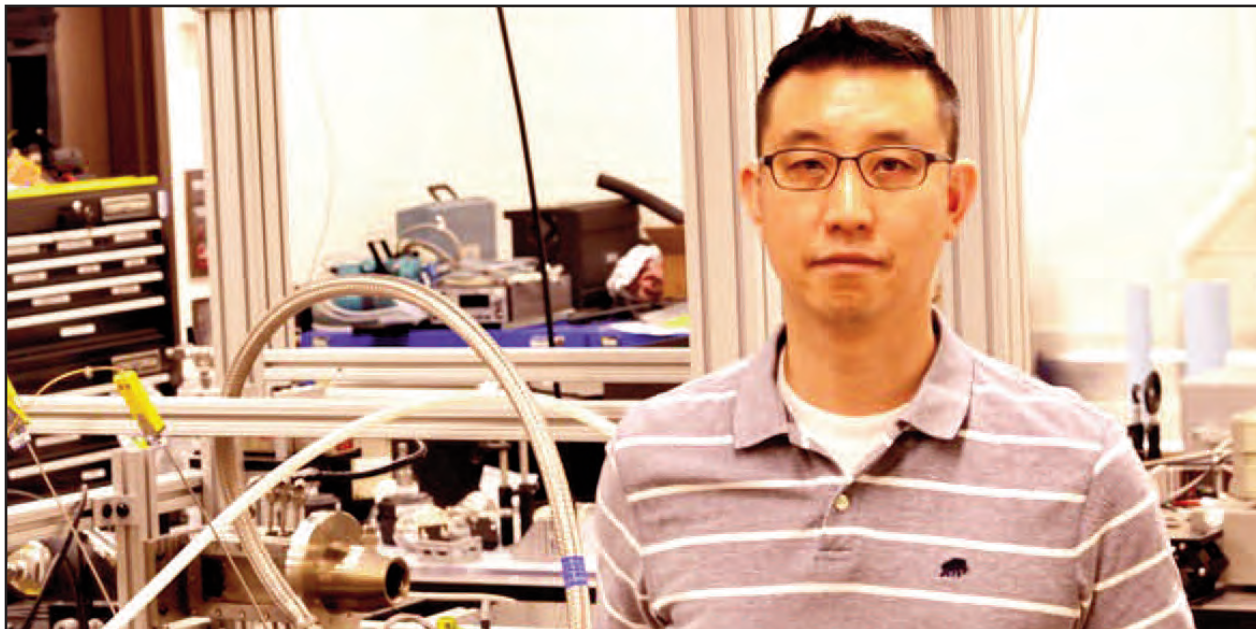
In the past few years, ARL has invested its talent into regional offices around the country to partner with civilian-sector researchers on various Army projects.

"We are at the right place, at the right time," Lee explained. "Our business model already enables us to situate with the leading researchers at regional hubs; we are in the midst of the action — so to speak — as military and civilian needs arise."

Researchers, from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Grainger College of Engineering and Carle Health, led the ventilator design, and the team was made up of more than 40 different engineers, doctors, medical professionals and manufacturers.

"We got together with hospital staff here and found one key issue people die from is lack of ventilators," Lee said. "Ventilators essentially pump air into your lungs and withdraw air out."

The device was created in less than a week,



JAMES BELL/ARMY NEWS SERVICE

Tonghun Lee, an Illinois-based Army Research Laboratory researcher, recently collaborated with industry partners to develop a 3D-printed ventilator design to help patients amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

completed 2 million test breathing cycles and is able to plug into an oxygen source found in most hospital rooms; or it can attach to a tank of oxygen.

For example, if hospitals become overwhelmed and patients are forced to receive care in hallways, the RapidVent could be used until a standard ventilator becomes available, said Eric Wood, an ARL researcher.

"The really sick patients would stay on the full ventilators," Wood said. "Our (3D-printed ventilators) are intended for patients who need a ven-

tilator but are not sick enough to displace those who are really sick."

"The hospital staff (we're working with) made it clear, with this design, the goal would be to transition patients onto a (standard ventilator) within a day or two," he explained.

During the testing phase, the device successfully ran the amount of oxygen patients need when they are unable to breathe on their own, ARL officials said. To date, tests have confirmed performances equivalent to the commercial products that are in short supply.

CDC

Continued from page 4

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continues to encourage childhood immunizations during the COVID-19 crisis but recently updated its recommendations for health-care providers to manage patient visits.

The way health-care providers schedule immunization appointments may vary according to social-distancing standards, said Morse.

It is possible that, depending on the influx of COVID-19 cases in a local community, some health-care providers may not schedule in-person wellness visits but will continue to offer immunizations, noted preventive medicine physician Lt. Col. (Dr.) Ruth Brenner, deputy chief of the Immunization Healthcare Division.

"Due to the pandemic, there is a strain on medical resources, so some clinics may not be able to support a full complement of immunization services, or offer them at the same location where immunizations were normally received. I recommend contacting your primary care manager or clinic to ask what is available, as well as community options," Brenner said.

As a mother of young children, Brenner had to navigate the medical system for important immunizations during the COVID-19 pandemic with the help of the Pediatric Clinic at her military treatment facility.

For parents who choose not to immunize their children during the pandemic, there are "catch up" schedules provided by the CDC so that chil-



Air Force Senior Airman Tamika Bradley, 20th Medical Operations Squadron allergy and immunizations technician, prepares to administer a vaccine to a child at Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina. National Infant Immunization Week was April 25 - May 2.

dren don't need to start over or repeat doses already received, explained Brenner. Many child-care centers are allowing a grace period for childhood immunizations at this time, she noted.

"Each family should balance the risks and benefits before going to the clinic," she said, adding that military treatment facilities are adhering to CDC recommendations of social-distancing and separating sick children from well children.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the strain on health care systems is obvious, said Brenner, adding, "Pediatric immunizations remain an important aspect of the health of our children and

our communities. Military treatment facilities are working hard to continue to offer pediatric immunizations during the current health crisis."

Morse said military Families should call their clinics to arrange times for a visit and ask about precautions to follow upon entering the facility, such as wearing a face mask. "It will be important to ask about normal vaccine side effects and take home the vaccine information sheets," she said. Concerned parents can also call the 24/7 Immunization Healthcare Support Center at (877) 438-8222 and select option 1 to speak with an on-call nurse or provider.

Soldiers punished, separated for UCMJ violations

OSJA

FORT POLK, La. — The preamble to the Manual for Courts-Martial states, “(t)he 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, certain disciplinary issues continue to be prevalent: Breaking quarantine or isolation orders; violating General Order No. 1; driving under the influence of alcohol; wrongful use or possession of controlled substances; fraternization; and sexual assault. Below are recent examples of adverse legal actions for units within the Fort Polk jurisdiction.

A first lieutenant, assigned to 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, was issued a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand for allowing a subordinate to operate a government vehicle in an unsafe manner and asking subordinates to mislead an Army Regulation 15-6 investigation. The CG directed filing the reprimand in

the Officer's Army Military Human Resource Record.

A master sergeant, assigned to 317th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div, was issued a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand for traveling outside of the installation's 50-mile radius. The CG directed filing the reprimand in the Soldier's local file.

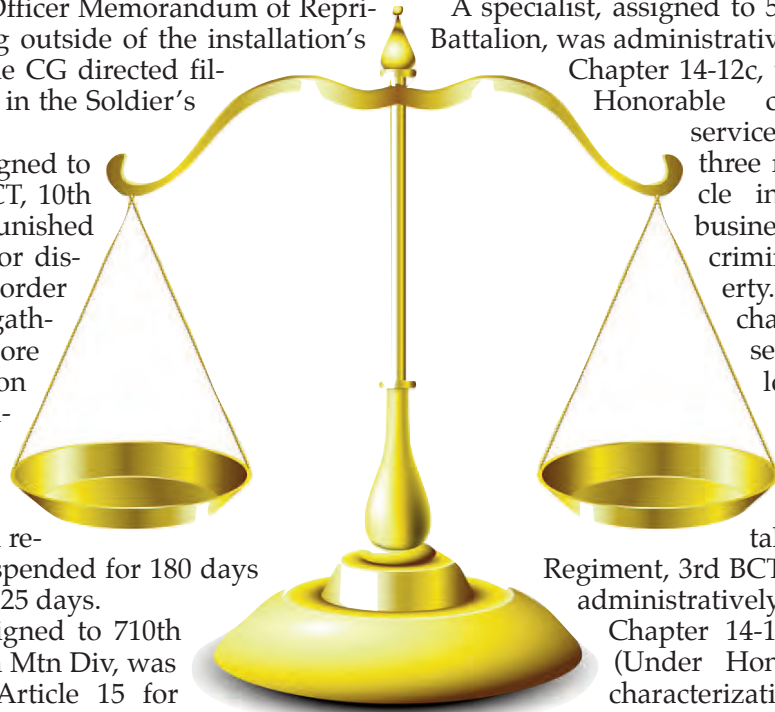
A corporal, assigned to 317th BEB, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div, was punished under Article 15 for disobeying a lawful order (being in a social gathering of five or more people), in violation of Article 92, Uniform Code of Military Justice. The servicemember was sentenced to a reduction to E-3, suspended for 180 days and extra duty for 25 days.

A sergeant, assigned to 710th BSB, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div, was punished under Article 15 for disobeying a lawful regulation by wrongfully using his government credit card for personal use, in violation of Article 92, UCMJ.

The servicemember was sentenced to a reduction to E-4, forfeiture of \$1,373 pay, suspended for 180 days, extra duty for 45 days, restriction for 45 days and a written reprimand.

A specialist, assigned to 519th Military Police Battalion, was administratively separated under Chapter 14-12c, with an Other Than Honorable characterization of service for discharging three rounds from a vehicle into an unoccupied business, which caused criminal damage to property. Generally, an OTH characterization of service results in the loss of a majority of a servicemember's VA benefits.

A private, assigned to 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div, was administratively separated under Chapter 14-12c, with a General (Under Honorable Conditions) characterization of service for sexual assault. Generally, this characterization of service results in the loss of a servicemember's educational benefits.



Basic Education Program now offered online promising score increases

By **CHRISTY GRAHAM**

Guardian editor

FORT POLK, La. — The social-distancing restrictions tied to COVID-19 have affected nearly every process, office and day-to-day activity at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk. But, not every impact has been negative.

Fort Polk's Education Center quickly responded to the necessity of telework by adapting its Basic Education Program, traditionally held in classrooms, into a virtual experience for Soldiers in the midst of an on-going, face-to-face class.

This class, which began face-to-face instruction on March 3, switched to the virtual format on March 23, just a few days shy of the students' end-date.

The subsequent class, starting on March 30 and ending on April 24, was the first fully virtual BSEP class offered.

These two classes tested together and saw a 92.3% increase in their General Technical scores.

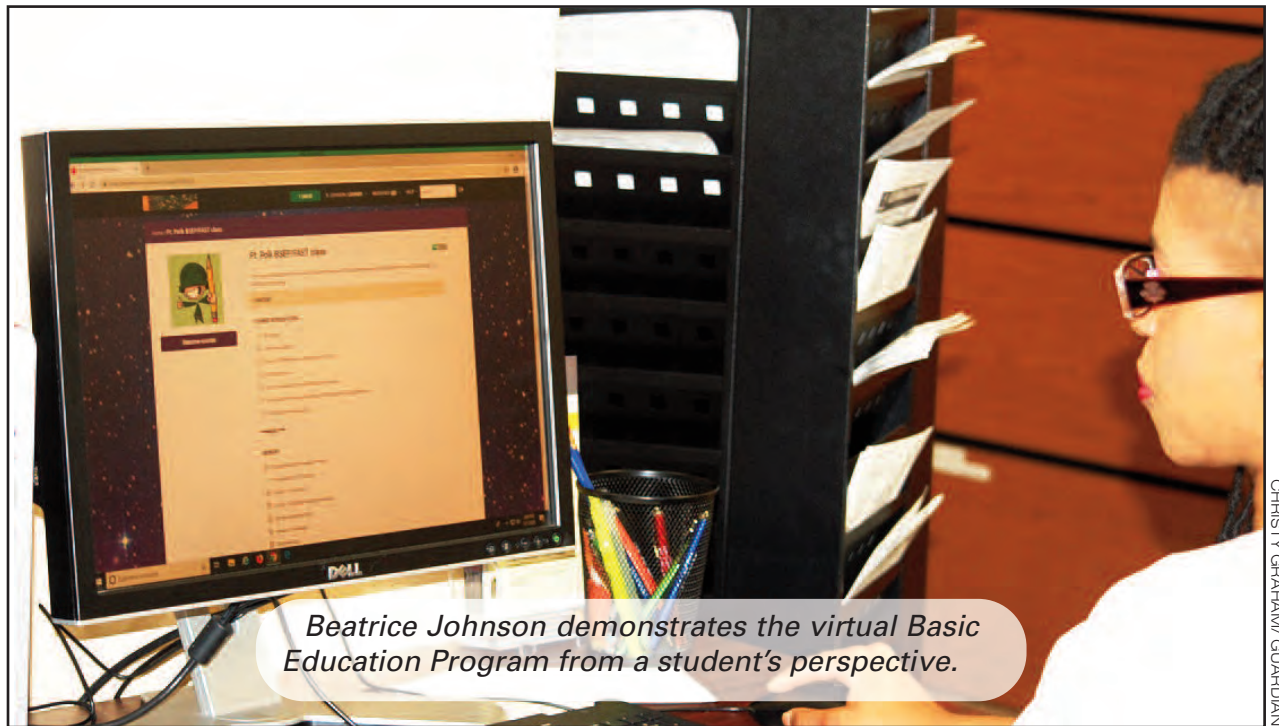
The range of score increases was between three and 22 points. Even the smallest increase was met with enthusiasm, as each Soldier achieved their set goals.

BSEP improves GT scores by concentrating on “arithmetic reasoning, paragraph comprehension and vocabulary,” said Chevina Phillips, education services officer.

Soldiers seeking this class are commonly driven to raise their GT scores to reclassify their military occupation or attend specialty programs, such as Special Forces, Green to Gold or the Nurse Commissioning program.

Prior to COVID-19, students attended the face-to-face course for 20 days. In the virtual classroom, it is “set up with a 20-day format, but students have access to the class over the weekend, as well” explained Phillips.

This means that students actually benefit from



increased time and exposure to the learning materials.

Beatrice Johnson, the BSEP instructor, explained how the virtual classroom operates.

“The platform we use is called Talent MLS. It's highly rated among learning management systems, which means that it's not a typical Google classroom or just document sharing,” said Johnson.

Over the course of the class, assignments are clearly listed by each day. Johnson explains that there are “videos, guided lessons and actual lessons.”

Students have two to three attempts to complete each assigned task successfully; otherwise, they are encouraged to schedule a tutoring session with the instructor to help them pass.

This platform offers a reports section, progress tracker and statistical analysis to the instructor for use in ascertaining any problem areas, providing directed instruction where needed and assessing the overall success of each class.

For students, the platform allows the student and instructor to seamlessly communicate, integral for any questions or tutoring requests, and an easy-to-follow interface, helping the student to stay on track.

Traditional classrooms may still be the favorite among students, but this virtual learning environment provides various benefits for both student and teacher to achieve their goals.

If interested, contact Kimberly Beery at 531-5269. Soldiers will be connected to a counselor that can help them register for this virtual class.

Community



Col. Jody L. Dugai, Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital commander, poses with a LifeShare blood-drive bus during a recent blood drive on the BJACH campus.

Fort Polk community answers call, donates blood

By JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES

Public Affairs Specialist

FORT POLK, La. – Throughout history, Americans have rallied during times of crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has inspired the nation to help their communities in various ways. Churches are preparing and delivering meals to the elderly and infirm. Talented and crafty individuals are sewing masks for hospital staffs and private citizens. Soldiers and Family members are donating blood.

During World War II, the Shreveport Memorial Blood Bank was established. At the time, blood banking was in its infancy; the idea of idea of citizens donating blood on a regular basis was still a new concept for the nation. The legacy of the blood banks' founder is one of commitment, compassion and never-ending vision. LifeShare Blood Centers provides blood components to medical facilities throughout Louisiana, East Texas and South Arkansas.

As COVID-19 reached the Fort Polk community, Soldiers and Families asked what they could do to help, while still maintaining social distancing. The answer was clear: They could donate blood. Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, in partnership with LifeShare Blood Center, has held three blood drives in response to COVID-19.

Jessica Sears, regional director, LifeShare said, "Someone will need blood every two seconds, and just one donation can save up to three lives. With all the wonderful advances in modern medicine, there is no manufactured substitute for human blood. It must be provided by volunteer blood donors in the community. One in three people need blood in their lifetime. If you don't need blood, it's almost certain that someone close to you will."

BJACH doubled their average blood-drive collection during these drives, ensuring hospitals would have blood available for patients. "The community response was tremendous," Sears said.

The Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk and BJACH are partners in the community, and the most desperately needed resource is blood. Soldiers and Family members have asked how they could assist or volunteer during the na-

tion's COVID-19 response. Donating blood provides a safe venue for their call to action.

Col. Jody Dugai, BJACH commander said, "As a medical community, we know the value of having blood available for patients, young and old, when and where it is needed. Blood is utilized to treat trauma patients, cancer patients, newborns and many other diseases. The blood is kept in the community for use by our medical partners and BJACH."

Fort Polk has provided more than 140 units of blood products during the last three blood drives. All the available appointments to donate were booked.

"I think that says it was wildly successful. We stepped up to the challenge and crushed it," said Dugai.

The most recent blood drive was held on May 1.

Sgt. 1st Class Felix Matoscruz, an observer/coach/trainer with Task Force Fire Support, said it was, "perfect timing for me, and I haven't donated in a while; I wanted to help out."

His sentiments were echoed by Sgt. 1st Class Fernando Alvarez, Echo Forward Support Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, who said, "Everyone should donate blood once in a while."

Family members and Department of the Army civilians joined Soldiers at the May 1 blood drive to show their support.

Baker Graves, a Leesville High School sophomore said, "I kind of feel bad that I'm not doing anything right now. When my mom told me about the blood drive, I said, 'let's do it.'"

This was his second time donating blood with LifeShare. "We got a pretty cool 'COVID-19 crisis warrior' T-shirt," said Graves.

There were 49 appointments and 50 units of blood collected at the last blood drive hosted by BJACH. Due to community response, LifeShare is working with the hospital to schedule another blood drive.

Local blood drives and appointments can be made on their website at www.donor.lifeshare.org.

The next local, mobile drive is tomorrow at the Walmart in Leesville, starting at 11 a.m.

Briefs

Patriot Pet Contest

Pets are great companions during the long weeks at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This May, pets can fetch 10 lucky military shoppers a combined \$3,000 in Army & Air Force Exchange Service gift cards — without having to set paw outside the house.

From May 1-31, authorized shoppers at Fort Polk, and Exchanges worldwide, can send in a patriotic-themed picture of their four-legged friends for a chance to win the Patriot Pet, Just Say "Treat," Photo Contest.

Two grand-prize winners will each receive a \$500 gift card, while eight second-place winners will each receive a \$250 gift card.

Authorized Exchange shoppers, aged 18 or older, can find complete contest rules and enter to win at www.shopmyexchange.com/Sweepstakes.

Winners will be selected on or about June 15.

Religious support

The Fort Polk Religious Support Office offers the following Facebook live feeds on Sundays:

- Catholic service, 8:30 a.m.
- Chapel Next service, 10:30 a.m.
- Gospel service, noon
- Traditional Protestant service, 1 p.m.
- Catholic service, 4 p.m.

For more information on religious activities on Fort Polk visit @FortPolkChapel-Page.

BJACH mask policy

Patients and visitors to Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital will wear cloth face wraps. Patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should wear surgical facemasks. Infant carriers can be covered with a light blanket. Children under age 2 are not required to wear facemasks.

DeCA guidelines

The following guidelines are in effect at the Fort Polk Commissary:

- You must wear a fast mask that covers the nose and mouth to enter the commissary.
- A 100% ID check is in place. Only those with valid IDs will be allowed to enter.
- Floor decals highlighting social distancing are in place.
- Shopping carts, registers and door-knobs are sanitized every 30 minutes.
- Plexi-glass panels have been installed at register one through five.



Greek
theatrical
mask



Chinese
opera
mask

Take small peek into fascinating history of masks

GUARDIAN STAFF

FORT POLK, La. — Whether for religion, medicine, protection or entertainment, humans have made and used masks for thousands of years. These remarkable facial coverings were originally made from materials such as leather and wood, but many specimens have long since deteriorated.

Archaeologists along the West Bank in Israel have recovered the oldest, intact mask ever found — about 9,000 years old.

Experts have surmised the Neolithic-era stone mask could represent the transition of a culture becoming more advanced. Though it's true purpose isn't known, it's thought the mask might have been part of some sort of ancestor worship.

The mask has the look of a human face, as do many of the stone masks of the time period. Only 15 have been found; many of which were found in the Judean foothills of Israel.

Cultures around the world have their own unique history of mask use. Spanning Egypt and Greece and to China, Africa, Venice and more, each regional mask shares similarities and maintains its own differences.

Some of the most familiar masks would probably be Egyptian masks used in rituals and as death masks found in museum exhibits around the world.

After mummification, a mask matching the dead was placed on the deceased, so their soul was able to recognize their body in the after life.

The masks were made from materials based on a class system. People from the lower class had plaster and papyrus masks molded on a wooden form. Royalty used gold on bronze molds.

African masks used carved wood made in the likeness of ancestors and animals, real and fantastical, that were totems — a natural item or animal believed to have spiritual significance representing a quality or concept — of ancestors.

They were made to connect with the spirits of those ancestors, to pro-

tect against evil spirits, and in tribal dance rituals.

In China, masks were used to thank gods and as protection against evil spirits. They were used in wedding, birth and death ceremonies, and entertainment. Chinese opera masks were painted with specific color codes signifying the attributes of a character. White signified a crafty and suspicious character.

There is a fine line between serious rituals and lighthearted entertainment in many of these cultures.

A couple of examples of this are from Venice and Greece.

In Venice, masks were used as a disguise. They originate from a strict class hierarchy. People in lower classes used beautiful masks to hide their true place in society, allowing them to blend in and enjoy the benefits of higher classes. Today, Venetian style masks are used for fun at masquerade parties and at events, such as Carnival and Mardi Gras.

In Greece, the birthplace of modern theatre, masks were used to advance art in the form of stage plays.

Live presentations of stories, with themes of comedy, satire, drama and tragedy, are considered an iconic contribution of classical Greek art.

Masks played a huge role in the culture's religious ceremonies celebrating Greek gods. Masks used in those ceremonies began to take on personas, and the people wearing them were seen as representations of the deities they were portraying.

The masks were then placed on an altar and offered up to the gods. Thus, the masks didn't physically survive, but they have been recognized thanks to the imagery preserved on ancient Greek pottery.

The masks were deemed powerful due to their seeming ability to transform an actor into the theatrical character they played.

The uses of masks are varied. They've been used for nefarious deeds such as to disguise criminals when robbing banks. Masks have also been used to punish those who broke the law, protect the judiciary that sentences criminals and to protect the identity of those participating in secret societies.

Masks have widely been used as protection through the ages.

Knights used helmets in wars, as do today's Soldiers, police officers, fire fighters, doctors, nurses and sports figures.

One famous example comes from the plague of 1656 in Rome and Naples.

Beak-like masks were a common sight during the plague. Doctors wore the masks and a protective suit to treat plague victims. One theory on the unique design of the mask is that the plague was thought to be spread by birds.

The thinking was that transforming the physician's mask into something bird-like might help remove the illness.

The mask also had a practical function. The beak was packed with pleasant smelling items, such as mint or rose petals, which was thought to keep the disease or "bad air" away. It didn't always work, since many of the doctors ended up with the plague.

Masks are used today to protect from the ravages of COVID-19. Though medicine has come a long way, and much more is known about germs, it's still uncertain whether masks are effective, as much depends on the type of mask used, among other considerations. Still, wearing masks is deemed one of the simplest tools used against coronavirus.

"Wearing a mask reduces disease transmission and protects both the wearer and the people around them," said Dr. Vin Gupta, a pulmonologist and global health policy expert.

The history of masks is rich and filled with much more information. If you would like to know more click on one of the websites used to research this story or any of the others available to you and start reading.

Editor's note: The information for this story was gathered from the following websites: www.historyof-masks.net/, www.ancient-origins.net, www.britannica.com/art/mask-face-covering/The-functions-and-forms-of-masks, www.haaretz.com and www.nationalgeographic.com.



Plague
doctor
mask



Egyptian
funerary
mask

From make-believe to medical: Masks take on multiple missions

By **ANGIE THORNE**

Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. — I loved Halloween as a child. I soon discovered that dress-up, make-believe, spooky vibes and candy (definitely candy) were my thing — even if only for one night a year. What I didn't enjoy was wearing masks.

The flimsy plastic masks that sold as part of costume sets, when I was a kid, never fit your face properly.

Whether you were a clown or a vampire, there was only a small slit for the mouth through which to breathe and eye holes that were too small. The wobbly disguise constantly slipped down, because it only had that thin elastic band that wrapped around your head and broke more often than not. Seeing where you were walking was a bit of a challenge, and getting enough oxygen to trek between houses trick or treating was worse.

Next came silicon masks that covered your head and were too scary for me — not to mention claustrophobic and muggy.

At that point, I decided I would stick with make-up for my costumes and leave the mask wearing to others.

Other than just wearing a mask for the fun of a holiday, I can only think of a few career paths that, off the top of my head, require wearing facemasks — usually for protection purposes.

For instance, employment in the medical or scientific fields; first responders such as fire fighters or EMTs; or maybe those in construction or chemical jobs. There might be more, but none of them have anything to do with my job, so I happily didn't worry about concealing my mug for any reason.

Fast-forward to 2020: I wish the only thing I had to worry about was dressing up as a witch with a funky green mask and having it stay in place on my face (yes, there was a wart on the nose).

Instead, the COVID-19 virus — silently contagious and deadly — slithered into almost every corner of the world and proceeded to make things scarier than any Halloween horror movie from Hollywood ever could.

As we continue to live through these extraordinary times, more people have fallen ill and the number of deaths continue to rise. Medical and scientific communities feverishly work to gather as much information as possible.

All this leads us back to, believe it or not, masks.

The further we dig into the trenches to fight this pandemic, it's been determined that one of the easiest ways to protect yourself and others is to wear a mask.

Yes, they are still uncomfortable, but at least there is a huge incentive to deal with its pesky discomfort issues.

Personal protective equipment is essential for medical professionals on the front line, giving those who have contracted COVID-19 a chance to survive, while protecting themselves from this menacing malady.

That means I didn't feel right about trying to get those types of masks when there was already a shortage.

That was a problem. What was I supposed to do? I'm not crafty; I don't own a sewing machine



Tucked behind a wealth of computers and other technical gadgets, T.C. Bradford, public affairs specialist, goes about his daily tasks with his homemade mask in place.

and wouldn't know how to use one even if I did; I wouldn't be making any myself.

Thank goodness for people with crafty skills. Countless people have stepped up to make homemade masks for friends, family and as a backup for nurses and doctors — much of it donated.

That's how I got my first masks. The adult son of a friend — yes ladies, men can sew too — wanted to do something productive and positive, so he taught himself how to make masks. I got two. Thanks, David.

I was so happy I had some protection. I wore those masks whenever I left the house. This was in early March, and the idea of wearing masks was still considered awkward and even discouraged. I can't begin to tell you how many eye rolls and admonishments, such as, "that's not going to do you any good," I got when I was practically the lone person at the grocery store wearing one.

It was frustrating and a bit intimidating, but I stuck to my guns. I looked at it this way: I'm getting older (aren't we all?) and I have underlying health issues, as so many of us do. The fact is, as more was learned about COVID-19 and who was dying from the disease, I knew I was in one of the dangerous categories.

No one was going to protect me from catching this illness. I knew that I had to take every precaution — even if the chances were slim that I was doing any good — and make the conscious decision to wear a mask whenever I left the house. If nothing else, it made me feel safe and I was in control of something in my life, as everything else was flying off the rails.

But, I only had two masks.

Thankfully, those crafty hordes began to sell to the masses.

I've heard that some were criticized for selling their wares in a pandemic instead of giving them away. Hopefully, I'm wrong about that. If not, I

thought that was harsh considering that America is based on capitalism; in this uncertain economy, if you can "capitalize" on a skill that provides a needed resource, then I say more power to you. As long as people don't try to take advantage by gouging prices, producing inferior product or not following through on delivery, I feel like they have every right to sell their goods.

With more people flooding the market with masks, the variety in mask choices soared. (Yay, me!) So, I bought a few.

Then another male friend bought a sewing machine, taught himself how to make masks (way to go T.C.; I love it) and agreed to make me a few.

The deal is I buy the materials, and he makes the masks. I've had fun buying cool material with themes from Harry Potter and Star Wars, to Dr. Who and dragonflies.

If I have to wear it, it might as well make me happy and other people smile. I have to be a little more professional and wear solid colors at work, but that's fine.

Masks may still be uncomfortable, but at least the patterns have made it interesting.

Two months later, the official stance changed on masks, and everyone is encouraged to wear one. That's great. I feel slightly vindicated in my actions, but that stance might change again. I can only do what I feel is right for me.

Currently, there are plenty of people who choose not to wear masks because they don't see the benefit.

That's their right until it's deemed mandatory. For the time being, it is only encouraged.

According to [Louisiana.gov](https://www.louisiana.gov/), masks or face coverings should be worn in public spaces and anytime you are near others who are not in your immediate household. The website states by wearing a mask, you protect others, and likewise, others protect you by wearing a mask.

That's all I'm trying to do. Whatever you choose to do, stay safe folks.



Commentary

Take time to celebrate Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month

GUARDIAN STAFF

FORT POLK, La. — May is Asian and Pacific American Heritage Month. The month highlights and celebrates the rich history and culture of Asian and Pacific Islanders who have contributed to America's diversity and success.

According to www2.ed.gov, Asian and Pacific Heritage is a broad term that encompasses all of the Asian continent and the Pacific islands of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.

The islands of Melanesia encompass New Guinea, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomon Islands.

Micronesia is comprised of Marianas, Guam, Wake Island, Palau, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and the Federated States of Micronesia.

The islands of Polynesia are New Zealand, Hawaiian Islands, Rotuma, Midway Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, French Polynesia and Easter Island.

One notable contribution of Asian Pacific Islanders is through military service.

Asian and Pacific Islander service members and Department of Defense civilian employees contribute to the DoD mission by serving in all branches of the military.

The following information details Army service based on 2019 data points.

- The Army has 29,313 Asian and Pacific Islander Soldiers within its ranks. That's six out of every 100 Soldiers. They make up 21.7% of the Army's senior enlisted ranks and 7.8% of commissioned officers.

- Asian and Pacific Islanders number almost five out of every 100 Army civilian employees — that's 11,834 people. Another notable fact is that 29.5% of Asian and Pacific Islander DoD civilians are also veterans.

- Asian and Pacific Islanders have a long history of military service that began as early as the Civil War, where Chinese Americans fought on both sides of the conflict.

- The first Asian and Pacific Islander to receive the Medal of Honor for heroism in the Philippines was Pvt. Jose B. Nisperos, in 1911.

- More recently, Gen. Eric Shinseki became the first Asian American four star general; and the 34th Chief of Staff of the Army.

- Daniel K. Inouye served in the U.S. Army during World War II as part of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which was composed of Soldiers of Japanese ancestry.

The 442nd became one of the most decorated military units in U.S. history, according to www.senate.gov. Inouye became the first Japanese American to receive both the Medal of Honor and the Medal of Freedom.

When Hawaii became the 50th state, Inouye was one of its first representatives. He represented Hawaii in the U.S. Congress for 53 years, first as a representative and then as a senator.

- In 2017, Tammy Duckworth, a retired disabled veteran, was the first Thai-American to be elected to the U.S. Senate.

These Asian and Pacific Islanders served and should be remembered.

Due to COVID-19, social distancing has



Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., speaks to U.S. service members stationed in Iraq during her visit to the country on April 26, 2019, as part of a Senate delegation including Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, left.



Americans of Japanese descent, infantrymen of the 442nd Regiment, run for cover as a German artillery shell is about to land outside of a building in Italy, April 4, 1945. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the executive order that created the 442nd Regimental Combat Team in February 1943. It was the only Japanese unit during World War II.

stopped traditional celebrations.

Instead, you are encouraged to celebrate the many contributions of Asian and Pacific Is-

landers in your own way or by learning more about their history, heritage and military service at <https://asianpacificheritage.gov/about/>.

CPAC transitions to virtual in-processing amid COVID-19

By **CHRISTY GRAHAM**

Guardian editor

FORT POLK, La.—Due to COVID-19 social-distancing restrictions, the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center for the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk evaluated and adjusted its standard operation procedures to fit a remote-work environment. Rising to the occasion wasn't an insurmountable obstacle for the CPAC team.

Christan Higgs, CPAC human resource specialist, highlighted the integral evaluative and planning processes that continually ensure success for the new, virtual on-boarding endeavor.

Civilian Department of the Army employees complete and sign an abundance of forms and declarations, constituting their new-hire packets. Some forms require proof of identification and others need witness signatures. The packet is large and involved. Human resource specialists, like Higgs, help customers navigate the process of building their packets, prior to their start dates.

At the dawn of their virtual process, Higgs explained that CPACs used their regional network to share best practices and new ideas. This wider net collected shared experiences, concerns and resolutions dealing with the transition to telework. The greatest benefactor was the civilian applicant.

Initial considerations included the protection

of personally identifiable information, technical and connectivity issues and best practices to accommodate the new hire without face-to-face interactions.

Based on the collaboration, CPACs recognized how vital the online new-hire record would be to protecting PII, "as emailing documents with PII is not recommended," said Higgs.

The digital record is maintained through the USA Staffing system, which offers a protected, virtual environment to upload documents. Due to social-distancing restrictions, the USA Staffing system is being utilized for additional documents, which would normally be submitted at in-person meetings.

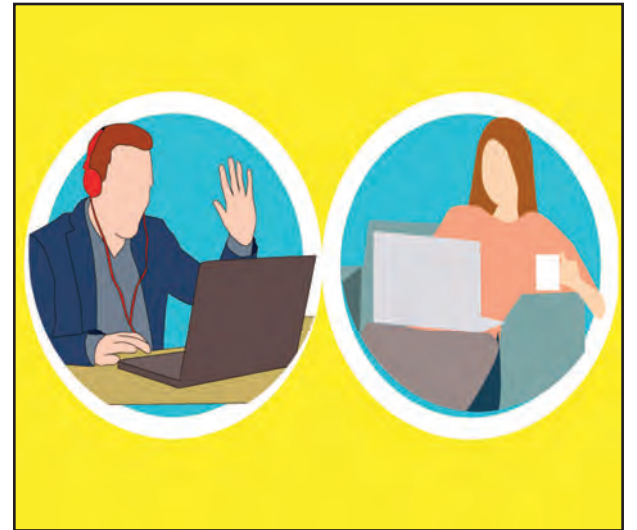
Technology provides a streamlined, paper-free process; but it also brings a range of glitches.

"There are always obstacles, such as technical difficulties," Higgs said, but this is where the human resource specialist steps in and overcomes.

With technological limitations, Higgs stressed applicants not to "hesitate to reach out and ask any questions...there is always a workaround."

Higgs explained that CPAC human resource specialists keep themselves available to their customers; they follow up with questions or concerns or after any entrant's connection drops during a phone call or Google duo conference.

Gabriel Walker, a recent new hire at Fort Polk, stated that "technology has its limits," as teleconference calls dropped within the less-than-ideal



rural networks of the area.

"Christan is receptive and responsive," Walker said, and she quickly called back, answered questions and remained available to him throughout the on-boarding process.

The virtual process is one that is continually being revised, Higgs explained. Each issue is resolved and used to inform the upcoming, virtual on-boarding interactions. The process is always being refined.

The JRTC and Fort Polk CPAC is constantly overcoming, adapting and improving to complete their mission.

From student-athlete, to Army ROTC, to potential NFL pro

By **CATRINA DUBIANSKY**

Army News Service

MONROE, La. — For most, going to college and getting through a heavy course load is enough to balance, but not for Army Reserve Officer Training Corps Cadet William Collins.

After completing three years of NCAA Division 1 football at the University of Louisiana Monroe, Collins decided to finish out his undergrad at University of Central Oklahoma (UCO). Coming from a family with a history of military service and the love of football, Collins wanted a way to complete his master's degree, play football, and join the Army, so that's exactly what he did.

After graduating with his bachelor's degree in 2019, Collins applied for his master's degree to continue his stay at UCO. Collins went on to not only study secondary education and play football as their starting quarterback, but also became a part of the Army ROTC program.

Just when you think balancing two very demanding activities outside of your typical day-to-day college classes is enough, Collins was asked by NFL scouts to throw at UCO's NFL Pro Day.

How did he do it you ask?

"It was very hard. I would do morning PT with ROTC and then lifted weights at night at a local

gym. Then after morning PT I would knock out all my online grad school homework, and before my night lift, hit some sprints to throw routes to whomever would stand there and catch," says Collins.

While Collins often times sacrificed a social life, extra time to spend with his girlfriend and family, and any down time that many other college students value, he says it was absolutely worth it.

Collins found that juggling school, ROTC and training for football while adding in extra workouts was very difficult. However, he believes ROTC helped him to be a better student, athlete, teammate, and truly pushed him harder than he would have pushed himself to train for the Pro Day.

"I was inspired to be a Cadet and train for this. I wanted to show that Cadets across the country are elite and that our nation's future officers are capable of accomplishing anything... (ROTC) helped me realize just how important it is to communicate well as a leader," Collins said. "As the quarterback, one of my jobs is to communicate the signal, or play call, to all the lineman and receivers ... Same is to be said for an infantry platoon leader. I will have to communicate fast and effectively."

Collins is waiting to hear back from a team, and has high hopes about his performance on Pro Day.



Army Reserve Officer Training Corps Cadet William Collins, harbors dreams of being both a quarterback in the National Football League and an Army Ranger officer. Collins, who will graduate with a master's degree in secondary education and receive his Army commission in May 2021 from the University of Central Oklahoma, was invited by professional scouts to the school's pro day in April.

Collins decided that if he does get chosen to go into the NFL, he will take that opportunity and join the Army Reserves. However, after his football career, he has reservations to immediately find his way back to the active duty component.

In the meantime, Collins is set to

graduate and commission from UCO in May of 2021. Collins hopes to branch infantry and go to Basic Officer Leadership Course (BOLC) and looks forward to possibly attending Ranger School to "hopefully train and be a part of the greatest force on Earth."

Squad

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Staff Sgt. Jonathan G. Searles, 46th Engineer Battalion, downloads topographic data taken from the Trimble GPS surveying equipment while in the field, prior to COVID-19.

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Daily operations in the S-1 shop are being conducted through telework to minimize the risk of COVID-19. To ensure that actions and training are completed, we use Facetime to have an open discussion about any issues.

I am thankful for, and extremely proud of, my squad. They have remained ready and resilient, despite current conditions.

Staff Sgt. Jonathan G. Searles

Essayons! STEEL SPIKE! Sergeant Major of the Army Grinston!

Conducting training whether it be MOS related or physical fitness, has been a difficult endeavor during these trying times.

However, my squad is a reflection of myself. They learn from me, they watch me and, most importantly, they mirror me. Because of this, I have striven to find ways to continue the professional and physical development of my squad.

I lead my squad in physical fitness training each week through competitions via a running application to track everyone's run times and



Staff Sgt. Jonathan G. Searles instructs his Soldier on using the Trimble 5600 Total Station, prior to COVID-19.

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Sgt. Daniel Alfaro Gomez and his squad conducts physical fitness training.

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distances. My squad sets weekly goals and tries to obtain them.

We also conduct MOS specific training twice a week via Facetime or office meetings, covering such tasks as AUTOCAD designing, building framing and basic surveying techniques.

My squad is a direct reflection of my leadership; and, whether we are distant or nearby, I will continue to push my Soldiers and be the best leader I can be.

Sgt. Daniel A. Gomez

"Steel Spike!" Sergeant Major!

My name is Sgt. Daniel Alfaro Gomez. I joined the Army on April 18. I am married to Laura Aguilar. We have three beautiful children ages 9, 7, and 5.

I started my military career as a 91F Small Arms Weapon Repair and graduated as an honor student from Advanced Individual Training. I have one deployment to Afghanistan. I competed for, and won, the Soldier of the Quarter at the battalion level, as well taking part in the Soldier of the Year competition for the XVIII Airborne Corps. I have also received the Commanding General's Volunteer of the quarter award while at Fort Polk.

"This Is My Squad" means to me that a leader understands each Soldier has individual strengths and exploits them to better each Soldier as a person, which in turn betters the squad, platoon and company as a whole.

During this time, my squad has found interesting and exciting ways to stay on top of training. While annual and semiannual services continue to be a priority, my squad has been able to overcome obstacles. For example, managing to complete these services, without delay, all while maintaining social-distancing guidelines and personal health.

During this time, Soldiers have been able to focus on their fitness. Being in this environment, a more customized fitness plan has resulted in better performance, as each Soldier can focus on their weaknesses and improve their strengths, without some of the limitations of group-led training.

This environment has introduced a great training opportunity for everyone, to include myself.

Since not everything will always be easy and feasible, it has been a great opportunity to think outside the box to accomplish the mission.

We have been able to use various platforms to upload training videos, as well as reaching across formations to co-use BeaverFit boxes to accomplish our personal fitness goals.

We were also able to use the BlueJeans app to conduct chaplain training, ensuring that even the spiritual component of fitness is maintained.

"This Is My Squad" means taking initiative and strengthening squad-level cohesion by using an interpersonal leadership style and innovative strategies to increase capabilities within our ranks. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us, at the squad level, to get creative and instilled an



Sgt. Alfaro Gomez and his squad service weapons and night vision goggles, during COVID-19.

46TH ENGB BN

ownership within our squads.

To build a cohesive unit, at any level, requires a cyclical relationship between rousing the individual; and, in turn, the individual galvanizing the team.

The Soldiers at JRTC and Fort Polk show their commitment to this endeavor by overcoming the COVID-19 restrictions while maintaining their working relationships, strengthening their bonds and fueling the pride and ownership of their teams.