

Prevention important to quelling substance abuse

By **JOHN L. PILGRIM**

Suicide prevention program manager

FORT POLK, La. — From day one in the Army, Soldiers are taught to be part of a team; to look out for each other and lift each other up at PT, weapons ranges and during deployments. It is equally important to look after each other during off-duty hours. Too many Soldiers struggle with risky behaviors, especially alcohol, in the evenings and on weekends. Too many Soldiers make wrong choices and put not only themselves but others at risk of serious injury and death. Every incident that results in injury or death is a tragedy that could have been prevented.

The educators at the Army Substance Abuse and Prevention Program want to make sure every Soldier knows there is help available.

“Soldiers choosing to get help is the right decision, especially regarding drugs and alcohol,” Amelia Connor, prevention coordinator for ASAP, said. “Getting help early is key to success as continued abuse will eventually lead to medical, legal and financial problems.”

Ovetta Jackson-White, ASAP manager and Dr.

Charlene Lacking, clinical director for Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital’s Substance Use Disorder Clinical Care (SUDCC) work in concert to ensure Soldiers who realize they have a substance abuse issue can go to the Behavioral Health Clinic on Fort Polk to initiate a self-referral.

The number of alcohol-related incidents on post have spiked in recent weeks and raised concerns among leadership, leading to more resources being made available to treat Soldiers, said Pilgrim.

“It is evident that some of our Soldiers need help and I encourage them to self-identify early and go to their supervisor and say, ‘Hey I am struggling with this and need help,’” said Jackson-White. “We are here to help and would rather do it sooner than later. Getting into trouble because of a urinalysis is too late to self-refer.” Soldiers who want to self-refer for alcohol or substance abuse can start the process by going to the Behavioral Health Clinic located on the sixth floor of BJACH. For units who desire training in alcohol and substance abuse please contact the ASAP team at 531-2031/1964.