



FORGING THE

WARRIOR SPIRIT

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Home of Heroes @ Fort Polk, LA

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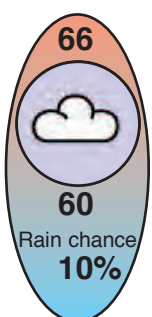


JRTC OPERATIONS GROUP

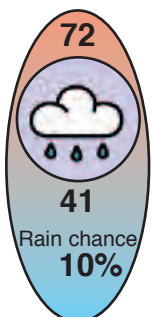
4/25 ID (ABN) conducts airborne assault

Paratroopers with the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division kicked off Rotation 20-03 at the Joint Readiness Training Center with an airborne assault Jan. 12 and 13. Pictured, clockwise from above: Soldiers prepare to load C-17 aircraft prior to their jump; paratroopers fill the moonlit sky above JRTC's Geronimo Drop Zone; and C-17 aircraft line the tarmac before taking paratroopers to their drop zone.

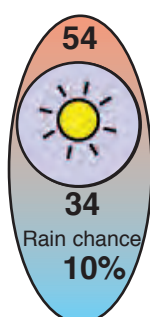
Weekend weather



Friday



Saturday



Sunday

Inside the Guardian

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Viewpoint

In our view

Guardian staff asked Fort Polk community members, "What is the first thing you notice when you meet someone new?"

Here are their responses:

Toni Buentello:
"The first thing I notice is their attitude."



Michell Clark: "I notice the uniqueness of each person. What makes them special."



Brittany Summers: "The first thing I notice is their smile."



Marla Roberts:
"The first thing I notice is their teeth because I always make people smile."



Temi Soyomi:
"The first thing I notice is their personality."



Dloise Harrell:
"Their different facial features, like whether they wear glasses or not, and their hair."



Monic Cole:
"Their feeling or mood. You can tell by the look on their face."



Marquitta Anderson: "Whether they are smiling or not. It tells you what type of mood they are in."



Guardian

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Briefs

Prescribed burns

Prescribed burns are taking place across the installation throughout housing areas. Prescribed burns ARE the burning of underbrush, debris and detritus that chars the forest ground into a black carpet. The fires are slow enough that any woodland creatures can easily escape or take cover, and the charcoal produced adds nutrients to the soil that improves the health of local flora. Burning dead or fallen trees in addition to the underbrush also reduces the amount of fuel available for potential wildfires. Prescribed burns take place about every three years. Appropriate notification of burn days will be coordinated to allow Families to make appropriate plans. If you don't want to smell the smoke, you will have enough time to leave before the fires are lit. Alternatively, you can stay indoors with the windows and doors closed. The fires are kept small and any smoke produced is short-lived.

MLK Day observance

An observance honoring the life and work of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is held Wednesday at noon in Fort Polk's Bayou Theater. Everyone is invited. Call 531-1911 for more information.

Abandoned vehicles

The Directorate of Emergency Services Traffic Section will release the following vehicles to a towing company for disposal on Feb. 1 (if they remain unclaimed). Vehicles are listed with the last four numbers of their VIN number. If one of these vehicles belongs to you please contact the Fort Polk Police Traffic Section at 531-1806/2677.

2016 Nissan	Altima	5322
2008 Pontiac	G8	5694
2005 Lincoln	LS	0097
2004 Pontiac	Grand Prix	1317
2000 Chevy	Malibu	5243
2002 Toyota	Corolla	6686
2013 Chevy	Camaro	1112
1990 Sdow	Trailer	3351
2008 Jeep	Commander	0690
2005 Chevy	Malibu	5875
2000 Chevy	S10	6812
2009 BMW	328i	5454
2008 Kia	SPORTAGE	7546
2011 Chevy	1500	4608
2001 Kia	RIO	5378
1999 Chevy	1500	5469
2002 Saturn	VUE	7797
2009 VW	JETTA	0049
2006 Kia	OPTIMA	9904

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From left: Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk Command Sgt. Maj. David Bass, Brig. Gen. Patrick Frank, commander, JRTC and Fort Polk, Nancy Joseph and Peter Joseph, stand beside the Leesville Wall of Heroes plaque dedicated to the Jospheh's son, Maj. Trevor Joseph, Wednesday, at Leesville City Hall. Joseph, who was killed in a helicopter crash at Fort Polk Sept. 26, 2019, was the first inductee into the memorial.

Joseph first inductee to Wall of Heroes

By KEITH HOUIN
Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. — Maj. Trevor Joseph, the 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment Soldier who was killed in a helicopter crash at Fort Polk Sept. 26, 2019, was inducted into the Leesville Wall of Heroes Wednesday at the Leesville City Hall. Joseph was the first to be inducted into this new Leesville program. Leesville Mayor Rick Allen said Joseph's death was part of the inspiration for the wall. "At Joseph's memorial service I saw the pain and sadness of the family and the Soldiers' lives he had been part of. I felt as a city we needed to do something to demonstrate just how much every Soldier here means to our community. At the same time I remembered my visit to Washington D.C. where I had the opportunity to speak in the Hall of Heroes," Allen said. Nearly 100 Soldiers and area citizens filled city hall to support Joseph's family for the ceremony. Joseph's wife, Erin Joseph, said it was an extremely emotional event. "I can't put into words what this means to us. I knew how wonderful Trevor was, but for people who didn't even know him to do this for him is amazing. Just that people have heard the stories about him and through the stories know what kind of man he was," she said. "It really



means a lot to the family to know he will be remembered by so many." It was also emotional and meaningful for the Soldiers. "I knew Trevor when he was a cadet and we have crossed paths many times. I am humbled and honored that the City of Leesville recognized him in this way, and that his plaque will always hang in the Leesville City Hall," Maj. Ralph Salazar, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment commander, said. "Today is about Trevor. Today is a celebration of his life and his sacrifice to Fort Polk and to Army medevac. He is a representative of all of us and he will never be forgotten."

CSA: Strength, innovation essential to National Defense Strategy

By **DAVID VERGUN**

Army News Service

WASHINGTON — The National Defense Strategy describes how the Defense Department will be postured for success in the great power competition with Russia and China, the Army chief of staff said.

In two words, the National Defense Strategy is to be strong and innovative to deter conflict or win if diplomacy and deterrence fail, Gen. James C. McConville said.

McConville spoke about the great power competition Jan. 14 at the Atlantic Council in Washington. Allies and partners, personnel and innovation were the general's themes.

Allies and partners

DoD relies heavily on allies and partners, McConville said, noting that he has personally met with 75 chiefs of staff from nations around the world over the course of the last year. There aren't enough U.S. Soldiers to be in all places in the world at one time where they're needed, he said.

In order to have well-trained partners who can provide their own security, the Army has recently stood up security force assistance brigades, he said. They train and advise partner nations. When they are all stood up there will be five active security force assistance brigades and one in the Army National Guard, he said.

In communications, a future integrated command and control network will not only link sensor to shooters across the DoD, but will also be integrated with systems allies and partners use, he said.

The Soldier is the Army's most important and potent weapon, McConville said. Having the right person in the right job is paramount. To do this, the Army is finalizing a new personnel system that looks at more than just two variables which the current system uses: Rank and job. This new system will consider 25 variables that include a range of knowledge, skills and even Soldier preference.

Perhaps the most important and influential persons in the Army are battalion commanders, he said. A good commander not only knows how to command well, but also influences whether or not soldiers reenlist due to the command climate that commander brings.

Therefore, the Army has developed a new command assessment program for these commanders to ensure only the best are selected.

He said physical fitness, leadership, peer and subordinate reviews are some of the selection variables.

Also, noncommissioned officers are no longer selected based solely on time in grade. Now, only the most qualified get promoted, he said.

Innovation will require a lot of experimentation and testing of leap-ahead technology systems, McConville said.

Among two of the Army's priorities are long-range precision fires, and air and missile defense, he said.

A near-peer competitor like Russia or China could make it difficult to enter an area through



DAVID VERGUN/DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

their advanced standoff weaponry, he said.

To overcome that obstacle, the Army is experimenting with advanced weapons that use directed energy and microwaves, he said, adding that in two to three years, he expects the Army to begin fielding new precision strike missiles and extended-range cannons.

Another way to penetrate an enemy's defenses, he said, is with aircraft that have much greater range and speed than the current fleet.

Some of those aircraft could even be unmanned, he said.

Unmanned ground vehicles are also being developed. It would make sense to have them take the lead in areas that are heavily mined or full of improvised explosive devices, he said.

Also, future tanks might just have one person in the vehicle instead of four. Artificial intelligence and robotics could take the place of some of the crew.

Army briefs

Historic experience

FORT INDIANTOWN GAP, Pa. — A Pennsylvania National Guard Soldier made history in December when she became one of the first two enlisted National Guard female Soldiers and the first female Soldier from the Pennsylvania National Guard to graduate from the Army's vaunted Ranger School.

Sgt. Danielle Farber said she wouldn't have made it through the grueling 61-day school if it weren't for the training she received at Fort Indiantown Gap beforehand.

Farber, 30, graduated from Ranger School at Fort Benning, Ga., on Dec. 13. She and Staff Sgt. Jessica Smiley of the South Carolina National Guard, who graduated in the same class, were the first two enlisted National Guard female Soldiers to graduate from the School. Since the school was opened to females in 2015, 42 women have earned the coveted Ranger tab.

Candidates needed

FORT BRAGG, N.C. - The inspector general is in need of top-quality candidates to fill its ranks across the Army Reserve.

"We are looking for the top 20%, which is a challenge because commanders are looking for that top 20% as well to be their staffs," said Sgt. Maj. Trevor Sellers, the top noncommissioned officer of the Army Reserve inspector general during a recent interview about the function and scope of the IG program.

As of now, IG offices across the Army Reserve have been significantly understaffed, making it a challenge to meet their mission requirements.

Finding such Soldiers can be difficult due to a perception problem. Soldiers often think IG representatives show up on the scene when things don't go right. For more information on the nomination process, visit www.usar.army.mil/USAR-IG.

Riggs' tradition one of selfless service, faith in God

By **CHUCK CANNON**

Command information officer

FORT POLK, La. — Nearly 75 years ago, Lehman Riggs was an infantryman spending the final days of World War II in the German town of Leipzig. With the war winding down in March 1945, Riggs and a fellow Soldier, Raymond “Robert” Bowman, were machine gunners assigned to Company D, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division and tasked with providing cover fire from a third floor balcony overlooking the Elbe River, as U.S. Soldiers set up defensive positions along the river.

Riggs and Bowman would alternate manning the .30-caliber Browning M1919 machine gun from their perch, swapping positions each time the gun had to be reloaded.

Also in the third story room was Robert Capa, a photographer for Life magazine, who followed the two Soldiers up the stairs to capture images of the battle.

It was at this point that fate — and Capa’s camera lens — stepped in and memorialized Riggs and Bowman.

As Riggs slid from behind the gun and Bowman took his place, a single shot from a German sniper hit the 21-year-old Bowman near his nose, killing him instantly. Riggs climbed over his fellow Soldier’s prostrate body and continued to lay down cover fire.

Capa captured the events on film and when Life magazine published its issue of May 14, 1945 signaling victory in Europe, the photos of Riggs and Bowman were published, with their faces obscured hiding their identities.

Capa’s photographs, titled “Death on a Leipzig Balcony” and “The Last Man to Die” are often seen in World War II history books, but for years the identities of the two men remained a mystery.

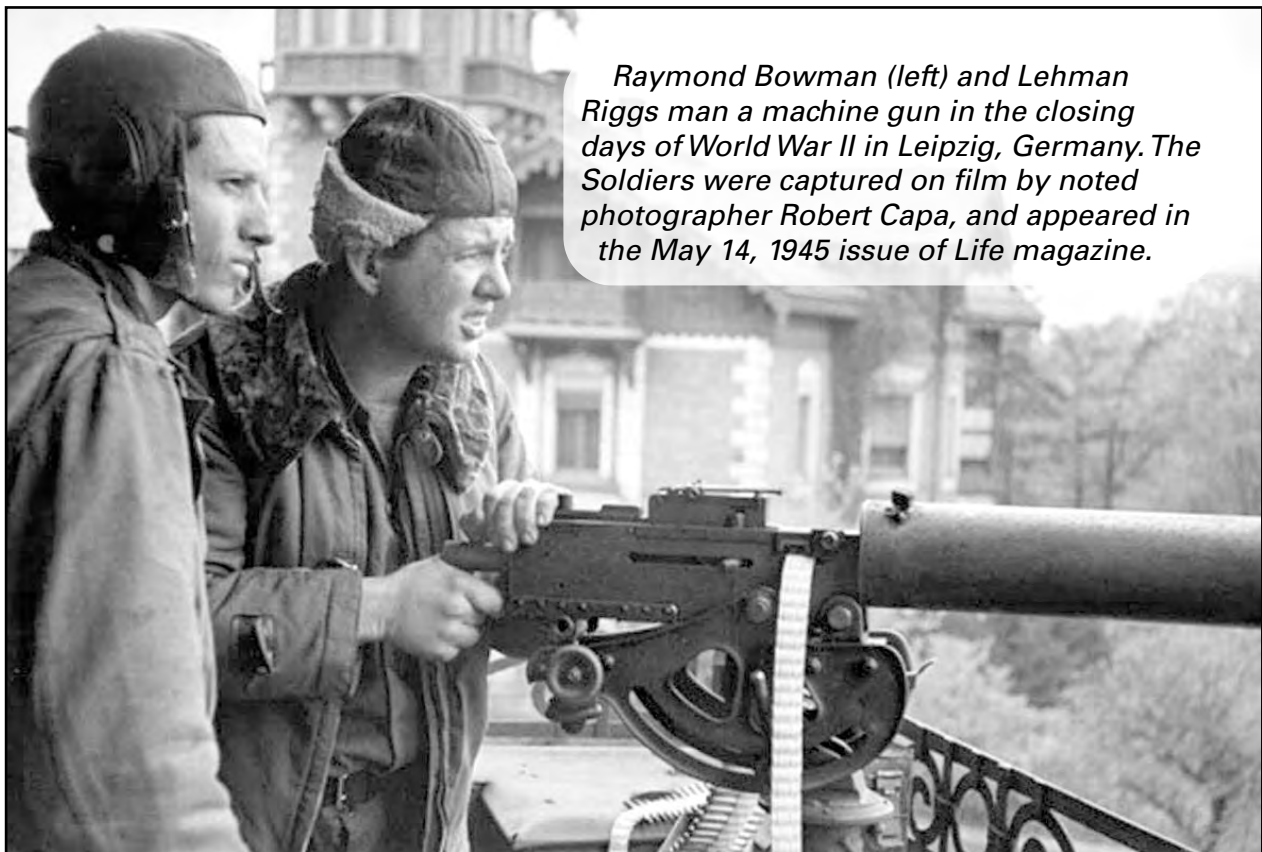
If the name Riggs rings a bell with the Fort Polk Family, it’s not surprising: Chap. (Lt. Col.) Derrick Riggs is the installation chaplain. And much to the surprise of the extended Riggs clan, the Lehman Riggs captured on film and in Life magazine was a family member they never realized was a famous World War II hero.

“My family knew nothing of his time in World War II because he never talked about it,” Riggs said. “Ten years ago, city officials from Leipzig, Germany, contacted Uncle Lehman to invite him back to Leipzig, Germany as they were having a special memorialization of the building in which he fought.”

Riggs said his uncle, the youngest of 11 siblings, never talked about his experience in the war and for more than 60 years, the Riggs family knew nothing of the photo.

“Shortly after Uncle Lehman was invited back to Germany, I met with him and he gave me a copy of the magazine which had the pictures of his event and the story about it,” Riggs said.

While Chap. Riggs was assigned at US Europe cCommand in Stuttgart, Germany, his uncle was again brought to Germany on April 17, 2016,



Raymond Bowman (left) and Lehman Riggs man a machine gun in the closing days of World War II in Leipzig, Germany. The Soldiers were captured on film by noted photographer Robert Capa, and appeared in the May 14, 1945 issue of Life magazine.

LIFE MAGAZINE

when the city of Leipzig changed the name of the street in front of the building where Riggs and Bowman manned their machine gun to Bowman Strasse.

“I had the immense honor to attend the ceremony and even visit the room in the building where the pictures were taken,” Riggs said. “As I walked up the stairs to the room with my uncle, I began to ask him a series of questions designed to help him remember details. After about a minute, he began telling the story of that day.”

Riggs said when he asked his uncle why he never talked about the war he replied, “For those of us coming back from the war, all we wanted to do was go back to our regular lives. We did not talk about it much because all our memories of the war are bad.”

Riggs said his uncle was baffled as to why it was Bowman and not him who was killed that day in Leipzig.

“He said the bullet went through his friend and ricocheted around the room, but didn’t hit anyone else,” Riggs said. “He said he always wondered why it wasn’t him.”

Riggs said one thing his uncle never wondered about was his faith. His father — Riggs’ grandfather — was a preacher, as was his younger brother — Riggs’ father, Retired Chap. (Col.) Dwight Riggs. Although Lehman did not become a preacher, Riggs said he did teach Sunday School for more than 60 years.

“And he was always witnessing to fellow Soldiers,” Riggs said. “I recently received a copy of a letter he wrote to his wife, and in it he talked about the opportunities he had to share the Gospel with others. He was — and is — a strong Christian.”

On Saturday, a ceremony celebrating Lehman Riggs’ 100th birthday and honoring his service to



PROVIDED BY CHAP. (LT. COL.) DERRICK RIGGS

Chap. (Lt. Col.) Derrick Riggs, Fort Polk installation chaplain (right), stands with his uncle, retired Staff Sgt. Lehman Riggs, in Leipzig, Germany in 2016.

the nation, will be held in Riggs’ hometown of Cookeville, Tennessee, where he’ll also be recognized as Tennessee’s oldest surviving World War II veteran.

Fort Polk’s Riggs said he wouldn’t miss the ceremony for the world. When asked what his thoughts would be as he watch the honors bestowed on his uncle, Riggs sat with his head bowed for a couple of minutes, the only sounds were light sobs coming from a proud nephew.

Wiping tears from his eyes, Riggs said, “I know what’s going to happen: My dad and I will be in uniform, as will a couple of others, and Uncle Lehman will walk up — in his uniform which still fits. He’ll execute a facing movement, raise his arthritic hand and render a salute to dad and I. My only hope is that there will be someone to catch us as we collapse.”

Rotation 20-03 kicks off with airborne, live fire operations

GUARDIAN STAFF

FORT POLK, La. — Joint Readiness Training Center Rotation 20-03 features Soldiers from the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, along with allies from Canada and Japan doing battle with JRTC's renowned opposing forces,

the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment Geronimos. As the visiting troops visit the crucible that is the JRTC "Box," the Geronimo forces strive to ensure their worst day of combat takes place here, and not down range. Here are a few photos of the training.



JRTC OPERATIONS GROUP



Clockwise from above: Soldiers prepare vehicles for movement; rockets fired during live fire; vehicle smove along a dirt road; paratroopers load up a C-17 aircraft for a jump into JRTC; and Canadian Soldiers prepare to tackle the box.



Fort Polk Soldier hits ice to fulfill hockey dream

By Pfc. GREGORY MUENCHOW
3rd BCT, 10th MTN DIV PAO

FORT POLK, La. — Several times throughout his life, Pfc. Richard M. Mischak, an infantryman in Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, was certain that his hockey career had come to an end.

Now he plays defense on the All-Army Hockey Team.

“When I played junior hockey, I broke my jaw in three places and thought that was the end of my hockey career,” he said. “And then when I joined the Army I thought that was it for sure.”

Shortly after he arrived at Bravo Company 2-30, one of his noncommissioned officers suggested he consider trying out for the All-Army Hockey Team, said Mischak.

He found an application, set his mind on making the team and approached his leadership about trying out.

“From the beginning, he had our support 100%,” said 1st Lt. Jake A. Minicucci, the platoon leader for 3rd Platoon, 2nd Bn, 30th Inf Reg. “He was working really hard here and always had an outstanding attitude, so we knew from the start he was going to be a huge asset to the All-Army Team.”

That strong work ethic and positive attitude drove Mischak to seek every opportunity to get practice time on the ice as he prepared for trials.

“In his free time, he would often drive for hours to get to a hockey practice and put in a lot of extra work on top of our already rigorous training schedule,” said Minicucci. “It was really impressive to see his level of commitment.”

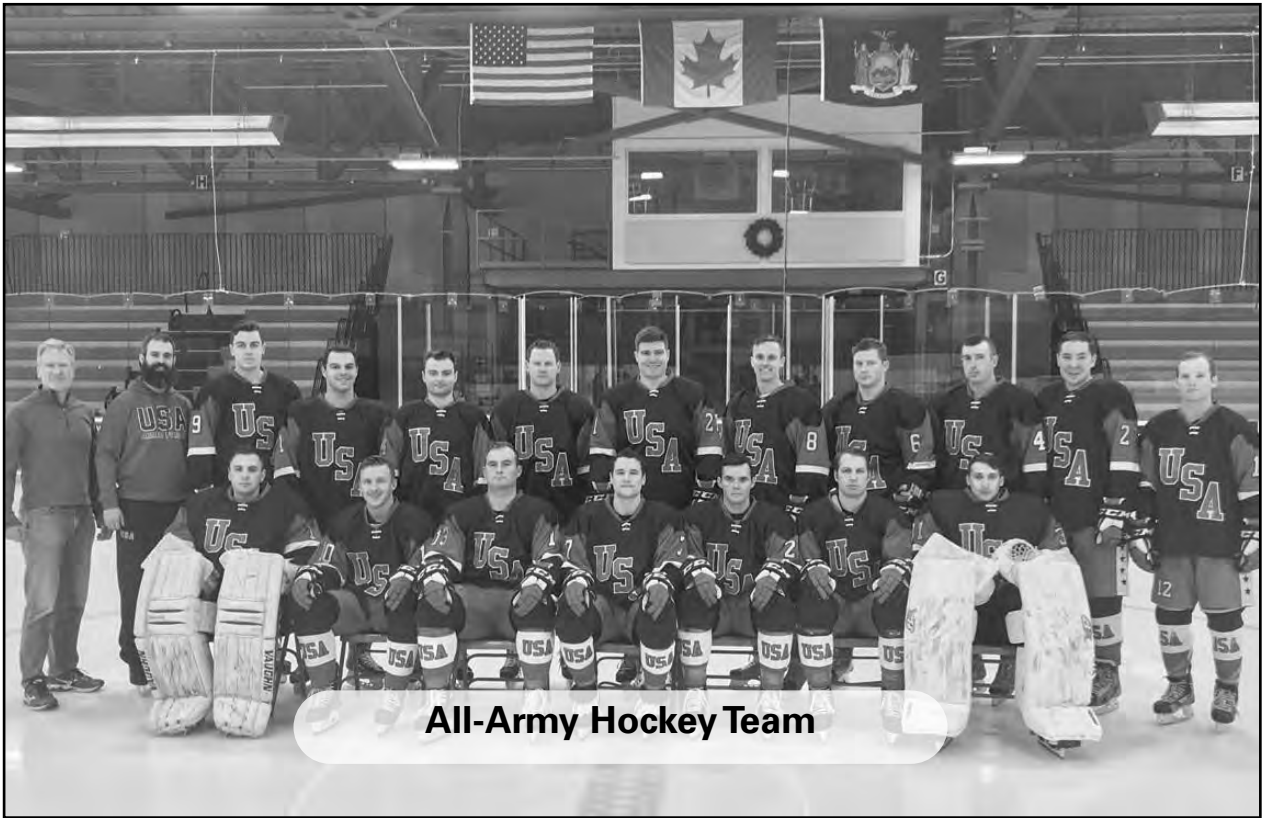
Mischak was selected to attend the tryouts for the team at Fort Drum, New York, from Dec. 27 through Jan. 1.

The tryouts culminated with a scrimmage against the Watertown Wolves, a Federal Hockey League team, which the All-Army Team won 5-3.

“Tryouts were pretty crazy; you had guys from all over the country and you’re giving up your free time on leave so it can be a hard decision,” said Mischak. “But at the end of the day it’s really the opportunity of a lifetime and we’re all there for the same reason.”

After their victory in Watertown, the final roster for the All-Army Team was selected and Mischak was on his way to Latvia to play in the 7th Open Baltic Military Winter Games Jan. 6-10.

“Being selected means a lot to me,” said Mischak. “I didn’t join the Army with the expectation of playing hockey, so being able to play



competitive hockey again is a dream come true.”

Despite meeting just over a week before the tournament, the team came together quickly and put on a strong performance, ultimately securing the silver medal.

They defeated Latvia Two 10-1, Sweden 4-0 and Estonia 4-0, before losing in the finals 3-2 to Latvia One.

“Hockey is a sport where you have to be connected and getting the chance to come together with the group of guys and playing at this level is indescribable,” said Mischak. “At the end of the day the Army is my family and now I’m happy to get back to my guys at Fort Polk.”



Check out interesting hockey fun facts

WWW.CBC.CA

FORT POLK, La. — Here are a few fun facts about your favorite game played on ice.

- Cow poop — as legend has it, when hockey was played in its early days, a frozen patty of cow poop was used as a puck.
- Frozen pucks — today, pucks are frozen before a game to prevent them from bouncing.

- Stanley Cup snacks — every member of a Stanley Cup winning team gets a personal day with the cup. Many champs have filled the cup with food. Some of the items that have been eaten from the cup include: Cereal, meatballs, chicken wings and ice cream.
- Captain rules — at one time, rules stated that the team captain had to be on the ice at all times.

Briefs

Continued from page 3

2006 GMC	1500	3847
2008 BMW	X5	4757
2003 Toyota	COROLLA	0139
2006 Mazda	3	9500
2010 Kawasaki	KLR650	9760
1990 Honda	CIVIC	1536
1996 Chevy	IMPALA	0432
2001 Ford	MUSTANG	1007
1999 Honda	ACCORD	3691
1990 Honda	Civic	1536

Kids skate

Siegfried Youth Center hosts Skating Through the Decades (70s, 80s and 90s) Feb. 29 from 3:30-6:30 p.m.

Admission is \$5 with skate rental per person or \$3 without. Skate trainers are available. There is a costume contest for children and adults. The event is open to the public and all ages may participate. For more information call 531-6004.

New you

Wheelock Gym and Fort Polk fitness centers present “New Year New Me” Jan. 24-March 20. Sign up at Wheelock Gym. Registration closes Thursday. Registration is \$35 per person. A grand prize will be presented to the participant with the greatest overall wellness improvement. For more information call 531-6795.

Community



Talking with friends can help you deal with depression

Using lifelines to defeat suicidal thoughts

By JOHN PILGRIM

Suicide Prevention Program Manager

FORT POLK, La. — What should have been the beginning of a new chapter in Pfc. Smith's life almost became his last. That's the thing about depression: You never see it coming.

It was his first duty assignment after joining the Army — something he had dreamed of as a child. He quickly found a group of friends in his unit and felt happy. However, within two months Smith fell into a pattern of drinking heavily with his buddies on the weekend. Normally he took a cab back from the club but on this occasion he decided to drive home because he thought he was "good."

Unfortunately, the MPs who pulled him over thought differently. He blew a .12 blood alcohol test content and was charged with DWI. His life, in a very short period of time, suddenly began to spin out of control. He found himself far away from home, alone and in serious trouble...

Smith's story isn't about DWI or substance abuse (although it could be). His story is about the depression that quickly followed his arrest for DWI. For anyone who has experienced or witnessed depression at its worst, I am sorry. Each of us who have lived through depression has our own way of describing what it felt like.

In many cases we feel that life was worthless. Every object in our room become weapons of suicide. We hide scissors, knives and even pencils away for fear of what we would do to ourselves. Our minds are plagued by "dark thoughts," and they never stop. Not even when we are asleep. Smith said he stopped trying at work because he knew he would be dead before long — what would be the point of it all?

Smith said he remembered thinking, "I am my own murderer," and there was no place to hide. He withdrew into himself, away from loved ones. He slept all day and cried all night. His depression left a permanent scar on his soul, and to this day he lives in fear of its return.

Smith tried to conceal his clinical depression from the outside world. He feared the stigma and

rejection that unfortunately comes with the diagnosis. He assumed that that once everyone found out he was depressed, his friends would run for the hills, people would talk and he would be treated differently.

Thankfully, Smith knew he couldn't go on faking a smile and a laugh when he felt dead inside. He had the courage to tell his closest friends and family about his depression in the hopes that they would understand. His close friends did understand. Other friends did not, and quickly fell by the wayside. They must not have been real friends to begin with. But those who did care stood by Smith's side through it all.

He was able to call them and say, "I feel like I can't be left alone right now," and a friend would come running to see him through the night. It was a turbulent time in Smith's life. The consequences of his decision to drive drunk had an impact on his life. But it wasn't the end of his story.

Smith came to understand his depression with therapy and got his life back on track. Now, a year later, he has a new girlfriend, he just got promoted and he has a great

bunch of friends.

Everyone should be able to open up to the people in their lives.

Even if they do not understand depression, many people will understand that a person needs help. Never should our Soldiers be made to feel weak or a burden by anyone who knows. Instead, our Soldiers who suffer with depression should be met with compassion.

Caring leadership is key as well. Taking care of our Soldiers has always been the focus of unit leadership. For our Soldiers in the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, who need help, please contact the therapists in your Embedded Behavioral Health Clinic at 531-2799/2795.

For other units on the installation, please don't hesitate to contact the Behavioral Health Department at Bayne Jones Army Community Hospital at 531-3922. If you are in crisis or if it is after duty hours please go to the emergency room at BJACH. You can also call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-8255.

Commentary

Briefs

School lunch menu

The following school lunch menu is for Vernon Parish schools for Tuesday through Jan. 24. Meals are served with salad bar and choice of milk:

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

Wednesday: Barbecue beef on whole wheat bun, potato rounds, green Lima beans, fruit.

Thursday: Pinto beans and sausages, fluffy whole grain rice, mustard greens, orange wedges, whole wheat cornbread.

Jan. 24: Cheesy chicken or beef chili and cheese nachos, corn on the cob, ranch style beans, apple wedges.

BJACH closures

Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital clinics, laboratory, radiology and pharmacy are closed today until 1 p.m. for training.

Entrance B doors (command suite area) are locked until 12:45 p.m. and BJACH's dining facility is closed for breakfast, but opens at noon with a soup, salad and sandwich lunch menu.

The emergency room and inpatient services remain open. Entrance A (second floor) remains open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

BJACH clinics, laboratory, radiology and pharmacy are closed Monday in observance of the Martin Luther King Jr. federal holiday.

The emergency room and inpatient service will remain open. Use Entrance A to enter the hospital.

Exchange offerings

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

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

Since Jan. 1, disabled veterans, Purple Heart recipients, former prisoners of war and certain caregivers were granted in-store shopping access with the Exchange.

Honorably discharged Veterans can shop online through their earned online shopping benefit.

For more information, visit **ShopMyExchange.com/vets**.

HPV vaccine now recommended for those up to age 45

By: MHS COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

WASHINGTON — The Food and Drug Administration has raised the recommended age to receive the vaccine for human papillomavirus, or HPV, to 45. Health care experts say that's good news for women and men who did not receive the anti-cancer vaccine in childhood.

"There are hundreds of different strains of HPV," said Navy Cmdr. Shannon Lamb, a urogynecologist and the U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery's Women's Health Branch chief.

"The vaccine doesn't protect from all of them, but it does protect from the most common ones that cause different types of cancers as well as genital warts."

HPV spreads through intimate skin-on-skin contact. Typically, the vaccine is recommended for girls and boys as young as age 9, and women and men up to age 26.

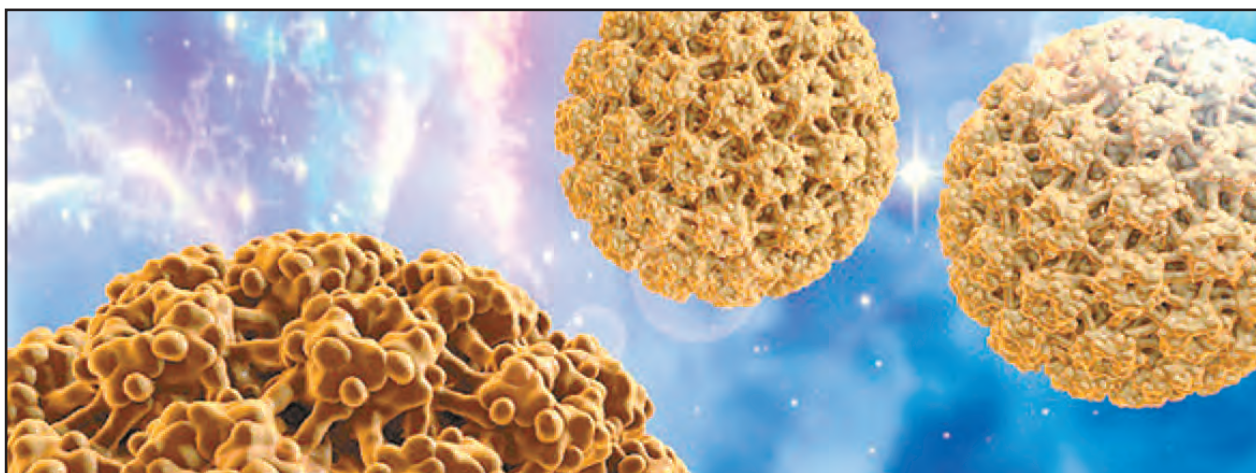
"It's recommended for young people so they're protected before they're ever exposed to the virus," Lamb said. "HPV is a very common infection. Over 80% of people will be infected in their lifetime."

In 2018, the FDA approved the vaccine for women and men up to age 45. While many adults have been exposed to some strains of HPV, most have not been exposed to all nine types covered by the vaccine.

"Therefore, expanding the age range for vaccination can help prevent HPV-related diseases in more individuals," she said.

Usually, people don't exhibit any signs or symptoms of an HPV infection, and most won't develop health problems related to HPV. The virus typically goes away after a couple of years. But there's no way to predict who will clear the virus and who won't. And for those who don't, the consequences can be deadly.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HPV is responsible for more than 90% of all cervical and anal cancers, 70% of vaginal and vulvar cancers, and more than 60% of penile cancers. About 25,000 women and



19,000 men are affected by cancers caused by HPV each year.

For HPV vaccination of service members, the Department of Defense follows guidelines published by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. Lamb says the vaccine isn't mandatory, but it's strongly recommended.

"The vaccine creates a lot of benefit for men and women," Lamb said, "and we know it works." The number of cases of genital warts in the United States has dramatically declined in the military as well as civilian populations since the vaccine was introduced, she said.

"The HPV vaccine is definitely making an impact," Lamb said. "But we're still missing a good chunk of the population that could benefit."

The vaccine is administered as a two-dose series for those under age 15, and a three-dose series for older people.

According to data from the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch's Medical Surveillance Monthly Report, only 26.6% of eligible servicewomen ages 17-26 initiated the vaccine during 2007-2017. During the same time period, only 5.8% of eligible servicemen in the same age group did so.

Further, for those who did initiate the vaccine and then remained in service for at least six months, only 46.6% of servicewomen and 35.1%

of servicemen completed the recommended three doses.

"I think there's a lot of misinformation about the HPV vaccine," Lamb said. "Parents may think their kids don't need it because they're not yet sexually active, for example, and older people may not understand they may be at risk."

Lamb is hopeful that with awareness people will make it a priority to talk to their health care providers about their risk for new HPV infections and the possible benefits of vaccination.

She notes that cancers caused by HPV may take years to develop after a person contracts the virus.

Further, while there are cervical HPV screening tests available for women for high-risk strains, there are no routine screening tests for men or tests that include all strains of HPV. More than 12,000 women living in the United States will be diagnosed with cervical cancer, and more than 4,000 women die from cervical cancer annually. Women at highest risk are those who don't undergo recommended screening and are not vaccinated, as well as women who smoke or have lowered immune systems.

TRICARE covers the HPV vaccine as recommended by the CDC. More information about the HPV vaccine can be found on the TRICARE website at www.tricare.mil.

January brings focus to importance of cervical health awareness

By SHEILA ANTHONY

PMHP

FORT POLK, La. — Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital's Health Promotion along with Primary Care hosts a Well Woman's Day for active-duty Soldiers and Tricare Prime beneficiaries needing pap smears. The dates are Jan. 27, 29 and 31. Please call 531-3011 to schedule your appointment.

January is Cervical Health Awareness Month. More than 13,000 women in the United States are diagnosed with invasive cervical cancer each year, but the disease is preventable with vaccination and appropriate screening.

A cervical pap smear can detect early cell changes to the cervix caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV), and allows health-care providers to provide early intervention. Pap smears are recommended for women starting at age 21 regardless of sexual activity and sexual preference. Your health-care provider will recommend frequency of testing based on your individualized risk factors.

HPV vaccination is recommended for all boys

and girls starting at age 11. The HPV vaccine can prevent more than 90% of HPV cancers, which are the most common causes of cervical cancer and genital warts. HPV vaccine is a two-shot series in children ages 11-14 because the vaccine produces a stronger immune response when taken during the preteen years. The vaccine is also available for all males and females up to age 45 but, for those 15 and older, a full three-dose series is needed.

Most sexually active individuals have HPV at some point. At any time there are about 79 million people in the U.S. with HPV, with 14 million new HPV infections in the U.S. each year alone. Nearly 300,000 women are diagnosed with cervical pre-cancer or abnormal cells of the cervix, which can lead to cancer. Nearly 11,000 cases of cervical cancer are caused by HPV with more than 4,000 women dying from the disease annually.

Some types of HPV can cause genital warts while others can cause cancers of the penis, anus, vagina, vulva and throat. HPV infections are usually harmless and most are cleared naturally by the body in a year or two.

HPV is transmitted by sexual activity, including oral, anal and vaginal sex. Male condoms can reduce HPV transmission to sexual partners, although condoms only protect the skin they cover.

There is no cure for HPV at this time, but health-care providers have plenty of options to treat diseases caused by HPV.

HPV can take weeks, months or even years after exposure before symptoms develop or the virus is detected. This is why it is usually impossible to determine when or from whom HPV may have been contracted. A recent diagnosis of HPV does not necessarily mean anyone has been unfaithful, even in a long-term relationship spanning years. While it may be upsetting when HPV is first diagnosed, remember HPV is common.

Pregnant women with HPV can still have vaginal deliveries and healthy babies. Discuss any concerns with your OB provider.

Your health-care provider can provide support and information on HPV as well as the following organizations: The American Sexual Health Association (www.ashaseexualhealth.org) and the National Cervical Cancer Coalition (www.ncccoonline.org).

Louisiana communities offer plenty of entertaining drama

GUARDIAN STAFF

FORT POLK, La. — Whether you travel north or south, there are opportunities to enjoy live theatre performances that can kick you out of your winter blues. Community theatres are alive and well. They are filled with talented actors performing musicals and plays featuring comedy and drama that will bring you to laughter and tears. Instead of heading to the movies, support community theatres and catch a live show for a fun change of pace. You never know how much you might enjoy it until you give the stage a try.

If you are heading south, make plans to visit one of the theatres found in Lake Charles.

If you are in the mood for a musical, the Lake Charles Little Theatre, 813 Enterprise Blvd., Lake Charles is a great place to be. The theatre began in 1926 and has persevered and thrived through wars, stock market crashes, location changes and more to make it to its present home in 1986. The theatre continues to be a success and celebrates its 93rd season.

The theatre opens 2020 with a presentation of "The Snow Queen," written by Kristen Brandt and Rick Lombardo, with music by Haddon Kime and lyrics by Kime, Lombardo and Brandt.

Be spirited away by this new musical adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's fantastical coming-of-age adventure that inspired the hit Disney movie Frozen. Join Gerda on a dangerous and whimsical quest to save her best friend Kai before he is trapped forever in the Snow Queen's palace. Dare to enter a world where flowers sing, woodland creatures talk and riddles yearn to be solved. With an original pop-rock score, alluring ballads, urban steampunk flair and the enigmatic Snow Queen, you'll soon see this is not your average bedtime story.

Show dates are Feb. 7-9, 14-16 and 21-23. Tickets range from \$10, \$15 and \$20 per person.

For more information visit www.thelclt.com.

Another Lake Charles stage tradition is the ACTS Theatre, One Reid St., Lake Charles. The theatre has been around since 1965 and has produced quality stage production plays and musicals in its long history.

The theatre's newest production is a musical



called "Disaster" by Seth Rudetsky and Jack Plotnick. It's 1979, and New York's hottest A-listers are lining up for the opening of a floating casino and discotheque. Also attending is a faded disco star, a sexy nightclub singer with her eleven-year-old twins, a disaster expert, a feminist reporter, an older couple with a secret, a pair of young guys who are looking for ladies, an untrustworthy businessman and a nun with a gambling addiction. What begins as a night of boogie fever quickly changes to panic as the ship succumbs to multiple disasters, such as earthquakes, tidal waves and infernos. As the night turns to day, everyone struggles to survive and, quite possibly, repair the love that they've lost — or at least escape the killer rats.

This hilarious homage to the era of bell-bottoms, platform shoes and the hustle with larger-than-life characters, snappy dialogue and some of the most recognizable songs of the '70s will have you dancing in your seats and rolling in the aisles.

Performance dates are Jan. 24-26 and Jan. 30-Feb. 2. Sunday performances begin at 3:30 p.m. and Friday and Saturday performances begin at 7:30 p.m. Tickets range from \$15, \$20 and \$25 per person. For more information visit www.actstheatre.com.

If you are heading north toward Monroe, make plans to stop by the Strauss Theatre Center, 1300 Lamy Lane, Monroe.

The theatre began in the 1920s as a humble drama club that met in residents' homes and grew into "The Little Theatre of Monroe" in 1932. Over time, the community grew with the theatre and in 1958, with the help of a donation from the Carolyn Rose Strauss Foundation and matching funds from the theatre, a new theatre was built on the Lamy Lane site. Today the theatre cele-

brates its 87th consecutive season of theatre. Become part of a rich theatrical history by attending one of the upcoming plays held at the theatre.

The first play of the 2020 season is Ken Ludwig's "Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery." The comedy takes a broad leap from Arthur Conan Doyle's 1902 "The Hound of the Baskervilles," as Ludwig turns it into a snappy comic mystery with five actors performing nearly 40 roles. Sherlock Holmes, along with Dr. Watson, is called to solve a case involving the male heirs of the Baskerville line who are being murdered one by one. Will Holmes solve the baffling case before Henry Baskerville — the next male heir who arrives from Texas — is also murdered? Performance dates are Jan. 30-31, Feb. 1-2 and 7-8. Other than the Feb. 2 matinee, held at 2 p.m., all performances begin at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$30 per person.

Enjoy the second play with dinner as the Strauss Theatre Center presents "The Sound of Murder Dinner Theatre."

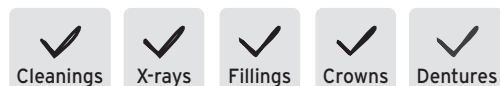
It's the 1940s, and the play takes place during one live hour at radio station WMDR. If this show doesn't go well, the station will go out of business. It doesn't help that the station owner's son is trying to sabotage the radio station's show. The mystery on air becomes too real when someone actually kicks the bucket. This murder mystery is sure to please, with a cast of wacky characters complete with suspense, love and funny moments. You'll always remember, "The Sound of Murder."

Show dates are Feb. 14-15 and 21-22. Doors open at 6 p.m. and the show begins at 6:30 p.m. Tickets for the dinner and show are \$50 per person.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.strausstc.com.

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Festivals

• Antique festival

The Ark-La-Tex Antique Festival is held today through Sunday at 620 Benton Road in Bossier City. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. today and Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. Admission is \$6. Parking is free. For more information visit www.heritageeventcompany.com/bossier-city-antique-festival.html.

• Film festival

The 15th annual Cinema on the Bayou Film Festival takes place Wednesday through Jan. 29 in Lafayette. The festival hosts a wide variety of independent films that will be screened with filmmakers

in attendance from across the United States and Canada. Cinema on the Bayou is committed to presenting nationally and internationally acclaimed documentary and narrative fiction films and filmmakers with truly original voices. The festival is also committed to advancing the understanding of Cajun and Creole cultures through film screenings, film panels and cultural exchange. For more information visit <http://cinemaonthebayou.com>.

Miscellaneous

• MLK parade

The Vernon Parish Martin

Luther King Jr. parade and rally will be held Monday at 10 a.m. at the Martin Luther King Community Center, 1003 North Gladys St., Leesville.

• Livestock show and rodeo

The Southwest District Livestock Show and Rodeo is held Jan. 31 - Feb. 2 at the Burton Complex in Lake Charles. Called "The Greatest Show on Dirt," the Southwest District Livestock Show and Rodeo returns to the Burton Complex with rodeo performances, livestock shows, stick-horse rodeo, appearances by Miss Rodeo Louisiana and more. The "mane" attraction is the professional rodeo performances that kick into gear each night featuring bucking broncos, thundering hooves and cheering fans. Visit www.lakecharlesrodeo.com for more information.

• Vintage Market Days

Vintage Market Days takes place Feb. 7-9 from 10 a.m. to 4

p.m. at the Beauregard Parish Fairgrounds. Vendors from across the country will have booths filled with antiques, boutique clothing, food trucks and live entertainment.

• VFW event

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (Post 3106) and the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Club hosts a Roaring 20s night at 6 p.m. Feb. 22 at 205 Harriet St., Leesville. Folks can enjoy casino games, raffles, free snacks and more. For more information call (210) 445-2650.

• Mardi Gras

Mardi Gras is synonymous with Louisiana. The celebration originated as a "last hurrah" before Lent. Carnival season began on Epiphany (Tuesday) and peaks on Fat Tuesday Feb. 25. Mardi Gras is celebrated statewide. For a list of all the Mardi Gras activities visit www.louisianadestinations.com/mardi-gras-parades-in-louisiana-2020.htm.



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6 TICKETS TO SEE BILLY RAY CYRUS concert live at the Coushatta Casino Resort in Kinder Louisiana on Saturday 18 January 2020 at 8:00 PM. Call 337-396-1832 for more information.

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