



FORGING THE

WARRIOR SPIRIT

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Home of Heroes @ Fort Polk, LA

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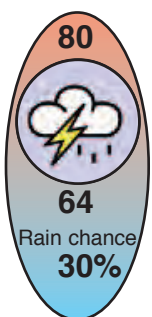
CHUCK CANNON / GUARDIAN

Running to represent Fort Polk

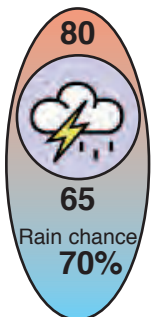
Twenty Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk Soldiers took off on a 10-mile jaunt March 30 at 6:30 a.m. on Marion Bonner Trail for an Army Ten Miler qualifier. The goal: Earning a spot on the in-

stallation team to represent JRTC and Fort Polk at the annual Army Ten Miler held Oct. 7 in Washington at the Pentagon. For story see page 14 of today's Guardian.

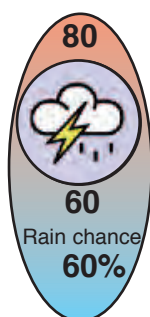
Weekend weather



Today



Thursday



Friday

Inside the Guardian

705th comes home 3 Battling child abuse .. 10

Retaining the best 5 MoMC celebrated 11

Vietnam vet honored .. 6 Planting pinwheels ... 12

Viewpoint

DGC Corner

By **JOHNNY BEVERS**

Deputy garrison commander

FORT POLK, La. — If you have driven around Warrior Hills Golf Course recently, you probably noticed the new decorative lights being installed along the walking path. The lighting is much brighter and conserves energy, while providing a safe environment to get your cardio workouts in on the paved path. The project will be finished around July 31, however, the lights along Corps Road are currently in operation.

Speaking of golf, if you're a golfer and haven't hit the course yet, I think you're going to be pleasantly surprised by the playing conditions. We have repaired several of the French drains

around the course that have improved the soggy conditions we experienced last year. The golf team recently fertilized



Bevers

the greens and continues to roll them, so putting conditions remain excellent.

Last week I touched on our housing

portfolio and am excited to announce the formation of our new

"Housing Assistance Office." Truth be told, we always had housing assistance, but it was called the "Residential Communities Initiative" or "RCI" for short. The office was next to our housing partner's office, so people didn't necessarily feel comfortable about bringing issues to their government representatives and in some cases didn't know the purpose of the office.

This office will be relocated to bldg 330 on Corps Road (old NEC facility) and will have a sign that describes the office as the Housing Assistance Office. Staff will assist you with not only finding a place to live, but also provide oversight of our base housing contractor through newly hired quality assurance evaluators who should be on the staff around the middle of May.

Again, if you have any suggestions for the garrison team or our installation, please email me at johnny.d.bevers.civ@mail.mil or call me at 531-1601.

Message



Guardian

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In our view

Guardian staff asked Fort Polk community members, "After you transition out of the Army, what is your dream job?" Here are their responses:



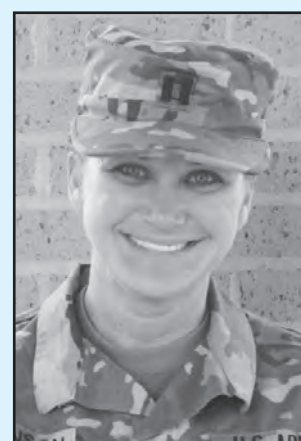
Sgt. Eduardo Beltran:
"After a nice vacation, I would like to do something in music. I'm a percussionist — snare and bass drums — so, I might teach."



Pfc. Andjoua Wynne: I want to be a nurse because I like helping people.



Spc. Fabian Pena:
"I would love to be a teacher. I enjoy seeing people make that connection as they grasp a concept and learn something new."



Capt. Emily Robinson: "I'm already a nurse, so I would love to continue in my field because I love everything about being a nurse."

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Briefs

Road repairs

The following road repairs are slated for two areas of Fort Polk over the next few months:

- The contract to repair Fourth Street has a required completion date of May 24. Works includes shoulder repairs, culvert replacement, removing asphalt, repaving with new asphalt overlay and new pavement markings. The work will require closures, detours and flagging operations to complete the repairs while ensuring safety for motorists and construction crews. Repairs are planned for three phases to minimize impact to motorists. Alternate routes are encouraged to minimize delays and traffic congestion. At the completion of Fourth Street repairs, Mississippi Avenue repairs will begin and includes shoulder work, crosswalks, milling, repaving and pavement markings.

- The contract to repair erosion along La. Hwy 467 has a required completion date of June 6. Work includes repairing a slope failure just southeast of access control point 2 and eroded sites between Louisiana Avenue and access control point 2. The slope failure site requires a lane shift for inbound and outbound traffic April 15-26 to ensure safety for motorist and construction crews. Alternate routes are encouraged to minimize delays and traffic congestion.

Holocaust observance

The Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk and the 519th Military Police Battalion host a Holocaust "Days of Remembrance" observance April 17 from noon to 1 p.m. at the Warrior Center. The theme is "Beyond Religious Boundaries." Everyone is invited. For more information call 531-1911.

SHARP golf event

In conjunction with Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month, the Fort Polk Sexual Harassment Awareness Response Prevention Program hosts a "Drive Out Sexual Assault" golf scramble, April 18 at Warrior Hills Golf Course. Check in for the four-person team is from 8-9:15 a.m. the day of the event, with a shotgun start at 9:30 a.m. Team members can be military, civilian or family members, but must be from the same unit. Organizations may enter as many teams as they want. No mulligans. Rules of golf will be followed.

Cost is \$20 for WHGC members and \$35 for non-members, to be paid no later than Thursday at the Installation SHARP Office, bldg 1947. Prizes will be awarded for the first place team, closest to the pin and longest drive. For more information call 531-1578/1788.



Fort Polk's 705th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company marches into Warrior Gym April 2 in front of Fort Polk leadership and Family members for a redeployment ceremony to welcome them home.

Fort Polk welcomes home 705th EOD

By **ANGIE THORNE**

Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. — A redeployment ceremony for the 705th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company was held April 2 at Fort Polk's Warrior Gym. Fort Polk leadership, Family and friends attended the event.

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general, welcomed the Soldiers of the 705th EOD and told those in attendance that the ceremony

was the most important event taking place at Fort Polk at that moment.

Frank praised the 21 Soldiers of the 705th EOD and their efforts during their nine-month deployment in support of theater operations in the Army's critical mission across the Middle East.

"These Soldiers belong to one of the most combat ready EOD formations in the entire Army. They courageously reduced the enemy's weapons of choice. While deployed, the 705th

Please see **705th**, page 7

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.

FY20 budget will fund child care, family initiatives

By **GARY SHEFTICK**

Army News Service

WASHINGTON — Army senior leaders have told lawmakers their fiscal year 2020 request will not cut any programs supporting military families.

“Due diligence was absolutely applied to ensure that there were no cuts that impacted Soldiers and their families,” Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley testified to the Senate Appropriations Committee’s Defense subcommittee March 27.

He was referring to the “night court” process in which senior leaders reviewed every one of the Army’s programs to assess how they impacted readiness and lethality.

It was an unprecedented 50 hours of “painstaking deliberations,” Secretary of the Army Mark T. Esper said.

“Tough choices” had to be made, Esper said, before submitting the \$182.3 billion budget request for FY20. About \$30 billion was redirected from legacy programs over the five-year defense plan to fund the Army’s six modernization priorities.

“To deter the growing threat posed by great-power competitors ... we must leap ahead to the next generation of combat systems,” Esper said. “In order to fund development of those systems, cuts had to be made to the number of legacy platforms upgraded.”

“There were cuts that impacted others, but not Soldiers and their families,” Milley emphasized. “That’s sort of the bargain we struck.”

Child-care initiatives

“No cuts have been made to the child care for our Soldiers,” Esper said. “It’s access that we’re wrestling with. I’m looking at a number of policy changes.”

First and foremost is to give Soldiers priority for child care over civilian employees and contractors.

“In many cases, that’s not what’s been happening,” Esper said, citing that about 30 percent of daycare centers are filled by “non-priority” personnel.

The Army is looking at expanding capacity at child development centers at some installations, he said.

Esper said he’d also like to expand hourly care to help military families who may not need monthly child care.

The Army recently saved funding by reforming the way parents sign up for child care, Esper said.

“We had a redundant management system in place,” he said. “Rather than going to the daycare center to sign up, you went to a separate building with separate people. We got rid of that. Now to sign up for daycare, you go just to the daycare center.”

FCC program

Esper said he would like to expand family child care, or FCC, where family members on base provide child care at their homes.

He recently signed a directive that allows on-



STAFF SGT. NICOLE MEJIA / ARMY NEWS SERVICE

Secretary of the Army Dr. Mark T. Esper (left) and Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Mark A. Milley deliver testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services and the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations on the posture of the Department of the Army in review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2020 and Future Years of Defense Programs, at the Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington D.C.

site supervision of children by Army spouses immediately following their FBI background check. Now spouses can begin offering child care in less than three weeks from arriving at an installation, he told legislators.

“It’s a great opportunity, but we need to incentivize that program to expand,” he said.

A new Child and Youth Services Employment Tool places the names of spouses interested in conducting child care into a database following completion of their background check.

“Rather than every time you go to a new assignment — a new installation — and go through the check again, we have your name in a database, we’ll hold it for five years and you can seamlessly move from base to base to base and get hired immediately,” he said.

Spouse employment

Esper said as he travels around the Army and visits installations, two issues that come up all the time are child care and spouse employment. The two are related, he said.

Spouse employment is a “very personal” issue for him, Esper said, dating back to when he served as an infantry officer after graduating from West Point in 1986.

“During my time on active duty, my wife could not get a job when we were at Fort Benning or in Italy, because of, frankly, discrimination against Army spouses at the time,” he said. “I think our spouses are highly qualified and underemployed.”

Army initiatives to hire spouses include an outreach to have states recognize the teaching credentials of other states.

Esper said he is personally engaging with states on this initiative and Tennessee recently signed onto the program. Spouses arriving at Fort Campbell, Kentucky can now immediately apply for teaching jobs in Tennessee, if they have teaching credentials from another state, he said.



A1C CRYSTAL JENKINS / ARMY NEWS SERVICE

They do not need to wait for a second set of credentials from Tennessee to begin a teaching job.

Esper also suggested Congress expand the “direct hiring authority” that already exists for certain critical career fields, such as medical fields, and allow military spouses to be hired into federal jobs without competing. Such authority would require legislation, he said.

Impact on readiness

Programs that support spouses and families definitely impact readiness, Milley said.

“We want our Soldiers to focus on their job,” he said. “If they’re worried about their medical care, good housing, mold in the house, good child care for their children, education, a safe base and so on... then they’re not focusing on their job. So it’s absolutely a readiness issue — there’s a direct correlation to the readiness of the force.”

In World War II, only about 10 percent of the Army was married with children, Milley said, while today about 60 percent of the force is mar-

Joint Readiness Training Center meets retention goals

By **JEAN DUBIEL**
Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. — For the first time in three years, the units comprising the Joint Readiness Training Center have met or exceeded Army retention goals, ranging from 100-167 percent for fiscal year 2019 and the first half of 2020.

Master Sgt. Darran Jay Tatum, command career counselor for JRTC and Fort Polk, said the retention mission for JRTC was to reenlist 116 Soldiers from across the following six units: Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Operations Group; 1st Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment; 3rd Battalion, 353rd Infantry Regiment; 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment; and the 41st Transportation Company and 383rd Movement Control Team, both of 519th Military Police Battalion. The retention team exceeded that goal by reenlisting 129.

"This is important because it helps the Army meet its end strength," said Tatum, who has operational supervision over the retention team.

Reaching that goal was a matter of balancing what the Army needs with what individual Soldiers want, according to Sgt. Thomas Bates, retention NCO for 3rd Bn, 353rd Inf Reg. This unit is considered one of the most difficult for Soldier retention because of the unique skillset of its dominant military occupational specialty, or MOS — 09L, translator/interpreter.

"Soldiers in this unit are primarily 09L, and they get hand picked to deploy with the Security Force Assistance Brigades," he said. "So they are always either deployed or only have two duty stations available to them: Here and the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California. Sometimes 09Ls can also go to Fort Huachuca, Arizona for a broadening assignment, but not always. This limits some of their options."

To encourage these Soldiers to reenlist, Bates tries to find schools they can attend for possible MOS reclassification, which would expand their duty station options.

"Their main focus to improve their career is to re-class, so we try to find ways to do that for them," said Bates.

Staff Sgt. Stanley Ukalovich is the company retention NCO for the 41st Trans Co. He said he explained to his Soldiers there is more to reenlisting than the monetary bonus.

"Usually the Soldiers want to stay in, they just need a little time and sometimes they need a pep talk," he said. "I motivated them to reenlist by reminding them what an honor is it to serve our country."

Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Wolf is the

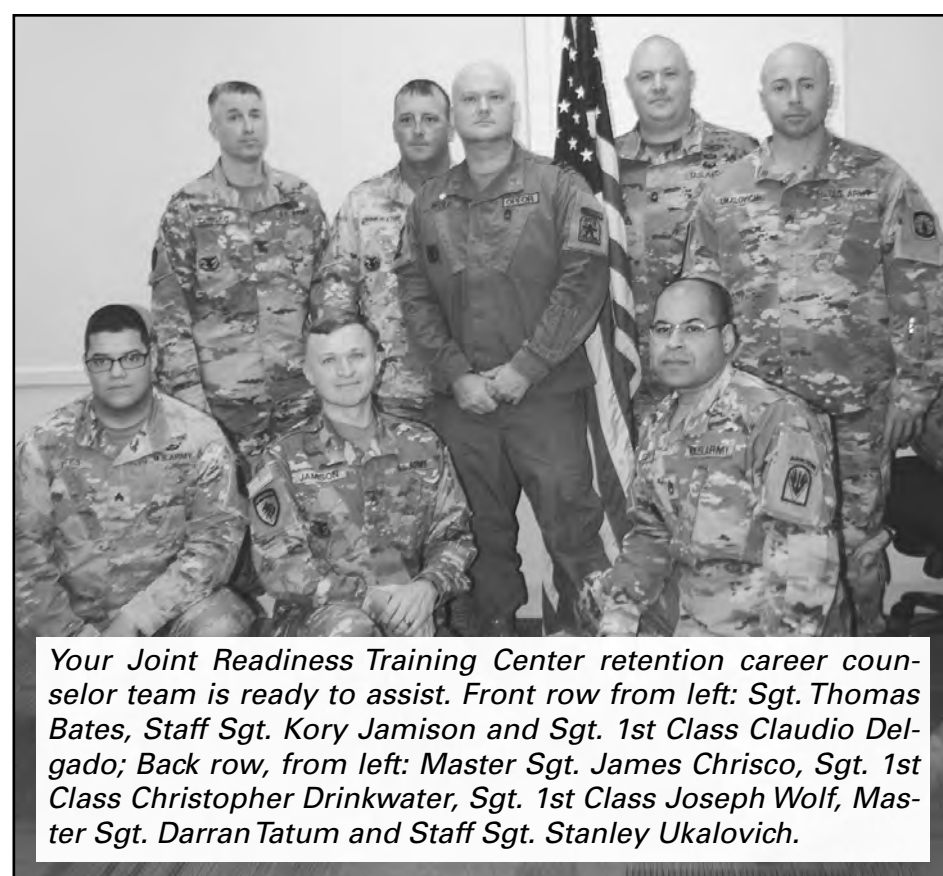
career NCO for the largest unit in the group, the 1st Bn (Abn), 509th Inf Reg. His task was challenging because he had to work around rotations, but he managed to use any down time in the box (the JRTC rotational training area) to talk to Soldiers about staying in.

"We're out on rotations for about a month, home for a week, then back out for a month, so a lot of my job has to do with timing," he said. "They tend to come into my office in waves, so I try to set things up to do as much as possible while we are in from the field. I also use the time we spend in the box to talk to Soldiers about retention. Word of mouth is vital, so Soldiers may hear about some of the options they have from each other, then they can find me and talk about it for clarification."

Sgt. 1st Class Claudio Delgado, Ops Group, said his unit has a high careerist population, with many additional skill identifiers, or ASIs, tacked onto their MOS.

"They are often offered bonuses because of their ASIs, and when they come into that reenlistment window, many of them are looking for career advancement," he said. "Many of our senior NCOs are very experienced, and they have good job opportunities on the outside, so we have to keep them in by encouraging them to stay so they can share their experience (with the next generation of Soldiers)."

Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Drinkwater is the retention operations NCO for Headquarters, JRTC as well as the servicing career coun-



Your Joint Readiness Training Center retention career counselor team is ready to assist. Front row from left: Sgt. Thomas Bates, Staff Sgt. Kory Jamison and Sgt. 1st Class Claudio Delgado; Back row, from left: Master Sgt. James Chrisco, Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Drinkwater, Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Wolf, Master Sgt. Darran Tatum and Staff Sgt. Stanley Ukalovich.

JEAN DUBIEL / GUARDIAN

selor for the 41st TC, 383rd and 1/5 Avn. His job is to assist the unit career counselors and retention NCOs by finding answers to questions that require input from higher echelons in the retention process, and to speak to Soldiers about their individual needs and goals.

"I'm the one that calls Human Resources Command to try to get the Soldiers what they want," he said. "A lot of the success we've had this time around can be attributed to more command involvement. We've got some tremendous leader-

ship here from (Brig.) General (Patrick D.) Frank (JRTC and Fort Polk commanding general) all the way down the chain, and that's the biggest reason for the success. General Frank told the brigade, battalion and company commanders that they needed to start talking to their Soldiers about staying with the team, staying in the Army — and it's been very positive."

If you would like more information about your Army career options, see your servicing career counselor or call Tatum at 531-7387.

AER offers company commander, first sergeant program

ACS

FORT POLK, La. — There are several Army Emergency Relief programs and services available to active-duty Soldiers and their Families. One such program is the Company Commander and First Sergeant Quick Assist Program, formerly known as the Commander's Referral Program. This program serves as an expedient and valuable tool for leaders to help Soldiers resolve short-term cash flow issues.

Company commanders and first sergeants can approve an interest-free loan up to \$2,000 for active-duty Soldiers, single or married. Common categories of assistance include (but are not limited to): Rent or mortgage, utilities and deposits, food, emergency travel, vehicle repair, non-receipt of pay or loss of funds, funeral expenses and repair or replacement of major appliances.

Soldiers complete AER Form 600, the Company Commander and First Sergeant Quick Assist Program Application, and submit it to the company commander or first sergeant for review. The Soldier will be interviewed by the commander or first ser-

geant who will verify the financial need. The commander or first sergeant will then approve AER Form 600 and send the Soldier to the AER Office, located at Army Community Service, bldg 920, Bell-Richard Avenue. The Soldier needs to bring the signed AER Form 600, valid military ID card, and leave and earnings statement to the AER Office. The AER officer will confirm eligibility before issuing the funds.

The intent of the Quick Assist Program is to allow leaders to directly respond to valid financial needs of their Soldiers.

AER wants to deter Soldiers from using payday loans, pawn shops and title loan companies. Use of these types of businesses will only deepen the Soldier's financial struggles. This program reinforces unit leader involvement in the resolution of their Soldiers' financial issues while making the process for the Soldier more convenient.

For Soldiers requiring loans of more than \$2,000 or who choose not to use the Quick Assist Program, contact the Army Community Service AER Office at 531-1958/1957 or stop by ACS, bldg 920.

Clinic known as 'red roof inn' officially named for hero medic

By **JEAN DUBIEL**
Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. — *"It doesn't take a hero to order men into battle. It takes a hero to be one of those men who goes into battle."*

— **Gen. H. Norman Schwartzkopf**

The above quote is emblazoned on a commemorative plaque honoring the namesake of the newly dedicated Fontaine Troop Medical Clinic, formerly known as the Consolidated Medical Troop Clinic in bldg 3504, also called the "red roof inn," on Georgia Avenue.

Spc. Michael Arthur Fontaine, born in New Orleans on Sept. 4, 1950, served as an Army medic during the Vietnam War. While assigned to Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Fontaine took part in a search and clear mission northeast of Quan Loi on Jan. 10, 1969.

His company made contact with the enemy, who were armed with rockets, mortars and automatic and semiautomatic weapons. Repeatedly exposing himself to hostile fire, Fontaine treated members of his platoon who were wounded and brought them to a central area where they could be evacuated. During his final attempt to aid the wounded, Fontaine managed to bandage two men and was en route to a third when the enemy's fire suddenly intensified. He threw himself onto the man to protect him and was mortally wounded by the enemy, but saved the life of his stricken comrade.

Fontaine's awards include the Distinguished Service Cross, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Air Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, and the Combat Medical Badge. He was also inducted into the State of Louisiana Military Hall of Fame in Abbeville.

During the building dedication ceremony held March 29, members of Fontaine's family and one of his battle buddies were there to help cut the ribbon.

David and Renee Fontaine are Michael Fontaine's brothers, and they attended the ceremony with their wives, both named Linda. Another Michael Fontaine was also there — his nephew, son of David and Linda.

"The greatest thing my parents ever did was name me after my uncle," he said. "I never knew him, but I

try to live up to what he was. Being named for him is the greatest honor, and I wouldn't have missed this event today for the world."

Michael traveled from Oklahoma City to attend the dedication.

David and Linda came in from the Houston area to take part in the ceremony. David said the family is honored that his brother's name is being memorialized in this way. "I think this dedication is not just in honor of my brother, but for all the combat medics — they save countless lives."

His spouse, Linda, said the building is a legacy for the family.

"We are grateful to the Army for doing this," she said.

Butch Watkins served with Fontaine in Vietnam. He attended as a representative of Charlie Company, 2nd Bn, 7th Cav Reg, and said everyone in the unit who met Fontaine fondly

remembered "Doc Trip," as he was called. "He was a good guy and always looked out for all of us."

Renee and Linda live in the New Orleans area, and Renee said while the building dedication is important, he'd gladly trade it all to have his brother back. "It's certainly an honor that the Army is doing this for him, but to be honest, I would trade this for him any day," he said. "That's just the way it is."

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commanding general, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, pointed out a group photo that was printed in the ceremony program. Fontaine and Watkins are in the photo along with a few other Soldiers in Vietnam.

"That's a pretty awesome photo. It really captures the essence of what Michael Fontaine meant to his unit, to his family, his Army and his nation," said Frank.

"It is amazing when you see a hero like Michael in that picture. You can imagine what kind of hero it takes to respond, under enemy fire, to Soldiers in his formation."

Frank also said it was fitting that the facility that now bears his name is at Fort Polk — the Home of Heroes.

"A combat infantry or cavalry unit will often refer to their medic as 'Doc.' That's a term of endearment," said Frank. "They're not medical doctors. But they are going to respond under fire, when you are injured, when you are pinned down — they are there, not the doctor in a white coat and stethoscope, but the medic, and that's what Michael Fontaine was. As Soldiers come through these doors, I think they'll feel his spirit and everything he meant to his cavalry unit."



Fontaine



Above: Specialist 4th Class Michael Arthur Fontaine (left) with some of buddies from C Co, 2nd Bn, 7th Cav, 3rd Bde, 1st Cav Div in Vietnam, including Butch Watkins (left kneeling).



Right: Butch Watkins, who served with Fontaine in 1969, attended the ceremony as a representative of the unit they served in and to honor his late comrade.



Left: The Fontaine Family (from left), Renee, Linda, Michael, Linda and David, stand for the Army Song during the dedication of the Fontaine Troop Medical Clinic March 29.

Below: Members of Michael Arthur Fontaine's Family, flanked by Command Sgt. Maj. David W. Bass (left), JRTC and Fort Polk command sergeant major, and Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank (right), commanding general of the JRTC and Fort Polk, cut the ribbon March 29.



Hiring event offers employment opportunities for Soldiers, spouses

SFL-TAP

FORT POLK, La. — The Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk Soldier For Life — Transition Assistance Program hosts a hiring and education event for the military community April 25 at 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Warrior Fitness Center.

Information about education and career opportunities is offered to Soldiers, spouses, retirees, veterans and Department of the Army civilians.

As of April 1, more than 20 employers have signed up to participate in the event. They include, but are not limited to, the following: Acadian Ambulance Services,

Airstream Renewables Inc., Amerisafe, Austin, Texas Police Department, Bridgestone Retain Operations, Badger Daylighting, Boise Cascade, Halliburton, The Lemoine Company LLC, Lockheed Martin, Occidental Petroleum Corporation, Saber Power Services LLC, Triple Canopy, a Constellis Company, Tek Systems, Vinell Arabia LLC, Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Waste Connections, Jacobs and Alexandria VA Health Care System.

Additionally, seven colleges and universities will be on hand to provide information on their programs and schedule individual counseling

sessions, including: Central Louisiana Technical Community College, Central Texas College, DeVry University, Upper Iowa University, Full Sail University, Grand Canyon University and Northwestern State University.

To prepare job seekers for the event, the Fort Polk Soldier For Life — Transition Assistance Program will host a Hiring Event Preparation Seminar April 24 at the Fort Polk Education Center and Allen Memorial Library, bldg 660, Colorado Avenue.

The seminar provides information on what to expect at the hiring event, what to bring, questions to ask, how to dress and how to follow-up with employers.

In the face of high unemployment rates among troops returning

home from service, many organizations, government agencies and businesses have initiated programs and partnerships to promote and encourage the hiring of veterans.

Companies often report that employees with military training and experience bring many core values and work habits essential to making a business successful, traits such as discipline, strong work ethic, integrity, commitment and the ability to focus on a goal.

Veterans who served in leadership roles bring the added potential for advancing in their careers through their ability to understand a mission, communicate clearly and lead others to achieving the goal.

For more information call the Soldier for Life-Transition Assistance Program at 531-1591.



Online SFL-TAP training available

SFL-TAP

FORT POLK, La. — You can complete several complementary Soldier For Life - Transition Assistance Program courses online on the Joint Knowledge Online (JKO) website.

If you choose to complete one of the online SFL-TAP courses, please remember to print your certificate of completion and present it to an SFL-TAP counselor to receive credit for completing the course.

The following eight transition courses are available:

- Dress for success
- Family concerns
- Interview techniques
- Individual transition plan review
- Salary negotiations
- Special issues
- Value of a mentor

For more information call the Fort Polk SFL-TAP at 531-1591 or the SFL-TAP Virtual Center at (800) 325-4715. You can also visit www.sfl-tap.army.mil.

705th

Continued from page 3

destroyed more than 1.7 million pieces of ordnance, responded to 210 EOD incidents and supported four different task forces across six locations in four countries. That's a busy deployment," he said.

Frank said each of the Soldiers could be proud they helped ensure America's freedoms and liberty were secured.

"All of Fort Polk salutes you. It's great to have you home," he said.

Bill Gilliam, Fort Polk G-3, said he attended the ceremony to support the returning Soldiers.

"I'm glad they are home and safe," he said.

Family members at the ceremony are relieved their loved ones were home.

Deanna Eskew, spouse of Pfc. Michael Eskew, said life — the good and the bad — doesn't stop when your husband is away. She said it was a difficult deployment for her because there were some deaths in the family while her spouse was gone.

"I really missed having him here to

support me," she said. "I'm so glad he's back. I'm looking forward to having our Family together again and the kids having their dad back will be wonderful,"

Leslie Dixon, spouse of 1st Lt. Daniel Dixon, said the toughest part about the deployment for her was learning to be alone again.

"Transitioning back to a life without him was tough," she said.

Dixon said having her spouse back is the most important thing to her. She said she is most excited to do the simple things couples share when they are in a relationship.

"I want to get back to those normal daily routines when we shop, cook, watch television and just be together," she said.

After the ceremony ended and Families were reunited, Staff Sgt. James Ruzicka, a 705th Soldier, said it was fantastic to be home.

"All I want to do now is spend time with my wife and kids, he said.



Staff Sgt. James Ruzicka, 705th EOD, and his spouse Samantha share an enthusiastic welcome home kiss at the 705th redeployment ceremony April 2.

ANGIE THORNE / GUARDIAN



First Lt. Madeline Platt (back row, third from left) stands with the other 16 military mentors selected for the United States Senate Youth Program mission in Washington, D.C., Feb. 27 to March 9.



Platt and her group of seven student delegates stand in front of the Lincoln Monument in Washington, one of many historical points of interest USSYP participants had the opportunity to explore during the week-long experience.

COURTESY

Building tomorrow's leaders

Fort Polk officer mentors U.S. Senate Youth Program students

By **JEAN DUBIEL**

Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. — Have you heard of the United States Senate Youth Program, or USSYP? It is an intensive week-long educational experience (with a \$10,000 scholarship tacked on) sponsored by the United States Senate for outstanding high school students interested in pursuing careers in public service. Military mentors are selected from throughout the Department of Defense to help guide these students during their Washington experience. This year, one of those mentors was Fort Polk's own 1st Lt. Madeline Platt, the acting G1 (human resources). She attended the 10-day event Feb. 27 to March 9.

Mentors are selected through a competitive process, according to Platt.

"You have to be an officer and experienced in working with students," she said. "It is open to all U.S. military branches worldwide, but only 17 people are picked to go."

Platt's application packet highlighted aspects of her Army career as well as her high school activities, including involvement in clubs, community service and sports. "I think they (the selection board) want to make sure the mentors can relate to these kids and have something to talk about, so they look for that kind of experience," she said.

Military mentors are meant to show the diversity of career fields in the services and demonstrate how educated careerists contribute to mission readiness. Platt has a degree in biology but is a 42B, human resources specialist, in the Army.

Platt said her group of seven girls had some

preconceived notions about the Army — images of tough guys running through the woods, firing weapons — but their time with Platt enlightened them.

"Yes, there are people in the Army who do that, but there is so much more and so many other ways to serve," she said. "I hope I was able to show them another aspect of military service."

"I think the experience will make me a better leader."

1st Lt. MADELINE PLATT
Fort Polk G1

The USSYP selects two student leaders from each state, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity to spend a week in Washington experiencing their national government in action. Student delegates hear major policy addresses by senators, cabinet members, officials from the Departments of State and Defense and directors of other federal agencies, as well as participate in meetings with the president and a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Part of the mentors' role in the program is to facilitate conversations between the students. "These kids were meeting other students from all over the country that were excited about government and politics," Platt said. "They were given a great area to share thoughts and ideas, and have friendly debates about those subjects." Platt explained that mentors were not permitted to add their input

into these conversations — just encourage the students to talk and ensure everyone had their fair say. "I wanted to teach them about the importance of being respectful to others, even when they have a different opinion," Platt said. "I think they learned a lot from me."

Platt was accountable for her students' whereabouts at all times. This required keeping a close eye on the group as they moved from place to place in Washington, touring crowded facilities and hearing certain speakers — a unique experience Platt and her group could share.

"This was such a great opportunity for me, not just to be able to mentor the students but also to be part of their experience, and together we heard U.S. Chief Justice John Roberts and the president speak," she said. "It was amazing for all the military mentors to be able to tag along on the students' experience. I was able to see and hear things that I would never have had the chance to experience otherwise."

Being a mentor also gave Platt a boost of confidence, which she said is invaluable to honing her leadership skills. "I learned some things from the other military mentors and from our coaches (those with previous experience in the program). I think the experience will make me a better leader," she said. "I was also asked to come back again next year to be a military assistant mentor. I think I'll do it, because it is such an awesome experience."

Officers interested in participating in the program can check out the website at www.ussenateyouthprogram.org for more information.

"I would encourage any officer to try it out," she said.

Briefs

School lunches

The following school lunch menu is for Vernon Parish schools for Monday through April 12. Meals are served with salad bar and choice of milk:

- **Monday:** Steak fingers, mashed potatoes and gravy, seasoned green beans, peaches and Jell-O cup, whole wheat roll.
- **Tuesday:** Barbecue ribettes on whole wheat bun, Cajun French fries, peas and carrots, pineapple chunks.
- **Wednesday:** Oven fried chicken, barbecue sauce cup, white northern beans, broccoli rice, cantaloupe, whole wheat cornbread.
- **Thursday:** Pork roast with gravy, fluffy whole grain rice, sweet peas, fruit, sherbet, whole wheat roll.
- **April 12:** Tuna salad on whole wheat bun, French fries, Bush's baked beans, oatmeal raisin cookie, applesauce.

Color run

Fort Polk's Directorate of Family Morale, Welfare and Recreation hosts the Dye Hard Warrior 5K Color Run Saturday from 9 a.m.-noon beginning at Showboat Theatre, South 10th Street.

To register or for more information visit the DFMWR Facebook page at www.facebook.com/fortpolkmwr/.

Easter services

The following Easter services are held in the Fort Polk Main Post Chapel:

- April 20, 8-10 p.m., Catholic Easter vigil
- April 21, 8:30-9:30 a.m., Catholic Easter mass
- April 21, 10:30-11:30 a.m., collective Protestant service.

Call 531-7338 for more information.

Exchange activities

The following activities are scheduled for the Fort Polk Main Exchange in honor of April's recognition as Month of the Military Child:

- Military Brat Patch giveaway Saturday beginning at 10 a.m. while supplies last. Patches will be handed out in front of the store to military children ages 17 and younger.
- Purple Up for Military Kids, April 13. Any child 18 or younger who wears purple is eligible to receive one free treat while supplies last from the following participating restaurants:
 - * Main Burger King — vanilla soft serve
 - * Charley's — small lemonade
 - * Starbucks — cake pop
 - * Subway — two cookies



Family members admire the art, poems and essays created by local military students at the Call for the Arts 2019 winner's reception April 1 at Fort Polk's Army Community Center.

ANGIE THORNE / GUARDIAN

Military students show creativity through art, word

By **ANGIE THORNE**

Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. — The third annual Call for the Arts 2019 winner's reception was held at Fort Polk's Army Community Service April 1 from 5-7 p.m. The contest was open to military-connected kindergarten through 12th grade students in Vernon Parish schools.

The top three winners in each category — art, poetry and essay — will be submitted for a district-level contest. Finalist submissions will then be considered in 2020 Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) publications.

Student artwork and poetry are featured at the MCEC annual conference in Washington and artwork is used in the "On The Move" magazine, the annual MCEC calendar and conference program.

Some of the suggested topics included cultures military kids have experienced, pride in parents, military wishes, hopes and dreams and more.

Sue Lopez, military student transition consultant, Vernon Parish School Board, said the contest allows kids an outlet for expression.

"They take what they experience as military children and how they are feeling right now and turn it into art," she said. "Their creations make them feel confident that their feelings are valid."

Lopez said participating in the contest looks good on a scholarship application or resume. "It also gives students the opportunity to have their work published," she said.

Emily Ring, 7, drew a picture and wrote a poem for the contest. Ring's picture was of her bed.

"I like drawing my bed. It travels with me all around," she said.

Evelyn Ring, Emily's mom, said she was proud of the depth of feeling put into the picture

and poem her daughter created.

"She decided to enter the contest on her own. She stepped out of her comfort zone to draw and write and that is wonderful," she said. "We have moved to a lot of places and her artwork has made me realized that her bed is her comfort zone," she said.

Katherine Brandt, 10, wrote a story for the contest. She said it was about how she handles being an Army kid and overcomes challenges.

Brandt said one of the hardest things for her is making new friends.

"It might take a while, but I'll make a new friend. Then they will move or I will move, but we try to keep in touch. Then I move to a new place and make another new friend," she said.

Keri Brandt, Katherine's mom, said moving is a huge adjustment for military kids.

"Every few years we move to a another house in a new neighborhood and city. Once we get there it's so important for them to find new friends and people to become their support system," she said.

Kiani Villenas, 16, and two other students — Aurora Bauer and Demi Bass — read their poems at the ceremony.

Villenas said she has always had trouble talking to people about her feelings, but found it was easier for her to write them down in the form of an essay.

Villenas's essay, "Where Is Home?" focused on the concept of what home is. As a military child, it's a thought process she is familiar with. She said in her experience home isn't just four walls — it's also having food on the table, clothes to wear, where the heart is and surviving.

"I've witnessed other people's homes. They don't always feel like they are home," she said.

This is a small excerpt from "Where Is Home?"

Please see **Art**, page 15

April highlights protecting children from abuse

FORT POLK FAP

FORT POLK, La. — April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. The Department of Defense community is an integral part of the efforts in positive parenting, encouraging use of resources and reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect. Help reinforce the message that all community members share responsibility for children's safety and well-being.

Facts about child abuse and neglect

Child abuse and neglect are significant public health problems in the United States.

- More than 1,670 children died in the United States in 2015 from abuse and neglect.
- According to child protective service agencies, about 683,000 children were victims of child abuse or neglect in 2015.
- One in four children have experienced abuse or neglect at some point in their lives, and one in seven children experienced abuse in the last year, according to self-reports from the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence.
- The financial costs for victims and society are substantial. A Centers for Disease Control study showed the total lifetime cost associated with just one year of confirmed cases of child abuse or neglect is \$124 billion.

Abused children often suffer physical injuries including cuts, bruises, burns, and broken bones. However, physical injury is not the only negative impact of abuse and neglect — it can also affect lifelong health including: Mental health, social development, risk-taking behavior (smoking, high-risk sexual behaviors and drug abuse) and life opportunities (educational attainment, employment and income).

Child abuse and neglect includes all types of abuse or neglect of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caregiver, or another person in a custodial role that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child. There are four common types of abuse and neglect.

- Physical abuse is the use of physical force, such as hitting, kicking, shaking burning or other shows of force against a child.
- Sexual abuse involves inducing or coercing a child to engage

in sexual acts. It includes behaviors such as fondling, penetration and exposing a child to other sexual activities.

- Emotional abuse refers to behaviors that harm a child's self-worth or emotional well-being. Examples include name calling, shaming, rejection, withholding love and threatening.

- Neglect is the failure to meet a child's basic physical and emotional needs. These needs include housing, food, clothing, education and access to medical care.

Child abuse and neglect and other adverse childhood experiences cause toxic stress that can disrupt early brain development and harm the nervous and immune systems. Exposure to childhood adversity can increase a person's risk for future violence, unhealthy relationship behaviors and poor health and wellness. This impact can be long-lasting and may continue across future generations.

Symptoms and signs of child abuse

Children who are victims of abuse often experience symptoms of stress in reaction to the abuse, in addition to symptoms that are specific to the kind of abuse they have suffered. The signs and symptoms of abuse often vary according to the age and developmental stage of the child. It is also important to understand that victims of child abuse are of-

ten abused in more than one way, so the child may demonstrate symptoms consistent with more than one kind of maltreatment. Examples of less specific signs and symptoms of child abuse include

- A tendency to either avoid, overly please or ingratiate themselves to the abuser;
- Poor school performance;
- Irritability or quickness to anger;
- Crying more often or easily;
- Anxiety or panic;
- Frequent complaints of physical symptoms, like headaches and stomachaches;
- Young kids may act younger than their age or than they had previously (regress);
- Spending more time alone, away from friends and family;
- Becoming more "clingy" and dependent on certain relationships;
- Expressing thoughts about self-harm or hurting others;
- More risk-taking behaviors or showing less concern for their own safety.

Examples of risk-taking behaviors in children include unsafe play, like climbing excessively high or running in the street. More potentially specific signs and symptoms of abuse may include the following:

- Neglect: The child may lose weight or fail to gain weight appropriately for their age. Their

energy level and ability to learn will likely decrease. They may become withdrawn and show physical signs of malnutrition, like dry skin or hair or develop thinning hair.

- Physical abuse: A child who is the victim of physical abuse may have repeated physical injuries and emergency room or other doctor's visits with or without adequate explanation. They may claim to be accident prone or provide other stories about how they sustained injuries and may tend to wear excessive clothing to cover injuries or otherwise engage in secrecy in an attempt to protect the abuser from intervention by child welfare authorities and law enforcement.

- Emotional abuse: Emotionally abused children may make negative statements about themselves or others that mimic the abuser, like calling his or herself names or otherwise exhibiting pessimism or low self-esteem.

- Sexual abuse: The child who has been sexually abused may exhibit sexual knowledge or behaviors that are much older than is appropriate for their age. They may also exhibit inappropriate sexual behavior, resulting in their engaging in masturbating excessively or in front of others, as well as participating in inappropriate sexual play with children. Medically, children who are sexually abused may develop genital injuries or sexually transmitted diseases.

Fort Polk's Family Advocacy Program can help. Call 531-1938 for more information. To report cases of suspected child abuse, neglect and spouse or intimate partner abuse on Fort Polk, call the 24-hour a day Hope Line at 531-4673.

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general, signs the Sexual Assault Awareness Prevention Month Proclamation as Col. Jarrett A. Thomas II waits his turn at Fort Polk's Warrior Community Center April 3. Fort Polk leadership also signed the Child Abuse Prevention Month and Month of the Military Child proclamations.



ANGIE THORNE / GUARDIAN

April set aside to recognize, appreciate military children

By **SUSAN CONNOLLY**

Military Child Education Coalition

WASHINGTON — April is the Month of the Military Child, a time to recognize and appreciate military children for their service and sacrifice. Military children live with on-going challenges presented by frequent moves, family separations, and life transitions. They move six-to-nine times during their kindergarten through 12th grade years. In their own way, military-connected children serve, too.

As a demographic, military-connected children number almost 4 million, 75 percent of whom are school-age. Almost every school district in America includes military-connected children and youth whose parents serve or served in the Active, Guard, and Reserve components of the armed forces. More than 80 percent of these students attend U.S. public schools while less than 8 percent attend Department of Defense schools.

The Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) works to address the needs of military-connected children through programs, services, and resources that enlighten and empower parents, educators, supportive adults and the students themselves. The well-being of all military-connected children and youth depends on a strong, consistent network of



supportive adults. Parents, teachers, mentors, and role models play a pivotal role in the life of a military child.

the Dandelion

The official flower of the military child is the dandelion. Why? The plant puts down roots almost anywhere, and it's almost impossible to destroy. It's an unpretentious plant, yet good looking. It's a survivor in a broad range of climates. Military children bloom everywhere the winds carry them. They are hardy and upright. Their roots are strong, cultivated deeply in the culture of the military, planted swiftly and surely. They're ready to fly in the breezes that take them to new adventures, new lands, and new friends.



You can make a difference in the life of a military child by seeking opportunities to acknowledge their sacrifice, volunteering for organizations that support them, and recognizing their contribution to the nation. MCEC invites everyone to wear purple on April 18 as a visible gesture of support for military kids.

For more information on Month of the Military Child visit www.MilitaryChild.org/.

Glow Night 2019

Join the New Family Support Program for a family night filled with fun and glow prizes in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month April 26 from 6-8:30 p.m. at Army Community Service, 1591 BellRichard Ave., bldg 920.

BJACH warns JROTC about danger of tobacco use

BJACH HEALTH PROMOTIONS

FORT POLK, La. — Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital's Department of Preventive Medicine Health Promotions collaborated with DeRidder High School JROTC programs in March to discuss the hazards of tobacco use.

BJACH Health Promotions helped students visualize the health hazards and chemicals used in tobacco products. Students were also able to play an interactive tobacco bingo game that highlighted the harmful side effects of tobacco use and its hazards to both the body and environment.

Cadets learned that one in 50 middle school students and two in 25 high school students had smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days as reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2018. The CDC report also predicted that if cigarette smoking continues at its current rate among youth in the U.S., one of every 13 Americans aged 17 or younger who are alive today will die early from a smoking-related illness.

Cadets were offered the opportunity to ask questions during the class as well as express their concerns. Participants received lanyards and prizes were awarded to tobacco bingo winners. The event consisted of seven classes with a total of 68 cadets.



DeRidder High School JROTC cadets participate in a program presented by Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital's Department of Preventive Medicine Health Promotions on the dangers of tobacco use.

Kids plant pinwheels for National Child Abuse Prevention Month



Each April, Fort Polk's Army Community Service New Parent Support Program hosts activities in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month. Parents and children who attend NPSP's Playmorning planted blue pinwheels April 2 to begin this month's events. Blue pinwheels are the universal symbol representing children of all ages at risk for child abuse or neglect.

Amanda Deinhardt and her daughter Harper, 3, plant a pinwheel in front of Fort Polk's Army Community Service building in honor of Child Abuse Prevention Month.



Alex Prins, 3, has fun with a pinwheel as he stands in front of a sign children from Army Community Service playmorning helped create with their handprints.



Jocelyn Murphy and daughter Alyvia Jade, 9 months, (left) and Amber Hogancamp and daughter Kadence, 1, plant pinwheels April 2.

Wild azaleas highlight recreation trail through Kisatchie

By **CHUCK CANNON**

Guardian editor

FORT POLK, La. — As has been noted on the pages of the Guardian the last few weeks, those who are fortunate enough to receive an assignment to the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk can be sure of one fact: The surrounding Kisatchie National Forest offers outdoor enthusiasts some of the best hiking and beautiful scenery they'll ever see.

One of the gems in this crown that dominates the area to the north, east and south of Fort Polk is the Wild Azalea National Recreation Trail, which follows the rolling hills, ridgelines and soggy bottoms of Kisatchie between Fort Polk and Alexandria.

If you want to see the pink and white blossoms in full bloom, now is the time to plan a trek along all or part of the 24-mile path.

Brochures from the Kisatchie National Forest's Calcasieu Ranger District, advise spring is best for viewing wild azaleas in the forest.

For those unfamiliar with the showy blooms, wild azaleas do not look like the garden-variety plants that sightseers get a glimpse of in yards or lining lanes in old antebellum home sites: They are light white and pink instead of darker colors. They also tend to attract butterflies, which offers visitors another palate of colors to enjoy.

Another reason for choosing this time of year to hike the trail is the weather — the stifling hot Louisiana summer is still a few weeks off, with its humidity and snakes that like to frequent the bayous, creeks and ponds, which are the favorite haunts of wild azaleas. Also, odds are you will also catch a glimpse of dogwoods in bloom, scattered among the towering dark green pines of the forest.

The Wild Azalea Trail is located in the Evangeline Unit of the Calcasieu Ranger District. End points are located at the Valentine Lake Recreation Area and at the town of Woodworth's Town Hall parking area.

It is designated for both foot and bicycle traffic and is accessible by road at several points along the trail. This makes it possible to hike short sections — a nice choice for those who have time constraints or are physically unable to hike the entire length. It is marked with bright yellow paint blazes and has signs at road crossings.

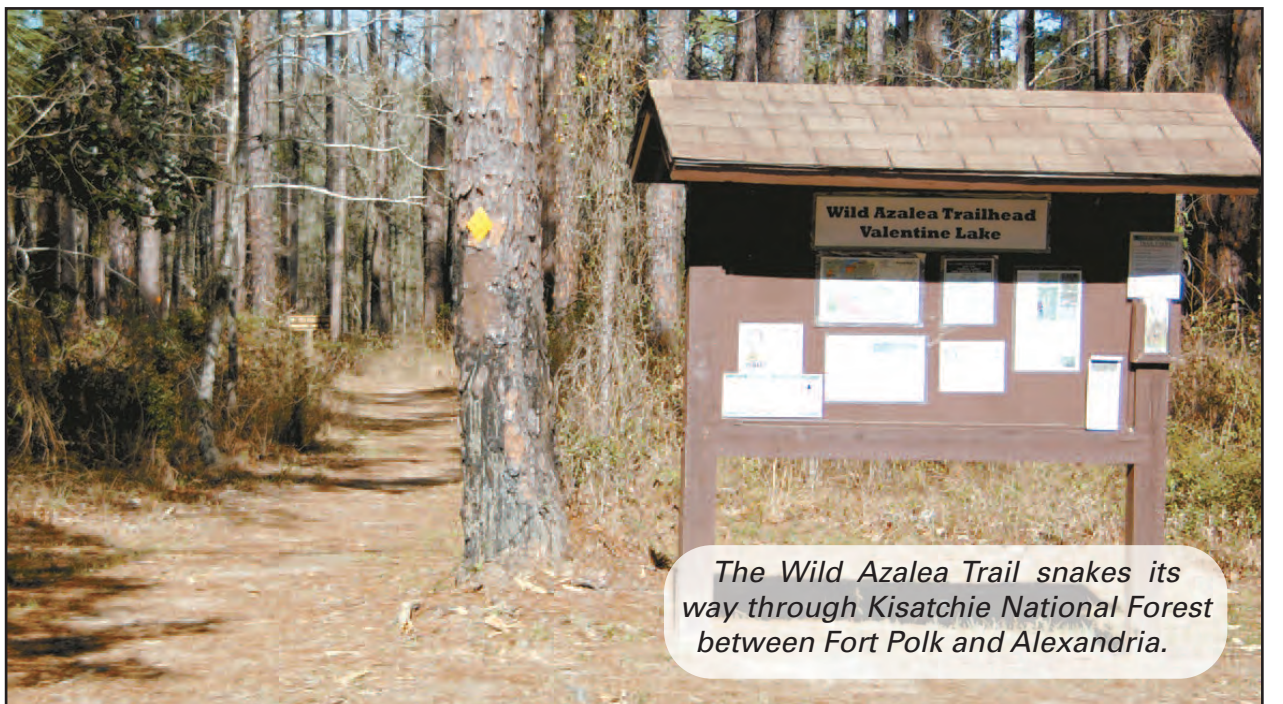
The U.S. Forest Service has divided the trail into seven segments for those who wish to hike the entire trail, but not all at once. For a list of the seven segments or for more information about the forest's trails and day use areas, visit one of the Kisatchie National Forest ranger stations or its website at www.fs.usda.gov/kisatchie.



A butterfly dines on wild azaleas.



Native wild Louisiana azaleas are in full bloom along waterways in Kisatchie National Forest.



The Wild Azalea Trail snakes its way through Kisatchie National Forest between Fort Polk and Alexandria.



The Wild Azalea Trail features well-marked forest trails and bridges across the waterways that meander through the Kisatchie bottomlands.



CHUCK CANNON / GUARDIAN

Spc. Megan Gray (left), Sgt. Megan Adams (center) and Sgt. Chestley Trawick cross the finish line together during the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk Army Ten Miler qualifier March 30.

Runners vie for chance to represent JRTC, Fort Polk

By **CHUCK CANNON**

Guardian editor

FORT POLK, La. — Twenty Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk runners tackled the pre-dawn darkness and misty conditions March 30 for an opportunity to earn a spot on the 2019 Fort Polk Ten Miler team that will represent the installation at the Army's annual Ten Miler in Washington Oct. 13.

The event began at 6:30 a.m. after reveille at the Marion Bonner Trail across from Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital. The hilly course provided a stern test for those hoping to represent Fort Polk.

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commander, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, who was one of the competitors, said he was impressed with the quality of athletes that showed up for the race.

"These Soldiers are incredible athletes," Frank said. "Their showing up on a Saturday morning shows the Warrior Spirit that we talk about at Fort Polk. I was pleased with the turnout."

Sgt. Jeffrey Cassel, 115th Field Hospital, was the top male qualifier with a time of 1:05.42. He said he was pleased with his time.

"That's a pretty good time for qualification," Cassel said. "I think I can get down into the 50s by October."

When asked what motivated him to try out for the team, Cassel said it was a three-fold reason.

"I run to represent my unit, Fort Polk and myself," he said. "Making the team is pride thing."

Cassel challenged three Soldiers in his unit — Spc. Megan Gray, Sgt. Megan Adams and Sgt. Chestley Trawick — to compete in the race.

Gray said she doesn't normally run 10 miles.

"The chance to be part of the JRTC and Fort Polk Army Ten Miler team is why I'm out here today," she said. "I think it will be great because it will not only give me a chance to be part of the team, but also improve my running ability, which as an active-duty Soldier is important."

Adams and Trawick — who along with Gray crossed the finish line together — agreed it was an exhausting run.

"We probably should have trained a little better," Adams said.

Trawick said the run offered a chance for personal growth.

"I got to see what my body could do, and where I need to get better and improve my fitness."

Sean McCrory, Family Morale, Welfare and Recreation sports director, said the team looks faster than last year's group.

"We have a pretty strong group of runners," McCrory said. "Last year during qualifying we had one male with a time under 70 minutes; this year we have four."

McCrory said there are plans to hold one more qualifying run since so many of the installation's Soldiers are in the field this month.

"Team selections will be made based on the top qualifying times," he said. "We'll choose six males and two females. This year we're also considering choosing a couple of alternates since you never know about PCS, schools or deployments."

"The alternates will train with the team, with the understanding the original six and two selected will represent Fort Polk if they are still here. That's the fair way to do it."

Sports briefs

Gymnastic classes

The Directorate of Family Morale, Welfare and Recreation Child and Youth Services hosts the following gymnastic classes at bldg 2070, Youth Gym:

- Parent and child gymnastics, ages 12 months to 3 years, Mondays at 10, 10:30 and 11 a.m., and Fridays at 5:30 p.m., \$25 a month.
- Preschool gymnastics, ages 3-5 years, Monday, Tuesday and Friday 4:30 p.m., and Wednesday 11 a.m., \$35 a month.
- School age gymnastics, ages 6-9 years, Mondays at 5:30 p.m. and Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m., \$45 a month.
- School age gymnastics, ages 10 and up, Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m., \$55 a month. Children must be registered with CYS. Call 531-6004 for more information.

Jiu jitsu classes

The Fort Polk Directorate of Family Morale, Welfare and Recreation and Child and Youth Services offers Brazilian jiu jitsu classes.

Classes are for ages 6 and up for \$48 a month.

Classes are held in bldg 744 Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5:30-6:30 p.m. and 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Participants must be registered with CYS.

Call 531-6004 for more information.

Soccer camp

Challenger International Soccer Camp is back at Fort Polk by popular demand for two sessions: June 3-7 and July 22-26.

Classes for TinyTykes (ages 3-5) are 8-9 a.m. and cost \$96.

Classes for ages 6-12 are from 9:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. and cost \$149.

Applications can be picked up at Child and Youth Services, bldg 400, 6880 Radio Road.

Mail applications and payment (checks payable to Challenger Sports) to:

Mike Rees
Challenger Sports
4403 Manchaca Road, Suite C
Austin, Texas 78745

Email mrees@challengersports.com for more information.

Intramural softball

The Fort Polk intramural softball season begins April 24.

Games are played on Fort Polk's Soldier Complex fields Monday through Friday beginning at 6 p.m.

For more information on how to sign up your team for league play call 531-2056.

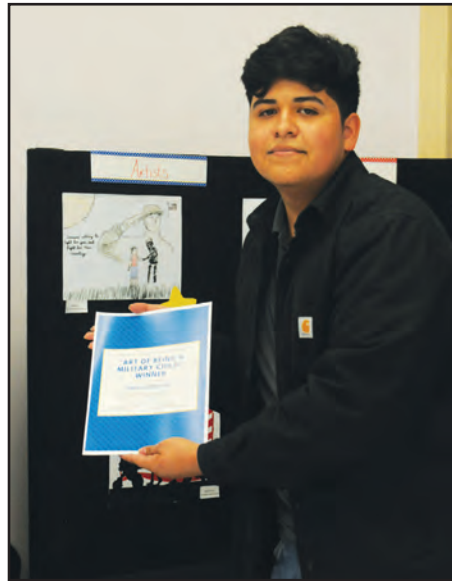
"So where is home for these people? Does it not exist for these souls? Do they wander into homes and still feel the emptiness lurking behind?"

Angel Rodriguez, 16, entered art into the contest. His picture depicted a hollow Soldier saluting a flag and a child holding a shadowed Soldier's hand.

He said the art has a twofold concept.

"The hollow Soldier, though he seems emotionless, actually feels a great deal for his country and Family," he said. Rodriguez then explained what that the child and shadowed parent in uniform represented.

"It expresses the idea that when their Soldiers are gone — deployed or training — they are still in our hearts, but when they are home, sometimes they are still gone," he said.



Angel Rodriguez, 16, stands next to his art at the Call for the Arts 2019 winner's reception April 1 at Fort Polk's Army Community Service.



Kids enjoy getting creative at the color station as parents view the art at the Call for the Arts 2019 winner's reception April 1.

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Fort Polk Guardian

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Measles vaccine protects against potentially serious illness

HEALTH.MIL

FALLS CHURCH, Va. — In the midst of a measles outbreak in the United States, public health officials are urging parents to get their children vaccinated, and for parents to make sure they're up to date on their own vaccinations.

As of March 28, there have been 387 confirmed cases of the potentially serious illness this year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In Rockland County, New York, officials announced a temporary ban on unvaccinated people gathering in enclosed public spaces, re-

porting that more than 80 percent of the individuals with measles had not been vaccinated.

Measles is a highly contagious virus that lives in the nose and throat mucus of an infected person. The virus, which is spread by air when an infected person breathes, coughs, or sneezes, can remain in the air for up to two hours after the infected individual leaves.

The vaccine to protect against measles is called the MMR vaccine because it also protects against mumps and rubella. Two doses of the vaccine are recommended, said Dr. Margaret Ryan, a retired Navy captain and the medical director of the Pacific Region Vaccine Safety Hub of the Defense Health Agency's Immunization Healthcare Branch.

According to the CDC, two doses of the MMR vaccine are about 97 percent effective in preventing measles, and one dose is about 93 percent effective.

"The MMR vaccine is a requirement for joining the service," Ryan said. "And all military family members should get the MMR vaccine along with other vaccines recommended by public health authorities such as the CDC. We strongly encourage and support protecting beneficiaries this way."

Noting that the DHA follows CDC recommendations, Ryan said children should get the first dose of the MMR vaccine at age 12 to 15 months. The second dose follows at least 28 days later, but usually between the ages of 4 and 6.

Adults who didn't receive two vaccine doses in childhood should also get at least one dose, she said.

"Those who are uncertain of their childhood vaccination history can get a blood test to confirm they're protected, or get the MMR vaccine," Ryan said. "Generally, it's safe to get extra doses."

Some parents mistakenly believe the MMR vaccine is connected to autism spectrum disorders. However, a large body of scientific research has proven there is no link between vaccines and the developmental disorder, even in children at high risk.

While most people don't experience side effects from receiving the MMR vaccine, some may get a mild fever or redness, swelling, or pain at the injection site, Ryan said.

"These kinds of symptoms are less common after the second dose," she said, "and if they occur, they usually resolve over a few days."

Coming down with measles is uncomfortable at best. The illness causes a rash and high fever. Further, about 30 percent of measles patients have complications including pneumonia or encephalitis, which is inflammation of the brain. Ryan said about one in every 500 people who contract measles dies of the infection.

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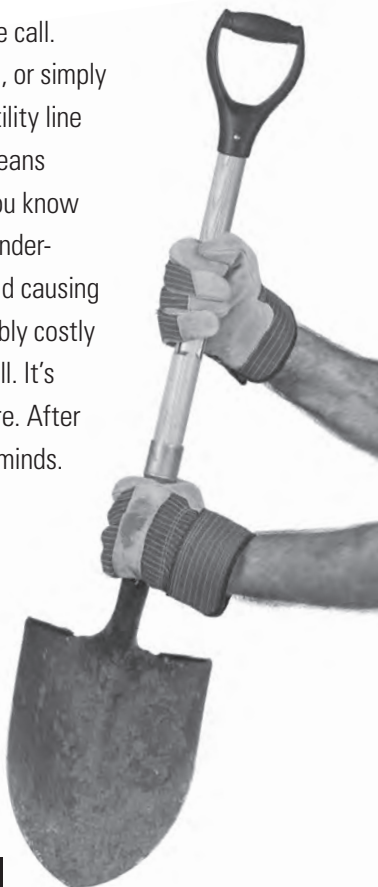
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Exchange hosts Vietnam veteran commemoration

By KEITH HOUIN

Public affairs specialist

FORT POLK, La. — “It tears me up. It tears me up to see the change from when I came back to what I see now. The respect the Soldiers get since then compared to what we got when we returned is so much better,” Vietnam veteran Lawrence Mason said. “When I came home there was no one at the airport but protestors. You got spat on and called baby killers.”

Mason’s is just one of many stories of the poor treatment Soldiers faced upon return from Vietnam. Though the stories can’t be changed, the nation is now welcoming them home and recognizing their service.

The Fort Polk Exchange joined more than 11,000 organizations around the world on National Vietnam War Veterans Day March 29 to recognize, honor and thank the more than 6 million living Vietnam veterans and their Families for their service.

After a brief introduction, store

staff presented a lapel pin to each veteran in attendance and then enjoyed refreshments and emotional conversations.

Vietnam veteran Edward Lamp said he appreciates the recognition of those who served during the Vietnam era, but it is a little late. “Things like this bring up a lot of memories. I had a friend I joined with who was killed in Vietnam, so this was more for him than me,” he said.

For Mason, this ceremony wasn’t just about the veterans of his era.

“My heart goes out to all these veterans today for what they’re doing for our country. As a third generation military guy like I am, I know the sacrifice my forefathers gave for this country and I see what today’s military is doing now.

“The recognition we didn’t get tears me up because it’s overdue, but we appreciate it now, and I appreciate all our veterans and everyone who supports our veterans. As long as we have that backbone in this country we will remain a strong nation,” Mason said.



KEITH HOUIN / GUARDIAN

Amanda Burruss, Exchange manager talks with Lawrence Mason after pinning on the Vietnam pin on.

Veterans weren’t the only people moved by the ceremony.

“I appreciate what these veterans have done for me, and it was an honor to be able to talk to them and hear their stories,” 2nd Lt. Jacob

Fitzgerald, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division said. “It would have been better to have appreciated them as they served and returned home, but I guess later is better than never.”

NATO marks seven decades of US, Western Europe security pact

By KEITH HOUIN

Public affairs specialist

FORT POLK, La. — Thursday marked 70 years since the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty and the formation of NATO.

NATO got its start in 1947 and 1948 as European nations struggled to rebuild their economies and ensure safety from a possible resurgent Germany or annexation by the Soviet Union. The former required a massive amount of aid to help re-establish industries and produce food in the war-torn landscapes. The latter required assurances against aggression. The United States viewed

an economically strong, rearmed, and integrated Europe as vital to the prevention of communist expansion.

In response to increasing tensions and security concerns, representatives of Western European countries gathered to create a military alliance. Great Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg signed the Brussels Treaty in March, 1948.

Their treaty provided collective defense; if any one of these nations was attacked, the others were bound to help defend it.

The civil war in Greece and political tension in Turkey led President

Harry S. Truman to declare that the United States would become more closely involved with European affairs, and provide economic and military aid to both countries, as well as to any other nation struggling against an attempt at subjugation.

Germany’s governance had long been disputed after the war, and in mid-1948, Soviet premier Joseph Stalin implemented a blockade against West Berlin, testing Western resolve. The Berlin Crisis brought the United States and the Soviet Union to the brink of conflict.

U.S. officials grew increasingly wary that Western Europe might deal with their security concerns by negotiating with the Soviets. As a counter to this, the Truman Admin-

istration considered forming a European-American alliance that would commit the United States to bolster Western European security. Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg proposed a resolution to seek a security treaty with Western Europe existing outside of the United Nations Security Council where the Soviet Union held veto power. The resolution passed, and negotiations began.

The result was the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty. The United States, Canada, Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the United Kingdom agreed to consider attack against one an attack against all.

Today there are 29 member nations in NATO.

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ANGIE THORNE / GUARDIAN

Month of the Military Child

Parkway Elementary School staff and students celebrate the kick off of April's Month of the Military Child by blowing bubbles in place of dandelions — the official flower of the military child — March 28.

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2. Please do not place any items in front of dumpsters as this prevents the driver from being able to service the dumpster.
3. There should be no field trash placed in any dumpster not marked "Mixed Field Waste", if a unit has field training to conduct they can call 535-1155 and schedule containers to be placed at their training location.
4. Please do not park vehicles around dumpsters, this will prevent the dumpster from being serviced.

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Lagniappe

BOSS

Check out Fort Polk's Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers. The organization offers single Soldiers the opportunity to volunteer, as well as participate in fun events. Don't miss your chance to take part. BOSS meetings are held the second and fourth Wednesday of each month from 10-11 a.m. at the Home of Heroes Recreation Center. The next meeting is April 10. For more information call 531-1948

Festivals

• Herb festival

If you love fresh herbs, head to the Kent Plantation House, 3601 Bayou Rapides Road, Alexandria, for its annual Herb Day Arts and Crafts Festival and yard sale Saturday from 8 a.m.-1 p.m.

• Boudin festival

Have you tried the Louisiana favorite called boudin? If not, you don't want to miss the Boudin Festival held in Scott, a little over two hours away from Fort Polk along Interstate 10. The festival takes place today through Sunday. There will be live music, fun carnival rides and plenty of chances to eat tasty Louisiana treats, especially boudin. For more information visit www.scottboudinfestival.com.

• Kite Fest Louisiane'

Kite Fest Louisiane brings professional kite fliers and hobbyists

to Port Allen in West Baton Rouge Parish. The event takes place at the West Baton Rouge Soccer Complex, 3383 Rosedale Road, Saturday and Sunday.

Enjoy great family fun where the skies are filled with kites of all sizes and shapes. Inflatables, face painting, a kite-making workshop and kite designing are just some of the activities for children. Bring the entire family, some lawn chairs and enjoy a day of kite flying.

Enjoy Louisiana food booths and indoor flying performed by indoor flying champions. Admission is free. For more information call (800) 654-9701 or visit www.westbatonrouge.net.

• Arts and crafts

Check out the Melrose Arts and Crafts Festival Saturday and Sunday.

There will be more than 100 vendors featuring hand-made items such as original art works, stained glass, gourmet jellies, hand-made jewelry, photographs, plants, toys, woodworking products, iron artwork, pottery and more.

Tickets are \$5 per adult and \$2 per child ages 6-12. Tickets for tours of the Big House are \$5. Self-guided tours of the grounds and viewing of all the historic buildings are free.

For more information visit www.melroseplantation.org.

Miscellaneous

• Flea fest

If you are looking for something fun to do this weekend, hop in the car and head down south to the Burton Complex Event Barn, 7001 Gulf Hwy, in Lake Charles for the annual Flea Fest held Saturday and Sunday. The event covers nearly four acres featuring more than 300 vendors from five states offering merchandise including antiques, collectibles, handcrafted items, art work, furniture, jewelry and more. There is even a farmer's market featuring items like honey and homemade soaps. If you get hungry, enjoy a snack from food

trucks featuring Cajun, Brazilian and French cuisines as well as barbecue and sweets.

Admission is \$5 per adult and free for children 12 and under. Tickets are available at the gate and are cash only. For more information visit www.fleafest.com.

• Guided tour

Mansfield State Historic Site hosts a guided battlefield tour to commemorate the 155th anniversary of the Battle of Mansfield. Park historians will conduct the 1.5 mile tour around the battlefield Saturday at 1 p.m. Appropriate footwear and clothing is recom-

Please see **Lagniappe**, page 20



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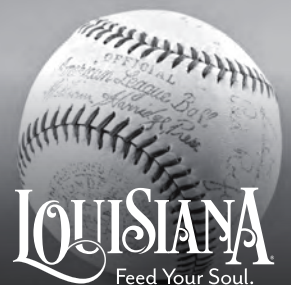
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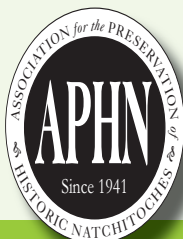
From I-49 take Exit 127 (Cypress) East to LA HWY 1, turn Right approx. 4 miles, turn Left on HWY 493 to Melrose

FESTIVAL ADMISSION

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Children must be accompanied by an adult • No pets inside gate entrance

GUIDED HOUSE TOUR - \$5.00



www.melroseplantation.org

Lagniappe

Continued from page 19

mended. The cost is \$6 per person. Gate admission to the park is \$4 per person ages 4-61. Seniors 62 and over and children under 3 are admitted free. Mansfield State Historic Site is located at 15149 La. Hwy 175, three miles south of Mansfield. For more information call (888) 677-6267 or visit www.facebook.com/mansfieldshs.

• Texas Hold 'em

Stop by Spare Time Lounge, 2087 Ninth St., Fort Polk, today at 6 p.m. to participate in a Texas Hold 'Em Tournament. The event takes place every Friday at 6 p.m. There is a \$20 buy-in and one \$20 re-buy. Weekly prizes are awarded to the top three players. Call 531-8139 for more information.

• CyPhaCon

If you love anime, science fiction, fantasy and gaming, you won't want to miss CyPhaCon, a sci-fi/fantasy and gaming culture convention set in Lake Charles April 12-14 at the Lake Charles Civic Center. Tickets can be purchased on the CyPhaCon website via the Civic Center box of-

fice through Ticketmaster. For more information visit www.cyphacon.org.

• Symphony feast

The Lake Charles Symphony hosts its annual Wild Beast Feast Saturday from 5-8 p.m. at VFW post 2130, 5676 Lake St., Lake Charles. The event features culinary creations of game including pork, poultry and seafood from local cooking teams, with a dash of Cajun flair. Prizes will be awarded to the top three chef teams, as well as a people's choice award.

Live entertainment is provided. General admission is \$50 per person or \$25 per student. For more information or to purchase tickets go to www.lcsymphony.com.

• Concert series

The City of Leesville, in conjunction with KJAE radio, hosts the 2019 Leesville Concert Series each Friday on the Polk stage in downtown Leesville at the corner of Texas and Fourth streets at 6 p.m. The event includes live music, food trucks and encourages dancing. The lineup is as follows: Today — Casey Peveto Band, April 12 — The jazz sounds of Robert Richard, April 19 — Dani Lacour, April 26 — Michael Kuk and May 3 — Rootsicana.

Clubs/groups

• Language club

Immerse yourself in learning a foreign language such as Russian, Spanish, Brazilian, Portuguese or Tagalog by attending the Language Immersion Table. The club meets the first Wednesday of each month from noon to 1 p.m.

The next meeting is Wednesday. For more information call Miguel Moyeno at (636) 577-4274.

• Bass Masters

Join the Fort Polk Community Bass Masters. The club meets monthly on the Tuesday before each tournament. Meetings are held at 7 p.m. at the New Llano American Legion, Post 387, 500 Vernon St., New Llano. The April meeting is Tuesday.

The April tournament takes place at Toledo bend April 13. The entry fee is \$40.

For more information call (337) 535-7591 or visit www.fortpolkcommunitybassmasters.com.

• Lose weight

Join Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) every Thursday at the Vernon Parish Library meeting room. Weigh in is from 5-5:50 p.m.

The meeting starts at 5:50 p.m. For more information call (337) 208-0896.



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