



FORGING THE

WARRIOR SPIRIT

THE JRTC & FORT POLK GUARDIAN

Vol. 47, No. 10

Home of Heroes @ Fort Polk, LA

March 6, 2020

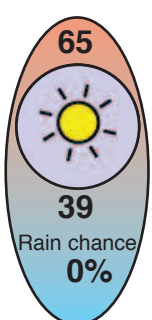


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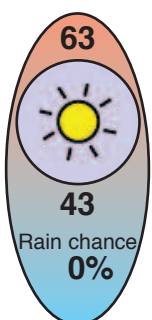
CHUCK CANNON / GUARDIAN

Fort Polk leadership honors latest Green to Gold selections

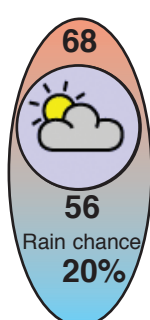
Weekend weather



Friday



Saturday



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Daylight saving time begins Sunday at 2 a.m. so don't forget to set the clocks forward before turning in Saturday.

Viewpoint

In our view

Guardian staff asked the Fort Polk community,
"What quality of life issue would you like to see addressed at Fort Polk?"
Here are their responses:

Mary May:
"Morale, Welfare and Recreation does a great job, but I think we need more free or cost effective activities and events. It's not always financially feasible for Families to travel off post to have fun."



Sannie Rosado:
"The housing because I think they need improvements inside and out. Soldiers work so hard. They should have the very best."



Pvt. Cheyenne Littlebear: "The living conditions in the barracks need to be improved."



Adreanna Alleyne: "Housing. My house is falling apart and I believe it is causing health issues. I could use a little help."



Janine Proto:
"More things to do for younger children, especially indoors because of the weather. I'm excited about the new changes planned for the Showboat Theatre."



Spc. Noah Pelt:
"I think suicide prevention should be focused on even more to encourage a healthier happier working and living environment."



Elyse Martin:
"The strays on post. We used to have a stray facility. Since funds were cut these poor strays are everywhere."



Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Carlin:
"Better quality barracks for Soldiers."

Editor's note: For more information on barracks renovations, read the March 13 Guardian.



Guardian

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Fort Polk Soldiers selected for Green to Gold program

By **CHUCK CANNON**

Command information officer

FORT POLK, La. — Three Fort Polk Soldiers have been selected to participate in the Army's prestigious Green to Gold Active Duty Option Program.

Staff Sgt. Manuel Vingua and Staff Sgt. David Mulcahy, Joint Readiness Training Center Opera-

tions Group, and Sgt. Russell Howard, 32nd Hospital Center, will attend the college or university that have a Reserve Officer Training Corp of their choice, and upon graduation, be commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army.

"These Soldiers will be sought out as mentors for the cadets at their university, as well as leadership positions," Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commander, JRTC and Fort Polk, said. "Green to Gold looks for the best talent for the program. Other cadets will seek their guidance because they've been a Soldier, they know what it takes to be a successful Soldier. They have unique experiences that cadets do not have."

For Vingua, an observer/controller/trainer for JRTC Ops Gp, the decision to apply for the program was easy.

"Becoming an Army officer has been my primary goal in life," Vingua said.

Ten years ago, Vingua was a West Point cadet, but was an academic casualty for failing two courses.

"I enlisted in the Army as an infantryman and continued to work towards my goal to become an officer," he said. "I set three goals that I needed to accomplish before I continued on my path to become an officer: Obtain an associate's degree, earn the Combat and Expert Infantry Badges, and achieve the rank of sergeant."

Vingua, who plans to attend Northwestern State University — Fort Polk, said he earned his associate's degree in Criminal Justice with Empire State College in the summer of 2018.

"I was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge in 2013 and earned the Expert Infantry Badge in 2017," he said. "I achieved the rank of sergeant in 2015, the rank of staff sergeant in 2017, and am currently selected for fiscal year 2019 sergeant first class."

With those goals reached, Vingua said he is ready to start his path towards becoming an officer once again.

"I am committed and qualified to reach my full potential, and secure commission in the Regular Army," he said. "I want to become an Army officer so I can continue to lead Soldiers as an infantry platoon leader, as I have done in the past as a rifleman and weapons squad leader."

Mulcahy's story is similar. The infantry Soldier will attend the University of Wisconsin — Stout and looks to branch into aviation.

"I wanted to attend college but I couldn't afford it," he said. "I thought I would serve one enlistment, then get out and go to school. I decided to stay in and work toward my degree while on active duty. I'm about 50 hours short of a bachelor's degree now."

Howard will attend Texas A&M — Central Texas outside of Fort Hood. He hopes to branch into cyber security.

"I wasn't really interested in computers or cyber security until I started taking some college classes," he said. "Now I think it will be a great field to enter."

The Green to Gold Active Duty Option Program is a two-year program that provides eligible, active duty enlisted Soldiers an opportunity to complete a baccalaureate degree or a two-year



CHUCK CANNON / GUARDIAN

graduate degree and earn a commission as an Army officer.

Soldiers selected to participate in the program continue to receive their current pay and allowances while in the program (up to a maximum of 24 consecutive months), and, if qualified, can use their Montgomery G.I. Bill, Army College Fund or Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits.

Requirements include:

- U.S. citizen (non-waiverable)
- Age — be less than 30 years of age on the date of the projected graduation and commission (Waivers can be requested)
- Cannot have been convicted of a domestic violence crime
- Have a minimum of two years active duty at the time of application as well as three months of active duty for every month of specialized training (waiver can be requested)
- GT score of 110 or greater
- Pass the Army Physical Fitness Test within the last 6 months with score of 180 or higher, minimum of 60 points in each event
- College grade point average of 2.5
- Letter of acceptance to school of choice offering Army ROTC
- Letter of acceptance from the professor of military science of that Army ROTC Battalion
- Favorable National Agency check (or have initiated the action)
- Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board medical qualification
- Be eligible to reenlist
- Not be a conscientious objector
- No more than three dependents including spouse (waiverable)

Questions should be directed to the Green to Gold program manager at usarmy.knox.usacc.mbx.train2lead@mail.mil. The deadline for submission of Green to Gold and scholarship applications will be determined upon opening of the application window.

Briefs

Polk drill

Fort Polk will conduct a Force Protection Condition Elevation Drill today. Soldiers, employees, Families, residents, guests and visitors may see Soldiers with weapons responding to planned events as part of the drill.

Do not be alarmed; this is part of the drill to ensure Fort Polk is prepared for any contingency and the safety of everyone on Fort Polk. Any questions or inquiries should be directed to the Installation Antiterrorism Office at 531-6007 or the Warrior Operations Center at 531-4916.

DCRT course

The Fort Polk R2 Performance Center hosts an MRT+/Deployment Cycle Resilience Trainer (DRCT) Course Monday through March 13. The class is held at the R2 Performance Center, bldg 2380, Alabama Avenue. To register call 531-2427 or come by the center.

Off limits areas

The Armed Forces Disciplinary Control Board of the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk has placed off limits restrictions on the following establishments in the Fort Polk, Leesville, Barksdale Air Force Base and Shreveport:

- Blackhawks Motorcycle Club, 2463 VFW Road, Leesville
- The Venue, 11810 Lake Charles Highway, Leesville
- American Legion Post 510, 703 North Gladys St., Leesville
- Banshees Motorcycle Club, 1330 and 1340 Rapides Ave., Alexandria
- BEAST Motorcycle Club, 3149 Davis Road, West Lake
- Pipes Emporium, 1304 Centenary Blvd., Shreveport
- Kokopellis, 400 Commerce St., Shreveport
- Lotus, 2001 East Texas St., Suite 3, Bossier City

American Legion Post 510 is the only American Legion Post designated as off limits.

Army launches enlisted assignment market

By DEVON L. SUITS

Army News Service

FORT MEADE, Md. — Armor, military intelligence and some quartermaster Soldiers will be the first to pilot a new assignment market system, as the Army looks into new ways to enhance the assignment process for enlisted personnel.

The Assignment Satisfaction Key-Enlisted Marketplace pilot program will launch in June, providing Soldiers a full list of available positions for them to choose, said Sgt. Maj. Wardell Jefferson, the Army's G-1 sergeant major.

A small population of armor branch NCOs tested the marketplace process last year using spreadsheets and email correspondence, which resulted in improvements to the web application that will roll out in June, G-1 officials said. Plans call for fielding the new system to the entire force beginning in January 2021.

The pilot is a welcome addition when compared to the current assignment system that locks Soldiers into six basing options — three in the contiguous U.S and three overseas, Jefferson said during a Facebook Town Hall Monday hosted by Army G-1.

The current system "was not providing Soldiers with choices," he said, adding that the new system will allow Soldiers to rank and order their assignment preferences, "to meet their Family's needs."

Army civilian employment

The force has also implemented a host of initiatives to help streamline the hiring process for Army civilians, said Carol Burton, director of the Army's Civilian Human Resources Agency.

"With the release of the Army People Strategy, we now have, for the first time, a roadmap on how to build the 21st-century civilian talent management process," she said.

With the inclusion of direct hiring and non-competitive appointing authorities, the Army has decreased its civilian hiring time from around 130 days to less than 80 days, according to data collected during the first quarter of fiscal year 2020, Burton said.

The decrease in hiring time is due, in part, to the Army's streamlined security clearance process for select occupations, she said.

Under the new process, the Army can submit an FBI fingerprint background check to clear an applicant, but only if they have no derogatory information in their record, Burton said. The FBI check takes about 24 hours, decreasing the time to process by weeks, sometimes months.

The Army is also piloting a new pre-employment drug test procedure at Fort Benning, Georgia, and Sam Houston, Texas, Burton said. Under the pilot, a new applicant can start their onboarding process as they wait for their drug test to be approved, which could take several weeks.

"We know that less than 1% of the applicants come back positive on a drug test. It is a low risk, but we still want to be careful," she said. "We are committed to trying to improve the process and reduce the hiring time."



Soldiers with 6th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, test their M1A2 Abrams for the first time at Fort Bliss, Texas, Oct. 18, 2019. Filling units with talented Soldiers is a goal of the Assignment Satisfaction Key-Enlisted Marketplace pilot program that launches in June.

STAFF SGT. KRIS BONET / ARMY NEWS SERVICE

Army People Strategy

The new assignment pilot and improvements to the civilian hiring process are just a few examples of how the Army is putting "people first," officials said during the Facebook Live session.

Under the Army People Strategy, the force is refining the way it acquires, develops, employs and retains its Soldiers and civilian personnel, said Casey Wardynski, the assistant secretary of the Army for manpower and reserve affairs.

"This is probably the most pivotal approach to people in the Army since the volunteer (force) way back in the early 70s. In terms of national security, I think it gives us a huge edge. I don't think other armies ... are going to take this approach."

CASEY WARDYNSKI
Asst. Sec. of Army

With the People Strategy, "it is clear that all our senior leaders are lined up and have a common vision," Wardynski said. "(Army senior leaders) have a good idea of where we are heading, how we are going to get there ... (and will play) a key role in allocating resources."

The Army's values of "honor, integrity, leadership, selflessness and country," is vital to acquiring new personnel, as the force brings in roughly 5,000 new officers and about 70,000 new active-duty Soldiers each year, Wardynski said.

"You don't have a lot of lateral entry in an Army," he said. "The people we bring in today will be our sergeants major in 20 years. The officers we bring in today from ROTC, West Point, or (Officer Candidate School), will be our next chiefs of staff or senior leaders in 20 to 30 years."

"Acquisition is something we have to worry about every day ... because any gaps will show up down the line."

As the Army acquires the right personnel, they will also need to develop them through education, training and credentialing, according to the People Strategy. Through meaningful employment, Soldiers and civilians will be able to "unleash their interests," and maximize their contributions throughout the total force, Wardynski said.

For the first time, senior leaders are building a system that focuses on the people and what they "would like to do in the Army," Wardynski said. Programs like the Army Talent Alignment Process and the Integrated Personnel Pay System-Army, or IPPS-A, allow the force to put the right person, at the right place, at the right time, he said.

"This is probably the most pivotal approach to people in the Army since the volunteer (force) way back in the early 70s," Wardynski said. "In terms of national security, I think it gives us a huge edge. I don't think other armies ... are going to take this approach. That's not in their culture."

With employment is the need to retain talented Soldiers and civilians throughout the force, he said. With the inclusion of IPPS-A, for example, the Army will have a better system to help transition active-duty Soldiers to the Guard and Reserve. IPPS-A is the Army's centralized human resources and pay data system that is scheduled for full release across the National Guard at the end of March.

BOSS study boards give Polk Soldiers edge over peers

By T.C. BRADFORD

Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. -- Fort Polk's Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers, or BOSS, is best known for activities and events geared toward getting Soldiers out of the barracks and giving them fun activities to pursue on their down time. They take trips to sporting events, go skydiving, hold an annual beach bash, comedy shows and more.

They also get involved in the communities surrounding Fort Polk by serving at the soup kitchen in DeRidder. They help veterans in need like the time they helped a World War II veteran who was living in his car because his yard had gotten so out of control he was unable to get into his house.

They also pitched in to fulfill a young cancer patient's dream of having a tree house. They partnered with Louisiana's "Dreams Come True" to get the project done.

Another program they offer is study boards for Soldiers scheduled for Soldier of the Month, Quarter and Year as well as promotion boards.

Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Ausbun, garrison command sergeant major, attends each study board held at the Home of Heroes recreation center Tuesdays and Thursdays at 6 p.m. Ausbun explains the purpose of the boards; what board members are looking for when Soldiers appear before them; and techniques Soldiers can use to better prepare.

Ausbun said the study sessions assist in creating a shared understanding of U.S. Army doctrine and board procedures.

Ausbun then conducts mock boards taking Soldiers through the process from start to finish. He offers tips and strategies Soldiers can use for their best chance of success. These mock boards are observed by everyone that shows up and later, an after action review is held where others can critique the member and note some possible stumbling blocks on the road to success. Ausbun said the program has a 100% success rate with Soldiers who take part.

One Soldier can attest to the efficacy of participating in the mock board program. Spc. Susana Gomez, BOSS vice president, has attended several, beginning when she was a private first class.

"I wanted to go to the board but my sergeants wouldn't let me because I didn't have any experience," she said. "So I started coming to the practices to see what I needed to do to get myself in front of a board."

Gomez said she was a blank slate when she started attending the mock boards — without knowledge of the regulations she would need for success.

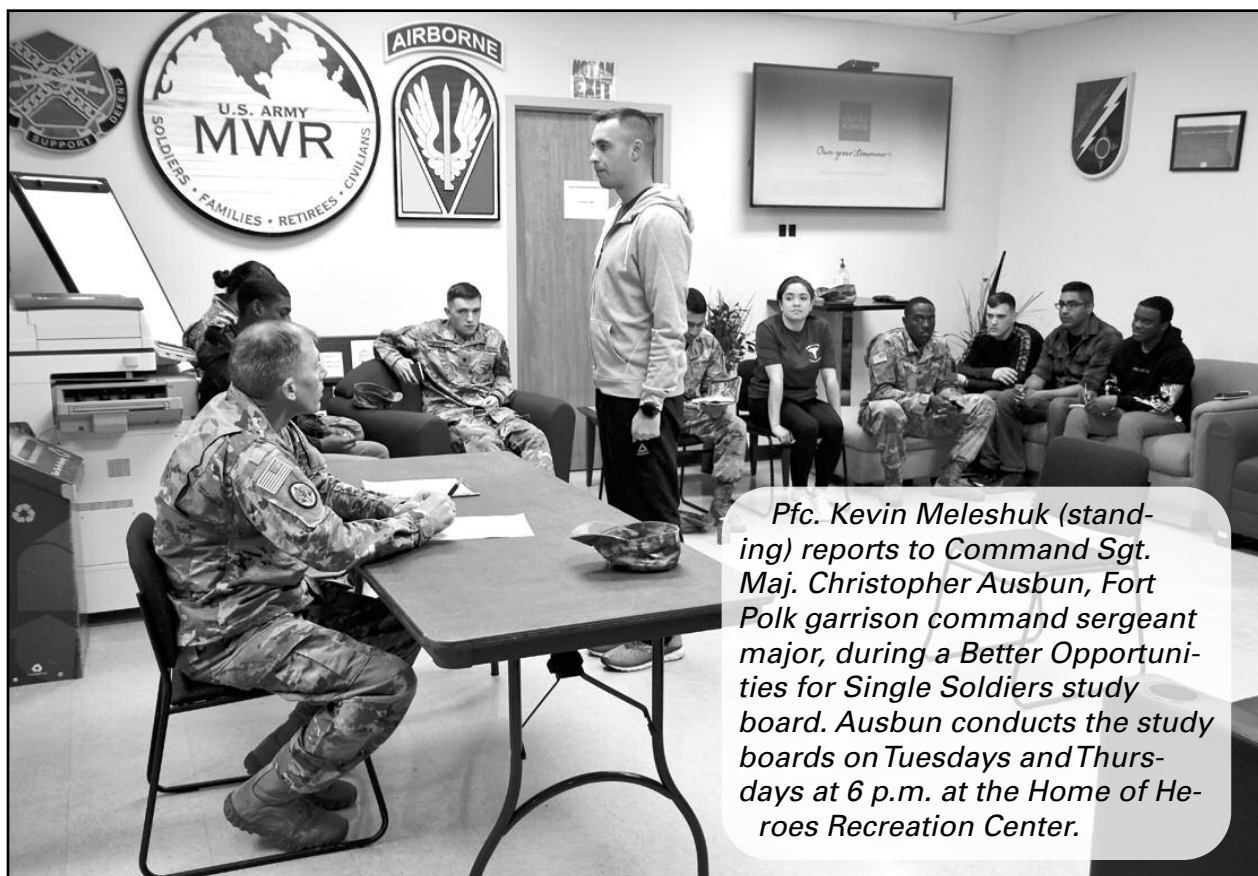
The mock sessions changed that. She said Ausbun tailors the mock board to the needs of the Soldier.

"Promotion boards want to see how much you know about non-commissioned officer roles and responsibilities," she said.

"Soldier of the Month, Quarter and Year boards are looking for your depth of Army knowledge ... things you should already know and be proficient with."

Gomez has a string of successes under her belt because of her time in the study boards.

"I went to the Soldier of the Month in October of 2019 and won that board. I went to the Soldier of the Quarter board in January and I won that



also," she said.

"I went to a promotion board the same day as the Soldier of the Quarter and earned my promotable status."

She said the thought of going in front of a board can be frightening, but Ausbun does a good job of getting you past your fears and gives Soldiers the tools to do well in a stressful situation.

"These study boards are special. This is a garrison command sergeant major coming out to teach us. You're not going to find that at many installations."

Pfc. Kevin Meleshuk, 32nd Hospital Center, was recently selected to appear before his unit's Soldier of the Month board. During a morning brief, his command sergeant major suggested he check out the BOSS mock board program to get practice before he faces the real board in about a month. He said he tried to prepare for the board by studying, but knew he needed some help.

"I was nervous when I walked in. I'm a new Soldier. I've been in a year and a half and been at Fort Polk for about six months," he said. "I figured I would show up and be ill prepared, which I definitely was, but I wanted to test the waters. I'm glad I was first one in the hot seat because now I know what I need to study."

Meleshuk said he felt a little confident after studying for the last two weeks but going through the process really made him aware of his weaknesses. He had high praise for the way Ausbun runs the program.

"When I walked in and met him, I went to parade rest to address him and he told me to just relax. He talked us through the whole process from the time you knock on the door until the time you are dismissed," he said. "He also made us aware that everyone sitting at the table has been in our shoes at one point in their careers. That was a comforting thought."

When asked how he did, Meleshuk replied, "I did absolutely terrible. I answered three to four questions out of a dozen asked. As soon as I sat

down in the hot seat, everything shut down. I was nervous but I think going through these sessions will develop the muscle memory that will allow me to work under pressure."

Meleshuk said Ausbun advised him to work with his sponsor on study sessions and have the sponsor quiz him the same way Ausbun did at the mock board.

He was so impressed with the program he's already spreading the word.

"I have some friends I'm going to text and have them come with me to the next one," he said. "I can't recommend this program enough. I think this is crucial practice for having success in front of the board."

Meleshuk said he was surprised at the small number of Soldiers taking advantage of the program. "I hope we can get the message out and have more Soldiers attend. I think it's an important step toward their future success."

Ausbun said in his opinion the program is vitally important.

"I call it 'Operation Give Back.' This serves as a touch point with our future leaders of the United States Army. These sessions help junior leaders truly understand regulations and services provided by the installation," he said. "Effective non-commissioned officers are leaders that put regulation into action to assist Soldiers and their Families on a daily basis."

Ausbun credits the BOSS team for the success of the program.

"They drive communication down to the unit level. I have told the BOSS President, Corporal Bianca Ortiz, that it does not matter the size of the study session," he said. "If we have one Soldier or a hundred Soldiers, we will still conduct the session because these Soldiers are taking personal time out of their day to become a better leader."

For more information, talk to your BOSS representative or head to the Home of Heroes Recreation Center Tuesdays and Thursdays at 6 p.m. They'll save a seat for you.

Hand washing important to protect against coronavirus

HEALTH.MIL

WASHINGTON — Hand washing is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your family from getting the coronavirus. Learn when and how you should wash your hands to stay healthy.

Wash your hands often

You can help yourself and your loved ones stay healthy by washing your hands often, especially during these key times when you are likely to get and spread germs:

- Before, during and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage

Follow five step to correct hand washing

Washing your hands is easy, and it's one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs.

Clean hands can stop germs from spreading from one person to another and throughout an entire community — from your home and workplace to child-care facilities and hospitals.

Follow these five steps every time.

- Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap and apply soap.
- Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails.
- Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
- Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.



- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Use hand sanitizer when soap, water unavailable

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations.

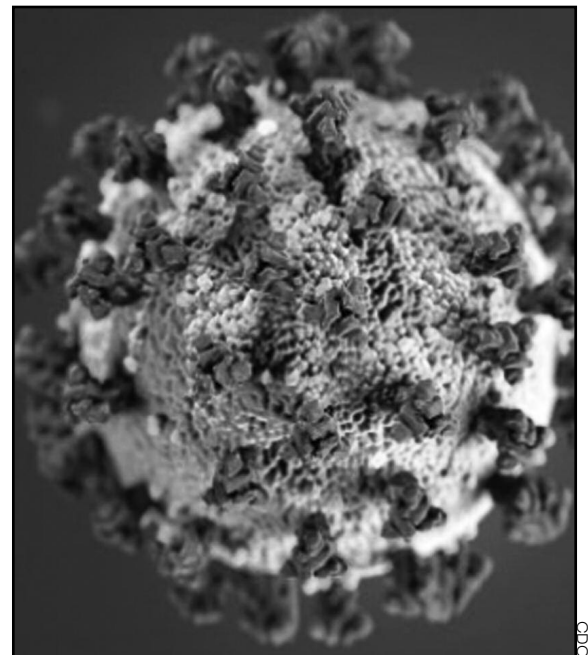
If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in many situations. However:

- Sanitizers do not get rid of all types of germs.
- Hand sanitizers may not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.
- Hand sanitizers might not remove harmful chemicals from hands like pesticides and heavy metals

How to use hand sanitizer

- Apply the gel product to the palm of one hand (read the label to learn the correct amount).
- Rub your hands together.



- Rub the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take around 20 seconds.

Department of Defense makes plans to combat coronavirus

By **JIM GARAMONE**

Army News Service

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department is making plans to combat the coronavirus, DoD leaders said March 2 during a news conference.

For the past six weeks, defense leaders have been meeting to plan for any possible scenario with the virus that first surfaced in China.

“We’ve issued a variety of (memoranda) and directives advising the force on how to deal with coronavirus,” Defense Secretary Dr. Mark T. Esper said.

The DoD civilian and military leadership, including the service secretaries and combatant command commanders, have worked together to ensure the department is ready for short- and

long-term scenarios, as well as domestic and international situations. Esper stressed that commanders at all levels have the authority and guidance they need to operate.

“(U.S. Northern Command) remains the global integrator for all DoD efforts and entities,” Esper said. “My number one priority remains to protect our forces and their families; second is to safeguard our mission capabilities and third (is) to support the interagency whole-of-government’s approach. We will continue to take all necessary precautions to ensure that our people are safe and able to continue their very important mission.”

Army Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the military has existing plans to combat an infectious disease outbreak.

The military is executing those plans.

DoD is communicating regularly with operational commanders to assess how the virus might impact exercises and ongoing operations around the world, the general said.

A command post exercise in South Korea has been postponed, but Exercise Cobra Gold in Thailand is continuing. Milley also said military research laboratories are working “feverishly” to try to come up with a vaccine.

Commanders are taking all necessary precautions because the virus is unique to every situation and every location, Esper said.

“We’re relying on them to make good judgments,” he said. “As new issues come up, DoD planners will work with all to combat the spread of the virus.”

3rd BCT, Patriot Inn compete for culinary greatness

By SPC. KAY EDWARDS
3RD BCT PAO

FORT POLK, La. — On Feb. 21, the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, and Patriot Inn Dining Facility, were recognized for their excellence in Army food service, and became regional winners of the Philip A. Connelly award.

Connelly devoted his professional life to perfecting food service management in both civilian and military venues. The Philip A. Connelly award is given out annually and was established in recognition of his devotion to food service and working in conjunction with Department of the Army Joint Culinary Center of Excellence, headquartered at Fort Lee, Virginia, and the National Restaurant Association.

“Winning this award shows how the Soldiers care about feeding their peers here at 3rd Brigade,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jason Gustad, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, 3rd BCT, 10th

Mtn Div, and NCOIC of the Patriot Inn DFAC. “It shows that they put in a lot of effort, their creative side, and also their attention to detail.”

There are more than 60 areas of inspection, with graders from both the restaurant industry and Fort Lee coming down to evaluate the Patriot Inn. “We had to prepare in many areas — admin, rations, training and cooking procedures,” said Gustad. “We started preparing approximately three months before, so it’s not just cooking a meal and presenting it, there’s so much more than that.”

3rd BCT and the Patriot Inn are among the seven finalists who will be moving on to the Department of the Army competition on March 18.

“It feels good because you’re not always recognized for things that you do,” said Pfc. Jquawn Williams, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div, and a cook at the Patriot Inn. “To be recognized as a group and as a family, and to achieve something that most dining facilities don’t achieve, feels really good.”



Above: Regional Phillip A. Connelly award.
Left: Patriot Inn chefs and support staff gather with the regional Phillip A. Connelly award the team won Feb. 21

Soldiers receive discipline, punishment for UCMJ violations

OSJA

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

The preamble to the Manual for Courts-Martial states, “The purpose of military law is to promote justice, to assist in maintaining good order and discipline in the armed forces, to promote efficiency and effectiveness in the military establishment and thereby strengthen the national security of the United States.”

Across Fort Polk, the following disciplinary issues continue to be prevalent: Sexual assault, driving under the influence, wrongful use or possession of controlled substances, fraternization, inappropriate relationships and domestic violence. Below are recent examples of adverse legal actions for units within the Fort Polk jurisdiction.

- An officer, assigned to 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment, was issued a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand for the maltreatment of subordinates and for abusing his grade and position to influence subordinates to alter his DA Form 705 after failing an Army Physical Fitness Test. The CG directed the reprimand be

locally filed.

- A first lieutenant, assigned to 2d Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, was issued a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand for consuming alcohol with a junior enlisted Soldier and cohabitating with a noncommissioned officer. The CG directed the reprimand be placed permanently in the officer’s AMHRR. The CG also issued the officer a relief for cause.

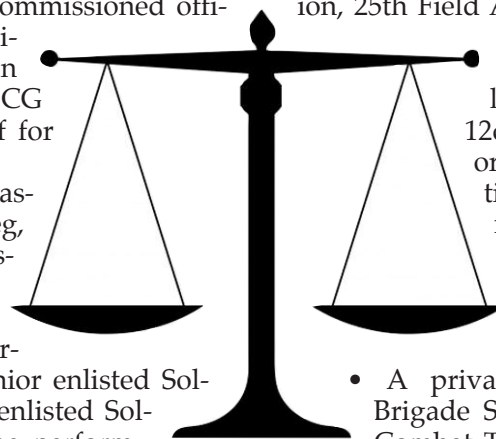
- A second lieutenant, assigned to 2nd Bn, 2nd Inf Reg, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div, was issued a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand for engaging in extramarital sexual conduct with a junior enlisted Soldier, fraternizing with junior enlisted Soldiers and being derelict in the performance of duties. The CG directed the reprimand be placed permanently in the officer’s AMHRR. The CG also issued the officer a relief for cause.

- A private (E-2), assigned to 317th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, was administratively separated under Chapter 14-12c(2), with a Gener-

al (Under Honorable Conditions) characterization of service for wrongful use of a controlled substance. Generally, this characterization of service results in the loss of a service member’s educational benefits.

- A private first class, assigned to 5th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment, 3d Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, was administratively separated under Chapter 14-12c, with a General (Under Honorable Conditions) characterization of service for operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated. Generally, this characterization of service results in the loss of a service member’s educational benefits.

- A private (E-2), assigned to 710th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, was punished under Article 15 for wrongful use of a controlled substance, in violation of Article 112a, Uniform Code of Military Justice. The service member was sentenced to a reduction to E-1; forfeiture of \$866 pay, suspended for 180 days; extra-duty for 45 days; and restriction for 45 days.



Deadline to implement REAL ID Act is Oct. 1

OSJA

FORT POLK, LA. — The REAL ID Act, passed by Congress in 2005, enacted the 9/11 Commission's recommendation that the federal government "set standards for the issuance of sources of identification, such as driver's licenses."

The REAL ID Act establishes minimum security standards for license issuance and production and prohibits federal agencies from accepting for certain purposes driver's licenses and identification cards from states not meeting the Act's minimum standards. The purposes covered by the Act are: Accessing federal facilities, entering nuclear power plants and boarding federally regulated commercial aircraft.

Beginning Oct. 1, the REAL ID Act will go into full effect. This means federal agencies will no longer accept the standard state-issued driver's license or identification to access federal facilities, buildings or installations. In addition, federally regulated, commercially operated airlines will also be prohibited from accepting the standard state-issued driver's license and identification cards.

Only driver's licenses and identification cards that are REAL ID compliant will be accepted for those purposes.

There are however, acceptable alternative forms of identification, such as military identification cards (including dependent and retiree), an Enhanced Driver's License (EDL) (issued in

five states currently) and a United States Passport.

While military members and dependents may rely on their military issued identification to access the installation, the REAL ID requirement will be problematic for other family members who cannot present a Real ID compliant identification or an acceptable alternative.

Therefore, it is important to inform family members outside the military of this new requirement.

At this time, most but not all states and U.S. territories are issuing REAL ID compliant identification. REAL ID compliant licenses are marked by a star on the top of the card. There are five current symbols in use: Gold star, black star, star cutout in gold circle, star cutout in black circle and star cutout in grizzly bear.

The EDL is an exception to the star marking system. Rather than a star, an EDL will state "En-

hanced Drivers License" on the front of the card.

State driver's license and identification cards that do not meet the Real ID standard will specifically state "Not for federal identification."

However, if an identification was issued before the state began issuing REAL ID compliant license or identification cards, there may not be any symbol or identifying language on the card. Therefore, that card would not meet the federal identification requirement.

Persons who are not sure if their state-issued ID is compliant should check with their state driver's license agency.

For more information regarding the

compliance status of the various states, acceptable alternative forms of identification and other general information regarding the enforcement of the REAL ID Act, visit the Department of Homeland Security's website at www.dhs.gov/real-id.

Distinguishing Real ID from regular license



Installation tax center: Filers can correct mistakes

By MICHAEL W. MOORE JR.

OIC, Installation Tax Office

FORT POLK, La. — The Fort Polk Installation Tax Center is open for business. Hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Wednesday and Friday, 11:30 to 7 p.m. on Thursday and 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday at bldg 1455, 2165 Ninth St., in the Home of Heroes Recreation Center. Call 531-1040 to schedule an appointment. Walk-ins are welcomed, but appointments take priority.

Many taxpayers believe when they file their taxes everything is final and they cannot correct mistakes made by them or their tax preparers. This can be stressful, especially if your tax return says you owe money that you do not believe you owe.

What many taxpayers fail to realize is they have the right to pay ONLY the amount of tax that is legally due.

This is one of 10 Taxpayer Bill of Rights. Taxpayers have fundamental rights when dealing with the IRS, one of which is the right to pay only the amount of tax legally due, including interest and penalties, and to have the IRS apply all tax payments properly.

This means taxpayers are entitled to:

- File for a refund if they believe they overpaid.
- Write or call the IRS office that sent the taxpayer a notice or bill. Taxpayers can do this if they believe the notice or bill is incorrect in any way.

When challenging information in a bill or no-

tice, taxpayers should be ready to provide copies of any records that may help correct the error. If the taxpayer is correct, the IRS will make the necessary adjustment to their account and send a corrected notice.

- Amend a tax return if they discover an error. They can also amend this return if there were mistakes in their filing status, income, deductions or credits.

- Request any amount owed be removed if it's more than the correct amount due.

- Request the IRS remove any interest from their account if the IRS caused unreasonable er-

rors or delays.

- Submit an offer in compromise, asking the agency to accept less than the full tax debt, if the taxpayer believes they don't owe all or part of the debt.

While it is important to file accurately to prevent delays, making a mistake is not the end of the world.

If you believe you have overpaid make sure you exercise all of your options.

Know your rights, and if you have any questions please stop by the Fort Polk Installation Tax Center or the Legal Assistance Office.

Community

Briefs

School lunch menu

The following school lunch menu is for Vernon Parish schools for Monday through March 13. Meals are served with salad bar and choice of milk:

Monday: Steak finger basket, mashed potatoes and gravy, Italian green beans, peach and Jell-O cup, whole wheat roll.

Tuesday: Barbecue ribettes on a whole wheat bun, Cajun French fries, peas and carrots, pineapple chunks.

Wednesday: Fish burger or fish sticks, Bush's baked beans, oven baked fries, mixed fruit.

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

March 13: Grilled cheese sandwich, vegetable soup, carrots/broccoli cup, apple wedges, chocolate pudding.

BJACH news

The Department of Defense recently sent a report to Congress outlining plans to re-size its military hospitals and clinics to better support wartime readiness.

In the report, DoD identified 50 military treatment facilities from each branch of the military that will have changes to their scope of care. Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital was not identified in the report. The report was sent in response to a Congressional directive that addressed restructuring military hospitals and clinics to increase focus on military and medical force readiness. "Our patients are our top priority," said Col. Jody Dugai, commander, BJACH "From our youngest child to our oldest retiree, we are committed to each and every person who comes through our doors for care."

Women's history

A Women's History Month observance is held at noon, March 18, at Fort Polk's Bayou Theater. This year's theme is "We Can Do It and She DID." The program is hosted by the 32nd Hospital Center. Call 531-1911 for more information.

Women veterans brunch

A Women Veterans Brunch, hosted by Veterans of Foreign Wars District 5, is held March 21 from 10 a.m.-noon at VFW Post 3106 in Leesville. Guest speaker is Command Sgt. Major Ruth Drewitt, Joint Readiness Training Center Operations Group, Task Force Sustainment. Groundbreaking for a Women Veterans Memorial is held at noon. Space is limited. Contact your local VFW to sign up. Active duty Soldiers can call (337) 353-9136.



Playground fun

Above: Caroline Webb, 3, looks down the slide tube at the covered playground next to Fort Polk's Catfish Cove March 3. Caroline is the daughter of Staff Sgt. Randy and Jessica Webb.

Left: Gunner Webb (13 months old) gets a push from his mom, Jessica Webb, on one of the swings at the covered playground next to Fort Polk's Catfish Pond.

CHUCK CANNON / GUARDIAN

MILITARY SPOUSE CAREER EMPOWERMENT EXPO

ONE DAY EVENT IN FORT POLK, LOUISIANA

Military spouses – meet in person with employers who are ready to hire!
FRIDAY, MARCH 27, 2020 • 9 A.M. TO 3 P.M. CT

At this free one-day hiring expo, you can:

- Meet face-to-face with SECO career coaches, Military OneSource consultants and employment readiness personnel.
- Prepare for your next job with resume tips, networking guidance and education options.
- Attend sessions around being your own boss and the federal hiring process, as well as the best ways to navigate a job search and self-care.

Expo perks perfect for you:

- Free child care available for attendees
- Lunch provided
- Opportunity for LinkedIn headshots and a free one year upgrade to LinkedIn Premium
- Hiring fair with Military Spouse Employment Partnership employers and local businesses

EXPO LOCATION

Fort Polk, Louisiana



Register now: <https://einvitations.afit.edu/inv/index.cfm?i=522310&k=0763400A7A57>

The Empowerment Expo is exclusively for spouses of Active Duty, Guard and Reserve service members assigned to Fort Polk. Registration is free and you will have to show your I.D. to enter.

To contact a SECO career coach, call Military OneSource at **800-342-9647**.



Read Across America volunteers readily roam Fort Polk schools to read Dr. Seuss books with rhythm, rhyme

GUARDIAN STAFF

FORT POLK, La. — In observance of Read Across America, Soldiers from 32nd Hospital Center, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk Command Group and firefighters from Fort Polk's Directorate of Emergency Services read books to children at North Polk and Parkway elementary schools March 2. The day is also known as Dr Seuss Day this yearly observance, inaugurated by the National Education Association, is celebrated on the school day that is nearest Dr Seuss' birthday.

NPE also had a Wacky Wednesday event to celebrate Read Across America. Children dressed in weird and wonderful to celebrate Dr. Seuss characters and books.



JEAN GRAVES / GUARDIAN



NPE



ANGIE THORNE / GUARDIAN

"And when they played they really PLAYED. And when they worked they really WORKED."



ANGIE THORNE / GUARDIAN



ANGIE THORNE / GUARDIAN



JEAN GRAVES / GUARDIAN

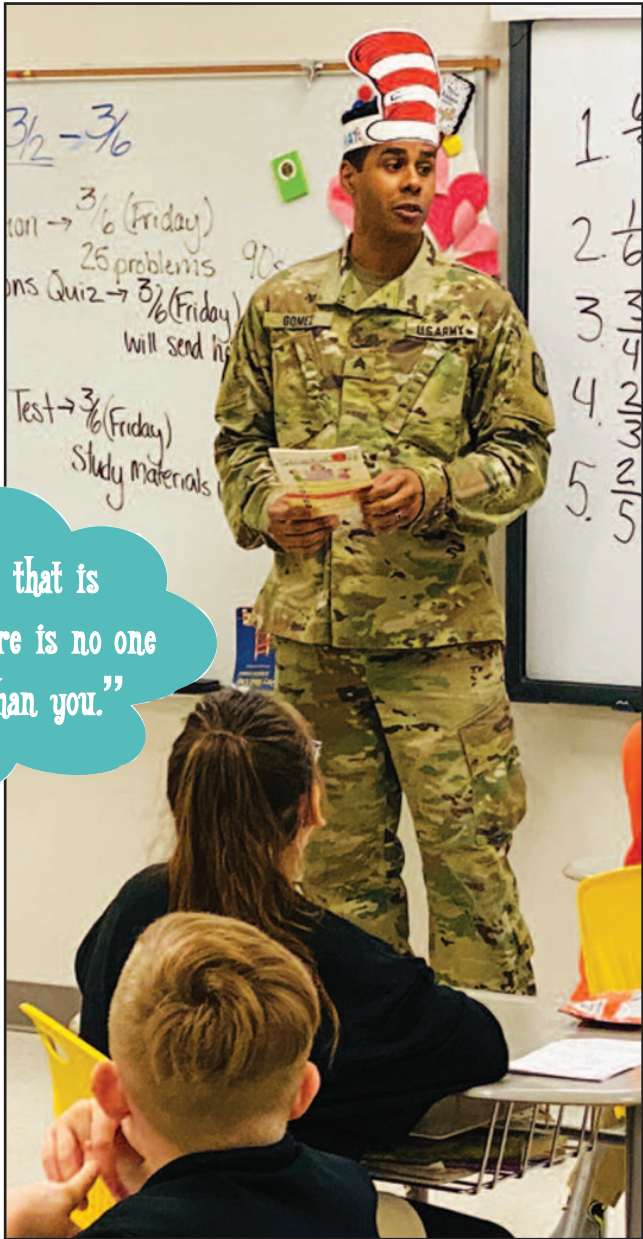


JEAN GRAVES / GUARDIAN

"Today you are you, that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is youer than you."



TC BRADFORD / GUARDIAN



JEAN GRAVES / GUARDIAN



ANGIE THORNE / GUARDIAN

"Don't give up! I believe in you all. A person's a person no matter how small!"



TC BRADFORD / GUARDIAN

Training pays off for AAFES employee

By T.C. BRADFORD
Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. -- Members of Fort Polk's Directorate of Emergency Services Fire Department gathered at the Main Post Exchange food court to honor an Army and Air Force Exchange Service employee who went through annual fire training and used the lessons learned to put out a real-world fire at the Qdoba restaurant.

Katrina Walker explained what happened. "I was in my office doing paperwork when one of my associates came in and said they needed me. I was finishing up my job intending to see what they needed when I was done, but they told me it was a fire. I went to see what was going on and saw the fire extinguisher. Everyone was panicking a bit, but I remembered the fire training I took and sprayed the fire out. We walked away and the fire flared back up. I went back and sprayed the fire again, ensuring it was under control and called 911 to have the fire department look at it."

Chad Estes, lead fire inspector, presented Walker with a certificate for her actions that day. "We're here to honor Katrina Walker for her quick action in using the fire extinguisher to put out a cooking fire. Her actions saved the government money and ensured the restaurant remained open to serve our Soldiers and their Families. She also potentially saved lives, including the lives of the fire fighters who responded."

Estes said fire safety training classes are held yearly during fire prevention week. He said Walker's actions prove the training does build



Fort Polk Fire inspectors and Post Exchange management honor Katrina Walker for her quick thinking when a grease fire broke out at Qdoba restaurant. Pictured: from left, Chad Estes, lead fire inspector; Jimmy McArthur, fire inspector; Walker; Michelle Myers, food court manager; Ron McDuffie, General Manager; and Carlos Jackson, fire inspector.

muscle memory that takes over during an emergency.

"It feels good. I'm proud. I'm just happy I was

able to save the company money and make sure nobody was hurt," said Walker. "I feel like I did my job."

MARCH 2020

ARMY VOLUNTEER CORPS & ARMY FAMILY TEAM BUILDING: (337) 531-1895		
24, 25, 26	0830-1500	AFTB LEVEL G @FRC
EMPLOYMENT READINESS PROGRAM: (337) 531-1957		
10	1000-1400	10 STEPS CLASS @FRC
	1730-2000	
27	1000-1300	MILITARY SPOUSE EXPO @WARRIOR CENTER
FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAM: (337) 531-1938		
03	1130-1330	ANGER & STRESS CLASS @ACS
FINANCIAL READINESS PROGRAM: (337) 531-1957		
04, 11, 25	0800-1230	FIRST TERMERS MONEY MANAGEMENT @ACS
NEW PARENT SUPPORT PROGRAM: (337) 531-7065		
EVERY TUES.	0900-1100	PLAY MORNING @ACS
26	1400-1700	BABY BOOTCAMP @FRC
MOBILIZATION AND DEPLOYMENT: (337) 531-7087		
11	0830-1230	KEY CONTACT TRAINING @FRC
	1700-2000	
18	0900-1530	SFRG LIAISON TRAINING @FRC
25	0830-1230	SFRG INFORMAL FUNDS @FRC
	1700-2000	
RELOCATION READINESS PROGRAM: (337) 531-6952		
EVERY THURS.	0800-1400	NEWCOMERS @ACS
10, 24	CALL	OCONUS/CONUS ORIENTATION @ACS

CREATIVE PARENTING

19 MARCH 2020
FROM 1200-1400
ACS BLDG. 920

ENJOY PAINTING ON A CANVAS WHILE YOU LEARN TIPS ON PARENTING.
FREE CHILDCARE PROVIDED FOR CYS ENROLLED CHILDREN
TO REGISTER: 337-531-1938

JRTC and Fort Polk
Fort Polk Military Spouse Career Empowerment Expo
DoD Military Spouse Career Empowerment Expo

March 27th 2020, 9:00am – 3:00pm
The Warrior Center

Morning Program:

- Guest Speakers from Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP), MilitaryOneSource, and a DoD Program Overview.

Afternoon Program:

- Lunch and Learn sessions with topics such as "Be Your Own Boss" and the "Federal Hiring Process."
- Additional sessions will include topics of "Not Finished Learning Yet," "Let's Get To Work," and much more!
- Career Coaches from MilitaryOneSource will answer questions about career paths, education benefits, and resume reviews.
- Hiring Fair and Resource Booths – 30 Employer tables and 10 Resource tables
- Free LinkedIn Professional Headshots.

Registration will be required for both morning and afternoon sessions.
Child care will be provided to all registered CYS hourly care children.
Registration for childcare must be done NLT 20 March 20.
Registration information will be published NLT March 9, 2020.
For more information contact: Stacy Delgado 931-6922/Stacy.Delgado@usarmy.mil

ACS EVENTS

MFLC
Military & Family Life Counselor Program

Need someone to talk to? Call (337) 531-1941
MFLCs work with families, individuals, couples and children to provide non-medical problem identification counseling services. Walk into ACS: 0800-1630 (M-F)

Find us on **Facebook** @FORTPOLKARMYCOMMUNITYSERVICE

Fort Polk Families lace skates, show moves at CYS event

By **ANGIE THORNE**

Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. — Remember skating (or wobbling) to your favorite tunes while jamming out to music and having fun with your friends? Good times, right? At least that's what Fort Polk's Child, Youth and School Service's Youth Sports planned for when they hosted Skating Through the Decades — a skating event held at Siegfried Youth Center Feb. 29. The event was open to the public and all ages were welcome to skate, as well as dress in the garb of their favorite decade to compete in the costume contest.

Jenna Mallon, a CYS sports and fitness program specialist, said she and her coworkers are always brainstorming ideas to provide kids with safe, fun and inexpensive opportunities to play.

"Skating seemed like the perfect activity. Then we had to come up with fun themes for them and their families to enjoy while skating," she said.

Mallon said events like this are especially important because it means Fort Polk Families don't have to travel off post to have a good time.

"At CYS, we specialize in children, but this event is the perfect opportunity for Families to spend time together, too."

Elizabeth DeKam, a Fort Polk parent, said much of the fun took place before the skating event began.

"My daughters, Faith, 12, and Daisy, 11, chose the eighties as their decade because of the big hair, blue eye shadow and wild neon colors. We had great time getting ready. They said they learned that it (the 80s) was the decade where bigger was better," she said.

DeKam said Daisy told her that if she (DeKam) could do this every day while growing up, then they (her daughters) should be able to handle it for one day.

Daisy said she loved seeing what her mom dressed up like when she was her age.

"I love the way we did my hair. We used so much hair spray. Now that we are here, I also love singing to the music while I skate," said Daisy.

Faith said though she liked putting her 80s style outfit together with her mom and sister, she enjoyed skating because it gave her a chance to hang out with her friends.

DeKam said between the stress of home life, school and all the activities they take part in, it's important for military kids to let loose, have fun and relax thanks to events like this.



Arabella Toncu, 6, skates with a little help at the CYS Skating Through the Decades event held Feb. 29.

Vanessa Blalock, 13, said she dressed up with clothes somewhere between the 80s and 90s.

"I love my ripped jeans and the skating is so much fun, especially in the dark with the colored lights all over the gym," she said.

Tiffany Migi, a Fort Polk parent, said her kids don't give up when it comes to skating.

"They might fall, but they are determined to learn to skate better. This event gives them the chance to do that while having fun. Their dad told them about this a week ago and they have been excited ever since. They are having a blast," she said.

Angela Ortiz brought her kids to Skating Through the Decades, but her children weren't the only ones out on the gym floor.

"Skating is a tradition in my family. I started skating when I was 4. We were so excited when we heard about this event because skating means so much to us."

"We love it," she said.

Jody Fowler, CYS, said events like Skating Through the Decades help the Fort Polk Families have a good time together.

"We want parents to have opportunities to do fun things with their kids and make memories that will last a lifetime," she said.

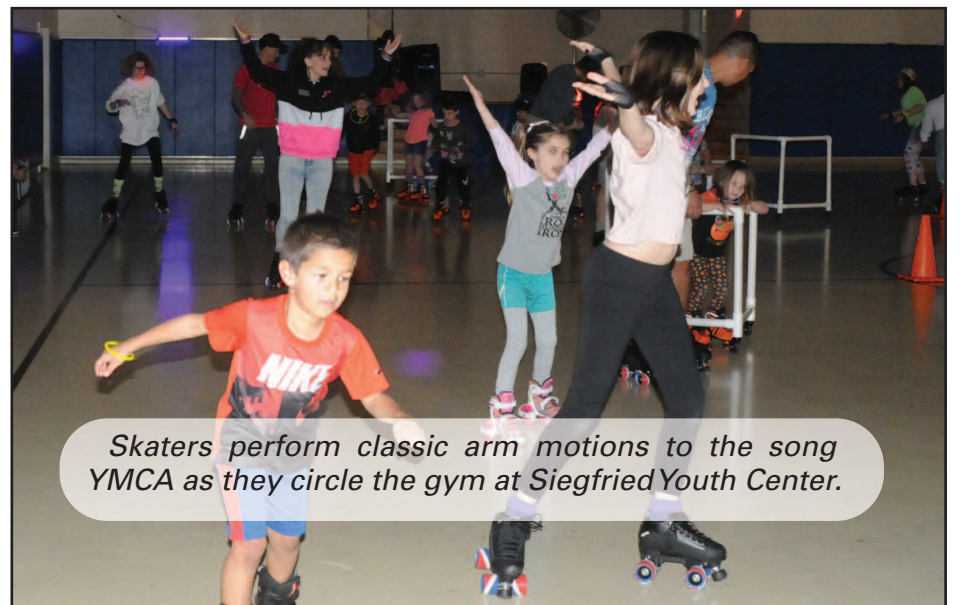
Fowler said skating camps are in the works for kids who want to master skating.

"The exact dates haven't been set yet, but interested parents should be on the lookout for this learning opportunity around June. The camp is a great chance to help kids get ready because we will probably have another of these skate events this summer as well," she said.



Balance and flow are the focus when it comes to skating with style.

ANGIE THORNE / GUARDIAN



Skaters perform classic arm motions to the song YMCA as they circle the gym at Siegfried Youth Center.



Jenna Mallon (left) and Alexis Gasby, CYS Sports and Fitness Program associates, dance to the music at Skating Through the Decades between handing out skates to participants.

Check out range of entertaining DFMWR events, opportunities

DFMWR

FORT POLK, La. — Fort Polk's Directorate of Family Morale, Welfare and Recreation offers a wide array of programs and events for every member of the Family. You don't want to miss your chance to experience the fun to be had over the next few months.

Laser Tag

The Warrior Hills Golf Course brings you Laser Tag on the driving range. Test your tactical skills with your friends and family today from 5:30-8 p.m. Sessions are \$5 per eight-minute session or \$12 for three sessions and all ages are welcome. Refreshments are available on the deck while you wait. For more information call (337) 531-4661.

Golf tourney

Warrior Hills Golf Course hosts the monthly Garrison Commander's Golf Tournament today. Shotgun start at 11:30 a.m. Entry fee is \$25 and includes greens fee, cart, lunch and prizes. Winners names will be displayed on the Anvil Trophy. For more information call 531-1982.

Strongest Youth Competition

Does your child love to compete

and show their strength? If so, sign them up for the Child and Youth Services Strongest Youth Competition held March 21 at 10 a.m. at Perez Field. Each age division competes for one youth to prove themselves the strongest of the group through a series of challenges.

Challenges include a tire flip, flexed arm hang, log toss and more. Prizes are awarded to the champion of each age division and the runner up of the division, not per event.

This event is free and open to the public. Registration begins the day of the event at 9 a.m. at Perez Field.

For more information, call (337) 531-6004.

Movie Night

The return of Movie Night is quickly approaching. Join the Fort Polk community at Headquarters Field March 28 for another great outdoor movie featuring "Frozen 2."

There will be free popcorn, candy, hot dogs, nachos, drinks and the signature MWR light up bracelets.

Concessions open at 6:30 p.m. and the movie begins at 7:30 p.m. Be there early to grab your goodies and get a great seat. Save the date for FreedomFest 2020!

The Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk's FreedomFest will be held July 18. Country music superstar Toby Keith will headline the event, which will include fireworks, static displays, salute to the nation, food vendors and children's activities.

Amazing Race

Join in the fun as the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk stages its version of the Amazing Race. Participants will race around South Fort Polk and perform activities for clues to the next destination. Challenges include physical fitness and critical thinking activities. Register at the Allen Memorial Library and/or the Home of Heroes Recreation Center. For more information call 531-2665.



Amazing Race
Mar 2
8am
Showboat Theatre
Register • Feb 15-27
Allen Memorial Library & Home of Heroes Rec Center
Costume Contest

LIMITED SPACES
16 Family Teams & 16 Soldier/Adult Teams
(3 - 5 per team) First Come First Serve!

Race around South Polk & perform activities
for clues to the next destination.
Call 337-531-6956 for more info

Challenges include physical fitness & critical thinking activities

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY:
ALFORD MOTORS, CHRISTUS HEALTH PLAN, SOUTH WEST BEVERAGE, USAA
BENOIT FORD, CORVIAS, PAPA JOHN'S, VOLKSWAGEN OF LAKE CHARLES
AMERICAN WARRIOR NETWORK, K&R FURNITURE, NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY
ACADEMY SPORTS, BARKSDALE FEDERAL CREDIT UNION, GEICO,
SABINE STATE BANK, TABOO HARLEY DAVIDSON

Sponsorship does not imply endorsement by the US Army AND/OR JRTC AND FORT POLK

Youth can volunteer

By **ANGIE THORNE**

Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. — American Red Cross, in partnership with Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, announces the application dates for its annual summer youth volunteer program.

The program begins June 1 and runs six weeks with a holiday break. The program ends July 10 with a Youth Volunteer Recognition Ceremony.

Teens are placed in participating departments/clinics gaining experience in the workplace and medical setting by volunteering their time during the summer.

This is not a job-shadowing program. Teens will volunteer during duty hours Monday through Thursday each week and will have experiential learning each Friday.

Applications are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis and must be completed in their entirety. Spaces are limited and based on the number of volunteers requested by hospital personnel.

Eligibility:

- Ages 13 to 17. Teen must be currently in high school or entering high school in the fall.
- Military ID card holders are priority.
- Fort Polk Department of Defense contractors and DoD civilian dependents are eligible.

How to apply?

- Submit an application through

April 13. Application includes a paper application, teacher recommendation, parental consent forms and essay. No applications will be accepted after April 13. All parts of the application are due including essay and school recommendation. If any part is missing the application is considered incomplete and will not be considered.

- Applications are available by emailing fortpolk@redcross.org.

- Application should be submitted to fortpolk@redcross.org with the subject line Youth Application and teen's name.

- Teens and a parent must attend one orientation if accepted. Details provided in acceptance email.

- Teens must be able to complete military requirements, both the health clearance (Occupational Health will be available June 1). Applicants need to update their immunization record and register with the Composite Health Care System) and HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act training (online 1 hour course). Details provided in acceptance email.

- If any of the requirements are not completed by the start date teens will be ineligible to participate. Completing the requirements is the responsibility of the teen applicant.

If you have any questions regarding the application, please contact the Fort Polk Red Cross Office at 531-4783 or email fortpolk@redcross.org.

Fort Polk community leaps into healthier lifestyle

By KATHY PORTS

BJACH Public Affairs Officer

FORT POLK, La. — Lifestyle changes are never easy, but on the official Leap Day, Feb. 29, more than 485 people took that first leap towards improving their health and that of their Family by attending the Sixth Annual Community Health Fair at the Main Post Exchange Mall.

More than 20 informational booths — women's health, vaping and tobacco cessation, behavioral health, pharmacy services, dental, patient centered medical home, health promotions, Army Substance Abuse Program, Family Morale, Welfare and Recreation fitness and the Army Wellness Center and the Wheelock Fitness Center subject matter experts — were on hand to answer questions and offer suggestions on the road to better health. Veterinarian Services was on hand to answer questions about family pets and their services.

Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital's Physical and Occupational Therapy Department staff demonstrated a variety of workout equipment available through the

Army and Air Force Exchange Service.

They showed patrons how to properly use the equipment to achieve the maximum benefit from their workout. The equipment featured exercise options, many of them useful to preparing for the new Army Combat Fitness Test that takes effect Oct. 1.

Representatives from Fort Polk's Army Wellness Center as well as Veterans Affairs, Humana (TRICARE) and Sexual Harassment/Assault Response Prevention program were also on hand. Fort Polk's AWC is fully staffed and offers classes, assessments and health coaching sessions. For more information about this state-of-the-art facility, call 531-3055 to schedule an appointment.

As an extra bonus, the Main Exchange offered special discounts and savings geared towards fitness equipment, footwear, workout attire and wellness for the entire family. Kids attending the fair had the opportunity to meet Dr. Seuss's The Cat in the Hat along with some healthy characters — Mr. Banana, Ms. Pea and Mr. Carrot.

The Army Performance Triad — sleep, activity and nutrition — ini-



KATHY PORTS / BJACH PAO

First Lt. Jessica Carrignan, a Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital physical therapist, watches as Christian Wilkinson, 9, tries out the ab roller during the Leap Day Health Fair Feb. 29.

tiative encourages military families to achieve and maintain a balance by getting eight hours of sleep per day, walking at least 10,000 steps each day or getting some type of exercise and by eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables.

BJACH's Patient Centered Medical Home checked blood pressure and informed those with a high reading to have it checked out, explaining the importance of maintaining a within range blood pressure.

Check out activities, events offered by Fort Polk’s Main Post Exchange

MAIN POST EXCHANGE

FORT POLK, La. — The Fort Polk Main Post Exchange offers the following activities and events for Soldiers and their Families:

• **You made the grade**
For 20 years, the Army and Air Force Exchange Service has celebrated the resiliency of military children who work hard in school, awarding them nearly \$550,000 through its You Made the Grade program.

Fort Polk students in first through 12th grades who maintain a B average or higher are eligible to receive a \$5 gift card each grading period.

Students who qualify for a gift card also have a chance to win a \$2,000, \$1,500 or \$500 Exchange gift card by filling out a sweepstakes entry form.

To receive the gift card and sweepstakes entry form, military students can bring their report card to the customer service desk at the Fort Polk Main Exchange.

Homeschooled students can participate by providing written affirmation of their grades from a parent or other community-authorized education provider. Students can submit one sweepstakes entry for each grading period.

Students can send completed sweepstakes forms to:

You Made the Grade
PO Box 227398
Dallas, TX 75222-7398

• **Tea time**
It’s tea time. The Army and Air Force Exchange Service invites princes and princesses from far and wide to a Disney Princess Tea Party Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The tea party will take place at the Fort Polk Main Exchange.

Refreshments will be served and royal activities will be available for guests. Royal guests will have a ball with an assortment of Disney princess toys to play with during the party.

For more information call 537-1001, ext. 208.

• The Exchange has scheduled the following movies for Bayou Theater:

* Today — “Onward,” rated PG, 6 p.m. (first run)

* Saturday — “Onward,” rated PG, 3 p.m. (first run), “Onward,” rated PG, 6 p.m. (first run)

* Sunday — “Onward,” rated PG, 3 p.m. (first run), “Onward,” rated PG, 6 p.m. (first run)

Ticket prices are as follows: First run showing, adults \$7.25, children \$5.75; regular showing, adults \$6.50, children \$4.25; regular 3D, adults \$8.50, children, \$6.25. Bayou Theater is located at 7830 Mississippi Ave., bldg 930.

• The Army and Air Force Exchange Service at Fort Polk provides 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**.

As part of its efforts to help Soldiers and their Family members BE FIT, Fort Polk Exchange restaurants offers better-for-you meals and snacks that support readiness and resiliency.

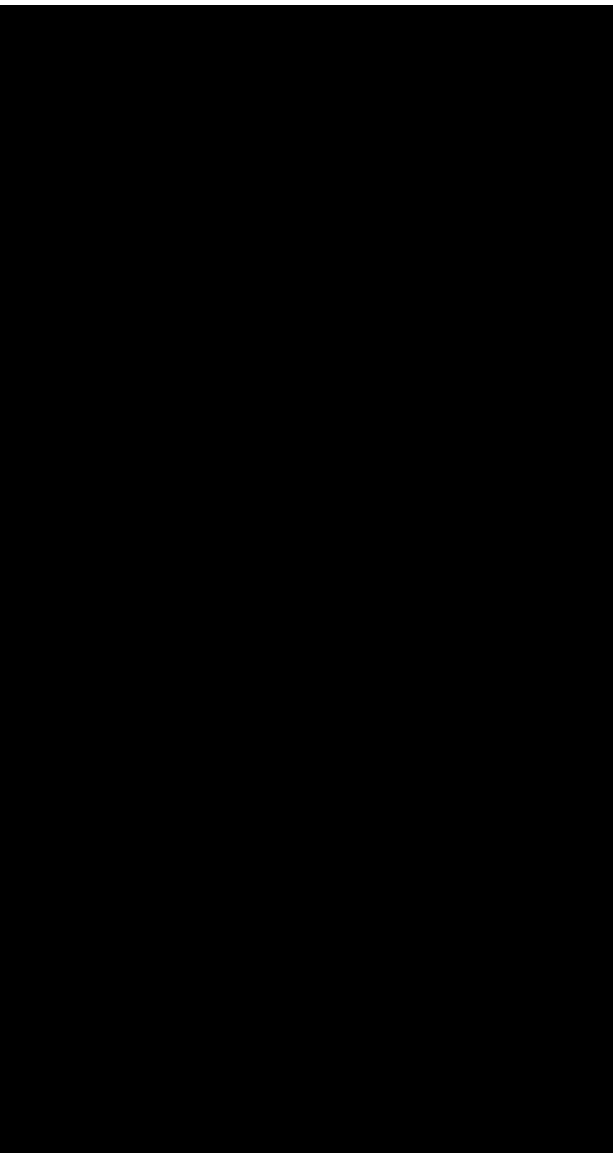
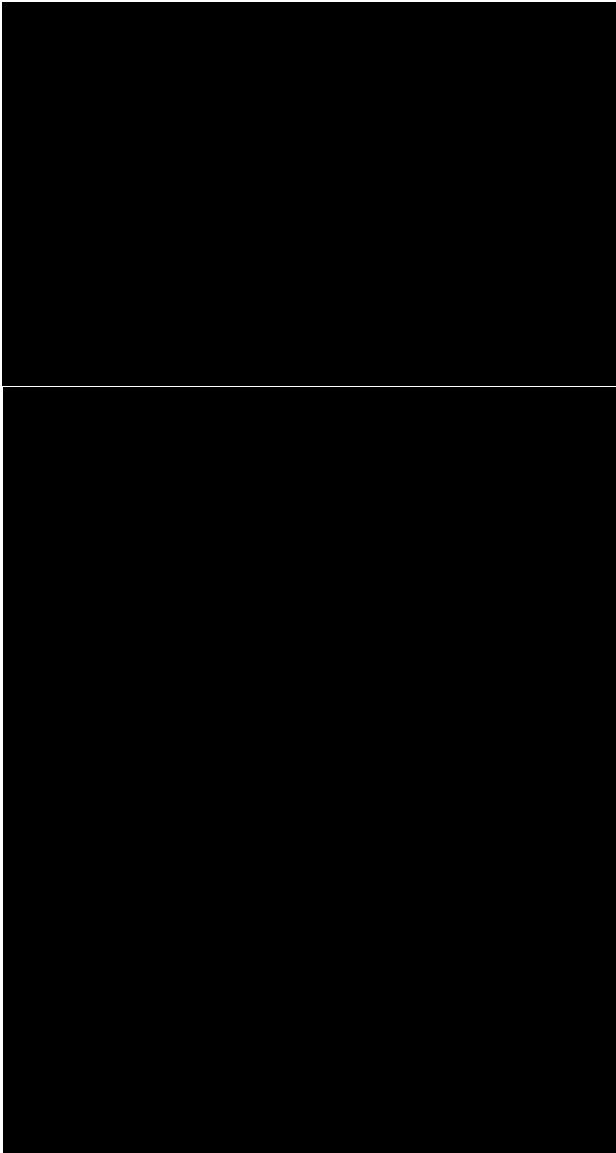
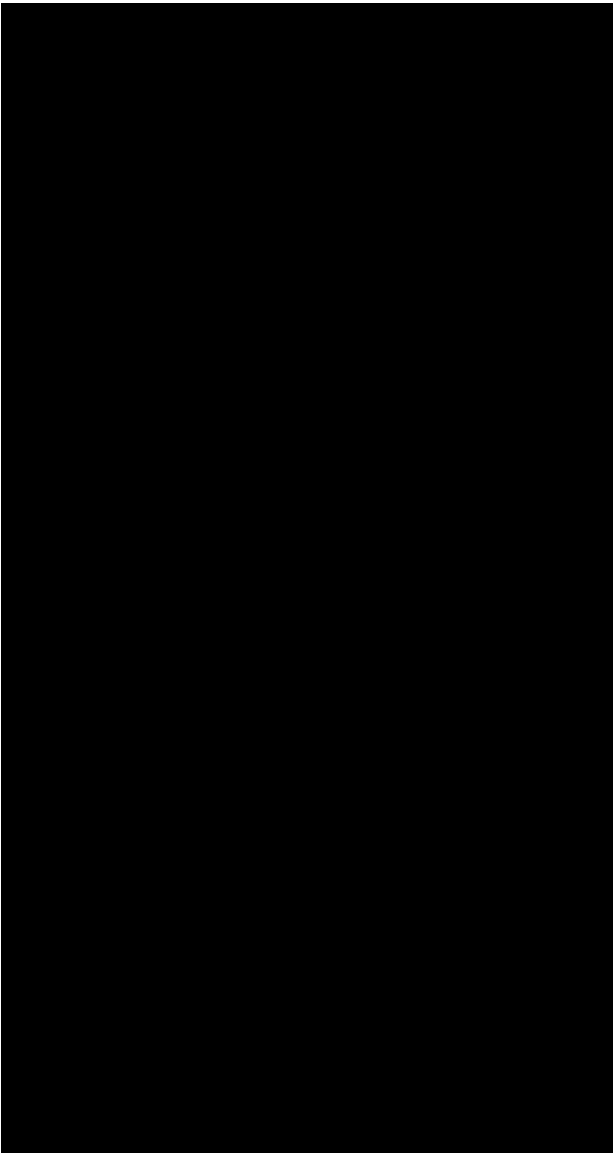
Online nutritional guides for Fort Polk Exchange restaurants are available at **www.shopmyexchange.com/be-fit/nutrition**.

• 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**.



Lagniappe

Festivals

• Black Heritage Festival

The annual Black Heritage Festival takes place March 14 at the Lake Charles Civic Center, 900 Lakeshore Drive. The festival features live entertainment, mouth-watering food and great family fun. The focus is to bring together the cultures of Africa and Southwest Louisiana and highlight the best in the community by celebrating diversity, culture and education.

For more information call (337) 436-9588.

• Iowa Rabbit Festival

Celebrating the economic and

culinary impact rabbits have in Southwest Louisiana, the annual Iowa Rabbit Festival — held March 20-21 — is a one-of-a-kind event.

This family-friendly festival has it all: Great food, live music and tasty cook-offs. Don't miss this hare-raising good time at the Burton Coliseum Complex, 7001 Gulf Hwy, Lake Charles. Admission is \$10 per person.

For more information visit www.iowarabbitfestival.org.

• Film festival

The annual Cane River Film Festival takes place at Northwestern State University's Russell Hall, 175 Sam Sibley Drive, Natchi-

toches, March 20-21. The mission of the festival is to showcase, nurture and support emerging creative filmmakers. The festival builds a unique and powerful hub for filmmakers all over the world. This year's event highlights the work of international and national student/independent filmmakers and Natchitoches' contribution to the film industry.

For more information visit www.caneriverfilmfestival.com.

• Crawfish festival

The Crawfish & Music Festival takes place at the Lake Charles Civic Center, 900 Lake Shore Drive, March 28 from 11 a.m.-9 p.m.

This festival brings you the best of Louisiana culture with great food, wonderful people and live music as you eat and dance the day away. This year the festival spices things up with a zydeco jam session.

Bring your taste buds as there will be more than just crawfish, including your favorite Cajun treats and dishes available from various food vendors.

The admission-free carnival will be in full swing, offering fun for the entire family. There will be a kids zone and plenty of shopping opportunities for adults.

Tickets are \$12.24 per person.

For more information or to purchase tickets visit www.eventbrite.com/e/crawfish-music-festival-tickets.

Miscellaneous

• Mansfield presentation

Of all the general officers produced during the American Civil War, perhaps none was as intriguing as Prince Camille Armand de Polignac, of France. The life of this notable figure is featured in a special presentation at Mansfield State Historic Site, 15149 La. Hwy 175, three miles south of Mansfield, March 14 at 2 p.m.

Polignac was a royal soldier of fortune and adventurer who excelled in mathematics, science, and the art of war. He was part of the Confederate army and led a division of Louisiana troops at the battles of Mansfield and Pleasant Hill in April 1864. Admission is \$4 per person ages 4-61. Seniors over 62 and children under 4 are admitted free. For more information call (888) 677-6267

• Azalea trail

Enjoy the Lafayette Historic Azalea Trail, a winding drive through historic districts, downtown, the university and oil center and neighborhood garden districts with grand boulevards for about 25 miles of the city's urban core. The official bloom season begins Sunday and extends thru March, but the date of the Azalea Trail event takes place Saturday from 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

This cultural floral attraction is a breathtaking display of color and beauty that has attracted thousands of visitors over the years.

Trolley rides are available March 7 and 14 (stops and details on the website). Trolley rides are held from 9 a.m.-noon and last an hour. They begin at the Alexandre Mouton House gardens, 1122 Lafayette St., at 9 a.m.

The azalea reception is held March 7 at the Vermilionville Living History Museum and Folk Life Park, 300 Fisher Road.

For more information visit www.azaleatrail.org.

• St. Patrick's Day parade

Now that Mardi Gras is over, if you haven't had enough of parades then you don't want to miss the 35th annual Wearin' of the Green St. Patrick's Day parade held March 14 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., 1800 South Acadian Thruway, Baton Rouge.

There will be marching bands, bagpipers, festive floats, marching groups, dignitaries and more. For more information visit www.visitbatonrouge.com.

Clubs/groups

• 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. For more information call (337) 208-0896.

• Bass Masters

Join the Fort Polk Community Bass Masters. The club meets monthly on the Tuesday before each tournament.

Meetings are held at 6 p.m. at the New Llano American Legion, Post 387, 500 Vernon St. The next meeting takes place March 24. The March tournament takes place at Sam Rayburn Lake March 28. The entry fee is \$40.

For more information visit www.fortpolkcommunitybassmasters.com.

