



FORGING THE

WARRIOR SPIRIT

THE JRTC & FORT POLK GUARDIAN

Vol. 47, No. 16

Home of Heroes @ Fort Polk, LA

April 17, 2020

JRTC and Fort Polk combats COVID-19 Isolation *Suicide Prevention*

By Lt. Col. MICHAEL DAVIDSON

Command surgeon

CHUCK CANNON

Command information officer

FORT POLK, La. — The Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk community is built on a foundation of teamwork and taking pride in caring for Soldiers, Families civilians, and contractors, and families. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected people in many ways, often leaving the team with feelings of depression and isolation. And depression and isolation can be a potent mix leading to thoughts of suicide, according to current studies conducted since the onslaught of COVID-19.

There is help and hope on the installation. The empathy and compassion and willingness to help and serve have established an environment that JRTC/Fort Polk is going through this together, said Lt. Col. Michael Davidson, command surgeon.

As more Soldiers and Family members are placed into isolation or quarantine, the Polk team has risen to the challenge of ensuring the well-being of the community.

"The presence of leadership and

care givers within our community has allowed the medical, behavioral, and chaplain teams to provide resources to build and establish trust for each other," said Davidson.

Organizations throughout the installation have confronted head-on the challenges presented by the pandemic.

For many Soldiers, the best help comes from those they serve with daily — their battle buddies, chain of command and unit ministry teams.

Spc. Chase Cas-sady, 5th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, recently spent 14 days in isolation.

The self-professed introvert said even he got stir crazy after a few days alone.

"But my chain of command

called me about three times a day, and my squad leader and medic would call," he said. "I was contacted by our chaplain's assistant who asked me if I was being taken care of and fed."

Cassady said it was a surprise how much attention he received from his chain of command.

"I was expecting to be by myself for two weeks with food pushed under the door," he said. "But they really took care of me."

It was the same for Spc. Marcus Bloxton, 317th

Engineer Battalion, also recently spent 14 days in isolation.

"They (chain of command) fed me and checked up on me every day," he said. "They sent me stuff to keep me entertained and made sure I stayed busy. Both of my NCOs, my lieutenant and Chaplain (Jonathan) Dukes paid me visits. It was tough, but they helped me

through it."

Davidson, said many of the installation's chaplains and behavioral health professionals have developed programs and are actively reaching out to Soldiers to address their emotional wellbeing and potential depression resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the programs:

- Chap. (Maj.) John Smith and Capt. Daniella Preece, behavioral health officer, both with the 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div, work closely to reach their Soldiers and stay in contact with unit commanders, conducting wellness checks.

- Smith and Preece have created a Patriot wellness email address for Soldiers and Families to ask questions and identify challenges as they adjust to COVID19 restrictions.

- Preece and her unit ministry team posted a video to Facebook to discuss some of the challenges they have noticed. The team plans to have at least one video per week where they will address the challenges of the Patriots and their Families.

- Behavioral health providers are operating on a rotating schedule

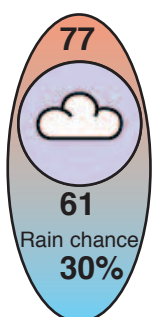
Please see Team, page 6



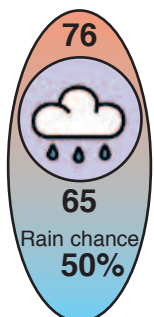
"HOME OF HEROES" THE JRTC AND FORT POLK TEAM



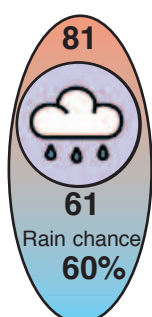
Weekend weather



Friday



Saturday



Sunday

Inside the Guardian

BOSS activities	3	Blood donations	11
Chaplain teamwork ...	4	Justice beat	12
Honoring kids	7	Gardening tips	13

Viewpoint

In our view

Guardian staff asked the Fort Polk community:
"What are you doing to stay positive and connected with family and friends while maintaining social distancing?"
Here are their responses:



Carrie Smith: "Our book club normally meets the first Tuesday of the month at a local restaurant. Because of the stay-at-home-order, we decided to meet virtually this month. It was nice to see a few friends (Amber La Mons and Jean Graves) to discuss the book. We had a small turn out, probably due to lack of chips and salsa."



Spc. Alejandro Gomez, 41st Transportation Company, 519th Military Police Battalion: "Finishing up my company's unit crest and calling my Family and friends during my personal time."



Keara Crouse: "We celebrated our son Owen's ninth birthday. We Facetimed with family in Kentucky who couldn't come for a visit while he opened his presents. We also had local friends drive by, play the happy birthday song on their car stereos and honk their horn for him."



Tiffany Nichols: "My mother did a virtual egg hunt with my daughter, Amelia (pictured). It was so cute! Mom even let her shop the bunny bucks store and plans to mail her rewards to her. Amelia and I are blessed to have such an amazing Gran and mother. She always goes above and beyond for all of us no matter what the obstacles may be"



Angela Wilson: "Enjoying the simple things in life. Spending time with my daughter, Lauren, before she heads off to college this fall."

Please see **View**, page 10



Guardian

Editorial Staff

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank
Joint Readiness Training Center
and Fort Polk commanding general

Col. Ryan K. Roseberry
Garrison commander

Kim Reischling
Public affairs officer

Chuck Cannon
Command information officer

Angie Thorne

T.C. Bradford

Keith Houin
Staff writers

Editorial Offices
Building 4919, Magnolia Street
Fort Polk, LA 71459-5060

Voice (337) 531-4033

Fax (337) 531-1401

Email: Kimberly.K.Reischling.civ@mail.mil

Fort Polk Homepage
home.army.mil/polk/

The **Guardian**, is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of the **Guardian** are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or Fort Polk.

The **Guardian** is published weekly by the Public Affairs Office, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.

The **Guardian** can be found on the JRTC and Fort Polk web site at home.army.mil/polk/ and the JRTC and Fort Polk Facebook page at [@JRTCandFortPolk/](https://www.facebook.com/JRTCandFortPolk/). **Guardian** archives can also be found on the JRTC and Fort Polk website.

Links to the **Guardian** are also included in all-users emails to government email users and by request to non-military units. To be included on all-users messages email kimberly.k.reischling.civ@mail.mil.

All editorial content of the **Guardian** is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the Public Affairs Office, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.

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

Briefs

CAC renewal

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult to renew expiring Common Access Cards and U.S. identification cards. The Defense Manpower Data Center is making temporary changes to ID card issuing procedures:

- Individuals whose CAC expires within 30 days can get a new card at a CAC ID card office or renew the CAC remotely
- CACs expiring within 30 days are also eligible to update the CAC Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) certificates remotely for network logon and other logical access through Aug. 31
- USID cards expired after Jan. 1 may be used for benefits access through Aug. 31
- Army and Department of Defense contractors whose CACs will expire soon must request that their period of eligibility be extended in the Trusted Associate Sponsorship System (TASS)
- To rekey CAC certificates visit www.dmdc.osd.mil/self_service
- Additional information on CAC and USID card issuance and renewal changes is available at www.CAC.mil/coronavirus.

COVID-19 screening

Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital's COVID-19 drive-up screening hours are Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-1 p.m., on Texas Avenue next to the Berry Mission Training Center.

PX curbside pickup

To help Soldiers and their Families practice physical distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fort Polk Main Post Exchange has implemented curbside pickup.

Shoppers at the Fort Polk Exchange are able to order at ShopMyExchange.com and pick up their purchases at the curb.

Authorized military shoppers with installation access can visit ShopMyExchange.com, find what they need and choose the pick up at store option.

When the order is ready, the store will call and offer the curbside pickup option. At the store, shoppers will park in a designated numbered space, call the phone number on the sign and the order is delivered to their vehicle.

Absentee voting

If you want to vote absentee visit FVAP.gov or stop by the Fort Polk Installation Voting Office at 920 Bell Richard Ave. Capt. Justin Smith is the installation voting assistance officer.

Call him at 531-0886 or email justin.m.smith.12.mil@mail.mil.



Before the stay-at-home-order and social distancing began, Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers were participating in a variety of fun activities and hope to do so again as soon as they are able. Here, BOSS members visit the Fort Polk Morale, Welfare and Recreation range facility to play paintball.

Fort Polk BOSS creating virtual community for Soldiers

By **ANGIE THORNE**

Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. — In the midst of the COVID-19 emergency, many Soldiers have Family at Fort Polk to share this difficult time with. They are a built in support system. That's usually not the case for single Soldiers. That's why Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers is so important. It provides a link to other Soldiers to make friends, form new relationships and forge bonds in good times and bad.

Cpl. Bianca Ortiz, BOSS president, said she thinks the COVID-19 stay-at-home-order for single Soldiers in the barracks is tough.

"They are stuck in their rooms 24-7 and that can mean a huge downturn in morale. It's especially hard for Soldiers that used to get out on the weekends. They are used to being able to go somewhere new to do something fun and different," she said.

Ortiz said some Soldiers don't mind all the down time because they enjoy playing video games and relaxing. But do it long enough, and even gaming can get old.

That's why Ortiz, Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher M. Ausbun, garrison command sergeant major, and fellow BOSS representatives have begun teleconferencing each Monday. The two focus areas for the BOSS team are quality of life issues that Soldiers may have in the barracks and ensuring Soldiers know they have support through installation services that are provided.

Also, if BOSS can't physically get their mem-

bers together in the same place to relax and have a little fun, then the hope is to brainstorm a few enjoyable ways to connect virtually to raise morale.

"We've tried to come up with activities Soldiers would really like to participate in," Ortiz said.

A few of the tentative ideas the BOSS team has come up with and are starting to move on are as follows:

- Weekly fitness challenges
- Book reading competition
- Zumba class (virtual instruction)
- Art Challenge (Soldiers can post their Bob Ross video) — Ross was an American painter, art instructor and television personality that hosted "The Joy of Painting."
- Self-care Sunday (Soldiers can post their best skin care routine)
- Virtual study sessions through the virtual ruck sack application (U.S. Army app — will share link on BOSS page)

Ortiz said they are still working on dates and figuring out details. As soon as definite times and dates are nailed down she said they will be posted on the Fort Polk Morale, Welfare and Recreation BOSS website page and Facebook page.

Ortiz said she is especially looking forward to doing the art challenge.

"I can't wait to see the outcome when Soldiers begin to post their finished art projects," she said.

Please see **BOSS**, page 6

Army news

Growth in DoD telework capability may outlive coronavirus

By C. TODD LOPEZ

Defense.gov

WASHINGTON — To keep business on track during the fight against coronavirus, the Defense Department has greatly expanded its telework capability with a variety of tools. Once the coronavirus threat has receded, some of those enhancements for telework may continue on in some capacity, DoD's chief information officer said.

"We are creating a much more robust enhanced teleworking capability, (and) we've obviously always had one. What we've done is put a multiplier effect into the quantity, the types of services and the collaboration tools." Dana Deasy, chief information officer, told reporters April 14 at a Pentagon news conference. "So there will be some permanency to what we have here. ... There is going to be an enhanced teleworking capability that will be sustained at the end of COVID-19."

The telework capability that might outlive the pandemic will enhance network proficiency, and include a larger base of teleworking equipment, Deasy said, but it's not just limited to technology.

"We've also developed some new tactics and

techniques that allow us to ramp up quite quickly," he said, adding that the department had "significant help" from industry partners to support the large numbers of Defense Department employees who are working off site due to social distancing and stay-at-home orders.

Air Force Lt. Gen. B.J. Shwedo, the Joint Staff's director for command, control, communications and computers/cyber and chief information officer, said as many as 4 million DoD military and civilian workers are now teleworking.

The Army, he said, has about 800,000 telework-enabled members on Defense Department networks, and the demand is increasing daily. The Navy, he said, had 100,000 remote workers on its networks before the coronavirus pandemic, and that has more than doubled to 250,000 workers. "Planned improvements in the next two to three weeks will bring the total to 500,000 remote users," Shwedo said.

The Navy's use of Outlook Web Access, he said, was at about 10,000 users before the pandemic, and usage may climb to some 300,000 users by the end of the month. The Marine Corps, he said, expects its OWA users to increase from about 70,000 to more than 105,000.

The Air Force, he added, has increased virtual

private network capability from 10,000 to more than 100,000 today, with an expectation to go to 200,000 in coming weeks.



Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Bridget Rubac, a Sailor assigned to the Expeditionary Medical Facility New Orleans Detachment, disposes of outer garments after escorting a patient to a room at the personal housing unit in support of the Department of Defense COVID-19 response in New Orleans, La., April 9.

Chaplains provide spiritual, mental, physical support

By CHUCK CANNON

Command information officer

FORT POLK, La. — The COVID-19 pandemic continues to require Soldiers and civilians to adjust their way of life and keep a "social distance" from friends and co-workers. In response, the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk Chaplain Corps has attacked this indiscriminate foe with programs and activities that promise to ensure the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the entire installation Family.

Chap. (Lt. Col.) Kenneth Godwin, installation chaplain, said it's not just one chaplain who has taken the lead in ministering to the Soldiers, civilians and Family members on Fort Polk, but the entire staff, including chaplains, ministry teams and civilian chapel staff.

"We've worked together and brainstormed ways we could support the Fort Polk Family," Godwin said. "We're using online avenues such as Facebook and Facetime. We're live streaming services and sermons. We have an online Christian film festival where viewers can watch a film, then discuss it online."

Godwin said utilizing social media has resulted in him working outside of his comfort zone.

"But I'm learning and becoming more comfortable with it," he said. "All of our chaplains are working to provide support for our Soldiers and Families."

Chap. (Capt.) Nikki Reeves, Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, said even though some of the hospital staff are teleworking, things are still "operating pretty much as normal," for her.

"All the wards are operational," she said. "We are trying to minimize the number of patients who are passing through the hospital, to protect both patients and staff, but my duties haven't shifted much."

Reeves said she conducts counseling "while maintaining social distancing" and has also incorporated activities such as a virtual escape room — a teamwork game.

"Teammates can collaborate, shoot me the answers and I can give them more information," she said.

During the Easter Week religious holidays, Reeves said she provided one-on-one communion for team members.

"I also passed on streaming opportunities for our Jewish staff members for Passover, and I gathered material for a Muslim Soldier to give him an idea what Ramadan is going to look like for him," she said.

Reeves said a big part of being a military chaplain is not just providing support for those who are the same faith as you, but also those who come from different faith backgrounds.

"COVID-19 has affected what the services we provide look like," she said. "We're on the front line and our team is stressed not only about those services they provide, but also what it means for them, and do they and their family members have what they need to stay safe?"

Reeves said she is also responsible for team members who are isolated or quarantined.

"I stay in contact with them to see their needs are met," she said.

Reeves pointed to another area where chaplains are also concerned.



Chap. (Capt.) Travis Dalsis, 46th Engineer Battalion chaplain, conducts online services. Chaplains have had to adjust how they interact with Soldiers and Families due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"With behavioral health, there are people on post who are in abusive or domestic violence situations, so what does that look like for them now that they are basically being told to stay home with that abuser?" she said. "Right now we're not getting a lot of information because people

Please see **Chaplains**, page 5

Chaplains

Continued from page 1

are staying pretty isolated, but we're trying to get that information out to schools and CYS (Child and Youth Services) so that once the situation (COVID-19) loosens up, and those who were abused are reintegrated back into society, teachers and staff have that awareness, and check to see if kids or spouses have bruises that don't seem normal and how are they behaving."

Another medical chaplain, Chap. (Capt.) Ronald Marshall, 32nd Hospital Center, said one of his duties is to ensure the free exercise of religion.

"We're about the ministry of presence, and we have to try and figure out how to provide that to everybody," Marshall said. "We have Soldiers who are deployed and preparing for deployment, and it puts a strain on the command and command teams and Soldiers. We also have Soldiers in isolation and quarantine, so what I try to do is keep social interaction to the best of my ability."

Marshall said that includes such venues as Facebook, Facetime, virtual game nights and Operation Gratitude — a program that sends Soldiers care packages.

"It's figuring out what we can do in the midst of this," he said. "And I'm still doing one-on-one counseling, either through social distancing or Facetime."

Marshall said the stay-at-home orders and social distancing has been especially difficult for Soldiers who are extroverts.

"Those Soldiers who are extreme extroverts are now being isolated, and don't have that social interaction or physical touch they need," he said. "There has been an increase in depression and it's our responsibility to get out there and help them and take care of their needs, both physically and spiritually. It's been a learning process for chaplains to let Soldiers know we care about them and can provide for them without actually touching them."

While the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an seeming expansion of chaplain duties, Marshall said they still keep up with their spiritual chores.

"We're still able to do Bible studies and services every Sunday even though we can't meet in the chapel," he said. "During the past week we've had questions that ranged from how an individual could take communion to holding an Easter Egg hunt. We had to think outside the box to come up with ways for them to have some type of social interaction without actually having a physical touch."

"We have to be able to assist our Soldiers and provide for their needs to the best of our abilities."

Chap. (Capt.) Samuel Hawthorne, 519th Military Police Battalion, said being responsible for Soldiers who are on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic battle is challenging.

"During the midst of all of this, MPs and medical personnel are mission essential," he said. "They are still operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It's not a lot of telework activity."

Hawthorne said there is some anxiety over COVID-19 and an uncertain future.

"There is also a restlessness; cabin fever, normal routines taken away," he said. "The ministry command teams of my unit are doing a great job, not focusing on the obstacles, but what we can do with the situation we're in."

That includes visiting MPs at the gate, praying

over them at guard mount and letting them know his staff is there for them. He said the MPs are conducting virtual training to keep busy when they are off duty.

"We have PT challenges every day, gym in the box and whatever we can do to keep them motivated," he said.

Chap. (Maj.) Michael Lindsay is the installation's pastoral chaplain and Catholic pastor. He said Catholic services were streamed live during Holy Week, April 9-12.

"It takes a little preparation," he said. "We had some volunteers, but it was tough because we had to maintain social distancing and we're used to getting together, meeting and having communion."

Lindsay said he keeps in contact with the Catholic community. He also keeps an eye on activities in his neighborhood.

"I noticed in my neighborhood Soldiers doing PT or walking with their Families, and I thank God that at least here, we can get out and do stuff like that," he said. "I think that helps to relieve a lot of stress. I see a lot of people trying to make the best of this now."

Lindsay said his greatest challenge is not being able to see the community — look them in the eye and visit with them — every Sunday.

"We're used to having a little social time together after services, and that's when you find out what's going on, who is sick, who has lost Family members, it's a chance for people to talk and check up on one another, and we don't have that now," he said.

Marshall said an interesting note is that he's heard there are more people watching the service's live stream than actually attend services.

"But we're working on ways to stay connected, and figure out how we will get back together once things open up," he said. "For now, we just try to stay connected as much as possible. I've learned more about Facebook and Facetime the last two weeks than I ever thought possible."

Marshall said it seems to him that more people are turning to their faith during the COVID-19 pandemic, praying together and meeting online.

"We even have a stations of the cross on the walking path around the golf course," he said. "I'm hearing people are looking at religious resources available online. I don't know whether it's because of the time of year or because people are searching, but there seems to be a lot of focus on religious activities."

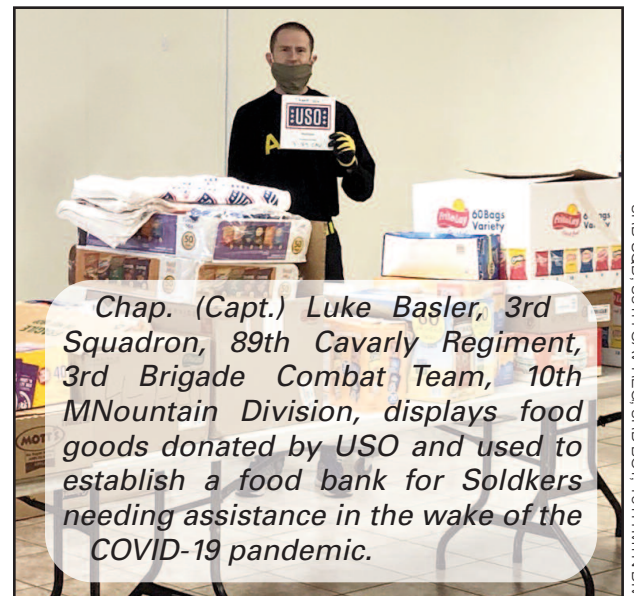
Chap. (Capt.) Travis Dalsis, 46th Engineer Battalion, has garnered support for his daily virtual "PT with the Chaplain," Monday through Friday.

"I am offering a Facebook live high intensity interval training workout on the Gospel Page from 6:45-7:30 for Soldiers and Families," he said. "Several Soldiers have shared that they work out with their spouses at home."

Other activities Dalsis leads include:

- Virtual Chaplain Training: A platform that includes powerpoints, interactive chat features and video conferencing to train Soldiers on topics such as goal setting, memorial ceremonies and ACE — Ask, Care and Escort — a suicide prevention program.

- Site visits: Provide chaplain support to quarantined Soldiers living in the barracks with food delivery, toilet paper and pizza. Additionally, UMTs conduct site visits to CQ desks, the ammunition holding area, and the Mission Training



Center and BJACH where mission essential personnel are working.

- The UMT conducted a virtual vow renewal for Mike Buterbaugh and his wife, Kelly, on their 25th anniversary.

- Virtual Church livestream on the Fort Polk Gospel Page with Gospel Service Chaplains, Dalsis, Chap. (Capt.) John Marr, Reeves and Chap. (Capt.) Jonathan Dukes. Chaplains worked as a team conducting open prayer, Scripture reading, sermon preaching, virtual communion and closing blessing.

Chap. (Maj.) John 'Fent' Smith, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division brigade chaplain, said his UMTs are using virtual hobby groups to maintain and build Soldier relationships.

"One such hobby group is Soldiers training for the Army 10 Miler," he said. "Despite running separately, four Soldiers are utilizing social media to share eating habits, training routines and maps with route, distance and time displayed."

Another hobby group is a gaming group, Smith said.

"Each weekend a different video game is played," he said. "The capacity is there for up to 150 persons to play at the same time. If you are not a gamer but still are interested in engaging the social group, a viewing option is available."

During a recent week, Smith said 3rd BCT UMTs engaged Soldiers and Family members through 354 personal phone calls, 39 hours visiting Soldiers in the dining facility line, 28 barracks wellness checks, and 14 chaplain videos posted to unit Facebook pages.

"We initiated a combined chaplain and psychologist virtual family coaching program," he said. "Couples and parenting coaching efforts will take place on Facebook. The resiliency team will provide tools and recommendations that strengthen family bonds during increased time together. Soldiers can visit: www.facebook.com/10thMTNPatriots/videos/244328420089027/ for more information."

"As you can see, Fort Polk's chaplains have been busy, providing support where needed for the Soldiers, civilians and Families on Fort Polk," Godwin said. "We will continue to look for ways to minister to the Fort Polk Family as we work together during this most difficult time."

You can visit the Fort Polk Chapel Facebook page for activities, religious education, Bible studies and other activities.

Team

Continued from page 1

with one team (one or two providers) operating from home via telework, and one team operating from the clinics.

- Providers are working closely with nurse case managers to coordinate care for high risk Soldiers and Family members. In addition to virtual appointments, face-to-face visits are still permitted and are prioritized for this patient population. Behavioral health providers are encouraged to maintain contact with their aligned unit leadership.

- To continue developing the behavioral health specialist skillset, as well as meet growing community needs, educational videos aimed at "psychological first aid" and other content are being prepared. The videos will be uploaded to the BJACH/Behavioral Health website. NCOs are also creating a Facebook page containing videos and other educational links. There are three officers currently preparing content.

- Plans are in the works for creating a Facebook live "town hall" for children to help them make sense of everything that is happening.

- Other ideas for frontline staff support include: Therapy by walking around teams, possible support groups, and pushing out relevant content such as bioethical and legal considerations for health care providers.

These programs come as no surprise to Spc.

Jose Alvarez, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div, who recently spent two weeks in isolation.

"Basically, people were checking on me all the time," he said. "If I needed anything they provided it. Chaplain Pearce called me once and sent me texts twice. Although it was boring, they made it doable."

In addition to the Team Polk activities, there are other coping tips for those who find themselves in emotional distress related to COVID-19 or any other trying situation, including:

- Set a limit on media consumption, including social media, local or national news.

- Stay active. Make sure to get enough sleep and rest. Stay hydrated and avoid excessive amounts of caffeine or alcohol. Eat healthy foods when possible.

- Connect with loved ones and others who may be experiencing stress about the outbreak. Talk about your feelings and enjoy conversation unrelated to the outbreak.

- Get accurate health information from reputable sources. For health information about COVID-19, please contact the Centers for Disease Control at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or your local healthcare provider.

- The national Disaster Distress Helpline (www.samhsa.gov) is available to anyone experi-

encing emotional distress related to COVID-19. Call (800) 985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to speak to a caring counselor.

- If you're experiencing emotional distress related to COVID-19, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-8255.

- For coping tools and resources, visit the Lifeline website at suicidepreventionlifeline.org or Vibrant Emotional Health's Safe Space at vibrant.org/safespace.

- The National Domestic Violence Hotline, (800) 799-7233, has highly trained advocates available 24/7 to ensure services and continue to support survivors.

For additional resources, visit the JRTC and Fort Polk web site at <https://home.army.mil/polk/index.php/about/suicide-prevention>.

The bottom line, said Davidson, is getting on the other side of the COVID-19 pandemic together.

"The JRTC/Fort Polk is a family team built on taking care of each other and preventing harm to any member of our team through the strong sense of community engagement at all levels," said Davidson.

Editor's note: For more on chaplain resources during the COVID-19 pandemic, please see story on page 5 of today's Guardian.

BOSS

Continued from page 3

Ortiz said she hopes the virtual activities will be a big success with a lot of participation.

"If it does well, we might even consider keeping the virtual events as part of the overall list of BOSS activities after things get back to normal," she said.

Another important aspect of the COVID-19 stay at home order is addressing a Soldier's mental wellbeing. Chap. (Maj.) Everett Zachary, United States Army Garrison, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, participated in a BOSS teleconference and helped focus on the virtual counseling opportunities still available to Soldiers.

Ortiz said though these are scary times, Soldiers aren't alone.

"We want Soldiers to know that we support them and if they need to talk to someone or need an outlet, not only can they talk to a battle buddy, but they can still take advantage of the services offered by Army Community Service and Fort Polk chaplains by telephone. We are also planning to post ACS and chaplain numbers for our single Soldiers on our BOSS page and Facebook page," she said. "We want to help them cope with the fear because no one knows how long this will last."

Ortiz said she wants to lift up all her BOSS members, and reach out to Soldiers that are new to Fort Polk that haven't had a chance to join BOSS or know what's available to them because the COVID-19 situation came about before they could acclimate.

"We want to reach out to them and all our members by giving them a sense of community, even if it is online," she said.

For more information about BOSS you can call 531-1948.



Another BOSS activity that took place prior to coronavirus social distancing was a trip to Lake Charles. BOSS members participated in an escape room adventure.

The official flower of the military child is the dandelion. Why?

Dandelions put down roots almost anywhere and are almost impossible to destroy. They're unpretentious plants — yet good looking. It survives 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 Army ... planted swiftly and surely. They're ready to fly in the breezes that take them to new adventures, new lands and new friends.

Military children are well-rounded, culturally aware, tolerant and extremely resilient. They have learned from an early age that home is where their hearts are and that a good friend can be found in every corner of the world.

They learn that to survive means to adapt, that the door that closes one chapter of their life opens up to a new and exiting adventure full of new friends and new experiences.

Anonymous

Celebrate Month of the Military Child, Army CYC anniversary

By **SUSAN A. MERKNER**

Army News Service

WASHINGTON — Even in a time of social distancing, the Army's April observance of Month of the Military Child offers opportunities for celebrating the youngest members of the military Family and acknowledging the adults who work with them.

This year's MOMC theme, selected many months ago, seems apt for 2020: "Overcoming Challenges: Adapting Today for a Stronger Tomorrow."

Army garrison Child and Youth Services program directors are supporting stay at home social distancing by leveraging the web and social media through virtual story time, DIY home workouts, virtual Family adventures, virtual Lego league and children drawing, painting and poster contests, the results of which they plan to use to decorate around post when facilities reopen.

For those looking for Family activities to do at home, MOMC's annual Young Lives, Big Stories national contest offers military children the chance to share their views on what it means to be part of a military Family through art and writing — an ideal opportunity for children at home now, since submissions are emailed. The deadline will be set for later this year, and details are available at www.armymwr.com/momc.

"Military children strengthen Families with their love and through their sacrifice to a cause much bigger than themselves. They are an integral part of Army readiness," said Lt. Gen. Douglas M. Gabram, commanding general, U.S. Army Installation Management Command.

CYS celebrates 40th

This year's MOMC coincides with the 40th anniversary of the creation of the Army CYC, which traces its beginnings to the creation of the first day care programs for military children.

With the theme "Journey to Excellence," the CYC anniversary celebrates the program's transition from rather humble beginnings to becoming a leader in child care with its Child Development Centers.

Army CDCs maintain a 97% accreditation rate, compared to about 10% nationally, from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the industry's primary accreditation organization, said Suzanne V. King, chief, Child and Youth Services, IMCOM G9.

The U.S. Army began offering child care in 1980, when women began entering the workforce in large numbers.

In the earliest years, child care in the Army and elsewhere consisted primarily of custodial care: Keep the



U.S. ARMY

young ones safe, fed and rested.

For example, when the Fort Leavenworth Child Development Center opened, it had 40 cribs inside an old military school building. Other posts used cleaned-out stables, Quonset huts and other borrowed spaces for child care. Annual staff turnover was often 300 percent due to low pay.

That changed in 1980 when the Army hired M.A. Lucas to lead the U.S. Army Child Development Services System, which she headed for 31 years.

The General Accounting Office reviewed military child-care programs in 1982, and the following year the Army established regulations for child development services.

Programs were developed for "latchkey kids," those youngsters who went home after school and had no adult supervision until a parent returned, a new concept in the 1980s.

In 1989, Army day care evolved further, with creation of the Military Child Care Act, which improved the quality of care and ensured affordability for military parents. Among the reforms were standardized facility design, safety protocols such as

installation of video cameras and recorders, inspections, improved compensation, and advanced training for providers.

Leaders looked to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the leading professional organization, whose accreditation standards became the goal for the Army's child development centers.

The Fort Leavenworth Child Development Center became the first Army day care to receive accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, a change which rippled through all the CDCs, advancing the Army's day care standards and drawing national attention. A 2002 Senate report called the Army program "a model for the nation for providing high-quality affordable childcare."

The CYC tagline, "Support for Army Families Found Here," reflects the program's mission: To integrate and deliver base support to reduce the conflict between parental responsibilities and unit mission requirements and enable combat readiness for a globally responsive Army.

Talk to your children about COVID-19

HEALTH.MIL

WASHINGTON — Military spouse Kellie Artis talked with her children about COVID-19 and how to stop the highly contagious respiratory illness from spreading. Afterward, they seemed untroubled. Ten-year-old Hannah and 8-year-old Rhys stopped asking to have friends over, and to visit the playground across the street from their home near Fort Bragg, North

Carolina. They didn't complain about the restrictions during video chats with their dad, a Special Forces officer who is deployed overseas.

But then one night, Artis heard Rhys crying in his bedroom. When she asked him what was wrong, he sobbed, "I don't like the coronavirus!" He'd overheard his mom talking on the phone with another

Please see **Safe**, page 8

Fort Polk Family Advocacy Program focus on protecting children in April

By **JOANNA GARCIA**
Family Advocacy Program

FORT POLK, La. — April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. It is an annual observance in the United States dedicated to raising awareness and preventing child abuse.

Part of the awareness is bringing attention to the statistics on child abuse and neglect, which are devastating.

According to the Child Maltreatment 2017 report, from the Office of the Administration for Children and Families, a division of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, published January 2019, 4.1 million child maltreatment reports were received in the United States, involving 7.5 million children.

Of those, 674,000 were determined to be victims; 74.9% were victims of neglect; 18.3% were physically abused; 8.6% were sexually abused and 7.1% were psychologically maltreated.

Almost five children die every day from child

abuse. In 2017, the number of children who died from abuse and neglect, in the United States, was 1,720; 72% of the fatalities were children younger than 3 years old. Of those children who died, 75% suffered neglect and 42% suffered physical abuse either exclusively or in combination with another maltreatment type; 80% of child fatalities involved at least one parent.

The Fort Polk Family Advocacy Program is dedicated to helping Fort Polk Families prevent child abuse and child neglect.

The Army Community Service Family Advocacy Program offers parenting classes, marriage classes, anger and stress management classes.

In addition, the New Parent Support Program is a prevention and education home visitation program for parents who are currently expecting, or who have children birth until 3 years of age.

New Parent Support Program home visitors are either licensed clinical social workers or registered nurses, who will work with Families, one-on-one in their homes, on a wide range of parent-

ing issues. In addition, they offer PlayMorning groups, Baby Boot Camp classes and Infant Massage classes.

Finally, the Family Advocacy Program would like every member of the Fort Polk community to remember APRIL:

A: Always
P: Protect
R: Reach out to
I: Inspire and
L: Love children

The Family Advocacy Program is here to help Families improve their current skills and expand upon their knowledge base.

Please call 531-1938/1941 for more information about classes or services available.

If you suspect or know of a military child who may be a victim of abuse or neglect, call the Family Advocacy Program HOPELINE, 531-4673, to make a report.

The HOPELINE is answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

PX offers MOMC brat patches to Fort Polk Families

MAIN POST EXCHANGE

FORT POLK, La. — During April, the Month of the Military Child, the Army and Air Force Exchange Service is saluting the nation's youngest heroes.

The Exchange partnered with Vanguard to create a free, limited-edition collectible iron-on patch celebrating military children who make Warfighters' mission and focus possible.

The patch is available at the Fort Polk Exchange for military children age 17 and younger.

For their safety and health during the COVID-19 pandemic, Fort Polk shoppers can reserve their patches by completing the reservation

form online at Exchange Community Hub page: www.publicaffairs-sme.com/Community/momc.

Once local stay-at-home orders are lifted, the Fort Polk Exchange will notify shoppers that their patches are ready for pickup.

The reservation form will be available through April 30, while supplies last.

Up to five patches per CAC-holding adult can be reserved.

"Military children sacrifice so their parents can serve our great nation," Ronald McDuffie, Fort Polk Exchange general manager, said. "This collectible military brat patch is a way for the Exchange to recognize the way Fort Polk children serve as well."

Computer surfing for kids

GUARDIAN STAFF

Here are a few websites to keep your kids entertained during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- <https://www.facebook.com/nutrients-forlifefoundation/>
- <https://www.mlb.com/news/baseball-themed-home-activities-for-kids>
- Saints: <https://www.neworleans-saints.com/fans/activity-book>
- Pelicans: <https://www.nba.com/pelicans/new-orleans-pelicans-activity-book>

Safe

Continued from page 7

military spouse. They were discussing further measures that might be enacted. Artis had used the word "lockdown," and the term had scared Rhys.

"They're owed an explanation about why their lives have changed so unexpectedly," Artis said. "But I'm trying to balance shielding them from too much information while also making sure they're safe."

Now more than ever, open communication is critical to helping children of all ages feel safe and secure, said Dr. Stephen Cozza. The retired Army colonel is also senior scientist at Uniformed Services University's Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, or CSTS.

But it can be difficult talking with children about COVID-19, Cozza said. The situation changes from day to day, and parents themselves are trying to keep up.

"We want to share," said Cozza, who is also a psychiatry professor at USU. "But at the same time, we want to protect our kids and not worry them. When we can stay calm and clear with our children, it helps them to remain calm and better understand what's happening."

In uncertain times, children in military families may have advantages, Cozza said. They include a strong sense of community — "we're all in this together" — and pride that their family

members are counted as helpers who sustain the well-being of the country.

But military kids also may feel a responsibility greater than their years, Cozza said, particularly if their parent is deployed. Dealing with a pandemic can be an added challenge for families as well as children.

Cozza said parents should offer age-appropriate messages to explain what's happening. So for younger kids, he said, it can be something as simple as, "Coronavirus is a new germ. Germs can spread from one person to another and make them sick. That's why we wash our hands."

Artis said she described maintaining 6-foot physical distance to her kids as "keeping llama space." They'd recently seen the animals up close at a birthday party, and could easily picture the length of one.

She also told her kids about people planting victory gardens during World War II as a way to support the Soldiers fighting overseas.

"I explained that they did their part, and now it's time to do our part," she said. "We can't see what we're fighting, but it still matters. And I told them we're doing it here for other kids' grandmas and grandpas, just like the people in Grandma and Grandpa's neighborhood are doing it for them."

Cozza said that with older kids, who may be

getting inaccurate information on social media,

"We need to help them understand what they see and hear. So maybe you start the conversation with, 'What have you heard about COVID-19, and what questions do you have?'"

He added that children of all ages should be assured that while COVID-19 is serious, there's no need to panic. Also, most people who do get sick will get better. And it's OK to express fears and ask questions.

Still, doing everything right doesn't mean there won't be a hiccup or two, as Artis learned.

"I certainly go through waves of anxiety," she said. "But I think we've adapted pretty easily — especially with the idea of not having an end date because that's how a lot of military families live our lives. There seems to never be an end date."

Cozza advises parents to be empathetic while still enforcing expectations. "You can say something like, 'I know this is a really tough time, and you miss our friends. But I really do need your help. And we're going to work together to get through this.'"

The CSTS has produced two fact sheets for parents: "Discussing Coronavirus with Your Children" and "Finding the Right Words to Talk with Children and Teens About Coronavirus" at www.cstsonline.org.

Military doctors, nurse discuss COVID-19 crisis in New York

By **TERRI MOON CRONK**

Army News Service

WASHINGTON — Military doctors and nurses are fanning out across New York hospitals to offer relief to their overworked civilian counterparts as the COVID-19 pandemic hits the city hard.

Three members of Joint Task Force New York-New Jersey — Air Force Col. (Dr.) Jennifer R. Ratcliff, commander of the 927th Aerospace Medical Squadron at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida; Army Lt. Col Leslie Curtis, chief nurse officer for the 9th Field Hospital, Fort Hood, Texas and Navy Capt. (Dr.) Joseph J. Kochan, executive officer for Operational Health Support Unit in Portsmouth, Virginia — briefed the news media on their COVID-19 efforts via telephone April 14.

"We really are here to support the citizens of the state of New York and support (the Federal Emergency Management Agency system), as long as we're needed," Kochan said.

"The benefit of the military is we are scalable. We have different teams out in (New York City) and in different environments, such as in the (Jacob K. Javits Convention Center). We can be utilized in whatever ways the city, state or this region requires," Ratcliff said.

Military doctors and nurses are working 12 hours or more a day in a world that runs 24/7, officials said.

"We've been bringing in 20 to 30 nurses a day, onboarding them to the agencies," Curtis noted. "Then they 'shadow' for a day or two and are then put on a schedule."

"Combining the staffs of military and civilian doctors and nurses during a pandemic has never been done before," Curtis said. "This is an extraordinary time in history where we've come together in all the services, providing (care) in a tough situation that requires us to really take heed of the environment."

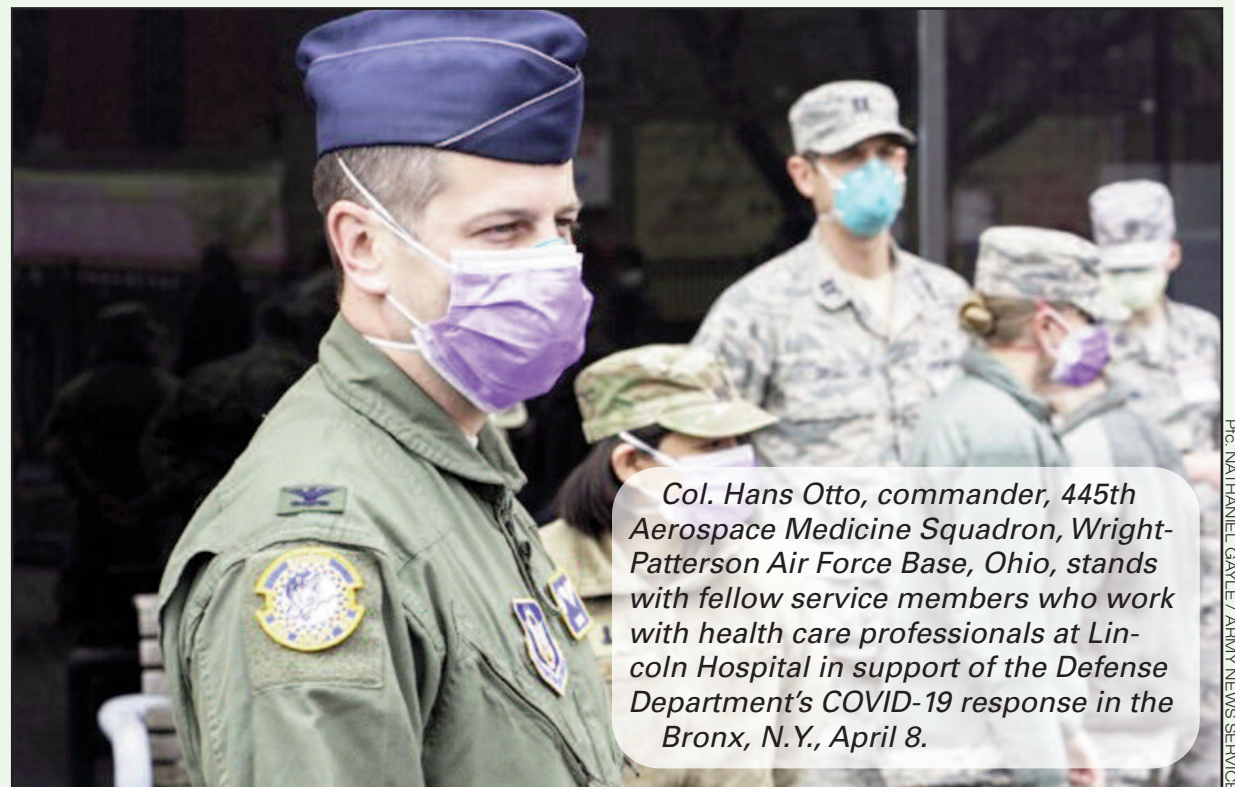
Military medical professionals who integrated into civilian hospitals went out to the hospitals and asked what their needs were, Kochan said.

"What we're doing is whatever the hospital needs. We're filling that need as best we can," he added.

"What I find interesting is that once we were credentialed within these hospitals, how quickly we've been able to actually integrate and how welcoming the city has been," Ratcliff told reporters. "We're fresh faces. We've got the energy and the enthusiasm to really help the people that are tired and have been working very,



DoD medical professionals currently in New York City directly supporting efforts in the fight against COVID-19 discuss their roles and integration into the overall mission. They included Col. Jennifer Ratcliff, commander, 927th Aerospace Medical Squadron, MacDill AFB, Fla., Lt. Col. Leslie Curtis, chief nurse officer, 9th Field Hospital, and Capt. Joe Kochan, executive officer, Operational Health Support Unit Portsmouth, Portsmouth, Va.



Col. Hans Otto, commander, 445th Aerospace Medicine Squadron, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, stands with fellow service members who work with health care professionals at Lincoln Hospital in support of the Defense Department's COVID-19 response in the Bronx, N.Y., April 8.

very long days and weeks."

The Navy sent about 200 doctors and nurses to New York City, Kochan said, adding that they have various skill sets, specialties and

backgrounds from all over the country. "We push them out into teams based on what the hospitals have asked for to fill in the critical needs they have," he said.

Brief

Mask contract

WASHINGTON -- A Defense Department contract under the Defense Production Act will provide more than 39 million N95 respirator masks over the next 90 days to help in the fight against the coronavirus, Defense Secretary Dr. Mark T. Esper said.

"This will help ensure our government has the industrial capacity to meet the nation's

needs," Esper said during a Pentagon news conference April 14.

Also, he said, a \$415 million contract awarded by the Defense Logistics Agency is providing 60 systems that can decontaminate as many as 80,000 N95 respirator masks each day, allowing those masks to be reused.

"This will allow medical professionals to reuse masks up to 20 times and will reduce the nation's need for new inventory," Esper said.

Six decontamination units have already been delivered to cities including New York; Columbus, Ohio; Boston; Chicago; and Tacoma, Washington, and the rest should be available by early May, he added.

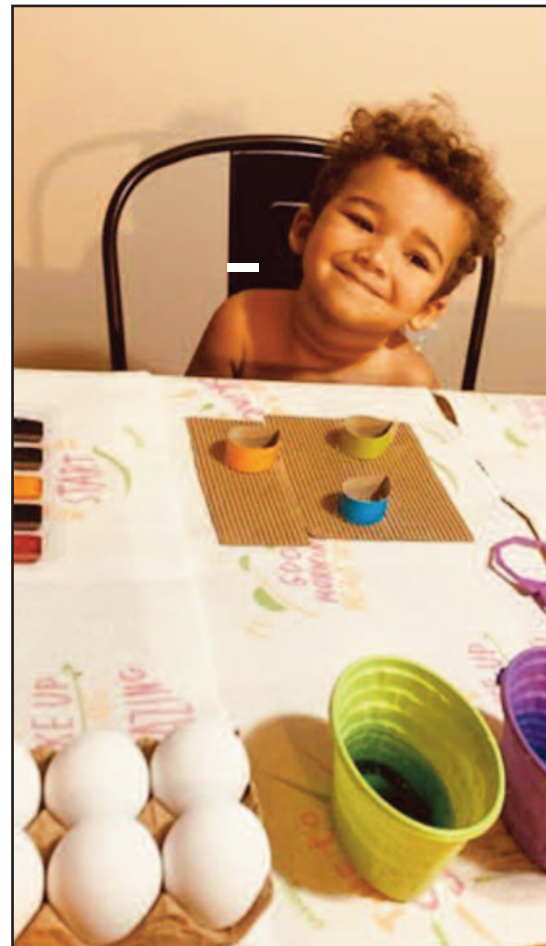
DoD has delivered 10 million of the new N95 masks to FEMA and HHS already, the secretary said, and is prepared to provide 10 million more. The DoD has more than 50,000 service members deployed in the COVID-19 fight.



Pvt. Jazzmine R. Viloria, 41st Transportation Company, 519th Military Police Battalion: "My Family and I use Zoom to attend Mass every Sunday together and afterwards we talk to each other for an hour"



Mari Mazza Martinkoski: "We are watching our church services online and we always Facetime with our family and friends to stay connected. We had an amazing family Easter lunch and lots of chocolate."



Katelyn Lewis: "I colored eggs with my little guy, Carter, on Easter Sunday."

POSITIVITY



Pvt. Christian A. Dougherty, 204th Military Police Company, 519th Military Police Battalion: "I Facetime my brother and Family every other day."



Pvt. Blake E. Kinkade, 204th Military Police Company, 519th Military Police Battalion: "I Facetime my Mom and she keeps me connected to my Family."



Elizabeth Jasper: "My boys, Ian and Logan, had a great time painting our front door."

Community



BJACH hosts blood drive

Above: Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital hosted a blood drive April 8 and collected 59 pints of whole blood and 3 donations of plasma.

Right: Sgt. Jesus Gil shows his COVID-19 T-shirt after donating a pint of blood during the BJACH blood drive April 8.

Know rights under Servicemembers Civil Relief Act

By **MICHAEL W. MOORE JR.**
Installation Tax Office

FORT POLK, La. — Travel orders have been suspended due to COVID-19. This has affected many Soldiers who entered into leases or ended leases in anticipation of PCSing. If you or a fellow Soldier you know fall into one of these categories, understand the options you have under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA).

Leases at new duty location

Section 3955 of the SCRA allows for termination of leases (auto and dwelling) upon receipt of certain types of military orders, including PCS or deployment orders. The orders must be for a period of not less than 90 days. The Department of Defense Stop Movement Order alone is not sufficient to trigger automatic cancellation under the SCRA as it is not considered PCS orders.

Servicemembers and Families who seek to either cancel a lease at their new duty station or request a pause to their rent obligations should seek assistance from a legal assistance attorney. A legal assistance attorney can help you prepare a letter to request that your landlord voluntarily allow you to either terminate your lease, or to request your landlord suspend your rent payments until you can occupy the premises.

Landlords are not required by law to either terminate a lease based on the Department of Defense Stop Movement Order, or to suspend rent payments, as a result, these letters are requests only. If a landlord will not voluntarily agree to allow for lease termination, you should work with your legal assistance attorney and your command to obtain a request for new orders.

The new orders should require you to move to your current duty location for a period of not less

than 90 days.

Once you have amended/new PCS orders, you should work with your legal assistance attorney to provide those orders to your landlord in order to validly terminate your lease under the SCRA.

Leases at your present duty location

If you have not yet cancelled your lease at your current duty location, you are advised not to do so. There is no legal requirement for a landlord to re-lease the premises or to allow you to retain your belongings on the premises after ending your lease.

For clients who have already requested termination, contact landlords immediately to see if the landlords will agree voluntarily to a lease extension or a temporary re-lease.

If you have terminated your lease and your landlord will not agree to let you stay, you may need to execute two moves: One from the terminated residence, and then again when PCS orders are re-issued. Chapter 051904, para. B. of the Joint Travel Regulation (JTR), authorizes a short distance move when vacating local private-sector housing due to involuntary tour extension. A short-distance HHG move is authorized when the tour of duty at a permanent duty station (PDS) is extended and the move is required for reasons beyond the servicemember's control. The move is authorized from the residence from which the Soldier commuted daily to the permanent duty station to another residence, or from non-temporary storage to government or private-sector housing.

If you need to send a letter to your landlord, a sample letter follows. For further guidance or questions please contact the Legal Assistance Office.

(Month, Day, Year)

(Landlord name)

(Landlord address)

Dear (Landlord):

I am writing to you to request that you allow me to terminate the lease agreement for the premises at (address of leased property). I entered into a lease with you to begin occupying the premises at (lease address) as of (lease start date). I am unable to occupy these premises for the foreseeable future due to the recent order from the Deputy under Secretary of Defense (enclosed). This memo orders me to stop movement as of March 13, 2020 through at least May 11, 2020, and possibly longer. As a result, I will not be able to occupy your property on the scheduled lease start date by virtue of my military service. Because of this, I am currently faced with the prospective burden of maintaining two households — one at my current location, and another at your property, which I am currently unable to occupy.

Given these changed circumstances, I do not know when I will be able to occupy the leased property, or if I will be able to occupy it at all. After the stop movement is lifted, my orders may be changed due to military and operational demands in the face of the National emergency. Due to this uncertainty, I respectfully request to terminate my lease agreement with you.

If you agree to this termination, please provide me with written acknowledgement of the termination for my records.

Should you need any additional information from me, please feel free to contact me at (phone number). Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,
(Name)

Fort Polk Soldiers punished 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: Breaking quarantine or isolation orders, violating General Order #1, driving under the influence of alcohol, wrongful use or possession of controlled substances, fraternization and sexual assault.

Below are recent examples of adverse legal actions for units within the Fort Polk jurisdiction:

- A master sergeant, assigned to 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat

Team, 10th Mountain Division, was issued a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand for driving under the influence of alcohol and refusing to complete a lawfully requested test to measure the Soldier’s blood alcohol content. The CG directed filing the reprimand in the Soldier’s Army Military Human Resources Record.

- A first lieutenant, assigned to 3rd Battalion, 353rd Regiment, Joint Readiness Training Center Operations Group, was issued a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand for driving under the influence of alcohol and refusing to complete a lawfully requested test to measure the Soldier’s blood alcohol content. The CG directed filing the reprimand in the Soldier’s AMHRR.

- A sergeant, assigned to 2nd Bn, 30th Inf Regt, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div, was administratively separated under Chapter 14-12c, with a General (Under Honorable Conditions) characterization of service for driving under the influence of alcohol. Generally, this characterization of service results in the loss of a servicemember’s educational benefits.

- A specialist, assigned to 317th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div, was punished under Article 15 for traveling outside of the 50-mile radius of Fort Polk, in violation of Article 92, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). The service member was sentenced to a forfeiture of \$971 pay for two months, suspended for 180 days; extra-duty for 25 days; and restriction for 25 days.

- A private (E-2), assigned to 2nd Bn, 30th Inf Reg, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div, was issued a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand for driving under the influence of alcohol with a blood alcohol content of 0.214%. The CG directed filing the reprimand in the Soldier’s AMHRR.

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

Tax tips to circumnavigate COVID-19 financial obstacles

By **MICHAEL W. MOORE JR.**

Installation Tax Office

FORT POLK, La. — The Fort Polk Tax Installation’s physical office is currently closed to keep the community safe from COVID-19. However, staff is still available to answer questions via phone, 531-1040, and email Michael.w.moore294.mil@mail.mil. Fortunately, the IRS extended the deadline to file taxes until July 15.

COVID-19 has hit the pockets of many citizens with unemployment and underemployment at an all-time high. Many citizens have been forced to dip into their savings and retirement accounts earlier than anticipated. Fortunately, if you fall into that group, the government has relaxed standards for citizens that take money out of their

IRA or workplace retirement funds.

You can withdraw up to \$100,000 this year without the usual 10 percent penalty, as long as the withdrawal is due to the pandemic.

You will also be able to spread out any income taxes that you owe over three years from the date you took the distribution. You may put the money back into the account before those three years are up, even though the rules may normally keep you from making a contribution that large.

This exception applies only to COVID-19-related withdrawals. You qualify if you tested positive, if a spouse or dependent tests positive, or if you experienced a variety of other negative economic consequences related to the pandemic. Employers can allow workers to self-certify that they are qualified to pull money from a workplace retirement account.

In addition, you can still borrow from your 401(k) or other workplace retirement plan, and you can take out twice the usual amount. For 180 days after CARES Act passes, with certification that you’ve been affected by the pandemic, you’ll be able to take out a loan of up to \$100,000. Usually you can’t take out more than half your balance, but that rule is suspended.

If you already have a loan and are supposed to finish repaying it before Dec. 31, you get an extra year. By doing this, you are borrowing from your retirement, which may adversely affect your ability to retire as soon as you desire. Financial advisors caution against borrowing from your retirement plan, so before you do so, please contact your financial advisor to determine if this is the best course of action and to develop a plan to pay back your retirement fund.

Army PHC experts offer tips for staying at home without feeling isolated

By **DOUGLAS HOLL**

Army News Service

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. — Following mandated stay-at-home and social distancing rules during the COVID-19 crisis is creating unique challenges for many individuals who are managing work, family and personal needs while still trying to stay healthy and not stress out or get too stir crazy.

Lt. Col. Leslie Roberson, a clinical psychologist and APHC behavioral health specialist, recognizes the challenges.

“Our family is spending more time together than usual due to COVID-19,” said Roberson. “Being together in close quarters can be challenging.”

Roberson recommends discussing daily work plans, especially when online meetings are occurring, so others in the household know when they need to be quiet.

“We have a freshman in the home and both my husband and I are teleworking,” said Sgt. 1st Class Sue Ellen Brown, the non-commissioned officer in charge of Pregnancy Postpartum Physical Training for Joint Base Lewis-McChord,

Washington. “A good strategy that has worked for us is to maintain a schedule and enforcing our timelines for workout, personal hygiene, lunch, break and also balancing when our dog Elle wants attention and love.

APHC experts say another strategy for maintaining good general health and managing stress while working from home is to maintain physical fitness levels. Personal physical training should include a balance of cardiorespiratory (endurance) exercise and resistance training. And you don’t need a gym to get it done. For example, the Army physical readiness training app also provides two weeks of PRT sessions that can be done with or without equipment. These resources can be found on the ACFT website at www.army.mil/acft/.

“Each morning before work begins, I try to incorporate walking the family dogs 15 minutes,” said Roberson. “I use a fitness tracker daily to monitor steps I’ve taken to make me accountable.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines recommend that adults engage in 150 minutes per week of moderate activity (i.e. brisk walking, bike riding 10 to 12 mph) or 75

minutes of vigorous activity per week (jogging at 6 mph or biking at 14 to 16 mph) or a combination of both.

These workouts can also be conducted while following recommended social distancing guidelines, according to APHC experts. Cardiorespiratory training can be performed indoors on a treadmill, stationary bike or stairs, or outside by going on a walk, run or bike around the neighborhood. Large empty parking lots at a neighborhood school, church or shopping center may allow one to walk/run without close contact with others.

Another critical part of staying healthy is good nutrition, which is one leg of the Army Performance Triad of sleep, activity and nutrition. Staying healthy during “stay-at-home” requirements involve three key considerations: Eating a rainbow of eight servings of fruits and vegetables, eat a balanced plate and hydrate with water throughout the day.

“We have made a conscious effort not to buy junk food and only keep healthy or semi-healthy food at the house,” said Brown. “We’re also cooking food at home to keep it healthy and attempting not to order out.”

COVID-19 lessons learned could help save environment

By **CHUCK CANNON**

Command information officer

FORT POLK, La. — There is an old proverbial saying that goes, “Every cloud has a silver lining.” It’s meaning: No matter how bad a situation might seem, there is always — or usually — a good aspect to it.

I remember one such “silver lining” in my family’s life.

My spouse Susan and I, along with our son Justin, were planning a trip home to West Monroe, Louisiana, for Christmas one year while stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The morning we were to leave, our car broke down.



Cannon

As most young Army families in the mid-1980s, we didn’t have the finances to afford to repair the car as we had spent most of our disposable income on Christmas presents

and to pay for the gas for the trip home.

Needless to say, we were depressed. We had so looked forward to seeing our families and escaping from Fort Bragg for a couple of weeks. Justin was about 6 or 7 and was really hoping to visit with his grandparents and cousins. It was going to be a great Christmas.

To say we were depressed that evening as we went to bed would have been an understatement. There were quite a few tears as we turned in for the night, sure that we were going to miss a wonderful Christmas.

As we woke the next morning we were greeted with the most amazing site: Overnight it had snowed about 8 inches, leaving a sparkling white blanket covering everything outdoors. For Justin,

who had been born in San Antonio, Texas, and lived there and the island of Okinawa in the South China Sea, it was a sight he’d never witnessed before.

For our little family, it turned out to be one of our best Christmases ever. Sure, we missed out on the family visit, but there would be others. However, that magical Christmas morning with its peacefully quiet pure white covering would be a day we would remember forever. Even now, we look back on that “depressing” Christmas as perhaps our best ever.

Why do I bring up an old Christmas story in April? And why now?

It’s the old adage I mentioned earlier: Every cloud has a silver lining.

We are going through a pandemic that is more devastating than anything I’ve witnessed in my nearly 65 years. Louisiana has seemed to be especially hard hit. Granted, we’ve experience widespread death and destruction before — hurricanes seem to cyclically hit our coast on a regular basis — but this is the first time I can remember an attack that is prolonged and shows no preference for sex, age, race or national origin. It doesn’t discriminate — we are all targets.

But as I watched The Weather Channel one morning this week, the talking head mentioned something that at first, struck me as odd, then as she explained, really opened my eyes. She said studies have shown COVID-19 has been good for the environment.

My first thought was she was crazy. Then she explained what researchers have discovered: Because people are staying home, there are fewer emissions from motorized vehicles, which in turn cuts down on the negative effect those emissions have on the environment.

Fewer people are driving to work — they’re teleworking from home.

Fewer people are taking public transportation,

opting to walk or ride bikes — to avoid contact with others.

More people are cooking at home, cutting down on paper and plastic utensils, and thus reducing waste at landfills.

I’m sure that as the pandemic reaches its zenith, there will be other research that confirms what the above shows: We know how to take care of Earth; it’s just that we sometimes need to be reminded.

A couple of years ago in this space I wrote about how I was amazed when I put pen to paper to learn how much trash Susan and I produced

each week, and what a positive difference it made when we began to “seriously” recycle. We went from two full large garbage cans a week for trash pick up to less than one-third of one can. It makes a difference.

Since mid-March I’ve already prepared more home-cooked meals than I did in the previous six months. Not only are they healthier than take out meals, but they also reminded me how much I enjoy cooking, and — most importantly — they cut down on the amount of take out waste, such as Styrofoam and plastic containers that aren’t recyclable in this area.

My wife will tell you I’m an optimist. I try to see the good in every situation. It’s how I’m wired. Sometimes that’s a difficult thing, such as with the COVID-19 pandemic. The pain, suffering and mental anguish it’s wrought on the world, cannot be denied. We need to follow the social distancing, stay-at-home orders and other warnings; if we do, we’ll beat this thing. Hopefully, things will soon return to some semblance of order.

But let’s not forget the lessons learned. We have it in our power to make a positive change in our environment. We’ve proven we can do this. Let’s make sure there is a silver lining to the COVID-19 cloud.

Commentary

Writer points out virtues, memories of gardening with Family

By **KEITH HOUIN**

Staff writer

FORT POLK, La. — As a long time gardener I learned a lot about the science of life. I learned about germination, nutrients, fertilization and that the smallest of seeds can grow to be a mighty tree.



Houin

I also have fond memories of times with my grandparents and uncles. In particular, the time we planted watermelon seeds and just a week later there was a huge watermelon in the garden. I was

four at the time and didn’t even consider that possibly my grandpa had bought one and put it there. All I knew at the time was the joy of having something spring to life.

Gardening taught me more than just nature science though. A garden doesn’t

just appear overnight after you put down seeds or seedlings. Each plant requires its own specific needs to grow and at some point, bloom or bear fruit.

A garden takes time, patience and — most of all — nurturing. Left alone it might still grow, but it will be wild and chaotic with no cohesive structure and filled with unwanted weeds.

In that way the garden is like us. To fully mature we need the same things a garden needs. We need to take time for ourselves and nurture our own wellbeing. We need to deal with the “weeds” that interfere with our personal growth and the wellbeing of our family and friends around us.

Despite the patience and nurturing, our garden will face hardships. There will be storms, insects and droughts that we cannot control that adversely impact the garden.

Blooms will be lost. Branches will be broken.

Soil will erode. The very foundation of the garden can be severely damaged.

Give it time and additional care though and the garden will prove its resilience. It will

spring back to life and continue to mature.

Commentary

Gardening tips from the past

Here are a few old-fashioned garden tips from www.myhomemaderoots.com:

- Use cornmeal to sow tiny seeds
- Use cover crops for a bountiful garden
- Don’t over water tomatoes
- Use tin pie plates to keep birds away
- Set out a shallow pan of beer in the garden to attract and drown slugs
- Bury kitchen scraps in small trenches in the garden if you’re unable to build a compost pile
- Plant flowers along with vegetables to draw pollinators
- Deadhead flowers for healthier blooms
- Keep tools clean and sharp by storing them in a bucket of sand mixed with a little mineral oil
- Use old pantyhose to tie up tomatoes
- Save hair from your hairbrush; it keeps rabbits out and is nice nesting material