

GUARDIAN



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Hero embodies warrior spirit at historic redesignation ceremony

By **ANGIE THORNE**
Public Affairs Office

FORT JOHNSON, La. — The Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk became JRTC and Fort Johnson at a redesignation ceremony June 13. Government officials, Army leadership, distinguished guests and members of the community attended the ceremony celebrating the historical name change of the Army’s premier combat training facility.

The installation, nestled along the border of Louisiana’s Kisatchie National Forest, was born Jan. 10, 1941, on the eve of America’s involvement in World War II. The newly christened Camp Polk began its long history of service by answering the Army’s call during the Louisiana Maneuvers.

Brig. Gen. David W. Gardner, JRTC and Fort Johnson commanding general, spoke at the ceremony and said the maneuvers were one of the greatest practice battles in U.S. history.

“The linked and nearly continuous mock battles had one purpose: to prepare 350,000 American Soldiers for the world war that had begun in Europe and was threatening to spread around the globe,” he said.

The essence of Camp Polk’s reason for being was summed up by Gen. George C. Marshal.

“He spoke the words that would become symbolic of Fort Polk’s mission, then and now. ‘I want the mistakes made down in Louisiana, not over in Europe, and the only way to do this thing is try it out, and if it doesn’t work, find out what we need to make it work.’ More than 80 years later, that idea is still at the forefront of our mission,” Gardner said.

After WWII, Camp Polk closed and opened several times to answer the nation’s call. In June 1950 it once again teamed with Soldiers training for the Korean War. In 1955, Camp Polk was redesignated as Fort Polk in preparation for Operation Sagebrush (the largest training maneu-



Brig. Gen. David W. Gardner, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Johnson commanding general, speaks to the audience at the redesignation ceremony June 13.

vers held since the Louisiana Maneuvers). More than one million Soldiers trained at Fort Polk during the Vietnam War. In 1993, the Joint Readiness Training Center moved from Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, to Fort Polk, thus beginning the installation’s current role as the Army’s premier combat training center.

“At this very moment, Fort Johnson is training America’s Soldiers to fight and win our nation’s wars. The 44th Infantry Brigade, from the New Jersey National Guard, which is part of the 42nd Infantry Division (The Rainbow Division) from the New York National Guard, just completed their fight against the formidable enemy — the mighty Geronimos,” Gardner said.

The installation’s motto is Forging the Warrior Spirit, which encompasses a Soldier’s courage, bravery, discipline, commitment, adaptability and sense of purpose.

“As Army Soldiers, we dedicate ourselves to the defense of freedom, the protection of our nation and the well-being of our fellow citizens. This sense of purpose infuses

every action we take, giving us the strength and resolve to persevere, even when the mission is arduous,” Gardner said.

Sgt. William Henry Johnson embodied the warrior spirit in its purest form. Johnson was a member of the all-Black New York National Guard 369th Infantry Regiment, known as the Harlem Hellfighters. He was referred to by President Theodore Roosevelt as one of the five bravest Americans to serve in World War I.

When an unexpected German raiding party attacked his position, Johnson and his comrade faced the enemy without support. Johnson threw grenades until he ran out, fired his rifle until he spent his ammunition, charged the enemy using his rifle as a club and, finally, drew his bolo knife to fight the raiders a close quarters.

“Ultimately, Johnson single-handedly engaged approximately two dozen men and sustained 21 separate wounds in hand-to-hand combat. His actions saved his comrade, sounded the alarm and secured

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JRTC and Fort Johnson Brig. Gen. David W. Gardner

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Garrison Commander

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Cover photo: Fort Johnson leadership uncases the installation’s new colors at the redesignation ceremony June 13. (Photo VISUAL INFORMATION)

Redesignation

Continued from page 1

his unit's safety and position," Gardner said. "Johnson became the United States' first hero of the Great War, immediately receiving the French Croix De Guerre for his actions. He was one of the first Americans to ever receive the award."

Johnson was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart in 1996, Distinguished Service Cross in 2002 and the Medal of Honor in 2015.

"The warrior spirit that burned within Sgt. William Henry Johnson now inspires generations of Soldiers that call JRTC and Fort Johnson home, as well as those that travel here from across the nation and world to train," Gardner said. "Johnson's story is a testament to the indomitable warrior spirit that is the lifeblood of the United States Army. May we all forge the warrior spirit within ourselves, honoring the sacrifices of those like Johnson, and carry it forward with pride, honor and unwavering dedication."

Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, National Guard Bureau chief and a guest speaker at the redesignation ceremony, told those in attendance that at pivotal moments in history and battle, Guardsman are there.

"They train, they fight, they fulfill their oath. They are warriors. They are heroes ... That is why I'm proud this place — The Home of Heroes, Forging the Warrior Spirit — bears the name of a Guardsman: Sgt. William Henry Johnson," Hokanson said. "I'd like to thank the Naming Commission for commemorating Sgt. Johnson's courage, strength and readiness and recognizing the historic contributions of our citizen-Soldiers."

Mark Leslie, Fort Johnson Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security director, attended the ceremony.

"If you have read Sgt. Johnson's citation for the Medal of Honor, then you know there is no doubt he embodies the warrior spirit. The man fought like a lion and was wounded 21 times. Think about that, 21 times and he kept fighting. Our Army, Soldiers and this installation should not only be proud, but feel privileged to bear Sgt. Johnson's name and keep forging the warrior spirit for generations to come," Leslie said. "When we come in the gates of this installation we are greeted with a sign that says Welcome to the Home of Heroes. How appropriate is it that we will now be memorializing a true hero?"

Hokanson said the Soldiers that pass through these gates, whether regular Army, National Guard or the Army Reserve, will emerge with lessons they will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

"They are transformed. They are forged and honed as warriors. They go forth with the spirit of Sgt. William Henry Johnson and all who



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upheld their oath with courage and honor," Hokanson said.

Retired New York National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. Louis Wilson attended the redesignation ceremony. Wilson accepted the Medal of Honor on behalf of Johnson in 2015. Wilson trained at Fort Polk years ago as an artillery command sergeant major.

"That was hard training, but to come back here now at the redesignation ceremony for Fort Johnson is amazing," Wilson said. "He (Johnson) is a personal hero to me. He grew up like I grew up. He was part of the Army and faced challenges and overcame them. If he was here today, he would have a big smile on his face knowing that his story and legacy is being carried on."

Tara Johnson, Johnson's granddaughter, was also in attendance.

Tara said she and her family were elated and honored to have Johnson recognized in this way.

"When granddad came back to America after the war and they had that ticker tape parade for him, he didn't look at it like he was the first African American guy sitting on a car, waving and having people cheer him on. He thought of himself as a Soldier and nothing more than that. He was honored," Tara said. "Now that this is Fort Johnson, his name is going to be remembered. The Soldiers that are training here are going to know his story and understand his dedication this country."

Fort Polk has answered the Army's call since 1941. The installation has trained millions of America's men and women to deploy, fight and win the nation's wars for more than 80 years. That legacy will continue as Fort Johnson.



Redesignation ceremony **highlights** history, heartfelt moments



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Lopez takes command of U.S. Army Garrison Fort Johnson

By CHUCK CANNON
Public Affairs Office

FORT JOHNSON, La. — Col. CJ Lopez assumed command of U.S. Army Garrison Fort Johnson during a change of command ceremony June 15 at 10 a.m. on the installation's Warrior Field.

Lopez replaced Col. Sam Smith, who is headed to Washington, D.C., for his next assignment as the senior military advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

Brenda Lee McCullough, director, U.S. Army Installation Management Command Readiness, was the reviewing officer and spoke first. She acknowledged the day was bittersweet for Smith.

"Commanding a garrison is one of the highest military honors one can experience, for both the tremendous responsibility as well as the trust we place in you to lead and care for our national treasures: Soldiers, civilians and their Families," she said.

"Although I must say we are sad to see you and your vibrant personality go, congratulations are in order on your next position."

The Army entrusts garrison commanders to defend and secure Army installations.

"You, Sam, as the garrison commander, led in our nation's defense of Fort Johnson with unparalleled expertise and grace," she said. "Thank you."

From June 2021 to June 2023, Smith led U.S. Army Garrison Fort Johnson as the nation's premier warfighter training center.

"You led the team in continuing its nothing-but-exceptional support to the senior commander," McCullough said. "And you did so while skillfully managing fiscal and resourcing challenges."

McCullough likened the job of garrison command to that of the 1980 U.S. Olympic "Miracle on Ice" hockey team, who succeeded against overwhelming odds to beat the heavily favored Russian team and captured the gold medal.

"I believe in miracles; they happen everyday at the Fort Johnson installation," she said. "To Col. Smith and the garrison staff, thank you for the daily miracles you provide to the Soldiers, civilians and Family members of Fort Johnson."

McCullough then welcomed Lopez to the IMCOM Readiness team and Fort Johnson.

"As a proven leader, I am confident that you will invest the same passion, professionalism, pride and expertise to the Soldiers, civilians and family members of Fort Johnson. They deserve nothing less," she said.

McCullough was followed by Smith, who began by thanking those who made his two years in command a success, including Brig. Gen. David W. Gardner, commander, Joint Read-



Col. CJ Lopez accepts the colors from Brenda Lee McCullough, director, U.S. Army Installation Management Command Readiness, to become Fort Johnson's garrison commander at the garrison change of command ceremony June 15.

iness Training Center and Fort Johnson, and garrison Command Sgt. Maj. Stephen Nielsen. Smith then spoke to the Soldiers, civilians and contractors who work at Fort Johnson.

"I couldn't have asked for a better team of professionals," Smith said. "We've accomplished great things here because of your can-do attitude. Your time, talent and tenacity are helping to create an installation that is second to none."

Smith then recounted the advances made in quality of life and infrastructure at Fort Johnson.

"It has been a busy two years at Fort Johnson and our team is proud of the work we've accomplished," he said. "But the bottom line is that an installation cannot function without the garrison staff. It is you civilians working on Fort Johnson who provide the support and continuity that is so important to both Fort Johnson and the Army."

Turning his attention to the relationship between Fort Johnson and local communities, Smith said it is unique among other Army installations.

"Where else can you be stationed where the communities outside the gates welcome you with open arms and work to make quality of life better for civilians, veterans, Soldiers and Families?" he asked. "And it's not just the communities surrounding Fort Johnson — it's cities and towns throughout the state, and community leaders and elected officials who are part of the Fort Johnson team."

Smith welcomed Lopez to what he considered one of the best jobs in the Army — commander of the Soldiers and civilians at Fort Johnson.

"They are the finest group of people you will



Col. CJ Lopez speaks at the garrison change of command ceremony.

serve with, and they'll do whatever is necessary to successfully complete Fort Johnson's mission of preparing today's Soldiers to fight our nation's wars."

Smith closed by thanking his husband, Hernan.

"Thanks for always being there for me," he said. "Words are not enough to convey my love and admiration for you. The life we've chosen isn't an easy one, but you've been there every step of the way."

Lopez was next to take the podium and said he understands he's joining a strong team.

"Your reputation precedes you," he said. "We will continue to build the garrison team and prioritize providing the best services possible for our Soldiers and Families."

After thanking his Family members and friends, Lopez thanked McCullough for the confidence from her and Lt. Gen. Omar J. Jones IV, commander, IMCOM.

"I know the workload you carry every day for our great Army and for the nation," Lopez said. "Thanks for being here today. I want to reemphasize to you my personal commitment to lead this garrison as best I can."

After thanking Smith for making the transition a smooth one and pledging support to local communities, Lopez turned his attention to the Soldiers on the field.

"You are the picture of strength and spirit fitting of the heroes who live at the Home of Heroes," he said. "I am extremely proud and humbled to be here as your garrison commander, and I promise you my best efforts every day. I will likewise count on each of you to bring your best efforts every day and I know you will."

Lopez has served in positions ranging from platoon leader to company and battalion commander, and operations.

His operational deployments include Operation Joint Forge, Bosnia-Herzegovina; Operation Iraqi Freedom; Operation Enduring Freedom; and Operation Inherent Resolve.

Lopez, who was born in Lafayette, Louisiana, is married to the former Mary Clare Thompson of Sylvan Lake, Michigan. They have one son, Kal, 18, and one daughter, Falon, 14.

Wilma takes command of Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital

By JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES
BJACH PAO

FORT JOHNSON, La. —Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital has a new leader following a change of command ceremony June 5 on Warrior Field at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.

The outgoing commander, Col. Aristotle Vaseliades, relinquished command to Col. Alisa Wilma, in front of military and local civic leaders, network hospital partners, Family and friends.

While the clouds kept the Louisiana temperatures in check, Vaseliades passed the unit colors to Brig. Gen. E. Darrin Cox, commanding general, Medical Readiness Command, West, and host of the ceremony, indicating his relinquishment of hospital command. Cox then passed the colors to Wilma, charging her with the responsibilities and authority to lead BJACH.

Cox said the U.S. Army Medical Command and the Military Health System have undergone tremendous change during Vaseliades tenure as the BJACH commander.

“Col. Vaseliades wore many hats during his time at Fort Polk,” Cox said. “In addition to being the hospital commander, he served as the JRTC and Fort Polk Surgeon, the Director of the Central Louisiana Small Market and chaired the installation senior medical council.”

Cox lauded Vaseliades for his accomplishments.

“During Col. Vaseliades’ command BJACH underwent a highly successful Joint Commission Survey with zero major findings, successfully transitioned the civilian work force from the Department of the Army to the Defense Health Agency and was recognized as the Department of Defense’s first Leapfrog Hospital of the Year,” he said. “And let’s not forget the bar that was set here when BJACH hosted the Command Sgt. Maj. Jack Clark Army Best Medic Competition. The Army Surgeon General, Lt. Gen. Scott Dingle, proclaimed it to be the best competition to date, setting the example for future units to match.”

Cox welcomed Wilma and her spouse, Paul Butler to the MRC, W family.

“I know you possess the knowledge, leadership, and strategic vision necessary to ensure this command continues to maintain its status as a premier medical platform for the world’s best expeditionary and globally integrated fighting force,” he said. This is a critical time in the history of our world. We are adapting who we are, how we fight, and what we fight with in preparation for future operational challenges. Your leadership will be vital to the ongoing successful modernization of the Army and Army Medicine.”

Cox said he was confident Wilma will excel at Fort Polk, with network partners, communi-



Col. Alisa Wilma (left), commander, Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, returns the unit colors to Command Sgt. Maj. Shavonda Devereaux, her senior enlisted advisor, for safe keeping during a change of command ceremony June 5 at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.

ty stakeholders, and the entire MHS.

Vaseliades thanked his Family, neighbors, JRTC and Fort Polk Leadership, hospital and network providers and Northwestern State University and Natchitoches Parish for their community partnership.

“I especially want to thank the kids of Eagle View Drive,” Vaseliades said. “During COVID-19 my kids were isolated or quarantined for two years in Korea and at Fort Bragg. Getting here with a good team of kids on our street helped get them out of their rooms and back to being kids again.”

Vaseliades said BJACH is and will continue to be excel and provide excellent care to the community.

“In the past 731 days we’ve pivoted to readiness while still providing exceptional healthcare to the 20,000 plus Soldiers, Families and retirees who call Fort Polk home. This is what sets us apart from our civilian colleagues,” he said. “We were able to do both at the same time. Our Soldiers are ready and prepared to execute their wartime mission and our organization has not only maintained but exceeded safety and quality care goals and expectations.”

Vaseliades wished Wilma good luck and assured her the BJACH team would take care of her.

Wilma is the first veterinarian to command a military treatment facility.

“When I first learned I’d be commanding BJACH, my husband said, ‘Congrats, you’re Ted Lasso,’” Wilma said. “A recent Gallop poll revealed that Americans would rather work for a boss like Ted Lasso than for an expert in their field. So, while I know he was joking, I wanted to thank my husband Paul for that compliment.”

Wilma said she didn’t plan to grow a mustache or start wearing visors.

“I plan on leaning in with the idea of leading from the heart,” she said.

Wilma thanked the Soldiers in formation for making the ceremony a success.

“Since winning matters, we will continue to support the mission of forging the warrior spirit at the Joint Readiness Training Center, because Army Medicine is Army Strong,” she said.

Editor’s note: Ted Lasso, starring Jason Sudeikis, is an American sports comedy-drama television series about a football coach who is hired to coach a soccer team in England despite having no previous experience coaching soccer. What Ted Lasso lacks in knowledge, he makes up for with optimism, charm and humor.

Geronimo goes “all the way” with change of command

By PORSHA AUZENNE
Public Affairs Office

FORT JOHNSON, La. — In the morning hours of June 12, a change of command took place at Spike Field. The 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment gathered to thank outgoing commander Lt. Col. Brendan D. Fitzgerald and welcome incoming commander Lt. Col. Mason W. Thornal.

“I’m going to miss the battalion,” Fitzgerald stated. “All of the officers, noncommissioned officers and the paratroopers that worked with me and for me, I’ll miss them the most. We had a great opportunity, being in the field every month and getting to fight the rotational training units. The great thing about Geronimo is we’re able to perfect our craft since every month we’re in a high intensity environment.”

The change of command opened with the passing of the unit’s colors, which represent the heritage and history of the 1st Bn (Abn), 509th Inf Reg as well the loyalty and unity of its paratroopers. Since the early days of warfare, the colors have served as the talisman of the unit’s identity. The flag is symbolic as it helped Geronimo Soldiers to develop a sense of pride, as well as serving the more practical purpose of marking the location of the commander and providing a rally point for paratroopers in the smoke and chaos of battle.

The colors were passed from Fitzgerald to Thornal as the outgoing commander relinquished his duties and responsibilities.

“I’d like to draw attention to the paratroopers, noncommissioned officers and officers of Geronimo,” Fitzgerald remarked in his farewell speech. “Before you stands a U.S. Airborne battalion tasked with being the Army’s premiere opposing force — an undersized battalion that has an outsized impact of the readiness of our Army and nation.”

Fitzgerald proceeded to thank friends, family, his spouse, Liz Falchi, and the Soldiers he served alongside during his tenure at Fort Johnson before passing the podium to Thornal.

“To the Geronimo family, thank you for being here to share this with us today. To the JRTC and operations group command team, thank you for the trust and opportunity to join the Geronimo team,” Thornal expressed in his opening remarks. “I look forward to working with both teams over the next two years. To the Geronimo team here on the field today, thank you for what you do every day for our nation and thank you for the sacrifices your Families make every day.”

In closing, Thornal expressed his eagerness in working and serving alongside the 1st Bn (Abn), 509th Inf Reg. The ceremony concluded with friends, Families, Soldiers and JRTC and Fort Johnson lead-



Outgoing commander Lt. Col. Brendan D. Fitzgerald passed the colors to incoming commander Lt. Col. Mason W. Thornal.



Fitzgerald and Thornal share an embrace as change of responsibilities are exchanged.



Thornal takes the podium to express excitement in working with the Geronimo team.



Capt. John Guerra, left, presents Fitzgerald and spouse Liz Falchi an award on behalf of the battalion.

ership exchanging appreciation with both the incoming and outgoing commanders.



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MICC change of command

Fort Johnson's Mission and Installation Contracting Command conducted a change of command ceremony June 6 at the Warrior Center. Lt. Col. Libson J. Williams Jr. relinquished command to Lt. Col. Donald M. Lee.



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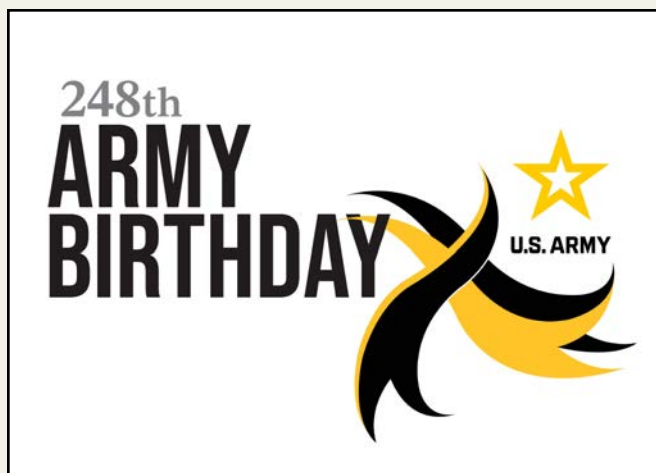
Command recognizes, celebrates Army's 248th Birthday

FORT JOHNSON, La. — The Army is one of the oldest institutions in the country. Born on June 14, 1775, when the Continental Congress established it, the Army is a year older than the Declaration of Independence and 13 years older than the Constitution.

The Army's tagline this year is Be All You Can Be, and our focus is on the Army's unlimited possibilities. The Army has always challenged Soldiers to be all they can be. Now, with more than 200 jobs to choose from, Soldiers can find their purpose and pursue their passions through a wide range of interest areas.

In addition to the fantastic Soldiers we have at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Johnson, we cannot forget the incredible contributions of the Department of the Army civilians that make this a truly great place to train, live, deploy from and come home to.

None could do what they do without their Families. We greatly appreciate the Army spouses, children and other Family members for their contributions and sacrifices as their Soldiers and Department of the Army civilians train, and sometimes deploy, in order to de-



fend our country. thank you all for everything you do!

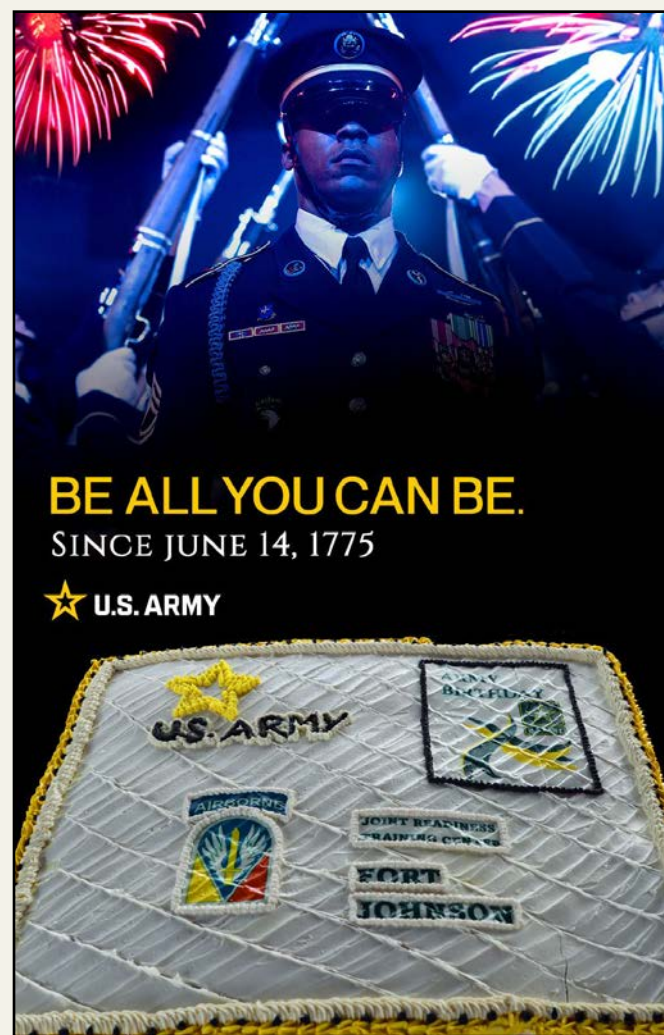
For 248 years the U.S. Army has answered the call to defend and support America against both foreign and domestic challenges, and we'll continue to do so in the future!

Forging the Warrior Spirit! Winning Matters!

David P. Hanson
Command Sergeant Major, U.S. Army

David W. Gardner
Brigadier General, U.S. Army Commanding

MESSAGE



Fort Johnson celebrates Army birthday in style with fitness, cake, ceremony

By PORSHA AUZENNE
Public Affairs Office

FORT JOHNSON, La. — JRTC and Fort Johnson celebrated two huge events this week: the redesignation of the installation in honor of the heroic Sgt. Henry Johnson June 13 and the U.S. Army's 248th

birthday the following day. Leadership, Soldiers and DOD civilians came together for physical fitness and cake, followed by the Army heritage ceremony.

The birthday festivities commenced at Warrior Field, with Soldiers performing a sprint-drag-carry session, which is a test of strength endurance and anaerobic capacity. As Soldiers dash 25 meters five times up and down a lane, they simultaneously sprint, drag a sled weighing 90 pounds, and finish by hand-carrying two 40-pound kettlebell weights. The test simulates pulling a fellow Soldier out of harm's way, carrying ammunition to a fighting posi-

tion or vehicle and moving quickly to take cover in the midst of battle.

After the physical fitness session was complete, attendees gathered around as a large cake was presented in honor of the Army's 248th birthday. Brig. Gen. David W. Gardner, JRTC and Fort Johnson commanding general, had Soldiers and civilians say where they were from, why they joined the Army

Family and what it means to them.

"We all need to continue to communicate that we represent a force that comes from all over America and from all backgrounds," Gardner stated after everyone told their stories. "As you listened to the stories, almost everybody here had options. Some of them weren't as good, while some people left great opportunities to take a chance on the Army, but it's kept you here. It's kept you a part of the world's finest fighting force that we've ever fielded in the history of our people

across the globe."

After Gardner concluded his speech, attendees celebrated with cake and punch. Once the physical fitness and cake cutting portions were complete, the festivities concluded at the Bayou Theater for the Army heritage ceremony. Hosted by the 519th Military Police

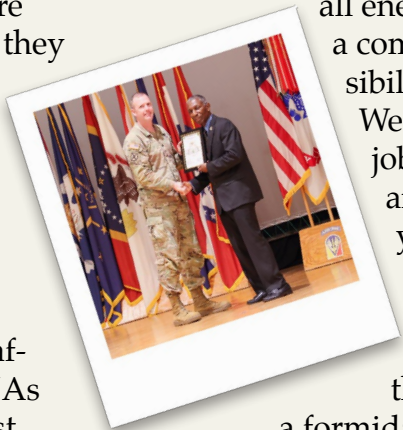
Battalion, the ceremony honored the Army's 248th year legacy.

Serving as the guest speaker for the event was Kevin Stuart, Fort Johnson's Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital Ombudsman.

"When we raised our right hand and said 'I will protect and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, that's a commitment, obligation and responsibility and we must live up to that. We've got to be committed to do our job whenever necessary to protect and defend our nation. For 248 years we've been doing something right and we need to continue to do that,'" Stuart remarked.

"That encourages success and that's why we as the U.S. Army is a formidable force in the eyes of our adversaries."

The ceremony concluded with a round of applause as Stuart was gifted a framed certificate on behalf of the 519th MP Bn for his dedication to ensuring the success of the Army's mission and vision.



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JRTC & FORT POLK

JRTC & Fort Johnson hurricane season 2023: are you prepared?

By TOMMY MORRIS
DPTMS

FORT JOHNSON, La. — Hurricane season began June 1 and lasts through Nov. 30. As Fort Johnson continues to take precautions to keep Soldiers, civilians and Family members safe, it is important to prepare for severe weather incidents, natural disasters and other unforeseen emergencies.

The 2023 hurricane forecast is predicted to have fewer storms and may be comparable to the number of hurricanes generated in 2022. Current projections indicate that the 2023 season will have an average of between 11-15 named storms. Four to eight of those storms are expected to reach hurricane strength, with one to three achieving a major hurricane rating of 3-5 with maximum sustained winds of 111 mph or greater.

Hurricanes are dangerous and can cause major damage due to storm surge, wind damage and flooding. They can happen along any U.S. coast or in any territory in the Atlantic or Pacific oceans. Storm surge, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, is an abnormal rise of water generated by a storm above the predicted astronomical tides. It is historically the leading cause of hurricane related deaths in the United States.

Emergencies like hurricanes, tornadoes or any other severe weather occurrence can happen unexpectedly anywhere and to anyone. The most important step you can take in helping yourself, your family and local responders is to be prepared no matter what the emergency. This will help you weather the storm and its aftermath, as well as aid in a quicker recovery for the community.

Consider the following steps in planning and preparing for a severe weather event.

Know hurricane risks (wind and water)

Find out what types of wind and water hazards could happen where you live. Hurricanes are not just a coastal problem. Impacts from wind and water can be felt hundreds of miles inland, and significant impacts can occur regardless of the storm's strength.

Consider threats

While hurricanes pose the greatest threat to life and property, tropical storms and tropical depressions can also be devastating. The primary hazards from tropical cyclones (hurricanes) are storm surge flooding, inland flooding from heavy rains, destructive winds, tornadoes and high surf and rip currents.

Determine flood-prone area

Anyone living in a flood-prone area is especially vulnerable to hurricane impacts. Find out today the flood risk for your area and plan accordingly. If you don't live in a flood zone, that doesn't necessarily mean you're safe; extreme rain from hurricanes can bring floods even to areas that aren't prone to flooding.



Learn evacuation zones

Determine if you live in a storm surge evacuation zone. This can tell you about your vulnerability to storm surge and will be imperative when it comes time to develop an evacuation plan.

Identify home structural risks

Find out if your home has any weaknesses that could prove deadly in a hurricane. Are your exterior doors and garage door hurricane proof?

Do you have storm shutters? Some aspects of your home can be strengthened to help withstand hurricane impacts, and some cannot. Mobile homes are especially vulnerable to hurricane-force winds, and basements are especially vulnerable to storm surge and flooding.

Prepare for hurricane season

The best time to prepare is before hurricane season begins to avoid having to rush through potentially life-saving preparations. However, the season is here and it's not too late to get your disaster supplies while the shelves are still stocked. Also, get an insurance check-up early, as flood insurance requires a 30-day waiting period.

Develop an evacuation plan

If you are at risk from hurricane impacts, you need an evacuation plan. Now is the time to begin planning where you would go and how you would get there. You don't need to travel hundreds of miles.

Your destination could be a friend or relative who lives in a well-built home outside flood prone areas. Plan several routes and be sure to account for your pets.

Create a communication plan

Take the time now to write down your hurricane plan and share it with your family. Determine family meeting places, and make sure to include an out-of-town location in case of evacuation. Write down a list of emergency contacts on paper and make sure to include utilities and other critical services. Remember, the internet may not be accessible during or after a storm.

Strengthen your home

If you plan to ride out the storm in your home, make sure it is in good repair. Declutter drains and gutters, bring in outside furniture, consider hurricane shutters, and proper plywood, steel or aluminum panels to board up the windows and doors. Remember, the garage door is the most vulnerable part of the home.

Assemble disaster supplies

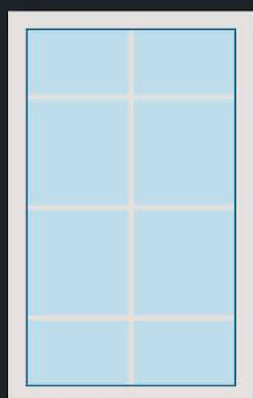
Whether you're evacuating or sheltering-in-place, you're going to need supplies, not just to get through the storm but for the potentially lengthy and unpleasant aftermath. Have enough non-perishable food, water and medicine to last each person in your family a minimum of three days (store a longer supply of water, if possible). Electricity and water could be out for weeks. You'll need extra cash, a battery-powered radio and flashlights. You may need a portable crank or solar-powered USB charger for your cell phones. And lastly, don't forget your pets.

For additional information, visit <https://ready.army.mil> or contact Tommy J. Morris, DPTMS, Chief, Protection Branch at tommy.j.morris2.civ@army.mil or call (337) 531-4875.

STRENGTHEN **YOUR HOME.**



**Cover
windows**



Trim trees



**Secure loose
outdoor items**



**Secure
all doors**



**Move your car
to a safe location**



Army celebrates anniversary of Women's Veterans Day

FORT JOHNSON, La. — June 12 was Women Veterans Day, which marks the anniversary of the enactment of the Women's Armed Services Integration act.

This year, we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the act, which allowed women to become permanent, full-time members of the U.S. Army.

In the Army, everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential to Be All They Can Be!

Thousands of American women served in formal, uniformed service to the U.S. Army in WWI and WWII, but as contract employees or auxiliary forces, they were not granted the full rank, privileges and benefits of their service.

Recognizing the vital role in of women in WWII, in 1948, President Truman signed into law the Women's Armed Services Integration Action, which enabled women to serve as permanent, regular members of the Army. In 2013, the Secretary of Defense lifted the ban on

women serving in direct combat and in 2016, all military occupational specialties opened to women.

In May 2021, Honorable Christine E. Wormuth was sworn in as the first female Secretary of the Army and in August 2021, Gen. Laura Richardson was appointed first female combatant command commander.

Our Army is dedicated to eliminating barriers to service and advancement, and ensuring equal access and opportunity for all.

We are proud of the everyday effort at our installation to build cohesive teams that are well-trained, disciplined and fit!

Forging the Warrior Spirit! Winning Matters!

MESSAGE

David P. Hanson
Command Sergeant Major, U.S. Army

David W. Gardner
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
Commanding



Exchange Senior Enlisted Advisor Focuses on Improving Quality of Life

AAFES

FORT JOHNSON, La. — The Army & Air Force Exchange Service's senior enlisted advisor is ensuring Fort Johnson's Louisiana Soldiers and Families have what they need to stay ready and resilient.

During his visit to Fort Johnson June 12, Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Kevin Osby toured Exchange facilities and met with post Command Sgt. Maj. David Hanson and garrison Command Sgt. Maj. Stephen Nielson to discuss how the Department of Defense retailer can improve the quality of life for the community.

"The Exchange is all in to make Fort Johnson a great place to work and live," said Osby, one of about 30 active-duty service members assigned to the Exchange. "We're committed to expanding and improving our services and options to best serve the community."

Recent improvement efforts include expanded dining options with the addition of Slim Chickens, Dunkin' Donuts and Baskin-Robbins, Chopz and Paavo's Pizza.

Renovations to the Mini Mall Express, the barber shop locations and the Starbucks, now with mobile ordering, demonstrates the Exchange's commitment to improving the quality of life for the community. DoorDash delivery service is available for Charley's, Subway, Qdoba, Slim Chickens and Burger King

and recently expanded to Express 1.

The Fort Johnson Exchange has also introduced self-checkout kiosks at the Main Store and Express 1, with the kiosks coming soon to the Mini Mall Express and Express 3 at North Fort.

The Exchange is working to add a third unmanned retail market, as well as improve cell phone service and options.

Every time service members shop their Exchange they are strengthening their community.

One hundred percent of Exchange earnings are reinvested in the military community through funding for critical quality of Life programs, as well as capital improvements. In the last 10 years, the Exchange has contributed \$3.5 billion in earnings worldwide.

"It matters where you shop," Osby said. "Small changes can make a big difference in a community. The Exchange is passionate about enhancing the quality of life for our heroes."

During his visit, Osby also thanked Exchange associates for their dedicated service. The Exchange is committed to hiring heroes.

Since 2013, the Exchange has hired more than 57,000 veterans and military spouses worldwide and aims to increase that to 75,000 by 2026.

To find out more about the Exchange history and mission follow them on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/ExchangePAO>.



During a visit to Fort Johnson June 12, Chief Master Sgt. Kevin Osby toured Exchange facilities and met with post Command Sgt. Maj. David Hanson, garrison Command Sgt. Maj. Stephen Nielson and AAFES management to discuss how to improve the quality of life for the community.



SHELBY WARYS/COMMAND PAO

BOSS brings benefits, balance to Soldiers quality of life

By **ANGIE THORNE**
Public Affairs Office

FORT JOHNSON, La. — Single Soldiers, far from the familiarity of home, friends and family, can often become isolated and lonely. The Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program was created to become a support system for those Soldiers. Its purpose is to not only enhance the morale and welfare of single Soldiers, but also to increase retention and sustain combat readiness.

The BOSS program has three core components aimed at maintaining a balanced life: leisure and recreation, community service and quality of life.

BOSS also assists the chain of command in dealing with suicide prevention, equal opportunity concerns and sexual harassment and assault issues that single Soldiers might experience.

“We are the voice of the single Soldier, day in and day out,” said Spc. Kevin West, Fort Johnson’s BOSS president. “Soldiers have told me they want input on the improvement to their quality of life. So, one of the most important things to me as BOSS president is to enable Fort Johnson’s BOSS program to advocate for the single Soldier from the installation level on up. It’s about giving the Soldiers, who may feel their opinions don’t count, a voice when it comes to advocating for what they want.”

In addition to influencing what happens around them, BOSS Soldiers physical, financial and emotional wellbeing are supported thanks to the three program tenants mentioned above.

Leisure and recreation

BOSS affords Soldiers the opportunity to assist in the planning and execution of recreational activities for single Soldiers.

“These events give our Soldiers a healthy outlet to relax and enjoy their time at Fort Polk,” West said. “It’s not just what we do (a crawfish boil, boating at Toledo Bend or a Cinco de Mayo party), it’s the culture we promote while doing it. We had 387 people attend that Cinco de Mayo party with no reported harmful behaviors. That’s important because these events give single Soldiers a healthy avenue to enjoy their time here.”

Community service

Provides direction for Soldiers interested in performing military and civilian community service-related projects. Community service projects provide Soldiers valuable experience, skills and a sense of community pride and ownership.

“A really big focus for us is giving back to the community that supports us. So you will see us out and about doing all kinds of things like reading to kids, painting at North Polk Elementary School, handing out backpacks full up supplies to kids going back to school and much more,” West said. “By volunteering, we

BOSS Soldiers volunteer at a North Polk Elementary School’s field day.



COURTESY OF BOSS

BOSS Soldiers volunteer at Striking Out Sexual Assault with JRTC and Fort Johnson SHARP at the Warrior Lanes!.



are not only positively impacting the Fort Johnson community, but also teaching BOSS members a sense of purpose and duty outside the traditional responsibilities of being a Soldier.”

Quality of life

The BOSS program serves as a tool to address many of the issues and concerns the Army faces today. The program gives the Army the ability to tackle tough issues through peer-to-peer leadership.

BOSS tries to connect with command on behalf of the Soldier. One issue they are bringing to the forefront is single Soldier parents.

“We asked, ‘What can BOSS do to help the single parent who is sometimes having to drop their child off at child care and head to PT (physical training) and go up, down, left and right to make things work as a Soldier and parent every day,’” West said. “They are an under represented population. When you are focusing on a population like single Soldiers, it’s sometimes hard to remember that there is also a dependent who relies on them.”

BOSS is looking at ways to better include single parent Soldiers who want to attend their events with their children, as well as represent the unique challenges they encounter.

“It’s not just about BOSS’s ability to advocate for them, but our ability to utilize the resources already available on post that they might not know about,” West said. “If BOSS can connect them to the right resource that makes me feel a lot better than just sitting on the sidelines.”

Other topics such as barracks questions and comments to things Soldiers would like to see at the post exchange and more are brought up. BOSS takes that information, depending on the topic, and passes it along to the relevant directorate, installation command or even Installation Management Command to advocate for the Soldier.

Another important part of the quality of life tenant is preventing harmful behaviors by working with programs like Sexual Harassment/ Assault Response and Prevention, Equal Opportunity program and suicide prevention.

West said one of the greatest items in the BOSS tool belt is its collaboration with Fort Johnson’s Viper Protect Program — an initiative which focuses on teaching junior enlisted Soldiers, at the grass roots level, how to protect and keep each other safe.

“Fort Johnson’s BOSS has partnered with

Please see BOSS, page 14

Continued from page 13

the Viper Protect Program, hosted by the 519th Military Police Battalion,” West said. “The program has helped our installation reduce harmful behaviors and we have BOSS members that have graduated from the Protect Program.”

It’s a way for Soldiers to actively improve the climate across the installation.

“Soldiers tell me, regarding the Viper Protect Program, that it appeals to them because it is proactive instead of reactive,” West said. “It’s not just about responding to something that has already happened and trying to make it better in the future. They are able to get ahead of it and proactively put in place what is needed to have a positive culture for Soldiers serving right now.”

Sgt. 1st Class Eric Rostamo, 519th Military Police Battalion noncommissioned officer in charge and founder of the Fort Johnson Viper Protect Program, said its objective is to proactively stop sexual harassment and assault, equal opportunity violations, racism, extremism and suicide.

“The Boss program is important to the Protect Program because these harmful behaviors happen everywhere, but they are statistically higher in the 18-24 year old demographic, which is also the BOSS demographic,” Rostamo said.

The quality of life perspective the BOSS Program promotes combined with the Protect Program’s three day course, promotes a proactive attitude toward reducing these behaviors before they happen.

“We offer SHARP, EO and suicide prevention training to Soldiers. After they take the course, they better understand the impact these situations have on other people,” Rostamo said. “Single Soldiers that graduate from the Protect Program take away a better understanding of the impact these behaviors have. It’s a people first initiative that empowers Soldiers to care about our most valuable resource — people.”

Rostamo has been in the Army for 15 years and wishes he had the BOSS program when he was a young, single Soldier. “This is the best program I’ve ever seen. I sometimes wish I was still a single Soldier so that I could take part in some of the events BOSS offers our Soldiers,” Rostamo said.

West is happy with the wide spread impact of everything BOSS does.

“The thing I’m most proud of is how we take people from every generation, background and culture, who wouldn’t traditionally speak to one another, and give them an opportunity to work together and think about what to do to be a better serving member of our community for, not just our Soldiers, but the surrounding communities as well.”

For more information about the Fort Johnson BOSS program call (337) 531-1948/5540.



BOSS Soldiers enjoy a Cinco de Mayo party.

COURTESY OF BOSS



The Geronimo BOSS Team and unit volunteers assisting the Leesville High School's Anchor Club to build bicycles for a raffle during a bicycle safety training at Vernon Elementary School. The LHS Anchor Club's focus is on brain safety awareness and physical activity.



BOSS had three more graduates of the Viper Protect Program! The graduation was hosted by the 519th Military Police Battalion.

MOLD MITIGATION

**TIP
#3**

If you see condensation or moisture collecting on windows, walls or pipes - **ACT QUICKLY** to dry the wet surface and reduce the moisture/water source. Condensation can be a sign of humidity.

If you **did not**
drop it,
do not
pick it up!

UXO, Dud, Training Round, War Trophy, Souvenir
NO MATTER WHAT YOU CALL THEM! THEY CAN BE DEADLY!

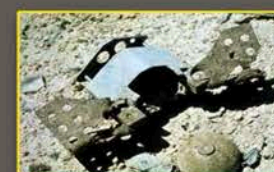
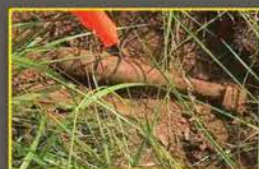
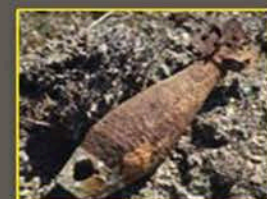
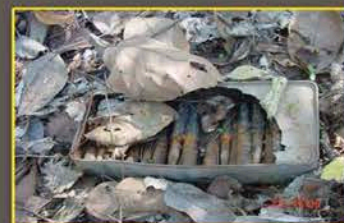
Learn and Follow
the **3Rs**

RECOGNIZE: The danger that a souvenir munition poses to yourself, your family and your neighbors

RETREAT: Do not disturb, touch or move it
Do not give or throw it away

REPORT: Call 911

Recognize
Retreat
Report



www.denix.osd.mil/uxo

Inclusion key in continuing gains in Army diversity

By CHUCK CANNON
Public Affairs Office

FORT JOHNSON, La. — Each June, the Army recognizes LGBTQ+ service members and civilians for their service to the Army and the nation. Pride Month is a nationally recognized observance celebrating the LGBTQ+ community, its advocates and allies by promoting community, unity and pride.

The selfless and dedicated service of LGBTQ+ Soldiers and civilians make our military stronger and the nation safer.

Since the repeal of Department of Defense's Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy on Sept. 20, 2011, gay service members may serve openly, with honor and integrity.

However, it wasn't always that way.

Frank Kameny, a World War II Soldier serving in the 58th Armored Infantry Battalion, 8th Armored Division, 9th Army, and later as a civilian astronomer, was fired and banned from federal employment in 1957 because he was gay.

He became one of the first LGBTQ+ advocates to confront the government's employment ban.

The 2021 DOD Instruction 1300.28 on transgender military service ensures no one, solely based on gender identity, will be denied accession into the Army; involuntarily separated or discharged from the Army; denied reenlistment or continuation of service; or subjected to adverse action or mistreatment.

Maj. Rori Chrisco-Janker, who works for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army, Equity and Inclusion Agency, said the Army recognizes the selfless and dedicated service of brave LGBTQ+ Soldiers and civilians has made the military stronger and the nation safer.

"We also know that a ready Army is one that sustains force capability by developing leaders and building teams in environments based on trust and respect," Chrisco-Janker said.

Dr. Lyle Hogue, acting deputy assistant Secretary of the Army, Equity and Inclusion, said the Army also recognizes all Soldiers and civilians are different.

"You can be all you can be in the Army — the Army recognizes the value of individual talent, backgrounds, and perspectives to its mission," Hogue said.

Former Fort Johnson garrison commander, Col. Sam Smith, is an openly gay officer and sits on the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion council representing Army G-2 (intelligence). He also represents intelligence community Soldiers. Smith said having served under Don't Ask, Don't Tell, he understands the journey, opportunities and struggles that come with being an openly gay officer.

"I believe in the mission and I love the Army," he said. "Even at a time I was struggling and I wrote a thesis at the War College



titled 'I Love the Army, Does the Army Love Me Back,' I knew there was a greater good."

The Army recognizes the value of individual talent, backgrounds and perspectives in accomplishing its mission. To sustain a high-quality Army that is trained and ready, Army leaders say it's important to ensure all Soldiers and civilians have the opportunity to maximize their talents and potential.

The Army is confident the talent, skills and abilities in its diverse force will help meet future defense challenges and win the nation's wars. According to Army leaders, it's important to work together to promote an inclusive culture that ensures respect and equal opportunity for all members of the department.

Smith said the Army has come a long way in making sure it's inclusive.

"There are policies, programs and activities that provide for whomever people are, whatever their orientation is," he said. "We have DEI, and as an Army, I think we are good on the diversity and equity part. The inclusive part was always a struggle. How do we pay it forward? How do we showcase to people who are behind us, who are asking, 'Is there a place for me in this Army? Can I be myself? Can I be successful? Who has paved the way for me?'"

Inclusiveness focuses on treating everyone with dignity and respect. One of the Army's goals is that everyone should feel valued, and they know that if they are struggling with orientation or identity, they are not alone; that there are people out there they can go to and ask for advice or assistance.

Smith pointed out areas where there has been DEI progress.

"We've opened combat arms to women," he said. "We have leaders who are part of the LGBTQ+ community who are successful commanders. We allow certain platforms to recognize all groups. We have EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity program) observances or monthly activities for multiple groups. Those are ways to recognize the Army

hears those communities and recognizes they may be a small part of the population, but still matter."

Smith said it's important for those Soldiers who are part of the LGBTQ+ community to "pay it forward," to share what they've learned and overcome with those who might be unsure if they can be successful in the Army.

"I am proud to openly serve, and I stand with all of our servicemembers, civilians and families who defend our great nation to wish our LGBTQ+ servicemembers, civilians and allies a Happy Pride," Smith said. "It is my continued hope and strong belief that all minorities and LGBTQ+ servicemembers will continue to find people in our Army and community that recognize us for who we are. Paraphrasing from my pastor, who I hear every Sunday, no matter where you come from, what you believe or doubt, what you feel or don't feel, or whom you love, you are welcome. This is a great inclusive message for all of us."

Despite the challenges LGBTQ+ Army Soldiers and civilians face, their commitment to service has made the military stronger and the nation safer. Lloyd J. Austin III, the Secretary of Defense, drove that point home.

"If you're fit and you're qualified to serve, and you can maintain the standards, you should be allowed to serve," Austin said.

The bottom line is a person can be all they can be in the Army, regardless of background, heritage or sexual orientation. The Army has provided tools to advance DEI initiatives across the board. No matter who you are, in the Army you can be successful. A person doesn't have to serve in silence. They can choose their own career path.

"As I stated when I had the privilege of taking command in 2021, if we could be or do just two things moving forward: Be inclusive and listen," Smith said. "Our Army's guiding principle is People, and to treat everyone with dignity and respect. We all don't have to agree, but together we are always stronger."

Fort Johnson community stands tall, talks Pride Month

By JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES
BJACH PAO

FORT JOHNSON, La. — Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital Soldiers, veterans and staff discussed historic and current challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community, serving openly and what it means to celebrate Pride Month at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Johnson.

Pride Month is not new. In fact, the first Pride march was held in New York City June 28, 1970, on the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising.

According to the Library of Congress <https://www.loc.gov/lgbt-pride-month/about/>, the Stonewall uprising was a series of events between police and LGBTQ+ protesters that stretched over six days. These events fundamentally changed the nature of LGBTQ+ activism in the United States.

Tammy Tate, deputy chief of the logistics and materiel branch at BJACH, served on active duty when gay service members were banned from military service and during the Don't Ask, Don't Tell era.

Tate served as a unit supply specialist and a recruiter during her military career and retired in 2008, two years before the repeal of DADT in 2010.

"I think I always knew I was gay, but I never acted on it," she said. "I did what was expected. I got married and I had a child."

Tate said she doesn't regret her marriage because of her son, but she inevitably divorced for a variety of personal reasons including an internal revelation she was having about her own identity and sexuality.

"When I first enlisted, the recruiting form straight up asked if you have ever participated in homosexual activities," she said. "If you answered yes, you were automatically disqualified."

Even if a gay recruit made it through, they could be administratively discharged if anyone found out about their sexuality during the DADT era.

"It was really hard. You just lived in the closet as the old saying goes," Tate said. "You went to work. You didn't ever say anything about your personal life. You just put your head down and did your job."

Tate had to keep her personal life a secret, which had negative impacts on her relationships.

"When I talk to my friends about that time now, they say, 'Tate we all knew,'" she said. "But I couldn't come out then. I grappled with a lot of things. I loved the Army. I wanted to be in the Army. I knew keeping a secret was against the Army Values, but that was a choice I made."

Tate had to choose between a career she loved and who she was as a person.



Pictured from left: Tammy Tate, deputy chief of logistics and materiel branch for Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, and her wife, Karen Tate, at their wedding in April 23, 2022.

COURTESY PHOTO

Anna Bickerstaff, practice manager at the Chesser Dental Clinic, served on active duty as a dental technician.

"I served during the time when the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy was in effect. Dating was difficult. We had to hide our relationships from the world," she said. "We weren't free to be who we are. We couldn't openly express our love for one another with meaningful gestures or gifts and were habitually lying about our relationship statuses."

Bickerstaff said it was common to assign the opposite gender to and make up names for partners.

"Most of us lived in fear and had to make the choice every day to be honest or risk everything we worked so hard for," she said. "It's so beautiful to see same sex couples out in the open without fear of reprisal today. They don't have to bear the weight of making the choice between love and livelihood."

Sgt. Hannah Cowsert, orthopedic specialist at BJACH and noncommissioned officer in charge of surgical services, said it's important to participate in Pride Month activities and share her story, not only for herself but for the LGBTQ+ Soldiers who served before her and those who will follow.

"I always knew I was gay, but I grew up in a conservative community where it would not have been accepted," she said. "I came out in a letter to my dad while I was in basic training. He was more accepting than I had expected. My family and my peers have been very accepting."

Cowsert said her dad just wanted her to be happy.

"My aunt joked she knew I was gay when I started playing softball in high school," she said.

Tate came out officially a year ago at the age

of 57. "Something finally clicked in her head after meeting a beautiful woman, my wife Karen, who helped me finally come out," she said.

Bickerstaff had her first crush on a girl in elementary school when she was 7 years old but dated boys until she was in her early teens because it was the right thing to do.

"I dated my first girl when I was 16 years old and everything just fell into place and made sense," she said. "My father was the first person I talked to about my not-so-sudden revelation and epiphany. True to form as a supporting parent from the baby boomer era, he responded lovingly, accepting me for who I am. I went down the line telling my siblings. They all said the same thing in response: 'We were waiting for you to tell us.' My mother is the only one who really has an issue with it. I came out to her years later when I was 21. Communication with her is still stressed, and I'm tolerated but not accepted. I know she's proud of my accomplishments, but not of me. It doesn't bother me as much as it used to because I'd rather be honest, comfortable, and happy with myself instead of living my entire life to make someone else happy and comfortable."

Cowsert said she feels confident serving openly at BJACH.

"I didn't know what to expect when I moved here from the Washington D.C. metro area," she said. "I feel safe on post and in bigger cities, and since I've been here, I haven't had any issues."

Cowsert said it's a testament to BJACH and installation leadership.

"When I found out the garrison commander was an openly gay man, I knew it was ok for me to be open too," she said.

Please see Pride, page 18

Pride

Continued from page 17

Cowsert said Pride Month is a good opportunity to have conversations and educate others about the LGBTQ+ community.

"This isn't a lifestyle choice," she said. "I spent too many years hiding. I want to be true to myself and hope people will learn to accept it."

Tate is happy for the current generation of Soldiers who can serve openly.

"I wish we could have had that when I was on active duty," she said. "We couldn't grow relationships, embrace each other in public or have our significant others there to welcome us home from a deployment. I'm sad we couldn't serve openly."

Tate wants to share her story to help others.

"To me, Pride Month is all about education," she said. "It helps us old timers and the next generation know and understand that it's ok to be open about your sexuality. The current generation right now is so fluent and it's because of these conversations."

Olivia Chapman, daughter of Maj. Micah Chapman, Task Force Three, Operations Group, Joint Readiness Training Center, is a high school sophomore.

"When I was 11 years old, this girl liked me and we had never talked about same sex relationships in my house," she said. "Both my older brothers are straight, so it wasn't a conversation that ever came up. Before that I never really had a crush on anyone. I was just living my own vibe in my own lane."

Chapman didn't really become aware of her attraction to other girls until she moved to Louisiana.

"When I had my first serious relationship with a girl and told my mom I was gay, she said she already knew," she said. "I was 13 years old when I came out, so I was nervous to tell my parents because I know of others whose families weren't accepting, which was scary."

Chapman isn't totally on board with the idea of Pride Month activities.

"Being gay isn't a personality trait," she said. "Making it a month just kind of reminds people you are different. But being gay is just who I am. We should celebrate who we are every day, not just once a year."

Chapman said it's easier for her generation to be open about who they are.

"I think the biggest challenge is educating our parents and the older generations," she said. "They grew up in a different time when homosexuality wasn't accepted."

Being a military child made things easier for Chapman because military Families are already diverse.

Bickerstaff said pride is simply being proud of who you are as a person.

"It's walking in your own truth and light without being ashamed of it," she said. "Pride



Sgt. Hannah Cowsert, orthopedic specialist at Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, shared this photo of herself taking a break during an outdoor training event while stationed at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.



Olivia Chapman, daughter of Maj. Micah Chapman, shared her experiences as an openly gay teenager during an interview for Pride Month at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Johnson. Chapman shared this photo of herself before prom Oct. 15, 2022.



Anna Bickerstaff, practice manager for Chesser Dental Clinic, and her daughter, Zoë, pose with the Chesser Dental Clinic Juneteenth and Pride Month table displays at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Johnson.

Month is a celebration of individuality and finding a family, home and community where you're accepted, understood and loved. We welcome everyone who wants to celebrate. You don't have to identify as queer to be an ally. Everyone who wants to be at our table is welcome to join. Pride Month is a time to bring awareness to our culture and lives."

Cowsert said having conversations during Pride Month are important.

"We are here. We aren't going away, so education and understanding will make things better for everyone," she said. "As someone who can serve openly in the Army, I owe it to the veterans who served under Don't Ask, Don't Tell to be out and share my story for them and the Soldiers who will join after me."

For Cowsert said being open and out allows her to be true to herself and help others.

"I will answer any questions. Nothing really offends me anymore," she said. "Most people ask questions in good faith because they want to understand and learn. You can learn more by talking to a person than by Googling it."

Bickerstaff said representation matters.

"We just want equality. There are so many different reasons to become more educated and to become an ally to those who identify as members of this community," she said. "Un-

derstanding our differences can elevate one's perception as opposed to accepting the ignorance and negative portrayal that we've been stigmatized by. That is why it's important to celebrate pride."

Chapman said living your own truth is important.

"Come out. People are more welcome to the idea of someone being gay nowadays," she said. "Don't stay in the closet. Don't be ashamed of yourself. Be true to yourself. There are more people who will support you than who won't. Gay or straight, my friends have my back."

Chapman attributes her ability to be openly gay to those who came before her.

"Thank you," she said. "Having the guts to stand up to ignorance, hatred and bigotry is why I can be out and live as an openly gay woman today."

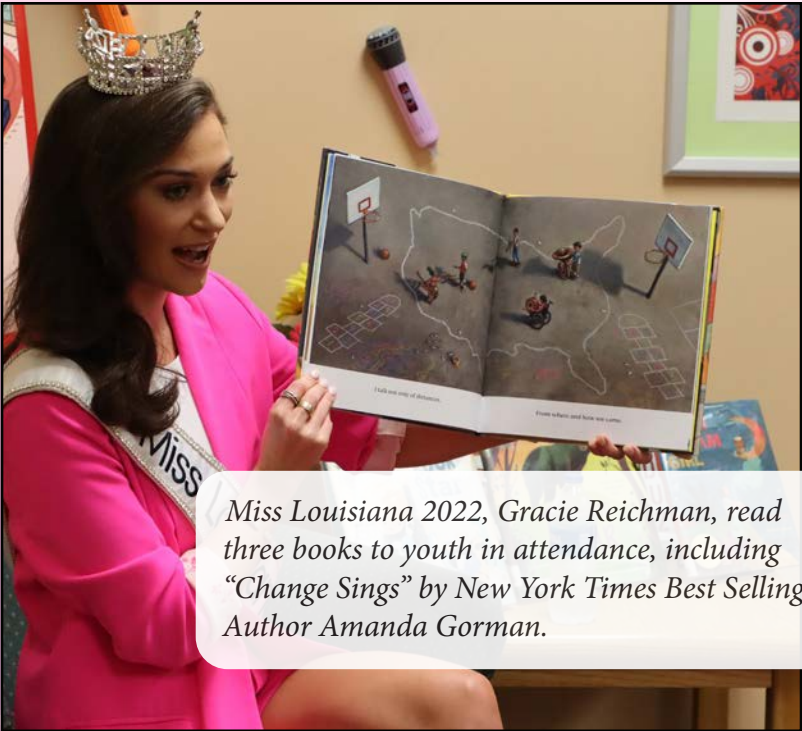
Tate said the key to happiness is honesty.

"I've never been happier," she said. "It's amazing. I lived in the closet for more than 40 years. I wanted to be the best partner I could be to my wife, Karen. The only way I could do that was to be honest. Her strengths are my weakness and we have helped each other come out and live our authentic selves together."

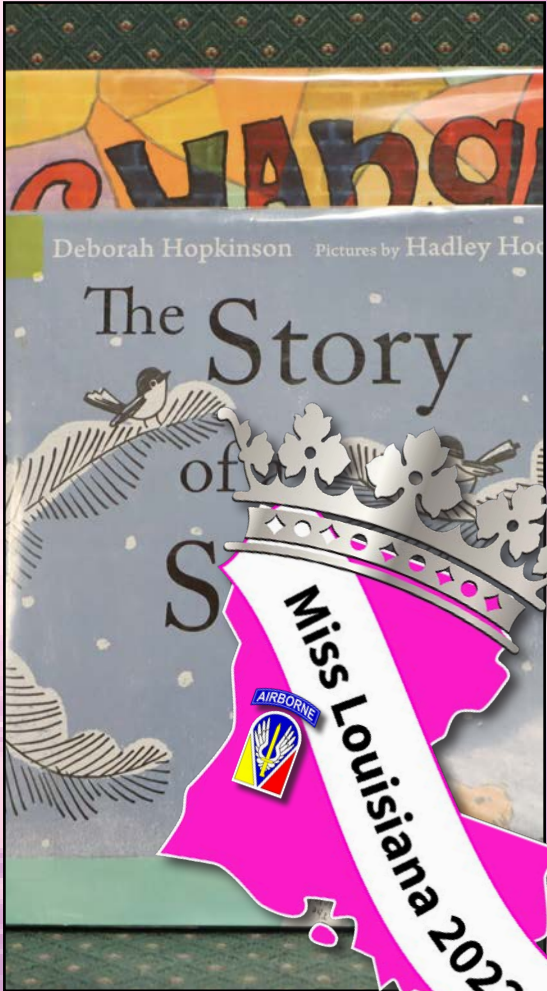
Miss Louisiana 2022 visits to kick off Summer **Reading** Program 2023



Miss Louisiana 2022, Gracie Reichman, visited Fort Johnson June 8 to kickoff the 2023 Summer Reading Program. Children gathered around as Reichman read books and held a meet and greet at Allen Memorial Library.



Miss Louisiana 2022, Gracie Reichman, read three books to youth in attendance, including "Change Sings" by New York Times Best Selling Author Amanda Gorman.



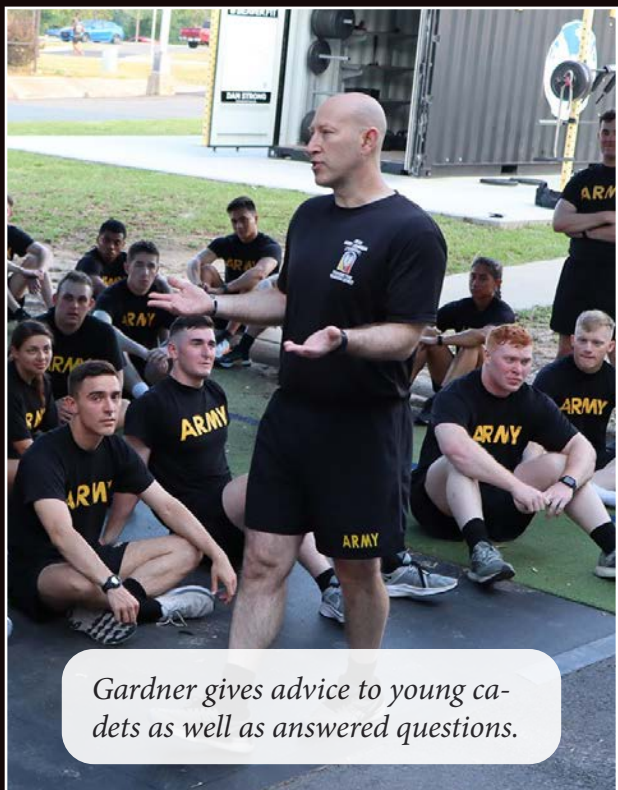
Cadets join Fort Johnson leadership for PT action



Brig. Gen. David W. Gardner, JRTC and Fort Johnson commanding general and Command Sgt. Maj. David P. Hanson met with cadets at the Home of Heroes Fitness Center June 8.



JRTC and Fort Johnson leadership worked out alongside cadets in a vigorous physical training session.



Gardner gives advice to young cadets as well as answered questions.

Take part in summer tradition of cooking over an open flame

By GABE WALKER
Public Affairs Office

FORT JOHNSON, La. — In 1963, the Barbecue Council founded National Barbecue Month, celebrated each May, to encourage Americans to cook outdoors. Possibly, the council may have decided barbecuing needed a resurgence thanks to the advent of indoor stoves and ovens. No matter the reason, the annual celebration of all things cooked on a grill seemed to work since grilling and barbecuing have continued to increase in popularity. However, in the South, folks needed little encouragement to pull out their grills. Thanks to consistently sunny weather, they tend to grill all year long.

But lets be real, though it might have helped, it didn't take a proclamation to make people cook outside. Humans have been cooking meat over an open fire for since neanderthals roasted roots over fire nearly two million years ago. A little closer to current history, Christopher Columbus found indigenous tribes on Hispaniola cooking meat over an indirect flame with green wood.

This may, or may not be the inspiration for cooking smokey, delicious meat over a fire. Imagine the delight of sailors getting off a boat and eating yummy, grilled meat after months at sea. It's the same feeling of joy people get today when eating the results of grilling their burgers, hot dogs and veggies, smoking a roast or barbecuing steaks, chicken and shish kabobs.

What type of grill you use and the food you put on the grill is a matter of personal preference and there is no wrong answer.

There is a wide variety of grills people can use to barbecue. Gas and charcoal grills are the most popular, but some people prefer wood pellet or electric grills or smokers. Each type of grill and smoker has its pros and cons. Choosing just one can be difficult and some purchase more than one to create a their outdoor culinary feasts.

Food safety is important.

- Always wash your hands after handling



GABE WALKER/GUARDIAN

meats and veggies to prevent food contamination and illness.

- Always ensure the grill is hot before adding meat to ensure it doesn't stick to the grill and to help kill bacteria.
- Take meat out of the refrigerator at least 30 minutes prior to grilling. If you put a cold piece of meat on the grill it will char and cook on the outside, but remain raw on the inside.

The most popular meats to barbecue are beef (steak and burgers) and pork cuts (ribs, sausage and hot dogs). Chicken and turkey are also well known barbecue staples, while lamb and goat are regional favorites in some parts of the country.

Let's not forget veggies. Corn, zucchini squash and portabella mushrooms are just some of the popular veggies to grill. It all depends on whatever your taste and preferences are. There are no wrong choices as long as it makes you taste buds and tummy happy.

Seasoning meat for grilling varies. Some folks like a dry rub bought from the local gro-

cery store. Others make their own seasoning rub. Either choice enhances the flavor of the end result.

Barbecue sauce is also a matter of personal preference and comes in many different brands, flavors and levels of hot and mild sauces. Lots of people enjoy making their own barbecue sauce. Sauce can be basted on the meat when taken off the grill or can be for dipping as a side dish.

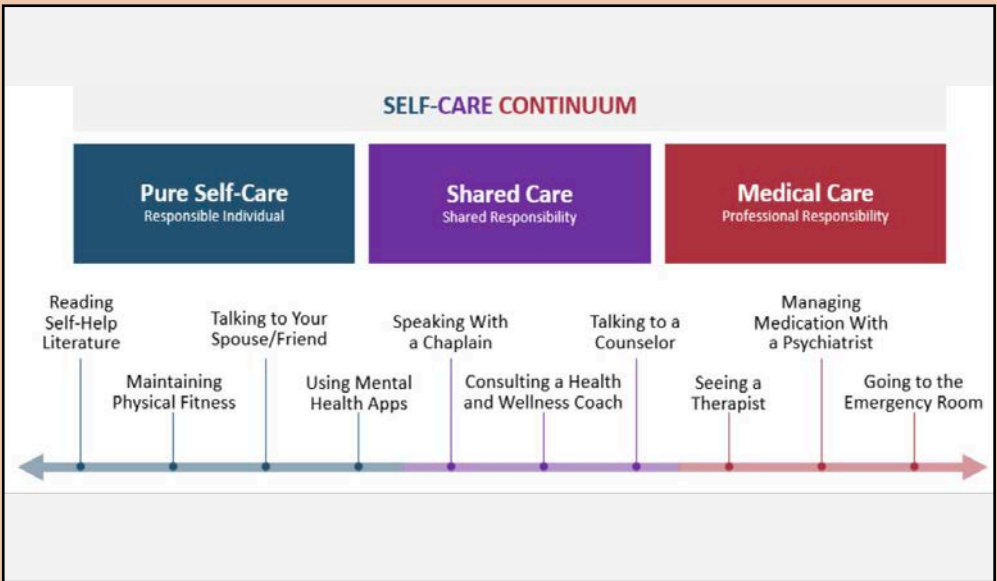
Grill safety

- Ensure to turn of the gas when you are done using a gas grill.
- Unplug electric grills after use.
- Either leave charcoal in the pit to burn out or put inside a metal container to avoid starting a fire. Charcoal can reignite even after dousing with water.

Though you can barbecue anytime, it is a summer tradition. So this summer, pull out your grills and barbecue at home, parks or camp sites. No matter where you are, get out and enjoy everything barbecue has to offer!

Let's Talk About It

No matter your age, mental health is important. Seek care and learn more at www.tricare.mil/mentalhealth.



4 STEPS TO FOOD SAFETY



CLEAN



SEPARATE



COOK



CHILL

Food safety takes center stage during summer season

FORT JOHNSON, La. — As pleasant summer weather ramps up, you might be ready to head outside and fire up your grill. Before you do, make sure you're following proper grilling safety guidelines.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, over 19,000 people on average are injured in a grilling accident each year. Don't be part of the statistics this year!

Here is a list of 10 of the most important grilling safety tips for you to follow the next time you break out the grill:

- Clean your grill
 - Cook away from other objects
 - Place your grill on stable ground
 - Check for gas leaks
 - Have a fire extinguisher on hand
 - Stay by the grill
 - Keep children and pets away
 - Know how to safely start your grill
 - Avoid loose clothing
 - Shut down your grill correctly
- When handling foods in the summer heat be sure to avoid these 10 most common mistakes:
- Washing meats in the sink may leave germs in the sink and cross contaminate
 - Eating raw batter or dough, including cookie dough, and other foods with uncooked eggs or uncooked flour
 - Thawing or marinating food on the counter
 - Not cooking meat, chicken, turkey, seafood, or eggs thoroughly
 - Peeling fruits and vegetables without washing them first
 - Not washing your hands
 - Eating risky foods if you are more likely to get food poisoning — adults over 65, children under 5 and those with health conditions that impede their ability to fight germs
 - Putting cooked meat back on a plate that held raw meat
 - Tasting or smelling food to see if it's good.
 - Leaving food out too long before putting it

Cooking temperatures

Product	Type	Minimum Internal Temperature & Rest Time
Beef, Pork, Veal & Lamb	Ground	160 °F
	Steak, chops, and roasts	145 °F and allow to rest for at least 3 minutes
Chicken & Turkey	Breasts	165 °F
	Ground, stuffing, and casseroles	165 °F
	Whole bird, legs, thighs, and wings	165 °F
Eggs	Any type	160 °F
Fish & Shellfish	Any type	145 °F
Leftovers	Any type	165 °F
Ham	Fresh or smoked (uncooked)	145 °F and allow to rest for at least 3 minutes
	Fully cooked ham (to reheat)	Reheat cooked hams packaged in USDA-inspected plants to 140 °F and all others to 165 °F.

- Clean** — Wash hands and surfaces often.
- Separate** — Don't cross-contaminate.
- Cook** — Cook to proper temperatures, checking with a food thermometer.
- Chill** — Refrigerate promptly.

in the fridge

In addition to maintaining a safe grill, proper food handling in the summer months is important to avoid food poisoning.

Be sure to keep your hands and cooking surfaces clean, don't cross contaminate foods, cook meats to the proper temperature, and put food in the refrigerator so it doesn't spoil.

Cold storage chart

Preparation	Type or Description	Refrigerate (40 °F)	Freeze (0 °F) ±
Beef, Lamb, Pork, Veal			
Fresh beef, lamb, veal and pork	Ground, hamburger, stew meat, variety meat (tongue, liver, heart, kidney, chitterlings)	1-2 days	3-4 months
	Chops, roasts, steaks	3-5 days	4-12 months
	Chops, pre-stuffed	1 day	Does not freeze well
Leftovers	Including casseroles	3-4 days	2-3 months
Corned Beef	In pouch, with pickling juices	5-7 days	Drained, 1 month
Bacon	Bacon	7 days	1 month
Ham (Pre-Cooked)			
Fully Cooked	Slices	3-4 days	1-2 months
	Half	3-5 days	1-2 months
	Whole	7 days	1-2 months
Canned Labeled "Keep Refrigerated"	Opened	3-5 days	1-2 months
	Unopened	6-9 months	Do not freeze
Vacuum sealed	Unopened, fully cooked vacuum sealed, dated	"Use-by" date	1-2 months
	Unopened, fully cooked vacuum sealed, undated	2 weeks	1-2 months
Chicken, Turkey, Other Poultry			
Fresh	Chicken breast, pre-stuffed	1 day	Does not freeze well
	Ground, patties, giblets	1-2 days	3-4 months
	Pieces	1-2 days	9 months
	Whole	1-2 days	1 year
Leftovers	Casseroles	3-4 days	4-6 months
	Chicken nuggets, patties	1-2 days	1-3 months
	Pieces, plain or fried	3-4 days	4 months
	Pieces in broth or gravy	3-4 days	6 months
Eggs			
Fresh	In shell	3-5 weeks	Do not freeze
	Yolk, whites	2-4 days	1 year
Leftovers	Casserole, quiche, omelet	3-4 days	2 months
	Hard-cooked	1 week	Does not freeze well
Opened	Liquid pasteurized eggs, egg substitutes	3 days	Does not freeze well
Unopened	Liquid pasteurized eggs, egg substitutes	10 days	1 year
Sausages, Lunch Meats			
Hard Sausage	Jerky sticks, pepperoni	2-3 weeks	1-2 months
Raw Sausage	Beef, chicken, pork, turkey	1-2 days	1-2 months
Smoked Sausage	Breakfast links, patties	7 days	1-2 months
Lunch Meat	Deli-sliced or store-prepared	3-5 days	1-2 months
Unopened	Hot dogs	1 week	1-2 months
	Lunch meat—vacuum-packed, sliced	2 weeks	1-2 months
	Summer sausage labeled "keep refrigerated"	3 months	1-2 months
Seafood			
Fresh	Fish	1-2 days	3-8 months
	Shellfish	1-2 days	3-12 months
Leftovers	Fish and shellfish	3-4 days	3 months
Miscellaneous			
Frozen Dinners and Entrees	"Keep frozen"	Unsafe to thaw	3-4 months
Mayonnaise	Commercial, "refrigerate after opening"	2 months	Do not freeze
Other Leftovers	Gravy and meat broth	3-4 days	2-3 months
	Pizza	3-4 days	1-2 months
	Soups and stews	3-4 days	2-3 months
	Stuffing	3-4 days	1 month
Salads	Egg, chicken, ham, macaroni, tuna (store-prepared, homemade)	3-5 days	Does not freeze well

SAFETY STAND DOWN BRINGS AWARENESS, HOSTS BLOOD DRIVE



ANGIE THORNE/CGUARDIAN

WANTED

★ DEAD NOT ALIVE ★

THE BITE N' BANDITS



BLOODSUCKER TUCKER

AEDES AEGYPTI

FEEDS DURING THE DAY
SNEAKY BITER - WILL COME INDOORS!



BLOODBAGS MCSKEETER

AEDES ALBOPICTUS

FEEDS DURING THE DAY
BITES MULTIPLE TIMES - AGGRESSIVE!

REWARD
SAFE AND HEALTHY
WORKPLACE

KNOWN TO TRANSMIT
★ ZIKA VIRUS ★
★ CHIKUNGUNYA ★
★ DENGUE FEVER ★

★★★★★★ #FIGHT THE BITE ★★★★★★



DEFEND

MOSQUITOES ARE OUT AT
ALL HOURS OF THE DAY
AND NIGHT
ALWAYS PROTECT YOURSELF!

DRESS

WEAR LIGHT-COLORED,
LOOSE-FITTING
LONG SLEEVES AND PANTS
WHEN YOU GO OUTDOORS.

DRAIN

DRAIN STANDING WATER FROM
AROUND YOUR HOME SO
MOSQUITOES HAVE
NOWHERE TO BREED.

DEFEAT

ALWAYS USE A
PERSONAL REPELLANT CONTAINING:
★ DEET ★ IR3535 ★ PICARDIN ★
ALWAYS FOLLOW
THE LABEL INSTRUCTIONS!

★ KEEP POOLS CHLORINATED ★ DRILL HOLES IN TRASHCANS AND RECYCLING BINS ★
★ FIX LEAKY FAUCETS ★ DO NOT USE CHEMICALS ON FACE MASKS ★

👉 WATCH OUT FOR POPULAR BREEDING GROUNDS 👈

CHILDREN'S TOYS ★ CHILDREN'S WADING POOLS ★ FLOWER POTS ★ BIRD BATHS ★ PET DISHES
RAIN GUTTERS ★ GUTTER DOWNSPOUT TUBE ★ CAVITIES IN TREES ★ OLD TIRES ★ TRASHCANS

BRIEFS

Women's league

Nine, Wine and Dine is a new ladies golf league that takes place each Tuesday from 5-7 p.m. Women are invited to participate. It's a great opportunity to make new friends, enjoy a night of golf (nine holes) and then opting to have dinner and wine at the Forge Bar and Grill.

The cost is \$22 for members and \$27 for non-members. The event takes place at the Warrior Hills Golf Course. The next Nine, Wine and Dine is today. For more information call 531-4661.

Wednesday night scramble

The Warrior Hills Golf Course hosts a nine hole scramble each Wednesday. The cost is \$20 for members and \$25 for nonmembers. The next scramble is June 21. For more information call (337) 531-4661.

Board game fun

Select from Allen Memorial Library's extensive collection of board games or bring your own and get your game on.

Board game night takes place every third Thursday of the month. Board games are available anytime during open hours at the library. The next game night is July 20. For more information call (337) 531-4661.

mation call (337) 531-2665.

Bass tournament

The Toledo Bend Army Recreation Park's monthly Bass Tournament. The park is located at 1310 Army Recreation Road, Florien. The tournament takes place the first Saturday of each month. The next tournament takes place Aug. 5 and is open to the public. Check in is at first light. Weigh in is at 3 p.m. The entry fee is \$40 per boat and \$5 per person for big bass. For more information call (318) 565-4235/4484.

Cosmic golf

The Warrior Hills Golf Course will host their monthly glow-in-the-dark golf event June 23-24 from 8-10 p.m. on the driving range. \$5 bucket deals will be offered. For more information call (337) 531-4661.

Escape Home of Heroes

Think you have what it takes to escape in time? On June 24 from 5-6 p.m. the Home of Heroes Recreation Center will have an escape room game open to all Soldiers.

This event consists of participants solving riddles and clues in order to successfully navigate their way out of the vicinity. Sign up is required.

For more information call (337) 531-5870.

Play Town & Cafe late night pajama party

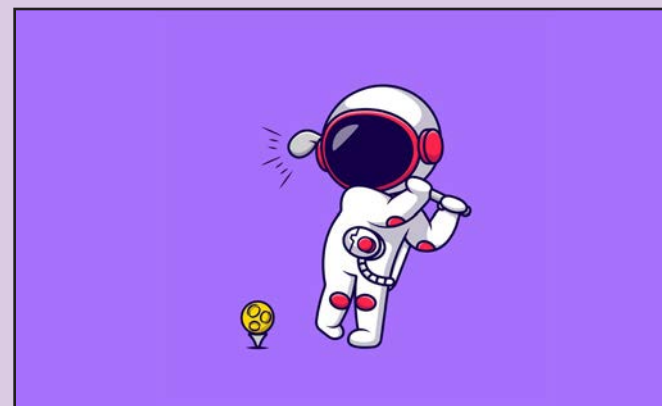
Come play in your favorite pajamas and enjoy a popcorn bar at Play Town & Cafe on June 30. From 6:30-8:30 p.m. refreshments will be provided while supplies last.

This is a free event. For more information call (337) 531-4057.

CYS fall soccer 2023

Registration for the 2023 CYS fall soccer season is ongoing until August 11. For more information call (337) 531-6004.

<https://johnson.armymwr.com/happenings/cys-fall-soccer-2023>



FORT JOHNSON THINGS TO DO

June 22-24: Beauregard Watermelon Festival, DeRidder.

Get ready for three days of watermelon fun! Watermelon eating and seed spitting contests, watermelon games and music, carnival rides and more. You'll also want to check out the canning contest, cornhole tournament and crafters displays at the festival along with the antique tractor show. The festival is held at the Beauregard Parish Fair Grounds, 506 West Dr. Come out and join in some good summer time fun!

<https://beauregardwatermelonfestival.com/>

June 30-July 4: Erath 4th of July Celebration, Erath.

Celebrate the nation's independence with an old-fashioned street fair for five days with carnival rides and games, food, live music every night, parade, water fights and a large firework display on July 4th. The event is free.

<https://www.erath4.com/>

July 1: Lebuau Zydeco Festival, St. Landry.

Enjoy zydeco music all day long. From the place that produced zydeco hits like, "Don't Mess with my Toot Toot" comes an annual celebration of the genre and its roots in the Creole community. It features the most popular zydeco bands in South Louisiana. Bring a dancing partner, a lawn chair and your appetite.

<https://www.cajuntravel.com/events/lebau-zydeco-festival/>

June 24: Bug Day, Kent House Plantation.

Kent Plantation House, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, is an authentic Creole plantation house built circa 1796 prior to the Louisiana Purchase.

The plantation house is one of the oldest standing structures in the state of Louisiana. People can tour the plantation, but they also have special events.

The annual Bug Day is always popular and this year will have the addition of reptiles.

The event begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 1 p.m. For more information call (318) 478-5998.

<https://kenthouse.org/events>

June 9-25: ACTS Theater's production of Hello Dolly, Lake Charles.

Artists Civic Theatre & Studio, Inc. presents the musical, "Hello Dolly." The story focuses around Dolly Levi, a widow in 1890s New York. Dolly is a matchmaker and her latest client, Horace Vandergelder, is both rich and grumpy. Dolly's scheming and the catchy music will have audiences laughing and singing along.

Tickets are \$25 per adult, \$10 per child and \$20 per senior. The performance begins at 7:30 p.m. To purchase tickets visit:

<https://www.actstheatre.com/>

June 16-25: The Big West Monroe Fair, West-Monroe.

The Big West Monroe Fair is back June 16-25! Stop by the Ike Hamilton Expo Center for 58+ rides, exciting shows, games, delicious carnival food, and loads of fair fun for everyone!

<https://www.monroe-westmonroe.org/events/the-big-west-monroe-fair/>

June 23 - 24: Mansfield Juneteenth Celebration, Mansfield.

The hottest 3-day summer event in Mansfield, Louisiana, with hip hop, zydeco, blues and gospel music on the Court House Square in downtown historic Mansfield. Food vendors and children's activities presented by the Mansfield Civic Group.

For more information call (318) 461-5775.

June 24: NELA Pride, Monroe.

Join NELA Pride at the first Family Pride Day on June 24 at the Louisiana Purchase Gardens & Zoo.

<https://nelapride.com/>

June 30-July 2: Patriotic Weekend on Toledo Bend, Many.

It's time to make your 4th of July plans and Sabine County + Sabine Parish Chambers of Commerce are bringing Texas AND Louisiana 3 days of events across Toledo Bend to choose from! From a boat and motorcycle poker run to concerts and free family-friendly activities, there is something for everyone!

<https://toledobendlakecountry.com/patriotic-weekend-toledo-bend>

Veterinary Corps vital to Army for 107 years

By JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES
BJACH PAO

FORT JOHNSON, La. — Veterinary services at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk provide more than routine healthcare for family pets. Established in 1916, the U.S. Army Veterinary Corps celebrated 107 years of service to the nation June 2.

U.S. Army Medical Department history reveals veterinarian expertise in the armed forces has evolved since 1776 when Gen. George Washington directed that a regiment of horses with a farrier be raised.

According to goarmy.com/careers, Army veterinary officers specialize in animal medicine, public health and research and development.

Veterinarians treat animals including K-9 units, ceremonial horses and serve an important role in food safety and humanitarian missions around the globe.

Col. Alisa Wilma, commander, Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, U.S. Army Veterinary Corps officer and former director of the Defense Centers for Public Health-Aberdeen, said the Army is the only branch to have a veterinary corps and veterinarians are like a Swiss Army knife to the Department of Defense.

"We might not be that specialty tool but having us around ensures the job will get done," she said.

All veterinarians begin their military journey as 64A, a general veterinarian. As they advance in their careers, they take additional training or pursue higher levels of education.

"This additional training will prepare us for one of five subspecialties," Wilma said. "I am a 64B, public health veterinarian. Other specialties include lab animal veterinarians, veterinary pathologists, clinical specialists and comparative medicine veterinarians, who participate in various research, development and acquisition programs."

According to the DCPH-A, animal health topics are an integral part of the public health mission and affect the daily lives of DOD personnel. Veterinarians protect military working dogs during deployment, combat zoonotic diseases such as rabies and research animal diseases of military interest or significance such as foot and mouth disease. Animal Medicine also impacts the daily lives of military families, including privately owned animals.

At the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, veterinarians not only treat the military working dogs and Family-owned pets, they also care for other government-owned animals.

At Fort Johnson, the Army owns goats, donkeys and chickens to enhance the realism for rotational units at the combat training center. Army veterinarians ensure the animals are

Capt. Aaron Judson, Chief of Louisiana Branch Veterinary Services, stands behind a gate during his monthly visit to the farm government-owned goats, donkeys and chickens are kept to enhance the realism for rotational units at the Joint Readiness Training Center. Veterinarians ensure the animals are vaccinated, treated for a variety of medical conditions and are housed in a suitable manner.



JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES / BJACH PAO



Gabriella Cangelosi, a farm hand with the Joint Readiness Training Center, assists veterinarians as they wrangle goats during monthly welfare checks.



At the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, veterinarians not only treat military working dogs and Family-owned pets, but they also care for other government-owned animals, like this goat.

vaccinated, treated for a variety of medical conditions and are housed in a suitable manner.

Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Neumann is an infantryman assigned to the 509th Infantry Regiment and serves as the farm manager for JRTC and Fort Johnson.

"We have more than 30 goats, eight donkeys, geese and a flock of chickens. These animals provide an additional layer of authenticity to the training scenarios," Neumann said. "They provide ambience to rotational unit Soldiers or can be used as obstacles blocking roadways."

The farm animals stay in the training area for the full two-week rotation.

"The veterinarians visit the farm monthly to treat the animals, inspect their food, the facilities and our pastures," he said. "They are always on call in the event of an emergency."

Spc. Aliyah Rattigan, animal care specialist with the Louisiana Branch Veterinary Services, said she learned about animal husbandry and livestock while in advanced individual training, but never worked with goats before arriving at Fort Polk.

"Interacting with different types of animals has been very rewarding," Rattigan said. "You never really know what you will come in contact with when you deploy to foreign countries. These animals enhance the experience of all who train here."

Mayor & Mrs. Nicholas E. Hunter and the
Mayor's Armed Forces Committee
invite you to the



15th Annual

Patriot's Ball

Saturday | July 1 | 5:30pm

Lake Charles Civic Center
Contraband Room | 2nd Floor

Cocktail **5:30** | Dinner **6:00**

Attire

Civilian: Coat & Tie/Formal
Military: Mess Dress, Class A,
or Coat & Tie

Live Entertainment by
The Supersoakers

Tickets can be purchased at the
Civic Center Box Office

This event is open to any person who loves, supports,
and defends his or her country with devotion.