



FORGING THE WARRIOR SPIRIT

The JRTC and Fort Polk Guardian

Vol. 48, No. 14

Home of Heroes @ Fort Polk, LA

April 9, 2021



3RD BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION

Patriots participate in premiere, professional partner training

Fort Polk's 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, "Patriots," participate in Raven 21-06. The 3/10 partners with British Forces, 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, — a North Atlantic Treaty Organization ally. A JRTC rotation is the ultimate training Soldiers and allies can receive. For more pictures see page 5.

Weekend weather



Inside the Guardian

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Viewpoint

In our view

Guardian staff asked the JRTC and Fort Polk community, "What do you miss most about being a kid?"

Here are their responses:



Lucy Taylor: "I had 12 brothers and sisters. With that many kids, we all played together. We rarely had friends outside our family. My parents took good care of us and provided us with everything we needed. It was a simpler time."



Spc. Serenity Ellington: "I would say not having to worry about anything. I miss that because there is so much stress I have to deal with as a young adult."



Tamara Gamble: "I think the lack of responsibility. Kids don't understand how easy they have it. They don't have to deal with the bills, stress and pressure adults deal with every day."

Pfc. Ryleigh Shepard: "Not having to worry about anything. Also, I miss playing football with my little brother and just having fun."



Margie Zayas: "Not much. I was one of those kids who wanted to grow up as fast as I could."



Jessica Millard: "I miss naps. I love a good nap and try to get one when I can. Also, the fact that kids are free spirits. They don't care about what others think as they go about having fun."



Cpl. Michael Wagner: "The excitement. Everything was new and fun."



Christopher LaFratta: "I miss Saturday morning cartoons. Also, before the Internet era, my mom would kick me outside on the weekends and tell me to go play and have fun. I wouldn't go home until it started getting dark."



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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:

@JRTCOperationsGrp, **@BayneJonesACH** or **@fortpolkmwr**.

Briefs

Abandoned vehicles

The Directorate of Emergency Services Traffic section releases the following vehicles to a towing company for disposal on June 15, 2021, if they remain unclaimed.

Vehicles are listed with the last four numbers of their VIN number.

If one of these vehicles belongs to you contact the Fort Polk Police Traffic Section at 531-1806/6675/2677.

1991	Lexus	ES 3	1115
1991	Jeep	Cherokee	1746
1996	Toyota	Corolla	3720
1998	Jeep	Cherokee	8963
2007	Jeep	Patriot	5613
2006	Nissan	Altima	6924
2007	Mitsubishi	Lancer	6360
2008	Jeep	Patriot	8419
2006	Audi	A 4	2290
1998	Honda	4 dr	9662
2003	Ford	F150	4907
2003	Dodge	Dakota	9878
Unk.	Honda	XR650	Unk.

Coping skills

The Army Community Service Family Advocacy Programs hosts a life coping skills class Tuesday at ACS, 1591 Bell Richard Ave., bldg 920, from 9:30-11:30 a.m.

The class helps Soldiers and Families advance their skills in financial readiness, domestic violence awareness and reporting, raising an emotionally intelligent child, suicide prevention awareness and more. To register call 531-1938.

Ten-Miler

Get ready to show off your long-distance running skills. Intramural sports hosts the second Army Ten-Miler qualifier April 16 at 6:30 a.m. at Marion Bonner Trail. Preregistration is through Thursday.

Go to www.polk.armymwr.com or Wheelock Fitness Center to preregister. You can also register the day of the event from 6-6:30 a.m. The event is open to all active duty personnel. For more information call (337) 378-2201.



COURTESY CORVIAS

Montee Court on Fort Polk, LA suffered severe storm damage with multiple trees down and debris spread throughout the area.

On-post housing repairs to be complete in May

CORVIAS

FORT POLK La. — In 2020, Fort Polk endured two severe hurricanes, Laura and Delta, followed by an ice storm in early 2021. The damage caused by the storms was extensive — more than 70% of the homes on the installation sustained significant damage — but Corvias made progress to restore community and the impacted homes.

In the immediate aftermath of the hurricanes, Corvias Property Management answered more than 3,000 calls with more than 60% of them considered emergencies.

The emergencies during these extreme weather disturbances included roof leaks, flooding, trees on homes, burst pipes and debris damage.

On top of the damage to homes, hundreds of trees and limbs were blocking roads and power was out for 10 days in the aftermath of Hurricane Laura.

The Corvias team mobilized within 72 hours of each storm to begin repairs, starting with the roughly 2,650 roofs that needed to be tarped, a process that takes two to five maintenance techs an average of 3 hours per roof depending on the severity of the damage.

“We know our service members and their Families are anxious for all the repairs to be

complete. We have brought in additional construction, maintenance and remediation support and are working tirelessly to address the restorations,” said Wil Motta, Corvias operations director. “We appreciate their understanding during these unprecedented extreme weather events.”

To date, more than 2,000 of the 2,650 damaged roofs have been repaired. The remaining roofs are currently in the process of being fixed. All 728 interior repairs in occupied homes have been completed, as well as more than 200 plumbing repairs due to the ice storm in mid-February.

Because Fort Polk is no stranger to extreme weather, Corvias had a plan in place to allow the team to rapidly respond. The plan included pre-stocked emergency supplies, a command center and a group of pre-selected emergency technicians who could respond in critical situations.

In addition, a dedicated team of staff members volunteered to stay on the installation during the storms to be available for the residents’ immediate needs, regardless of the time of day.

In assessing the damage to homes, the Corvias team realized several Families would need to be temporarily relocated while repairs were made to their homes.

Please see **Housing**, page 8

Army News

Army victorious at Wrestling Olympic Trials

BY BRITTANY NELSON

Army News Service

FORT POLK, La. — Sgt. Ildar Hafizov and Spc. Alejandro Sancho fought their way to victory at the U.S. Olympic Wrestling Trials in Fort Worth, Texas, April 2-3, earning spots on the U.S. Olympic Wrestling Team where they will represent the Army at the Summer Olympic Games this July in Tokyo, Japan.

Hafizov and Sancho, members of the U.S. Army's World Class Athlete Program, are joining six other Soldier-athletes at the 2020 Summer Olympic Games, now being held in July 2021 due a delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hafizov grabbed the Olympic title for the Greco-Roman 60kg weight class and Sancho for the Greco-Roman 67kg weight class. The Army was on display at the nationally broadcasted event as both Soldiers competed against fellow WCAP opponents in their Championship Series; Hafizov faced Sgt. Ryan Mango and Sancho wrestled Sgt. Ellis Coleman.

Sancho's emotional victory marks his first time making the U.S. Olympic team. He beat Ellis in the best-of-three-series, 2-0 and 3-1.

"This feels unbelievable," Sancho said shortly after his win. "This is such an amazing feeling and I am so proud to be part of the Army team. WCAP and the Army have changed my life. I can't thank them enough for what they have done for me."

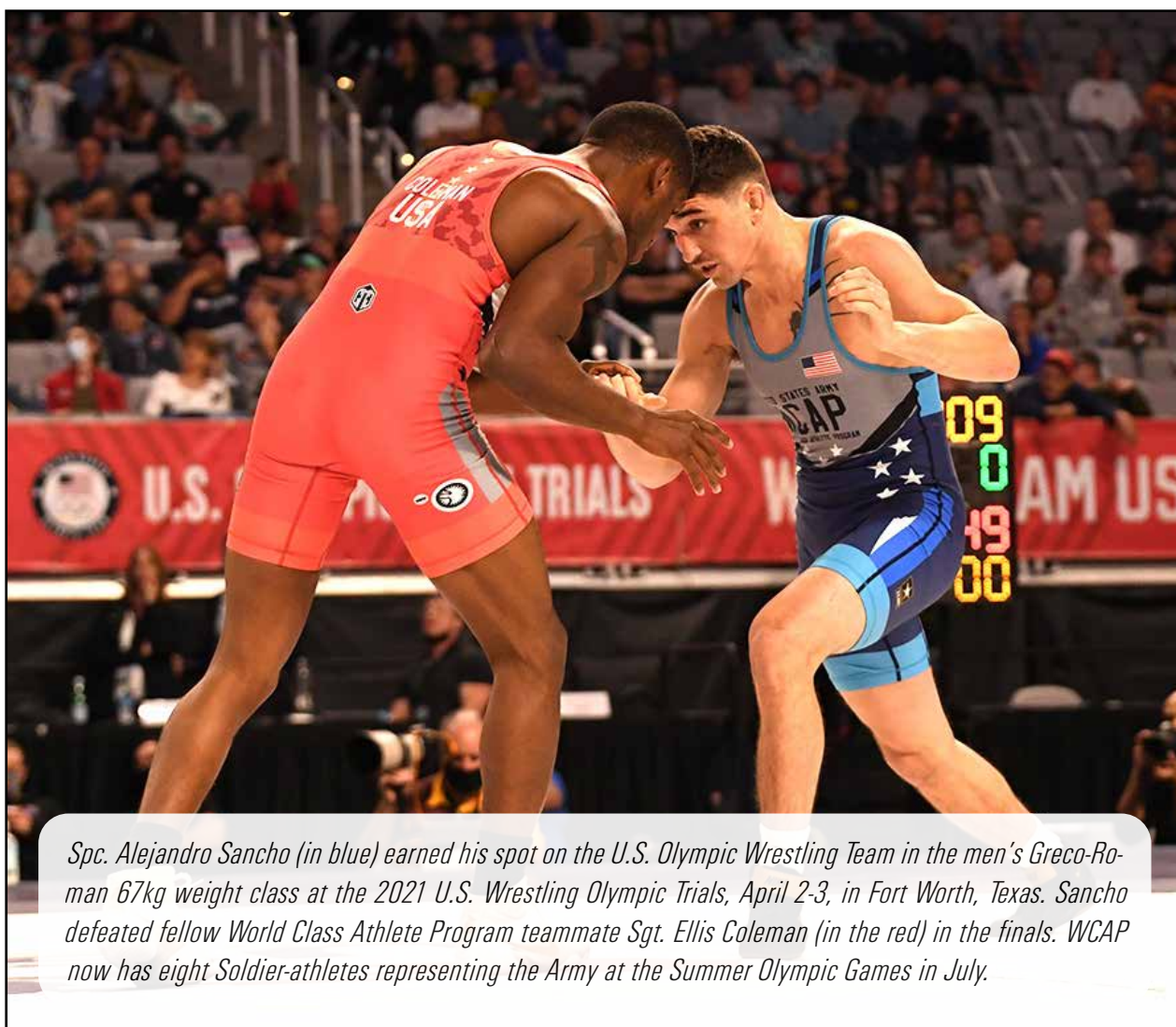
Sancho noted that mental preparation is crucial and Army values helped keep him disciplined throughout the competition.

"Anything can happen in this sport," said Sancho. "I wanted to maintain a good position throughout the matches and kept my mind on the goal — to win."

Hafizov fell short at the 2016 trials as the runner-up in the 67kg weight class. He earned a long-awaited victory this time around, beating Mango 7-0 and 8-0.

"I feel great," Hafizov said after his win. "I am so happy and proud of myself. I have been waiting five years for this moment."

A former Uzbekistan Olympian, Hafizov came to America to chase his dreams, a goal



Spc. Alejandro Sancho (in blue) earned his spot on the U.S. Olympic Wrestling Team in the men's Greco-Roman 67kg weight class at the 2021 U.S. Wrestling Olympic Trials, April 2-3, in Fort Worth, Texas. Sancho defeated fellow World Class Athlete Program teammate Sgt. Ellis Coleman (in the red) in the finals. WCAP now has eight Soldier-athletes representing the Army at the Summer Olympic Games in July.



Sgt. Ildar Hafizov (in red) earned his spot on the U.S. Olympic Wrestling Team in the men's Greco-Roman 60kg weight class at the 2021 U.S. Wrestling Olympic Trials, April 2-3, in Fort Worth, Texas. Hafizov defeated fellow World Class Athlete Program teammate Sgt. Ryan Mango (in blue) in the finals. WCAP now has eight Soldier-athletes representing the Army at the Summer Olympic Games this July.

Please see **Olympic**, page 6

Rotation

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3RD BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION

Olympic

Continued from page 4

he was able to achieve through a victory at his second U.S. Olympic trials appearance.

"Like everyone else, I wanted a better life for my family. My wife and kids are my inspiration," said Hafizov, a father of two. "I am so proud to represent our great country and the Army. The Army gave me the ticket for a better life."

Staff Sgt. Spencer Mango, one of WCAP's wrestling coaches, spoke of the Army's large presence at the trials, with five Soldier-athletes making it to the Championship Series round.

"We bring quality Soldier-athletes into the program and our strength shows," said Mango, 2018 U.S.A. Greco-Roman Wrestling Coach of the Year and two time Olympic team member. "These guys went through a lot of adversity this year and they have been working hard. They stayed focused and were able to get the job done."

Sgt. Jenna Burkert, a competitor in the Women's Freestyle 57kg weight class, was among the five Soldier-athletes to make it to the championship round. Her emotionally charged and hard fought battle did not go unnoticed.

"Jenna has had a rough month, her mom passed away last week," said Sgt. 1st Class Jermaine Hodge, WCAP's women's wrestling coach. "She is a gamer, she has trained for these trials and she is giving it her all. All you can do is live for the moment."

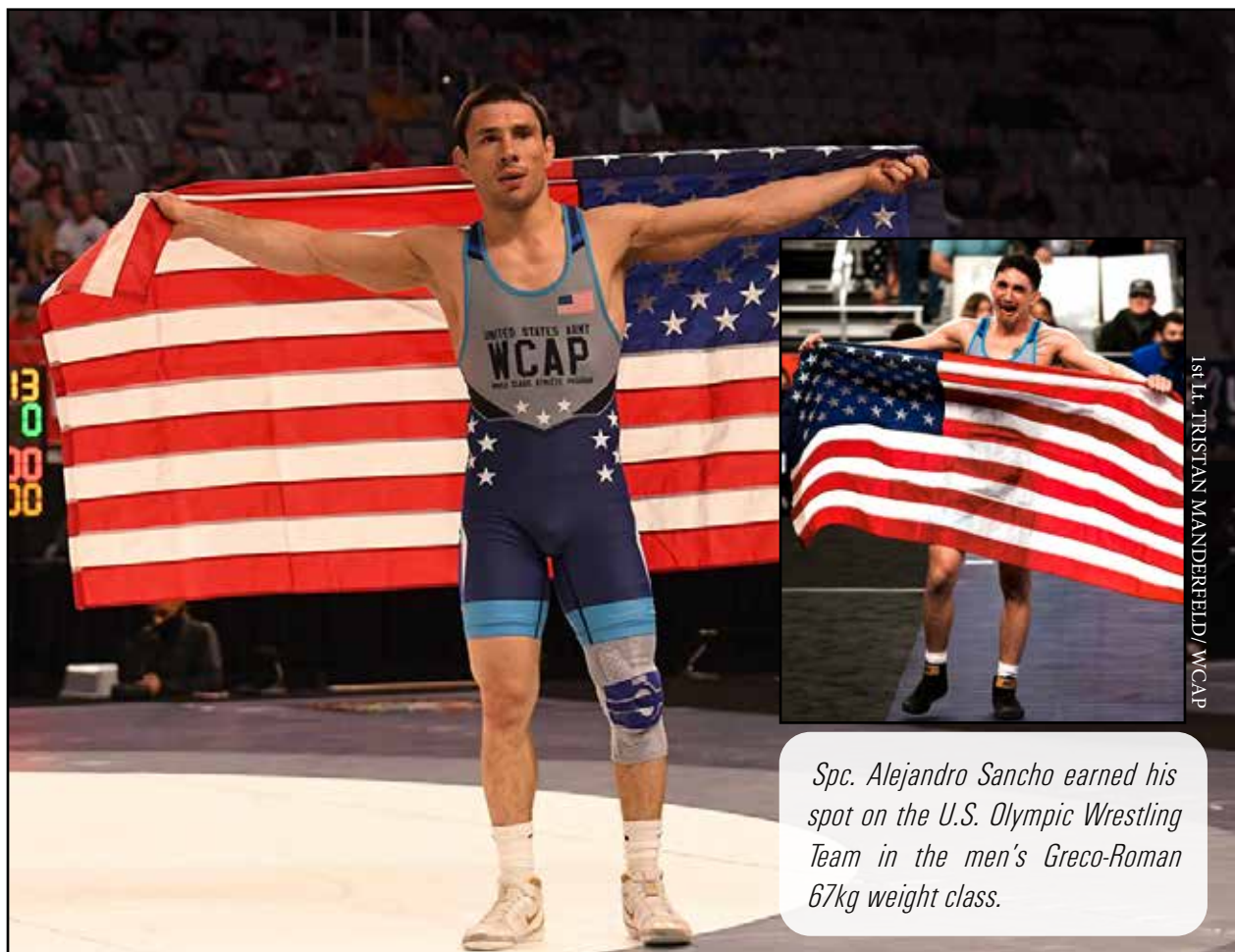
After Burkert's debut at the Olympic trials, the 2019 Pan American silver medalist thanked her mom.

"It is an absolute honor to be her daughter," the three-time Wrestling World team member said. "At the end of the day I know my mom didn't care about the wins or the losses, she wanted me to have fun and do my best. She meant everything to me and is my champion."

Hafizov and Sancho bring the total number of Olympic qualified WCAP Soldier-athletes to eight.

The six other Soldier-Olympians are Staff Sgt. Naomi Graham, wrestling; Staff Sgt. Sandra Uptagrafft, 1st Lt. Amber English and Staff Sgt. Nikolaus Mowrer, shooting; and Sgt. Amro Elgeziry and Sgt. Samantha Schultz, modern pentathlon.

Follow at [USArmyWCAP](#) to see the Olympic journey of these Soldier-athletes and others still competing for their chance to represent the nation this summer.



Spc. Alejandro Sancho earned his spot on the U.S. Olympic Wrestling Team in the men's Greco-Roman 67kg weight class.

Sgt. Ildar Hafizov earned his spot on the U.S. Olympic Wrestling Team in the men's Greco-Roman 60kg weight class at the 2021 U.S. Wrestling Olympic Trials, April 2-3, in Fort Worth, Texas. Hafizov defeated fellow World Class Athlete Program teammate Sgt. Ryan Mango in the finals. WCAP now has eight Soldier-athletes representing the Army at the Summer Olympic Games this July.

FY21 - Ammunition Amnesty Day

ASP Parking Lot

JRTC & Fort Polk will hold its annual military ammunition amnesty day on April 15, from 0800-1500.

The program, in accordance with DoD regulations, is designed for the public to turn in military ammunition only. Unexploded ordnance can be dangerous and should not be stored at a private residence.

If you have military munitions and you wish to dispose of these items (no questions asked), you can bring them to the turn-in site at the Fort Polk ASP on Mill Creek Road, between South and North Fort.

Unknown ammunition is too dangerous to move, please call the 705th Explosive Ordnance Disposal at (337) 531-5505, and a crew will properly dispose of the munitions.

Again, there will be no questions asked

Remember the 3Rs of UXO Safety!

RECOGNIZE

RETREAT

REPORT

Turn-in Site

Fort Polk Soldiers found guilty for UCMJ violations

OSJA

FORT POLK, La. — 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.”

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

Across Fort Polk, the following disciplinary issues continue to be prevalent: Violations of General Order #1, driving under the influence of alcohol, wrongful use/possession of controlled substances, fraternization, sexual assault and underage drinking.

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

- A sergeant, assigned to 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, was separated under Chapter 10 (Discharge in Lieu of Trial by Court-Martial) for being absent without leave for four consecutive days, fraternizing with junior enlisted Soldiers

and making a false official statement in violation of Articles 86, 92 and 107, Uniform Code of Military Justice.

The Soldier was issued an Other Than Honorable condition characterization of service and a bar to post. Generally, this characterization of service results in the loss of a service member’s educational and health benefits.

An OTH characterization of service also results in the service member being reduced to the grade of E-1.

- A specialist, assigned to 46th Engineer Battalion, was issued a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand for failing to complete a lawfully required test to measure her blood alcohol content level, in violation of Article 92, UCMJ.

- A specialist, assigned to 2nd Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div, was issued a GOMOR for animal abuse and assaulting his spouse, in violation of Articles 134 and 128, UCMJ.

- A private, assigned to 46th Eng Bn, was issued a GOMOR for driving under the influence with a blood alcohol content of .230%, in violation of Article 92, UCMJ.

- A private, assigned to 46th Eng Bn, was separated under Chapter 14-12c(2) (Commission of a Serious Offense) for wrongful



use of a controlled substance in violation of Article 112a, UCMJ.

The Soldier was issued a General Under Honorable conditions characterization of service and a bar to post.

Generally, this characterization of service results in the loss of a service member’s educational benefits.

Drinking, depression can lead to dark thoughts, suicide

By AMELIA CONNOR
Army Substance Abuse Program

FORT POLK, La. — Drinking alcohol comes with risks — to your health, relationships and one other often remains unspeakable: Suicide.

No one situation or event leads to suicide. The factors of suicide are complex and may involve family history, mental health, relationship challenges and prolonged stress.

If you are a service member, other risks may include lack of advancement, career setback, feeling like your honor was lost, injury or health issues or a recent return from a deployment.

Deployments, temporary duty assignments and permanent changes of station may cause stress due to loss of connection with Family or friends, time away from home or changes to your day-to-day routine.

While alcohol does not cause suicide, it can play a big role. Some say it is the second largest risk factor for suicide and suicide attempts, right after depression. People who

are thinking about suicide often turn to alcohol.

Rather than helping, alcohol can increase thoughts of suicide. Here’s how:

- When you drink, you make snap decisions without much thought. This is because alcohol slows down the part of your brain that controls thoughts, movement, speech, memory and messages between your brain and body. You are less able to solve problems and may have trouble seeing a positive future for yourself. This leads to dark thoughts.

- While trying to forget your problems, you may drink a great deal and unknowingly distance or cut yourself off from your unit, buddies, friends or Family. These are the people who can be most supportive during hard times.

Think about it. You may be in a situation where you are going through a tough time. Perhaps you aren’t sure how to make things better and you start drinking more.

Alcohol can cloud your thinking and pretty soon, you may see suicide as the easiest or only way out.



But there is help — and hope. Seeking help when you need it is a sign of strength and there are many ways to get help.

If you are having thoughts of suicide, you can speak with someone confidentially and anonymously. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-8255.

The Department of Defense’s “Own Your Limits” website has many articles and resources related to the risks of alcohol misuse. For more information or additional resources check out www.ownyourlimits.org or call your local Army Substance Abuse Program at 531-2031.

Keep watch: Birds nest in strangest places

BY AMY BRENNAN

Conservation outreach coordinator

FORT POLK, La. — The Migratory Bird Treaty Act is one of the earliest and most important pieces of legislation dedicated to wildlife conservation. During the 1800s, bird feathers were highly prized in the millinery, or hat-making, trade.

Market hunting was mostly unregulated at the time, leading to the decimation of bird populations throughout North America.

By the turn of the century, several bird species became completely extinct with many others critically endangered.

Migratory birds are global citizens, often wintering in one country and summering in another, so this dangerous trend led to several treaties between the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Japan and Russia.

The MBTA, signed into law in 1918, makes it a crime to “pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill or sell” a migratory bird or any of its parts, including nests, eggs and feathers. This law is an important consideration everywhere, but especially at Fort Polk.

During spring, Soldiers see and hear birds all around them. If lucky, they can even witness one building a nest. It can be exciting to watch a bird build its nest, lay eggs, observe the young grow and fledge (leave) the nest.

However, on Fort Polk, not all bird nest sightings bring excitement and curiosity. Birds pick the strangest places to nest —

Housing

Continued from page 3

Corvias tripled the amount of on-post hospitality suites to accommodate the displaced Families, which allowed them to stay in a fully furnished on-post house until their homes were repaired. The Corvias “We Care” team continually communicated with displaced Families, updating them on the status of work on their homes, and assuring them that their needs would continue to be met until the work was completed.

Corvias has plans for full recovery by the end of May.

For maintenance requests, Corvias Property Management encourages residents to call 537-5020/ 5013 during normal business hours or 537-5050 or (866) 436-2047 after hours for emergencies.



This gate and old vehicle are just a couple of examples of where birds can nest at Fort Polk.

military vehicles, equipment and building entrances to name a few.

Once a native bird lays its eggs, the nest cannot be touched until the young fledge leaves the nest. Proper maintenance and cleaning of equipment helps deter birds from building nests. Units should inspect their equipment on a consistent basis. This

helps avoid any adverse impacts to the training mission.

If the bird is nesting in a welcomed place, observe the nesting process from a safe distance to allow the bird the space to nest successfully. If you have any questions about the MBTA, contact Fort Polk’s wildlife biologists at 531-4172.



FORT POLK, LA HIRING EVENT

Supporting Installations
FORT JACKSON, SC – FORT RUCKER, AL
Prepare and Connect with Employers and Apprenticeship Opportunities!



PRE-WORKSHOPS IN PERSON
15 April 2021
7460 Colorado Ave Bldg. 660 Fort
Polk, LA 71459
1300 - 1600 CST



HIRING EVENT IN PERSON
22 April 2021
7460 Colorado Ave Bldg. 660 Fort
Polk, LA 71459
1000 - 1300 CST



Please contact
Transition Assistance Program for more
information at (337) 531-1594/4621 or email
usarmy.polk.imcom-central.mbx.sfl-tap@mail.mil



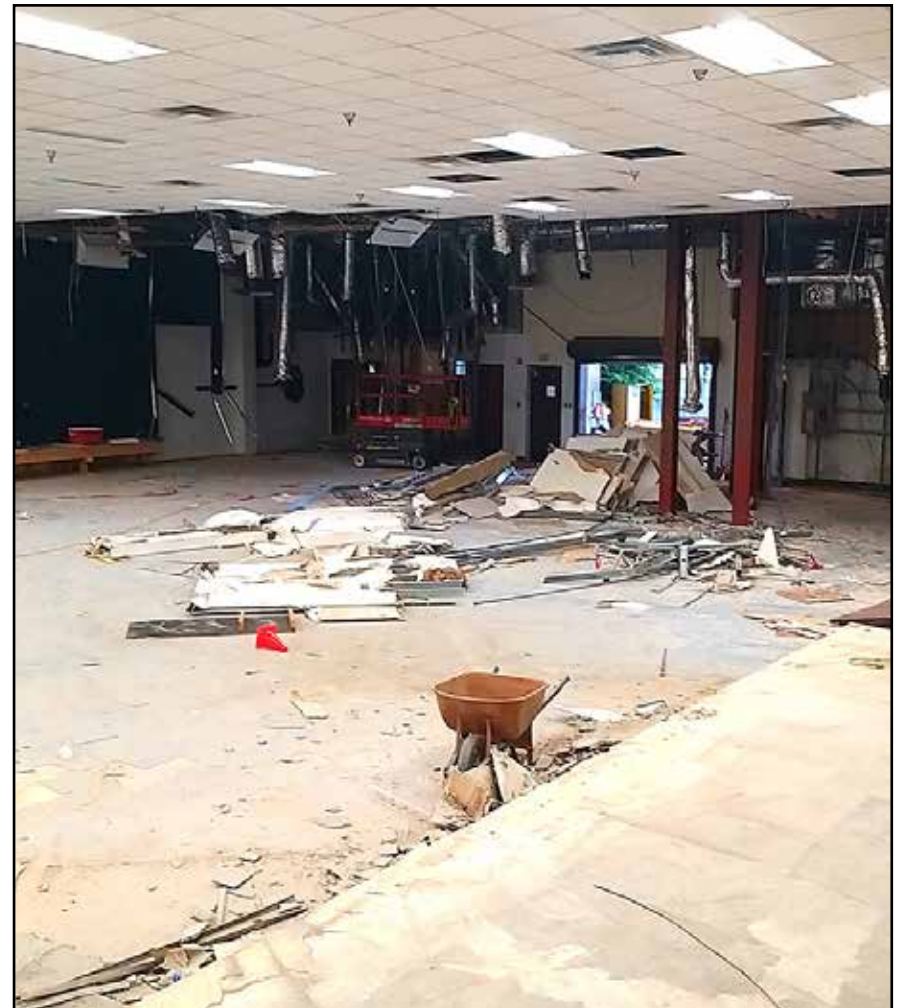
Virtual Hiring Event
Job-seeker Registration
[Click here to register now](#)







Work in progress
Showboat Theater is currently undergoing renovations to become the Directorate of Family Morale, Welfare and Recreation's Family Recreation Center, an indoor playground equipped with a large play structure, interactive games/toys, motorized cars, party room and snack bar. The project is currently in the demolition phase. As of now walls, flooring and the stage have all been removed.



SAFETY CORNER

**APRIL IS
CHECK YOUR
HELMET
MONTH**

You wear it for a reason



Check it this season

**Replace your motorcycle helmet every 3-5 years -
Wear and tear, as well as exposure to UV rays, can
break down important components of your helmet**



Fit = Function



**Check for
damage**



**Check
for age**

SOFTBALL SEASON

Intramural Sports
COMPANY LEVEL
Soldiers Athletic Complex

SEASON BEGINS
13 APR • 1800
 TEAMS UP TO 15 PLAYERS
 REGISTER: NLT 8 APR
 AT POLK.ARMYMWR.COM

Open to
 active duty
 family members
 retirees
 dod civilians
 18 yrs +

337-378-2201

US ARMY
 SPORTS FITNESS ASSOCIATION
 BENEFIT
 CORVIAS
 FORGING THE WARRIOR SPIRIT
 SPONSORSHIP DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT BY THE U.S. ARMY, ARMY JETC & JPMF POLA



ANGIE THORNE/GUARDIAN

Fort Polk leadership sign proclamations

Ashley Gorrell (left), 18, of Leesville High School, and Edward Timmons III (right), 12, of Vernon Middle School, look on as (from left to right): Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher M. Ausbun, garrison command sergeant major, Col. Ryan K. Roseberry, garrison commander, Brig. Gen. David S. Doyle, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general and Command Sgt. Maj. Michael C. Henry, post command sergeant major, take turns signing the Month of the Military Child and Child Abuse Prevention month proclamations at a signing ceremony held at the Warrior Center April 7. Before Fort Polk leadership signed the official declarations, Timmons read the Month of the Military Child proclamation and Gorrell read the Child Abuse and Prevention proclamation aloud as they represented the children of Fort Polk at the ceremony.



Army Body Fat Composition Assessment Certification (AR 600-9)

Now offered by your local AWC
Call **337.531.3055** to
sign up today!

The next class will held:
26 April from 1330-1630

The Army Wellness Center now provides a certification course for Soldiers to administer height, weight and Army body fat composition assessments. This is an annual certification which provides education and training according to AR 600-9 and is needed by any Soldier who plans to officially conduct these tests. If height and weight is an issue in your unit and you do not have a designated Master Fitness Trainer or certified noncommissioned officer, call the AWC at 531-3055 to enroll in the upcoming course. Limited space is available, so register today.

Briefs

Religious services

Take part in one of the religious services held each Sunday at Fort Polk such as the Catholic Mass held at 8:30 a.m.; the Chapel Next Contemporary held at 10 a.m. and the Gospel service held at noon at the Main Post Chapel. The Christ King Fellowship Traditional service is also held each Sunday at Glory Chapel at 9 a.m.

Also, take note of activities at the Main Post Chapel:

- Protestant Women of the Chapel meets each Tuesday from 9:30-11:30 a.m. at the Main Post Chapel.
- Catholic Women of the Chapel meets at the Main Post Chapel on the second and fourth Monday of the month at 6 p.m.
- Little Explorers is a youth group for children ages 4-11 held the first Wednesday of the month 6-7:30 p.m. at the Main Post Chapel.
- Youth of the Chapel is held the second and fourth Wednesday of the month at Main Post Chapel from 6-8 p.m.
- Mothers of Preschoolers meets the second and fourth Thursday of the month at the Main Post Chapel from 6-7:30 p.m.
- The Family Life Chaplain lunch and learn for couples takes place the second Friday of each month. The next lunch and learn is May 14 at the Warrior Center from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Lunch is provided.

For more information call the on duty chaplain at (337) 208-2868 or the garrison chaplain at (337) 353-3275.

Catfish derby

Due to rotational requirements, Fort Polk's Catfish Derby, originally scheduled for April 17, will now be held May 8 from 7-11 a.m. at Catfish Cove.

Apologies for any inconvenience. Fort Polk's command wants to ensure as many Families as possible participate in this event.

Fort Polk employee looks back at career

BY ANGIE THORNE

Public affairs specialist

FORT POLK, La. — After a 20-year career as an air traffic controller at the Fort Polk Army Airfield, Michael Elmes retires June 30.

He said he knows what retiring feels like because he's done it before. Elmes served 20 years in the military. He initially signed up for three years and got out. He joined the National Guard and worked civilian jobs for a couple of years, but then reenlisted as an air traffic controller.

"There was a shortage at the time," he said. "I went to Army Air Traffic Control school, graduated and worked in the field another 17 years before retiring from the Army."

Elmes worked in the civilian workforce before getting a call from the Federal Aviation Administration about the possibility of working as an air traffic controller again. He said he jumped at the chance. After attending flight service school at the Federal Aviation Administration Academy in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, he worked at the DeRidder Airfield for four years. Then an air traffic control job opened up at the Fort Polk Army Airfield.

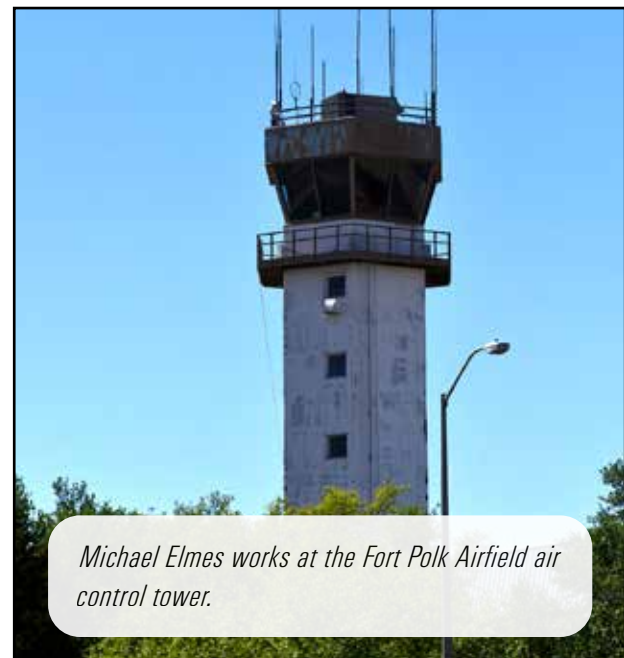
"I applied and have been here ever since," he said.

In his time at Fort Polk, Elmes said his most memorable moment was when President Bill Clinton visited the installation on March 18, 1996 — Clinton was the first sitting President to visit Fort Polk.

"We provided air traffic control for the president's aircraft," he said. "I was right there in the tower, but I never got to see him with my own eyes."

Elmes said he is proud of his life's work and all the effort he put into it to be a success.

"I think I'm proudest of the time I spent at the FAA Academy, where the air traffic control training takes place," he said. "It was some of the hardest training that I experienced in my career."



Michael Elmes works at the Fort Polk Airfield air control tower.

KEITH HOUN/GUARDIAN



ELMES

Looking back, Elmes said he has seen many things change in his field, but one of the biggest has been the rapid advance in technology.

"The technological changes in equipment like radars alone is amazing, but the most incredible development, to me, has been in unmanned aerial vehicle airplanes. They can fly from one country to another by remote control alone. It's crazy what they can do today," he said.

That's just one reason Elmes said he loves his job.

"It's exciting and challenging. Every situation is different and you never know what's

going to happen," he said. "You have to have a plan of action, but you also have to be flexible enough to make changes on the spot. It keeps you on your toes."

With his last day at work getting closer, Elmes said he got a chance to experience what retirement might look like thanks to COVID-19 lockdowns.

"I realized quickly that doing a whole lot of nothing wasn't for me," he said.

Instead, Elmes thinks he'll take a little time off and then find a part time job that will keep him occupied.

"Eventually, I'll retire for good and will concentrate on my hobbies like metal detailing and fishing. It's going to be great," he said.

Take walk, discover wildflowers on Marion Bonner Trail

BY ANGIE THORNE

Public affairs specialist

FORT POLK, La. — Sunny days, bees drifting from flower to flower and soft breezes are some of the moments found during the spring days that entice folks from the weary confines of their humble abodes.

Take that spring incentive and go for a stroll through Fort Polk's Marion Bonner trail — a 10-mile, two-way walking, jogging, running path through the Fort Polk woods. If the thought of exercise and lovely weather aren't enough to get you moving, maybe curiosity might be what you need to push you out the door.

Just drive into the parking lot along Chaffee Road on the way to North Fort Polk to reach the trail. Once you hit the path that leads through the heart of Fort Polk, you can find any number of nature trails off the beaten path. Your reward for this effort is the beauty of unexpected flowering bushes and wildflowers found along the track, some with signs detailing information about certain flora.

The following are just a few of the flowers you might see as you explore nature's spring show:



- **Native azalea** — these wilder relatives of the azalea have a much different look than the ones you see in perfectly landscaped yards across the South. You will find these flowering shrubs in either dappled shade or sunlight. The flowers are tubular with flaring petals and long stamens and come in a range of colors.



- **Red buckeye** — red buckeye is a medium-sized deciduous (a tree or shrub that sheds its leaves annually) tree-like shrub in the horse chestnut family. It can be found growing throughout the southeastern United States in its native habitat. Trees are found from Virginia to Florida to Texas and are distributed throughout the Gulf south, growing along streams and as an understory tree in forests.



- **Bird's-foot violet** — this wildflower is one of the largest and perhaps most attractive member of the genus Viola. Its flow-



ANGIE THORNE/GUARDIAN

ers consist of two pairs of upper petals and one lower, spurred petal. Two color forms are seen in the wild: In one, all five petals are uniformly lilac; in the other, which is much rarer, the two upper petals are deep, velvety violet. Clustered in the center of the flowers are five orange-tipped stamens. The three-to-five-parted leaves of this plant arise from a short, underground stem and bear some resemblance to a bird's foot — hence, its common name.



similar to parsley. Flowers are five white petals with red stamens in clusters but don't smell them — though pretty, they have a fishy or rotten scent.



- **Parsley hawthorn** — this is a shrub to small tree of the rose family. You will find it in woods and low pastures. The leaves look similar to parsley. Flowers are five white petals with red stamens in clusters but don't smell them — though pretty, they have a fishy or rotten scent.

- **Lyre-leaf sage** — is a Salvia perennial ground cover from the mint family with large deeply three-lobed leaves and showy blue flowers in the spring. It reseeds easily and its flowers provide an excellent landing platform for bees.

- **False garlic** — is an early spring wildflower of the lily family that appears on lawns, meadows and roadsides. It grows

from a bulb and looks like a wild onion, but has fewer and larger flowers on long stems and lacks an onion odor. The white flowers have six white petals and six yellow stamens (the male fertilizing organ of a flower that is pollen producing). They grow in clusters.



- **Prairie verbena** — doesn't look much different from the verbena you buy at your local plant nursery. Its flowers are rounded clusters of pink, lavender or purple blooms on top of stems with highly divided leaves. In the wild, the plant forms brilliant displays that can cover acres of ground.



- **Narrow-leaf blue-eyed grass** — is a perennial wildflower of the iris family. The stems may be up to 18 inches long and bear light blue, star shaped flowers a few inches above the leaves. Only one flower at a time blooms on these small plants and the leaves are grass like.

As always, when walking along the nature trails, be careful and understand that none of these plants are edible.

Editor's note: The information for the flowers and plants highlighted in this article were found at www.lsuagcenter.com, <https://louisianadigitallibrary.org>, <http://friendslaarb.org> and www.wildflower.org.

Parents plant pinwheels to observe Child Abuse Awareness month

OSJA

FORT POLK, La. — The New Parent Support Program held its annual pinwheel planting for Child Abuse Prevention Month with the Pregnant Postpartum Physical Training Soldiers and their Families April 1 at Army Community Service.



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Tiffany Koch
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Lions Club Arena
276 HM Stevens Blvd.
Leesville, LA 71446

7:30 p.m. Friday – Jr. High Performance
10:00 a.m. Saturday – Jr. High Performance
1:00 p.m. Saturday - Cutting
7:30 p.m. Saturday – High School Performance
8:00 a.m. Sunday – Cowboy Church
10:00 a.m. Sunday – High School Performance

Gate Fees \$8.00
Weekend Pass \$15.00
Kids 6 & Under are FREE

Concession on Grounds (Food & Drinks)

Entry to arena will be from the rear of the Lions Club Arena to park. From Hwy 8 (Texas Hwy), turn right on Bradley Street and continue on Bradley until you arrive at the arena. From Hwy 171, turn on Warner Street, which becomes Nona Street, to arrive at the arena. Signs will be posted.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CALL
Rodeo Coordinator: James Hagan (337) 208-8005