

THE JRTC AND FORT POLK

GUARDIAN

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Gather information during National Preparedness Month

DPTMS

National Preparedness Month each September raises awareness about the importance of preparing for disasters and emergencies that could happen at any time. The 2021 theme is "Prepare to Protect. Preparing for disasters is protecting everyone you love."

Fort Polk has made great strides in its emergency preparedness posture and continues to improve through planning, preparation, and partnership with surrounding communities to minimize the impact and effects of a disaster. Despite successes, continued efforts

are required to sustain progress and continue improving awareness, readiness and resilience when a disaster or emergency strikes. Throughout September, the Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security, Emergency Management Branch, will provide information displays with pamphlets, preparedness kits, and Ready Army related material at selected venues, participate in information forums, be available to conduct awareness training for Family Readiness Groups and other installation organizations, and conduct emergency preparedness education and awareness

on "Making a Plan." By getting involved, and knowing the risks about disasters and hazards that could affect you and your family where you live, work and go to school will make a significant difference in the safety and resilience of the Fort Polk community. Each week in September, the campaign focuses on a different aspect of preparedness for individuals, Families and communities.

• **Sept. 1-4:** Make a plan: Talk to your friends and family about how you will communicate before, during and after a disaster. Make sure to update your plan based on the Centers

Please see **Preparedness**, page 9



Guardian Editorial Staff

Brig. Gen. David S. Doyle
Joint Readiness Training Center
and Fort Polk

Commanding General
Col. Samuel P. Smith Jr.
Garrison Commander

Public Affairs and Communications
Kavanaugh Breazeale
Kim Reischling
Chuck Cannon
Keith Houin
Angie Thorne
Jeff England

Editorial Offices
Building 4919, Magnolia Street
Fort Polk, LA 71459-5060
Voice (337) 531-4033
Fax (337) 531-1401

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

Fort Polk Homepage
home.army.mil/polk/
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For more information on Fort Polk units and happenings visit the following Facebook pages:
@JRTCOperationsGrp, **@BayneJonesACH** or **@fortpolkmwr**.

National Preparedness Month 2021

Prepare to Protect

National Preparedness Month is an observance each September to raise awareness about the importance of preparing for disasters and emergencies that could happen at any time. The 2021 theme is "Prepare to Protect. Preparing for disasters is protecting everyone you love."

BE INFORMED. MAKE A PLAN. BUILD A KIT. GET INVOLVED.

Emergencies, by definition, leave little or no time to react. The increased threat of terrorism and naturally occurring disasters demonstrate the need for our Army community to be prepared for any emergency.

To help prepare the Army Community for all hazards, Ready Army encourages everyone to—Be informed. Make a plan. Build a kit. Get involved. The Army's campaign expands upon the national Ready campaign to provide targeted information to support the unique needs of our Army community stationed around the world.

The Army recognizes the continued commitment and sacrifice that Soldiers and their Families make every day. Ready Army supports that commitment by strengthening our Army community and the peace of mind of our deployed Soldiers, who can focus on their critical duties knowing their loved ones know what to do if an emergency strikes.

Soldiers take care of Soldiers; Army Families take care of Army Families; and in the Army, we take care of each other. This underlying compassion creates an attitude that we are in this together, instilling emergency preparedness and education programs such as Ready Army helps prepare the entire Army Community, and a prepared community saves lives.

ARE YOU READY IF AN EMERGENCY OCCURS?

National Preparedness Month is held each September to encourage Americans to take simple actions to prepare for emergencies.

An emergency kit ensures your Family has what you need during an emergency. Your kit should include supplies for a minimum of three days, whether you have to temporarily shelter-in-place, evacuate, or move to a civilian shelter or designated safe haven.

A Family emergency plan ensures everyone in your Family understands what to do, where to go and what to take in the event of an emergency.

Stay informed about potential threats in your area, and get involved in preparing your community. Visit www.readyarmy.mil for further information on emergency planning.

READY ARMY

Ready for an Emergency? You can be.

2021

Weekly Focus

- Week 1: 1-4 September - (Make a Plan)
- Week 2: 5-11 September - (Build a Kit)
- Week 3: 12-18 September - (Prepare for Disasters)
- Week 4: 19-25 September - (Teach Youth about Preparedness)

WEEK 1 - MAKE A FAMILY EMERGENCY PLAN

WEEK 2 - BUILD A KIT
A DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT IS A COLLECTION OF BASIC ITEMS YOUR HOUSEHOLD MAY NEED IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY.

WEEK 3 - PREPARE FOR DISASTERS
KNOW WHAT DISASTERS AND HAZARDS COULD AFFECT YOUR AREA.

WEEK 4 - TEACH YOUTH ABOUT PREPAREDNESS
TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES. REASSURE THEM BY PROVIDING INFORMATION ABOUT HOW THEY CAN GET INVOLVED.

For more information, please contact
Tommy J. Morris, Emergency Manager
at (337) 531-4875 or email,
tommy.j.morris2.civ@mail.mil



Cover Photo: Demolition of the WWII Peason Live Fire Tactical Operations Center took place Aug. 25. The demo opens the door for a better rotational design for the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk. The JRTC and Fort Polk is already the Army's premier combat training center. Efforts such as this will make the training center an even better place to train Soldiers. (U.S. Army Photo: Ray Barnard)

Soldiers save civilian life after unexpected **shootout**

By **ANGIE THORNE**

Public affairs and communication

FORT POLK, La. — Everyone deserves a little rest and relaxation, especially Soldiers. Getting away can refresh mind, body and soul and refocus them on the mission. That's what Sgt. Nelson Mercado, 286th Medical Detachment, 32nd Hospital Center, Army practical nursing specialist, and Sgt. Farrell Noel, 115th Field Hospital operating room specialist, were doing when they decided to take a trip to New Orleans on the last weekend of July.

What they didn't know is that their peaceful trip was going to be a lot more chaotic and dangerous than they could ever have imagined.

Noel said he and Mercado were enjoying the ambiance of New Orleans while sitting outside a pub on Bourbon Street, when gun shots erupted between 2 to 3 a.m. Aug. 1.

Mercado said the two shooters were having an argument that quickly escalated.

"They each pulled out a gun and began shooting at each other, even though there were massive amounts of pedestrians, even children, out and about enjoying themselves," said Mercado.

Noel said he grabbed Mercado and they ran inside the pub with the rest of the crowd trying to get to safety.

"When we turned around, we saw the shooters through the pub windows. One was down the street shooting in our direction and the other was right in front of us — he shot first. The second shooter returned fire as he continued to back away from the other gunman. As we watched through the window, we saw the flashes of gunfire. There were multiple rounds fired as they emptied their clips into the crowd," he said.

As the shooting ended, Mercado said he didn't know where the second shooter went, but he saw the shooter closest to them turn the corner and run.



Sgt. Farrell Noel, 115th Field Hospital operating room specialist, (left) and Sgt. Nelson Mercado, 286th Medical Detachment, 32nd Hospital Center, Army practical nursing specialist, stand next to the 32nd Hospital Center Headquarters sign.

That's when Noel and Mercado carefully stepped outside the door to make sure the shooters had vacated the area and saw two casualties in the middle of the street. Their medical training kicked in and they headed straight for the casualty that was closest to them.

Though they said they were cautious because they thought the shooters might come back, it didn't stop them from leaving the safety of the pub to aid the victims of the confrontation.

Sam Madson was one of the shooting victims. He and his wife, Lita, were visiting friends in New Orleans when the gunfire erupted.

Madson was on the ground hemorrhaging from two gun shot wounds — one to each of his shins.

Noel said as he approached Madson to talk to him, Mercado did a visual sweep to see where Madson had been shot.

"In tactical combat casualty care, one of the first things you do is check the scene and assess the patient. He said he had two bullet wounds.

Mercado was already working on the left leg, so I ran around to begin to apply pressure to the right leg," said Noel.

Mercado said they didn't have any tools or medical equipment to work with, so they had to use what was available.

"I took my belt off and applied it two inches above the gun shot wound and tied it. The Army trains us how to handle wounds like this when we are out in the field," he said.

As Noel was applying pressure to the right leg, a friend of the Madsons approached and Mercado instructed him how to use his belt on the other leg. Noel said he continued to apply pressure until the friend was done.

"If you remove pressure before that, they could bleed out and there was already a lot of blood loss," said Noel.

Mercado said once Madson was stabilized, they stayed with him and monitored him after they were assured the other casu-

Please see **Shootout**, page 8

Briefs

Vaccine event

The Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk hosts a walk-in COVID-19 vaccination clinic at the Post Exchange (7742 Colorado Avenue) Saturday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. The first and/or second dose of the Moderna vaccine will be available to any Soldier, Family member, retiree, civilian employee or contractor 18 years and older.

If this will be your second dose — remember to bring your vaccination card

Super sign-up

The Fort Polk Spouses' and Community Club hosts its annual super sign-up event Sept. 11 from noon-3 p.m.

Join them at the Family Readiness Center, bldg 924, 7960 Mississippi Ave., to kick off the club's 2021-2022 activities. Registration is not required.

Get physicals

Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital is conducting back to school/

sports/Child and Youth Services physicals from 4-5:30 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday. Call 531.3011 to schedule your appointment. Please bring completed forms and your child's immunization records with you.

Additional dose

Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital understands that Fort Polk's immunocompromised population is especially vulnerable to prolonged illness from COVID-19.

BJACH is now offering an additional dose

Please see **Briefs**, page 7

DOD mandates Pfizer vaccine, Pentagon official says

By DAVID VERGUN
DoD News

The Food and Drug Administration granted full approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine Aug. 23, now called Comirnaty.

All members of the Active and Reserve Components, including the National Guard, will be required to get the COVID-19 vaccine along with the list of other vaccines they are already required to receive as part of their individual medical readiness requirements.

Secretary of Defense, Lloyd J. Austin's direction establishes a requirement for service members to be fully vaccinated.

Service members can elect to receive any FDA licensed or authorized (EUA) vaccine to meet that requirement.

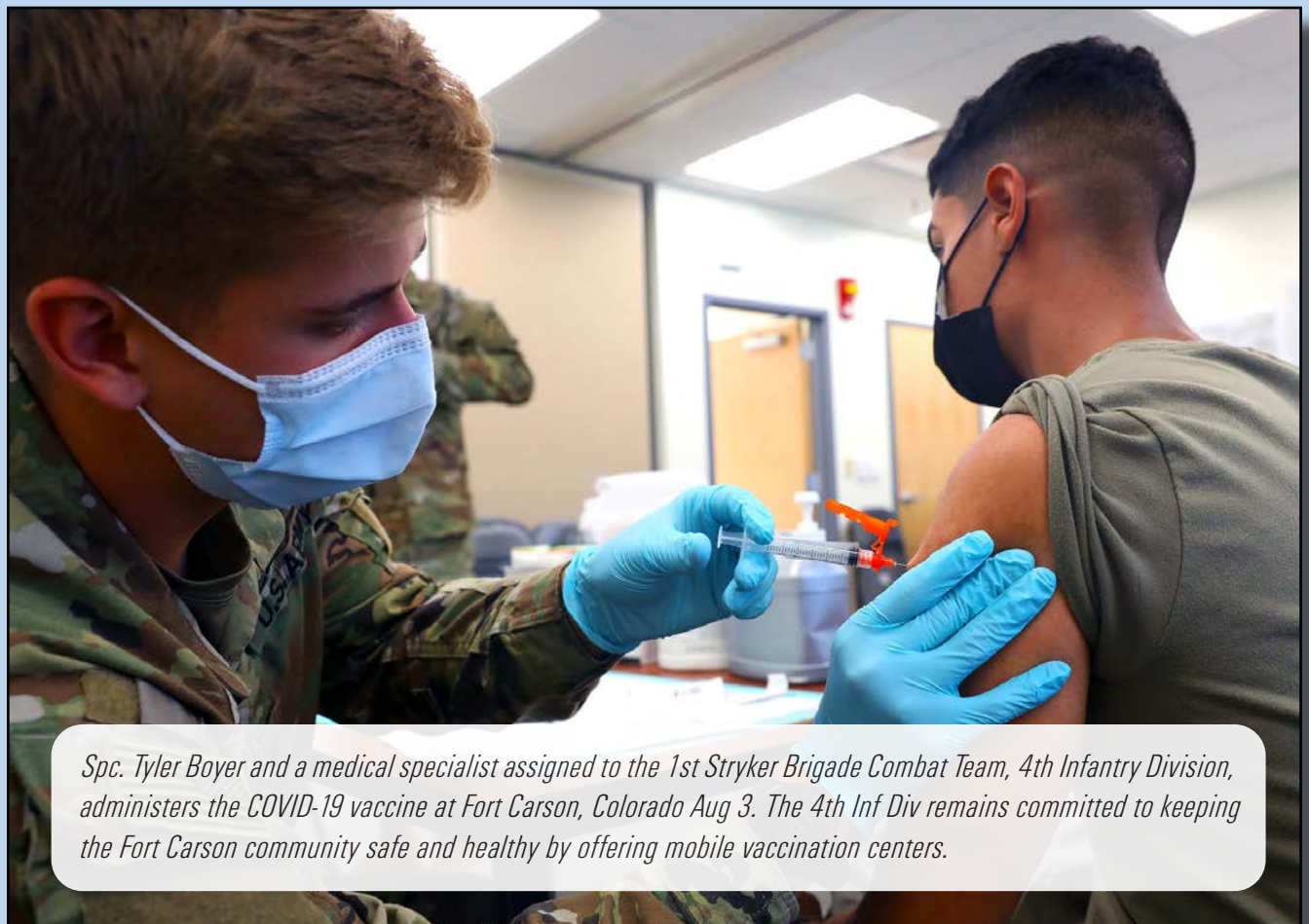
If vaccinations are being given on a mandatory basis, the only vaccine that may be used at this time is the Comirnaty vaccine.

Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, John F. Kirby, said the health of Department of Defense's military and civilian employees, Families and communities is a top priority.

"These efforts ensure the safety of our service members and promote the readiness of our force, not to mention the health and safety of the communities around the country in which we live."

The vaccine is administered for the prevention of COVID-19 in individuals age 16 and older.

The vaccine continues to be available under emergency use authorization for individuals 12 through 15 years of age and for the administration of a third dose to certain immunocompromised individuals, according to the FDA.



Spc. Tyler Boyer and a medical specialist assigned to the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, administers the COVID-19 vaccine at Fort Carson, Colorado Aug 3. The 4th Inf Div remains committed to keeping the Fort Carson community safe and healthy by offering mobile vaccination centers.

In other COVID-19 news, Kirby said medical personnel at the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, are conducting COVID-19 screenings for Americans and eligible Afghan evacuees who exhibit signs or symptoms of the disease.

COVID-19 screenings also take place at the temporary safe havens and upon arrival in the United States, he said.

Right: Army Spc. Angel Laureano holds a vial of the COVID-19 vaccine, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, Md., Dec. 14.



Exchange fee-free layaway helps Fort Polk shoppers budget for holiday

AAFES

FORT POLK, La. — Fort Polk shoppers making their holiday lists and checking them twice will have a little extra help from the Army and Air Force Exchange Service in budgeting their gift shopping.

Beginning Sept. 1, the Exchange will waive the \$3 service fee on select layaway items, including toys, bikes, computers, iPads and tablets.

"The Exchange's fee-free layaway is a great tool to manage gift-buying for Family and friends," said Fort Polk Exchange General Manager Ronald McDuffie. "As a bonus, it also keeps presents out of sight until the big day."

The \$3 service fee is waived for select items of \$25 or more. The standard deposit of 15% of the item's price is still required to put the product on layaway.

For toys and bikes, the items must be picked up within 60 days or by Dec. 24, whichever comes first.

For computers, laptops, iPads, notebooks and tablets, the items must be picked up within 30 days or by Dec. 15. Some exclusions apply. See customer service at the Fort Polk Exchange for more details.



fee free
layaway



starts September 1st

some restrictions apply:

\$3 service fee waived if layaway picked up in full

\$5 cancellation fee applies

limited time only

FIRE FIGHTERS HOST BLOOD DRIVE

Fort Polk fire fighters hosted a blood drive in front of the fire department, bldg 0001, Aug. 20. Blood supplies are running critically low, according to LifeShare Blood Centers. The Fort Polk community turned out to help.



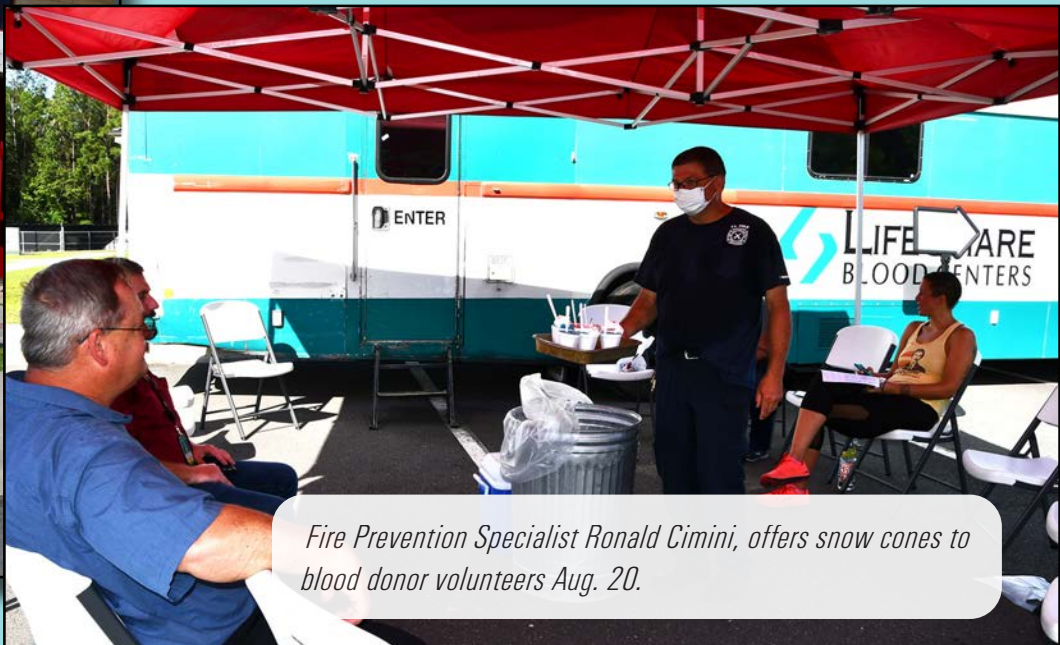
Members of the Fort Polk community patiently wait their turn to roll up their sleeves and give blood.



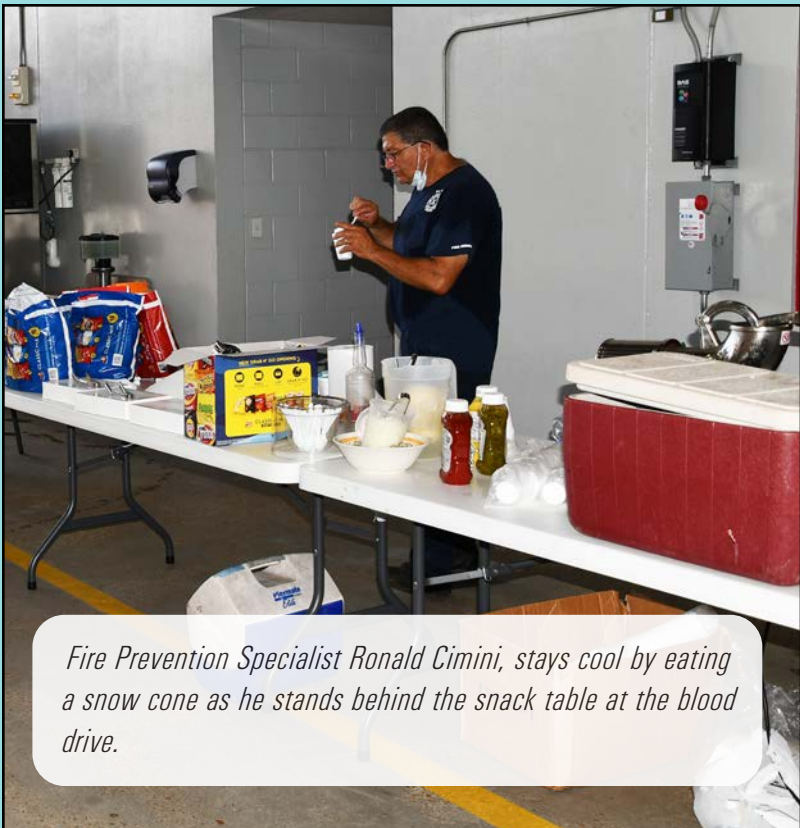
Lannisha Wilson, a donor tech on the LifeShare Center bus, inserts a needle into Leilani Asuncion's arm. Asuncion says she gives blood to support the cause.



Melissa Rubio, fire fighter, shows off the T-shirt she received after giving blood.



Fire Prevention Specialist Ronald Cimini, offers snow cones to blood donor volunteers Aug. 20.



Fire Prevention Specialist Ronald Cimini, stays cool by eating a snow cone as he stands behind the snack table at the blood drive.



After giving blood, Chris Lewis, fire fighter, steps off the LifeShare Center donation bus with his T-shirt and snow cone in hand.



Signs and a blow up character get people's attention on the day of the blood drive.

CHUCK CANNON/ GUARDIAN

“Cajun Dustoff” bids farewell to Salazar, welcomes DiMaio

By JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES
BJACH PAO

FORT POLK, La. — Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment has a new leader following a change of command ceremony at Polk Army Airfield, Aug. 19.

Outgoing commander, Maj. Ralph Salazar, relinquished command to Maj. Christopher DiMaio, in front of aviators, medical leaders, Families and friends.

Charlie Company, affectionately referred to as “Cajun Dustoff”, provides 24-hour air medical evacuation support to JRTC, Fort Polk and the surrounding community, 365 days per year.

According to the article, “Matching tradition: ‘Dustoff’ lifts patient care to a higher level” the moniker arose, in part, during the Vietnam War because of the clouds of dust that would billow up when the helicopters took off or landed. All medical evacuation units have assumed the call sign “dustoff” since then.

Throughout military history, unit colors have marked the position of the commander on the battlefield and served as a rallying point in times of confusion. Now, the colors symbolize the authority of the command. During the change of command ceremony, the passing of the colors represents the transfer of authority between commanders.

In the heat and humidity associated with summer in the South, Salazar passed the unit colors to Lt. Col. JD Swinney, commander, 1-5 Avn Reg, indicative of handing over his responsibility and authority. Swinney then passed the colors to DiMaio charging him with the same responsibilities and authority.

Swinney recognized the achievements of Salazar and welcomed DiMaio. He acknowledged the challenges faced by “Cajun Dustoff” and the importance of its mission.

“This unit puts themselves in danger every day to save our fighting forces. They answer the call daily to fly in marginal weather, faced with fatigue and fight through the confusion that comes with medical emergencies and rapidly changing situations. They know if they get it wrong the patient will suffer,” Swinney said. “Soldiers passing through JRTC, the Families and children of the Fort Polk team and the citizens of Central Louisiana all look to ‘Cajun Dustoff’ to carry them to safety when no other means are available.”

Swinney told the formation of Soldiers that their daily exploits are a reminder of why Soldiers do what they do each day for their country.

Outgoing commander, Maj. Ralph Salazar, thanked his family and faith for supporting him during his tenure.

“When I took command, I thought to myself, ‘no one is shooting at me,’ how hard can it be? I was quickly humbled,” he said. “Being part of this organization is somewhat like a deploy-



Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment has a new leader following a change of command ceremony at Polk Army Airfield Aug. 19.



Left: Maj. Christopher DiMaio, addresses aviators, medical leaders, Families and friends after he assumes command of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment during a change of command ceremony at Polk Army Airfield, Aug. 19.

ment. Most of us spend 100 nights per year in the hangar with another 100 nights on call. In spite of the rigor, I doubt there is a team member among us who doesn’t love their job and this unit as much as I have.”

Salazar said during his command there were 262 patients evacuated, with 60 that were urgent trauma.

According to Salazar, this MEDEVAC company has flown more trauma and acute critical care patients than the other 13 active duty units combined.

“The 262 represents the Soldiers and civilians who would have lost life, limb or eyesight if we hadn’t been willing to brave the weather, fly deep into the night or cancel the one date night we may have tried to schedule that month when we had to surge a third crew,” he said. “I suppose the only number that really matters is one. Each and every one — through the efforts of the ‘Cajun Dustoff’ team, one more Soldier returned to duty, one more child got to go home to their parents, one more life was saved and Families and friends spared of grief.”

Salazar said there is only one word to de-

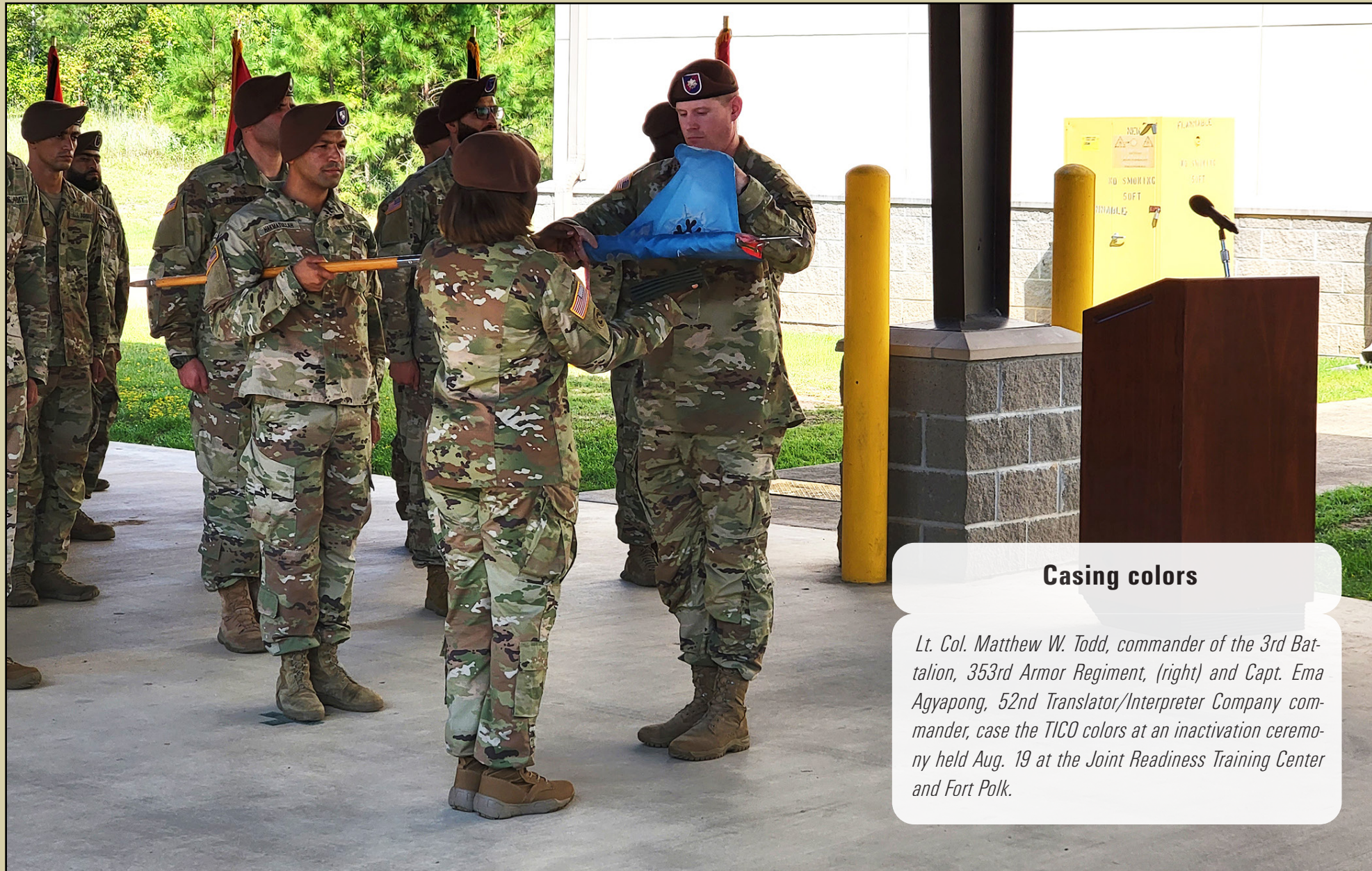
scribe the unit: Perseverance.

“Relying on each other when we are tired or scared,” he said, “everyone on the team is pivotal, necessary and plays a vital role in life or death situations. Whether it was the loss of your commander, Major Trevor Joseph in 2019, the force of two hurricanes, an ice storm of Biblical proportions or a global pandemic that claimed the lives of some of our family members ... you fought through.”

As Salazar signed out for the last time as the company commander, he said leading them was the privilege of his life.

Maj. Christopher DiMaio, the new commander, kept his remarks traditionally short. He said assuming command is the greatest honor and privilege of an officer and he thanked his senior leaders, mentors and Family.

“I am honored to serve alongside and after the Soldiers that have contributed to establishing this distinct unit,” he said. “I would like to affirm to the ‘Cajun Dustoff’ family my commitment and selfless service to you, your Families and our mission of dedicated, unhesitating support to our fighting forces and the Fort Polk community.”



Casing colors

Lt. Col. Matthew W. Todd, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 353rd Armor Regiment, (right) and Capt. Ema Agyapong, 52nd Translator/Interpreter Company commander, case the TICO colors at an inactivation ceremony held Aug. 19 at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.

Briefs

Continued from page 3

of the vaccine for moderately to severely immunocompromised beneficiaries in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Guidelines. If you answer yes to any of the following questions you may qualify for a third COVID-19 vaccine shot at this time:

- Have you been receiving active cancer treatment for tumors or cancers of the blood?
- Have you received an organ transplant and are taking medicine to suppress the immune system?
- Have you received a stem cell transplant within the last two years or are taking medicine to suppress the immune system?
- Do you have moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency (such as DiGeorge syndrome, Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome)?
- Do you have advanced or untreated HIV infection?
- Are you currently on an active treatment with high-dose corticosteroids or oth-

er drugs that may suppress your immune response? If you would like to get an additional dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, call 531.3011 for a telehealth appointment to discuss whether getting an additional dose is appropriate for you.

24/7 prescription center

The Script Center machine located at Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital's Entrance A, is available 24/7 for non-refrigerated prescription refills. It's quick, easy and hassle free: Call in a prescription refill to 531.3785. Select Option 2 or request a refill at [tricareonline.com](https://bayne-jones.tricare.mil/Health-Services/Pharmacy). Prescriptions will be available after noon the next business day. For first time users, bring your Department of Defense ID card and prescription number to register with the Script Center machine.

Once registered, the Script Center can be used 24/7 to pick up refill prescriptions with ID card, username and password or fingerprint login. For more informa-

tion visit <https://bayne-jones.tricare.mil/Health-Services/Pharmacy>

DES vehicles

The Directorate of Emergency Services will release the following vehicles to a towing company for disposal on Monday, if they remain unclaimed. Vehicles are listed with the last four numbers of their VIN number. If one of these vehicles belongs to you, please contact the Fort Polk Police Traffic Section at 531.1806/6675/2677.

2000	Audi	A4	7545
1994	Ford	Ranger	7582
2011	BMW	328I	7142
2005	Mazda	RX8	0655
2000	GMC	Sierra	5456
2012	Ford	F-150	6589
2002	Mitsubishi	Montero	9774
2007	Cadillac	CTS	8777
2010	Mini	Cooper S	1729
2002	Honda	Shadow	2420
2003	SAAB	93	3023
2002	Ford	Taurus	7521
2003	Mitsubishi	Lancer	3693

Shootout

Continued from page 3

alties were receiving care as well.

Noel and Mercado assured Lita her husband had stopped bleeding.

"We were trying to keep them both calm until emergency medical services arrived on the scene. We tried to keep them distracted and ease their minds until the ambulance arrived," said Noel.

After about five minutes, EMS arrived and Mercado explained Madson's wounds and what they had done.

"In that situation it felt like forever, but it was only minutes before they arrived and they took it from there," said Noel.

After informing their leadership what had happened, Noel and Mercado got some sleep and

headed back to Fort Polk the next day.

Mercado said it wasn't quite the relaxing trip they had planned, but said he and Noel were glad they were there at the right time and place and had the skills necessary to help.

"I think anyone with our training would have done the same thing," said Noel.

That doesn't mean it didn't have an effect on them. Noel said Mercado returned from a deployment last year and though you expect that kind of thing to happen during a deployment, it's not something you think about happening at home, he said.

"You are mentally prepared for mortars, indirect gunfire and

more," said Noel. "You don't expect it on a weekend trip for fun here."

Noel and Mercado said it was even more stressful because of the unexpected nature of the event and the fact that they had to scramble to use what they could find to try to help save a person's life.

"I think it hits home more because it caught us off guard," said Mercado.

Now that some time has passed, Mercado and Noel look back on the weekend and are thankful.

"We were lucky we didn't get hurt and are happy we were there to help Sam and Lita," said Noel.

Noel said they were there to render aid when it was needed

and that's what the Army stands for — especially in the medical field.

"We have the training and it kicked in automatically. It wasn't something we had to think about," said Noel. "The Army does an excellent job training us to do what we do."

Mercado said before they left the scene of the shooting, Lita made sure to get their phone numbers. She has kept in touch to let them know how Sam is doing. "It was a horrible situation, but the positives include keeping in touch with Sam and Lita. He is doing well and I feel like we have made friends that we will keep for the rest of our lives," he said.

28 SEPTEMBER 2021
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Soldier looks back on career, calls JRTC “choice assignment”

By Lt. Col. AMALIO DE LEON JR.
G-1

FORT POLK, La. — As a career Army professional, it is crucial we map our assignments with the tactical planning needed to progress along the appropriate career path. If we are being honest with ourselves, however, there are only so many sacrifices we are willing to make for career progression.

When my Branch Manager called and said, ‘I have an assignment for you at Fort Polk,’ images of Biblical flooding and living far from the daily conveniences I know and love went spinning through my head. Beginning as an infantry officer, I felt privileged to spend the majority of my career assigned overseas to “premier” installations such as Hawaii, Korea, Belgium, Puerto Rico and Honduras. Although I had participated in rotations at NTC (National Training Center) and Joint Readiness Training Center, I felt like I had reached the optimal balance, finding professional success while maintaining a string of comfortable duty locations. It wasn’t until I re-branched to the AG Corps that I felt my good fortune had finally come to an end when I received the call I was to be stationed to JRTC and Fort Polk. Soon after came the sympathetic calls from my colleagues, asking what I’d done to be assigned at one of the least requested locations in the Army. Had I only known then, JRTC and Fort Polk would turn out to be the most rewarding assignment, personally and professionally, of my career.

My entire perception of JRTC and Fort Polk was based on what I’d experienced on previous rotations. I knew that going to a CTC (combat training center) as part of a rotational unit would be a grueling experience, testing

my skills and readiness as a leader. The day I brought my Family to JRTC and Fort Polk was, honestly, filled with uncertainty and trepidation. I fully expected our three years to feel like one long rotation. What I discovered was, an assignment should be chosen based on the opportunities it provides, not on the weather. JRTC and Fort Polk has granted my Family and myself the most rewarding, genuine connections. Living in a small, close-knit community has allowed us to truly connect with the people we work and reside with.

The stable schedule gives me ample quality time to watch my daughter grow. As she prepares to graduate, she is competitive for any university she would like to apply for, due to the education she received, despite my original biases, and the educational support she has at home. As an AG Officer, I have the opportunity to see behind the curtain into the framework of career mapping.

As a result, I can attest that JRTC is an installation rich with career prospects from key development to broadening assignments. JRTC and Fort Polk is known for being a place where units come to hone their abilities by testing every warfighting function in realistic, trying conditions.

It isn’t meant to be easy. If it was it wouldn’t set the conditions to prepare you for combat but I guarantee, living here isn’t like living in the box. With just a finite amount of time at JRTC and Fort Polk, key development time can be completed with a wealth of knowledge to make stronger leaders in the future while continuing to check the necessary boxes of career progression. Conversely, this is also a great location to extend dwell time, continue career progression, all while granting your Family stability.

One of the benefits I have experienced at

JRTC and Fort Polk that I had truly not anticipated, is the unequivocal respect and acceptance I have been shown from the leadership down. Throughout my 20-year career, I have been challenged to overcome my accent, forcing others to see what I bring to the table and not the color of my skin.

Whether I was on the beaches of Hawaii or walking down the streets of Belgium, I was perceived by many as less than I am because English is not my first language and my accent is predominant. My Family and I felt the most at home in Korea until we moved to JRTC and Fort Polk. From the moment we arrived, people were not only accepting of our Hispanic heritage but for the first time, I felt welcomed as a true equal. I felt like a weight I didn’t even know I had been carrying, had been lifted off of my shoulders.

As a father, I could raise my daughter on an installation where the place you come from doesn’t matter as much as where you are. As a husband, I have the security of knowing my wife is in a community where she is embraced. As an officer, I finally have the complete freedom to perform my duties and mentor future leaders without the confines of having my book judged by its cover. For once, at JRTC and Fort Polk, people just read the book and allowed my performance to speak for itself. I’ve learned happiness has very little to do with location, it’s a mindset. When choosing your next duty assignment, genuinely understand your career path and make an educated choice. Are you looking for sincere connections and a place to enhance your career? It is time to shift your outlook and understand that every assignment counts. I would not have imagined that JRTC and Fort Polk would have been my choice assignment, but with all things in life, hindsight is 20-20.

COMMENTARY

Preparedness

Continued from page 2

for Disease Control recommendations due to the coronavirus.

- Sept. 5-11: Build a kit: Gather supplies that will last for several days after a disaster for everyone living in your home.

Don’t forget to consider the unique needs each person or pet may have in case you have to evacuate quickly. Update your kits and supplies based on recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control.

- Sept. 12-18: Prepare for disasters: Limit the impacts that disasters have on you and your family. Know the risk of disasters in your area and check your insurance coverage.

Learn how to make your home stronger in the face of storms and other common hazards and be better able to act fast if you receive a local warning or alert.

- Sept. 19-25: Teach youth about preparedness: Talk to your kids about preparing for emergencies and what to do in case you are separated.

Reassure them by providing information about how they can get involved.

For more information, contact Tommy J. Morris, Installation Emergency Manager at (337) 531-4875 or tommy.j.morris2.civ@mail.mil.

National Preparedness Month

Prepare to Protect





ANGIE THORNE / GUARDIAN

Maple Terrace housing town hall

A housing town hall took place Aug. 24 in Maple Terrace. Members of command and representatives from housing and organizations across Fort Polk walked through the neighborhood to view the state of housing and talk to residents. The town hall was cut short due to inclement weather.

Left: Staff Sgt. Zek Cunningham, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, talks with Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk Commanding General Brig. Gen. David S. Doyle during the Maple Terrace Town Hall.

Below: Lt. Parish West, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, (right) is a Maple Terrace resident that attended the meeting at the Maple Terrace Center at the end of the town hall to ask questions about housing.



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*ALL COVID-19 VACCINATED ELIGIBLE

DRAWING | 9 SEPTEMBER

The persons eligible for a chance to win must have received their first vaccine dose at the time of the drawing. Eligible persons must be 18 years or older, a DoD ID card holder and currently living, working or affiliated with the Fort Polk community. Winners will have until 7 October to receive their second vaccination. To claim the prize, contestant must be fully vaccinated.

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FIRST DAY FUNDAMENTALS

Aug. 20 was the first day back to school for Vernon Parish students. Fort Polk Garrison Commander, Col. Samuel P. Smith Jr.; Garrison Command Sergeant Major, Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher M. Ausbun; and Tiffany Koch, Fort Polk school liaison officer, spent the morning talking to students, parents and school officials. Smith wished students a good first day at Pickering Elementary School, asked teachers and school administrators how he could help make the school year better and toured Pickering High School.



Fort Polk Garrison Commander, Col. Samuel P. Smith Jr. (center left) talks with Dana Donaldson, Pickering Elementary School principal, (center right) and teachers on the first day of school.



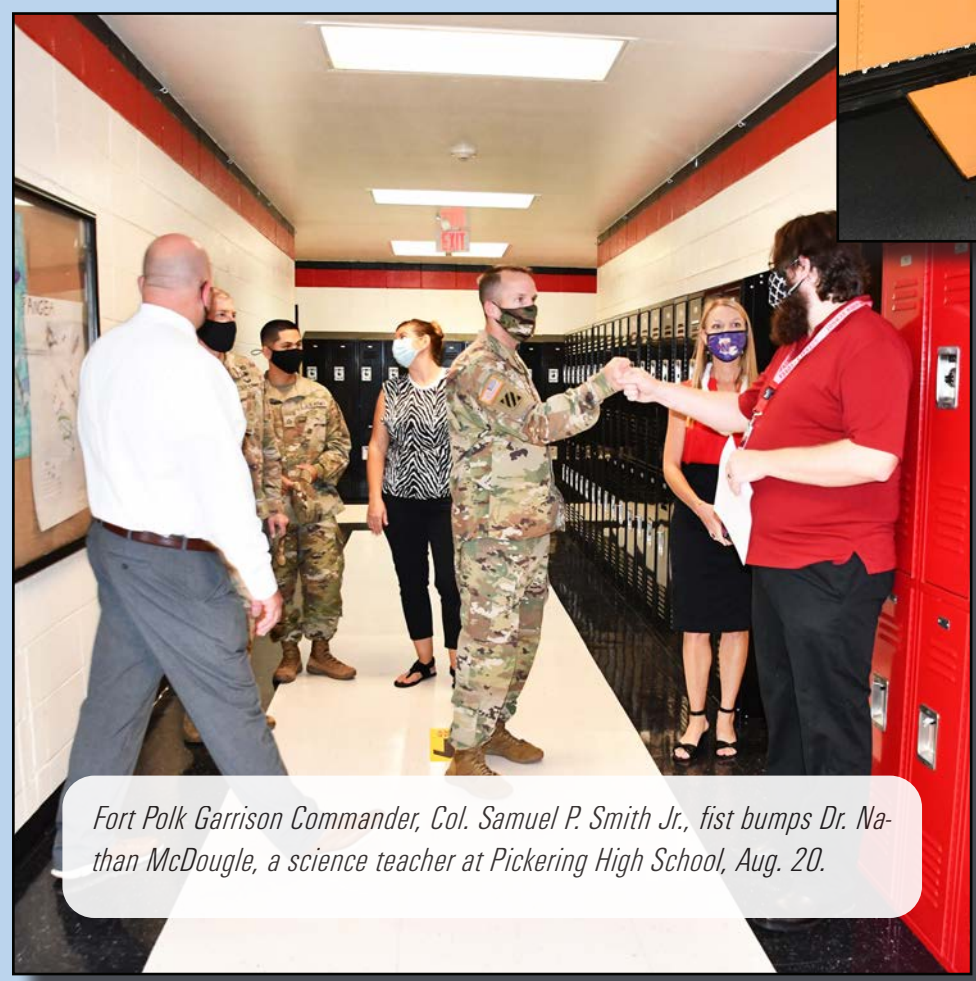
A Fort Polk student walks to his bus as he gets on and heads to the first day of school.



Fort Polk Garrison Commander, Col. Samuel P. Smith Jr. steps on to a bus to wish Fort Polk students a good first day of school.



Fort Polk Garrison Commander, Col. Samuel P. Smith Jr. welcomes students as they enter Pickering Elementary School on the first day of school.



Fort Polk Garrison Commander, Col. Samuel P. Smith Jr., fist bumps Dr. Nathan McDougle, a science teacher at Pickering High School, Aug. 20.



Fort Polk Garrison Commander, Col. Samuel P. Smith Jr. talks to high school students at Pickering High School Aug. 20.

ANGIE THORNE/GUARDIAN



WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY

AUGUST 26

Women have come long way to equality

By **KEVIN B. STUART**
JRTC and Fort Polk Military Ombudsman

FORT POLK, La. — Imagine living in a society in which you have no voice. You cannot even vote or hold a job without your spouse's approval and if you are employed, then your wages belong to your spouse.

If you were unmarried, you may have a choice of a low-paying, physically demanding job in a factory or mill and possibly as a low-paid teacher, nurse or secretary. You cannot complain about the unfair system because the law will not support you and if you did complain, you would probably lose the job.

The law neither hears your voice, nor recognizes any of your claims or concerns. You are helpless and must rely on the good nature and wisdom of those around you. This was the daily life and legal status of American women until 1920 when women won the right to vote.

Since 1973, by presidential proclamation, Women's Equality Day was officially commemorated on Aug. 26, the anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, giving women the right to vote. The passage of this amendment to the U.S. Constitution was the culmination of the women's suffrage movement that formally began in July 1846, at the Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York.

Several women were instrumental in gaining the right to vote; one name that is familiar to many is Susan B. Anthony (first woman in American history to have her image on U.S. currency, the dollar coin). Born in 1820, she was a teacher, writer, temperance and abolition organizer, who is widely known as the founder of the women's right movement. She and other suffragists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, Carrie Chapman Catt, Anna Howard Shaw, Martha C. Wright and Mary Ann McClintock, paved the way for women to vote and enter politics.

The struggle for the ratification of the 19th Amendment on August 26, 1920 was a long and arduous one, but successful in the end, with women gaining the right to vote.

Drawing on the energy of the women and men who supported the temperance movement and abolition, the conference implored women's right to suffrage.

Today we celebrate Women's Equality Day in remembrance of the years of hard work to secure the rights of women to vote. This day has also been set aside to recognize the contributions civilian and military women have made in American history. Women have made great strides in our country over the past few decades and continue to break glass ceilings in a wide array of areas.

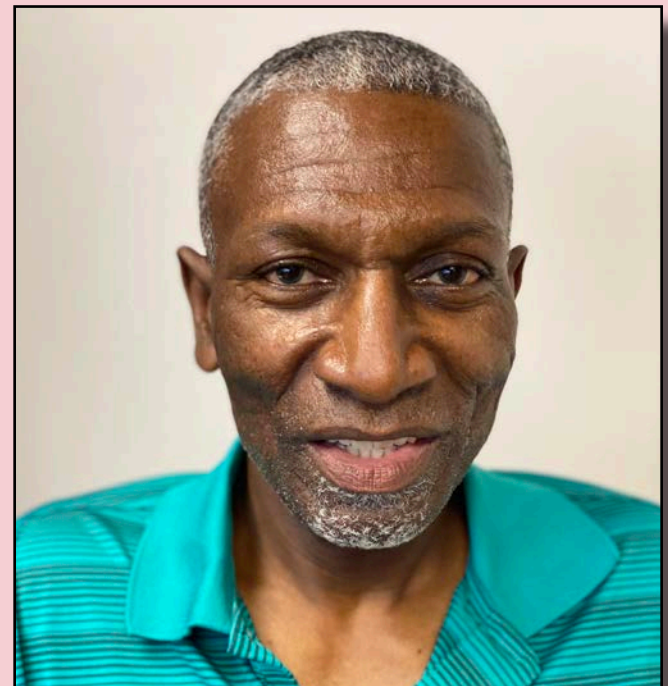
It is important that the voice of women is heard and used to secure rights for those who will follow in the future. As we continue celebrating Women's Equality Day, let us acknowledge the brave and visionary women and men who struggled, suffered and campaigned for equal rights.

Despite the suffering of women in the past, they have endured and triumphed and today women have the right to vote and opportunity to be all that they can be in our nation.

The road is a little easier today for women because of their victory and now they have a voice along with the power of a vote. If we are to become a pluralistic society, our differences should be afforded the opportunity to be freely expressed, respected and celebrated.

Women's Equality Day gives us an opportunity to reflect on the continued struggle for equality in the workplace and other areas in our society. Women in public service as well as government, have long served this nation by working to clear barriers, enforce laws, and implement new ideas to help modify people's attitudes.

I truly believe that equality equates to opportunity and opportunity equates to



STUART

progress, which ultimately leads to unity and success for all in America. Every citizen of America must have the opportunity equally to be all that they can be without regard to gender, color, nationality, religion, national origin or race.

Today we are reminded of having the opportunity and, in some instances, the responsibility to help create a society that gives both women and men an equal voice and equal right to vote.

Please take the time and opportunity to observe and reflect on this year's Women's Equality Day observance and explore the contributions, achievements and accomplishments women have made in our nation.

Got News?

Call the Guardian
at 531-1416

COMMENTARY

JRTC & Fort Polk & MWR Present



TOBY KEITH

SEPTEMBER 10

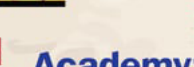
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