

GUARDIAN



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Fort Johnson quality of life initiatives are ongoing mission

By **MELISSA BOX**
Plans, Analysis and Integration Office

FORT JOHNSON, La. — The Army recognizes people as its first priority and is committed to providing quality of life programs to Soldiers and Families. These programs help increase the well-being and readiness of the force.

Fort Johnson leadership hosts a conference, biannually, aimed at improving those programs by getting feedback from a cross section of Fort Johnson’s population. The conference aims to develop a long-term plan for continuing initiatives and help vector and establish a waypoint for community needs, desires and resources.

The most recent Quality of Life Conference was held Nov. 15, 2023, in the Warrior Center.

The conference was conducted in a round table format, with small breakout sessions discussing the day’s topics, which included everything from permanent change of station moves and support to resilience, spouse employment and health care.

The event included subject matter experts sharing their knowledge. After presentations by briefers, table discussions took place and were followed by a question and answer session. Participants were able to share their insights and suggestions to improve quality of life on Fort Johnson.

There were 100 in-person conference participants and 40 attending virtually.


A common theme presented throughout the conference was communication. Table discussions centered around finding new ways to enhance communication to the end-user and customers on Fort Johnson. Another common theme was streamlining programs/services to maximum utilization. One conclusion that emerged from the conference was an immediate need to improve awareness of


SEMI-ANNUAL


Joint Readiness Training Center & Fort Johnson


QUALITY OF LIFE CONFERENCE


JRTC & Fort Johnson QoL Initiatives


HOUSING

HEALTH CARE

CHILD CARE

SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT

PCS MOVES

SUPPORT AND RESILIENCE

Commanding General's QoL Priorities:

Education • Housing • Child Care • Health Care • Army Spouse Employment • MWR - Recreation

Care for Our People • Build Readiness • Succeed in our JRTC & Fort Johnson Campaigns

Commanding General's Priorities

MAY 20 FROM 9:30 A.M. - 2:30 P.M.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Welcome – 9:30-9:35 a.m.

QoL Progress Overview / Recap Last Conference – 9:35-9:45 a.m.

Child Care – 9:45-10:15 a.m.

Education – 10:15-10:45 a.m.

Housing / Barracks / IHG – 10:45-11:15 a.m.

LUNCH (1 hr 15 min) – 11:15 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Infrastructure – 12:30-1 p.m.

MWR Events and AAFES – 1-1:45 p.m.

Feedback/Closing Remarks – 1:45 - 2:30 p.m.

This is an event for Soldiers, civilians, retirees and Family members to participate in, and provide feedback or suggestions on the state of QoL on Fort Johnson.

Seating is limited. RSVP to kayla.l.moore16.civ@army.mil NLT May 13



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

Commanding General

Col. CJ Lopez

Garrison Commander

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The Guardian can be found on the JRTC and Fort Johnson website at home.army.mil/johnson and the JRTC and Fort Johnson Facebook page at [@JRTCandFortJohnson/](https://www.facebook.com/JRTCandFortJohnson/). Guardian archives can also be found on the JRTC and Fort Johnson website.

Links to the Guardian are also included in all-users emails to government email users and by request to non-military units.

All editorial content of the Guardian is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the Public Affairs Office, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Johnson. For more information on Fort Johnson units and happenings visit the [@JRTCandFortJohnson](https://www.facebook.com/JRTCandFortJohnson/) Facebook page.



Cover photo: Caught mid swing, members of the Fort Jonson community are seen having fun on one of the carnival rides during Forge Fest, held March 28 at Headquarters Field. (U.S Army photo by Antoine Aaron)

Fort Johnson takes stand against sexual assault, harrassment

By PORSHA AUZENNE
Public Affairs Office

FORT JOHNSON, La. — Fort Johnson leadership, Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention personnel, and community members gathered in front of the installation headquarters to sign the Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month proclamation April 2.

The signing symbolizes a pledge to channel energy around others to eliminate sexual harassment and assault in every aspect of Fort Johnson life.

Observed every April by both military and civilian communities, SAAPM aims to eliminate sexual assault by focusing on creating appropriate culture and requiring a personal commitment from all service members. This year’s Army campaign theme — Change Through Unity: Empower. Protect. Prevent. — highlights unification in the fight against sexual assault; promotion of respect and empowerment for all; and the role of all members of the Army team to create a healthy climate while reinforcing their responsibility to act to prevent sexual assault and harassment.

“I want people coming forward comfortably, knowing our JRTC (Joint Readiness Training Center) and Fort Johnson team will call out harmful actions and behaviors we don’t approve of,” said Maj. Gen. David W. Gardner, Fort Johnson commanding general. “It’s good we’re signing this proclamation today, but for



From left: Maj. Gen. David W. Gardner, commanding general of the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Johnson, post Command Sgt. Maj. David P. Hanson, and garrison commander Col. CJ Lopez sign the Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month proclamation April 2 in front of post headquarters. (U.S. Army photo by Porsha Auzenne)

me, every day is a day I’m proclaiming we as an installation want to be at zero incidents.”

Signing the proclamation along with Gardner was garrison commander Col. CJ Lopez

and post Command Sgt. Maj. David P. Hanson.

For additional resources call 337-531-4656/0587/1549 or visit www.armyresilience.army.mil/sharp and www.safehelpline.org.

UPCOMING SAAPM EVENTS

April 9 | Teal Thursday

April 9-10 | Spoken Word Artist Obie West
(Select locations)

April 17 @ 10 a.m. | Guest Speaker (SHARP Training) Dr. Vanessa Guyton of CEA Associates @ Warrior Training Center

April 12 @ 1:30 p.m. | Guest Speaker (SHARP training) Nicole Snell of Girls Fight Back Risk Reduction training @ ACS Ballroom

April 16 | Teal Tuesday

April 24 | Denim Day. Encourage the wearing of denim in support of victims of sexual violence

There will be info tables every Friday throughout the month April at the Fort Johnson PX and every Wednesday at the Fort Johnson Commissary.



CHANGE THROUGH UNITY

Embracing our collective strength to inspire trust and courage so the Army community can thrive



All members of the Army community help to shape its culture, one of trust and connectedness. Everyone is expected to build upon the positive and healthy aspects of the Army culture to foster a prevention-focused command climate and to eliminate sexual harassment and sexual assault.

To collectively create a cohesive and healthy environment, Soldiers at all levels must:

- Consider the needs of their battle buddies, the challenges they may face and their goals.
- Practice unit core values through individual actions, to shape and normalize a positive culture.
- Participate in educational and training opportunities that champion healthy behaviors.

Scan to learn more



Contact the DOD Safe Helpline: 877-995-5247
www.armyresilience.army.mil

Deployment Anxiety: Weighing in on effects for Soldiers, Families

By ANTOINE AARON
Public Affairs Office

FORT JOHNSON, La. — As Soldiers gear up for deployment, the weight of anticipation looms heavy, affecting not just the troops but also their Families left behind. Lt. Col. Alexander Ragan, Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital installation director of psychological health, shed light on the role of support systems in navigating pre-deployment stress.

“Deployment can be a significant event, and a lot of anxieties depend on our ability to deal with significant events,” Ragan said.

He emphasizes the pivotal role of leadership involvement and Family connectivity in ensuring Soldiers' mental well-being during their deployments. For Soldiers, the burden of preparing for deployment extends beyond physical readiness; it encompasses mental and emotional fortitude.

The weight of leaving behind Family, friends and the comfort of home adds layers to their already demanding mission responsibilities. There's a constant internal battle between duty and personal attachments. Soldiers must reconcile their commitment to serve with the sacrifices they and their Families endure.

Families, too, bear the brunt of pre-deployment stress. Spouses juggle heightened responsibilities, from managing household affairs to providing emotional support for children grappling with the absence of a parent.

"It's a delicate balance," Ragan acknowledged. "Families often shoulder the burden silently, putting on a brave face to alleviate the worries of their deployed loved ones."

Families who stay linked with the Soldiers' units are better equipped to handle these challenges. Ragan underscores the importance of



timely communication, accurate information dissemination and providing a platform for addressing concerns to alleviate pre-deployment stress.

Drawing from experience, Soldiers and Families who have weathered past deployments often devise coping strategies. Simple yet profound gestures like maintaining routines, regular communication and sending care packages bolster the Soldier-Family bond amidst physical separation.

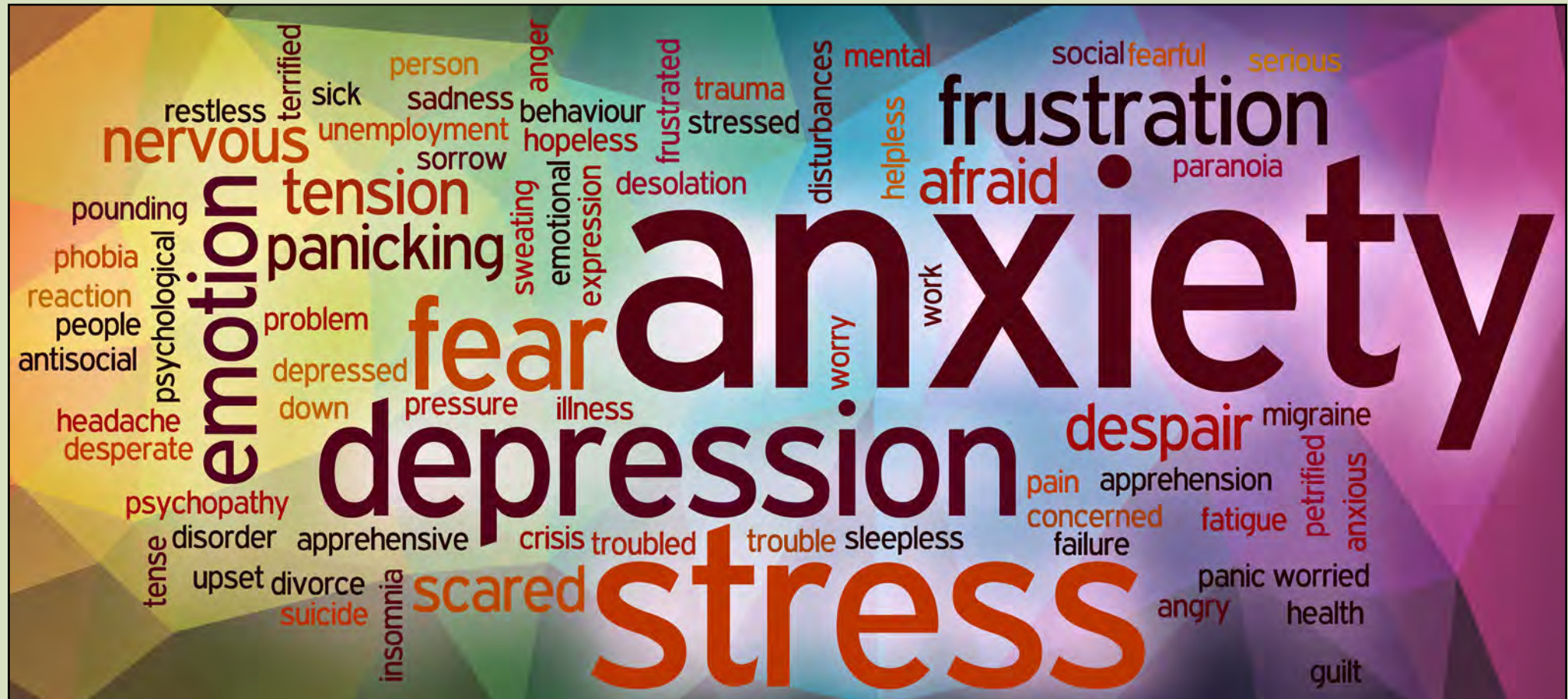
While the military offers resources like Military OneSource, <https://www.military-onesource.mil/>, for preparation and support, recognizing signs of behavioral changes in Soldiers remains crucial. Getting proper sleep,

diet and exercise, coupled with setting deployment goals, fosters resilience amidst challenging environments.

Beyond deployment, the journey of reunification poses its own set of challenges. However, with accessible resources such as chaplaincy, behavioral health and medical support, the continuum of care ensures a smoother transition back home.

As the cycle of deployment and reunion persists, the unwavering support network remains paramount in sustaining the well-being of Soldiers and their Families.

For more information visit <https://bayne-jones.tricare.mil/Health-Services/Mental-Behavioral-Health>



April is Alcohol Awareness Month

YOUR ACTIONS WITH ALCOHOL MATTER



KNOW YOUR LIMIT & STICK TO IT



EAT A MEAL, PACE YOURSELF & STAY HYDRATED



PLAN YOUR RIDE HOME AHEAD OF TIME



DON'T MIX ALCOHOL WITH MEDICATIONS



OWN YOUR LIMITS
SERVE HONORABLY.

www.ownyourlimits.org



Is this your relationship with alcohol?



FIND IT DIFFICULT TO PERFORM YOUR JOB

DRINK TOO MUCH OR TOO OFTEN



ENGAGE IN RISKY BEHAVIORS

FEEL THAT YOUR 'TOLERANCE' HAS GONE UP



GET DRUNK ALONE, OR USE ALCOHOL TO COPE

If one or more of these statements apply to you, act early and get help.

ownyourlimits.org/check-your-drinking

OWN YOUR LIMITS

SERVE HONORABLY. DRINK RESPONSIBLY.
Contact Us: dha.ncr.comm.mbx.drink-responsibly@mail.mil



Concerned about your alcohol use?

Speaking up and asking for help with alcohol use concerns is a sign of strength.



AVOID DAMAGING YOUR CAREER

Discuss alcohol use concerns before you get an alcohol-related incident or DUI charge.



KEEP YOUR RELATIONSHIPS STRONG

If alcohol is impacting you, speak up early.



MAINTAIN READINESS

The DoD and your Service branch have resources to keep you on-duty and mission ready.

Learn more about responsible drinking and how to get help.

ownyourlimits.org/get-help

OWN YOUR LIMITS

SERVE HONORABLY. DRINK RESPONSIBLY.
Contact Us: dha.ncr.comm.mbx.drink-responsibly@mail.mil



Tips for cutting back ON ALCOHOL



Set limits before you go out and stick to them



Keep alcohol out of your home



Learn how to say no to another drink



Drink slowly and on a full stomach



When you drink, have no more than one standard drink per hour



Make every other drink a nonalcoholic one



Find other fun things to do that don't involve alcohol



Get support from family & friends - talking can help



Cope with stress in creative ways without alcohol



Stay active, eat healthy and avoid tobacco



Set alcohol free days

OWN YOUR LIMITS

317 Brigade Engineer Battalion hosts Norwegian Foot March

The Norwegian Foot March was held March 23 at Little Cypress Recreation Center. Participants put their endurance to the test, challenging themselves, both physically and mentally by rucking 18.6 miles with a 24-pound ruck in the required time. Upon completion, participants earned the prestigious Norwegian “Marsjmerket” Foot March Badge. Their efforts will encourage “esprit de corps”, and act as a tribute and remembrance of fallen heroes, past and present, who have given all for their country.

The Norwegian Foot March was introduced in 1915 as a culminating training event for new conscripts and infantry soldiers. Traditionally, the event simulated overnight movement by a dismounted light infantry element. The element would occupy attack positions prior to daybreak and attack its objective at first light, fighting until it was successfully seized and only resting after consolidating its gains later that evening. Today, the Norwegian army uses the foot march to assess soldiers’ overall physical fitness and to build unit cohesion.



MASS SHRED DAY

@ The Old Commissary Parking Lot

Apr. 18 | 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

All Fort Johnson agencies are invited to dispose of old, unclassified mass paper on Mass Shred Day.

Pickup will be done by the shredder truck.

**No classified/PII documents*



APRIL

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|--|
| <p>FOLLOW US ON</p> <p>★ FORT JOHNSON FAMILY AND MWR</p> <p>★ JRTC AND FORT JOHNSON</p> <p>★ JOHNSON CYS</p> | <p>1. CYS Adventure Camp ATLTL & Archery Camp 11 am-1 pm Perez field</p> | <p>2. 1-25 Art Show AUTISM AWARENESS DAY</p> | <p>3. PROCLAMATION SIGNING 9:15 am AT WARRIOR FIELD</p> <p>CYS Adventure Camp Paint Ball 11 am-2:30pm Recreational Shooting Range</p> | <p>4. WEAR BLUE DAY</p> | <p>5. MOMC Storytime 11:30 am Allen Memorial Library EVERY TUESDAY AND FRIDAY</p> | <p>6. TEEN JOB WORKSHOP ACS BLDG EVERY SATURDAY OF APRIL OPEN DAY SOFTBALL/BASEBALL</p> |
| <p>7. NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK APRIL 7-13</p> | <p>8. ALLIGATOR LAKE STROLL MONDAYS, 4 PM ALLIGATOR LAKE</p> | <p>9. PLAYTOWN FOOD SPECIAL</p> | <p>10. KIDS BOWL FREE WITH ADULT PURCHASE WARRIOR LANES ALL DAY</p> | <p>11. STEAM Thursday 5 pm Allen Memorial Library</p> | <p>12. SUPERHERO CHALK THE WALK 5 pm HONORS FIELD</p> | <p>13. CAR & KIDS BIKE SHOW AUTO SKILLS CENTER 8 am - 1 pm</p> <p>Nailed IT! Warrior Center 12 pm - 4 pm</p> <p>POOL PARTY SFC GUESS JR POOL 5 pm - 7 pm</p> |
| <p>14. VOLUNTEER WEEK APRIL 14-20</p> | <p>15. TEEN BABYSITTING COURSE April 15-18, 4 pm - 6 pm April 19, 4 pm - 8 pm MST BLDG 744</p> | <p>16. Volunteer of the Qrt 6 pm Warrior Center</p> | <p>17. PURPLE UP! DAY! ENVIRONMENT DAY PX 10 am - 2 pm</p> <p>WIN A MOMC SHIRT RAFFLE PX 3 PM</p> | <p>18. BOARD GAME NIGHT 5 pm ALLEN MEMORIAL LIBRARY</p> | <p>19. PURPLE UP BALL 7 pm Warrior Center</p> | <p>20. FUN RUN LAP AROUND THE GOLF COURSE 9 am WARRIOR HILLS GOLF COURSE</p> <p>ROCK PAINTING 11 AM - 1 PM PX</p> |
| <p>21. PAINTBALL DAY 12 PM SHOOTING RANGE</p> | <p>22. EARTH DAY</p> | <p>23. Tree Planting TIME + LOCATION VARY</p> | <p>24. SHARE YOUR STORY 12 PM - 3 PM PX</p> | <p>25. 1-25 Art Show Deadline for MOMC Art Show to Arts & Crafts</p> | <p>26. WALL-E MOVIE Night 6 pm HEADQUARTERS FIELD</p> | <p>27. OPERATION MEGAPHONE APRIL 26-27 Middle School and Teen Center</p> |
| <p>28. Children's Fishing Tournament 9 am Toledo Bend Army Recreation Park</p> | <p>29. Youth Maintenance Class 4 PM AUTO SKILLS CENTER</p> | <p>30. COLORING CONTEST 12 PM - 4 PM PX</p> <p>Enter to win a \$10, \$15, or \$20 Exchange gift card</p> | | | | |

VERNON + BEAUGARD PARISH SPRING BREAK, APRIL 1ST - 5TH

FOR MORE DETAILS CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE AT JOHNSON.ARMY.MWR.COM OR SCAN THE QR CODE



CHILD & YOUTH SERVICES



Fort Johnson focuses on Child Abuse Prevention Month

ARMY COMMUNITY SERVICE
Family Advocacy Program

FORT JOHNSON, La. — April is recognized nationally as Child Abuse Prevention Month.

That’s why Fort Johnson is joining installations Army-wide in implementing a series of events designed to heighten community awareness in an effort to prevent child abuse and neglect from occurring.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, approximately one in seven children experience child abuse or neglect in the United States each year.

“The rate would be higher if unreported cases were factored in,” said Aida Rivera, acting Family Advocacy Program manager. “That’s why it’s important we heighten community awareness, not just during CAPM, but throughout the year.”

The CAPM theme for this year is MilParents Rock, a theme that not only focuses on the many challenges faced by military parents, but also on the strength and resilience that helps Families overcome them.

Planned events are designed to provide the tools and opportunities parents need to build strong bonds and foundations for their children, decreasing risk factors that can lead to child abuse and neglect, and increasing protective factors.

“We know from research protective factors increase when communities and peers provide support,” said Anne Bollinger, New Parent Support Program home visitor.

“That supportive environment helps build on protective factors, which in turn helps parents gain confidence in their ability to nurture their children and raise them in safe and productive environments.”

The many activities planned throughout the month offer opportunities for parents to get out with their children in Family-friendly settings, participate in fun activities, make loving memories and enhance their bonds.

“CAPM recognizes the importance of military parents and our community working

together to build strengths and prevent child abuse and neglect,” said Terri Tarpley, Family Advocacy Program troop trainer. “We encourage our military Families, and Fort Johnson as a whole, to come out and join us.”

For more information on CAPM, events and on parenting education and other support services, contact the Army Community Service Family Advocacy Program at 337-531-1941.

To report known or suspected child abuse or neglect, contact the 24/7 installation reporting point of contact at 337-531-4673.



IMCOM TIP OF THE WEEK

Did you know? The **Employee Readiness Program** can hone career paths for military spouses and Family members.



home.army.mil/johnson



ARMY EMERGENCY RELIEF

SUPPORTING SOLDIERS AND THEIR FAMILIES SINCE 1942



ARMY
EMERGENCY
RELIEF

EST. 1942

YOUR DONATION HELPS SOLDIERS AND FAMILIES IN NEED
OFFICIAL NONPROFIT OF THE U.S. ARMY

ROAD WORK AHEAD



PARTIAL ROAD CLOSURE

APRIL 3-17

Louisiana Avenue will be partially closed in support of new construction at the Information Systems Facility to replace the storm drain culvert.



PARTIAL ROAD CLOSURE

STARTING APRIL 17

A portion of Tennessee Avenue from Louisiana to Kentucky Avenue will be permanently closed for demolition in support of new construction for the Information Systems Facility.



SPEED LIMIT REDUCTION

STARTING APRIL 19

The speed limit on Alabama Avenue (in the vicinity of building 1562) will be reduced to 20 MPH.



Yield to Pedestrians Sign



W3-5
Reduce Speed Limit Ahead Sign





Proclamation signings

In honor of Month of the Military Child, the children of Fort Johnson planted pinwheels at Warrior Field April 3. Pinwheels represent playfulness and the joys of childhood that all little ones should enjoy. In support of those goals, Fort Johnson leadership signed proclamations in honor of Month of the Military Child, Child Abuse Prevention Month, and Autism Awareness Month in an effort to ensure children will be protected and cared for to the fullest extent.

“Strong and resilient children are essential to the success of the Army’s mission. The Army is proud and grateful for their support to our nation.” — Lt. Gen. Omar Jones, commanding general, U.S. Army Installation Management Command (U.S. Army Photos by Antoine Aaron)



FORT JOHNSON HIRING AND EDUCATION EVENT



APRIL 18

Hiring Event Pre-Workshops

**Register with TAP*

1:30-4:30 p.m.

APRIL 25

Hiring and Education
Event

10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Fort Johnson Library and Education Center
7460 Colorado Ave., building 660

Please contact
Fort Johnson Transition Assistance Program
for more information at
337-531-1591/4621
or
usarmy.johnson.id-readiness.mesg.tap@army.mil



Fort Johnson Forge Fest fun



ANGIE THORNE/GUARDIAN





ANTOINE AARON/GUARDIAN



ANTOINE AARON/GUARDIAN



ANGIE THORNE/GUARDIAN



ANGIE THORNE/GUARDIAN



ANGIE THORNE/GUARDIAN



ANGIE THORNE/GUARDIAN



ANGIE THORNE/GUARDIAN



ANTOINE AARON/GUARDIAN



Honoring those who served

Vietnam veterans were honored March 29 for Vietnam War Veterans Day at the Fort Johnson Main Exchange. Each veteran was honored for their service and sacrifice with a special lapel pin and a gift. (U.S. Army photos by Porsha Auzenne)



“

I'm happy Vietnam veterans are finally receiving their due. We followed our orders and did what was expected of us. We lost a lot of good, young men over there, and for those who survived to be ostracized, was wrong. Thankfully, that's changing.

— Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Jose Blanco

”



**VIETNAM WAR
VETERANS DAY**
MARCH 29

JRTC & Fort Johnson Motorcycle Safety Courses



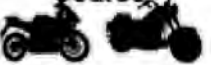






See your unit
Motorcycle Mentor
first!



- Type in <https://safety.army.mil>
- Click on 'OFF-DUTY' at the top of the page
- Under 'PMV-2 (Motorcycles)' choose 'Training'
- Click on visit AIRS Website at <https://airs.army.mil/Home.aspx>
- Follow the above link, type in your CAC code and click on "I ACCEPT"
- At the top for Region, click on "Southeast", and in Garrison, click on "Fort Johnson"
- Utilize the calendar and choose a course/date and click on "Location"
- This will take you to a page. Read the instructions and fill out the form

(337) 531 - RIDE

APRIL 2024

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|-----|-----|--|-----|--|--|-----|
| | 1 | 2 Basic Riders Course  | 3 | 4 Intermediate Drivers Training  | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 Basic Riders Course  | 10 | 11 Intermediate Drivers Training  | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 Basic Riders Course  | 17 | 18 Intermediate Drivers Training  | 19 Advanced Rider Course  | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 Intermediate Drivers Training  | 26 Remedial Drivers Training  | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | | | | |

JRTC AND FORT JOHNSON MOTORCYCLE SAFETY AWARENESS MONTH RALLY



May 3 at the Fort Johnson Thrift Shop parking lot.

All Department of Defense card holders, including active duty, Reserve, veteran, Family members and DoD civilians, are welcome to participate.

The ride will take place through the Kisatchee National Forest and end back at the parking lot where the rally began. There will be food trucks and raffles.

Bikes will assemble at 8:30 a.m. and the rally begins at 9:45 a.m.

**Biker vests/cuts are prohibited.
For more information call
719-659-5540.**

Headquarters Installation Management Command

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On-Demand Education Counseling Now Available
.....<

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Sign in as a guest with rank and full name



Connect with an Army Education Counselor



SERVICE HOURS

10 a.m.-2 p.m. Central Time

Contact Us



TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT OUTSIDE OF THE SERVICE HOURS
usarmy.jbsa.imcom-hq.mbx.g1-aces-virtual-education-center@army.mil

Taking peek inside military child’s life during Month of **Military Child**

By **EMMALEE POLK**
Military child

FORT JOHNSON La. — Let me set the scene for you. Imagine never having enough time to set down roots, build lasting relationships or connect without the nagging thought everything will disappear within the next couple of years. It’s a lonely path. Easy to stumble through once your footing is lost. You need a reminder that while your time at any one place is temporary, it’s okay to passionately adore every moment while there and be filled with a love so powerful it makes saying goodbye catch in your throat as tears line your eyes. Military kids learn to shoulder this burden and we carry it well. However, nothing stops it from becoming heavy.

My journey began May 29, 2006, at Womack Army Hospital, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. From the moment I was born, my life intertwined with the military. At the time, my father was deployed and it would still be several months before he was reunited with my mom and introduced to me for the very first time. I remember sitting down with my mom as we flipped through old photographs of my dad coming home and meeting me. Most kids have photos with their dads in the hospital — they are wrapped up in those white cloth blankets as their dad sits in a stiff hospital chair, smiling down at their newborn baby. That’s not how mine looked at all. In my photograph, I am 5 months old, buckled into a carrier and wearing a homemade patriotic dress made by my great-grandmother. I’m in a hangar surrounded by Soldiers greeting their Families. The picture shows my dad with the biggest smile plastered across his face as he holds me — still dressed in his Army uniform.

Some of the most difficult challenges a military child faces are the deployments. My Family has gone through five of them. My parents would walk into my room, sit down on my bed, and tell me the same thing each time, “They need him more than we do right now.” As a child, that was very difficult for me to understand. I got jealous other children had fathers there to support them on their first day of school, wish them a happy birthday, be there for Christmas and kiss them goodnight. Meanwhile, an ocean separated me from mine.

A lot of kids didn’t know what we were going through or how hard it was on our Family. They didn’t know we had to use code names on phone calls because my dad was in a dangerous area or how many nights we had to leave voicemails because Dad could not make it to a phone. They did not know what it was like watching the other fathers and feeling a tight pain in their chest. However, no matter how sad and tedious deployments got, I’m lucky enough to have a mom who has always made

COMMENTARY



EMMALEE POLK

them bearable.

When I was 5, Mom was always coming up with creative ways to make our nights feel a little less sad. For example, after we finished cleaning the kitchen from dinner, my mom would put a CD in a little DVD player underneath a kitchen cabinet and we would have a karaoke sing-off to the song Duo from the American Tale movie. For hours we would dance around the kitchen, using wooden spoons as microphones as we sang every lyric. Other nights we would sit on the couch eating frozen dinners and watching a movie before bed. I know doing little things like that helped us all feel happier and a lot less lonely.

Teachers always demonstrated sympathy to their military students — especially those facing deployments like I was. In kindergarten, several teachers pulled military students out of class and led them to a room where they told us we were strong and loved. Each of us left with a special doll dressed in an Army uniform with an empty slot where we could slide in a picture of our loved one overseas. During one of the deployments, my mom bought me a diary so I felt like I always had a personal connection to Dad. I wrote about everything in my diary —

always starting it off with the same two words: “Dear Daddy.” One day, I remember writing to my dad in school and my teacher was reading my words over my shoulder. She got a really sad expression on her face as she eased into the desk next to me and began asking me about my dad and why I was writing to him. I remember the tight feeling in my throat and how close I was to tears as I tried to get her to understand what living through deployments feel like. She did her best to understand, but ultimately just smiled at me sadly and told me if I ever needed to talk to someone, she was there.

The last deployment my Family and I faced happened the Saturday after Thanksgiving. I remember decorating for Christmas early that year because it would have been too much for us to do it alone. We all woke up early and settled in the car to take Dad to the airport. My brother and I helped him load all his bags into the back of the car while my dad finished doing something in the house. We drove him to the airport, said our tearful goodbyes and came back home. Even pulling into the driveway felt achingly different knowing it was just the three of us now. When we walked in, our eyes immediately went to the Christmas tree.

Please see **Military child**, page 19

Military child

Continued from page 18

Underneath the evergreen branches were several wrapped gifts that were not there before. I sat down with my mom as she dissolved into tears at the sight of the gifts and I watched as her fingers drifted from present to present. When we finally left the living room, we were all greeted with another unexpected and emotional surprise. In each of our bedrooms, my Dad took the time to write several encouraging notes on our mirrors for us to wake up to every morning. Of course, that prompted more tears. To this day, I have kept every single sticky note and every single letter left for me on my mirror. Deployments are extremely difficult for any Family, but they have a way of bringing us closer together and bonding us through the challenging experience.

While even the negative aspects of the Army have brought out the best in me, I've had countless meaningful experiences that have the same effect. The military offers a unique perspective on life and one of the best lessons I have learned from being a military child is what truly matters in life.

What matters to a military child will always be different than what most children hold dear to their hearts. For instance, many children enjoy the privilege of calling a single place home. That home will always be a constant in their lives. They get to grow up in the same community with their friends and Family, they get

to form strong connections to the place they were raised and are able to experience nostalgia when they're older as they think of where they came from.

However, the life of a military kid is very different story. They soon learn that home is an open road and extended Families are most often seen through the lens of a camera. Many of them say goodbye more times in their first couple of years than most adults will say in a lifetime. I think because of our unique experiences, we get to learn about the things that really matter a lot quicker than those born and raised in one place.

I have also found what matters is the little moments. The best way to understand this is by answering this question: Do you know what it's like to feel the bittersweetness of a moment while you're living it? I do. It's the little things like laughing nonstop with my friends on the bus ride home from school, finishing that last race with my team, cheering on a football game with the band at homecoming, sitting with my friends while listening to our pastor preach, or getting the opportunity to see Family every so often. While living in those moments might not feel like much, looking back on all those little memories is what made the big things matter. My Family and friends matter to me, but it's those memories we all share and the impacts they've made on my life that makes all the dif-

ference. Those memories are what shape me. They give me something to cling to when the storms in my life feel too great to overcome. They are my rock, my foundation and my strength. There is nothing more beautiful than a tear-soaked goodbye or a desperate last hug. The things that make these parting moments so painful are the memories attached to each person. No matter what happens or where we go, those memories and the echo they leave in our hearts make us stronger each day.

If you ask most kids what matters to them they might say money, or having the nicest pair of shoes or any other material possessions. Ask me (or any military child) and their answer will be Family, friends and their memories.

I can proudly say my association with the military has made me the person I am today. Because of the tough times, I know how to lace up my boots and Soldier on. Because of the good times, I know the importance of Family. I have a deeper understanding of the cost of freedom and an overflowing sense of love for my country and the people within it. The military has made me grateful for everything, not only what our beloved Soldiers do, but also everything their Families sacrifice. I encourage all military Families to hug each other a little tighter and continue to do everything they can to support our Soldiers. We are not alone — we are all one Family — a military Family.

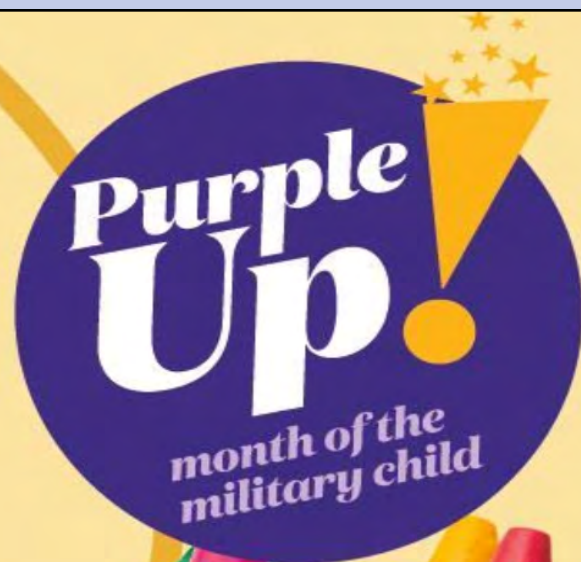
Coloring Contest

Pick up a coloring sheet from your community center

Return it by April 29

Winners will be announced April 30

Corvias
PROPERTY MANAGEMENT



Fort Johnson's Army Community Service Financial Readiness Program presents:

Homebuying classes

April 18
from 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Palmetto Community Center
900 Bell Richard Ave.

April 19
from 9-10 a.m.

Army Community Service
Building 920

Scan the QR code
below to register
or call 337-531-1941



UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON FORT JOHNSON



EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH
MIRAEAL COLON, MAKS ARMY AIRFIELD



SPRING HERITAGE TOUR

2024

Saturday, April 27

Peason Ridge Tour • 8 a.m.-12 p.m.
Pine Grove Church (Highway 118)
**It is recommended guests bring food, snacks and drinks for Peason Ridge tour.*



Main Fort Tour

Warrior Memorial Park
Social/Lunch Hour • 11 a.m.
Ceremony • 12 p.m.
Tour Departs • 12:15 p.m.



Zion Hill Cemetery • Brack Cemetery • Mill Creek Cemetery
Woods Cemetery • Haymon-Watson Cemetery • *Holly Springs Cemetery
*Six-Mile Community Dipping Vat
**If time permits*

For both tours, participants are welcome to ride in the bus provided or to caravan behind the bus. If anyone would like to attend both events, it is recommended that they caravan behind the bus for the Peason Ridge tour so they can depart with enough time to make it to the Main Fort tour.

For more information please contact Amy Brennan at
amy.c.brennan3.ctr@army.mil or 409-504-2445.













ALERT ALERT ALERT ALERT ALERT ALERT ALERT ALERT ALERT ALERT ALERT ALERT ALERT ALERT ALERT ALERT ALERT

33%

CHANCE

ALERT!

STATISTICS SHOW THAT 33% OF THE POPULATION WILL REQUIRE BLOOD AT LEAST ONCE IN THEIR LIFETIME.

BLOOD DRIVE

BAYNE JONES ARMY COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

ENTRANCE B

April 19

8 A.M. - 4 P.M.

Give life to the fullest!

Did you know that every 2 seconds someone needs blood? In fact, nearly 30,000 units of whole blood and red blood cells are transfused each day. By donating blood you allow others to live life to the fullest, and that is definitely worth celebrating!

**Sign Up
Today!**





JRTC and Fort Johnson

Catfish Derby

April 27 from 7-11 a.m. at Catfish Cove

Enjoy
activities, raffles,
games, prizes,
educational booths
and a fillet
demonstration.

Children 15 and under are allowed
to fish. People 16 and older are
allowed to assist children fishing.
This event is open to
the public.

For more information call
Amy Brennan
at 409-504-2445.



April is:

Financial Literacy Month

APRIL 2024 CLASSES OFFERED

★ Refresher course

April 10, 17 and 24 from 9 a.m.-noon

★ Prepare finances for a deployment

April 10 from 1-2 p.m.

★ Prepare finances for return from deployment

April 10 from 2:30-2:30 p.m.

★ Prepare finances for a PCS

April 10 from 3:30-4:30 p.m.

★ Prepare finances for a marriage

April 17 from 1-2 p.m.

★ Prepare finances for welcoming a child

April 17 from 2:30-3:30 p.m.

★ Prepare finances for divorce

April 24 from 1-2 p.m.

★ Prepare finances for a disabling sickness or condition

April 24 from 2:30-3:30 p.m.

★ Prepare finances for a promotion

April 24 from 3:30-4:30 p.m.

All classes are offered in-person, monthly at ACS or online at olms.armyfamilywebportal.com

Please call ACS at
(337) 531-1957/1958
1591 Bell Richard Ave
Bldg 920

scan me



Check VIN numbers

The Directorate of Emergency Services Traffic Division will release the following vehicles to MWR for disposal if they remain unclaimed. Vehicles are listed with the last four of their VIN number. If one of these vehicles belongs to you, please contact the Fort Johnson Police Traffic Division at 337-531-1806, 6675 or 2675.

| | | | |
|------|-----------|-----------------|------|
| 1994 | Ford | F250 | 3432 |
| 2014 | Chevrolet | Cruze | 0491 |
| 2002 | Pontiac | Grand Prix | 1285 |
| 1995 | Dodge | 1500 | 8277 |
| 2016 | Jeep | Patriot | 9883 |
| 2005 | Buick | LeSaber | 7593 |
| 2001 | GMC | Yukon | 6444 |
| 2010 | Hyundai | Genesis | 5409 |
| UNK | UNK | Utility trailer | N/A |
| 2016 | Hyundai | Elantra | 3891 |
| 2008 | Yamaha | R6 | 5446 |
| 2016 | Yamaha | R3 | 2153 |
| UNK | UNK | Boat trailer | UNK |
| UNK | UNK | Kayak trailer | UNK |
| UNK | UNK | Boat trailer | UNK |
| UNK | UNK | M/C trailerBoat | UNK |
| 2001 | Ford | F150 | 0450 |
| 2000 | Ford | Ranger | 3852 |
| 2006 | Nissan | 350Z | 4586 |



MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM
MHS GENESIS

Refills are here!



TRICARE® beneficiaries can order prescription refills through their MHS GENESIS Patient Portal.



To learn more visit:

www.tricare.mil/MHSGENESISRxRefills



SLIPS TRIPS FALLS



a loss of traction between the shoe and the walking surface



an inadvertent contact with a fixed object



a slip, trip, or fall from height

for information on avoiding slips, trips and falls, go to <https://safety.army.mil/>

WATCH YOUR STEP

Slips, trips, and falls are a leading cause of Army accidents

If you, as a garrison employee, were involved in an actual or potential on-duty safety mishap, do not hesitate to contact the Garrison Safety Office at:

531-SAFE



SUMMER EXPLORATION ADVENTURES

JUNE 3 - JULY 26

* NO CAMP ON JUNE 19 OR JULY 4

AGES 5-10 • 7:30AM-5:00PM

Week 1:
June 3-7

**COMMUNITY
SUPER HEROES**



Week 2:
June 10-14

Character Books



Week 3:
June 17-21*

AVIATION



Week 4:
June 24-28

**LOUISIANA'S
ANIMAL KINGDOM**



Week 5:
July 1-5*

Olympic Games!



Week 5:
July 8-12

STEM



Week 5:
July 15-19

Performing Arts
Music • Dance • Theater



Week 5:
July 22-26

Splish Splash



Registration Is **Online Only**, April 10th - May 23rd

Parents can register their children by visiting
cityoflakecharles.com/summercamp

\$40 Weekly, **\$10** T Shirt (Required)

Bellard
2808 Hillcrest Dr.

College Oaks
3518 Ernest St.

Donald Ray Stevens
1619 Cessford St.

Henry Heights
801 East School St.

LIMITED SPACE AVAILABLE. LUNCH PROVIDED.

For more information, please call 337-491-1280

Assisted stretch therapy

Cantrell Fitness Center is now hosting assisted stretch therapy sessions. Benefits of stretch therapy include improved performance in physical activities, joint stiffness prevention, stress reduction, enhanced flexibility and more.

Cost is \$20 for 30 minutes and \$30 for 60 minutes.

<https://johnson.armymwr.com/happenings/assisted-stretch-therapy>

Story time

The Allen Memorial Library hosts Story Time Tuesdays and Fridays at 11:30 a.m. Library staff, or a special guest, read a story to children from the Fort Johnson community. After listening, kids participate in a craft.

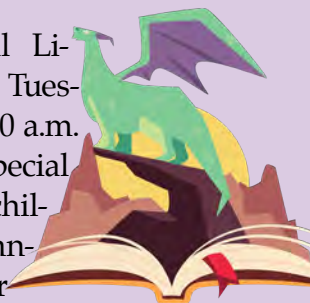
For more information call 337-531-2665.

Cars and coffee

Join the Auto Skills Center for discussion about cars around a hot cup of coffee. Takes place every third Saturday from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

For more information call 337-531-6149.

Chalk and stroller walk



Calling all superheroes of Fort Johnson! Exceptional Family Member Program is partnering with New Parent Support Program for the annual Superhero Chalk-the-Walk. Parents and youth are invited to wear their best superhero outfits April 12 to Honor Field from 5-7 p.m. For more information call 337-531-2840

Music mashup trivia night

Classic trivia with a musical twist. Trivia questions will cover anything and everything related to music, singers, (lyric) writers, composers and more. Put your ultimate music knowledge to the test April 12 at the Anvil Bar from 5-6:30 p.m.

<https://johnson.armymwr.com/calendar/event/trivia-night-music-mashup/6384712/87233>

Nailed It!

Just like the famed television show, kids can take a crack at recreating an edible masterpiece for a prize. This decorating competition occurs April 13 on the



Warrior Center patio from noon-4 p.m.

<https://johnson.armymwr.com/calendar/event/nailed-it/6384717/87238>

Movie night

Come on down to Headquarters Field April 26 for popcorn, face painting and a showing of Wall-E on the big screen! Concessions open at 7 p.m.

<https://johnson.armymwr.com/calendar/event/movie-night-wall-e/6384711/87232>

Kids fishing tournament

Bring your little ones out to Toledo Bend Army Recreation Park for a day of fishing and fun April 28.

The tournament will take place from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. Prize categories include largest fish, most fish and smallest fish.

Registration will be on-site the day of the tournament from 8-8:45 a.m. at the Toledo Bend Boat House.

<https://johnson.armymwr.com/calendar/event/kids-fishing-tournament/6384721/87239>



FORT JOHNSON THINGS TO DO

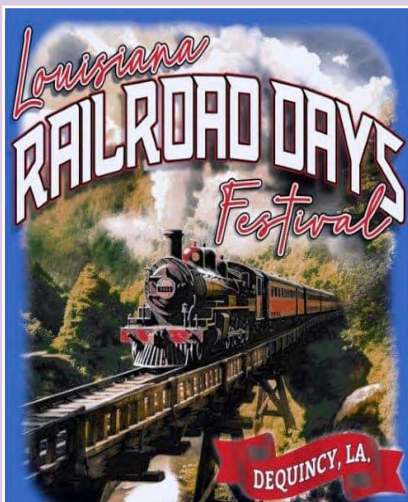
April 11-13: Louisiana Railroad Days Festival DeQuincy, La.

Join the Louisiana Railroad Days Festival for its 40th celebration since it evolved in the spring of 1984. The festival is held annually on the second weekend in April at the Railroad Museum Park, with many local businesses, clubs, churches, and schools participating. The festivities consist of food vendors, arts and crafts booths, carnival rides, free entertainment, and a parade.

<https://larailroaddaysfestival.com/>

April 13: Pit Boss Rib Cook-Off Lake Charles, La.

In support of the local turnarounds we are moving our Pit Boss Rib Cook-Off competition hosted by the NoLo Farmers market at Miller's Supersaver to April 13. Inviting all BBQ teams, contractor teams, and Family teams to the Inaugural Pit Boss cook-off competition. A percent-



age of proceeds will be donated to support a local veteran.

<https://www.visitlakecharles.org/event/pit-boss-bbq-sauce-inaugural-cook-off-competition/46757/>

April 19-21: Baton Rouge Blues Festival Baton Rouge, La.

The Baton Rouge Blues Festival is a free music festival in downtown Baton Rouge, surrounding North Boulevard from 5th Street to Lafayette Street. Featuring multiple music stages, vendors, artists, kids activities and more, this is the perfect free, family-friendly festival!

<https://www.brblues.org/>



April 20: Joining Hands for Autism Walk Lake Charles, La.

Join St. Nicholas Center for Children and Autism Services of Southwest Louisiana for our annual Autism awareness walk. Our event goal is to raise awareness and promote inclusion for children, adults, and Families affected by autism in our community.

<https://www.visitlakecharles.org/event/joining-hands-for-autism-walk/46700/>

April 24: Spring Tea Tasting Lake Charles, La.

Stop by Imperial Calcasieu Museum to sample six complimentary loose tea blends offered by Tea at Walden Writing & Tea. Learn the basics of making a good cup of tea and taste a variety of white, green, and black teas as well as a couple of herbal tisanes. Stay and browse the art exhibits. Light refreshments will be served.

<https://www.visitlakecharles.org/event/spring-tea-tasting/46836/>

April 26-28: Annual Étouffée Festival Arnaudville, La.

Get a taste of the competition at the Mayor's Cook-off at the Annual Étouffée Festival, which will feature a diverse variety of étouffées including crawfish, seafood, vegetable, and even wild game! Festivities include carnival rides, award winning bands, bingo, various vendor booths, an auto show and, of course, étouffée!

<https://cajuntravel.com/events/arnaudville-etouffee-festival/>



Defense Commissary Agency off to races with **NASCAR**

By **TRESSA SMITH**
Defense Commissary Agency public affairs specialist

FORT GREGG-ADAMS, Va. — The Defense Commissary Agency hosted NASCAR Xfinity Series team JR Motorsports, an American professional stock car racing team, at its Fort Gregg-Adams, Virginia, headquarters and support center March 21.

During the visit, JRM, team sponsor Unilever, and driver Justin Allgaier unveiled a custom paint scheme on a simulator replica of the No. 7 Chevrolet.

Allgaier piloted the DeCA themed care at Richmond Raceway just north of Richmond, Virginia, March 30, featuring DeCA’s logo on its hood, and its “Commissary CLICK2GO” online ordering destination shop.commissaries.com at the rear.

Unilever and JR Motorsports have worked with DeCA for a decade to publicize the military’s commissary benefit, and in 2021 presented their first military-themed car sporting the DeCA logo.

Noting that history, Bob Bunch, the agency’s acting deputy director, welcomed the JRM team, Allgaier and industry representatives from Unilever and OSCWEBco to the agency’s headquarters. He spoke of his appreciation for their long-term relationship with commissaries.

“Now you all know that’s an honor. For us to be a part of that is phenomenal. And this event, the unveiling of this year’s military theme, has kind of become a tradition,” Bunch said. This year the team will again take the simulator car on a tour of U.S. military commissaries, visiting 51 stores in total.

“I tell people every day, never forget what we’re about. Seeing the DeCA logo on the car speaks to that. What we do is important, so to have someone of Justin’s stature represent our agency is something that touches my heart and means something to me. It’s a validation of why we’re here,” Bunch said.

Allgaier, who is JRM’s winningest driver, took a moment to speak about his own sense of pride in driving a car that represents an important benefit afforded to the men and women of the U.S. military.

“You know, we discuss people a lot in our



From left: Sgt. 1st Class Troy Wood, executive assistant to Defense Commissary Agency Senior Enlisted Advisor, Justin Allgaier, driver, Bob Bunch, DeCA acting deputy director, and Kurt Hall, Unilever military team leader, show off this year’s DeCA-themed JR Motorsports Xfinity Series No. 7 car at DeCA’s Headquarters and Support Center. (DeCA photo by Jessica Rouse)

race shop. People are what makes the world go around,” Allgaier said. “We have a lot of really cool race cars, and there’s a lot of really shiny parts on those race cars, but at the end of the day, it’s people that put them together. It’s people that make the parts. It’s people that take them to the race track and service them. It’s about people, and what DeCA does for the military community and their Families that is truly special.

“We love to be able to promote this on the race track, but we also want you guys to know that we’re with you 365 days of the year,” Allgaier continued. “Know that next weekend we’re going to go to the racetrack and have a lot of fun, and we’re going to do our best to get you guys back to victory lane!”

NASCAR Hall of Famer Dale Earnhardt Jr., who is a co-owner of JR Motorsports along with his sister Kelly Earnhardt Miller and Rick Hendrick, took time to record a special video message for the unveiling to offer his thoughts on their long-standing relationship with DeCA.

“We’re proud to have the DeCA logo represented on Justin Allgaier’s No. 7 Chevrolet once again in 2024. We had great success last season going to victory lane in Charlotte, and I can’t wait to see the DeCA Chevrolet on the track again this year at Richmond,” Earnhardt said. “Two hundred and thirty-five commissaries help sustain military communities across the globe by ensuring food security through significant savings, healthy food options, clean and safe stores, convenience and premier customer service. Collectively, each and every one of you — Team DeCA — contributes to Family readiness, enhances the quality of life of America’s military and their Families and helps retain and recruit the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.”

Following the car’s unveiling, Allgaier remained on site to greet agency employees, pose for photos with fans, sign autographs and show off his ride.

As Bunch noted, “Serving those who serve. Folks, it doesn’t get any better than this.”

Schedule of commissary appearances

April
10 – Wright-Patterson AFB; 15 – Fort Knox;
16 – Fort Campbell; 18 – Scott AFB; 20 – Fort Leonard Wood; 23 – Fort Leavenworth;
24 – Fort Riley; 26 – Fort Carson; 27 – Peterson
SFB
May
7 – Hill AFB; 10 – McChord AFB; 11 – Fort

Lewis; 15 – Travis AFB; 17 – March ARB; 20-
21 – Naval Base San Diego; 22 – Marine Corps
Air Station Miramar; 23 – Marine Corps Base
Camp Pendleton; 25-27 – Nellis AFB; 29 – Luke
AFB; 31 – Davis-Monthan AFB
June
3-4 – Fort Bliss; 6 – Kirtland AFB; 10 – Tinker
AFB; 12 – Little Rock AFB; 14 – Fort Cavazos; 24
– Lackland AFB; 25 – Fort Sam Houston; 26 –

Randolph AFB; 29 – Keesler AFB
July
1 – Naval Air Station; 2 – Hurlburt Field; 3
– Eglin; 5 – MacDill AFB; 15 – Patrick SFB;
16 – Naval Air Station Jacksonville; 18 – Fort
Moore; 20 – Fort Eisenhower; 23 –Camp
Lejeune; 24 – Fort Liberty North; 25 – Fort
Liberty South