

THE JRTC AND FORT POLK

# GUARDIAN

Monday, March 27, 2023 Vol. 50, No. 6

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## QUALITY OF LIFE LINES OF EFFORT



CHILD CARE



HEALTH CARE



HOUSING



SPOUSE  
EMPLOYMENT

## New Parent Support Program helps with parenting challenges

### ARMY COMMUNITY SERVICE

FORT POLK, La. — If you are pregnant or have a child under the age of 3 and are struggling with the challenges that often accompany parenting, you're not alone.

Help is available from the Family Advocacy Program New Parent Support Program, which is a voluntary service designed to help new parents successfully navigate the adventures of parenting.

Whether you are preparing for a new baby or have questions related to parenting an infant or toddler, assistance from the NPSP team of nurses and social workers may be just what you need.

"We offer in-home services for Families who are expecting or have a child 3 years old or younger," said Heather Hoosier, NPSP home visitor. "We also offer office visits and weekly Walk and Talk sessions where parents can get their questions answered while networking with other parents and receiving and giving peer support."

Additional classes include Baby Boot Camp, a single session class designed for expecting Families. The class prepares them for bringing their new baby home from the hospital.

"The session includes learning how to and practicing diapering, bathing and swaddling," Hoosier said. "Basic newborn appearance and care, feeding, safe sleep and soothing techniques are also discussed."



First time parents are encouraged to join the class in their second or third trimester.

NPSP also offers a What to Expect the First Four Months class. It is a four-part weekly series covering the techniques of infant massage for Families with infants 2 to 4 months of age. Certified infant massage instructors provide parents with massage techniques and facilitate group discussions. The class is designed to encourage attachment and bonding between infants and parents.

"In-home visitation provides Families with the opportunity for private, in-home services based on the specific needs or the requests of

a particular Family," Hoosier said.

Growth, development and encouraging resilience and self-care are among common topics of home visitation.

Weekly Walk and Talk takes place each Tuesday at 10 a.m. at Honor Field, weather permitting. Families are encouraged to attend for interactive socialization between parents and children.

Strollers are encouraged. Check the NPSP Facebook page for weather cancellations.

For additional information, visit the Fort Polk NPSP Facebook page, drop by Army Community Service, building 920, 1591 Bell Richard Ave. or call (337) 531-1938.



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Gardner

JRTC and Fort Polk

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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 [@JRTCandFortPolk](https://www.facebook.com/JRTCandFortPolk) Facebook page.



**Cover photo:** Sgt. Brian Baskin, flight medic, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment, surveys the landing zone from a UH-60 Black Hawk Helicopter for the hot and cold load training during the Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital mass casualty exercise March 9 and 10 at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, Louisiana. (Photo by Capt. James Walker, BJACH Chaplain )



# Director of IMCOM Readiness visits Fort Polk to assess quality of life progress

By **ANGIE THORNE**  
Public Affairs Office

FORT POLK, La. — Whether you have lived at Fort Polk for a while or are brand new to the installation, you are bound to have noticed the abundance of ribbon cuttings taking place everywhere you look.

These positive changes are occurring because Fort Polk is part of a pilot program targeting quality-of-life improvement.

Brenda Lee McCullough, Director, U.S. Army Installation Management Command, Directorate-Readiness, visited Fort Polk March 14-15 to check on the latest completed projects, and those still in the works.

While here, McCullough attended the ribbon cutting for 9th Street, went on barracks tours, visited a Child Development Center, the North Fort Fire Station, STARBASE, housing and more.

McCullough was impressed with Fort Polk’s hard work.

“I think it’s phenomenal what the team has done to push all the projects and programing toward an opportunity to help service members and Families and to make life at Fort Polk just that much better than it already was,” McCullough said.

One of the highlights of her visit was a tour of Fort Polk’s newly opened Play Town & Café.

While at the facility, McCullough saw for herself the benefits of the quality of life improvements in use at Fort Polk through the enjoyment of the children and parents playing and making use of the newly-opened facility.

“It’s the exact energy that we were expecting for this facility. I love how the children are having a great time while parents are relaxing and interacting. That’s exactly why we set this up. We wanted a nice place for children, especially when it gets super hot and muggy here,” McCullough said. “It also gives the parents a break while in eye contact with their kids. I think it’s awesome.”

Play Town & Café is a 12,000-square-foot indoor playground and café for Fort Polk Families to have a safe, comfortable atmosphere to play, meet other Families and encourage a sense of community.

The facility has an indoor play area with slides, climbing nets, interactive games, battery-powered ride-on cars and more.

For parents, Play Town & Café offers limited exercise equipment for eligible patrons. In addition, it has a party room, which can be rented for birthday parties, Family Readiness functions, instructional classed and more.

What does all that mean?

Jonathan Cole, Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation director, summed up the appeal of the new facility and its contribution to quality of life at Fort Polk.

“Play Town & Café is fun,” Cole said.



*Brenda Lee McCullough, director, U.S. Army installation Management Command, Directorate-Readiness, visited Play Town & Café March 15 as part of a two-day trip focused on quality of life initiatives. McCullough watched as children and parents happily enjoyed the benefits of the newly opened facility.*



For more information about Play Town & Café call (337) 531-4057.



# BJACH, Cajun Dust Off **prepare** for mass casualty incident

By JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES  
BJACH PAO

FORT POLK, La. — Soldiers and civilian staff at Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital prepared for real world emergencies with a mass casualty exercise March 9 and 10 at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.

Capt. Kelvin Cook, chief of operations for BJACH, said exercises and training help organizations prepare for challenges.

“The purpose of exercises like these are to get repetitions in preparation for major events that are non-daily occurrences,” Cook said. “Mass casualty events are not common here, but if we experience one it is imperative that our staff and leadership are ready to execute. This allows us to rehearse what is supposed to happen.”

BJACH has a MASCAL plan in place.

“MASCALs are stressful and bend operations almost to a breaking point if you are not prepared,” Cook said. “This plan is necessary in support of our facility’s primary mission of providing professional and compassionate healthcare to our patients.”

Maj. Cody McDonald, clinical nurse in charge of the BJACH emergency department, said training for emergencies ensures readiness.

“When we experience a MASCAL, anyone can help patients on and off of a helicopter,” McDonald said. “We want to make sure we don’t create more patients by being unsafe around an aircraft. This training helps our Soldiers and staff understand the expectations and commands of the crew chief or flight medic.”

McDonald said working with Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment creates interoperability between emergency assets across the installation.

1st Lt. Thomas Gorman, a pilot with Charlie Company “Cajun Dust Off” 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment, said they work closely with BJACH daily.

“Hot and cold load training is one of the most important steps in the medical evacuation process,” Gorman said. “The training teaches Soldiers and civilians how to physically interact with our crew for handing off or receiving patients from the helicopter crew.”

It is extremely important to learn how to properly utilize the litter under the increased stress of a turning rotor system. Units that host this training see increased efficiency under the rotor disc, and less miscommunication in a very noisy environment.

“BJACH and Cajun Dust Off see each other nearly every day,” Gorman said. “Both of our units need to have a cohesive communication and working relationship. With systems and processes set in place to aid in the efficient transfer of patients, Soldiers and civilians



*Soldiers from Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital practice loading patients on to a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter during a mass casualty exercise March 9 and 10 at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.*



alike will be able to get the care they need with quickness and skill.”

The hot and cold load training and the MASCAL exercise are necessary to maintain critical skills. “We are constantly training to ensure we don’t lose perishable operational skills at BJACH,” Cook said. “These exercises keep our leaders current on their roles and responsibilities during an emergent situation. Individually, everyone knows what they need to do when the time comes. However, the challenge is to know what others are doing during an emergency and how to nest your plan with other departments and organizations collectively. This is how we can be effectively synched.”

There is a lot of talent at BJACH.

“By conducting these exercises, we are able to begin the melding of great minds into a sin-

gle solid plan,” Cook said. “This benefits everyone that comes through our doors.”

Cook is confident in the ability of the BJACH staff to respond effectively to a MASCAL situation.

“I believe that we are capable of handling whatever comes through our doors,” Cook said. “Whether it is patients that can be treated here, or patients that need to be transferred out, the staff we have here are extremely passionate and knowledgeable in their professions and have the tools to be successful. We are prepared to handle emergent situations, but there is no ‘cookie cutter’ one-size-fits-all plan, so we must be prepared but ready to evolve and change based on the situation.”

Emergency preparedness and training are essential for readiness.



# Steel Spike participates in training to teach Soldiers **combatives**

By Spc. KELLY ACEVEDO  
Public Affairs Office

FORT POLK, La — All Soldiers learn hand-to-hand combat and weapons training, essential skills taught to prepare Soldiers to defeat the enemy in combat through modern Army combatives.

Although this technique is taught and used throughout the Army, a new way to fight — linear involuntary neural-override engagement system — was introduced to Soldiers of the 46th Engineer Battalion “Steel Spike” by instructor Mark Leslie, Directorate of Plans, Training,

Mobilization and Security director.

Leslie, a retired Army lieutenant colonel, introduced the Soldiers to LINES, a fighting technique composed of martial arts that is used for fighting in combat. The United States Marine Corps adopted the system from 1989 to 1998 followed by Army Special Forces from 1998 to 2007.

The training opportunity began in January and ends in December for a total for 12 sessions during physical readiness training on the unit’s foundation days. The most recent session was held March 10 at Fort Polk’s Spike Field.

Leslie completed LINES in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where he served in 1992. He has continued to teach Soldiers the system to this day.

“It’s a great system for a Soldier in full combat equipment to execute. You can integrate this with the Army’s combatives system too. It’s an additional set of tools for the Soldier’s rucksack,” Leslie said.

Combined techniques from LINES with the modern Army combatives develops life-saving skills if faced with a situation where someone would not have a weapon to defend themselves.

The Marine Corps believes there are four levels of warfare: bombs, bullets, blades and bodies. As the last resort for a Soldier to survive against an enemy, they would need to use their body when nothing else can be used as a weapon.

Capt. Sarah Hoyte, Headquarters and Headquarters Company commander, 46th Engineer Battalion, coordinated with Leslie to increase combat effectiveness and lethality.

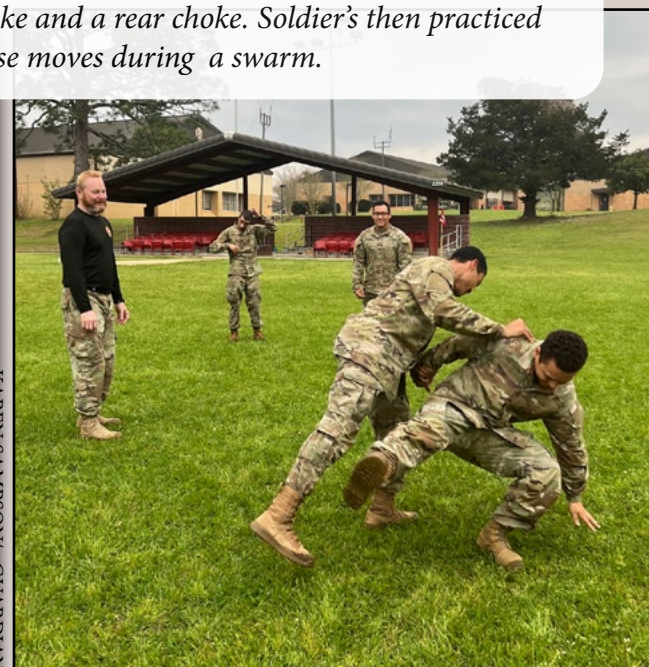
“This training gives Soldiers a different perspective on combat training. It offers additional tools for their tool kit, especially for when trying to neutralize the enemy,” Hoyt said.

Hoyt appreciates Leslie for taking time to train with the unit.

The session included four moves for the Soldiers to learn: escape from a front headlock, escape from a rear headlock, conduct a front choke and a rear choke. The focus was the front headlock.



Mark Leslie, Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security director, and Soldiers from 46th Engineer Battalion demonstrate four fighting positions. The positions including front headlock, escape from a rear headlock, front choke and a rear choke. Soldier’s then practiced these moves during a swarm.



“I want to make sure they get that right with no mistakes because for the next session they’re going to walk me through it. They need to show that they have attained a level of proficiency and can teach someone else. That’s the whole point of the program,” Leslie said.

This time around, the Soldiers had to do multiple swarms, a type of attack a group attempts against an individual or smaller group.

Soldiers were divided into groups of five, with one standing in the center to be attacked. Once each Soldier was attacked, the real fun began.

They were once again divided. This time, four stations 100 meters apart from each other were composed of four to five Soldiers while the rest were expected to run to each station and defend themselves from the swarm of attacks. Although already tired, the skills they learned still benefited them.

Once a Soldier successfully progressed through all the stations, they were physically exhausted.

“Before, they didn’t have to run or do multiple swarms. So, they obtained a baseline level

of proficiency. Today we increased conditions like all good Army training. As you get proficient you make it more difficult,” Leslie said.

Spc. Austin Gray, HCC, 46th Eng Bn, trained for the first time with Leslie. He enjoyed the experience and felt he learned something new.

“It’s cool to switch it up and learn something different. This training aspect will lead to improving self defense,” Gray said.

Gray is looking forward to the following sessions. Staff Sgt. Miller Benjamin, HHC, 46th Eng Bn, completed the recent sessions and wants to continue to progress in the training.

“I feel that I have already learned a lot. I like how it’s more specific. My favorite move is the neck choke and how to get out of it,” Benjamin said.

Leslie quoted Bruce Lee to motivate everyone. “I don’t fear a man who knows a thousand kicks. I fear a man who can kick a thousand times.”

If you are a leader who is interested in training your unit in hand-to-hand combat, contact Mark Leslie at [mark.s.leslie.civ@army.mil](mailto:mark.s.leslie.civ@army.mil) for more information.



**Fort Polk SHARP Presents**

# STRIKE OUT SEXUAL ASSAULT



## WHAT: BOWLING

**WHERE:** JRTC AND FORT POLK BOWLING CENTER

**WHEN: 26 APRIL 1700 – 2000**

**WHY:** To build community trust anchored in dignity and respect with a focus on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Prevention through Interactive play and fun.

**COST: \$4.50 BUY 2 GAMES AND GET THIRD GAME FREE. \$2.00 SHOE RENTAL.**



**Dr. Roy Nafarrete**

**CAPT (USN), ret.**  
**Presents:**

## CHANGE THE CULTURE

Location:

**Bayou Theater**  
**Multiple Sessions:**

18 April 23

0930-1030; 1100-1200

1330-1430

Open to All

19 April 23

0930-1030 and 1100-1200

Open to all

20 April 23

1100-Noon Senior Leaders  
BDE CMD Teams; MSG and  
above; GS11 and above

## We Change the Culture.



**Q:** How do we eliminate violence and destructive events in DoD?

**A:** We stop it before it starts by eliminating destructive behaviors

**For more information, contact the Installation SHARP Office @ 337-718-SARC (7272)**



**SHARP**  
SEXUAL HARASSMENT/ASSAULT  
RESPONSE AND PREVENTION

# NATIONAL DENIM DAY

## WHAT: NATIONAL DENIM DAY

WHERE: JRTC AND FORT POLK  
COMMUNITY

WHEN: 26 APRIL 2023

**WHY:** *All personnel are encouraged to wear jeans in support of “Denim Day,” with a sticker that says, “What is Denim Day?”*

(See your unit SARC or Victim Advocate for stickers and buttons)

Denim Day is an international movement responding to the Italian Supreme Court's overruling of a rape conviction in 1999. An Italian woman was raped, and when the case went to trial, the jury found her assailant guilty. The Supreme Court then overturned the ruling, saying that jeans are too difficult to remove, and the assailant could not have done so without the victim's help.



## Housing Town Hall

Installation leadership and housing officials hosted a Housing Town Hall in the Palmetto Terrace community. Residents were able to share their housing questions and concerns, maintaining the open dialogue between the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk community and Fort Polk leadership.



ANGIE THORNE/ eGUARDIAN



KAREN SAMPSON/ eGUARDIAN



KAREN SAMPSON/ eGUARDIAN

## Passover Seder

FORT POLK, LA

April 5th

1930hrs @ Glory Chapel



MAIN POST CHAPEL

## Easter Services

Holy Thursday Mass 6 April 1730

Good Friday Mass 7 April 1500

Easter Mass Vigil 8 April 1930

Easter Mass 9 April 0900

Easter Sunrise Service 9 April 0630

Location: Alligator Lake

Easter Service 9 April 1100@ MPC





# Fort Polk celebrates essence of National Medal of Honor Day

By RETIRED ARMY Lt. Col. MARK LESLIE  
DPTMS Director

FORT POLK, La. — The Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk is also known as the Home of Heroes. Thus, it seems appropriate that we are honoring the nation's Medal of Honor heroes.

Congress established March 25 as National Medal of Honor Day to foster public appreciation and recognition of Medal of Honor recipients. The date is significant, as the first Medal of Honor was awarded March 25, 1863.

The Medal of Honor is the nation's highest award to service members for conspicuous gallantry and courage in combat. Specifically; "The deed performed must have been one of personal bravery or self-sacrifice so conspicuous as to clearly distinguish the individual above his comrades and must have involved risk of life."

National Medal of Honor Day is the day set aside for the United States to honor and recognize its 3,516 Medal of Honor recipients. To put that relatively small number in context, millions and millions of men and women have served in the nation's armed forces since the Medal of Honor's creation in the Civil War and less than 4,000 have received this coveted and indisputable award that represents the nation's gratitude.

The medal is so highly regarded President Harry Truman is reported to have said on more than one occasion, "I'd rather have the Medal of Honor than be the President."

We are fortunate to have 65 living Medal of Honor recipients still with us. The most recent medal was awarded March 3, 2023, to U.S. Army Col. Paris Davis for actions in Vietnam.

I have been honored to meet three Medal of Honor recipients and hear them speak. The impression they left on me is indelible. Through their words, I was struck by their humbleness and grace. A common theme they all espoused was that the medal doesn't represent them alone. Instead, they wear the medal on behalf of all they served with.

To me, this speaks volumes about the character of the man and the integrity of the medal itself. The three I was privileged to talk with extensively and hear on more than one occasion, are Army Col. Robert B Nett, Army Col. Ralph Puckett and Army Col. Roger Donlon. All are incredible human beings, leaders, Soldiers and legends

in the Army.

Nett earned the Medal of Honor for actions in the Philippines during World War II and went on to serve in the Korean and Vietnam wars. Puckett earned the medal during the Korean war and went on to serve in

Vietnam and Donlon earned the honor as a special forces officer in Vietnam.

Many years ago, I had the privilege of having breakfast with Nett. At the time, my son was about 8 and I asked if he would mind if I brought him. He was more than gracious, telling me that of course I could. It was one of the best moves I ever made. My son is now a staff sergeant in the Army and still remembers Nett's stories and words of wisdom vividly.

JRTC and Fort Polk have a rich and deep history with the Medal of Honor. Twenty-eight Medal of Honor recipients are from or accredited to the state of Louisiana. Ten of those have been memorialized in Fort Polk's housing areas with street names. Five are located in Palmetto Terrace, two in Dogwood Terrace and three are in Maple Terrace.

Fort Polk is also privileged to be home to one of the most modern urban training sites in the world, appropriately named in honor of Sgt. 1st Class Randy Shughart and Master Sgt. Gary Gordon, both Medal of Honor recipients from actions in Somalia in 1993.

Fort Polk is slated to be redesignated as Fort Johnson in honor of Sgt. Henry Johnson of Charlie Company, 369th Infantry Regiment, 93rd Division, American Expeditionary Forces. Sergeant Johnson was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during combat operations against the enemy on the front lines of the Western Front in France. When I read Sgt. Johnson's Medal of Honor citation, it made me think of the question posed by President Regan when he was presenting the Medal of Honor to Master

Sgt. Roy Benavidez in 1981.

"Where do we find such men? We found them where we've always found them. In our shops, on our farms, on our city streets, in our villages and towns."

Sgt. Johnson is such a man. His harrowing and heroic actions define courage and commitment in combat.

In observance of this Medal of Honor Day, JRTC and Fort Polk posted tributes on social media, spoke on radio and television about this sacred medal and those that have earned it, created a podcast to educate the community and set up tribute displays on all digital signs on the installation as well as special displays in the Main Post Exchange.

As a proud Army community, I encourage all to learn about the ultimate award that the country can bestow on ordinary men that have performed extraordinary deeds in the most trying of times.

Visit the Fort Polk website to learn more about the 28 Louisianans that have earned the Medal of Honor at <https://home.army.mil/polk/index.php/about/medal-honor> (here you can find the 10 street names memorialized on Fort Polk after Medal of Honor recipients), listen to the Fort Polk Podcast or visit the Congressional Medal of Honor Society Web Page at [www.cmohs.org](http://www.cmohs.org) and learn more about the real heroes of this country.

If you are looking something a little more graphic and appealing to youth, I recommend the new Association of the United States Army initiative, the Medal of Honor Graphic Novels page <https://www.ausa.org/medal-honor-graphic-novels>, a relatively new and fresh way to tell and share the stories of these heroes.

I think you will leave with a renewed sense of appreciation for those that have earned this token of appreciation from the country to an elite group of men and what it means when the security officers at the gates welcome you with "Welcome to JRTC and Fort Polk — The Home of Heroes!"

These men define the word hero!



## COMMENTARY



# Honoring Medal of Honor recipients accredited to Louisiana



**1st Lt. John B. Babcock - Indian Campaigns**

*Babcock and his troops were attacked by a superior force of Indians. Advancing to high ground, they fought the Indians until relieved.*



**2nd Lt. Powhatan H. Clarke - Indian Campaigns**

*Clarke rushed forward to rescue a soldier who was severely wounded and exposed to enemy fire. He carried him to a place of safety.*



**Pfc. Raymond M. Clausen Jr. - Vietnam War**

*Clausen risked his life while serving with the Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 263 during operations against enemy forces. He left the comparatively safe helicopter on six separate occasions to carry out rescue efforts.*



**Col. Jefferson J. DeBlanc - World War II**

*For conspicuous gallantry at the risk of his life as section leader to six fighter planes in Marine Fighting Squadron 112 during aerial operations against Japanese forces. He rendered decisive assistance, destroying three aircraft.*



**Pfc. James Diamond - World War II**

*Diamond charged and killed a Japanese sniper about to throw a grenade into the midst of his machine gun section. He also assisted his fellow soldiers by evacuating them to safety under heavy fire.*



**1st Lt. Douglas B. Fournet - Vietnam War**

*While advancing uphill against fortified enemy positions, Fournet gave his life to save his men by using his body a shield in front of a mine as he attempted to slash the control wires.*



**2nd Lt. Lloyd H. Hughes - World War II**

*A pilot of a heavy bombardment aircraft, Hughes was part of an attack on oil refineries. His aircraft took several hits but he completed his mission and bombed the refinery. His plane caught fire and crashed.*



**Sgt. Leroy Johnson - World War II**

*Johnson was squad leader of a nine-man patrol sent to observe an enemy machine gun position. He was ordered to destroy the gun. The enemy threw grenades. Two landed by his men. He threw himself on the grenades.*



**Pfc. Milton A. Lee - Vietnam War**

*After his company was surprised by intense hostile fire, Lee moved through heavy enemy fire giving lifesaving aid to his wounded comrades. He also charged the enemy in a successful one man assault, after which he died of his injuries.*



**Seaman John Osborne - Interim**

*Serving on board the U.S.S. Juniata, Osborne displayed gallant conduct in rescuing from drowning an enlisted man of that vessel.*



**2nd Lt. Hampton M. Roach - Indian Campaigns**

*Roach erected breastworks under fire and also kept the command supplied with water three consecutive nights while exposed to fire from ambushing Indians at close range.*



**Ensign Thomas John Ryan Jr. - Interim**

*Ryan rescued a woman from the burning Grand Hotel, Yokohama. His heroic conduct reflects the greatest credit on himself and the U.S. Navy.*



**Col. Edward R. Schowalter Jr. - Korean War**

*His platoon approached its primary objective under heavy fire. Schowalter, though wounded, led his men into the trenches and began routing the enemy from the bunkers with grenades until the ground was secured.*



**1st Sgt. Emanuel Stance - Indian Campaigns**

*Stance distinguished himself with gallantry on a scout after Indians.*

Please see Honor, page 9



# Honor

Continued from page 8



## **Petty Officer Albert Weisbogel - Interim**

*Weisbogel received two awards for gallant conduct in jumping overboard from both the U.S.S. Benicia and the U.S.S. Plymouth, at sea, and rescuing from drowning one of the crew from each ship.*



## **Maj. Hulon B. Whittington - World War II**

*During an enemy armored attack, Whittington assumed command of his platoon. He reorganized the defense and mounted a tank and positioned it to destroy a German tank, allowing them to destroy the enemy.*



## **Sgt. Moses Williams - Indian Campaigns**

*Williams rallied a detachment and skillfully conducted a running fight of three or four hours. With unflinching bravery and devotion to duty under heavy fire, he also saved the lives of at least three of his comrades.*



## **1st Sgt. Homer L. Wise**

*While his platoon was pinned down by the enemy, Wise assisted carrying one of his wounded men under heavy fire. He then took up positions to fire upon the enemy and used tank fire to reduce the enemy and occupy the objective.*



## **Col. John R. Kane - World War II**

*Kane led heavy bombardment aircraft in a mass low-level bombing attack. Through intensive antiaircraft fire and enemy fighter airplanes, he led his formation into the attack and succeeded in his mission at the risk of his life.*



## **Cpl. Jean J. Beaufort - Civil War**

*Beaufort volunteered to go within the enemy's lines, and at the head of a party of eight destroyed a signal station, thereby greatly aiding the operations that followed.*



## **Capt. Steven L. Bennett - Vietnam War**

*Bennett was the pilot flying an artillery adjustment mission. Enemy were massing for an attack. He requested support, but was denied. He was determined to aid the endangered unit and continued to attack. He crashed and lost his life.*



## **Commander Howard W. Gilmore - World War II**

*Commanding officer of U.S.S. Growler, Gilmore struck the enemy in spite of hostile air and anti-submarine patrols. They sank an enemy gunboat under heavy fire. Gilmore gave his life to save his men.*



## **Maj. Gen. Adolphus W. Greely - Interim**

*For his life of public service in the Army from 1861-1906.*



## **CW4 Michael J. Novosel - Vietnam War**

*Novosel, 82nd Medical Detachment, distinguished himself while serving as commander of a medical evacuation helicopter. He unhesitatingly maneuvered his helicopter into heavily fortified enemy territory to rescue a wounded soldier.*



## **Cpl. Thomas Riley - Civil War**

*Riley captured the flag of the 6th Alabama Cavalry.*



## **1st Sgt. Thomas Shaw - Indian Campaigns**

*Shaw forced the enemy back after stubbornly holding his ground in an extremely exposed positions and prevented the enemy's superior numbers from surrounding his command.*



## **Sgt. Ernest Vuede - Indian Campaigns**

*Vuede was admired for the gallant manner in which he faced a desperate Indian.*



## **Master's Mate John Williams - Civil War**

*Williams told his men every man must die on his thwart sooner than leave a man behind. Although wounded by a musket ball in the thigh, Williams retained charge of his boat.*



# Ph.D. candidate visits Fort Polk for dissertation information

By **CHUCK CANNON**  
Public Affairs Office

FORT POLK, La. – Emily Rabung, a Ph.D. candidate from Ohio State University’s School of Environmental and Natural Resources, spent March 13-17 at Fort Polk to get a glimpse of how the installation’s Environmental and Natural Resource Management Division, Directorate of Public Works, is able to mesh protecting endangered species while training the Army’s Soldiers to fight.

Rabung met with lead wildlife biologist Chris Melder, threatened and endangered species biologists Matt Christiansen and Amy Brennan, and threatened and endangered species data manager Andrhea Massey. They discussed the work done on Fort Polk with the red-cockaded woodpecker and the Louisiana pine snake.

The Fort Polk ENRMD team are part of a partnership between Fort Polk and the Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands, headquartered at Colorado State University.

“The resources available to the conservation branch seem to be significant, especially when compared to other natural resource management agencies,” Rabung said. “I was pleasantly surprised to hear that prescribed fire is not held up by funding concerns as it is often reported as the number one barrier in other federal agencies. Concern with public or political backlash towards decisions also did not seem to be as significant barrier as compared with other agencies.”

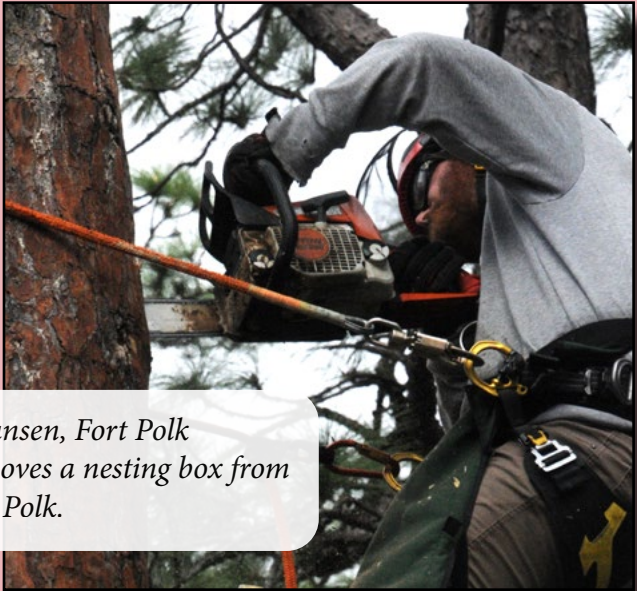
The ecological management of Army-owned land at Fort Polk is mandated through the Sikes Act, which is the main driver for the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan. The plan consists of mutually agreed upon conservation, protection, and management of fish and wildlife resources on Fort Polk military lands.

The natural ecosystem of Fort Polk generally consists of longleaf pine, hardwood ridges, riparian streamsidess, bogs and baygalls that support a diversity of species. Fort Polk is home to 237 avian, 50 reptilian, 22 amphibian, 44 mammalian land and 69 butterfly species and more than 1,400 vascular plants, 23 vegetative community types, and many other macro and microorganisms important to ecosystem health. In addition to the red-cockaded woodpecker and Louisiana pine snake, examples of rare and sensitive animals found on the installation are the alligator snapping turtle, the Kisatchie painted crawfish and the monarch butterfly. The Fort Polk INRMP provides for programs designed to facilitate various land management concentrations to support ecosystem health and diversity while keeping the military mission at the forefront.

Fort Polk has a unique agreement with the



*Matt Christiansen, Fort Polk ENRMD, removes a nesting box from a tree on Fort Polk.*

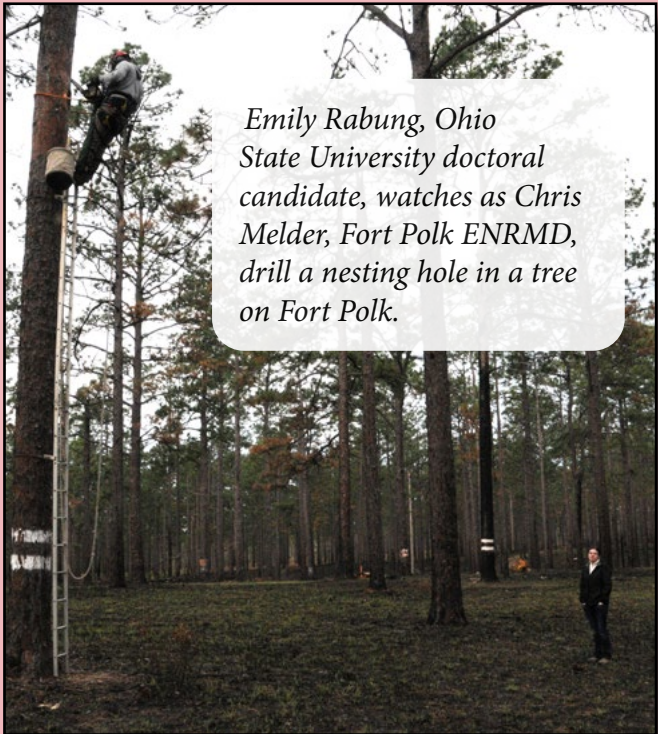


*Rabung speaks with Chris Melder (center) and Christiansen about Red Cockaded Woodpecker conservation efforts on Fort Polk.*

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries that allows installation property to serve as a Wildlife Management Area, furthering Fort Polk’s commitment to providing outdoor recreational opportunities for our community. When training permits, Fort Polk is open to hunting, fishing, bird watching, and nature viewing. Examples of commonly harvested game animals are white-tailed deer, Northern bobwhite quail, and the Eastern wild turkey.

Rabung has scheduled visits to several other military installations to see how they handle balancing training with protecting the environment.

“There will be many months of analyzing the data I gathered here and comparing it with other sites,” Rabung said. “Once I’m done, I will present my dissertation with my findings.”



*Emily Rabung, Ohio State University doctoral candidate, watches as Chris Melder, Fort Polk ENRMD, drill a nesting hole in a tree on Fort Polk.*



*Chris Melder, Fort Polk ENRMD, drills an RCW nesting hole in a tree on Fort Polk.*

CHUCK CANNON/EGUARDIAN

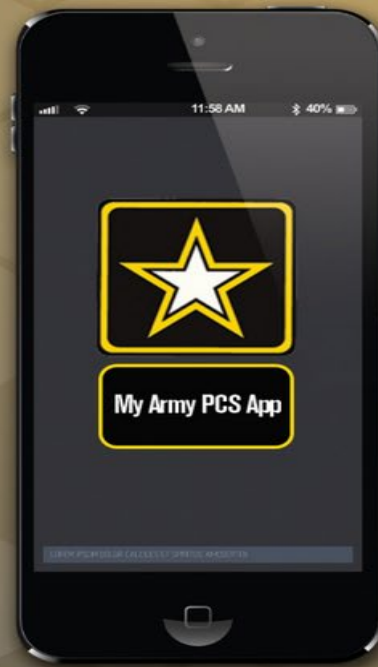




# Plan Your PCS Move with a Swipe and Click



## My Army PCS App



### Get ready – Prepare for Your PCS

- ✓ Get your PCS Orders – **No Orders, No PCS**
- ✓ Talk with your family about your PCS move
- ✓ Download the "My Army PCS App"

### Set –Plan Your Move

- ✓ Know Where You are PCSing to
- ✓ Review the Checklist
- ✓ Setup and track your important dates
- ✓ Request a sponsor
- ✓ Know Your Entitlements – Military Pay, BAH, Weight Allowance, etc.
- ✓ Know Pet travel requirements

### Go - Organize Your Move

- ✓ Chat with a live Agent during Your PCS Move
- ✓ After your PCS move, file a Claim

Let's Get Moving



App, 2023

## My Army PCS App

- The "My Army PCS App" is a customizable app that enhances users' PCS experience. It helps users prepare for their PCS before, during, and after their PCS report date.

- Knowledge-based information tool

- Entitlements
- Move types
- Resources
- Claims



Live Chat

Talk to a live agent at the Army Personal Property Call Center.



### Calculate Days Until PCS

Customize

Claims

Transportation Customer Service



EFMP Location

Email: [usarmy.pentagon.hqda-dcs-g-4.mbx.g43-hhg-app@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.pentagon.hqda-dcs-g-4.mbx.g43-hhg-app@mail.mil)



# Vernon Parish Student wins Louisiana American Legion Oratorical Contest

## VERNON PARISH SCHOOL BOARD

FORT POLK, La. — Hailey Wolff, a 10th grade student at Hicks High School in Vernon Parish, recently won the American Legion Oratorical Contest (state level), which began in 1937.

Wolff has won the contest at the local, regional and state levels. She will now compete on April 21, in Indianapolis, Indiana, for a \$25,000 scholarship.

Wolff earned a \$1,000 scholarship by winning Louisiana’s American Legion Oratorical Contest. Students had to present an eight to 10 minute speech about the U.S. Constitution and then respond to an assigned topic from the moderator.

Wolff is the daughter of Christopher and Kimberly Wolff of Hicks, Louisiana.

Connie Britt, Vernon Parish School Board supervisor, said members of VPSB and her high school are so proud of Wolff.

“I heard her speech during the district competition, and it was amazing she was able to remember everything she wanted to say without pauses to gather herself or to remember parts of her speech,” Britt said. “Eight to 10 minutes is a long time when facing a panel of judges and not being able to refer to notes. We will continue to expect great things from Hailey.”

Her principal, Jennifer Wilbanks, said Wolff is a phenomenal student.

“She works hard and is determined to succeed in all things that she participates in. The oratorical contest is one of those events. We knew that she had the potential to excel and expected nothing less than for her to win. We are incredibly proud of her and cannot think of anyone better to represent our state,” Wilbanks said.

Wolff won at the school district level. Then she competed in Alexandria at the regional



Hailey Wolff stands in front of the Vernon Parish School Board building holding her award.

COURTESY/VERNON PARISH SCHOOL BOARD

competition. Finally, she spoke in Lafayette at the state round of competition.

The American Legion Oratorical Contest exists to develop deeper knowledge and appreciation for the U.S. Constitution among high school students.

Former winners include talk show host Lou Dobbs and former Vice President Mike Pence.

According to the American Legion Oratorical website, young orators earn some of the most generous college scholarships available to high school students. More than \$203,500 in scholarships can be awarded each year. The overall national contest winner gets a \$25,000 scholarship. Second place takes home \$22,500 and third place gets \$20,000.

Each state winner who is certified into and

participates in the national contest’s first round receives a \$2,000 scholarship. Those who advance past the first round receive an additional \$2,000 scholarship.

The American Legion’s National Organization awards the scholarships, which can be used at any college or university in the United States.

Britt said Wolff’s winning is especially gratifying because Fort Polk is located in the heart of Vernon parish and Soldiers can be seen training, learning and participating in the community every day.

“To have one of our students verbalize the importance of the Constitution that our Soldiers uphold makes her win even more special,” Britt said.

### BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

Bloodborne pathogens are infectious microorganisms present in blood that can cause disease in humans. These pathogens include, but are not limited to, hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV), and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS. Workers exposed to bloodborne pathogens are at risk for serious or life-threatening illnesses.

**CONTACT THE GARRISON SAFETY OFFICE AT 531-SAFE IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS**

**TRAINING:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8zP-by6RbU>  
**FACT SHEET:** <https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/bbfact01.pdf>

**Bloodborne Pathogens Safety**

Bloodborne pathogens are viruses and bacteria found in blood and body fluids. They can carry diseases like HIV and the Hepatitis B Virus.

- Treat All Fluids as Infectious**  
Always handle blood as if it is infectious.
- Protect Yourself First**  
When administering first aid, protect yourself first before treating the victim.
- Use Personal Protective Equipment**  
Wear personal protective equipment like gloves and a face mask to prevent contact with blood.
- Use Safe Practices**  
Place contaminated materials in labeled, sealable containers that are color-coded or marked with a biohazard label.
- Clean Up The Right Way**  
When cleaning up materials that have been exposed to blood, never use your bare hands. Wear gloves, and use tongs or a brush and a dustpan for broken glass.

### BACK INJURY SAFETY

- **USE SAFETY BELTS**
- **KEEP YOUR EYES UP AND LOOKING FORWARD**
- **AVOID OVER-EXERTING OR REPETITION**
- **BEND AT THE KNEES AND KEEP BACK STRAIGHT**
- **AVOID SUDDEN MOVEMENTS SUCH AS TWISTING**
- **WHEN MOVING, WALK SLOWLY AND CONTROLLED**
- **STAND WITH FEET SHOULDER-WIDTH APART**



# Northwestern State University students talk about STIs with Soldiers

By JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES  
BJACH PAO

FORT POLK, La. — Nursing students from Northwestern State University conducted a service-learning project about the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections March 9 to Soldiers at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.

Jennifer Joo and Laura Brigman, both military spouses and nursing students at NSU, wanted to do their project in partnership with Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital because they want to normalize the discussion surrounding STIs in their community.

The students worked closely with BJACH Public Health Nursing and shared information from the Centers for Disease Control.

“We are following the CDC campaign for Talk. Test. Treat. The most important aspect of the campaign is talking to your partner and getting tested together,” Brigman said. “Normalizing communication about the prevention of STIs with conversation starters like ‘I care about you,’ or ‘I want us both to stay healthy,’ are important for Soldiers to have with their partners.”

Joo chose to pursue a nursing degree because she never wants to stop learning or giving back to her community.

“We chose to do our project on STIs because we realized there was a lack of knowledge about the subject among military members at Fort Polk,” Joo said. “We want Soldiers to know STIs are preventable and it’s not a death sentence.”

Brigman always wanted to pursue a career in medicine. She followed a different path, including enlisting in the U.S. Marine Corps, but finally decided to follow her heart and become a nurse.

“Nursing isn’t necessarily a job. It’s a passion and that is why I love it,” Brigman said.

The topic is relevant because there is a significant rise in STIs, a concerning public health issue in Louisiana.

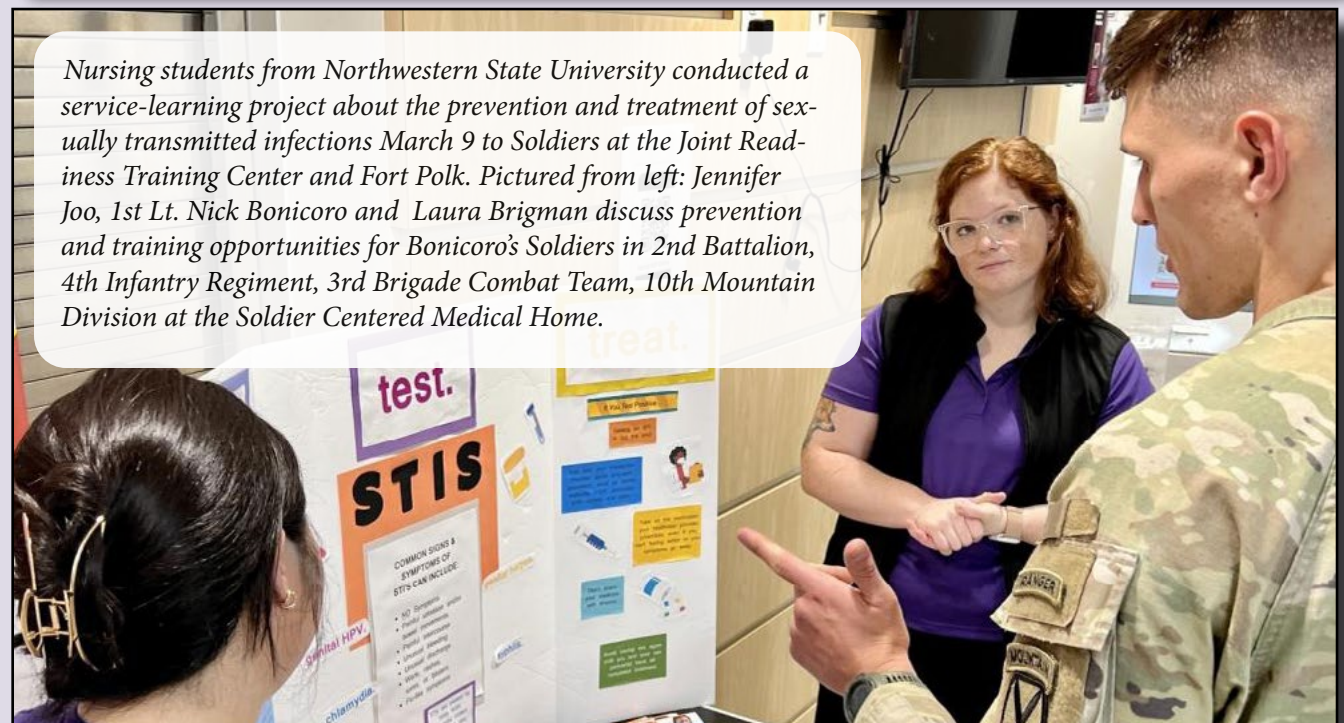
“I think it is an important conversation to have,” Brigman said. “There are potential life-long problems that can occur from STIs if you don’t get it treated quickly or prevent them from the start.”

Toni Pritchard, public health nurse at BJACH, worked closely with the students as they prepared for the project.

“We are dedicated to help nursing students be successful in their program,” Pritchard said.

Pritchard, a former nursing instructor at Lamar Salter Technical Community College, said service-learning projects like this one are very important.

“It helps students use their creativity in addressing needs,” Pritchard said. “They research the topic and identify gaps in knowledge. Then they determine the most appro-



priate way to deliver that information to their chosen audience. Having the opportunity to function as a nurse in an education component is essential. Projects like this help them build confidence that will help them be successful in their nursing careers.”

STI education is very important to the Fort Polk community.

“Louisiana is number two in the nation for sexually transmitted diseases,” Pritchard said. “Fort Polk tends to mirror what is going on in the state.”

Some STIs are curable, some are not.

“Their project Talk. Test. Treat. philosophy is important because we need to identify the STI in order to treat it,” Pritchard said. “We are encouraging anyone who is sexually active to talk about sex with their partners, get tested and, if necessary, get the appropriate treatment.”

During their project the pair spoke to nearly 75 Soldiers from 3rd Brigade Combat Team,

10th Mountain Division.

“Talking about STI prevention before becoming sexually active with a new partner is a healthy way to begin a new relationship,” Joo said. “Not having the conversation can potentially lead to problems down the road.”

If the conversations don’t happen, there are other ways to protect yourself from STI.

“Condoms are most effective, but there are lots of different types of sex and lots of different options to protect yourself,” Brigman said.

To learn more about the Talk. Test. Treat. campaign visit the [www.cdc.gov/std/saw/talk-testtreat](http://www.cdc.gov/std/saw/talk-testtreat) or contact the BJACH Department of Public Health Nursing to schedule a class for your unit or organization.

The BJACH Walk-In STI Clinic is open Monday through Friday from 8–9:30 a.m. in building 3515, Georgia Avenue. For more information or to coordinate training for your unit or organization call (337) 337-6131.



# Take note of many extraordinary women throughout history

By KEVIN STUART  
BJACH Ombudsman

FORT POLK, La. — The story of America is built on strong, courageous and persevering women. Their responses to inequities and other injustices helped shape the nation. During Women's History Month, let's remember our past in an effort to better shape our future.

From the pre-colonial era to today, women have made significant contributions to the growth and strength of America. Now is the time to remember and honor those women of courage and vision who paved the way for others to follow.

Many women, who were leaders, scientists, inventors and artists played significant roles in important discoveries and inventions and led major causes and movements while inspiring their contemporaries to bring about social change. Their stories reflect memorable moments in history and celebrate the events that shaped America.

The power of that story is not just about adversity, but also optimism, resilience of spirit, inner strength, courage, and vision. Hopefully, this will encourage others to explore, take risks, succeed and transform.

Many have assumed roles that were once the exclusive domain of men and amassed the expertise to influence business and politics. The diversity of women in the United States is



Condoleezza Rice

quite evident.

Exploring the history and positions of women in America helps us understand the human connections we share across generations. Celebrating women who pioneered our future contributes to this process.

Some of the numerous women who have and continue to contribute to our nation include the following:

- Harriet Tubman: First black woman to be honored on a U.S. stamp and soon to be on the 20-dollar bill. Tubman worked for the U.S. Army as scout, nurse and spy, and led over 300 slaves to freedom.

- Patsy Mink: First Asian American woman elected to Congress.

- Susan B. Anthony: Founded the women's right movement and paved the way for women to vote.

- Ellen Ochoa: First Hispanic American woman to go into space.

- Condoleezza Rice: First woman selected to serve as the National Security Advisor for the U.S.

- Sacajawea: American Indian woman who guided the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the Pacific Northwest.

Please see Women, page 15

## Eat healthier, get fit, **save** a ton with Commissary sales

### DEFENSE COMMISSARY AGENCY

FORT LEE, Va. — Spring starts March 20 and what better time to start eating healthier than while celebrating National Nutrition Month?

The Defense Commissary Agency offers service members and their Families extra savings to boost their health and wellness, as well as activities through social media to help customers start their goals, find a routine and create a path to wellness.

One way to stay healthy includes DeCA's latest "Thinking Outside the Box" recipe — a one pan chicken fajita bowl. Thinking Outside the Box recipes are dietitian-approved, offering quick and economical solutions for home-cooked meals. Customers can save on the items listed in these recipes.

Shoppers can also save on their grocery bill by using the following DeCA programs:

- Your Everyday Savings Program — YES! offers extra savings and value on the products customers buy most. Look for the orange YES! label on store shelves.

- Savvy Shopper — To reach a higher level of savings beyond everyday low prices, look for

the best deals featured in the latest sales flyer.

- Pathway to Savings — More opportunities to save are available through the "Instant Savings and Buy One, Get One (BOGO) Free" deals and Commissary Rewards Card digital coupons. Customers can save more than \$150 through these deals. Many more digital coupons are available at <https://shop.commissaries.com/digital-coupons>.

CLICK2GO mobile app — DeCA has made shopping even easier with its Commissary app that gives customers access to DeCA's Commissary CLICK2GO online payment, curbside pickup, digital coupons, the sales flyer, dietitian-approved recipes and more.

The mobile app is free for download through Google Play and IOS app stores.

Other savings opportunities include the following options:

- Monster Energy — Commissary customers at participating stores can enter for a chance to win a Kawasaki motorcycle by scanning a QR code on in-store posters and displays. Contest ends Nov. 30.

- Commissary Store Brands — DeCA's private label inventory of Commissary Store

Brands include an assortment of items spanning the entire store to include Freedom's Choice food, HomeBase non-food, Top Care health and beauty, Full Circle Market natural and organic food, Wide Awake ready-to-drink coffee products, Tippy Toes baby products, Flock's Finest wild bird food and Pure Harmony pet food.

- Dietitian-Approved Fueling Stations — The commissaries' grab-n-go Dietitian-Approved Fueling Stations are a great alternative to the drive-thru or can be used as a quick way to stock office and barrack fridges with quick, on-the-go, snacks and meals.

These stations are full of dietitian-approved snacks and meals that are nutritious and high-performance foods. They're conveniently located near the registers in select stores. View the Deli

Fueling Station page for a list of dietitian-approved salads, sandwiches and wraps.

- "Box Tops for Education" — General Mills is offering customers an opportunity to save money while supporting local schools through the "Box Tops for Education" promotion.

See store displays and high-value coupons for participating General Mills brands. This campaign is ongoing throughout the year.







### 9th Street ribbon cutting

Installation leadership, Directorate of Public Works and installation Management Command officials took part in a ribbon cutting ceremony March 15.

## Check VIN numbers

The Directorate of Emergency Services Traffic Division will release the following vehicles to Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation for disposal if they remain unclaimed. Vehicles are listed with the last four of their VIN. If one of these vehicles belongs to you, please contact the Fort Polk Police Traffic Division at (337) 531-1806, 6675 or 2677.

|      |           |            |      |
|------|-----------|------------|------|
| 2004 | Ford      | Mustang    | 4127 |
| 2008 | BMW       | 328i       | 9559 |
| 2013 | Audi      | A6         | 7319 |
| 2007 | BMW       | 650i       | 2192 |
| 2000 | Honda     | Accord     | 0717 |
| 2005 | Kawasaki  | M/C        | 0133 |
| 2010 | Jeep      | Patriot    | 0760 |
| 2005 | Ford      | Focus      | 4767 |
| 2006 | Ford      | Escape     | 3900 |
| 2009 | Ford      | Mustang    | 0250 |
| 2010 | Dodge     | Challenger | 9430 |
| 2018 | Chevrolet | Camaro     | 2576 |
| 2014 | Kia       | Optima     | 0324 |
| 2014 | Dodge     | Dart       | 5863 |
| 2011 | Infiniti  | 2D         | 3365 |
| 2000 | Chevrolet | Impala     | 8125 |
| 2011 | Nissan    | Altima     | 9341 |



# Women

Continued from page 14

- Linda Chavez-Thompson: First woman elected to the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, and was the highest-ranking woman in the labor movement during the early 2000s.
- Dr. Mary E. Walker: A contract doctor for the U.S. Army and the first and only woman to receive the Medal of Honor.
- Clara Maas: First contract nurse who contributed to the study of yellow fever.
- Sybill Ludington: Revolutionary War heroine, who rode 40 miles on horseback through New York, rallying the militia.
- Madeleine Albright: First woman selected to serve as the U.S. Secretary of State
- Clara Barton: Founded the American Red Cross.
- Dorothea Dix: First woman appointed to a federal administration position.
- Wilma Mankiller: First American Indian woman appointed to Chief in Cherokee history.
- Mary Mcleod Bethune: Educator who founded Bethune Cookman College.
- Eleanor Roosevelt: Devoted her life to see women gain representation in government and world affairs.
- Sandra Day O'Connor: First woman to serve as a Supreme Court justice.
- Kamala Harris: First woman elected as Vice President of the United States.
- Mary Golden Ross: Outstanding mathematician and first American Indian to serve as an aerospace engineer.
- U.S. Army captains Kristen Griest and Shaye Haver: First women to graduate from the U.S. Army Ranger Course.
- Ketanji Brown Jackson: First Black woman to serve as a Supreme Court justice.
- Jackie Joyner-Kersey: Considered one of the greatest female all-around athletes in history.

Many women continue to challenge social traditions that previously limited their potential. They continue to demonstrate their strength and determination while enduring and triumphing over the challenges they face.



Jackie Joyner-Kersey



## Life skills

Adulting getting you down? Check out Life Skills 101 March 27 from 9-10 a.m. at Army Community Service, 1591 Bell Richard Ave, building 920. For more information call (337) 531-1938/0636.

## Story time

Fort Polk's Allen Memorial Library hosts Story Time each Tuesday at 11:30 a.m. Library staff, or a special guest, read a story to children from the Fort Polk community.

After listening, kids participate in a craft. The next Story Time is March 28. Call (337) 531-2665 to sign up today.

## Women's league

Nine, Wine and Dine is a new ladies golf league that takes place each Tuesday from 5-7 p.m. Women are invited to participate. It's a great opportunity to make new friends, enjoy a

night of golf (9 holes) and then opting to have dinner and wine at the Forge Bar and Grill. The cost is \$22 for members and \$27 for nonmembers. The event takes place at the Warrior Hills Golf Course. The next Nine, Wine and Dine is March 28. For more information call 531-4661.

## Golf scramble

The Warrior Hills Golf Course hosts a scramble each Wednesday.

It is a nine hole scramble from 5-6 p.m. The cost is \$20 per member and \$25 per nonmember. The next Wednesday Night Scramble takes place March 29. For more information call (337) 531-4661.

## Board game fun

Select from Allen Memorial Library's extensive collection of board games or bring your own and get your game on. Board game night takes place every third Thursday of the month. Board

games are available anytime during open hours at the library. For more information call (337) 531-2665.

## Game night

Join the Magic: the Gathering Soldier game night March 29 from 6-7 p.m. The event is open to all Soldiers. You must register. For more information call (337) 531-5870.

## Bass tournament

The Toledo Bend Army Recreation Park's monthly Bass Tournament. The park is located at 1310 Army Recreation Road, Florien. The tournament takes place the first Saturday of each month. The next tournament takes place April 1 and is open to the public. Check in is at first light. Weigh in is at 3 p.m.

The entry fee is \$40 per boat and \$5 per person for big bass. For more information call (318) 565-4235/4484.

# #FortPolkThingsToDo

**March 31-April 2:** Books Along The Teche Literary Festival, New Iberia.

Various venues will celebrate literature and its impact on the area's culture with storytelling, workshops, readers theater, music, bourée lessons and tournament, bus and boat tours, 5K run and food of all kinds. Anyone who is familiar with James Lee Burke and his fictional character, detective Dave Robicheaux, knows of New Iberia and the city's fascinating blend of heritage, hospitality and history.

<https://booksalongthetecheliteraryfestival.com/>

**March 31-April 2:** Cyphacon, Lake Charles.

This comic con is sure to appeal to almost every anime, sci-fi/fantasy and gaming fan in the region. As with past events, the convention will be hosting some impressive television video and anime voice celebrities, including two-time Oscar nominee Mary McDonnell, President Laura Roslin in the hit SyFy series "Battlestar Galactica"; Terry Farrell, Lt. Cmdr. Jadzia Dax of "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine" and many more.

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

**April 14-16:** Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival, Ponchatoula.

Each April, the town of Ponchatoula puts on the state's largest free festival in honor of the beloved strawberry. Since 1972, the Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival has attracted visitors from near and far to celebrate its local strawberry farmers and the Ponchatoula community. The festival has flourished. Drop by for at least one of three days filled with time-honored traditions, amazing food and drinks, live music, rides and loads of family fun.

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

**April 15:** Melrose Arts and Crafts Festival, Melrose.

This is the 49th year for the Melrose Arts and Crafts Festival. Vendors from the Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas and beyond come to Melrose to sell their handcrafted items. Visitors from all over attend the festival to enjoy shopping, food, music and fun.

<http://www.melroseplantation.org/festivals>

**April 21:** Louisiana Forest Festival, Winn.

The festival is a salute to timber and encompasses a wide variety of timber related activities. There are numerous forestry equipment displays and related exhibits. Professional lumberjack sports competitors come from all across the United States to participate in the show. There will be 13 lumberjack events to cheer on with six different chainsaw events. There are both historical and modern forestry and logging practices as the festival pays homage to local history and celebrates the future with deep roots in the forestry community. The festival also has excellent fun and food throughout the day. There will be a wide variety of vendors and entertainers. The public is invited to join in the fun.

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

**April 22-23:** Baton Rouge Blues Festival, Baton Rouge.

The festival returns April 22-23 in downtown Baton Rouge with stages planned at Galvez Plaza, North Boulevard, Lafayette Street and more. The event has become one of the nation's fastest growing blues festivals of its kind, consistently growing in attendance to more than 50,000 people ranging from ages 18 to 65. Produced by the Baton Rouge Blues Fes-

tival & Foundation, the festival is located in downtown Baton Rouge. Its mission is to encourage the promotion, preservation and advancement of the swamp blues music native to Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

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

**April 23:** Scottish Tartan Festival, Minden.

The Festival is held from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Enjoy Scottish music and dance as well as demonstrations in falconry, weaving and more.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/scottishsocietylahielands>

**April 26:** Festival International de Louisiane, Lafayette.

Festival International de Louisiane is an international music and arts festival known for bringing a variety of unique and emerging performers to Louisiana. The festival is free to the general public. The family-oriented event is held each year in downtown Lafayette.

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

**April 29-30:** Kite Fest Louisiane, Port Allen.

Great family fun is always on tap at the annual Kite Fest Louisiané, where the skies are filled with kites of all sizes and shapes. A kite-making workshop and kite designing are just some of the activities for children. Bring the entire family, lawn chairs and enjoy a day of kite flying, Louisiana food booths and indoor flying performed by indoor flying champions. Fireworks at dusk on April 29.

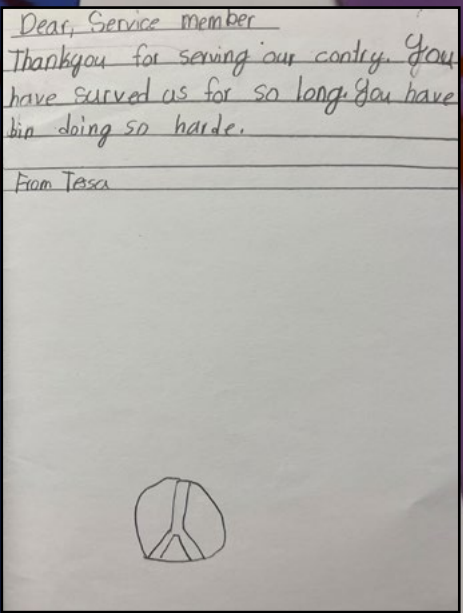
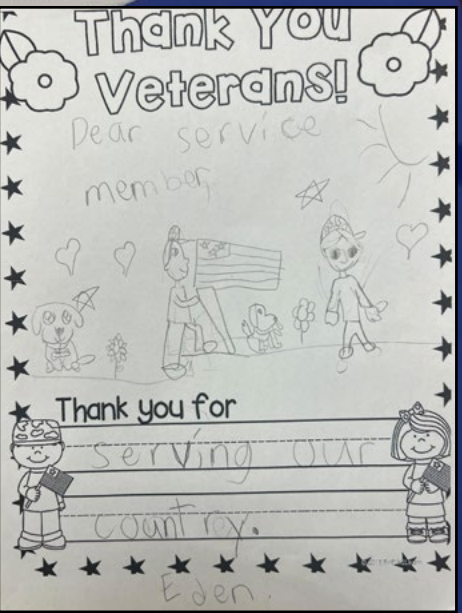
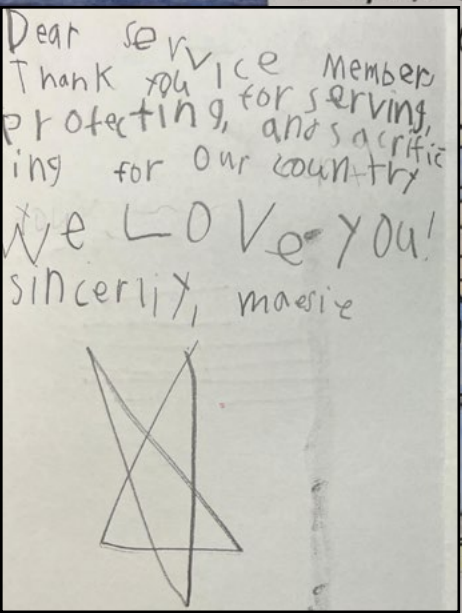
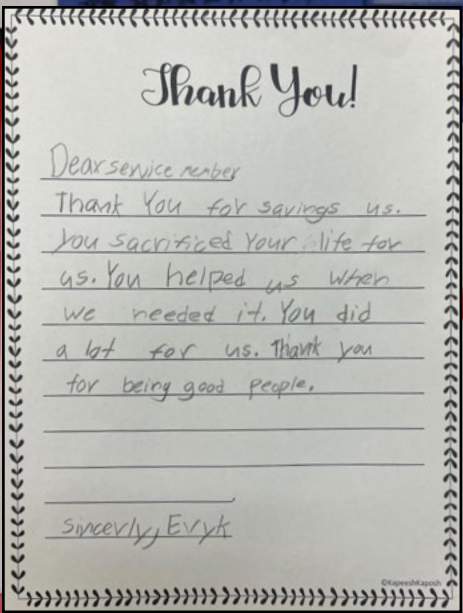
<https://westbatonrouge.net/>

**May 5-6:** Mayfest, Leesville.

Mayfest is a free event with live music, food and fun held in historic downtown Leesville on the first weekend in May.

<https://www.vernonparish.org/events/mayfest>





# Illinois students boost morale for Fort Polk Soldiers

By Spc. KELLY ACEVEDO  
Public Affairs Office

FORT POLK, La. — When I was in the fourth grade my teacher had my classmates and I write letters to her friend, a Marine who was overseas in Australia. She believed our letters could uplift him and his buddies.

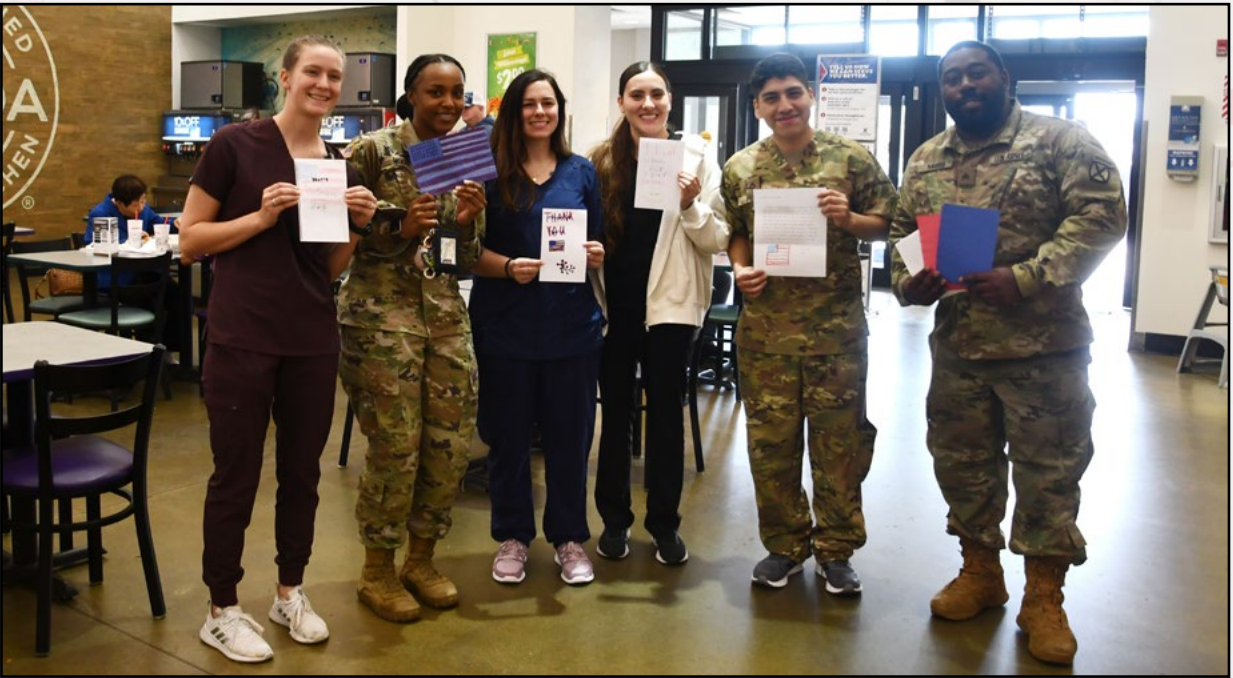
Most kids thanked him and his peers for their service. I, on the other hand, shared my interest in the military, but told him my parents didn't approve. He wrote back to us and in turn uplifted me and said to not be limited and go after whatever I want to do, even if that meant to serve against my parents wishes. So, I did.

Fast forward 15 years and I am now at the end of my four-year contract with the Army and have received my own letters from students thanking me and my buddies for our service. Reading the letters brought a nostalgic feeling along with the warm memory.

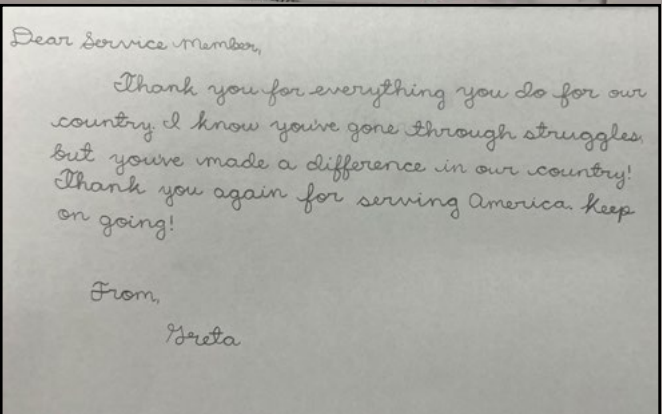
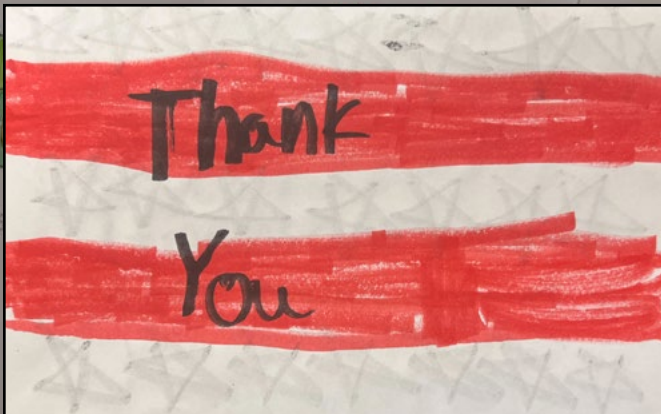
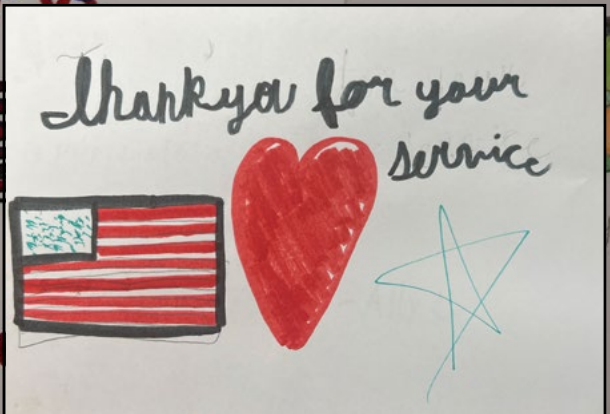
Students from Immaculate Conception Grade School, Elmhurst, Illinois, sent heartfelt letters to the public affairs office for us to share with the installation. We partnered with the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program to hand out all the letters to Soldiers on the installation at the Post Exchange.

The letters were fun to read and it was apparent that the Soldiers were happy. A little morale boost is never a bad thing.

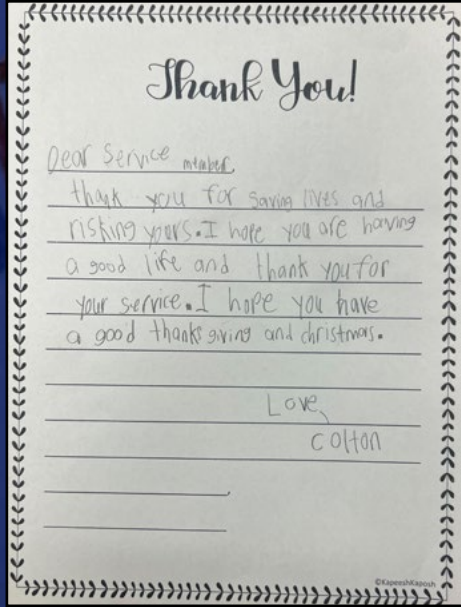
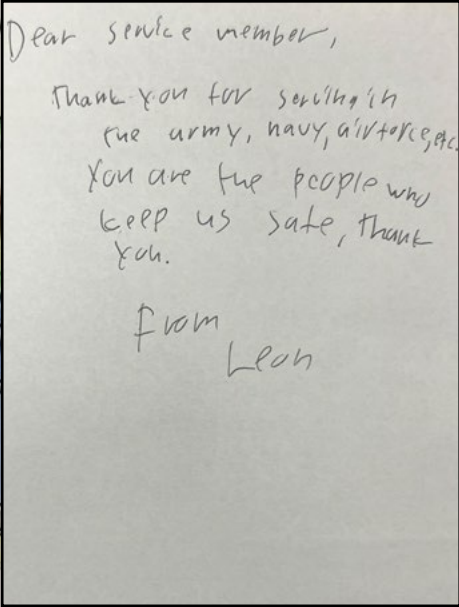
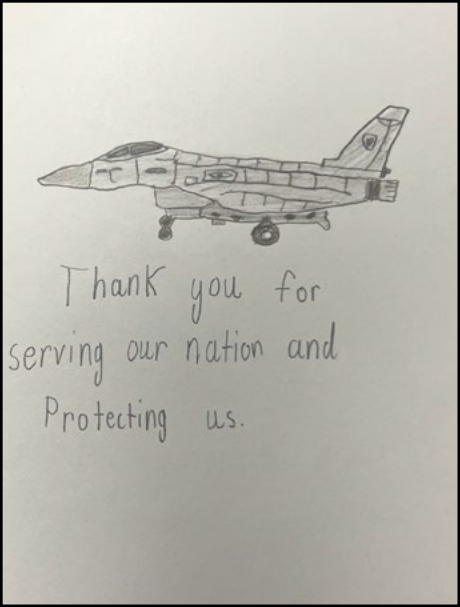
Please see Students, page 18



SpC. KELLY ACEVEDO/EGUARDIAN







# Students

Continued from page 17

Here's what a few of the Soldiers said back to the students.

"I appreciate it a lot! Thank you so much," said Spc. Carlos Vargas, a dental specialist stationed with the Dental Activity Command.

"Thank you for the cards! They are sweet and boost morale," said Spc. Aliyah Rattigan, an animal care specialist stationed with the Veterinary Clinic, Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital.

"Thank you for your support! These cards always make our day," said Sgt. Tafari Maragh, a combat engineer stationed with the 573rd Clearance Company, 46th Engineer Battalion.

I kept one letter that stood out to me and hung it up on my wall in my office. A student named Daniel wrote that he too wants to serve, but his parents won't let him. He said he thinks all Soldiers are heroes like in the movies, but amazingly better. I made sure to keep this letter because it reminded me of 8-year-old me.

Before I enlisted, it was a bit of a struggle to get my parents on board with me joining the military, which is under-

standable, but I am happy that I trusted my gut and enlisted in 2019. A lot of good came from that decision, especially the fact that joining made the process easier for my parents to become citizens.

My husband is also a Soldier. The Army has given us opportunities to progress in our careers and provide for our son Santiago.

Anyone who has the courage to serve does something that less than 1% of the nation does. It's great to do something bigger than yourself.

To Daniel, and all the kids who aspire to serve the nation, and those who don't, do what makes you happy, regardless of what others may say

or think. This applies to everything you set out to do.

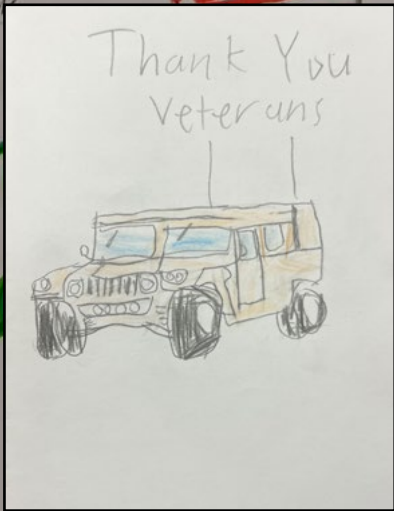
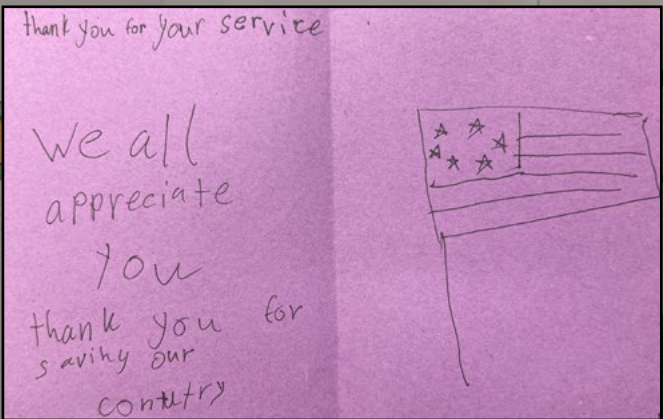
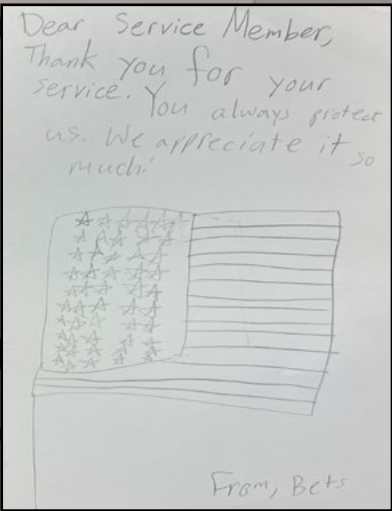
Whether you want to be a photographer, a baker, a singer or actor, the world is at your fingertips. When you believe in yourselves, anything and everything is possible. Trust me.

Thank you to the teachers and staff who took the time to coordinate this amazing project. Although not expected, it was greatly appreciated.

## COMMENTARY



Spc. KELLY ACEVEDO / eGUARDIAN







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