

# ARMY FLYER

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VOLUME 71 • NUMBER 6 • MAY 10, 2021



PHOTO BY ARMY NATIONAL GUARD SGT. JOVI PREVOT

**A Mississippi Army National Guard aircrew performs aerial maneuvers in an AH-64 Apache near Tupelo, Miss., March 29.**

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Team expertly navigates severe weather – minimal damage

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# Post team expertly navigates ‘unique’ storms, reports only minimal damage

By Jim Hughes

*Fort Rucker Public Affairs*

Even though they didn’t come as a surprise, local weather experts said the storms Fort Rucker experienced April 24 were quite extraordinary.

Spread over 16 hours, the weather events featured two moderate thunderstorm warnings, one severe thunderstorm warning and a tornado warning, according to Cindy Howell, supervisory meteorological technician with the Air Force’s Operating Location-C, 18th Combat Weather Squadron, also commonly known as Fort Rucker Weather Operations.

“It was unique in that it was such a long-duration weather event,” Howell said, adding that the weather team had been keeping an eye on the front for almost an entire week before it hit. “A lot of times, we’ll see weather move through, but this was three waves— we were here from 5 a.m. until 9 p.m. It was wave after wave after wave. It was certainly exciting.”

Even the afternoon tornado warning was unique, according to Amanda Dixon, lead meteorological technician who was in the office at the time. The warning was given 19 minutes in advance, as opposed to the norm, which is around five minutes.

“It formed almost 30 miles to our west-southwest and was kind of holding together,” she said. “We were thinking about

issuing the warning, and then it looked like it was weakening for one scan on the radar and then it was back again, so we said, ‘No, it’s holding and it’s going to be within 15 miles,’ and we issued the warning.”

Another thing that made the day unusual was hail on post, Howell said.

“We don’t often see hail, especially large hail, in this area,” she said. “I had half-inch hail at my house in Enterprise, but there were reports of 1-inch hail in Daleville and Enterprise – and it was very widespread with numerous reports of at least pea-size hail.”

While the all-day weather event was certainly out of the ordinary, it did next to no damage on post, according to Col. Whitney B. Gardner, Fort Rucker garrison commander.

“We only had one house that sustained minor damage from a tree limb that fell on it,” he said, adding that the work done by Corvias and the Directorate of Public Works in the housing areas and throughout the post to remove trees that could cause problems if they fell helped to keep the damage to a minimum.

“Before, with storms like we saw April 24, we probably would’ve had major issues in the housing areas,” Gardner said. “All the work Corvias and DPW have done was money

“ Before, with storms like we saw April 24, we probably would’ve had major issues in the housing areas. All the work Corvias and DPW have done was money well spent. ”

– Col. Whitney B. Gardner  
Fort Rucker garrison commander



COURTESY PHOTO

**A view of the reported funnel cloud near Fort Rucker April 24. The photo was taken from the post exchange looking toward the Daleville Gate at around 2 p.m., according to Fort Rucker weather officials.**

well spent. The housing effort was a direct result of feedback we received from residents – people were unhappy with how many trees posed threats to houses and property. Corvias listened, and carried out a deliberate and effective effort to clean up those dangerous trees out there.”

While he’s thankful for the post not taking any damage during the storms, the colonel also hopes that they serve as a lesson to people that they need to prepare for bad weather before it becomes a reality.

“My concern is that we get so many new people at Fort Rucker every day,” he said. “As

a team, we do our very best to get information out there in as many different ways as possible to meet the needs of people of all ages. We use social media, websites, newcomers’ briefings, announcements, flyers – every way we can think of to get the information out there.

“When we have these events, people need to already know how to be prepared; how to react and that their family knows how to react; and have all the equipment they need to protect themselves, such as a weather radio or weather alert apps and that their phones are ready and charged – these things are very important,” Gardner said. “If you’re at home,

## STORMS cont.

watch the TV stations for up-to-date reports and pay attention to Fort Rucker Weather – they put out updates constantly during severe weather. All of these things are critical to protecting ourselves.

“I’m really proud of our team and how everyone reacted to those potentially dangerous situations,” he added.

Howell agreed that preparation is key to navigating Mother Nature’s often unruly behavior in southeast Alabama.

“The time to prepare for severe weather – thunderstorms, tornados and hurricanes – is now, before the events unfold. We’d like people to know they shouldn’t rely solely only on tornado sirens for their weather information or when to go take cover. Not every location

has a siren and not every siren works all the time. The best bets are a tried and true weather radio, or a weather app – there are many free weather apps that are excellent and will give you notifications to your particular location.

“But if you are in an area where you hear tornado sirens, take cover right away and ask questions later,” she added.

Dixon added that when people know there will be severe weather in their area, they should consider staying at home, or at least close to home, and know where the best areas are to ride out dangerous situations, such as a tornado – on a floor in an interior room.

“Have your plan made now, and make sure your entire family knows what to do and

where to go,” Howell said. “And stay there until you hear the all clear. It may seem like an eternity, and it may be a while, but it will be time well spent if it keeps you safe.”

For more information on preparing for severe weather, visit Ready Army at <https://ready.army.mil/>.

That preparedness could come in handy soon as many weather experts are predicting an above-average hurricane season, which starts June 1, after a record-breaking year for named storms in 2020, according to Howell.

But people who call Fort Rucker home should have complete confidence that their weather team will be on top of things.

“We’re probably talking about 200 years of experience, if you put us all together,” Dixon

said. “Cindy and I have 18 years each at Fort Rucker alone. We’re a very experienced team with knowledge from many areas.”

Howell agreed with her colleague’s assessment, adding that all members are experienced or retired Air Force weather operations technicians.

“Fort Rucker is in very good hands – we have a great team,” she said. “We’re fully focused on the Army mission – keeping people safe is what we do and why we’re here.”

The weather team consists of Howell, Dixon, and also Tony Jennings, Jason Kendrick, Dennis Rice, Lou Straw and Tori Temple, all meteorological technicians; and Doug Crosby and John Crosby, electronics technicians.



The U.S. Army has partnered with the Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) to create the **Digital Garrison** mobile app. **Digital Garrison** is a one-stop information source for Army communities. The app puts real-time information into Soldiers’, families’, and civilians’ hands and keeps military communities connected – a key part of readiness and resiliency.

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# SELFLESS SERVICE

## Fort Rucker honors post's volunteers during ceremony

By Jim Hughes

*Fort Rucker Public Affairs*

The U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence and Fort Rucker commanding general took time to honor and thank the installation's volunteers for bringing donating their time, effort, talents and selfless service to help make the post a great home for Army Aviation during a ceremony April 23.

Maj. Gen. David J. Francis told the volunteers on hand to be recognized at the 2020 Fort Rucker Volunteer of the Year Appreciation Ceremony at the U.S. Army Aviation Museum that they are the embodiment of this year's theme: volunteers are the heart of the Army community.

"What really makes Fort Rucker a home is our volunteers," he said, adding that the community's volunteers consist of Soldiers, fam-

ily members and civilian employees. "Our volunteers help us make worship, sports, family activities, schools and so many other activities very special. It's our volunteers, all of you, that make Fort Rucker home."

The commanding general said he was impressed with how Fort Rucker's volunteers kept finding ways to help out despite the pandemic.

"One of the shining stars in all of this COVID business has been our volunteers," Francis said. "You can't keep a volunteer down. They were able to look past themselves in this challenging time and look at different ways to do things."

"We thank you for all of your personal sacrifice that you have put forward, over the



PHOTOS BY JIM HUGHES

**Maj. Gen. David J. Francis, U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence and Fort Rucker commanding general, thanks the post's volunteers during a ceremony April 23. A check representing the estimated dollar amount of the thousands of hours Fort Rucker volunteers have donated across the post is in the background.**

past year especially," he added. "They don't do it for recognition or a pat on the back – they're simply incredible people who care very deeply about Fort Rucker, and more importantly, about the people who make up our force here."

After numerous volunteers were recognized for their donated hours of service, Mike Kozlowski, Army Community Service, announced the 2020 volunteers of the year. Each winner received a certificate of appreciation, a personalized Alabama clay eagle statue, a volunteer parking pass, a volunteer coin and an Above the Best lapel pin.

\* **Youth Volunteer of the Year** – Adison Lentz, for going above and beyond in her duties as a volunteer in her work with ACS, Enterprise High School and the other organizations where she has dedicated her time.

\* **Adult Volunteer of the Year** – Stephanie Lawson, who was recognized for providing outstanding service, supporting both the Department of Defense Education Activity Parent Teacher Organization and the school

board in a tremendous way and serving as a role model for young Aviation Branch leaders and their families.

\* **Volunteer Family of the Year** – CW4 Charles and Cecilia Ciccarella, who embodied the spirit of volunteerism with their contributions to the Scouts.

\* **Active-Duty Volunteer of the Year** – CW3 Aaron Comps, who worked tirelessly with multiple organizations across the installation and his work with the U.S. Army Aviation Museum as a tour guide.

\* **Helping Hand Award** -- Rosa Ann Licina, for enriching the lives of service members, family members, retirees and civilians throughout the installation through her generous work with the thrift shop and Brown Dental Clinic. Licina was not on hand during the ceremony to accept the award.

\* **Lifetime achievement award** – Jessica Chasteen, who made an impact on countless lives throughout her time volunteering on the installation. She exemplifies the meaning of serving as the heart of the Army community.



Chasteen



# VOLUNTEERS cont.



Lentz



Lawson



Ciccarelli family



Comps



# 223 YEARS OF COMBINED SERVICE

## 8 Soldiers, 1 civilian retire at quarterly ceremony

By Jim Hughes  
*Fort Rucker Public Affairs*

With a combined 223 years of service, eight Soldiers and one civilian employee retired during the Fort Rucker quarterly retirement ceremony April 30 at the U.S. Army Aviation Museum.

Col. Chad E. Chasteen, U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence chief of staff, served as host for the event and was assisted by Command Sgt. Maj. Luis R. DeJesus Jr., 1st Battalion, 223rd Aviation Regiment command sergeant major.

The following are short write-ups on each retiree.

### COL. STEPHEN A. BARNES

Barnes, director of the Medical Evacuation Proponency Directorate, earned his commission in the Medical Service Corps through the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps at

Wheaton College, Illinois, in 1991. He served multiple combat tours in support of both operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. He said the highlight of his career was being associated with the MedEvac mission to save the wounded while being able to serve alongside a company of heroes in the Dustoff community. He and his wife, Nickie Gael, have five children. They plan to reside in Kansas City.

### CW4 MATTHEW J. DECKER

Decker, A Co., 1-14th Avn. Regt. executive officer, entered military service in 2001 and served as a pilot and instructor pilot in the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior, AH-64 Apache, UH-72 Lakota and MD-530 Cayuse Warrior. He served multiple combat tours in support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. He said



PHOTOS BY JIM HUGHES

**Col. Stephen A. Barnes, Sgt. 1st Class Kristy Y. McIntosh, CW4 Matthew J. Decker and Sgt. 1st Class Mark T. Flater at the retirement ceremony April 30 in the U.S. Army Aviation Museum.**

that more than the times and events that defined his career, it was the Soldiers, Airmen, Afghans, civilians and family who entrusted him with their commands, their lives and their livelihood who highlighted his career. He will forever be thankful and honored. He and his wife, Rainbeau, have two children. They plan to reside in Idaho.

### CW3 TAKIA T. ALLEN

Allen, air traffic and airspace management technician course manager, entered military service in 1998 as an air traffic controller. In 2011 she was selected for Warrant Officer Candidate School and the Air Traffic and Airspace Management Technician Course. She served multiple combat tours in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. She said the highlight of her career was having the opportunity to be a leader and attaining the senior NCO and senior warrant officer ranks. She and her husband, Omar, have three children and two grandchildren. They plan to reside in Enterprise.

### FIRST SGT. RENALDO D. EDGE

Edge, 3-17th Cavalry Squadron operations NCO in charge at Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia, entered military service in 2001 as an aviation operations specialist. He served multiple combat tours in support of operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom and Inherent Resolve. He said the highlight of his career was coaching, mentoring, inspiring, captivating and motivating all of those he served with. He plans to reside in Florida.

### MASTER SGT. RODOLFO B. JAVIER JR.

Javier, 110th Aviation Brigade senior supply sergeant, entered military service in 2000. He supported operations Spartan Shield in Jordan, Iraqi National Resolution, Iraqi Surge and Iraqi Sovereignty.

He said the highlights of his career were being a combat logistics adviser to the Jordanian army in support of Operation Inherent Resolve and Chadian armed forces in Chad. He and his wife, Maricel, have three children. They plan to reside in Enterprise.



**CW3 Takia T. Allen, Sgt. 1st Class Clifton D. White, 1st Sgt. Renaldo D. Edge, Joseph D. Harris and Master Sgt. Rodolfo B. Javier Jr. at the retirement ceremony.**



## RETIREES cont. —

### SGT. 1ST CLASS KRISTY Y. MCINTOSH

McIntosh, 1st Avn. Bde., entered military service in 2001 as a personnel administrative specialist and later reclassified as a supply sergeant. She served multiple combat tours in support of operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. She said the highlight of her career was having two wonderful children and being a recipient of the Order of St. Martin award. She plans to reside in Phenix City.

### SGT. 1ST CLASS MARK T. FLATER

Flater, Directorate of Training and Doctrine air traffic control systems training developer, entered military service in 1998 as an air traffic controller. He served combat tours in support of operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. He said the highlight of his career was marrying his beautiful wife, Misty, and having two wonderful children. They plan to reside in Orlando.

### SGT. 1ST CLASS CLIFTON D. WHITE

White, DOTD training developer, entered military service in 2000 as an aircraft powerplant repairer. He served multiple combat tours in support of operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. He said the highlight of his career was marrying his beautiful wife, Adriene, and having three wonderful children. They plan to reside in Huntsville.

### JOSEPH D. HARRIS

Harris, Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security chief of plans, operations, mobilization and security, entered military service in 1975 and retired from active duty in 2005. He began his civil service career in 2005 as an operations specialist with DPTMS.

He said the highlight of his career was being blessed with meeting and serving with so many great Americans from all across the greatest nation in the history of civilization.

He has five children and stepchildren, and a "whole bunch" of grandchildren. He plans to reside in Headland.

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# 'THANK YOU!'

## Army chief of chaplains thanks CDC staff for hard work

By Jim Hughes  
*Fort Rucker Public Affairs*

The Army's chief of chaplains carved a few moments out of his already-packed Fort Rucker visit itinerary to drop by the child development center to let the employees there know that their herculean efforts have not gone unnoticed.

Maj. Gen. Thomas L. Solhjem, along with Sgt. Maj. Ralph Martinez, Chaplain Corps Regimental sergeant major, took a quick tour of the facility, and met with leadership and staff to let them know he appreciates all of their hard work, especially in how they expertly dealt with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Command Sgt. Maj. Raymond P. Quitugua Jr., Fort Rucker garrison command sergeant major, introduced the general to the Directorate of Family, Morale, Welfare and Recreation, child and youth services and CDC leadership.

"We're extremely proud of our caregivers," he told Solhjem. "We get a lot of positive ICE (Interactive Customer Evaluation) comments on our CDC caregivers, and they are some of our most positive and genuine comments that we receive. There's definitely a lot of appreciation from the parents and patrons for our CDC – we have some of the best caregivers out there."

The garrison command sergeant major added that he and Fort Rucker's leadership, including Maj. Gen. David J. Francis, U.S.

Army Aviation Center of Excellence and Fort Rucker commanding general; Col. Whitney B. Gardner, garrison commander; and Command Sgt. Maj. James D. Wilson, Aviation Branch command sergeant major, could not be more proud of the caregivers and administrators at the CDC. "They do not have an easy job – it's hard – and they give 100% every day," Quitugua said. "They truly care – it's more than just a job for them. They know every child, they know each child's siblings and they know the parents. They're perfect examples of what we're referring to when we talk about people first or the family concept – the caregivers and administrators go above and beyond in making every single child feel special.

"Being a military child is hard, and they recognize that," he added. "So, when the parents are at work serving the country, they do their part to ensure that service members' children are being well taken care of."

The chief of chaplains' visit was greatly appreciated by the CDC staff, said Kimberly Cardwell, the director.

"It was exciting," she said. "It really makes you proud – proud of your staff and what they've done – for someone to take time out of their busy schedule to visit and tell you that what you're doing is appreciated.

"We have a great team," she added. "Especially during COVID – it was a scary



PHOTO BY JIM HUGHES

**Maj. Gen. Thomas L. Solhjem, Army chief of chaplains, presents a chaplains' coin to Lesley Giusti, a caregiver at the Fort Rucker CDC, May 6 for her efforts in taking care of Fort Rucker youth.**

time. The ladies came together and they were scared, but they knew that they were mission essential and that they had a job to do. They also knew that families were depending on us – the military was depending on us. They had a mission to accomplish to allow Soldiers to accomplish their missions."

Cardwell's boss, Toni Hampton, Fort Rucker CYS coordinator, agreed.

"The whole CYS team is great," Hampton said. "They are some of the hardest workers in the garrison. Their mission is directly related to the readiness of Fort Rucker, and the pandemic made that even more apparent. They do a great job."

During his visit, Solhjem also presented a coin to Lesley Giusti, a caregiver at the CDC, for her efforts in taking care of Fort Rucker youth and making the CDC successful.

"That was very exciting," Hampton said.

"I've been here for 20 years and I've never seen that happen before. She really deserves it – that was a big highlight."

Verlydia Royal, assistant director of the CDC, and Cardwell nominated Giusti to receive the special recognition for her efforts in taking over two classrooms when the lead was out for a lengthy period of time, and other instances of her going above and beyond.

"She didn't have to do that, but she stepped in and took charge in there – whatever hours I needed her to work or however late I needed her to stay, she did it," Cardwell said. "We have to move furniture every six months – move everything completely out of the room – and she and her husband came out and did the entire building. She's just a phenomenal caregiver and she is very dedicated to her children, her parents and the CDC."



# Lyster's environmental health readies for summer

By Lyster Army Health Clinic  
*Public Affairs*



PHOTO BY JANICE ERDLITZ

**Andrew Hamre, Lyster Army Health Clinic Environmental Health Section, is ramping up the monitoring of the heat category, mosquito surveillance and testing of the recreational waters on Fort Rucker as summer approaches.**

April showers may bring May flowers, but they also usher in hot and humid weather, resulting in an increased presence of mosquitoes to the southeast.

The Lyster Army Health Clinic Environmental Health Section, Department of Public Health, will be ramping up monitoring of the heat category, mosquito surveillance and testing of the recreational waters on Fort Rucker.

Andrew Hamre of environmental health shared tips and insight on staying safe and healthy this summer.

Heat injuries are preventable and monitoring the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature Index assists leadership in decision making regarding Soldier acclimatization, work and rest cycles during outdoor work and training, and recommended water consumption. "It can also be useful to the civilian workforce and residents on Fort Rucker when planning strenuous outdoor work," Hamre said.

The vectors for mosquito-borne diseases, such as ZIKA Virus, Chikungunya, Dengue Fever, and West Nile Virus, have become commonplace in the southeast in recent years. The environmental health section monitors mosquitoes and mosquito-borne diseases on Fort Rucker by placing collection devices at designated locations. The EH team collects, sorts, identifies and ships mosquito specimens to the Army Public Health Lab at Fort Meade, Maryland, for analysis of the presence of these diseases.

"When mosquitoes are actively pursuing a blood meal, wearing long pants and sleeves, and using Deet insect repellent can help protect you and your family from their bites,"

Hamre said. "Also, eliminating any standing water around your house, and changing out the water in wading pools and birdbaths at least weekly will prevent the completion of the life cycle from egg to adult mosquito. Be aware that mosquitoes can breed in large numbers around your home in a very small amount of water."

Swimming is always a popular pastime on Fort Rucker during the summer. Pools, lakes, and other water-related activities are great sources of fun and exercise; however, there are potential risks of waterborne illness and injury, he added.

Pools and similar facilities can harbor pathogens that make people sick, and sometimes the chemicals used to treat the water can irritate people's skin, eyes and lungs. Fortunately, most of these risks are preventable, Hamre advised.

Pools on post are operated by contract personnel with daily checks of the filtration systems, and lifeguards check the pH and chlorine every two hours. Additionally, the environmental health staff performs monthly facility inspections, and collects weekly water samples for bacterial analysis from the pools and at the approved swimming area at West Beach, he added. If sample results should exceed the established allowable limits, the facility is closed until subsequent satisfactory test results are achieved.

Environmental health's goal is to minimize these risks so families can all enjoy the benefits of recreational water safely, Hamre said.

To learn more about Lyster Army Health Clinic, visit <https://lyster.tricare.mil/> or follow the Lyster Army Health Clinic Facebook page.



# Clinic laboratory earns accreditation from College of American Pathologists

By Janice Erdlitz

*Lyster Army Health Clinic Public Affairs*

The Accreditation Committee of the College of American Pathologists awarded accreditation to the Lyster Army Health Clinic Laboratory Department based on results of a recent on-site inspection.

The facility's director, Dr. Christopher Kulhavy, was advised of this national recognition and congratulated for the excellence of the services being provided. The laboratory is one of more than 8,000 CAP-accredited facilities worldwide.

"The unparalleled hard work and dedication of the lab staff are what make CAP accreditation possible, and we are lucky to have such a

fantastic team" said Kulhavy.

Lt. Col. Danielle Rodondi, LAHC commander, upon learning of the laboratory's accreditation, said "Our lab team promotes a level of professional and medical expertise that contributes to outstanding patient care. Their commitment to the Fort Rucker community shows through their knowledge, respect and dedication. We are so proud of our lab team – the role they play in healthcare, especially during a pandemic, does not go unnoticed. They are truly above the best!"

The federal government recognizes the CAP Laboratory Accreditation Program, be-

gun in the early 1960s, as being equal-to or more-stringent-than the government's own inspection program.

During the CAP accreditation process, designed to ensure the highest standard of care for all laboratory patients, inspectors examine the laboratory's records and quality control of procedures for the preceding two years. CAP inspectors also examine laboratory staff qualifications, equipment, facilities, safety program and record, and overall management.

## ABOUT THE COLLEGE OF AMERICAN PATHOLOGISTS

As the world's largest organization of board-certified pathologists and leading provider of laboratory accreditation and proficiency testing programs, the CAP serves patients, pathologists, and the public by fostering and advocating excellence in the practice of pathology and laboratory medicine worldwide. For more information, read the CAP Annual Report at [www.cap.org/pdf/cap-annual-report.pdf](http://www.cap.org/pdf/cap-annual-report.pdf).

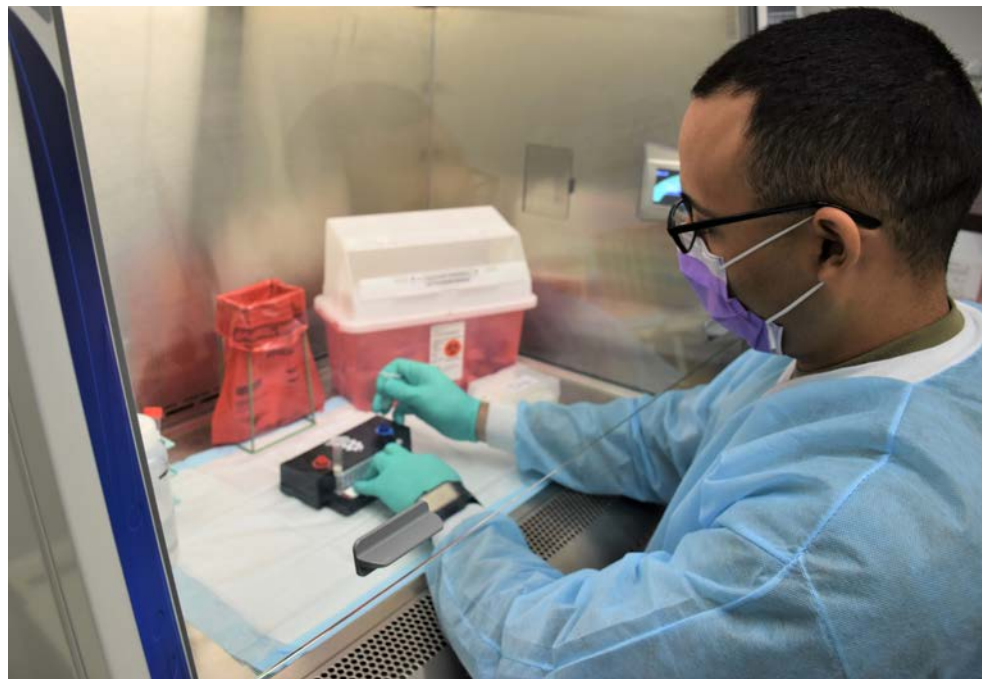


PHOTO BY JANICE ERDLITZ

The Lyster Army Health Clinic Laboratory Department recently received accreditation from the Accreditation Committee of the College of American Pathologists based on results of a recent on-site inspection.

**RUCKER LANES AND YOUTH SPORTS PRESENT**  
**2021 SUMMER YOUTH BOWLING PROGRAM**  
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**Session 1:** June 5, 12, 19 & 26 - Saturday mornings 11:00-11:45am  
**Session 2:** July 10, 17, 24 & 31 - Saturday mornings 11:00-11:45am  
 (Limited to 10 participants to allow for social distancing within the facility. These will be filled on a first-come, first served basis)

- Eligibility: Children of Active Duty, Dependent, Reserve, National Guard (on active duty), DOD Civilians, and retirees. Child and Youth Services membership is required.
- Child(ren) must be registered through CYS (Parent Central Services 334-255-9638). Registration for the program will be open now through May 31st. All fees must be paid at time of registration. If a child is absent, that week will be forfeited. There will be no makeup dates for this program.
- Cost to participate is \$25 per child, per session. This cost includes bowling, bowling shoe rentals, t-shirt, and participation medal.
- Each participant will be assigned to one pair of lanes and will be given 2 games, shoes, and instruction from a team member. Social distancing will be enforced and masks must be worn at all times. One parent or guardian must accompany each participant and stay for the duration of the program.

If you have any questions please contact the bowling center POC, Ms. Christina Carl @ (334) 255-9503. We are open Monday - Saturday 11:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. & Sunday 11:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

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# AAFES renovation project makes progress – Qdoba, Starbucks, new HVAC, more

By Jim Hughes

*Fort Rucker Public Affairs*

The project bringing big improvements to the Army and Air Force Exchange Service shopping experience at Fort Rucker continues to make progress in the building housing the main store, the food court, the Four Seasons and concession vendors.

The highlights of the improvements include adding a Qdoba Mexican Eats restaurant, a Starbucks, more shopping room in the Four Seasons and a customer bathroom in the main store, according to Brenda Hyland, Maxwell/Fort Rucker/Gunter Exchange general manager.

Other improvements include new polished concrete flooring, replacing the current tiled flooring, improved lighting and other infrastructure improvements, including an overhaul of the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system, she said, adding that work on the project began Nov. 18.

“The Fort Rucker Main Exchange Shopping Center Image Update is progressing with many exciting upgrades,” Hyland said. “Some of these are emerging and readily apparent. Others, while not visible, will enhance the customers’ experience greatly. The principle of these is the new HVAC. The old ductwork is being removed and replaced in its entirety throughout the building. While this occurs, a mobile unit is providing heat and air.”

“The image upgrade is a massive undertaking – almost every square inch of the building is being renovated,” she said. “We thank our patrons for their patience as we make our transformation and we hope they will love the results when the project wraps up in the spring of 2022!”

Construction in the first phase of the

Four Seasons side of the store has been completed, including installing the new polished concrete flooring and upgraded LED lighting, she said, adding that the completed sections offers patrons a preview of what they will see building wide.

“This flooring will be implemented in all areas that are currently tiled and lighting will be installed throughout the shopping center,” Hyland added. “Fixture upgrades and a merchandise reset will be carried out when the remainder of the construction work on this side of the store is complete. We expect that to be in the latter part of June.”

Construction on Qdoba Mexican Eats is under way, and the grand opening of the new restaurant is scheduled for Aug. 3.

“The addition of another food facility requires plumbing modifications,” Hyland said. “The first item will be a trench for the new lines running across the food court, with an off-shoot to the location of the new Starbucks, which is scheduled to open in late July. The trench-cutting work will be done at night and the trench will be made safe for customers passing through the area with planking to cover it during operating hours.”

The floor tile in the mall and food court will be demolished to expose the concrete below it. This work will also be done at night and in phases, she added.

“It will be safe for people to walk across and, while not cosmetically attractive while the work is in progress, there should be no disruption to customer traffic,” Hyland said. “The first phase will be from the northwest entrance (by the Four Seasons) up to Subway. The dining area of the food court will be next and will most likely be done in two sections,



PHOTO BY JIMMIE CUMMINGS

depending on the flooring beneath the tile. We anticipate there needing to be some fresh concrete poured in that area, but accommodations for through-traffic will be made, and it should only take a day or two for the concrete to cure and be walkable.”

Charley’s will be open for the duration of the project, with the exception of a one-to two-day window (exact date to be announced) when the wall dividing its kitchen space from Qdoba’s is demolished. Popeye’s Chicken and Subway will remain open until after Starbucks and Qdoba are in operation, the general manager added.

“At that point, they will need to close for roughly three months to allow for plumbing and flooring renovation work in the food storage and preparation areas, and an image upgrade at Subway,” she said. “After this work is completed, both restaurants will reopen.”

The last section of the flooring in the mall

will be in the area from the front entrance to the main store entrance. The ramp will continue to be accessible during the day, Hyland said.

“The HVAC upgrades in the food court and mall area will run concurrently with the floor work,” she added. “All of the demolition of the old ductwork will occur after hours. You will see exposed ceiling during this phase, but it will be made safe each day prior to opening.”

Work on the top half of the store will commence once Four Seasons and the mall area have been completed. This will be done in three sections to allow for continued customer service throughout the project, Hyland said, adding that “one small part of the construction in this section of the store has already commenced and will be completed in May – a new customer restroom in the back left corner of the main store.”



# Fort Rucker hosts motorcycle mentorship ride

About 15 post motorcyclists took part in the Fort Rucker Motorcycle Mentorship Ride today to Lakepoint State Park in Eufaula. Soldiers, retirees, civilian employees and family members all took part in the group ride.

When the group headed out on the ride, Maj. Gen. David J. Francis, U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence and Fort Rucker commanding general, gave them a thumbs up as they passed by the USAACE headquarters building.

All riders received a safety briefing, and vehicle and personal protective equipment inspections prior to the ride.



PHOTOS BY JIM HUGHES





## 1-145th Avn. Regt. welcomes new commander

Lt. Col. Katherine J. Slingerland accepts the unit colors from Col. Tammy L. Baugh, 1st Aviation Brigade commander, as she assumes command of the 1st Battalion, 145th Aviation Regiment from Lt. Col. Donald R. Kirk during a change of command ceremony May 5 at the U.S. Army Aviation Museum.



PHOTO BY JIM HUGHES

# ARMY FLIER

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The "Army Flier" is published digitally bi-monthly by the Fort Rucker Public Affairs Office, Bldg. 131, Sixth Avenue, Fort Rucker, AL, 36362.

Questions, comments or submissions for the "Army Flier" should be directed to the editor at [usarmy.rucker.us-ag.mbx.atzq-pao@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.rucker.us-ag.mbx.atzq-pao@mail.mil).

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