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ARMY PHOTO

The view from the back of a CH-47 Chinook while Soldiers from the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade perform crew certifications during Defender Europe 21.

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EAGLE RISING

WOCC, MOAA induct 24th member into distinguished society

By Jim Hughes

Fort Rucker Public Affairs

U.S. Army Warrant Officer Career College and Military Officers Association of America officials inducted the Order of the Eagle Rising Society's 24th member during a ceremony July 9 at the U.S. Army Aviation Museum.

Retired CW5 Harry L. Hobbs, who is in the U.S. Army Ordnance Corps Hall of Fame, has set the bar “very, very high for the next recipients to be considered for this recognition,” said retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, MOAA president and CEO, and also guest speaker for the ceremony.

“This is a new ‘Wow!’ moment for me,” Atkins said. “He retired with nearly 30 years of service to our nation and he completed two combat tours during his military service. He has taught at every level of the warrant officer education system, and he was the first warrant officer in the Army to earn a PhD and receive a below-the-zone promotion to CW5.

“CW5 Hobbs lives the MOAA mantra of never stop serving,” he added. “He continued to serve by mentoring youth from all works of life in the Huntsville community – he was selected mentor of the year of 2011 for city of Huntsville and veteran of the year in 2021 for city of Madison.”

Hobbs was also the first Army warrant officer invited to speak to graduating cadets

at the U.S. Air Force Academy, according to Atkins. “That also underscores how we all think of him – not just the Army, but the entire military community.”

The retired general said he asked Hobbs what his message was to those graduating academy cadets.

“Rubber balls and glass balls,” Atkins said Hobbs told him. “They need to start prioritizing. I wanted them to know that in their lives they will have rubber balls and glass balls. If a rubber ball falls out of your hand, it’s going to bounce around for a while, and you can probably let it go and recover it and bounce it again or whatever it is. But if you drop a glass ball, it’s going to shatter and break. You need to figure out in your life what are the rubber balls and what are the glass balls. I wish I had been there to listen to that.”

Atkins added that he was honored to help induct Hobbs. “Thank you for your dedication, your commitment to our nation, your selfless service and your leadership over many, many years of service. These are examples that we all need to follow.”

Col. Ross F. Nelson, commandant of the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Career College who also helped induct Hobbs, agreed.

“Congratulations to you and your family on this meaningful occasion,” the colonel said. “In you, we find a dedication and sac-



PHOTO BY JIM HUGHES

Retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, MOAA president and CEO, and Col. Ross F. Nelson, commandant of the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Career College, congratulate retired CW5 Harry L. Hobbs on his induction into the Order of the Eagle Rising Society during a ceremony July 9 at the U.S. Army Aviation Museum.

rifice that must be recognized, a sterling example of what we all should strive to be, and an expressive reminder of the selfless service that can live within each and every one of us. We are grateful for what you’ve done and continue to do for the cohort and your community.”

Hobbs thanked a long list people who helped him to get where he is today, including his family, mentors, former supervisors and leaders, fellow Soldiers, and more.

“It took a village to get me standing on this stage this morning at this ceremony,” Hobbs said. “I never imagined that a young, multiracial boy, born out of wedlock, growing up in the middle of the color line in the deep south, raised in poverty without parents, that one day I would be standing before this auspicious group of heroes, mentors and attendees to be inducted into any organiza-

tion, much less this prestigious Order of the Eagle Rising Society today.”

He added that he joined the Army after he graduated from high school because he knew the Army system “would allow me to continue to grow as a person, and reward me based on my hard work and efforts to accomplish my Army tasks and missions. I could tell very early in my Army experience that this was a lifestyle that would allow me to continue to serve my country and make an honorable living.

“I want to thank the leaders who allowed me to make mistakes early in my military career, and still allow me to recover and go on to have a successful career,” he said. “Remember that, leaders. Be careful of the judgment that you give to others, it may just come back to you if it is too harsh. That’s a free gold nugget for the young leaders out there.”

EAGLE RISING cont.

He said he didn't begin his Army career thinking he'd get inducted into "this order, or that hall of fame – you just go about doing what is right every day, whether someone is watching or not.

"My goal was to always give my best effort," Hobbs added. "My mentors always told me if you do well at the small things, the big things will come your way. They were right.

"Tell the truth even when the truth is not convenient," he said. "In the final ledger of life, the truth always wins. And the truth will set you free.

"My motto is to be polite, professional, positive, passionate – I took these golden nuggets from these leaders and I grew as a leader, and even now, as the first vice president of color for one of the largest and oldest municipal utilities in north Alabama," Hobbs said.

He closed by saying that people can get to the best version of themselves "with a four-letter word, spelled w-o-r-k. Good old-fashioned work, along with respect to others are still the keys to success. You can obtain whatever your American dream or goal may be in life. Stay polite, stay professional, stay positive, stay passionate, and when the sun comes up, you can still run – start running towards your dreams. If you can't run, then walk like you have a purpose."

Established in 2004 as a joint venture between MOAA and the USAWOCC, the Order of the Eagle Rising Society annually recognizes one individual who has contributed significantly over his or her lifetime to the promotion of the warrant officer community in ways that stand out in the eyes of the recipient's seniors, subordinates and peers, according to MOAA and WOCC officials.



Hobbs and his wife, Erica, who've been married 40 years.



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.

DOWNLOAD DIGITAL GARRISON TODAY FROM THE APPLE APP STORE OR GOOGLE PLAY!



CLICK2GO

Online ordering, curbside delivery starts at Fort Rucker Commissary

By Jim Hughes

Fort Rucker Public Affairs

Commissary CLICK2GO, the Defense Commissary Agency's new online ordering and curbside delivery service arrived at the Fort Rucker Commissary July 20.

"This service really speaks to the needs of our customers who can now plan, order and pay for their purchases on-line, and then just drive to the store to get them without having to get out of their vehicle," said Marisol Hennessey, store director.

The Fort Rucker CLICK2GO began accepting internet orders July 16 for July 20 pickups, Hennessey said, adding that the first day went well.

Col. Robert J. Holcombe, Fort Rucker garrison commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Raymond P. Quitugua, garrison command sergeant major, attended the service's grand

opening, helping to cut a cake, talking to the employees making CLICK2GO work and making a delivery to a customer.

"This is a big day," Holcombe told the commissary team. "I wanted to say thank you from the community for everything you do – you're providing a really critical service for Soldiers and their families. Everything you do every day makes a difference – it really makes the military family concept work and it allows Soldiers to do what we do."

The colonel added that what the Fort Rucker Commissary is doing to keep up with the times is "super cool."

"You are keeping up with the standard that we expect from grocery stores – staying current and relevant," Holcombe said before encouraging the commissary employees to continue

being part of the process to always get better. "All of the best ideas don't come from the CEOs of these companies, a lot of the best ideas come from the people who do the work and implement it on the ground. When you come up with ways to make this better, please tell your boss, let



PHOTOS BY JIM HUGHES

Col. Robert J. Holcombe, Fort Rucker garrison commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Raymond P. Quitugua Jr., garrison command sergeant major, deliver a CLICK2GO order at the Fort Rucker Commissary July 20 while at the store for the grand opening of the new service.

her know. You'll see it before anyone else – we can make this better, make it more efficient. Don't hesitate to share your ideas, thoughts and expertise."

Hennessey provided a brief rundown of Commissary CLICK2GO's features:

- * Easy-to-use navigation and search functions to help customers plan healthy meals and take care of their family's needs;
 - * Enhanced product information;
 - * Robust recipe features;
 - * Featured sales and promotions;
 - * Upgraded mobile-friendly experience;
- and
- * No service fee (\$4.95 fee waived until further notice).

Information on how the service works is found on www.commissaries.com with dedicated sections such as "How CLICK2GO Works." First-time customers will need to cre-

ate an account, according to DECA officials.

In step with grocery shopping trends, DECA is working to bring on-line ordering, payment and pick-up options to all commissary-eligible patrons. In early June the agency announced plans to expand Commissary CLICK2GO to all 236 commissaries worldwide, and the rollout status can be found on the agency's web site.

"I encourage all our shoppers to access the CLICK2GO page on commissaries.com to learn more about it," said Hennessey.

Customers use a computer or mobile device to make their orders online where they select from commissary products offered based on the store's stock assortment. After products are selected, the shopper selects a pickup time and pays for their order. At their appointed time they park in designated parking spaces where commissary workers bring their groceries, the store director added.



ACS program ready to help new parents handle challenges

By Jim Hughes

Fort Rucker Public Affairs

Becoming a parent for the first time can be an intimidating prospect for many people, but the Army Community Service New Parent Support Program on post stands at the ready to lend a helping hand.

That helping hand can provide information, classes, networking opportunities with people in the same boat, baby bundles for clients in the program, and a staff ready to listen to any concerns and who cares, Joy McCormick, NPSP home visitor and licensed social worker.

"We have a great program," she said, adding that the program is designed to help expecting parents from pregnancy all the way up to children turning 3. "We laugh all the time because my children are adults, and I start looking at it and I think, boy, I did everything wrong – it's amazing my babies are still alive."

She said one of the top draws of the program is the support of having "somebody to talk to that doesn't think you're crazy when you start asking questions. We are parents, we've done that – we're willing to listen to what's going with new parents and try to understand the situation they're in. We will also be there to provide them someone to talk to. Sometimes you don't even know what to ask, but it's nice to have someone listen to you, and let you talk and laugh about what's going on."

And sometimes it's a pat on the back that makes a huge impact, McCormick added. "A lot of time it's that reassurance that you are a good parent and doing a great job, because they don't get told that enough – you're a great mom or you're a great dad! I think they need to hear that sometimes – being a parent is a very tough job."

Command Sgt. Maj. Raymond P. Quitugua Jr., Fort Rucker garrison command sergeant major, agreed, and added that being an effective

parent is also part of the total Soldier concept.

"This is where the new parent support program comes into play – it covers everything from prenatal classes to parenting basics," he said. "The Army can teach Soldiers many things. We can train them on land navigation, how to breach an obstacle, fire their assigned weapons, employ hand grenades and so on. We also recognize that those are just a few aspects of what makes a good Soldier."

"It may not be a drill sergeant doing the instructing, but our team of nurses, social workers and amazing family advocacy staff are just as dedicated," Quitugua added. "Soldiers everywhere should take advantage of this outstanding program because I believe becoming a good parent will make you an even better Soldier."

The informational side of the program includes just about everything new moms and dads need to know, McCormick said. The program provides numerous reading materials, follows a tailorable curriculum developed by Florida State University that has been adopted by numerous bases throughout the U.S., and offers referrals and information to off-post programs that help new parents and young children.

The program also regularly offers classes, now done virtually but resuming face-to-face instruction in August, in proper installation and use of car safety seats, infant massage, baby sign language, learning through music and nutrition, she said. "It's a wide gamut that covers pretty much everything that impacts a child from birth to age 3. And outside agencies, such as Lyster Army Health Clinic, Parent to Parent and the Military Child Coalition also partner with us."

She added that the program's playgroups for children and parents were put on hold during



ARMY FLIER STAFF PHOTO

Fort Rucker parents participate in an infant massage workshop in this file photo.

the pandemic, but will resume in August.

Mom and Me, Dad, Too for parents of children from birth to 16 months will take place Mondays from 9-11:30 a.m. at The Commons on Seventh Avenue. Tot Time will take place Wednesdays from 9-11:30 a.m. at The Commons. People wanting to attend need to make a reservation by calling 255-3359.

NPSP also includes home visits every two weeks in its services for on- or off-post residents, which are designed to help new parents and provide support, according to McCormick.

"We like to go into home to make sure it is safe, if the environment set up in a safe manner, if the baby is sleeping in crib correctly and there aren't things in the crib that aren't supposed to be there for safe sleeping," she said. "We want to see the children in their environment, how they are reacting, how they are doing, how things are going, and then talk and see what is going on with the family."

"We can then follow up, and provide educational sheets and explain what things mean and if this is normal development," McCormick said, adding the staff is flexible with the timing of the visits.

The program also provides baby bundles for clients enrolled in the program McCormick said. These include various baby items, and also for other stages of development, as well, such as a tummy time pillow for infants at 2 months to help strengthen head and neck muscles, books to help develop language and cognitive development, items to help with teething and more.

And people can take the program with them if they PCS – the program is transferable to most installations within the Army, so parents don't have to worry about whether they will be supported if they move, McCormick added.

To find out more about the NPSP, visit the office in Bldg. 5700, Rm. 371G or call 255-3359.

Popular CYS programs return after lengthy absence

By Jim Hughes
Fort Rucker Public Affairs

U.S. ARMY **MWR** **CHILD & YOUTH SERVICES**

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After about a year-and-a-half absence, Fort Rucker Child and Youth Services is bringing back many of its most popular programs starting in August.

Those programs include youth sports, the child development center's preschool and toddler part-day care program, instructional classes and home school enrichment, according to Toni Hampton, Fort Rucker CYS coordinator.

Hampton and the CYS staff are excited to reopen the programs shut down by the pandemic, and also about seeing the familiar faces of children they haven't seen in a year along with all of the new faces who now call Fort Rucker home, she said.

"We encourage parents to check into these programs, and to visit and meet our staff, see our facilities and hopefully choose to use more of our CYS programs," Hampton said, adding that CYS programs are a great way for children new to Fort Rucker to meet new friends. "We're really grateful to the community for sticking it out with us, and we hope that they choose CYS programs in the future."

YOUTH SPORTS

Registration is ongoing for soccer; flag football; volleyball; and ready, set, run, with seasons for each set to begin in August, according to Randy Tolison, youth sports and fitness director.

"We're excited about getting started again with our sports programs – we invite every young person eligible to participate to come out and do so," he said, adding that those who are eligible include children of anyone who works on Fort Rucker– contractors, non-appropriated fund employees, civilian employees and servicemembers. "But to participate, they do need to be a

CYS member – becoming a member is free – then they can then register for the activities."

He advised interested parents to call parent central services at 255-9638 if they're not members of CYS to find out what documentation they need to bring with them in order to register for CYS.

Children will also need a current sports physical, as well, which can be obtained by scheduling an appointment with each child's health care provider. Lyster Army Health Clinic will host a School and Youth Sports Physical Day July 24.

For more, see Page 14.

But once the red tape and examinations are out of the way, though, the benefits for children taking part in team sports are many, Tolison said.

"They get the opportunity to play with other young people, and build and develop skills that they can be proud of and build on throughout their lives," he said, but one of the most important things is the lifetime friendships they develop. "We have children who will be with us for a year or possibly two, then move on, but some of the friendships they develop through these sports often last for many, many years."

The Fort Rucker Youth Sports Program is in need of coaches to ensure each child who wants to gets to participate, Tolison said.

For more on becoming a coach, see Page 8, or call 255-2254.

PART-DAY PRESCHOOL AND TODDLER CARE

The CDC will offer its preschool, toddler part-day care program for ages 2-5 starting Aug. 16.

This program is designed for parents of children in those age groups who don't nec-

CYS cont.

essarily require all-day care, Hampton said.

"This was a very popular program before the pandemic – it gives people the flexibility to have regular care, but not necessarily full day," she added. "Some families do not have the need for full-day care, but still want to provide their children with regular socialization within a school setting to prepare them for kindergarten."

Parents can choose to receive care for two, three or five days a week from 8-11 a.m. Interested parents should visit military-childcare.com to request child care space, and then they will receive an email or phone call from parent central services if space is available.

Parents will pay a monthly fee, which is based on a sliding fee scale determined by their total family income. "The program runs on the school year calendar, but if something comes up and plans change, they can withdraw from the program if necessary," Hampton said.

During the program children participate in group time, where they will read stories, play games, sing songs, work on an art project and more, she added.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

CYS will bring back its popular instructional programs in August, designed for parents who are looking for their children to better develop their minds and bodies, and also learn a skill that could turn into a life-long pursuit, Hampton said.

"The goal of the instructional program is to help to promote skills in children that

they can use later in life – it really helps open their eyes to what is out there," she said, adding that the program will offer classes in gymnastics, music – guitar, piano and voice – and swimming.

"Gymnastics is great for motor skills and great for their health," Hampton said. "Music helps in the development of their brain function, and swim lessons are important – learning to swim can save a child's life."

Instructors for each program are contractors, and each program is broken up into levels from beginner to advanced – age groups are also broken up, as well, she added.

The classes will run from August to July, and people can join in progress as long as there is space available. Swim lessons are paid for by lesson, while music and gymnastics are paid for monthly, Hampton said.

To sign up for a class or get more information, visit webtrac.mwr.army.mil or call 255-1867.

HOMESCHOOL ENRICHMENT

CYS will offer its homeschool enrichment program once again Sept. 8.

The free program offers a physical education activity at the youth center to supplement parents' homeschool curriculums, she said, adding that people do need to register with CYS to attend.

For more information on any of these program, call CYS at 255-1867.

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REGISTRATION
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Bldg. 5700, Rm. 193 (334) 255-9368

Visit webtrac.mwr.army.mil
Check CYS → select state (Alabama) →
select Fort Rucker → click on SKIES →
scroll to activity & enroll

Children must be registered with Child & Youth Services. A current sports physical is required. For more information, call the Instructional Program office at 334-255-1867. For registration information, call 334-255-9368.

CYS INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

Bldg. 2800, 7th Ave (334) 255-1867

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WANTED

Youth sports in dire need of coaches for upcoming seasons

By Jim Hughes
Fort Rucker Public Affairs

The Fort Rucker Youth Sports program is in dire need of volunteer coaches as it looks to start up team sports again in late August.

With the soccer; flag football; volleyball; and ready, set, run seasons all looking to start in late August, now is the time for people to begin the process of becoming coaches, according to Randy Tolison, youth sports and fitness director.

Demand regularly exceeds supply when it comes to coaches for youth sports, and a shortage of coaches can result in fewer teams being fielded, fewer youth able to take advantage of the program and even less playing time for children who are on teams, he said.

"Sometimes we get started in the season and we just don't have enough coaches," Tolison said. "Then we pick up one or two along the way, but by the time we get their background checks cleared, we're halfway

through the season. We encourage all prospective coaches to get in contact with me now, so I can get the information on what they need to do to them so they're ready to go before the season starts."

The workload of being a youth sports team coach is heavily frontloaded, but the rewards are great once the season starts and beyond, according to Tolison. Coaches will need to get a background check completed through child and youth services, conduct some training online on general and sport-specific coaching through the National Alliance of Youth Sports.

"The starting part is a little bit intense as far as getting the training and background check done – that is the hardest part," he said. "Once the season starts, we give you a practice schedule, a game schedule, rosters – all you have to do is contact the players and tell



FILE PHOTO

them when and where practice will be held."

The rewards include watching children develop, impacting that development and helping to provide a valuable experience for the youth of the Fort Rucker community, Tolison added.

"The value of volunteer coaches is indescribable," he said. "Our youth would not be able to play if we didn't have volunteer coaches. We want every child to have this experience, but unfortunately, sometimes we come up short on coaches and we end up having to put too many youth on one team – that makes it a burden for the coach and the kids because it cuts into their playing time."

Prospective coaches don't need to be an expert in their chosen sports, Tolison said.

"If they think they're not knowledgeable enough about a sport, there's no need to worry," he said. "All of our coaches are

certified through the NAYS. They do their training through NAYS online – orientation to coaching, coaching of a specific sport and also concussion training. Still, some people may think, 'I just don't know if I can do it.' Well, we have staff that can go out and give them a boost, and maybe get them some one-on-one training as to what they can and can't do, and what they should and shouldn't do. Our coaches are one of the most valuable contributors to our program other than the kids themselves, but we can't have the kids if we don't have the coaches."

People interested in helping Fort Rucker youth by becoming a volunteer sports coach should get in touch with Tolison as soon as they can. He can be reached at 334-255-2254 or 334-379-1355, or by visiting youth sports in Bldg. 8950 on Seventh Avenue.

“Our coaches are one of the most valuable contributors to our program other than the kids themselves, but we can't have the kids if we don't have the coaches.”

– Randy Tolison,,
Fort Rucker Youth Sports director

Aviation Handbook prepares platoon leaders for large-scale combat operations

By Kelly Morris

USAACE Public Affairs

An Army Aviation handbook aims at a critical point in carrying out tactical operations – the Aviation platoon.

Army Techniques Publication 3-04.23, Army Aviation Platoons, which was released back in May, provides insight for platoon leaders on leadership roles, unit structure, training and missions for platoon-level leaders across the branch.

Lt. Col. Brian Schapker, doctrine division chief at the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence Directorate of Training and Doctrine, said the emphasis on platoons is intended to help the Army prepare for large scale combat operations.

“In the Army we are in the business of developing leaders, and for commissioned officers that starts at the platoon leader level,” Schapker said.

“It’s our small units that will engage with the enemy first, so a large majority of training should be focused on platoon level and below, because that sets a foundation. That forms a base for our collective team. This aviation platoons manual helps feed into that,” said Schapker.

The concise seven chapters include roles and responsibilities, a breakdown of Troop Leading Procedures, training with an emphasis on Mission Essential Task Lists, collective tasks and Training and Evaluation Outlines, and training management.

It also covers aviation missions, flight platoons (including attack, air cavalry, assault, command aviation, heavy lift, air ambulance, and Shadow and Gray Eagle unmanned aircraft systems platoons), sustainment platoons and maintenance considerations, and aviation support platoons (including air traffic services and military intelligence

flight platoons) with some additional considerations regarding forward arming and refueling.

“It reemphasizes the core competencies of army aviation. It introduces the Army Training Strategy to junior leaders, and discusses troop leading procedures. It’s focused on the junior leaders, and trainers and educators throughout the Army Aviation Branch,” Schapker said.

“It helps leaders not only develop their platoons, but develop themselves as they understand the process, and gets them prepared for the next stage of their career,” he said.

The publication serves as a quick reference for new Aviation lieutenants, and aims to streamline the information gathering process for them.

“The goal is that every new lieutenant that comes out of (the Basic Officer Leadership Course) will be able to reference it digitally, and platoon sergeants can reference and utilize it as well,” Schapker said. “It also provides a reference for where to go for other things they may have questions about.”

Since every branch and center of excellence in the Army is different, and platoons are also different, the Aviation Center was allowed more freedom in developing the content for the branch.

Schapker said a team of noncommissioned officers at USAACE headed up by Sgt. 1st Class Taracus Jones, doctrine branch NCO in charge, led the effort to create the publication. The NCOs reached out to the Aviation community for input, and produced the publication in less than a year.

“They’re the backbone of the Army, and to utilize that resource was phenomenal. It started coming together based off their hard



PHOTO BY MAJ. ROBERT FELLINGHAM

An AH-64 Apache of the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade, Wings of Victory, launches from the forward area rearming and refueling point to begin single-ship aerial gunnery tables during the 1st Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment's preparation for DEFENDER-Europe 21 at Grafenwöhr Training Area April 14.

work,” he said.

The publication also incorporated input from Aviation Captains Career Course students as part of the process.

Though the new document is not perfect, it serves as a guide, said Schapker.

The handbook is intended to make operations smoother and leaders’ lives easier when they reference it and use it in daily operations.

“In the end, the Army speaking a common language, and aviation speaking a common language is beneficial,” Schapker said.

Schapker said doctrine is always evolving.

“It is ever changing to the operational environment, to the enemy, to what we need to

do on a day to day basis,” he said.

Going forward, the directorate welcomes feedback from the branch.

“This being a new pub, it’s been thru all the adjudication process, all the staffing process...but now it’s getting it out to the force and seeing what needs to be adjusted, that’s where it is right now,” he said.

Schapker said people may contact DOTD through the doctrine branch email to provide feedback at usarmy.rucker.avncoe.mbx.dctrine-branch@mail.mil.

“We always welcome that feedback.”

The ATP can be found in the Army Publishing Directorate website at <https://armypubs.army.mil/>.

Army aims to assist Soldiers during turbulent moving season

By Joseph Lacdan
Army News Service

WASHINGTON – To aid Soldiers during a challenging permanent change of station season, which is seeing some delays with household goods shipments due to the current environment, the Army has widened the window for Soldiers to report to their next duty station.

Soldiers scheduled to report to a new assignment between July 6 and Sept. 30 can now check in up to 30 days before their scheduled report date and as much as 20 days after. Often a Soldier's report date can be dependent on when a government-arranged moving company can transport their household goods, said Scott Kuhar, deputy chief of the Operations Management Division at Army Human Resources Command's Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate.

However, regardless of a Soldier's report date, they must complete the process and report to their new assignment no later than Nov. 10, when the service begins transitioning to its new Integrated Personnel and Pay System-Army. Kuhar said the service will shut down its personnel systems shortly after that date in order to make the transition.

If Soldiers find they cannot begin in-processing within 20 days of their original report date, they can turn to their installation's military personnel division, which can then authorize a deferment of up to 60 days from the original report date if necessary, provided that the extra time does not extend past Nov. 10.

"We know this year is more challenging than usual, and we are working to give our Soldiers and families options, resources, and flexibility to reduce as much stress as possible," said Gen. Edward Daly, commander of Army

Material Command.

The added flexibility may help ease some of the stress Soldiers face when moving this summer as well as contribute to readiness. Jon Finke, chief of HRC's OMD, said that Soldiers will often request a shipment date, only to learn they will have to wait an extra month for an available moving company.

"You're kind of at the mercy of the moving system," Finke said. "And the Army is realizing that and trying to work with Soldiers and families so that they can move, but we have to honor what the transportation companies can do and how they can support us at the same time."

Last month, Derrick Candler, head of the Transportation Policy Division in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Army Logistics, said the Army had experienced the ripple effect of labor shortages across the country. High demand on the shipping industry has impacted Soldier movement, exacerbated by shortages of drivers and laborers.

In extreme cases, Soldiers have had to report to their next duty assignments without their household goods, temporarily leaving their spouses and family behind during an on-going moving process.

Finke hopes that providing additional time will eliminate that possibility.

"We are doing our best within our control here to keep family units together during the movement process," Finke said. "By saying 'Soldier, go ahead, report' that leaves a spouse and possibly the children stuck to do the moving process, which would very much be a strain on a family."



PHOTO BY ERIC PILGRIM

Chris Fursman, OMD human resource specialist, said that the HRC receives about 40-60 requests per day to either extend or reschedule report dates.

Previously, Soldiers had to file a request through their chain of command to HRC, a process that took up to 60 days for approval. Now, Soldiers can receive an extension authorization locally through their chain of command within a few days.

"What we've done now is we've taken that long process ... and we're crunching it down," Fursman said, "so we can assist the Soldiers and take some of that burden off of them."

Soldiers will still need to make sure their scheduled leave matches their adjusted report date.

UNPREDICTABLE OBSTACLES

Soldiers, Army civilians and families preparing for a PCS move in the summer months should anticipate the unexpected, Candler

said.

Some other options to assist Soldiers include extended storage for household goods at the location of origin, and allowing Soldiers to apply for cost reimbursements higher than government rates to hire a commercial moving company.

Candler said Soldiers scheduled to change duty stations may experience delays due to labor shortages and a booming housing market throughout the country.

In addition to reduced travel restrictions, moves across the country have significantly increased, Candler said. Soldiers have reported waiting for up to six weeks before moving companies could transport their household goods to their next residence.

The surge in home sales have presented challenges for military families looking to extend their temporary rentals. Soldiers have reported that some landlords have asked them to vacate rental homes earlier than expected in

MOVING SEASON cont.

order to sell the home, find another renter, or move in themselves, Candler said.

"Right now homes are selling very quickly, which is putting extra strain on the moving industry during the busiest time of year," he said.

Combined with the extra demand, labor shortages have exacerbated the challenges. In April, the "Wall Street Journal" reported that the country posted a record 9.3 million job openings. Candler said because of pandemic restrictions, moving companies trained fewer truck drivers, packers and loaders.

"The biggest [factor] we face is the labor shortage," Candler said. "There is a nationwide labor shortage in numerous industries ... the moving industry is having problems finding enough employees to provide the required services."

Candler said moving companies used by the Defense Department accept moves based on available resources and labor.

If Soldiers find themselves in a situation where they must wait for an extended period before movers can deliver their household goods to their next duty station, they can contact their chain of command, turn to their installation's transportation office, or use the new chat function in the Army's PCS Move app to speak with a live transportation specialist for more information on how to successfully plan a move or address unique challenges that come up during the move process.

Soldiers can download the app, which has information on entitlements, types of moves, planning, scheduling and claims, in the Google Play and Apple App stores. Soldiers can also call a 24-hour hotline for questions on PCS moves at 833-MIL-MOVE.

Candler said that his office has been monitoring moves across the Army and has worked with installation transportation offices to help prepare Soldiers and their families.

Transportation offices are the first line of

support for PCS moves, and can help Soldiers and families through each stage of the moving process. Soldiers should first learn about their available entitlements before deciding whether to make a personally-procured move, or PPM, or use a government arranged moving company. For the latter, Soldiers should work with transportation offices to begin planning the packing and shipping of their household goods immediately after receiving their PCS orders.

The Army changed its policy on PCS orders requiring that orders be sent at least 120 days prior to a Soldier's report date to allow for longer planning timelines.

"Soldiers should make their household goods pickup the first priority on their planning checklist, scheduling their move months in advance," said Gene Thomas, the transportation division's personal property policy lead.

If Soldiers face problems when moving companies fail to pick up or deliver household items by the scheduled dates, they can receive an inconvenience claim paid by the transportation service provider. Soldiers now also have up to 180 days to notify moving companies of damages incurred during the move.

Another issue that Soldiers may face during their PCS is that moving truck rental services and non-DOD approved moving companies might inflate the cost of a move, Candler said. He added that Soldiers should be aware of scammers and use only a government-approved moving company.

"For example, one year ago, it may have cost \$3,000 to rent that truck to go from coast to coast. Today, it may now cost as much as \$9,000 to go from coast to coast," Candler said. "In addition, what we're finding out is when people are going out [and] hiring their own moving companies, in some cases, that cost could be three times as much when compared to previous years due to supply and demand."

Thomas warns Soldiers to remain wary of "fly-by-night companies" that look to profit from the moving Soldier's or family's desperation. He said that non-DOD approved moving companies may quote a Soldier one price and then raise the cost exponentially in the middle of the moving process.

If Soldiers choose to hire a commercial mover, they should consider a mover registered with the federal government at www.fmcsa.dot.gov/protect-your-move. Soldiers can avoid potential dilemmas by moving with a DOD-arranged moving company that establishes fixed, government-regulated rates for moves.

The goal is always a smooth move scheduled in advance, but Soldiers have a few options if they have leave or move-in dates looming.

"Each case will be different but Soldiers may choose to speak to their leadership about

extending their tour of duty, or they may choose to perform a PPM," Candler said. "Whatever a Soldier decides, they should still coordinate work with their installation's transportation office, especially if they run into delays."

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic remains an obstacle for some Soldiers and families as restrictions on movement at either their departure or arrival location can slow their transition, especially for overseas moves.

Finally, Army leaders remain committed to supporting Soldiers and their families throughout the PCS process and this summer's unpredictable challenges, Candler said. Army leaders have worked to provide transportation officers with tools to address moving emergencies and dilemmas.

"We are in this together; patience and flexibility will be essential in making it through this peak PCS season," Candler said.

Whether you're a new drone pilot or have years of experience, FAA rules and safety tips exist to help you fly safely in the national airspace.



Drone operators in the local area, especially those who wish to fly near any of Fort Rucker's stagefields or basefields, should call **USAACE G3 Air** to avoid interference with USAACE flight training.

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Army offers helpful PCS resources as COVID-19 creates household goods shipment delays

Fort Leonard Wood
Public Affairs

(Editor's note: Fort Rucker Public Affairs contributed localized information for this article)

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – The COVID-19 pandemic has put strains on many aspects of normality around the world, and the large numbers of service members completing a permanent-change-of-station move this summer are seeing delays in household goods shipments due to private-sector shortages in labor, equipment and supplies.

To alleviate as much of the uncertainty as possible, the Army has tools available and advice to make a PCS more convenient, predictable and user friendly.

The Army PCS Move App — available for download from the Google Play and Apple app stores — offers information on financial management, entitlements, types of moves, planning, scheduling and the claims process. In addition, it provides practical advice, links and interactive functions such as live chat to make the PCS move a low-hassle experience.

Additionally, local transportation offices are ready to help. Contact information for the closest transportation office can be found at the official Department of Defense Customer Moving Portal, or by calling the Army PCS Help Desk at 1-800-521-9959.

At Fort Rucker, the installation transporta-

tion office is located in Bldg. 5700, Rm. 270, and is open Mondays-Fridays from 7:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. For more information, call 334-255-9842.

For more information on moving to or from Fort Rucker, check out the newcomers section of the post's website at <https://home.army.mil/rucker/index.php/newcomers>, or call relocation services at 334-255-3735.

Upon receipt of orders, Soldiers should immediately create an account or log on to the Defense Personal Property System, upload their orders and complete all shipment applications for the move. The next step is to visit the local transportation office for counseling, which will assist Soldiers, civilians and families with state-side and overseas moves. By contacting the transportation office quickly, customers will have a better chance of scheduling a convenient move, receive confirmation of booking a moving company in advance, and receive approval to conduct what's called a personally procured move. A PPM, as they're commonly called, is designed to provide service members with an alternative to move their household goods on their own. Members may move their personal property themselves, using rental equipment, their own vehicle or by hiring their own commercial carrier. For more information on PPMs, visit <https://move.mil/tutorials/create-a-ppm-shipment>.

Since each move has unique needs and requirements, Military One Source offers strategies for smooth moves, relocation assistance and personalized support that can be found on their website. Their 24/7 hotline – 1-833-645-6683 – provides customer-support representatives who can offer assistance and answer questions. The Army also released three household goods claims videos, located on the Army PCS Move App, to provide answers to frequently asked questions.

Army officials also offered the following tips to make a PCS run as smoothly as possible.

- * Soldiers may request their government travel charge card limit be raised to the maximum of \$25,000, to be used for authorized moving expenses.

- * Soldiers and families PCSing without a GTCC may request a pay advance through their Organizational Defense Travel Administrator if they're planning to conduct a PPM.

- * Soldiers should reach out to their gaining installation housing office as soon as they get their PCS orders.

- * Beware of scammers. Use only an approved moving company registered with the federal government. More information can be found at the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration website.

Soldiers PCSing outside the continental United States are authorized an overseas housing allowance, dislocation allowance and temporary lodging allowance for no more than 60 days. However, extensions may be authorized when certain reasons exist, such as non-arrival of household goods or a delay in the availability of government quarters due to service requirements.

Soldiers PCSing inside the continental United States are authorized a basic allowance for housing, dislocation allowance and temporary lodging expense up to 10 days, depending on the location. TLE reimbursement must not exceed \$290 per day.

Options exist for Soldiers and families with

no DOD moving company assigned who have a 30-day or less home sale or expiring lease, or a short-notice report date that cannot be extended; or a short-notice DOD moving company cancellation or missed pack and pick up.

Option 1: The government picks up the household goods and places them into an origin storage facility until a DOD moving company can move it forward to the destination with some delays expected.

Option 2: The Soldier conducts a PPM from the residence to a local self-storage facility and receives actual cost reimbursement until the government can schedule a DOD moving company to move it to the destination. An ACR allows reimbursement, which could be significantly higher than normal government contracted rates.

Option 3: The Soldier conducts a full PPM at 100 percent of what the government would pay a moving company to move all of the household goods from the origin to the destination duty station. This option is not recommended for OCONUS moves.

Option 4: The Soldiers receive an ACR memorandum from the transportation office to hire a commercial moving company with a minimum of two commercial invoice estimates.

After a shipment is delivered, Soldiers should complete the customer satisfaction survey on the Defense Personal Property System website. The survey results will help keep moving companies accountable by assessing their performance.

The deadline for claim notification is now 180 days after delivery – up from 120 days – which gives Soldiers, civilians and families ample time to identify and report lost or damaged goods.

Though the summer PCS season may feel different this year, the Army is doing what it can to take care of its most valuable asset – its people.



Lyster Army Health Clinic plans School and Sports Physical Day

By Janice Erdlitz
Lyster Army Health Clinic

Lyster Army Health Clinic readies youth for back to school with an upcoming School and Sports Physical Day July 24.

Clinic staff will host the day to serve as a one-stop source to complete mandatory school and sports physicals for students, who are ages 4-18 years old.

Lyster's commander, Lt. Col. Danielle Rodondi, remarked, "We found it important to schedule the event on a Saturday to offer additional access and convenience for our families with other commitments during the week. Our goal is to ensure our service members' children are prepared for the upcoming school year."

To participate, a parent or legal guardian must schedule an appointment and be pres-

ent during the physical. Parents must bring physical forms from their respective schools, as forms may vary by school. The parent should complete their portion of the form prior to arriving at Lyster to not delay appointment time. If the child has received any vaccines that are not recorded in the child's file, please bring any additional shot records to the appointment.

Additional important info before arriving at your appointment:

- By appointment only, no walk-ins.
 - Patient must be an enrolled beneficiary with their PCM at Lyster.
 - Patient must be present for appointment.
- Child must be present regardless of how recently the child has been evaluated by their



PCM.

· Please do not bring additional children to the appointment. If an additional child(ren) requires a sports physical, each child requires their own appointment.

· Only school/sports physicals will be addressed. If there are other concerns or issues (medication refills, referrals, acute issues, etc), please make an appointment during regular clinic hours.

· If the child wears glasses, please bring

the glasses to the appointment for the eye exam portion of the physical.

For more information, visit <https://lyster.tricare.mil>.

Children with chronic medical conditions including asthma, food allergies, attention deficit disorder, heart conditions or developmental delay, should schedule an appointment separately for an indepth assessment.

To schedule an appointment, call the Lyster Appointment Line at 800-261-7193.

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