

ARMY FLIER

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VOLUME 72 • NUMBER 4 • MARCH 10, 2022



Soldiers hold on to cargo during a sling load training exercise with a CH-47 Chinook at Fort Carson, Colo., Feb. 9.

ARMY PHOTO

MUNSON HEIGHTS

CG leads post, Corvias leadership on walking town hall

PAGE 2

AER KICKS OFF

Campaign begins to help Soldiers help Soldiers

PAGE 3

FAMILY TRADITION

Post firefighter of the year follows in father's footsteps

PAGE 4

CONNECTING

International military sponsors help liaison officers feel at home

PAGE 5

COVID TESTS

Lyster Army Health Clinic begins issuing at-home kits

PAGE 10

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

CG leads post, Corvias leadership through Munson Heights walking town hall

By Jim Hughes
Fort Rucker Public Affairs

The high level of participation in the latest housing walking town hall thrilled Fort Rucker leadership, and also helped some residents get fixes for their issues scheduled right then and there.

Maj. Gen. David J. Francis, U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence and Fort Rucker commanding general, led USAACE, garrison and Corvias leadership through the Munson Heights neighborhood Feb. 23 in an ongoing effort to bring leadership into the areas where people live to get feedback on people's experiences living on post.

The effort paid off big time, the general said, adding that participation was the highest since the walking town halls began last year.

"I'm very happy about that – the response from the community was great," Francis said. "This is all about making sure that our Soldiers and our families have a safe, great place to live. These walking town halls help us to see for ourselves how things are going. If people bring problems to our attention, we can get after them immediately."

This town hall was held as a result of feedback received from the Feb. 10 walking town hall through Allen Heights, according to Col. Robert J. Holcombe, Fort Rucker garrison commander.

"This town hall was out of sequence be-

cause we came out here to look at a specific issue that we had heard was a system-wide problem in an area of Munson Heights," he said, adding that the issue was plumbing backing up in a number of homes in one area.

"The great news is that what we found out on the ground is that most of the issues had already been resolved," Holcombe added. "It was well worth coming here, checking on things and verifying everything was taken care of."

"What we don't want is for residents to have an issue and no one's hearing them, or complaining about problems and it's somehow not reaching leadership," he said. "Corvias are great partners and really good at what they do, but there's no substitute for walking through and talking to residents one on one – that's why we do these town halls."

While some problems were brought up – a pest control issue, standing water in a backyard and an unsafe storm drain – most of the comments were of a positive nature on the on-post living experience, Francis said, adding that Corvias officials immediately took action to begin fixing the issues brought to the group's attention.

"It's great that our housing partner, Corvias, is getting a lot of good reviews on their responsiveness and the effectiveness of what they're doing for people," Francis said.



PHOTO BY JIM HUGHES

Maj. Gen. David J. Francis, U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence and Fort Rucker commanding general, and USAACE, garrison and Corvias leadership, meet with residents in the Munson Heights neighborhood on post during the latest housing walking town hall Feb. 23.

"There are always some exceptions to that, but for the most part people seem happy with their homes and the services they receive.

"Most of the residents we spoke to said they love living here, and that it's a great place for their kids to grow up and be able to play outside and not have security concerns – those sorts of things," he added. "We received overwhelmingly positive reactions this evening."

The healthy amount of feedback from this walking town hall helps fuel the desire to keep them going, Francis said.

"This will be an ongoing effort that will never stop – we have to make sure that we maintain visibility on the condition of our housing," the general said. "We have different sections of housing built in different time

periods at Fort Rucker. I think it's important for us to stay in touch with our residents and make sure that we're doing the things we need to do to make this a great place to live.

Francis also thanked the Corvias team, and "all of our Soldiers and families who live, play and work here on Fort Rucker."

Residents don't have to wait for a walking town hall to get help with any housing issues that crop up, Holcombe added.

"Corvias should always be people's first stop whenever they have an issue with their home," he said. "But if residents get to the point where their issue isn't being resolved, call the housing office in Bldg. 5700 (255-9230). We'll work it from there because we represent the Soldier in the relationship – they can always come to us for help."

SOLDIERS HELPING SOLDIERS

Fort Rucker kicks off annual Army Emergency Relief campaign

By Jim Hughes
Fort Rucker Public Affairs

Fort Rucker kicked off its annual Army Emergency Relief campaign during a ceremony in The Landing March 2.

Maj. Gen. David J. Francis, U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence and Fort Rucker commanding general and speaker at the event, said the AER campaign is among his favorites.

“I think that’s because it is by far the most impactful way that we impact our Soldiers – Soldiers Helping Soldiers,” he said. “That’s what AER has been doing for over 80 years. We do this to make sure that our Soldiers can focus on the task at hand in front of them.

“Whether that is having it to pay for groceries for their family because they had some unforeseen financial event, or paying to get a loved one or themselves home for a family emergency, or striving for a better way of life for their family by sending their spouses to college,” Francis added. “That is what AER does – it provides resources to our families to do that.”

The AER Campaign will run through May 15. The nonprofit organization was incorporated into the Army by the secretary of the war and the chief of staff of the Army in 1942 to support Soldiers and family members facing financial hardships, according to the AER website.

In the last 80 years, AER has provided \$2 billion to nearly 4 million Soldiers, including \$1 billion since 9/11. The organization is solely based on donations, and Soldiers can utilize those funds for an array of reasons.

According to the AER website, the organization can help with: emergency travel; natural

disaster preparation and evacuation; mortgage, rent and initial deposit; temporary lodging; food; health care not covered by TRICARE; vehicle costs; utilities; funeral expenses; and basic essential furniture.

“It alleviates (Soldiers’) unexpected financial hardships so that they don’t have to take on additional debt by relying on the off-post, high-interest rate sources – providing a fiscally responsible alternative to the temptation of turning to payday loans, rent to owns, or pawn shops when they need money urgently,” Francis said. “The assistance provided by AER comes in the form of a zero-interest loan or possibly a grant. The goal is to make AER the Soldier’s first choice for unexpected financial hardships.”

Last year alone at Fort Rucker, 79 active duty and retired Soldiers and their family members and survivors received almost \$190,000 in emergency assistance, the general said, adding that almost \$17,000 was provided as grants. “This would not have been possible without the hard work of leaders and emergency relief coordinators like all of you in here today.”

In addition to helping with unforeseen financial hardships, AER has secondary mission of providing scholarships to spouses and children of Soldiers. The scholarship program provides undergraduate education scholarships based on financial need for children, spouses, and orphans and widows of active duty and retired Soldiers, according to AER officials.

“I can tell you that is a magnificent program, and within the Wiregrass here we had



PHOTO BY JIM HUGHES

Col. Robert J. Holcombe, Fort Rucker garrison commander, Maj. Gen. David J. Francis, U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence and Fort Rucker commanding general, Command Sgt. Maj. James D. Wilson, Aviation Branch command sergeant major, and Command Sgt. Maj. Raymond P. Quitugua Jr., garrison command sergeant major, sign donation sheets to Army Emergency Relief during the kickoff for the Fort Rucker AER Awareness Campaign March 2 at The Landing.

12 spouses and 68 children that benefitted this school year receiving more than \$311,000 in scholarship assistance,” Francis said. “Again, that would not be possible without the team in this room helping us to get AER moving.”

Last year, the Fort Rucker community supported the program with a little more than \$110,000 during its campaign, but in turn received more \$500,000 in support. With that in mind, the general said he’d like everyone to give generously to the worthy cause.

“The mission for commanders and AER representative is to ensure that 100% of the Soldiers and civilians on Fort Rucker have been offered the opportunity to donate to AER,” Francis said. “AER is about Soldiers taking care of Soldiers, and I give my thanks to our AER

lead this year and all of the AER leaders in the units out there. Our Soldiers and our families here at Fort Rucker, they are the ones who truly benefit from your work during this campaign.”

The All-In Federal Credit Union will, as it has for the past 31 years, organize a golf scramble tournament to raise funds for AER May 6 at Silver Wings Golf Course, according to Capt. Peter Blickhahn, Fort Rucker 2022 AER campaign coordinator. Last year’s tournament raised \$30,000.

“AER is about Soldiers Helping Soldiers. It’s what we all do!” the captain added.

To donate to AER, people should contact their unit coordinator, or donate online <https://www.armyemergencyrelief.org/>.

FAMILY TRADITION

Post firefighter of the year follows in father's footsteps

By Jim Hughes

Fort Rucker Public Affairs

For the Directorate of Public Safety's firefighter of the year, working on Fort Rucker is a bit of a family tradition.

Lieutenant John Ross, a second-generation firefighter on post and a third-generation Fort Rucker employee, said he feels honored to be named the directorate's firefighter of the year.

"I am more than ecstatic to have earned this award over so many other deserving candidates," he said, adding that he believes his willingness and motivation to learn, and then spread that knowledge to his colleagues, helped him achieve the honor.

He said he's proud to work with such a great team.

"This team is very special," he said. "We are the largest fire department in the U.S. Army and we have a mission for the home of the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence. That being said, we have many unique endeavors that most fire departments do not encounter.

"Being part of this department is definitely rewarding. I could not imagine serving with a finer group of individuals," Ross added. "DPS received (the Sgt. Maj. Wardell B. Turner Award recognizing it as the best in the Army) last year simply because all three sections did what it took day in and day out. I would like to thank everyone from the top of the chain of

command down to the bottom for what they do on a daily basis!"

Ross' family tradition began when his paternal grandfather was stationed at Fort Rucker in the 1960s, the Carroll High School graduate said.

"While here, he met my grandmother at the Ozark courthouse," he said, adding that they married a year later. "After a 20-year career in the Army, they moved back to Ozark in 1980, and both grandmother and grandfather were hired as a civilians on post."

His grandmother worked at the Soldier Service Center helping Soldiers in- and out-process and retired after 21 years. His grandfather worked with the Directorate of Public Works and retired after 22 years.

"My father got hired at the tire shop on Fort Rucker in 1986 and transferred over to the fire department in 1988," Ross said. "He retired with a rewarding 28 years of service in December 2014 as an assistant chief of operations."

Ross followed in his father's footsteps in May 2015 when he was hired on as a firefighter at Fort Rucker.

"I plan to work until retirement, as well. I can only hope to be as successful and as much of an asset as my family before me," he said. "When it came to picking a place to work as



PHOTO BY JIM HUGHES

Ross

a firefighter, there were no other options – my roots were already planted. I grew up on this installation watching my father lead other firefighters."

But Ross didn't immediately jump right into his father's footsteps.

"To be honest, I was not exactly sure what I wanted to do with my life," he said. "I had considered other careers, and was leaning towards attending the Alabama Aviation College to be an aircraft mechanic at Fort Rucker, but God had other plans – He kind of put firefighting into my lap.

"I had no plans on being a firefighter until one day I was informed that Ozark was holding a firefighter recruit class the following week. Next thing I know, I had graduated and was a certified firefighter," he said. "At that point, I decided I would make a career out of it."

He's been at it for nine years, with stints at the Troy and Andalusia municipal fire depart-

ments before spending the past seven years at Fort Rucker, where he was recently promoted to the rank of lieutenant.

"My primary duties as a firefighter are to respond to fires, vehicle accidents, medical emergencies, hazardous material incidents, technical rescue, and any other emergency that require life, safety, property conservation and scene stabilization," Ross said.

He is also heavily involved in the unit's vehicle maintenance program and volunteered to take charge of scheduling annual physical fitness exams for the firefighters on his shift, according to a DPS write-up on his performance that also referred to him as the fire department's "go-to guy."

"My philosophy behind having a successful career is having integrity, a hard-work ethic, pride in the job, a positive attitude and, most importantly, taking care of people," Ross said.

CONNECTING

International military sponsors help aviation liaison officers feel at home

By Kelly Morris
USAAACE Public Affairs

Those who enter the gates to Fort Rucker have likely heard the words many times: “Welcome home.”

For international liaison officers and their families stationed at the home of Army Aviation, the welcome they receive goes beyond a salutation. Before they arrive, a volunteer network is already established to make them feel more at home, and ensure they have a ready resource in the local community.

Lt. Col. Helen Mammino, Australian liaison officer, and her family already knew by word-of-mouth of sponsors George and Harriet Schmitz. The couple has served as volunteer sponsors for international students and liaison officers for years. Within a few weeks of Mammino's arrival in the States, she received a call with a friendly welcome for her and her family.

“I instantly knew I had that connection with them,” Mammino said. “It’s a trusted familiarity when you’re connected through mutual friends. We’re very fortunate to be part of that sense of community and friendship.”

The presence of liaison officers like Mammino at the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence helps strengthen mutually-beneficial relationships with U.S. allies and partners.

For Mammino, who has a background in

aviation special operations and just completed battalion command in Australia, this is her first time serving as an LNO.

“It’s a big move, and it’s a big change. It’s always daunting, particularly with a teenage daughter,” she said. “Knowing we have people to come to is reassuring.”

George Schmitz, a Vietnam veteran and former OH-6 Cayuse driver, retired after 20 years of active duty service, settled in the Wiregrass area, and then worked for 26 years at Fort Rucker before retiring as a contractor.

“It felt like we never really got out of the military, being here, supporting the military, and that’s part of this thing,” he said. “To us it was just a natural extension, doing what we’re doing supporting people in the military and giving us the opportunity to meet great people. We’ve gotten a lot more out of this than we’ve ever given, believe me.”

A Soldier for Life, George and his wife Harriet have their own international story. Harriet hails from England, and the couple met in Europe while George was still on active duty.

“We spent 10 years in Germany, and coming over here Harriet went through the throes of being Americanized, so she better understands what a lot of the liaison wives or students’ wives (experience),” George said.

In the past Harriet has encouraged people to get involved in volunteerism in the



PHOTO BY KELLY MORRIS

Lt. Col. Helen Mammino, Australian liaison officer to the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence, her husband Marty, and their daughter Kate stand for a photo with Harriet and George Schmitz, a local couple who volunteer as sponsors for international military families Feb. 17.

community as a way to meet people and find resources, including through the Friends of the Library, where Harriet served as president for years.

“You try to incorporate them into things that you do in your personal life,” she said.

They first became sponsors after they heard about the call for volunteer sponsors for international students, and later their role shifted more to liaison officers.

“We thought it would be something fun to do to meet some fellow Europeans,” Harriet said.

They have hosted more than 155 students and officers and their families since 1990, including LNOs, doctors, individual students, and exchange officers comprised of British, Canadians, Germans, Australians, Dutch, Koreans, Danish and Italians.

They have taken groups to college football games at Troy University to explain the American sport. They provide tips on places to visit and stay, ideas for day trips, restaurants and events going on with arts and theater.

Little things people don’t think about can be somewhat challenging, such as differences in measurements for cooking, cuts of meat, customs, finding their way around, language barriers, or even shopping.

“If you buy something you don’t like you can return it. A lot of countries, you can’t do that. America is very liberal that way. ... Just little things you don’t think much of,” Harriet said.

The couple has even shown up at Grandparents Day at school to support international military children, or served as a

CONNECTING

cont.

backup point of contact to pick the child up after school if the parents are out of town.

They have enjoyed sharing American traditions and holidays, including having as many as 20 or more people at their home to celebrate Christmas and Thanksgiving.

Mammino's husband, Marty Colyer, who recently retired from the Australian military, said holidays in a new country have to be experienced really to be understood.

"A lot of foreigners get exposure to what Thanksgiving is superficially through these TV shows but don't really understand it. When you're included in a Thanksgiving dinner — and I've had a couple operations overseas and then here — it's a wonderful personalization of it. You feel very grateful," he said.

George and Harriet have also learned a lot about other nations over the years, including more about Anzac Day — a national day of remembrance in Australia and New Zealand that commemorates those who served and died in all wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations.

They hope people will keep an open mind while they are in-country, and grow their understanding beyond what they have seen about the U.S. on television.

"You just try to give them a better picture of America and let them know America is not always what you perceive it to be," Harriet said. "Americans are very generous people. They will help you."

The bottom line is just letting the liaison officers know they always have a friend to come to, and encouraging them to get as much out of their opportunity in the States as they can.

"We always say 'it's what you make of it,'" George said. "We just want them to know they've got an open door."

Fort Rucker DPS is hiring Department of the Army Security Guards

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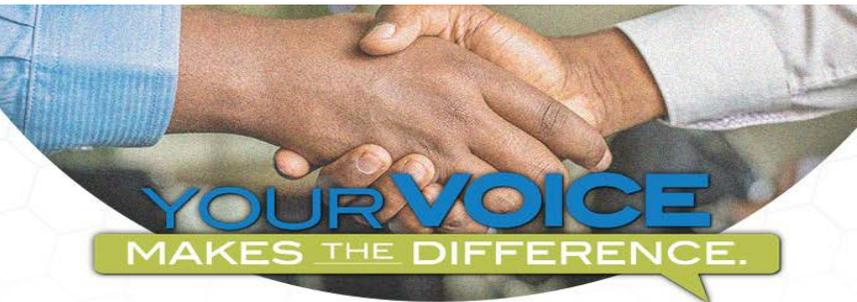
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TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS

Fort Rucker organizations team up to help military youth develop self-worth, healthy relationships

By Christy Davis

Fort Rucker Victim Advocate Coordinator

One in three high school students experiences some form of abuse from a dating partner, according to Military OneSource.

February each year is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. This February, the Fort Rucker Family Advocacy Program encouraged teens to develop self-worth and healthy relationships with their peers.

The Fort Rucker Family Advocacy Program hosted several activities throughout the month with the support of the youth center, MWR business operations, ACS financial readiness and the riding stables.

The month was launched with Balloonarama, hosted by Stacy Puzon, family advocacy specialist. During this event, teens were taught the differences between good and bad stress, along with being given the tools on how to support each other through those stressful seasons.

The month-long campaign continued with an event called Love Yo-Self, presented by Roxy Fuentes from the Exchange Center

for Child Abuse Prevention, which is a community helping agency that supports Fort Rucker families. Fuentes shared the importance of self-worth, self-care, decision-making, healthy relationships and boundaries.

Beth Gunter, ACS financial readiness program manager, facilitated a group activity and presentation on the importance of developing healthy financial attitudes and practices early in life that will carry over to good relationships as adults.

The month culminated with the Barn Dance, which provided an opportunity for fellowship, encouragement and communication amongst the youth, all while learning to line dance.

The dance was held in the barn at the riding stables with the support of Joan Varner, lead recreation assistant at the stables. With the help of three-line dance instructors, Tori Sarabia, contract victim advocate, Mason Barrington, ACS program support assistant, and Mary Smith, youth center administrative



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Preventing Teen Dating Violence

Help teens develop healthy connections and recognize behaviors that can lead to abuse.

assistant. Jeff Nunley, CYS facility director, provided pizza and drinks for the teens.

Youth center staff provided much-needed support to make this event possible. Ron Cook, with business operations, also participated by issuing 60 gift cards to include bowling, golfing and drinks from the Coffee Zone. The teens were allowed to win the gift cards, as well as other prizes.

One teen asked to exchange his golf certificate for a bowling certificate because he thought his family would enjoy that activity together.

The TDVAM Campaign created an atmosphere for teens to gain a better understanding of healthy relationships. Each event averaged 20-30 teens in attendance; however, the Barn Dance attendance was at 35 teens. Students were given evaluation forms after each event. One student reported, "Self-love is important." Another student said, "How you see yourself can affect you bad and good."

This month has been amazing – the teens are so nice and kind to each other and they enjoyed the time. The family advocacy team enjoyed pouring more positivity into them.

Aviation Soldier speaks on her inspiration to serve

By Pfc. Kimberly Chastain

D Company, 2-158th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 16th Combat Aviation Brigade

JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD, Wash. — If I could extend one pivotal shred of advice to any woman who will hear the call to serve in the U.S. Army, it would be this: Your legacy cannot outlive you if you refuse to live out your legacy. Today is the history of tomorrow, so it's best to act accordingly.

In my time as an enlisted Army Aviation Soldier, I have learned, grown and exceeded my own expectations in countless ways. The progress I've made as a person is unmatched by any other life experience prior to my enlistment. Army Aviation is the collaboration of passion for flight, the skill of the aviators and the dedication of maintainers such as me.

I'd be lying if I claimed to never have

a difference of perspective than my male counterparts. Conversely, I couldn't be more emphatic when I say they've taught me that Selfless Service, along with the other six Army values, is universal. After all, Army Aviation maintenance can only be successful if the team is cohesive. By putting the success of the team above ourselves, we establish camaraderie, and through that there will also be victory.

It is this determined, timeless outlook on teamwork that I and other women service members share. The example of cohesion, camaraderie and tenacity I draw upon for inspiration would be that of the Ninety-Nines.

Founded in November of 1929 by women aviators, for women aviators, these fearless fe-

males forged the way for women in aviation. Their first president, none other than Amelia Earhart, utilized her influence alongside the group for the generational benefit of future female aviation enthusiasts. Of this she said, "Aviation, this young modern giant, exemplifies the possible relationship of women and the creations of science. Although women have not taken full advantage of its use and benefits, air travel is as available to them as to men."

I'm not only an aircraft maintainer, but I one day hope to advance to the position of crew chief. I deeply treasure the everyday adventure that is my career and take great pride to work alongside every Soldier on my team, for there's no greater learning experience than the one you never expected. I may have much room to improve, but it sure is a good thing that the sky's the limit.



PHOTO BY CAPT. KYLE ABRAHAM

Pfc. Kimberly Chastain is a UH-60 helicopter repairer from Keene, Texas, assigned to D Co., 2-158th AHB, 16th CAB at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.



DG

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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12th Combat Aviation Brigade Apaches arrive to Saber Strike 22

By Capt. Gabrielle Hildebrand

Army News Service

Nearly 20 AH-64D Apache Longbow helicopters from the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade landed at Lielvarde Air Base, Latvia, Feb. 24. The helicopters and the Soldiers of the 1-3rd Attack Battalion, 12 CAB, are in Latvia to participate in the multinational exercise, Saber Strike 22.

"Saber Strike 22 is an invaluable opportunity for the 12th CAB to train air-ground operations with our allies, fostering trust with our Latvian and Lithuanian host nation forces," said Col. G. Patrick Schuck, the 12 CAB commander.

The 12 CAB is deploying to Lithuania and

Latvia to support the exercise and validate U.S. Army Europe and Africa's operational reach along NATO's eastern flank. Held every two years, Saber Strike 22 began Feb. 28 and continues through March 18.

The exercise includes about 13,000 participants from 13 nations. Exercise activities will occur across the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia.

"Training events like Saber Strike allow our aircrews to conduct realistic training throughout the year and across the expanse of Europe," said Lt. Col. David Roman, com-



PHOTO BY CAPT. GABRIELLE HILDEBRAND

Local Latvian media take photos and video of AH-64D Apache Longbow helicopters assigned to the 12th CAB at Lielvarde Military Airfield Feb. 24.



PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. THOMAS MORT

An AH-64D Apache Longbow helicopter assigned to 1-3rd Attack Battalion, 12th Combat Aviation Brigade, arrives at Lielvarde Military Airfield, Latvia, Feb. 24.

mander, 1-3rd Aviation Brigade.

The 2nd Cavalry Regiment will be joining Saber Strike 22, as well. Due to contingency operations, Bravo "Blackcats" Company from the 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment will provide heavy lift capabilities.

"The Blackcats are excited to support 12th CAB and 7th ATC with heavy assault elements," said Capt. Billy Armstrong, commander. "Any chance to train alongside our NATO partners and fly with our fellow aviators is a great opportunity."

Training events like Saber Strike 22 are

long-planned and show that NATO allies and partners stand stronger together.

Upon completing the exercise activities, the personnel and equipment are scheduled to return to their home garrisons.

12 CAB conducts multi-domain, realistic, and challenging training exercises and remains ready for full-spectrum combat aviation operations.

For more information on Saber Strike 22, visit <https://www.dvidshub.net/feature/SaberStrike>.



Lyster Army Health Clinic distributes at-home COVID test kits

By Janice Erdlitz

Lyster Army Health Clinic Public Affairs

Lyster Army Health Clinic began distributing at-home COVID test kits to TRICARE beneficiaries March 7.

The test kits are available for pick up at the Lyster Army Health Clinic's AOD Desk at the front of the clinic from 3-4:15 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays (excluding holidays and training days).

Please remember to bring your military ID card for pick up.

About at-home COVID-19 Tests:

• At-home COVID-19 tests are tests that you can take at home and get your results without sending a sample to a laboratory for testing. These tests are easy to use, produce rapid results, and can be bought over-the-

counter if necessary.

Did you test positive for COVID-19?

• You should report your positive at-home test results to your health care provider, who will record the test result in your electronic health record.

Your health care team will help you with questions about potential and current COVID-19 symptoms, what self-care you can provide at home, and when to seek health care if symptoms worsen.

Learn more about your COVID-19 at-home test options at <https://www.health.mil/News/Articles/2022/02/25/Answering-Your-Questions-About-COVID19-Testing>.



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The "Army Flier" is an authorized publication for the Fort Rucker community, published under the authority of AR 360-1.

Contents are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, or Fort Rucker.

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.

The PAO staff reserves the right to edit submissions selected for publication. For more information about the "Army Flier," call (334) 255-1239.

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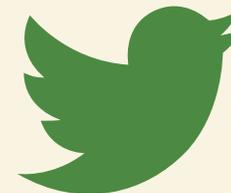
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