



FORGING THE

WARRIOR SPIRIT

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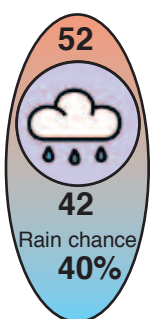


CHUCK GANNON / GUARDIAN

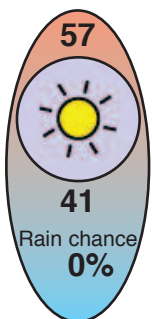
Cannon fire honors President George H.W. Bush

Soldiers with the 5th Battalion, 25th Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, render a 50-gun salute in memory of former President George H.W. Bush, at 5 p.m., Dec. 6 at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk. The 5-25 also rendered a 21-gun salute at noon. For story see page 7 of today's Guardian. Bush passed away Nov. 30.

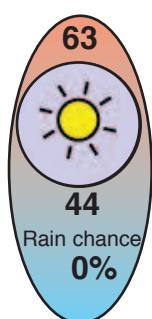
Weekend weather



Today



Thursday



Friday

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Viewpoint

Don't forget Soldiers suffering invisible wounds

By Retired Lt. Col. MARK LESLIE
DPTMS chief, Plans and Operations

FORT POLK, La. — Let me precede this piece by saying that I am not a behavioral health specialist, a medical professional nor do I claim to be. But with more than 30 years in the Army from private to senior NCO, to lieutenant colonel, I think this gives me a unique perspective on Soldiers and their behavior.

A few weeks ago I found out that a friend of mine, a senior leader in our Army, had taken his own life.



Leslie

Sadly, this was not anything new; it seems that every few months I learn similar news from my circle of friends.

Less than one percent of a nation of roughly 350 million people has served in uniform. That is an amazing statistic.

To me, that makes that less than one percent an elite and special class of American citizens. Those veterans are the less than one percent that are willing to put their lives on the line and the prosperity of their families and endure the less than predictable life style of the military for the other 99 percent of the nation. They shoulder the load — often silently and without complaint — of the nation's security for others and do so willingly and without an expectation of adulation or entitlement from those they serve. The veteran is a special breed of citizen that expects nothing

in return but the acknowledgment and respect from a citizenry that, at times, seems ignorant of their sacrifice and apathetic to their contributions.

According to the last Veterans Administration study, there are about 22 veteran suicides a day, including active-duty Soldiers. This averages out to about one every 65 minutes. While that statistic is staggering enough, it is hard to visualize. So, let's put in in perspective to Fort Polk: That means in

about a year every active-duty Soldier on Fort Polk would be dead. That is quite shocking; in about a year, with no action by the enemy, criminal acts, traffic accidents, disease or natural causes, the Army loses an entire brigade combat team, the cream of the corps with Operations Group, a top notch MP battalion, an engineer battalion with specialized skills that we desperately need and a host of special medical professionals from BJACH along with a number of other specialized MOSs that take years to train. Think about that for a minute. In less than a year, every active-duty Soldier on Fort Polk is dead.

What is the point of these statistics? To make you think about the enormity of the problem. Invisible wounds are present in our ranks and they are as important to address as visible wounds.

After this most recent tragedy, I informed my employees. Many had known this Soldier and considered him a solid leader and family man with a bright future, set to retire and enjoy the fruits of his labor. While none of us are behavioral health spe-

cialists, we are retired senior leaders in the Army, know Soldiers and know the struggles veterans face. This "sit-down" wasn't scripted or planned, but it was probably the best suicide prevention discussion I ever had. There was no script, no slides and no agenda — it was off the cuff, honest talk from the heart and from men who were sick with sorrow and desperation to find a way to suspend this wave of suicides of America's finest. We had known warriors that

had taken their own life and were affected by it. Traumatized by the haunting feeling of "what did I miss, what could I have done?"

There was a common theme that emerged: Continued engagement by leadership, by leaders closest to the problem that knew them and what they had been through. This continued engagement did not just apply to active-duty leaders; it is a persistent obligation — for life — with those we have served with in trying times. When you change command, have a change of responsibility, ETS, retire or hang up the uniform, it doesn't mean that you stop leading. Once you have led men, they will always see you that way; you're stuck with it.

As their commander or leader, it is an honor and a compliment. I have driven to Texas in the middle of the night on a work week, sent money, bought plane tickets, hosted Soldiers in my home for days, called friends to do a QRF and yes, even called the police to make sure one of my men was safe, long after my time as their

Commentary

Please see **Suicide**, page 4

In our view

Guardian staff asked Fort Polk residents, "What is your favorite Christmas song?"
Here are their responses:



Sgt. La'Juan Gordon: "All I Want For Christmas is You by Mariah Carey."



Sgt. Paul Leva: "Baby It's Cold Outside."



Spc. Gabriel Artega: "'This is Halloween' — it's a great Christmas song."



Melissa Rock: "Baby It's Cold Outside."



Guardian

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Briefs

ACP holiday hours

The Fort Polk Directorate of Emergency Services announces the following hours for the installation Visitor Control Center and access control points during the holiday season:

• **Dec. 24**

Visitor Control Center closed.

ACPs 1 (main gate, Louisiana Avenue) and 7 (K Avenue and Alligator Lake) open 24 hours.

ACPs 2 (University Parkway, La. Hwy 476 North), 5 (La. Hwy 467 South and La. Hwy 10) and 6 (Chaffee Road at North Fort housing) closed.

• **Dec. 25**

VCC closed.

ACPs 1 and 7 open 24 hours.

ACPs 2, 5 and 6 closed.

• **Dec. 26**

VCC open 24 hours.

ACPs 1 and 7 open 24 hours.

ACPs 2, 5 and 6 open 5 a.m.-9 p.m.

• **Dec. 31**

VCC closed.

ACPs 1 and 7 open 24 hours.

ACPs 2, 5 and 6 closed.

• **Jan. 1**

VCC closed.

ACPs 1 and 7 open 24 hours.

ACPs 2, 5 and 6 closed.

• **Jan. 2**

VCC open 24 hours.

ACPs 1 and 7 open 24 hours.

ACPs 2, 5 and 6 open 5 a.m.-9 p.m.

For more information call 531-2677.

Weapons registration

The Fort Polk Directorate of Emergency Services reminds residents and those who work on or visit the installation that privately owned weapons or firearms, must be registered on post if they are to be brought on the installation for any reason, including, but not limited to the following: Sales, hunting, use at Family Morale, Welfare and Recreation ranges, and exhibitions. This includes rifles, handguns, black powder weapons and historical firearms that may be part of a collection. Personnel residing on Fort Polk have five business days to register it with the Visitors Control Center, located just outside of access control point 1 on Louisiana Avenue.

BJACH accredited

The Joint Commission, an independent, not-for-profit organization that accredits and certifies health care programs in the United States, conducted a follow-up sustainability survey at Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital Dec. 10. BJACH remains fully accredited.

Fort Polk unveils new smartphone app

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

FORT POLK, La. — Fort Polk Home of Heroes has a new smartphone app.

Fort Polk's app, which is free, provides critical two-way communication between Fort Polk and its residents or anyone who wants to be connected with the installation.

This will be the exclusive app for communications from the installation with press releases, bulletins, alerts, an event calendar and more.

Communications to Fort Polk can be made as well. Your smartphone will now be your platform for submitting tips that may help in solving

crimes and locating missing persons or vehicles.

Fort Polk's app also provides easy one touch calling for non-emergency calls.

To get the full benefits of the application, users should enable location services. This will give exact gps and grid coordinates should you be sending in a crime tip or a picture of a facility or area that needs attention.

You should also allow push notification which will allow you to stay up-to-date on important Fort Polk information.

To get the app, Type "Fort Polk Home of Heroes" in the search box of your app store and download for free.



Changes open door to more spousal hires

By RONALD CAMP

Human resources assistant

FORT POLK, La. — More spouses can now apply for federal jobs after recent changes to the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019 and Executive Order 13473, which covers non-relocating military spouses of active-duty members of the armed forces in Program "S" of the Priority Placement Program. A significant program change as applied in the past allows spouses who were married after their spouse's arrival at Fort Polk to register in the program. Previously, spouses must have been married to the active-duty sponsor prior to their relocation to Fort Polk.

To register, spouses must be otherwise eligible and meet the following criteria:

- Must be married to the active-duty sponsor and reside within the commuting area of the sponsor's permanent duty station.
- Must not have received a permanent offer of federal employment to an appropriated or non-appropriated funded position.

Until new implementation guidance is issued from the Office of Personnel Management and

Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service, spouses are permitted to provide the following documentation as proof of their eligibility through the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center, affording them an opportunity to register in PPP and receive spousal preference:

- Proof of marriage to an active-duty sponsor (even if they were married after they moved to Fort Polk);

- Proof of military member's active-duty status (active-duty sponsor's approved military orders);

- That the spouse is residing within the commuting area of the sponsor's permanent duty station (documents that substantiate such as housing letter or bill providing address);

- That the spouse has not received a permanent offer of federal employment (this must be confirmed at time of registration counseling).

If all criteria are met, then the Fort Polk CPAC will assist the spouse with registering in Program S of the PPP.

For additional questions or assistance with registration in the Military Spouse Program, please contact Ronald Camp, human resources assistant, Fort Polk CPAC, at 531-4020.

Report Suspicious Activity or Behavior

iWATCH ARMY

iREPORT **i KEEP US SAFE**

See Something Say Something

Trump picks Milley for chairman of Joint Chiefs

By **JOE LACDAN**
Army News Service

PHILADELPHIA — On a frigid afternoon in Philadelphia, President Donald Trump stood with his next top military advisor prior to the annual Army-Navy football game.

Trump selected Gen. Mark A. Milley, chief of Staff of the Army, as the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In a tweet preceding the annual Army-Navy game Dec. 8, Trump tweeted his nomination of Milley.

"I am pleased to announce my nomination of four-star General Mark Milley, Chief of Staff of the United States Army — as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, replacing General Joe Dunford, who will be retiring," the president tweeted.

"I am thankful to both of these incredible men for their service to our Country."

If confirmed by the Senate, Milley would succeed Marine Corps Gen. Joe Dunford, who has served in the position since September 2015. Dunford will step down in September 2019. Trump said the date of transition is "to be determined." Milley would be the 20th man to hold the position since General of the Army Omar N. Bradley in 1949.

Milley flanked Trump at midfield as the president officiated the coin toss prior to the Army-Navy rivalry game held at Lincoln Financial Field Saturday, won by the Black Knights 17-10.

Milley, a Massachusetts native and Princeton graduate, has served as the Army's 39th chief of staff since 2015. Previously, he commanded U.S. Army Forces command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He served as commanding general of III Corps, based at Fort Hood, Texas, and earlier as commander of the 10th Mountain Division.



Gen. Mark A. Milley, the Army's chief of staff, right, was nominated to succeed Marine Corps General Joe Dunford, left, as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. President Donald Trump tweeted the nomination Dec. 8.

Army brief

Blended retirement

WASHINGTON — Less than a month remains for Soldiers to opt into the Blended Retirement System and so far only 19 percent of those eligible have switched to the new plan.

Pentagon officials are concerned many Soldiers will be missing out on benefits under BRS that they can take with them if they leave the Army before serving 20 years.

One key benefit of the new retirement sys-

tem is that Soldiers can keep their money from the Thrift Savings Plan — including government contributions and matching funds — when they leave the service.

Under BRS, Soldiers will receive matching funds from the government every paycheck for their TSP contributions on up to 5 percent of their earnings. And if they decide to leave service before retiring, they will be able to keep those funds.

While all military members who began their

service this year automatically fall under the new retirement plan, Congress gave existing troops until Dec. 31 to opt into BRS.

Active-duty Soldiers who had fewer than 12 years of service as of Dec. 31, 2017 are eligible; and so are reserve-component members with fewer than 4,320 points.

MilitaryOneSource provides free financial support 24/7 at (800) 342-9647, and a BRS calculator is at www.militarypay.defense.gov/Calculators/BRS/.

Suicide

Continued from page 2

commander was over. To lead in combat and bring them back only to lose them years later is devastating, not only to the victim's immediate family, but their Army family as well. Leaders and friends have to live with that loss, and it is no less traumatic as a combat loss. Regardless of method, a loss is still a loss, and to me, a loss due to suicide is more traumatic than a combat loss. They were alone and we weren't there when they needed us most.

What our group deduced, is that there is no magic bullet. Soldiers in today's war live through attacks that they would have never previously lived through due to advances in protection. But that does not mean they have no wounds. There are invisible wounds that may take years to resonate, form or evolve.

For all our toughness, the one thing you can't make tougher or more resilient is the brain. If the brain is scrambled like a shaken egg in an IED blast, it may be years before a symptom or behavior is present.

This war had changed my thoughts on suicide. Before, I thought only weaklings and those unprepared for the reality of combat — and life —

chose suicide. But this war has changed that. Some of the bravest and toughest men I know, men I have personally seen exhibit Herculean acts in combat, who have saved my life at the expense of their own flesh and blood have struggled with this. They are not weak; they are wounded, and I feel just as obligated today to care for and lead them as I did then.

Army leaders have to be tough, but you can also exercise empathy, compassion and caring. Obligation as a leader never ends; that's the way they see us — it's the burden we bear. I think we owe it to them. They did the extraordinary for us, we are in their debt for life, to lead them and if necessary, save them.

When I heard of the recent passing of my friend, I had the urge to call one of my former Soldiers who struggled with what we had experienced.

This Soldier had been my personal security when I was an advisor. This job was nothing ordinary and we experienced our share of horror. He had been medically retired as a result of his injuries, against his wishes. When I called, he was sitting in a parking lot in the early morning

with a loaded weapon in his car. He said he had no intention of using it. I changed my plans that day and drove several hours to meet him and have a cup of coffee and reassure him that he was still a man, still a warrior and still had a lot to contribute.

I ask every leader in our Army — present and past — to reach out to the warriors they think may be suffering from invisible wounds. Do it today, tomorrow, next week and beyond. It is a life-long commitment. Reassure them and remind them of some of their finest hours and contributions. Let them know they still have a place, and of their self-worth. Let them know they are important, that they matter and still have more to give. Let them know that what they did — and continue to do — matters. Someone cares, we care, and the Army family cares. I think you will be glad you did. Consider it a Christmas gift to humanity.

If you or someone you know is contemplating suicide call the Fort Polk Chaplain's Office at 531-4916/7501, the Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline at (800) 273-8255 or the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at (800) 784-2433.

Healthy smiles result from Fort Polk DENTAC award-winning model

GUARDIAN STAFF

Editor's note: The following Army News story was written by Erin Perez, Regional Health Command – Central, and has been supplemented by Angie Thorne, Fort Polk Guardian staff writer.

FORT POLK, La. — The Fort Polk Dental Activity has earned the Defense Health Agency 2018 Advancement Toward High Reliability in Healthcare Award. They are among four recipients in the Improved Access Award category, earning their award for Readiness Access.

Lt. Col. Paul Colthirst, commander of the Fort Polk DENTAC, and his team, submitted an initiative called Fort Polk Dental Readiness and Access that described the implementation of a dynamic Assess, Develop, Assure concept model, known as ADA.

Assess, Develop and Assure — that's what the dentists at Fort Polk do every day, said Colthirst. "The first thing we do when a patient comes to us is make an assessment of their dental health. Then we develop a treatment plan and assure that the work gets done. Add in the fact that assess, develop, assure is the motto of Fort Polk DENTAC and a play on the acronym of the American Dental Association. It seemed simple to take all of that information one step further to create the ADA model," he said.

The model determines the point at which Soldiers will have optimum access to care by comparing historical Soldier readiness processing data to unit coordinated scheduling to increase the Soldiers' access to premier dental care, and ensure unit readiness.

For the ADA initiative to remain an achievable goal, the DENTAC treatment coordinator pre-scheduled Soldiers for their dental care with their commands. The lynchpin to this successful program was the coordination of the training cycles of the U.S. Army Forces Command units on Fort Polk with appointment availability, patient capacity

and provider availability of dental clinics on post. Colthirst said the cooperation and collaboration of the FORSCOM tenant units' leadership teams and readiness NCOs were instrumental to the success of this program.

The Dental Corps has always tried to develop access to Soldiers for dentistry, said Colthirst. Expanding this model was a concerted effort, not only within DENTAC, but also within the units by talking to leadership and helping them better understand how dental emergencies in theater can be problematic for a unit.

"I gave a presentation that shows how many dental emergencies we have seen in theater and the cost in dollars and manpower. If a unit loses a Soldier that specializes in a certain field or is the chief of a department it can have an adverse ripple effect within the unit," he said. "On average, one Soldier is lost for three days when a dental emergency occurs. Multiply that across a brigade or an entire theater and you are talking tens of thousands of lost hours."

Providing Soldiers with preventive care before they reach theater is imperative, said Colthirst.

"The goal of the ADA model, at least for dental care, is not to do away with mass Soldier readiness processing, but rather to enhance the opportunity of unit coordinated scheduling, similar to SRP, but to add specialty and comprehensive care to the process," Colthirst explained. "This means greater access to patients — and providers can do more procedures at one appointment which means Soldiers have more time to be with their respective units for training."

In the past, Colthirst said Soldiers had to make multiple appointments to take care of assessment, getting their teeth cleaned, having work done and more. "Now they have one appointment and we are able to take care of several things — an exam, hygiene and restoration can be done all at once. Though any



From left to right: Maj. Gen. R. Scott Dingle, deputy surgeon general and deputy commanding general (support) United States Army Medical Command, Lt. Col. Paul Colthirst, commander of the Fort Polk Dental Activity and Sgt. 1st Class Jerry McMillian, senior dental non-commissioned officer and DENTAC first sergeant, show off the Access to Care Award Colthirst accepted on behalf of the entire Fort Polk DENTAC at the 127th Association of Military Surgeons of the United States awards dinner held Nov. 29.

specialty care would require another appointment, the whole process is simply more efficient," he said.

According to Colthirst, the Fort Polk DENTAC team of more than 60 people all contributed to the effort, but it was the diversity of thought, skills, individual effort and leadership engagement that polished a good idea and made it a resounding success.

"This team of DoD civilian employees, Soldiers and contract employees worked tirelessly toward dental readiness for the Soldiers in their care," said Colthirst.

"I am extremely proud of the Fort Polk dental leadership and team." Col. Michael Roberts, Regional Dental Command — Central commander, said. "They took Gen. Milley's (Chief of Staff of the Army) priority of readiness and found an innovative and successful contribution to the overall readiness of the troops on Fort Polk. I commend the leader-

ship for allowing their team creativity and innovation in achieving a stated goal. I can't think of any team more deserving of being recognized at the highest level of DoD Healthcare."

This recognition validates the hard work they do, said Colthirst. "My staff worked tirelessly to deploy and redeploy 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division and they deserve this validation of a job well done," he said.

Colthirst said he was proud to submit the ADA process to the Department of Defense wide competition.

"This was the first and only dental award given out. Having Fort Polk as the standard bearer proving that the ADA process works is a great honor for Fort Polk DENTAC and Fort Polk as a whole," he said. "We are the recipients of this award, but this is really a Fort Polk success."

3rd Battalion, 353rd Training Regiment Soldier sets bar earning prestigious badge

By T.C. BRADFORD

Public Affairs Office

FORT POLK, La. — Sgt. 1st Class Troy Williams is a team NCOIC for Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 353rd Training Regiment. His current position has him training the Army's newest units, Security Force Assistant Brigades. He is also the first 353rd Soldier to earn the coveted instructor badge.

The program was initiated in 2014 to be earned by non-commissioned officers as a part of the Instructor Development and Recognition Program.

Williams explained how he earned the badge. "The first step was going to Army Basic Instructor Course (ABIC). The course gives you new approaches to instructing," he said. "The Army is moving away from an instructor standing in front of a group of Soldiers presenting a block of instruction and putting emphasis on facilitating class discussion and creating an environment where students learn from each other."

Williams has earned the basic instructor badge and is now able to train for the senior instructor and master instructor badges. To earn the senior level, he will need to complete 400 hours of instruction as the primary instructor and graduate

the Small Group Instructor Training Course and the Foundation Training Developer Course.

To earn the master badge he will have to attend and graduate the Advanced Facilitator Skills Course or the Faculty Development Program and Evaluating Instructor's Workshop, meet evaluation and board requirements outlined in Training and Doctrine Command regulation 600-21.

Williams said the Army is trying to limit the size of classes to 25 or 30 students. "Keeping that ratio down is important," he said. "With fewer

Please see **Badge**, page 8

A Co, 353rd Inf Reg preps 2nd SFAB leaders for deployment

By **CHUCK CANNON**

Guardian editor

FORT POLK, La. — When the Army established the Security Force Assistance Brigade concept it was determined that the Soldiers comprising the brigades receive the best training possible. SFABs are specialized units with their core mission to conduct training, advising, assisting, enabling and accompanying operations with allied partner nations.

To that end, when the 2nd Security Force Assistance Brigade was informed its members would deploy to Afghanistan in the spring of 2019, where better to send its Soldiers for training than the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk? There, Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 353rd Infantry Regiment, Joint Readiness Training Operations Group, could provide theater-specific training not found anywhere else.

Capt. Miguel Moyeno, A Co commander, said the training is important to the Soldiers of the 2nd SFAB because it takes them from training collectively on different tasks to focusing on where they are actually going with answers to the problems they will face.

“Not a lot of (Army) training gets that specific, but for what the 2nd SFAB needs to know going into theater, this is the training that points them in the right direction,” he said.

The 2nd SFAB leadership — senior NCOs and officers — trained with the 353rd Dec. 3-7 at Tiger Hall in Fort Polk’s Tigerland. There is special emphasis on the training, as the 2nd SFAB will have to hit the ground running.

“They are going to have their hands full,” Moyeno said. “They are scheduled to go into theater sometime this spring, and as soon as they arrive they have to advise their counterparts on the Afghanistan presidential election. There’s not going to be much transition, so (training) will not only prepare them for their specific mission, but also for all the problems and upcoming issues they’ll face as soon as they get in theater.”

First Sgt. Matthew Carter, A Co first sergeant, said another advantage 2nd SFAB has in the training provided at the JRTC is immediacy.

“Through our liaison officer (LNO) we have on the ground in Afghanistan, we can answer any specific questions they might have immediately,” he said. “We’ll write down their question, contact the LNO, get an answer, and then provide the answer.”

Moyeno said the 2nd SFAB leaders will take what they learn back to their Soldiers at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and then return to the JRTC for rotation 19-03 Jan. 3. While at JRTC, the 2nd SFAB will be augmented by members of the 353rd when they deploy later in the spring.

“We’re sending 10 of our linguists with the 2nd SFAB when they rotate to theater as interpreters,” Moyeno said. “It would be similar to an OCT (observer/controller/trainer) telling a rotational unit that he would be accompanying them on a deployment. The interpreter plays a huge role.”

An added bonus to leader training is the trust that develops between trainers and trainees.

“The good thing about having the senior leaders here is that we’re building legitimacy with them,” Carter said. “When they return for their rotation, they will have told the other members of the team we are subject matter experts and know what we’re talking about.”



CHUCK CANNON / GUARDIAN

Staff Sgt. Nawid Abraham, a linguist with the 52nd Translator/Interpreter Company attached to Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 353rd Infantry Regiment, Joint Readiness Training Center Operations Group (standing) leads senior leaders of the 2nd Security Forces Assistance Brigade in a discussion of Afghanistan culture Dec. 3 in Tiger Hall at Fort Polk’s Tigerland. The 2nd SFAB is slated to deploy to Afghanistan in spring 2019.

Maj. Jacob Jeffers, Security Force Assistance course director, said the instructors’ goal is to get 2nd SFAB Soldiers more familiar with their advisory role in Afghanistan.

“We’ll focus on logistics; most of the people who are successful over there have a handle on the logistics arena because it’s something you can measure,” Jeffers said. “We’ll also have some guys coming in from 1st SFAB who will give them an idea of what goes on from day to day. We have some of the best instructors in the Army, straight out of Afghanistan, and we rotate our guys in and out of Afghanistan and Iraq to make sure they remain relevant.”

One of the 1st SFAB members to provide input for the 2nd SFAB Soldiers was Lt. Col. Nathan Williams, who shared insight into what the 2nd SFAB could expect.

“The SFAB concept is relatively new, less than 18 months old, originally brought up by the Chief of Staff of the Army, so we’re a new operating force that just deployed and returned,” he said. “We’re the first of six SFAB brigades. Because we were the first to use this new concept, it’s important for us to help the overall SFAB enterprise by coming back here to teach the lessons that we gained in Afghanistan during the past nine months.”

Williams said that not only could 1st SFAB Soldiers provide lessons learned in Afghanistan, but they could also help 2nd SFAB Soldiers work through the problems the 1st SFAB encountered while standing up as a new Army operation concept.

“Our whole purpose in Afghanistan was to try

to coach back down to the lowest level,” Williams said. “In 2014 we pulled away from coaching at the battalion level in Afghanistan; last year we expanded that back to the battalion level. We sent advisors out on partnered missions with the Afghanistan forces at a much lower level than we have done in the previous five years.”

Williams said many of the lessons they’re bringing back pertain to getting out and doing patrolling again with Afghan partners instead of just staying at FOBs (forward operating bases).

“So you’re looking at identifying what enemy threats are out there, trying to figure out how best to understand what our Afghan partners are doing and communicate that back through our channels so we can support them better, and help coach them in ways they can be more effective,” he said. “That sounds a little vague and easy, but it’s pretty difficult. It’s really those one-on-one relationships that we’re trying to pass on.”

Williams said another point 1st SFAB members shared with the 2nd SFAB is the uncertain environment in Afghanistan — not only the enemy they will face out in sector, but the potential issues that exist within the Afghan National Army itself, such as insider threats. Also, the importance of providing “bottom up” feedback to coalition partners, the Afghan National Army and Ministry of Defense.

“In a huge enterprise it’s often hard to understand what the challenges are to Soldiers at the lowest level,” he said. “Being out there at that

Please see **SFAB**, page 7

Cannon crewmembers honor former president during salute

By Sgt. ASHLEY M. MORRIS
3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div PAO NCO

FORT POLK, La. — Twenty-seven Soldiers from Alpha Battery, 5th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, participated in 21-gun and 50-gun salutes using howitzers in honor of the late former President George H.W. Bush, at the main post parade field on Fort Polk Dec. 6.

The group rendering the honors included an officer in charge, a noncommissioned officer in charge, a watchman, and six fire teams that each consisted of four cannon crewmembers.

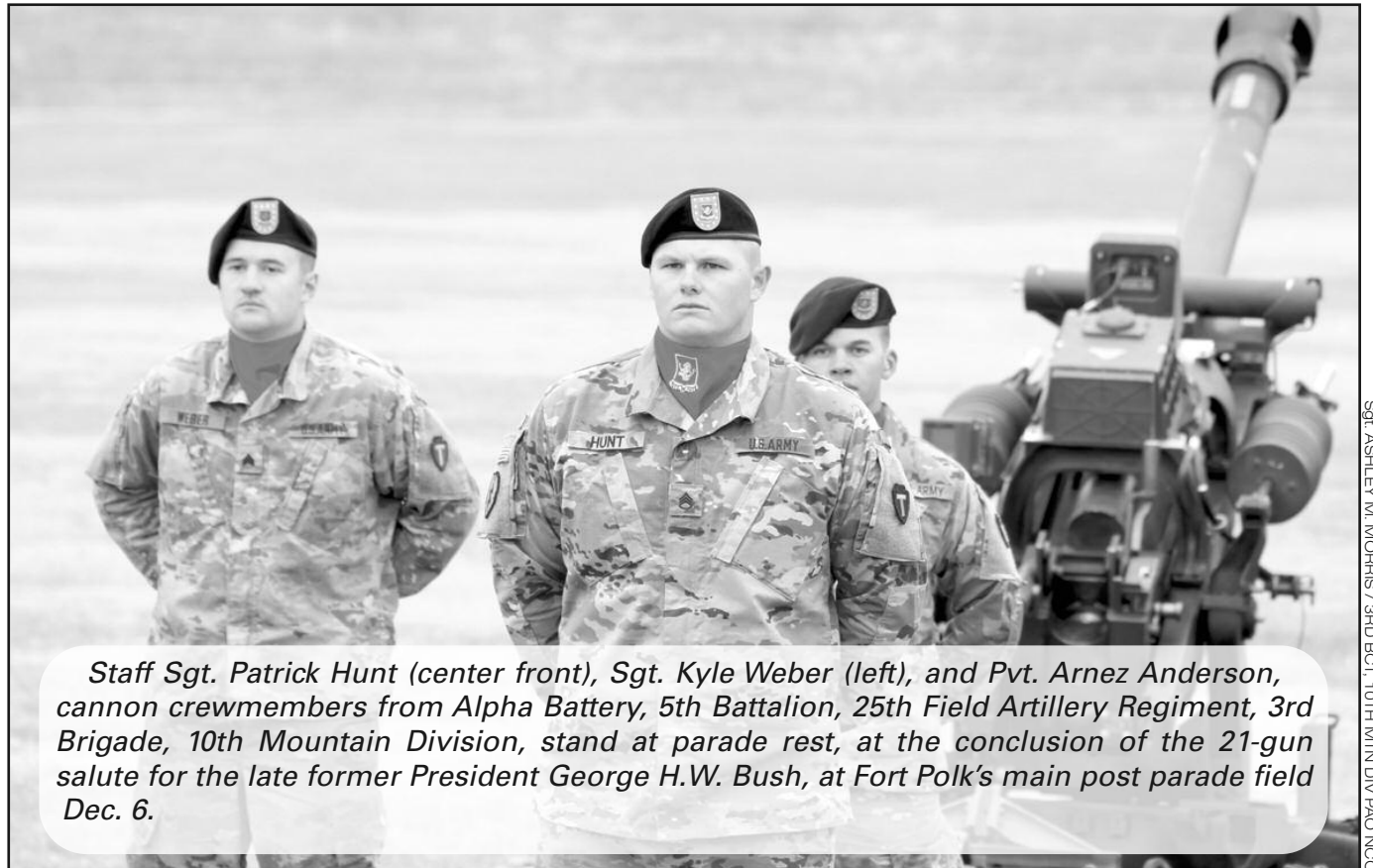
"We don't practice on a normal occasion for this kind of thing," said Staff Sgt. Patrick Hunt, a cannon crewmember team leader assigned to Alpha Battery. "Once this came down, we practiced all day yesterday (Dec. 5) and a little more this morning (Dec. 6)."

During the 21-gun salute, once the command is given rounds are fired one at time, during one-minute intervals. During a normal fire mission, seven man fire teams are expected to send live rounds swiftly, efficiently and accurately towards the enemy within 30 seconds.

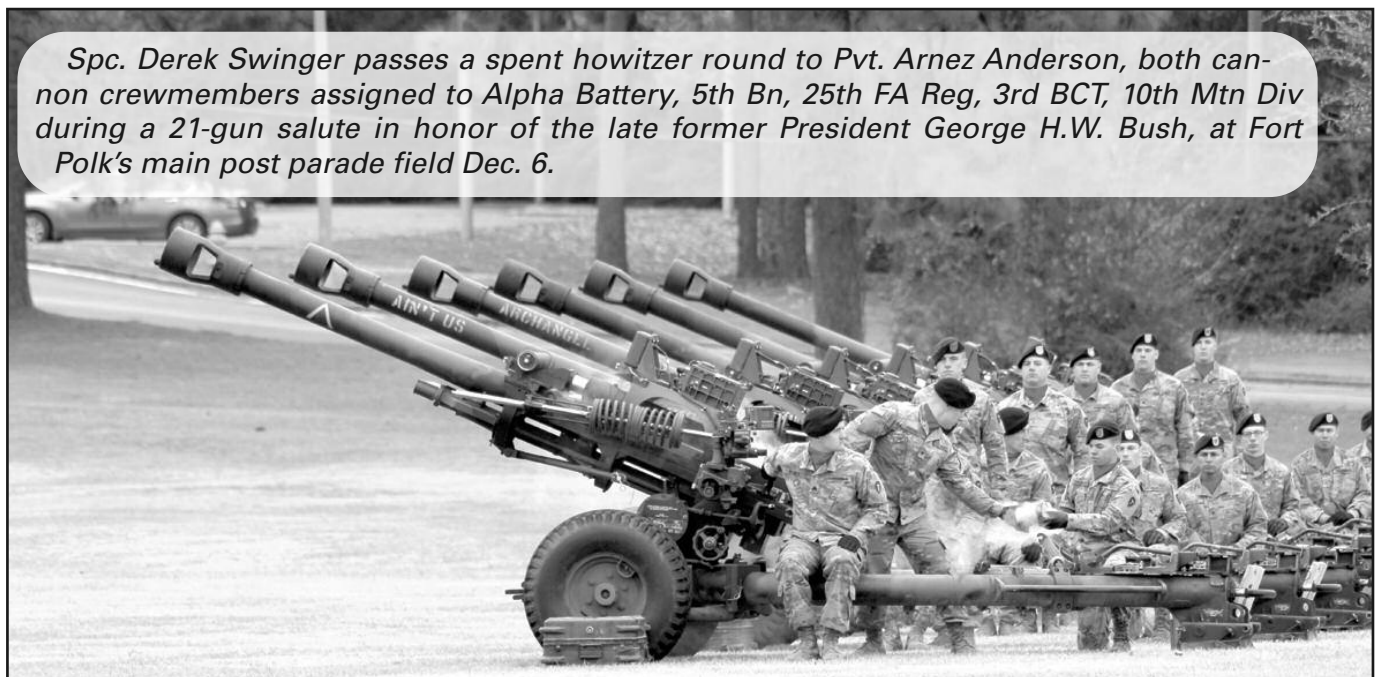
"The gunner is in charge of putting in all of the information, and making sure the round lands where it's supposed to land," said Sgt. Kyle Weber, cannon crewmember gunner assigned to Alpha Battery.

Bush died Nov. 30. On Dec. 5, the federal government observed a national day of mourning. U.S. presidents receive a 21-gun salute and 50-gun salute on the day of their funeral and burial.

"This means a lot," said Pvt. Arnez Anderson, a cannon crewmember assigned to Alpha Battery. "It's not like we get to do this every day. To be able to be a part of a detail like this and have a 21-gun salute to a president, is a part of history and something I will always remember."



Staff Sgt. Patrick Hunt (center front), Sgt. Kyle Weber (left), and Pvt. Arnez Anderson, cannon crewmembers from Alpha Battery, 5th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, stand at parade rest, at the conclusion of the 21-gun salute for the late former President George H.W. Bush, at Fort Polk's main post parade field Dec. 6.



Spc. Derek Swinger passes a spent howitzer round to Pvt. Arnez Anderson, both cannon crewmembers assigned to Alpha Battery, 5th Bn, 25th FA Reg, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div during a 21-gun salute in honor of the late former President George H.W. Bush, at Fort Polk's main post parade field Dec. 6.

SFAB

Continued from page 6

lowest level allows us to provide that feedback."

Staff Sgt. Nawid Abraham, a native Afghan linguist with the 353rd Inf Reg's 52nd Translator/Interpreter Company (TICO), provided culture training for the 2nd SFAB leaders.

"Our instructors are mostly native, from Afghanistan," he said. "Our goal is to make sure 2nd SFAB Soldiers are familiarized with the Afghan culture, at least with the basics, before they go to the country: What to expect, how to behave, what to do to build rapport and build that relationship with their counterparts in Afghanistan."

Abraham said instructors focus on fundamental dos and don'ts, things like not crossing your legs, how to shake hands with a male, how to interact with a female, and all sorts of necessary in-

formation the 2nd SFAB Soldiers might need.

"It is extremely important for them to know this," he said. "Some of them have deployed and know a little bit about the culture, but not the class as a whole.

"We encourage the female Soldiers to take the lead when the team deals with a female. We also teach the males to interact with females without violating the culture."

Capt. Jacques Roulette, 2nd SFAB, said the training was beneficial.

"It gives us background knowledge on the culture we're going to be embracing during this deployment, and makes us a little more sensitive and receptive to some things we may encounter that we were previously unaware of," he said.

"The instructors here are very professional

and knowledgeable about their areas of expertise."

Moyeno said his company provides an important job for the Army.

"Culture training, framework on how the Army and the police force work together, understanding their logistics system and an overview of advise and assist missions," Moyeno said. "It's a huge collective effort to get them, as advisors, to focus on the specific areas where they are deployed, advising missions they are going to be doing, people they are going to be working with, everything."

For Moyeno and his team of trainers, it's just another day at the office.

"This is how we prepare Soldiers for the fight," he said.

3-89 Cav conducts CBRN training to increase unit readiness

By 2nd Lt. JONATHAN LAANSMA

3-89 Cav Reg PAO

FORT POLK, La. — Soldiers from 3rd Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, conducted chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear training at the CBRN range on Fort Polk Dec. 6. The training equipped Soldiers with the knowledge and tools to combat the CBRN threat and increase unit readiness.

“The 3-89 Cav operates in a complex environment where the enemy has the ability to utilize CBRN weapons and materials that cause mass civilian and Soldier casualties,” said Capt. Christopher Kennedy, assistant squadron operations officer, 3-89th Cav. “The 3-89 Cav must be prepared to dominate the enemy through deliberate training under CBRN conditions.”

The squadron’s mission during CBRN training was to prepare Sol-

diers to dominate the battlefield — in the event of chemical warfare — by mastering CBRN equipment, decontamination techniques, conquering mask confidence chambers and becoming efficient with CBRN warning and reporting systems.

Squadron Soldiers were trained and evaluated on their ability to swiftly and effectively navigate CBRN equipment under contaminated conditions. Soldiers learned CBRN tasks and purposes in a classroom environment and were evaluated throughout the week on various physical exercises. To thoroughly examine CBRN competency, Soldiers completed the mask confidence course which demonstrated CBRN knowledge, equipment capability and individual stamina.

With readiness, lethality and unit effectiveness at the forefront, 3-89 Cavalry Squadron seeks to further develop its Soldiers through regular training exercises to prepare them for future operations.



Soldiers with the 3rd Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, conduct chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear training at Fort Polk’s CBRN range Dec. 6

Badge

Continued from page 5

students, you can include more voices into the conversation and the students can learn from each other by sharing their experiences.”

Once an instructor completes ABIC, they have to complete 80 hours of instruction. In addition, instructors must be evaluated in a formal counseling session. They must also evaluate themselves and other instructors. Williams said he believes and hopes that others in the 353rd will follow in his footsteps and earn the badge themselves.

“It’s not like being presented a coin or certificate. It’s something that you can wear on your uniform for the rest of your career,” he said. “I’ve had many instructors ask me about getting the badge.” The unit even explains the process of earning the badge as a part of their Leadership Development Program.

What does it matter if Soldiers assigned to the 353rd earn the badge? Williams explained, “The process is making our unit better. If we have better instructors, it’s going to make the quality of instruction better for rotational Soldiers training for deployment.”

Williams said that will have a trickle-down effect that will allow Soldiers tasked with meeting the nation’s goals to do their jobs more effectively. “Better instruction leads to better Soldiers and that breeds excellence,” he said.

By earning the instructor badge, Williams is able to make an immediate impact on the efforts of Soldiers deployed to the Middle East. He helped train the 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade and just got back from a follow up visit with the unit. “I went to Afghanistan and spoke with their Guardian Angels and security forces,” he said.

“We went over best practices and tactics, techniques and procedures. I brought that information back here and will incorporate the lessons

learned into the training plan for the 2nd SFAB and other units we are assigned to train.” He said that knowledge, passed on to other Soldiers, will have an immediate impact on future missions.

While Williams is the first in the unit to earn the badge, other instructors are on a path to join him.

“They have gone through ABIC and are now working on getting their 80 hours of teaching time and completing their evaluations,” he said.

One Soldier on that path is Staff Sgt. David Fletcher, a Security Force instructor with the 353rd. Learning to be an instructor is done at the local level at Fort Polk.

There are no mobile training teams to come in and teach the courses, nor are there any distant schools to be sent to. Fletcher has been through ABIC and Common Faculty Development Instructor Course (CFDIC). He spent time as an assistant instructor but now teaches CFDIC. Once he completes CFDIC as the lead instructor, Fletcher will have met his 80 hour requirement and will move on to completing the evaluation requirement.

Earning the badge would mean a lot to Fletcher. “I’m glad the Army has introduced the badge and is allowing us to earn it,” he said. “Instructing is not something that just anyone can do. To be able to get up in front of classes full of students that often outrank me and instruct them effectively requires skills that must be honed and trained. Like earning other badges in the Army, you have to show up ... you have to perform. There is a standard you have to meet.”

Fletcher said that Williams having the badge motivates him and other instructors to be better at their jobs. “Sergeant First Class Williams is one of the best instructors in the unit. He facilitates classes better than anyone else, in my opinion,” he said. “I look up to him and see him wearing



Command Sgt. Maj. David W. Bass, JRTC and Fort Polk command sergeant major, left, presents Sgt. 1st Class Troy Williams of the 3rd Battalion, 353rd Infantry Regiment with his instructor badge. Williams is the first member of the 353rd to earn the badge.

the badge and I want to strive to get where he is at, to be a better instructor and to learn from him.”

Williams gives credit for his success to the efforts of the Security Force Assistance NCOIC, Sgt. 1st Class Michael Barrett. “None of this would be possible without him. He encouraged me along the way as I earned the badge and his leadership of the NCOs in our section has been outstanding,” he said. “He is the driving force behind our success.”

Fort Polk MPs hone basic, combat skills

By **CHUCK CANNON**

Guardian editor

FORT POLK, La. — It's often difficult for a commander to get their Soldiers together for a training opportunity, especially a unit such as the 91st Military Police Detachment, 519th Military Police Battalion. The 91st MP Bn Soldiers can be found spread across Fort Polk performing a myriad of jobs to include military police investigations, desk sergeant duty, traffic and force protection and military working dog patrols.

That was the problem faced by Capt. Nathan Barnes, commander, 91st MP Det.

His solution: Ask for a little help from the Directorate of Emergency Services and other MP companies on Fort Polk and take his entire detachment to the field.

The result: Four days (Dec. 3-6) spent getting Soldiers back to basic individual, team and squad tasks, missions and procedures.

"Our day-to-day mission is garrison law enforcement and all we have is sergeant's time for the basic Soldier training you might see in a line unit," Barnes said. "This was an opportunity for us to come together and get back to basic Soldier training and have some fun."

Barnes said the "fun" included work on "presence patrol" — what his Soldiers would do as a deployed MP company.

"We focused on ambushes, attacks and other relevant training, such as letting the local population know we were there," he said. "It was good to get the vast majority of my unit together and work on the basics of tactical operations."

The training, which took place in November, presented no surprises, Barnes said.

"It was what we expected," he said. "We knew we would have a few difficulties but were able to work through it. You could clearly see a difference in quality from Monday when we first went out to Wednesday when we did our final mission. We also did day, night and CBRNE (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive) qualification with our weapons."

Spc. David McCloud, a desk sergeant with the 91st MP Det, said the training was different from other line units he had gone to the field with.

"This was a lot cooler: The same amount of training, but the missions were based on different objectives, and the objectives had your adrenaline pumping and made you want to accomplish them," he said. "It was realistic and the role players did a great job."

McCloud said the unit's squad leaders handled everything well and made the missions seem real. He also said he learned the importance of communication on the battlefield.

"I've never been one to call out direction, but this was so realistic I felt like I had to," he said. "I'm ready to go out and do it again. It wasn't boring."

Staff Sgt. Justin Cooper, 91st MP Det, is a combat veteran and said the training was vital for his unit.

"Even though we're a small element, it's important that we maintain our tactical skills," he said. "When it comes to this FTX (field training exercise), we started with the basics, then moved on to situational awareness."

Echoing McCloud's comments, Cooper said

Please see **MPs**, page 10



Above: Soldiers with the 91st Military Police Detachment, 519th Military Police Battalion, work on patrol procedures during a field training exercise at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk Dec. 3-6.

Below: Soldiers with the 91st MP Det qualify with their sidearms wearing CBRNE (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive) gear during the unit's FTX Dec. 3-6.



519th MPs host 16th MP Bde quarterly competition

By Capt. MYLISSA SCHENCK

S6 OIC, 519th MP Bn

FORT POLK, La. — Fort Polk's 519th Military Police Battalion, 16th Military Police Brigade, hosted the 16th MP Bde Soldier, NCO and Officer of the Quarter board Dec. 4-7.

Participants included MPs from the following: 83rd Civil Affairs Battalion; 91st Military Police Battalion; 385th MP Bn; 503rd MP Bn; 519th MP Bn; and 716th MP Bn.

Winners were as follows:

- Soldier of the Quarter — Spc. Nicholas Campanell, 716th MP Bn, Fort Campbell, Kentucky

- NCO of the Quarter — Sgt. Travis Amon, 503rd MP Bn; Fort Bragg, North Carolina

- Officer of the Quarter — 1st Lt. Jared Linton, 716th MP Bn

The competition consisted of the following:

- Foot march
- Obstacle course
- Professional development staff ride
- Army physical fitness test
- Formal board with hands-on tasks
- Awards dinner

Lt. Col. Larry Dewey, commander, 16th MP Bde, Fort Bragg, directed the competition to be held quarterly to recognize excellence in service. The event rotates between the brigade's subordinate battalions.



CAPT. MYLISSA SCHENCK / 519TH MP BN

Military policemen and women with the 16th Military Police Brigade, Fort Bragg, N.C., competed for Soldier, NCO and Officer of the Quarter at Fort Polk, home of the 16th MP Bde's 519th MP Bn Dec. 4-7. Among the events were a trip through Fort Polk's obstacle course where Soldiers exhibited their fitness and dexterity.

MPs

Continued from page 9

(improvised explosive device) lanes and learned how to keep our eyes open and be aware of our surroundings. We really worked on situational awareness, what the role players were doing, how they were acting, and then came up with a plan of action."

One of the missions Cooper's team faced was removing a high value target from a local village.

"We worked through it well even though we were outnumbered," he said. "We were able to set up a 'snatch and grab' and accomplished the mission by setting up a diversion. We then struck quickly, grabbed the target, met up with our trucks and got away."

Cooper said communication and situational awareness were the keys to success.

"We adapted and overcame," he said. "It can be difficult switching between combat and garrison roles, and that's why this training is so important, to be able to get away as a unit and work on our tactical skills."

Cooper said he was able to draw on his combat experience to provide additional training for the unit's younger, less experienced Soldiers.

"I've been involved hands on with insurgents," he said. "I've learned how to spot IED-making material. Being able to communicate that to others is important. We were able to use that when training."

Although it's important to "learn by the book," Cooper said more is needed.

"There is no 'right way' in combat because situations change, and you have to be able to make quick decisions, and if you don't, you're in trouble," he said. "That's why training like this is important — it allows you to know how to react and builds trust with the younger Soldiers and those who have been there and have experience. The fact that we came together and were able to accomplish this mission was amazing, how well we worked together and fit like a puzzle."

Two of those "younger" Soldiers were Sgt. Jordan Marsteller and Pfc. Scott Kokjohn, both military working dog handlers with the 50th Military Working Dog Detachment assigned to the 91st MP Det. Marsteller said the training was particularly important for the unit's dog handlers.

"Being a dog handler, we basically wear two different hats: We have the law enforcement side and we have the conventional warfare side, which is IED detection and occasionally drug suppression with units deployed around the world," he said. "It's hard for us to get in the training we need. We typically deploy as individuals instead of complete units, so we have to know what we're doing so we can sell ourselves to the battlefield commander. Going to the field gave us time to devote ourselves to that training and develop our combat skills. We were leading patrols, searching for IEDs, communicating with the platoon and reacting to combat."

The training was especially important to

Kokjohn, as he will deploy in the spring.

"On a day-to-day basis we don't get that training with other elements," he said. "I realized how important communication is — if one link is messed up, the whole line of communication can be messed up. I know what needs to be communicated to the rest of the unit. It will help me greatly on my upcoming deployment."

Marsteller, who is a recently promoted non-commissioned officer, said being placed in a leadership position during the training helped him develop his NCO skills.

"I had the opportunity to lead a mission and it allowed me to develop leadership skills which will be invaluable to me when I deploy," he said.

"I learned that it's not easy, you've got to learn to think on your feet, because now you're not just worried about you and your dog, but about a squad- or platoon-sized element that you're leading. It definitely gave me more confidence."

Barnes said the feedback he received from his Soldiers and leaders indicated the training met its goal of improving the lines of communications between elements.

"From what I saw and heard it was good refresher training and bonding time," he said. "It's rare they can get together and train. I've been the commander here for about 15 months. We participated in a battalion FTX in May, saw what our deficiencies were then and we worked on them. I think this training was a success."

Army National Guard celebrates 382nd birthday in December

GUARDIAN STAFF

FORT POLK, La. — The Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk hosted an event for the Army National Guard with cake cutting and speeches in honor of its 382nd birthday Dec. 13.

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commander, JRTC and Fort Polk, spoke of the importance of the Guard and its predecessor, the Minutemen.

“When you see that Minuteman up there (on the wall behind the cake), you know you are talking about the National Guard,” Frank said. “Everyone knows that symbol. It signifies the American spirit responding in times of trouble for the good of the nation.”

Frank said looking at the Guard’s colors is like talking a walk through history.

“You will find Lexington, Gettysburg, all the battles of World War II and so many more,” he said. “That’s what the Guard is about. To me, that’s why colors matter so much: You can see the combat streamers, what they represent and the contributions they made. That’s pretty powerful.”

Maj. Manny Rosado, Fort Polk senior guard advisor/operations officer, said it was important to remember the Guard’s history and its role in keeping America safe.

“We are older than the Army,” he said. “We have multiple missions that should be acknowledged and celebrated.”

Capt. Sharon McDonald, logistics officer for the 256th Infantry Brigade, Louisiana National Guard, said the Guard’s role in the birth of the United States should always be remembered.

“That was the first time citizens stood up for themselves and chose to fight for their freedom and independence,” she said.

The first militia regiments were organized by the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony on Dec. 13, 1636, and from the Pequot War in 1637 until the present day, the Army National Guard has participated in every war or conflict this nation has fought. The militia stood their ground at Lexington Green in 1775 when the opening shots of the Revolutionary War were fired. They fought the British and their Indian allies from the Great Lakes to New Orleans during the War of 1812, and provided 70 percent of the troops that fought in the Mexican War.

The majority of the troops that fought in the Philippines during the Spanish American War in 1898 were National Guardsmen, and the greatest number of combat divisions to fight the Germans during World War I came from the Guard — including six out of the eight that the German general staff rated as “Excellent” or “Superior.”

The Guard doubled the size of the Regular Army when it was mobilized in 1940, more than a year before Pearl Harbor, and contributed 19 divisions to World War II, as well as numerous other units, to include Guard aviation squadrons.

More than 138,000 Guardsmen were mobilized for Korea, followed by numerous smaller mobilizations for the Berlin Crisis, Vietnam and numerous strikes and riots at home. More than 63,000 Army Guardsmen were called to serve in Desert Storm, and in the decade since then, Guardsmen have seen a greater role than ever before conducting peacekeeping in Somalia, Haiti, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, Bosnia and Kosovo.

History since Sept. 11, 2001

Sept. 11, 2001 brought new meaning to the

concept of homeland defense for the National Guard. In the wake of the attack on the World Trade Center, the New York Army and Air National Guard mobilized more than 8,000 personnel to secure the area, rush in supplies and assist in the rescue and recovery. Other states mobilized lesser amounts to increase security and provide assistance to the recovery efforts in New York and at the Pentagon.

On Sept. 27, President George Bush authorized the use of the National Guard in a Title 32 status (federally-funded, but state-controlled) to increase security at airports; by mid-December, 2001 in excess of 50,000 Guard members nationwide were mobilized in either federal or state status to secure airports and other vital facilities, or support Operation Noble Eagle (homeland defense) and Enduring Freedom (the Afghanistan war).

In 2005, National Guard members and reservists were said to comprise a larger percentage of frontline fighting forces than in any war in U.S. history (about 43 percent in Iraq and 55 percent in Afghanistan). There were more than 183,366 National Guard members and reservists on active duty nationwide who left behind about 300,000 dependents, according to Defense Department statistics.

Also, 2005 marked the largest deployment ever of National Guard troops in response to a natural disaster. Hurricane Katrina devastated broad swaths of Mississippi and Louisiana, and the damage was compounded by the failure of levees in New Orleans. Hurricane Rita followed shortly thereafter and did great damage to Louisiana and Texas. At peak, more than 50,000 Army and Air Guard members responded to these hurricanes, while nearly 80,000 were simultaneously serving on active duty elsewhere in the world.

In January and February 2007, National Guard troops from eight states were activated to go help shovel snow, drop hay for starving cattle, deliver food and necessities to stranded people in their houses, and help control traffic and rescue stranded motorists in blizzards dropping feet of snow across the country.

As part of the Global War on Terrorism, National Guard units and individual National Guard members performed sustained active duty during Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, both as part of scheduled mobilizations and as individual volunteers.



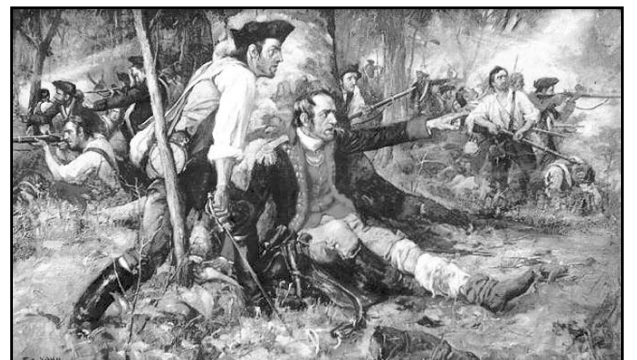
Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers slog through the jungles of the South Pacific during World War II.



Col. Christopher Moretti, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk chief of staff, (left) stands next to his son, Pvt. C.J. Moretti, South Carolina National Guard, and Col. Thomas Hanley, Fort Polk Senior Guard advisor, as they cut the birthday cake at the National Guard birthday celebration Dec. 13.



Whether providing relief efforts in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005 (above) or on the battlefield during the Revolutionary War (below), America's Army National Guard has always answered the call when needed.



Community

Fort Polk nurse helps save man's life

By **ANGIE THORNE**
Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. — You could be walking along having a normal day when an emergency happens right in front of you. What do you do? Are you going to be able to take action and save the day? Most people would like to think they could and would, but you just don't know until it happens to you.

That kind of crisis happened to Capt. Brandi Barrett and a few of her neighbors Nov. 3. Barrett is part of the Army Reserve Individual Medical Augmentee program — which facilitates the rapid expansion of the active Army wartime structure — and is attached to Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital as a nurse.

She and her husband have a home in East Texas but live at the Alligator Lake RV Park through the week. "I work 12 hour night shifts two to three times a week. My husband, Jason Barrett, also works here. He is the Network Enterprise Center director. But anytime we are off, we go home," she said.

Barrett is thankful that she was at Alligator Lake on Nov. 3. That day around noon, Barrett was going about her normal routine. As she mowed the lawn in front of her recreational vehicle, she noticed a couple of older gentlemen fishing in a boat on the opposite side of the lake. She said she thought nothing of it.

In the meantime, Barrett and her neighbors at the RV park were unaware that an emergency was taking place right in front of them.

After finishing the lawn, she went to her backyard to clean the mower and put it away. As she was working, her neighbor (Robert Robinson) came around the front of Barrett's RV and asked if she had a boat or canoe.

Barrett said she didn't and asked him what was wrong.

He told her their friend Doni Smart, who was visiting, thought someone was yelling for help from the boat on the lake and he thought that one of the fishermen was in the water and the other was holding him up.

"My main thought was I've got to get him out of the water, but how?" said Robinson.

Kelly Robinson, Robert's wife, said she thinks Mitchell was in the water for at least 20 minutes before anyone realized what was happening. Kelly said once they understood the men needed help, everyone began to work together to figure out how to help.

"I was about to jump in the lake and swim out myself, but my husband told me no. He was afraid that I would get caught up in the grass in the lake and then there would be more people to save," she said.

That's when Robinson and Barrett ran to the edge of the lake. Looking at the man in the lake, Barrett assessed his condition visually. "He looked very weak and his head was wet. That means at some point he had been completely submerged. I had no idea how long he had been in the water. That scared me," she said.

Alligator Lake is murky and you can't see much. "I stuck my foot in the water and as soon



as I felt the temperature I knew he couldn't sustain himself for much longer. It was cold," she said.

She took off her headphones and her keys out of her pocket. "As I stood on the edge of the lake I could hear the man in the water grunting — I later found out his name was Douglas Mitchell," said Barrett.

Hearing him and looking at his face, Barrett said she knew he was in distress and couldn't last much longer. "Kelly Robinson, Robert's wife, even yelled at me to wait so she could get me a life vest before I got in the water, but I knew I couldn't. I felt even a few seconds would make a difference. I knew if I didn't try, he might not make it. So, I jumped in," she said.

Though she has extensive medical training, Barrett doesn't specifically have any rescue training, but she didn't let that stop her from trying to help. "I was confident in the training the Army gave me and my ability to assist those men because the military has kept me in good physical shape. I had no doubt that I would get out there and we were going to get it figured out," she said.

Barrett swam toward the boat.

"When I got there I moved around so that I

Please see **Nurse**, page 18

Briefs

School lunches

The following school lunch menu is for Vernon Parish schools for Monday through Dec. 21. Meals are served with salad bar and choice of milk:

- **Monday:** Steak fingers, mashed potatoes, gravy, Italian seasoned green beans, peaches and Jell-O cup, whole wheat roll.
- **Tuesday:** Barbecue ribettes on whole wheat bun, Cajun French fries, peas and carrots, pineapple chunks.
- **Wednesday:** Oven fried chicken with barbecue sauce, white Northern beans, broccoli and rice, cantaloupe, whole wheat cornbread.
- **Thursday:** Pork roast with gravy, whole grain rice, sweet peas, fruit, whole wheat roll.
- **Dec. 21:** Chili dog on whole wheat bun, French fries, ranch style beans, watermelon, coleslaw.

Chapel services

The following Christmas services are slated for Fort Polk:

- Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, Dec. 24, 6 p.m., Showboat Theater.
 - Christmas Eve mass, 5 p.m., Dec. 24, Glory Chapel.
 - Christmas Day mass, 9 a.m., Dec. 25, Glory Chapel.
- For more information call 531-2669.

Exchange briefs

The Fort Polk Main Exchange offers the following opportunities during December:

- Military Star card shoppers will get double the bang for their holiday buck with double rewards points on Dec. 24. The Army and Air Force Exchange Service retail card, which typically earns cardholders 2 points for every \$1, will earn last-minute shoppers 4 points per \$1 on every present and purchase made at Exchange locations, including **ShopMyExchange.com**. Shoppers automatically receive a \$20 rewards card every 2,000 points. Travelers who fuel up at Fort Polk Expresses will also receive the double points, in addition to the daily savings of 5 cents off per gallon. Shoppers who do not have a Military Star card can sign up at the Fort Polk Exchange or online at **MyECP.com** and save 10 percent on all purchases made the first day.
- A Transformers Time Trial for military children and their Families is held from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday at the Main Post Exchange. The event showcases the latest Transformer toys and tests participants' skill at converting them from robot to vehicle and back again.

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VPSB recognizes Principals of Year for 2018

FORT POLK PROGRESS

LEESVILLE, La. — The Vernon Parish School Board honored its 2018 Principals of the Year during a meeting Dec. 6 in Leesville. The awardees included Rosepine Elementary School Principal Sandy Blakeway, Evans High School Principal Kathy Bass and Leesville High School Principal Tammie Phillips.

“The state gives us guidelines on how we select our Principals of the Year, and then they are selected by their peers,” said Carolyn Bosely, the VPSB supervisor in charge of the Principal of the Year selection process. “The folks we are honoring today are already working on the application process for the next step in the competition.”

Blakeway was selected as Elementary School Principal of the Year. She said the award was a “great honor.”

“My family is a family of educators,” Blake-way said. “My middle sister was the state High School Teacher of the Year, and I just think that with this honor I’m keeping that tradition of excellence in education alive.”

Bass was named Middle School Teacher of the Year, and expressed the pride she feels for her school. “I love my school so much, so I don’t look at it as a job,” Bass said. “I just go to work and try to make Evans the best that it can be.”

Phillips was chosen as the High School Teacher of the Year, and was thankful for the recognition.

“It is a great honor because I was selected by peers, and I enjoy my job — I love the kids,” Phillips said.

As each awardee was presented a plaque for their achievement, Bosely read them a message from their respective assistant principals. Of Blakeway, Rosepine Elementary School Assistant Principal Gertrud Blady said, “Her qualifications, enthusiasm as a leader and personal character all make her truly deserving of this title.”

Evans High School Assistant Principal Tanya Jeane said that Bass “is a truly deserving recipient of Middle School Principal of the Year.

“She continues to make her students and teachers strive to be the best they can be,” Jeane added.

Mark Mawae, Leesville High School assistant principal, said Phillips “makes decisions based solely on one question, ‘What is best for the students of Leesville High School?’

“Her first priority is the students of Leesville High School,” Mawae said. “We have a saying at Leesville High School, ‘Once a Wampus Cat, always a Wampus Cat,’ and we are so proud that she is the Wampus Cat that leads the rest of us.”

Vernon Parish School Board member and Fort Polk Garrison Commander Col. Jarrett A. Thomas II congratulated the Principals of the Year.

“It’s always great to recognize excellence, and it serves to inspire others down the road,” Thomas said.

“We are grateful to the honorees for exhibiting key leadership qualities and going above and beyond to ensure that the students in their schools achieve academic success,” said Michael Reese, president of Fort Polk Progress, which spearheads the Education Initiative alongside Vernon Parish Schools, the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk and the Vernon Parish Chamber of Commerce and community stakeholders.

VPSB Superintendent James Williams ex-



Leesville High School 2018 Principal of the Year Tamela Phillips, center, stands with, from left to right, District One Board Members Doug Brandon, Jackie Self, Steve Woods, Robert Pynes, Jr., Jim Seaman, Superintendent James Williams and District 6 Board Member Vernon Travis.



James Williams, Vernon Parish School Board Superintendent, (left) stands with Kathy Bass, Evans High School principal and the 2018 Vernon Parish middle school/junior high principal of the year, (center) and District 3 Board Member David Detz.

pressed his appreciation to the Principals of the Year for their efforts at their schools.

“Being a principal is a tough job. There’s so much going on — so much accountability and responsibility,” Williams said. “We’re very fortunate to have the principals that we do, especially the ones that we recognized today.”



James Williams, Vernon Parish School Superintendent, (left) stands with Sandra Blakeway, Rosepine Elementary School Principal, the 2018 Vernon Parish elementary school principal of the year, and District 7 Board Member John Blakenbaker at a VPSB meeting held Dec. 6. Blakeway is from a long line of educators and says the award was a great honor.

Dried trees can lead to dangerous Christmas fires

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

FORT POLK, La. — According to the National Fire Protection Association, one of the biggest causes of fires during the holiday season is dry Christmas trees.

A small fire that spreads to a live Christmas tree can quickly grow large. Follow these steps to make Christmas fire-free:

Picking the tree

- Choose a tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.

Placing the tree

- Before placing the tree in the stand, cut two inches off the base of the trunk.

- Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, such as fireplaces, radiators, heat vents or lights.

- Make sure the tree does not block an exit.

- Add water daily to the tree stand.

Lighting the tree

- Use lights that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use.

- Replace strings of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Read manufacturer's instructions for the number of light strands to safely connect.

- Turn off Christmas tree lights

before leaving home or going to bed.

After Christmas

- Get rid of the tree after Christmas or when it is dry. Dried out trees are a fire danger and should not be left in the home or garage, or placed outside against the home for long periods of time.

- Find a local recycling program for the tree.

- Bring outdoor electrical lights inside after the holidays to prevent hazards and extend their life.

For more information on how to keep your home safe this Christmas season visit the National Fire Protection Association website at www.nfpa.org.



Follow these tips to keep home, family safe at Christmas

GUARDIAN STAFF

FORT POLK, La. — The Christmas holidays can be loads of fun with presents, good food, lots of lights and family gatherings. But it could also be dangerous if you're not careful.

Check out these safety tips from www.good-housekeeping.com that can help make your Christmas merry and bright:

- Don't overdo it on the lights. As much as you may want to cover every inch of your house with twinklers, you may have to scale back depending on your outlets. Check the lights' packaging for the power output and never plug in more than what a power strip or outlet says it can handle.

Always look for the UL symbol when buying electrical items and pay attention to its color: Green means it's approved for indoor use, and red means it can be used indoors and outdoors. When using old lights, check wires for signs of fraying or cracking.

- Candles are pretty, but they're still open flames. December is the peak time of year for candle-related house fires, says the National Fire Protection Association. Sure, they set a glowy holiday mood, but flames and Christmas decorations don't exactly mix. In a five-year study, the

NFPA found that 52 percent of decoration-related fires were started by candles.

Keep lit candles at least 12 inches away from surrounding objects. Trim wicks to a quarter of an inch before you light them and only let candles burn for one hour for every inch of diameter. Never leave lit candles in a room that's unattended.

- Never toss anything but logs into your fireplace. Greenery and tree needles burn much faster than logs, creating sparks, which can fly into the room or onto the roof. They can also cause a build-up of creosote, a highly flammable compound, in the chimney. Make sure the fire is out and the embers have cooled before you leave the house or go to bed. Put the ashes in a metal bin that's at least 25 feet away from the house.

- Don't be sloppy with broken ornaments.

If you drop a glass ornament and it breaks, pick up the big pieces and wrap them in newspaper or a paper towel before throwing them in the garbage. Then, sweep the space and go over it with a vacuum cleaner. Pay extra attention to floors this time of year — even if you haven't just broken something.

With guests coming-and-going and a surplus of decor you don't typically display, you may not notice something on the floor. Debris could cause

slips and falls, and pets and little kids might end up playing with (or worse, eating) stuff they shouldn't.

- Festive favorites can seriously harm your pets. A cat might see shiny tinsel as a toy, but a single strand can become tangled in the intestines, causing serious damage. Holly, mistletoe and poinsettias are toxic to dogs and cats when ingested. And as for candy canes (the real ones, not the dog-toy variety), their curvy shape and wrapper can be a choking hazard and sugar-free ones made with xylitol are poisonous to dogs.

- Not all toys work for all kids. Keep all the kids in mind when selecting gifts. This could be problematic if an older kid's toy comes with lots of little parts. Look for toys that have been vetted for safety checks and are compliant with government regulations.

- Remember to secure the house. If you're headed out of town for an extended period of time, you should do more than just lock up. Tell neighbors you trust that you're going away and have them keep an eye out. Have the post office stop your mail and put lights — inside and outside — on timers, so they go on and off at random times during the night. You can also call Fort Polk military police at 531-0705 to check your house while on patrol.

Capt. Marc Guillari, his spouse, Hazel, and their child, Angelo, show off their first-place winnings from the Net Zero Waste 30 Day Recycle Challenge held Nov. 1-30 at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort.



Event recognizes families for recycling efforts

NZW

FORT POLK, La. — From Nov. 1 to Nov. 30, the Net Zero Waste and Qualified Recycling Program facilitated a 30 Day Recycling Challenge, open to all post military families. The success of the event would not have been possible without the in-kind donations and support of the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, Huddle House and Strike Zone.

During the challenge, families were encouraged to bring in their No. 1 plastic containers and bottles, aluminum cans, white paper, mixed paper and cardboard to the Fort Polk Recycling Center, located on Georgia and Maine avenues.

The items were brought to Bay No. 2 of the Recycling Center, presorted, weighed and recorded under each family's name for 30 days. The top three families were awarded \$250 worth of prizes

at the end of the challenge.

This event aimed to show families how simple it is to recycle at Fort Polk, and also gave them an opportunity to participate in a fun, competitive activity that involved the whole family.

The 41 families that participated in the challenge diverted nearly 4,600 pounds of recyclables from the landfill. These military families proved that by working together, Fort Polk wins.

Congratulations to the top 3 families:

First — Marc Guillari and Family (390 pounds of recyclables): \$75 AAFES gift card and \$50 Walmart gift card.

Second — M. Rodriguez and Family (348 pounds of recyclables): \$50 AAFES gift card and a \$25 Huddle House gift card.

Third — Randolph Perry and Family (336 pounds of recyclables): \$25 AAFES gift card and a Strike Zone certificate.

Happy Holidays from our Home to Yours!

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Happy Holidays from US to YOU!



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Published for the community of Fort Polk, La.

Ombudsman notices positive attitude has favorable impact on others

By **KEVIN B. STUART**
MEDCOM ombudsman

FORT POLK, La. — I was visiting a store in the local community the other day and witnessed an employee display one of the most positive attitudes I have seen in a long time.

The store employee was helpful, professional and positive in every aspect during the customer interaction, even though the customer appeared to be rude, impolite and discourteous. The store associate demonstrated a positive attitude that was inviting and keen to the customer's questions. The employee also displayed great patience in addressing the customer concerns.

I have also seen during the past few months, numerous people who live and work on Fort Polk constantly displaying positive attitudes. I get fired up and happy to see that.

Have you figured out the focus of this article yet? I am writing about a subject that appears minor to some folks, but major to others and could be the difference between winning and losing a war or battle, gaining or losing a friendship, co-workers and family members. I am referring to "attitude — what about it?" — a topic that many people in the military and local community are aware of and applies to just about everyone, especially if you work or serve in a job or position that provides services to others.

Webster's dictionary defines attitude as "a state of mind or a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior."

I have noticed on numerous occasions the word "attitude" given a negative connotation. For example, some parents may scold their children, or leaders/managers admonish their employees for having or displaying an attitude, meaning a bad attitude. On the other hand, some companies and corporations may acknowledge or recognize those employees who consistently display an exceptional positive attitude.

Although "attitude" is normally interpreted negatively, or unfavorably, attitude can also be interpreted in a positive manner. Maybe you have heard or witnessed someone tell a person they have a pleasant or nice attitude, or someone has told you that you have a great or good attitude.

On the other hand, how many times have you heard someone refer to an individual as having a terrible or bad attitude?

Have you noticed the difference in how you feel when talking with someone with a good attitude rather than a negative one? Think about it!

Think about the power you have in your atti-

tude. That's right, I believe that everyone has some power in their attitude, whether they know it or not. A person's attitude can have a significant impact on others, whether it's good or bad. Would you rather work or follow a person in a tough situation with a good attitude or a negative attitude?

There are not many things in life we can control, but we can control our attitude. I believe that each of us must decide how we are going to approach our day, job, family, friends and life, and attitude will play a big part in that decision. No one can change our attitude unless we choose to give that power away. The attitude we have is ours — we own it!

It's crucial to understand the impact our attitude can have on people around us. Our attitudes can be contagious. We hold the key to how others will perceive and react to our attitude. Think about the times you have received or given a friendly smile when speaking to another person. A small gesture, such as a smile, can go a

long way toward influencing another's reaction. However, a small gesture, such as a frown, or not speaking to someone, can do just the opposite.

Individuals who display a happy and positive attitude often help others around them feel better. I have seen situations when a person who displays a negative attitude has the tendency to bring everyone around them down. You've heard the old phrase "misery loves company."

So, the next time you are unsure about what your attitude is for that day, feel free to ask a family member, friend, co-worker or the person standing or sitting next to you: "Hey, what about my attitude?"

Then look in the mirror and ask yourself the same question and deal with it from there.

I believe a person's attitude is just as important as education, great wealth, failures or successes; attitude is just as important as someone's talent, skill or appearance. I believe a person's attitude can have a major effect on a team, company, church, home or even an entire Army.

In the words of the late Norman Vincent Peale (motivational and inspirational speaker, who



wrote the best seller book, the Power of Positive Thinking): "Give everyone a smile. Spend so much time improving yourself that you have no time left to criticize others. Be too big for worry and too noble for anger. And when you get up in the morning, you have two choices — either to be happy or to be unhappy. Just choose to be happy."

So I hope everyone can wake up and choose to be happy and continue to maintain and nurture that positive attitude to make a positive difference in someone's life.

Commentary

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Holidays time to raise alcohol, drugged driving awareness

ARMY SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAM

FORT POLK, La. — The holiday season is the time of the year when drunk and impaired driving accidents are most prevalent. Drug and alcohol use impair judgment, delay reaction times and can result in deadly consequences when driving.

December is National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month, a time to raise awareness about the consequences of driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs.

Most people would never imagine their holiday celebration could result in a fatality or imprisonment, but the risks associated with driving while impaired are real and can have tragic consequences for everyone involved.

Here are a few simple tips for celebrating and driving safely this holiday season:

- Designate a non-drinking driver ahead of time.
- If drinking alcohol at a party or other celebration, allow at least one hour between drinks.

It takes about one hour to get rid of one drink from your body (one drink is equal to a 12-ounce beer, 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5-ounce shot of liquor).

- Alternate drinking alcoholic beverages with soda, juice or water and eat food.
- Don't mix alcohol with other drugs including over-the-counter and prescription medications.
- Don't ride with someone who is impaired. Use other means of transportation such as a taxi or driver who is sober.

If you are hosting a party here are some steps to take to help your guests drive safely:

- Plan ahead and designate a sober driver.
- Collect each guest's keys upon arrival and store in a designated basket.
- Serve foods along with alcohol-free beverages such as soda, juice or water.

- Stop serving alcohol one to two hours before the party actually ends.

If you take a medication that makes you drowsy, do not drive. Have someone drive you. During Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month, recommit to preventing the loss of life by reminding others to be sober and drug free, and

use safe driving practices on the road.

Drink responsibly, drive responsibly and encourage family members,

friends and co-workers to be safe and responsible drivers for the holidays and beyond.

For more information or to seek help contact the Fort Polk Army Substance Abuse Program at 531-2031/1964.

Fort Polk's ASAP team wishes everyone a Happy Holiday and remember that "BUZZED driving is DRUNK driving!"



Take these steps to reduce occurrence of SUID, SIDS risks

BJACH PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

FORT POLK, La. — Sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) is a term used to describe the sudden and unexpected death of a baby that is less than 1 year old in which the cause was not obvious before investigation. Sudden unexpected infant deaths include sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), accidental suffocation in a sleeping environment and other deaths from unknown causes.

These deaths usually occur during sleep or in the baby's sleep area. About 3,500 babies in the United States die suddenly and unexpectedly each year.

The Centers for Disease Control has monitoring programs in multiple states and jurisdictions. These monitoring programs are used to obtain better data quality to help lead to a stronger understanding of circumstances that may be linked to an increased risk of SUID and SIDS. CDC supports the 2016 recommendations issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics to reduce the risk of all sleep-related infant deaths.

AAP recommendations to reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related infant deaths include:

- "Back to sleep" for every sleep. To reduce the risk of SIDS, infants should be placed for

sleep wholly on the back for every sleep by every care giver until the child reaches 1 year of age. Side sleeping is not safe.

- Use a firm sleep surface. Infants should be placed on a firm sleep surface, such as a mattress in a safety-approved crib, covered by a fitted sheet with no other bedding or stuffed animals to reduce the risk of SIDS and suffocation.

• Breastfeeding is recommended. Breastfeeding is associated with a reduced risk of SIDS. Unless contraindicated, it is recommended that mothers breastfeed exclusively, or feed with expressed milk for 6 months, in alignment with recommendations of the AAP.

• It is recommended that infants sleep in the parents' room, close to the parents' bed, but on a separate surface designed for infants, ideally for the first year of life, but at least for the first 6 months. There is evidence that sleeping in the parents' room but on a separate surface decreases the risk of SIDS by as much as 50 percent.

• Keep soft objects and loose bedding away from the infant's sleep area to reduce the risk of SIDS, suffocation, entrapment and strangulation. Avoid soft objects, such as pillows and pillow-like toys, quilts, comforters, sheepskins and loose bedding, such as blankets and nonfitted sheets; these can obstruct an infant's nose and mouth. Avoid use of bumper pads in cribs and bassinets.

• Consider offering a pacifier at nap time and bedtime. Although the mechanism is yet unclear, studies have reported a protective effect of pacifiers on the incidence of SIDS, even if the pacifier falls out of the mouth during sleep. Because of the risk of strangulation and suffocation, pacifiers should not be hung around the infant's neck, attached to infant's clothing or have a stuffed animal attached to it. For breastfed infants, pacifier introduction should be delayed until breastfeeding is firmly established.

- Avoid smoke exposure during pregnancy and after birth.

• Avoid alcohol and illicit drug use during pregnancy and after birth.

• Avoid overheating and head covering in infants. Infants should be dressed appropriately for the environment, with no greater than one layer more than an adult would wear to be comfortable in that environment. Covering of the face and head should be avoided.

• Infants should be immunized in accordance with recommendations of the AAP and CDC. There is no evidence that shows there is a causal relationship between immunizations and SIDS. In fact, recent evidence suggests that vaccination may have a protective effect against SIDS.

For more information visit www.cdc.gov/sids/Parents-Caregivers.htm.

Fort Polk Child, Youth, School Services youth participate in arts contest

By CHUCK CANNON

Guardian editor

FORT POLK, La. — More than 50 Fort Polk youth showed off their artistic talents as the installation's Directorate of Family Morale, Welfare and Recreation's Child, Youth and School Services, along with School Age Services, hosted a fine arts competition.

Competitors vied for bragging rights in the following categories: Acrylic, watercolor, chalk, pencil, ceiling tile, photography and sculptures.

The categories were further divided into the following age groups: Ages 16-18, 13-15, 10-12

and younger than 12.

The annual event, usually held in November or December, is a precursor to the Boys and Girls Club of America fine arts competition.

First-place entries from Fort Polk are forwarded to the national event held in January or February. Paige Greathouse, facility director for Fort Polk's Siegfried Youth Center, said local winners "receive respect from their peers and a ribbon."

The entries are left on display for everyone to see and there will be a reception for the competitors. At the national level, winners receive scholarships, depending on age groups and categories. "To compete at Fort Polk, the youngsters

must be registered with CYS," Greathouse said.

More than 50 pieces of art were entered this year and participants worked both at home and at the youth center on their projects.

First-place winners include:

- Ages 16-18, pencil, Divine Harmon
- Ages 16-18, ceiling tile, Darius Lockett
- Ages 13-15, photography, Destiny Ross
- Ages 13-15, acrylic, Ian Jasper
- Ages 13-15, pencil, Amasa Colby
- Ages 10-12, watercolor, Eevee Rasor
- Ages 10-12, sculpture, Logan Jasper
- Ages 10-12, pencil, Gabriel Cordova
- Ages below 10, acrylic, Londyn Gatson.

Briefs

Continued from page 12

TRICARE extension

The deadline to switch or enroll in TRICARE health plans has been extended to Dec. 31.

Beginning Jan. 1, you will only be able to change plans or enroll during the annual open season or following a qualifying life event. Visit www.benefeds.com for more information.

TRICARE fee increase

Some military retirees will see higher Tricare enrollment fees next year, while some out-of-pocket costs will increase slightly.

The enrollment fee adjustment, announced on Tricare's website and in letters sent by mail to beneficiaries this month, are part of an annual fee change based on the retirement pay cost of living adjustment, the letter states. The retiree cost of living allowance for 2019 is 2.9 percent.

Individual military retirees enrolled in Tricare Prime will pay \$297 per year, while families will pay \$594. Tricare for Life users are not affected by the change. Out-of-pocket costs for some Tricare Prime retirees also will rise slightly. For current retirees using Tricare Select, primary care outpatient and urgent care visits will increase by \$1. For other increases visit www.TRICARE.com.

Scholarships

The Scholarships for Military Children Program for school year 2019–2020 kicks off today and accepts applications through Feb. 15.

For scholarship year 2019-20, Fisher House Foundation will award 500 scholarship grants of \$2,000 each. Rules and requirements for the program, as well as links to frequently asked questions, are available at www.militaryscholar.org.

Nurse

Continued from page 12

could see his (Mitchell's) face. As soon as I saw him and heard his breathing I knew that he had aspirated," said Barrett.

Aspiration is a condition defined as food, liquids, (such as lake water) saliva, or vomit that is breathed into the airways.

Barrett said Mitchell's head was barely above water.

"The gentleman that was in the boat holding on to Mitchell was having a difficult time. I assumed he was a friend or family member. The boat was tipping as all the weight was on one side and he looked like he was getting tired. I didn't know how long he would be able to hold on to Mitchell. I couldn't do anything on that side of the boat because I was afraid I would tip it completely and we would all be in the water and in a lot of trouble," she said.

Barrett said she talked to Mitchell and his fishing partner and told them to hold on and keep his head above water. Then she swam around to the back of the boat and grabbed on, hoping to put weight there and bring the front end back up a bit.

"Then I just started kicking. We weren't going anywhere at first but, finally, the boat started to move. I kept telling them to hold on and I would get them to shore," she said.

Meanwhile, Robinson had left to get a rope. Once Barrett got to a certain point in the lake, he

threw the end to her.

"I had to throw it to her a couple of times to reach her and she had to swim a little to get the rope. Once she had it she swam while I pulled her in," he said.

As they got closer, Barrett shouted that they needed blankets due to the water temperatures. "I told them the water was freezing," she said.

Kelly ran to get blankets while Robinson helped Barrett get the boat on shore.

Robinson said once he and Barrett got Mitchell pulled on shore and covered him in blankets, Barrett's nursing skills kicked in. "She was talking to him and rolled him on his side because he was coughing up water," he said.

Barrett said the water Mitchell was spitting up had a pink tinge, which was a sure sign of aspiration. "Luckily, 9-1-1 had been called. We stayed with him until emergency services arrived and took him to the hospital," she said.

Barrett and her fellow rescuers have tried to keep up with what happened to Mitchell's condition after he was taken for medical treatment. "I know he was taken to Byrd Hospital first. By the time I checked on him the next day, he had been moved to Rapides Regional Medical Center, Alexandria, in the intensive care unit. Since then, I've tried to keep track of how he is doing. Last week, Dec. 6 or 7, I got a phone call from Mitchell's daughter, Misti Mitchell Benoit, who

asked if he could talk to me," she said.

Barrett said she was excited to talk to Mitchell and had tears in her eyes as Mitchell thanked her.

"I told him I was so glad he called. I talked to him for a while to find out how he was doing. He said he was going to take me out for a catfish dinner when he recovers," she said.

Barrett said she is happy to report that Mitchell is now home and expected to fully recover from the boating accident.

Barrett doesn't think she did anything special when she made that snap decision to help a couple of strangers in trouble, at least nothing that anyone else wouldn't have done.

She said it was definitely a combined effort to help save Mitchell.

Kelly agrees that it was a team effort with everyone working together that helped save Mitchell, but there is no doubt that Barrett was key to his survival.

"She is a hero," Kelly said.

Barrett is humble about her part in the rescue and said she gets embarrassed talking about it, but said she would do it again in a heartbeat.

"Just because I'm not in my scrubs or a uniform, doesn't mean I shouldn't do my job, especially being in the medical profession. I was there, had the proper training and an opportunity to help. I'm just glad I was in the right place at the right time," said Barrett.



Jingle all the way

Due to rain, Parkway Elementary School's Jingle Bell Jog took place inside the halls of the school. Parents seem to have fun as they came out to support and run with their kids. The jog is part of Parkway's health and wellness program. The kids were encouraged to jog or walk as many laps as they could for 30 minutes during the event held Dec. 7. The child with the most laps from each grade gets to have a special lunch with the principal.

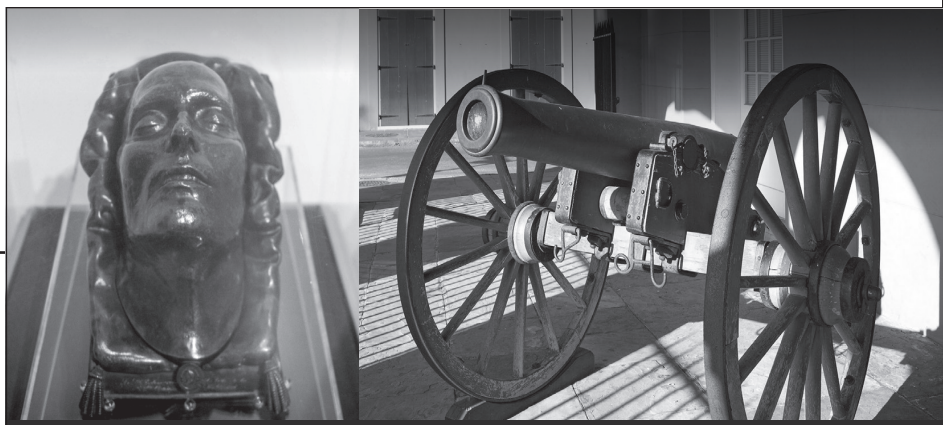


Command Sgt. Maj. Jerry L. Dodson, Fort Polk command sergeant major, left, talks to Cpl. Devon Douglas, Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers president, and other volunteers as they organize toys donated to the BOSS Toy Drive. The drive had 171 applicants and will help 327 children have a happy Christmas.



Making Christmas merry, bright

Above: Sgt. 1st Class Antonio Turegano, Operations Group and Audie Murphy president, (left), Kimber Tritten, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division volunteer, (center) and Gaye Smith, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain, work to empty the donation boxes of toys Dec. 7 as part of Fort Polk's toy drive.



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Lagniappe

BOSS

Fort Polk's Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program offers a wide variety of events for single Soldiers.

For more information on BOSS events call 531-1948.

- **Door decorating contest**

BOSS hosts a door decorating contest until Dec. 25. Decorate your door, take a picture with your door and submit it to Facebook@FortPolkBOSS.

Submit your picture with name, rank and unit. There are prizes for first-, second-, and third-place winners.

- **Holiday party**

The BOSS holiday party takes place Dec. 25 at 3 p.m. at the Home of Heroes Recreation Center.

There will be a white elephant gift exchange, so if you can, bring a gift to exchange (\$25 limit). Enjoy free food and giveaways. Single Soldiers only.

- **Festival trip**

BOSS is taking a trip to Moody Gardens, Galveston, Texas, to see the "Festival of Lights." Enjoy a cool holiday destination.

The trip also includes stops at the Aquarium Pyramid, 4D Special FX Theater, Ice Land: Pole-to-Pole and outdoor skating.

The cost is \$100 per Soldier and space is limited. Single Soldiers only.

- **Lemon lot**

Trying to sell your vehicle? Bring it to the BOSS Lemon Lot. Registration is \$5 for 30 days.

Cars that are not registered will be towed.

Register at the Home of Heroes Recreation Center.

- **Volunteer opportunity**

The BOSS program encourages you to donate your time to those in need.

BOSS lends a helping hand at the DeRidder Soup Kitchen each Monday and Wednesday.

Departure time is 4 p.m. from

the Home of Heroes Recreation Center.

Festivals

- **Christmas lights**

Make plans to attend the Natchitoches Christmas Festival through Jan. 6 to create glowing memories of the holiday season. The Natchitoches Christmas Festival offers a variety of celebrations, entertainment, tours, food, music, shopping and of course, Santa.

Enjoy viewing more than 300,000 Christmas lights and 100 lighted set pieces illuminating downtown Natchitoches and Cane River Lake every evening at dusk.

All Christmas events take place in downtown Natchitoches along the banks of Cane River Lake and the Historic District. Prices vary for admission.

For more information visit www.natchitocheschristmas.com.

- **Christmas festival**

The NOLA ChristmasFest, held at New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, may be decked out in red, white and green décor, but the largest indoor holiday event on the Gulf Coast, is giving half-off entries on Fridays to service members who defend and honor the red, white and blue.

Military service members and first responders who bring their official, valid ID will receive a discounted entry of \$10 for tickets purchased at the door.

This special offer may not be combined with other discounts and may not be extended to Family members or guests.

Enjoy the New Orleans area's only ice skating rink and ice slides, holiday characters, amusement rides, themed inflatables, arts and crafts, gingerbread house exhibit, Kringle carousel, winter whirl, snowball fight area, snowy summit climbing wall and other favorites.

The festival is open every day from Thursday through Dec. 31, including special hours on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and until 9 p.m. on New Year's Eve. For more information visit www.nolachristmasfest.com.

Miscellaneous

- **Community dinner**

Stop by New Llano's old town hall, 211 Stanton St., Dec. 25 from noon to 4 p.m. to enjoy the seventh annual Community Christmas Gumbo Dinner. Everyone is welcome and the event is free. For more information call (337) 378-

7607.

- **Holiday golf**

Head to Warrior Hills Golf Course Saturday for the Santa's Run Two-Person Golf Scramble. The shot gun start is at 9 a.m. The cost is \$30 per member or \$40 per non-member. For more information call 531-1982.

- **Dance party fun**

The Home of Heroes Functional Fitness Center hosts a Jingle Jammies pajama dance party and door prize raffle from 10 a.m. to noon. For more information call 531-7669.

- **Zoo lights**

Have a "holidaze" date night Dec. 28 at the Alexandria Zoo from 6-9 p.m. Tap into your wild side with a Holiday Light Safari experience for those 21 and older.

Stroll the zoo decorated with thousands of dazzling lights, sip on beer and wine, enjoy music, warm up by the bonfire, and satisfy your sweet tooth with complimentary s'mores. For admission price and more info

www.thealexandriazoo.com/Zoo-Brew.html.

- **New Year's Eve party**

Stop by Spare Time Lounge from 8 p.m.-1 a.m. Dec. 31 for a party to ring in the new year. Admission is \$10 per person or \$15 per couple. Dance to a live DJ, enjoy party favors, appetizers and champagne for the toast. For more information call 531-8139.

Clubs/groups

- **Toastmasters meet**

Toastmasters International meets from noon-1 p.m. at the Fort Polk Education Center, 7460 Colorado Ave., room 208, on the first and third Wednesdays of each month. The next meeting is Wednesday. For more information call (337) 208-8557.

- **Language club**

Would you like to immerse yourself in learning a foreign language such as Russian, Spanish, Brazilian, Portuguese or Tagalog? If so, attend the Language Immersion Table the first Wednesday of each month from noon to 1 p.m. at Tiger Hall.

The next meeting is Jan. 2. For more information call (636) 577-4272.

- **Lose weight**

Join Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) every Thursday at the Vernon Parish Library meeting room.

Weigh in is from 5-5:50 p.m. The meeting starts at 5:50 p.m.

For more information call (337)

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NOTICE: All real estate advertised in this newspaper is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, which makes it illegal to advertise any preference,

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In signing this form, I certify that the items I am advertising will be made available for purchase, use or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation or any other nonmerit factor of the purchaser, user or patron.

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