



Battle of the bands

Addictive Behavior Battles other Bands July 16.

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Fort Riley Post



Softball play continues

Three teams go undefeated in play

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Friday, July 23, 2004

America's Warfighting Center

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Around The Army

Aberdeen Proving Ground

Aberdeen Proving Ground's APG News reported praise for past accomplishments and well-wishes for the future dominated the proceedings of the U.S. Army Garrison Aberdeen Proving Ground Change of Command Ceremony on Farnshaw Field July 8 as Col. Mark U. Mark turned over the garrison's leadership to Col. John T. Wright.

Diane M. Devens, director of the Northeast Region, Installation Management Agency, hosted the ceremony. Maj. Gen. John C. Doesburg, commander of APG and the U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command spoke to the assembly.

Fort Belvoir

The Fort Belvoir Eagle reported July 15 that about 30 preschoolers join their parents to learn and develop skills geared toward helping them play tee-ball or baseball when they're older.

On Tuesday mornings and evenings, the children are introduced to motor skills for baseball including catching, throwing and batting. There is no competition - just bonding with their parents and learning skills that could prepare them for team sports on the post.

Fort Knox

The Fort Knox Inside the Turret reported 70 mph winds tore up the post.

A severe storm system whipped through the Fort Knox area July 20, causing property damage and road closures with heavy winds and rain.

Large trees could be seen down throughout Fort Knox, with housing areas near Brooks Field suffering some of the heaviest damage.

Fire Chief Marvin Gunderson said his team of 14 fire fighters on duty from July 20 through July 22 responded to calls throughout their shift.

"The main event was cutting a lady out of a car," Gunderson said. "(She) had a tree fall on her (vehicle) on Wilson Road while she was driving home from work."

Gunderson said that seven fire fighters and two Emergency Medical Specialists used Jaws of Life and other tools to extricate the woman from the partially-crushed car. She was immediately sent to Ireland Army Community Hospital's Emergency Room.

Fort Myer

Fort Myer's Pentagon reported July 16 that the Army's oldest active infantry unit prepared to return this week, marking the beginning of the end for the unit's first deployment since the Vietnam War. By week's end, a large group of Soldiers from Company B, 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, "The Old Guard," will exit the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa for Fort Myer. The unit has spent more than seven months involved in tactical missions in the region.

Stay In Step with Fort Riley

See what's happening on Fort Riley cable Channel 2 every day at 6:30 a.m., 8 a.m., noon, 6 p.m. and 10 p.m.

Soldiers receive Bronze Star, Purple Heart Medals

By April Blackmon
Staff writer

Two Soldiers were awarded the Bronze Star and three Soldiers received the Purple Heart at a ceremony July 21, for their sacrifices in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"These Soldiers and their family members we recognize today represent all that is good about our division, our Army and our nation," said Lt. Col. Oscar J. Hall IV, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor and provisional commander of the 1st Infantry Combat Team.

The Bronze Star is awarded for heroic or meritorious achievement of service, not

involving aerial flight in connection with operations against an opposing armed force.

Staff Sgt. Clint Boyer, 1st Bn., 34th Armor, received a Bronze Star with "V" device. Boyer received a gunshot wound to the face while conducting a raid in Ar Ramadi.

He was cited for valor after killing an Iraqi Baath Party colonel who was the leader of an insurgent cell in Ar Ramadi.

Spc. Ronald Ryker, 1st Bn., 16th Infantry received a Bronze Star. Ryker received a rocket-propelled grenade wound through the leg, returned fire and called for medical assistance and evacuation for wounded comrades while fighting in Al

Habbaniyah in November 2003.

The Purple Heart is awarded to Soldiers wounded by an instrument of war.

"It's hard to say congratulations to someone who wins the Purple Heart," said Brig. Gen. Frank Kearney, assistant division commander for maneuver, 24th Infantry Division (Mech).

"I kind of say thanks for your sacrifice and your suffering," said Kearney.

"Each one of them has a permanent reminder that they'll carry with them for the rest of their lives of what they've done for America and what they've done for all of us and what they've done for the Iraqi people," Kearney said.

Capt. Michael Messer, 1st Bn., 16th Inf.,

was wounded by an enemy hand grenade while leading his company Feb. 17 as they secured a building in Ar Ramadi.

"It's not exactly the first award you think of that you want to get," Messer said. "But I have no regrets over anything that happened while I was in Iraq," Messer added.

Sgt. Anthony Cora, 1st Bn., 34th Armor, was wounded by IED shrapnel in the neck while conducting a patrol Nov. 10, 2003 near Ar Ramadi.

Sgt. Jimmy Schreck, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Combat Team was wounded in action by an improvised explosive device Sept. 19, 2003 in Fallujah.

Iraqi Commandos

1st BCT Soldiers assist in training

By Paula M. Fitzgerald
1st Marine Division

CAMP RAMADI, Iraq — Newly minted Iraqi commandos are ready to work with Marines in Iraq against enemy forces, thanks to a little help from 1st Brigade Combat Team Soldiers.

Army Staff Sgts. Richard A. Dycus and Jack C. Harlan spent the better part of their military careers transforming "18-year-old American kids" into disciplined fighters. Now, they are in Iraq helping to improve the country's fledgling Iraqi Civil Defense Corps.

Harlan, Dycus and 18 fellow drill sergeants from Fort Knox, Ky., who are supporting the Army's 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, recently finished training Iraq's first commando company. The company belongs to the 60th ICDC Brigade.

Now Harlan and Dycus are preparing the company for real-world missions. The new commandos will soon be working beside Marines and Soldiers against the enemy.

The commando company was developed to expand the ICDC's capabilities, Dycus said.

"Commandos are elite ICDC soldiers who have completed the first two phases of training," said the 27-year-old Dycus. "The company was formed to handle more aggressive offensive type missions."

The ICDC was created after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime to maintain Iraq's internal security. Most missions include manning checkpoints, convoy security and patrols.

"We handle very special and hard missions," Iraqi Maj. Durayd

See Commandos, Page 2



Post/Fitzgerald

Commandos with the 60th Iraqi Civil Defense Corps prepare to maneuver through the obstacle course at Camp Ramadi, in 1st Marine Division's Area of Responsibility. Army Staff Sgts. Richard A. Dycus and Jack C. Harlan, with the Army's 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, trained the commandos for the 1st Marine Division during a 24-day course.



Post/Fitzgerald

Iraqi Civil Defense Corps Commandos fight each other during hand-to-hand combat training at Camp Ramadi. Army drill sergeants with 1st BCT trained the first Commando Company.

All Soldiers fill in for brigade's security

By Paula M. Fitzgerald
1st Marine Division

CAMP RAMADI, Iraq - Army Pfc. Zediah E.C. Timmons, personnel clerk with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Combat Team, never pictured himself in Iraq when he was younger.

Timmons, of Smith Center, Kan. and the brigade have been here for almost a year conducting security and stabilization operations in the country's Al Anbar Province.

The brigade is currently supporting the 1st Marine Division.

Since September, Timmons' company has been partially responsible for securing the camp, where hundreds of Marines, soldiers, sailors and airmen live and work.

"Even though these soldiers are from the Headquarters Company, they're still responsible for the safety and protection of the personnel on the base," said Army 1st Sgt. Patrick Sticca, company first sergeant. "We're just doing our part."

The company is comprised of the brigade's cooks, communicators, mechanics and administration personnel.

Every private to sergeant in the company is required to stand the 24-hour duty several times each month.

"We have soldiers on guard duty everyday," Sticca added.

The soldiers of HHC receive their instructions from Battery A, 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery. Guards receive daily intelligence briefs before assuming their posts.

Timmons is no stranger to manning posts inside the camp's perimeter towers.

"I've stood this duty probably about 20 times," 21-year-old Timmons said. "I have it at least once every two weeks."

Four soldiers, wearing protective vests and helmets, are assigned to each tower.

The teams split in half and rotate shifts throughout the guard period.

While on duty, soldiers like Army Sgt. Jonathan D. Glab,

See Security, Page 2



Post/Fitzgerald

Pfc. Zediah E.C. Timmons, personnel clerk with HHC, 1st BCT, watches for suspicious activity.





Post news in brief

Sexton named top employee

The Fort Riley Staff Judge Advocate recently recognized Deb Sexton as the office's Employee of the Quarter. She received a time off award.

Finance battalion goes to field

The 4th Finance Battalion will be at minimal staff July 23 due to a field exercise. Anyone with finance questions or concerns should call 239-9878.

Team seeks new skydivers

The U.S. Army Parachute Team, "Golden Knights" are accepting applications to attend their annual Assessment and Selection Program in September. A downloadable version of the application is available on the Golden Knights' Web site: www.armygold-enknights.com.

To become a Golden Knight, applicants must have a minimum of 150 freefall parachute jumps, a flawless civilian and military record and volunteer to become Airborne qualified. Applications are being accepted until July 30. Packets can be sent to the U.S. Army Parachute Team, P.O. Box 70126, Fort Bragg, NC 28307. Call the Golden Knight Administration at 396-4800.

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Commandos continued from page 1

Khaldon Afat, commando company commander, said. "Anything the other ICDC units can't handle, we do it."

Commandos are trained to conduct raids, ambushes and other operations in an urban environment using skills the average ICDC soldier does not possess.

But becoming a commando proved to be more difficult than many of the ICDC soldiers originally thought.

Dycus and Harlan, who have almost 20 years of Army experience between them, began the 24-day training cycle with 114 ICDC soldiers but only graduated 41 men.

"We had to drop a lot of the guys during the assessment phase of the course," explained Dycus, of Nashville, Tenn.

Dycus stated that, "They just couldn't handle the mental and physical challenges we placed on them."

The course was broken into several phases. The first four days were designed to weed out those

who wouldn't be able to live up to commando expectations.

"The students were working on about four hours of interrupted sleep per night," said Harlan, a 27-year-old from Abingdon, Ill. "We tested them mentally and physically."

During the next phases, the remaining 41 ICDC soldiers, ranging from 16 to 60 years old, were taught first aid, individual movement techniques, hand-to-hand combat, squad level tactics, advanced rifle marksmanship and platoon movement tactics.

The drill sergeants used some of the same training techniques for the commandos the Army uses to train American Soldiers.

Some of their tactics didn't have quite the same effect. "Most of them didn't understand English," Harlan said. "When we yelled at them, nine times out of 10 they would just stand there and say 'yes.'"

Through the use of interpreters and hand gestures, the drill sergeants were able to get around

the language barrier. Following the 24-day training course, the ICDC soldiers were dubbed commandos and given maroon berets to signify their elite status.

Iraqi Republican Guard soldiers wore maroon berets during Hussein's rule.

Unlike Republican Guard soldiers, the commandos are interested in protecting a democratic Iraq.

"Many of the guys who join the ICDC are interested in the paycheck," Dycus explained.

"The commandos are very disciplined and want to fight insurgents who are against democracy. These guys are the best of the ICDC."

Afat said he and his men owe their future success to Harlan and Dycus.

"The drill sergeants gave us all the information we need and all the training to start doing real missions," he said.

"After all this training, I know for sure we are definitely ready for the real thing," he stated.



Post/Fitzgerald

A Commando with the 60th Iraqi Civil Defense Corps crawls under barbed wire at the obstacle course at Camp Ramadi.



Post/Fitzgerald

Army Sgt. Jonathan D. Glab, personnel sergeant with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Combat Team, mans a 50 caliber machine gun in one of the towers.

Security continued from page 1

HHC personnel sergeant, take their jobs seriously.

"The enemy is outside the wire, they want to kill us," explained Glab, from Middletown, N.J. "We're here to make sure they don't."

Armed with rifles, rocket launchers, grenades, machine guns and pistols, the soldiers keep watchful eyes on any "suspicious activity" going on near the camp's perimeter.

"Mainly, we're making sure no one tries to infiltrate the wire," Timmons explained.

"If we receive incoming mortar fire or anything like that, we call it in and report it."

He said the duty sometimes "seems to drag on," but that doesn't make him any less vigilant. He said recently, the camp came under attack from enemy mortars. "I was scared and excited all at

the same time," Timmons said. "That was the first time I ever saw an impact like that."

According to Sticca, several of his soldiers have been involved in engagements with the enemy.

He said he remembers at least two incidents when HHC soldiers exchanged fire with enemy combatants.

Army Sgt. Issac D. Barnes, an M-109A7 howitzer gunner with Battery A, has been impressed by the HHC soldiers' performances. "They've been pulling guard with us since we got here in September," said the soldier from Rolling Fort, Miss.

"It's really interesting working with people from other (military occupational specialties)."

The HHC soldiers were given training before heading up to the towers.

"They got several classes about

how to operate the crew-served weapons," Barnes said.

The training focused on the .50-caliber machine gun and the squad automatic weapon.

Still, the soldiers have been relying on their basic "soldier skills."

"All soldiers are trained in basic infantry tactics," Glab explained.

"There's really no difference between admin soldiers and artillery soldiers. Soldiers are soldiers."

Although Glab can think of other things he'd rather be doing than guard duty, he's happy to be in the towers.

"It makes me feel good to know I'm keeping the other soldiers safe," he said.

"I'm one part of the puzzle. I know there are other guys here doing the same thing for me."

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Post news in brief

Mail classes scheduled

An Introduction to Unit Mailroom Operations class will be offered July 28 from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in building 319. Pre-enrollment is required. To enroll, call 239-5411. Each commander who operates a unit mailroom must have at least one primary and one alternate unit postal officer in grade E-6 or above. Each mailroom must also have at least one primary and one alternate unit mail clerk.

Prospective unit mail clerks must have at least an Interim secret clearance and have completed 20 days on-the-job training before attending class. For more information, call 239-5411.

Other class dates are: Aug. 11 and 25 and Sept. 8 and 22. An official mail training class will be offered from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. July 29, at building 319. Each unit or activity must have a primary and alternate official mail manager. Training requirements include: Private Express Statutes, Non-Mailable Material, Classifications of Mail, Special Postal Services, International Mail, Postage and Fees.

Penalties for Private Use, Protection of Mail, Mail Surveys, Addressing Mail and Cost Saving Methods.

Pre-enrollment is required. To enroll or for more information, call 239-5411 or 239-5200. Other class dates are scheduled for Sept. 2 and Oct. 15.

Safety classes scheduled

July's Directorate of Environment and Safety class schedule includes:

HAZCOM Train the Trainer Course beginning at 9 a.m. July 23 in room 6, building 407. The HAZCOM (Hazard Communication) Train the Trainer course is designed to train unit instructors on Hazard Commu-

nication requirements. These trainers instruct others within their organization on safety precautions and information on chemical health hazards as required by federal law. To enroll or for more information, call 239-0446 or 239-2334.

Retirement packages due 90 to 120 days

Any civilian employee considering retirement should submit a retirement application package 90 to 120 days before the intended retirement date, recommend officials in the Army Benefits Center-Civilian. A timely submission will help ensure a timely first annuity payment from the Office of Personnel Management.

A delay in submitting an application package will affect retirement application processing, often resulting in a delay in the receipt of the first annuity payment.

ABC-C statistics indicate that about 75 percent of the employees who submitted retirement applications one to 15 days before retirement may encounter a delay in annuity receipt. To learn more about the retirement process, visit the ABC-C Web site at <https://www.abc.army.mil>.

Heat injury training offered online

Civilian supervisors wanting to provide their employees about "heat injury" can make use of a Power Point presentation on the Web at: <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil>.

For more information, call Becky Mabrey R.N., Occupational Health Preventive Medicine Service, Fort Riley, at 239-7042.

Chaplain receives Soldier's Medal

Staff Reports

Chap. (Capt.) Jim Blount of the 541st Maintenance Battalion received the Soldier's Medal July 14, during a ceremony on Fort Riley's Custer Hill.



Chap. Jim Blount

Blount is honored for risking his own life to save other

fellow Soldiers in November 2002.

Blount said he was stationed in Kosovo when a Soldier took him hostage after firing weapons in a barracks area and threatened to kill himself and fellow Soldiers.

After five and a half hours of counseling, Blount said he convinced the Soldier to hand over his weapon and turn himself into the local hospital.

"By the end, we were praying together. He shared half a muffin with me. He proceeded to take all his combat gear ... off, gave all his rounds up, gave his weapon to me and we walked out of there," Blount said.

During the ordeal, Blount said he was concerned for the Soldier holding him hostage and the Soldiers who had surrounded the building they were in.

"I knew that if I didn't get him out of there soon enough, they were going to come in," Blount said. "I told him the Army and all the armed forces, never leave a Soldier behind. So I said, if you stand here, then I'm going to stand here with you."

"At one point, he decided he was going to go out and engage them, and by doing that, he was going to basically commit suicide by getting himself killed and take

as many with him as he could.

"I said to him ... if you go out, I'm going to walk out there with you. And I think he began to care for me as he saw that I was caring for him and I put my safety secondary to his. He didn't walk out of there when I said that," Blount said.

As Blount shared his story with Soldiers of the 541st Maintenance Battalion, the chaplain told them he was willing to risk his life again to save his comrades.

"I put my life on the line for that Soldier ... and I'll put my life on the line for any one of you," he said.

Army One Source available for help

Need help? In this time of high operational tempo and long deployments, many families are under additional stress themselves and are concerned for their loved ones overseas.

For families experiencing problems, help is available through their local family support center.

Another resource is the One Source Program, a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week, toll-free information and referral service available via telephone and the Internet to active duty Soldiers, mobilized Reserve and National Guard Soldiers, deployed civilians and their families. The One Source program provides information on matters ranging from everyday concerns to deployment and reintegration issues.

Servicemembers and their families may access One Source in the following ways:

Army One Source — Web site: <https://www.armyonesource.com> (fill in user name: army; password: onesource); in the states, phone toll free (800) 464-8107; outside the states, phone U.S. access code + (800) 464-8107 (all 11 digits must be dialed); for hearing-impaired, phone (800) 364-9188; for Spanish speakers, phone (888) 732-9020.

Air Force One Source — Web site: <https://www.airforceone-source.com> (fill in user name: air-

force; password: ready); phone (800) 707-5784

Army

The Army's suicide prevention program formally began in 1984 when the Army chief of staff directed a panel of experts be formed to review existing suicide prevention efforts and determine what additional steps could be taken to reduce the rate of suicide. In 2000 the Army refined its suicide prevention program to focus on five major strategies: Developing life-coping skills, encouraging help-seeking behaviors, raising awareness and vigilance to suicide prevention, focusing on synchronizing and integrating an installation-wide suicide prevention program, and conducting suicide surveillance and analysis.

Coming Home

Before servicemembers return home, they receive training on managing the stress of reintegration with family, including how to manage expectations, the importance of communication, and the need to be careful about alcohol use. During redeployment processing, Servicemembers are screened for the symptoms of depression or stress-related problems. If any servicemember returns with a mental health issue, he or she receives appropriate

treatment. If long-term problems arise, care is available through the Military Health System for active

duty members and retirees and through the VA hospital system for non-retired veterans.

Help available in managing stress

Stress affects almost everyone. Sometimes, it can be a good thing because it can energize us to meet new challenges or changes. But if it's not managed, stress can affect your physical and emotional health, your relationships, and your life. Below you'll find tips for managing stress.

Recognizing the signs of stress

The first step in managing stress is learning how to become aware of it in yourself. Some common physical and emotional symptoms of stress include difficulty sleeping, headaches, neck or back pain or muscle tension, stomach pain, irritability, anger, depression or mood swings.

Managing stress

Sometimes, the best way to deal with stress is to confront it at the source. If you're worried about what your boss thinks about your performance, you could ask and find out. If you feel overwhelmed by your to-do list, you could block out some time to tackle it. But not all stresses can be handled so directly. Some sources of stress can't be eliminated, such as a sick older relative or a child who is having difficulty in school. To manage those kinds of stresses, you may need to use other techniques. Here are some suggestions:

* Relaxation techniques are often successful for managing stress. You might try deep breathing, meditation, or just sitting quietly for a few minutes each day to gather your thoughts.

* Taking care of yourself is also an important tool for managing stress. Eating a nutritious diet and getting enough sleep and regular exercise are vital for dealing with stress.

* Research shows that social relationships make you feel better and have a positive effect on your health. Be sure to set aside time for friends and family. For more information, log on to Army One Source at www.armyonesource.com or call Army One Source today at (800) 464-8107, 6-9188.

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2nd Bn., 34th Armor Soldiers balance training, families

By Kristen Hamilton
KSU Intern

Leaders and Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor, pull double duty at Fort Riley these days. In fact, they doubled up on responsibilities 10 months ago.

Members of the "Dreadnaught" battalion take their own mission in stride while shouldering the extra burden of caring for the 3,000-plus family members of 1st Brigade Combat Team Soldiers deployed to Iraq.

The battalion assumed added responsibilities for manning the brigade's rear detachment when Col. "Buck" Connor took the majority of 1st BCT Soldiers to Iraq to support operations of the 1st Marine Division.

That also means the battalion staff fills in as the "home base" brigade staff.

"We are a conduit of information and problem solvers. At the

same time, we are preparing for the full spectrum of combat," explained Lt. Col. Oscar Hall, battalion commander and provisional brigade commander.

Rear detachment operations involve a wide spectrum of responsibilities, but the battalion staff focuses on helping families, assisting with the medical recovery of wounded Soldiers and in-processing and training of Soldiers new to the brigade, Hall said.

He emphasized that a good line of communication ensures success for any operation.

"We have held two brigade, numerous battalion and countless company level FRG (Family Readiness Group) meetings throughout the deployment. At these meetings, we disseminate information, solve problems and squelch rumors," Hall said.

The rear detachment's assis-

tance also extends to the special needs of Soldiers.

"We track wounded Soldiers to make sure they are getting the best medical care, and we have paid final honors through memorial services for those Soldiers that have made the supreme sacrifice," Hall said.

He quickly credited his Soldiers, rear detachment commanders, FRG leaders and veteran's organizations for their help in carrying out the added responsibilities. "The 'Rear D' commanders do everything that company commanders do and more," Hall said.

"Dreadnaught" Soldiers stepping up to help families in need resulted in many letters of thanks from spouses, organizations or family members, Hall continued. Veterans groups help, too, he said. "The Society of the Big Red One has sent a representative to

Walter Reed hospital to meet all

of our wounded Soldiers. Through the McCormick Foundation and the Big Red One Scholarship Foundation, they have contributed approximately \$90,000 to 1st Brigade."

In its rear detachment role, 2nd Bn., 34th Armor, personnel ensure new Soldiers go through theatre-specific training, get manifested and are ready to join their unit. They also make sure new families link up with an FRG, Hall said.

Meanwhile, the battalion's war training continues. That training includes three tank gunnery exercises, a National Training Center rotation, company and platoon lanes training, an inspector general inspection, two scout gunnery exercises, three mortar live-fire exercises and countless hours spent on small arms ranges, he said.

"In all of our training we are incorporating lessons learned

from the brigade's deployment (to Iraq) and theatre-specific training to include convoy operations, weapons proficiency, casualty evacuation, water survival, combat lifesaver, clearing buildings, setting up a forward operating base and reacting to improvised explosive devices," Hall said.

Those lessons impress upon the battalion's Soldiers the difference between their normal war mission of driving around inside a tank's 70 tons of armor and conducting operations on foot while wearing 50 pounds of body armor, Hall said.

"The battalion has always known that it's never been a question of if, but when we will deploy," Hall said.

Until then, Hall said they would continue their mode of high-intensity training to cover the full spectrum of combat operations, fire another tank gunnery

exercise in July and participate in JRTC.

"Our extra training has given us an advantage, but we've had a lot to do," Hall said. "Even as we prepare for the upcoming gunnery, we are committed to providing assistance to those family members whose spouses are deployed."

"We are transitioning more rear detachment responsibilities to others, and when the advance party arrives from the brigade, we will hand off responsibilities to them," Hall said.

In the meantime, Hall emphasized that the "Dreadnaughts" remain committed to the Soldiers and families of 1st Brigade. "My Soldiers know they were a critical support to forward deployed units. If the Soldier knows the family is cared for, the Soldier can focus on the fight, and that's been our goal since day one," Hall said.

Director announces open season

Washington, DC — U.S. Office of Personnel Management Director Kay Coles James has announced the first open season for the Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Program since 1999.

The FEGLI 2004 Open Season will be Sept. 1-30 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the program.

"The Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Program is just one of the federal benefits that employees can use to plan for the future and to anticipate the fulfillment of essential responsibility to their families," said James. "This open season will give federal employees the opportunity to make any adjustments they need to better plan for the future."

The FEGLI program consists of basic life insurance coverage and three options that include coverage for up to five times an employee's base salary plus coverage for family members. In most cases, a new federal employee is automatically covered by basic life insurance. The types and amounts of coverage available are not changing.

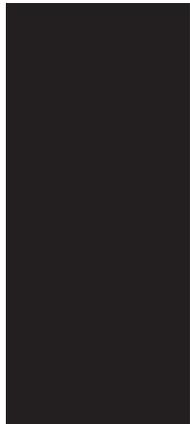
During the open season, federal and postal employees in eligible positions will be able to enroll in the FEGLI program or increase or change current coverage without having a physical or answering any questions about their health. The earliest that newly elected coverage will be effective is Sept. 1.

OPM will have a special FEGLI 2004 open season Web site set up before the start of the open season. The Web site will contain an election form and more information about the program.

The federal government established the FEGLI program on Aug. 29, 1954. It is the largest group life insurance program in the world, covering more than 4 million federal employees and retirees as well as many of their family members.

For more information, call Karen K. Brough, personnel management specialist at Fort Riley's Civilian Personnel Advisory Center, at 239-6084.

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Commentary

Letter to the editor

Family of fallen Soldier responds to kindness

To the Editor of the Fort Riley Post:

During the past 14 days, our family has under taken the most arduous and difficult task a family could be subjected to - the loss and burial of a child. We need not speak of the tear in our souls that occurred upon notification that Brian had been killed in action while serving in our nation's army operating in Iraq. We can address with eternal gratitude, our friends and neighbors, both in our home in McKinney and in Brian's home of Austin, and from Fort Riley, who have and continue to, support us during these dark days.

Many have called, visited our home, (both in McKinney and in Austin), or have written letters. Response via e-mail to the loss of Brian has been overwhelming. Although conditions have been surreal at times, all have helped and guided us with the every day tasks of living while we mourn and try to make some sense of our

loss. All wish to convey their condolences and in some way, soothe and mollify our grief.

There are many to be thanked, but several have steadfastly been at our side from that terrible first day. The most notable are Joe and Anne Ader, Gretchen Goodrich and Dave and Maurine Martinez in Austin. The Remember Brian Web site started by JB and Jenny Barnes has been a forum for sharing special stories about Brian. More than anything, this Web site has let us see who Brian was away from home. In McKinney, Sanford Burrus DDS and Beth Sawyer, in Fort Riley, 2nd Lt. Jim Meeks, has been invaluable to us. Many have provided much appreciated support in the form of dinners for our gathered relatives.

A special thanks goes to the young scouts from Brian's Troop 303. They have shown that boys grow up to be the men who might, one day, be a part of our nation's peacekeepers.

Another thank you goes to the young men from Fort Hood who

served as pallbearers for Brian. The task of burying one of your own must be a most difficult job. The bugler played to all of us. We appreciated General Zink for taking the time to pay his respects to one of his boys.

The memorial service for Brian in Fort Riley was especially poignant. These young men and the wives of Brian's platoon who are still in Iraq knew Brian in the Army part of his life and were there when he died. We so appreciated Karen Indermuehle for offering her home to us and 2nd Lt. Meeks for escorting us during our stay and the many calls he made to make sure things were ok. The reception after the memorial was especially helpful. Thank you to all who took the time to come and talk to us.

We also want to take this opportunity to thank The Society of the First Division, the Soldiers and Families of the 1st BCT, and the Pioneer Services for the flowers at the memorial service. They were beautiful.

Of note: One of KC's brothers-in-law asked about the people who were pulling over to let the funeral procession pass. It seems that respect shown a funeral procession is not a custom in the northern part of our country. It is the small things that we do here to show respect for one another that makes this a great place to live.

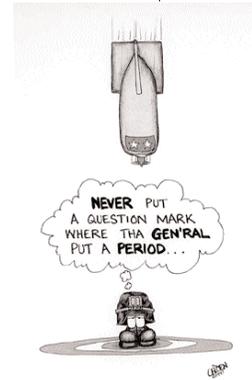
What wonderfully kind, caring people share this world with us. Wherever we go, to the grocery store, the post office or the bank, we are always greeted with sincere questions of "How are you, how is your family doing?"

Thank you for sharing our grief, for comforting and consoling us all during the most difficult time of our lives. We are eternally grateful.

With respect,
Dr. and Mrs. William M. Smith

Parents of 2nd Lt. Brian Drew Smith, killed in Iraq, July 2, 2004

Grunt By Wayne Ulden



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Commentary

View from Iraq

1st Maintenance Company rebuilds over 100 HMMWV engines

Kathleen E. Trant
1st Maint. Co.

Even though it was the middle of the night, the soldiers of Fort Riley's 1st Maintenance Company were hard at work in the 100-degree heat of Iraq's desert. The only sound that broke the clacking of the wrenches was the rumble and rev of a High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle engine. Spc. Brenton Hobbs had just rebuilt.

It was music to the ears to hear the sound of this engine. What was different from any other HMMWV engine? This was one of the most special engines the soldiers have rebuilt. It was their 100th rebuilt HMMWV engine since deploying to Iraq in September 2003, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Rebuilding 100 HMMWV engines in a combat zone was a milestone; rebuilding the first HMMWV engine was a miracle.

Chief Warrant Officer Dave Ujezo and his seven soldiers initiated the HMMWV engine rebuild program. The program provides supported units with a rapid source of supply for 6.2 and 6.5-liter engines.

"When we first got here, the supply system could not meet the

demands placed on it; engines were just not available," Ujezo said. "We had no previous experience with this. In garrison, we primarily replace components, but rarely do we get to open them up and fix what's broken inside. That's all mostly done by civilian contractors. In this case, units had trucks down for an average of 45 days. We were tasked to do something about that."

Ujezo's team created an installation-level repair and test facility in the middle of the desert. There, Soldiers strip broken engines down to the block, clean and resurface the valves and cylinders and replace seals and any worn or broken components.

"A lot of people said it couldn't be done," said Cpl. Russ Smith, the shop NCOIC. "The soldiers had no previous training or experience, we were lacking a lot of tools and of course, because of all the dust, no one thought we would have an area sterile enough."

When the Army Materiel Command's Logistics Assistance Office was approached about the program, their initial response was reserved.

"We had to prove we could produce a quality product," Ujezo said.

Once AMC agreed to support the project, the unit purchased special tools and created a bench

stock of common parts.

In Iraq, almost everything is a matter of life and death, especially the serviceability of equipment. The 1st Maintenance Co. Soldiers understand the responsibility and trust they are given. Despite the

obstacles, the Soldiers continue to rise to the challenge and adapt methods to overcome them. The company was originally tasked to salvage 60 percent of the engine blocks they received.

The Soldiers gained confidence

and experience and refined techniques so that about 90 percent of all engines that come into the shop are repaired and returned to the shelf in about three days. That is an amazing statistic, considering most of what the soldiers use

in the shop, they fabricate. The entire company helped to make the shop a reality.

The facility and test stands for the engines were built from scratch. A lot of the tools utilized in the shop, the mechanics based on ideas they thought might make the process easier.

Since then, the 1st Maintenance Co. has provided engines to units from Task Force 82, the 1st Brigade Combat Team and the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force.

The Soldiers said they are proud of what they have accomplished.

"I have learned everything from taking an engine apart, checking the parts for wear, the function of each part and how to put it together. I even learned what sort of adjustments to make to the engine if it runs funny or rich. I knew none of this before," said Pfc. Alo Berleme.

"Given the conditions, I wouldn't have thought it possible," said Spc. Nick Costa. "It's like you are seeing something that looks like it won't ever run and knowing that you have the ability to make it come to life again."

"The best part is when you hear the engine start up. That sound, you think to yourself - I did that. I'm proud of what we've accomplished here," said Spc. John Whitted.



Post Taylor

Cpl. Russ Smith, (Left) Spc. John Whitted, Spc. Steven Lewandowski, Pfc. Alo Berleme, Cpl. Brenton Hobbs, Spc. Nicholas Costa, Spc. Krzysztof Kuerha and CW4 David Ujezo, members of 1st Maintenance Company's Automotive Platoon stand by the 100th HMMWV engine they rebuilt since deploying to Iraq.

1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery Soldiers talk with Iraqis while on patrol

By Keith Schreckengost
Co. A, 1st Bn., 5th FA

On Sept. 7, 2004, 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery, deployed to Ar Ramadi, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

We spend most of our time in the town of Tamim, which is across the Euphrates River from Ar Ramadi.

In Tamim, most people live in houses, but there are several apartment complexes. Visitors will not see any malls or department stores and there are no grocery stores or restaurants. Instead, Tamim has many little shops and outdoor markets where people sell such things as fresh lamb, live chickens, fruits and vegetables, baked goods, housewares, clothes, toys and, of course, candy.

The battalion's firing batteries are assigned three significant missions: patrols, base defense and our wartime mission, artillery support. Each firing battery has shared equal time throughout the year performing these missions.

Although each mission is equally important to the success of the operation, the most rewarding mission is patrolling Tamim, which has a population of about 6,000.

Performing patrols in Tamim allows us to interact with the average citizen of Iraq. We get to experience first-hand the hospitality and sophistication of the Iraqi people. We have learned of their joys, frustrations, culture and, good or bad, their attitude about America and Americans.

By and large they, like all people, just want to get on with life, to raise their children the way they want and to live the way they want to without outside interference.

Most of their weddings occur on Wednesdays. Their funerals are typically on Thursdays. Consequently, these are the two days that can provide significant emotional events for those new to the country and the patrol mission.

As Soldiers in a hostile environment, we react to gunfire. Back home it is unusual to see someone fire a rifle into the air.

Not so in Iraq, where this practice is a long-standing tradition.

It takes all of one week on patrol and you can be sure you will hear gunfire on a Wednesday or Thursday. Imagine our relief when we learned that some one had been celebrating an event and not trying to take a life. This is a custom we have worked hard to understand and to end.

The typical neighborhood here is built with the homes side-by-side and back-to-back, with barely a walkway in between. Back yards are non-existent. Nearly every home, school and mosque has a wall built around it, while most stores and shops do not. Typically, each neighborhood has its own schools and mosque.

Our unit helped to rebuild many of the schools in Tamim. The schools are being rebuilt due to decades of neglect under the previous regime.

This is probably the mission with the greatest impact on Iraq's future. These children will always remember that the Americans helped to rebuild their schools and mosques and generously provided

school supplies. Since they are Iraq's future, hopefully this will facilitate favorable relations for years to come.

Whenever we go to one of the schools, most of the kids run out to greet us and practice their English. On occasion, some of my Soldiers have played marbles with them.

For a significant period of time, the infrastructure has been neglected. Despite this, most homes, mosques and schools have running water and electricity. This area has only limited periods of free government-supplied electricity each day, but this situation is improving. Most neighborhoods in Tamim get about eight hours of free electricity daily. The rest is purchased from privately owned generators for about 2,000 to 3,000 Iraqi dinar (\$1.43 to \$2.14) per month per electric line.

Many families have a refrigerator, washer, phone, radio and television. Computers and cell phones are not common and are considered luxury items.

Tamim, for the most part, does not have sewers under the roads

like we do in the United States. Their "sewers" are ditches that run along the side of the roads. Sometimes they are quite odiferous.

Even with all these problems, the Iraqi people have a pretty good attitude about life.

We have spent significant amounts of time walking through the neighborhoods meeting people and talking to them. Most of the adults have been friendly to us, greeting us warmly and inviting us in for tea. However, on one occasion I met an older gentleman, a shop owner, who told me through my interpreter, "We don't want you here, go home."

I stopped the patrol and asked him why he wanted us to leave. Initially, he would not even talk to me.

Eventually, he decided to talk, but because I was in uniform he denied me entry into his shop. I ended up speaking with him for about 20 minutes.

First, I let him explain his views. Then I assured him we were here to help Iraq, not to harm its people. We discussed all the

work we have done for his community, such as improving their schools, mosques, sewers and fuel and electricity prices. By the time we were done, I left on speaking terms.

The next week I purposely returned to his shop. As always, I was dressed in my uniform and protective gear, but this time the man invited me in. I was offered tea, and we sat together and again addressed his concerns, which he took the time to organize into a written list.

Like many people in Iraq, this gentleman had no idea why we are here.

Like many other citizens of Iraq, he had assumed that we are just an occupying force — until we took the time to speak with him.

Never before have these long-suffering people experienced this kind of freedom. This system of government is very new to the Iraqis, and they are cautious.

As we continue to inform Iraq's citizens, we expect that they will embrace their new freedom.

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Unmanned vehicles help save lives

By K.L. Vantran
AFPS

WASHINGTON - The Soldier touches the laptop screen, programming the route for an unmanned ground vehicle. Miles away, the vehicle begins its journey. As the robot maneuvers through the terrain, the Soldier watches its progress on his screen. The Demo III robot is the Army Research Lab's newest experimental unmanned vehicle. The XUVs are a test bed for autonomous mobility research and experimentation directly relevant to military transformation efforts, according to Army Master

Sgt. Frank French, a research, development, testing and experimentation noncommissioned officer for the lab. French also is a tank crewmember. The goal in this case, French noted, is for the vehicle to serve as a scout and to conduct route reconnaissance. As the Demo III rolls through the terrain, it gathers data on its surroundings. The Soldier plans a mission for the robot through the operator control unit (computer), said French. "If the vehicle runs into trouble, it can send a message back that it needs help. The Soldier can then turn on the cameras (mounted on the vehicle), take a

look around, execute a plan, and the robot will resume its mission." Since 1998, the lab's robotics program has been developing advanced technology for early insertion into the current and future force. Live experiments with the unmanned vehicles are part of the robotics program. These tests have given Soldiers hands-on experience with the technology of autonomous mobility and provided researchers with invaluable feedback about human factor issues and user needs, as well as ideas for advancing the technology. The first two unmanned vehicles were rolled out in September

1999 during troop exercises at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. The following year, troops at Fort Knox, Ky., put the vehicles to the test during day and night operations. The most recent testing, in April, examined advances in tactical and cooperative behaviors of unmanned vehicles. The ultimate goal is to save lives, French said. "Many missions are extremely dangerous," he added. "If we can proficiently send a system (into a dangerous area) - regardless of what it is - and it helps achieve the goal, we've reduced the threat to the individual Soldier, which is extremely beneficial."

'Freedom Calls' offers video conferencing

By Donna Miles
AFPS

WASHINGTON — Army Spc. Joshua Strickland thought he was in big trouble earlier this week when his commanding officer personally escorted him to a facility he'd never heard of at Camp Cook in Iraq under the pretense of signing some papers. The young Soldier got even more nervous when his tight-lipped commander led him behind a door that read, "Authorized Personnel Only." But there, on a television screen, were 16 members of Strickland's family, gathered around a large-screen TV at his brother-in-law's home in Valdosta, Ga., waiting for Strickland to help celebrate his daughter Shelby's first birthday. Thanks to 21st-century technology and the Freedom Calls Foundation, Strickland got to sing "Happy Birthday" to the daughter he hadn't seen in seven months and to watch her toddle toward the TV screen for the first time and utter her first "da-da." He looked on excitedly as Shelby blew out her first birthday candle, then chatted with his wife

Dorothy and other family members he hadn't seen since deploying to Iraq with the 25th Infantry Division's 1st Battalion, 25th Aviation Regiment. "It was just amazing," said John Harlow, executive director of the Freedom Calls Foundation, which made the July 14 visit and others like it at Camp Cook possible. "It gives me a lump in my throat every day." The facility, the first of its kind in Iraq that offers service members free videoconferencing so they can stay in touch with their families, is made possible through private donations to the Freedom Calls Foundation. Harlow said plans call for three additional facilities in Iraq and two in Afghanistan, and possibly five more facilities after that depending on donations. In addition, the foundation plans to install the videoconferencing capability at Army posts in the United States for families who don't have a broadband Internet connection at home, and at military hospitals so troops can interact with their newborn children and new moms hours after birth, Harlow said.

Harlow said the capability is shortening the miles between deployed troops and their families and helping ensure deployed service members don't miss out on important family events. "Soldiers are now able to not only see, but participate in, milestone family events such as the birth of a new child, first communions, high school graduations, birthdays, weddings and anniversaries over the Freedom Calls Network." Shortly after the facility opened to 12,000 Soldiers at Camp Cook last month, Spc. Michelle Soto, from the California National Guard, used the facility to "attend" her daughter's high school graduation. Participating virtually by videoconferencing, Soto got to watch her daughter receive her diploma, then talked with her family for almost two hours. Army Staff Sgt. Shadow Evans used the facility to create her own family milestone. Arriving at the facility in an up-armored Humvee rather than a limousine, she exchanged wedding vows via videoconference with Sgt. Richard Everton, in Durango,

Colo. But Ed Bukstel, director of operations for the Freedom Calls Foundation, said the facility isn't just for major family events. He said deployed troops and their families can use the capability to talk about the little things in life, such as a child's camp experience that day, that too often go unshared during a parent's deployment. "They can talk just like they would over the dinner table," Harlow added, "in spite of the fact that their Soldier is 10,000 miles away in a war zone." Harlow said the service is transforming the nature of deployments, bringing families together in a way never before possible. "Throughout history, tours of duty in wartime have served to separate families," he said. Thanks to state-of-the-art technology provided through the Freedom Calls Foundation, he said, "though families may be separated by war, they need not be estranged by it." More information about the service is posted on the Freedom Calls Foundation Web site - www.freedomcalls.org.

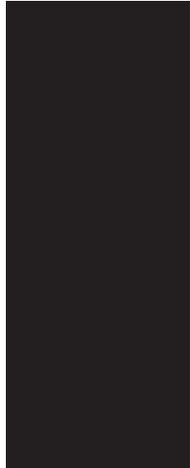
War Essay Contest to award \$35K

By John Runyan
ARNEWS

WASHINGTON — An essay contest open to all interested individuals is asking applicants to reflect on the issues behind a "new kind of war." The "Principles of War Essay Contest" will award \$15,000 to the writer who best answers the questions: "Have the principles of

war changed? How are they changing? Or do they remain valid?" The second- and third-place finishers will receive \$10,000 and \$5,000, respectively. All three top finishers will have their essays published in Proceedings. Five honorable-mention essays will be awarded \$1,000 each. All essays must be 3,500 words or less and be submitted by Feb. 1.

Essays should be sent to principlesessay@navalinststitute.org. The contest is cosponsored by U.S. Naval Institute, Johns Hopkins University and Royal United Services Institute working in partnership with National Defense University, Army War College, Air Force War College, Naval War College, Office of Force Transformation, and the Department of Defense.



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PostOrr

Pvt.2 Kevin Reynolds drops 1st Sgt. Michael Mears into the kiddie pool during the 82nd Medical Company's water balloon day.

82nd Med. Co. Soldiers make big splash

By Aaron Orr
82nd Med. Co.

Soldiers from the 82nd Medical Co. (AA) spent a good part of a recent Sunday dousing one another with squirt guns, water balloons and bottles of ice water. They ran around the tents in the company area, sometimes tactically, sometimes like a stampeding herd, soaking anyone who dared leave their tent in PT uniform.

"This is good because it's lifting the spirits of everybody in 82nd Med.," said Pvt. 2 Kevin Reynolds.

The day came about after 1st Sgt. Michael Mears and Maj. Cara Alexander, commander of the 82nd Med., came up with the idea of a balloon fight day.

For Mears, the plan backfired when he was dunked in ice water.

"I dunked three people so far. Slamming people in the water, that's my special move," he bragged.

Reynolds proved it, when he picked up 1st Sgt. Michael Mears and dropped him in the small kiddie pool filled with ice water.

Soldiers showed their creativity in some of the equipment they came up with for soaking one another.

Not many soldiers from the Aviation Unit Maintenance (AVUM) Platoon had shown their faces when water balloons began to fall from the sky on the open area in the center of the tents.

AVUM's troops had devised their own version of mobile artillery; a five-ton truck with a giant, homemade, balloon slingshot attached to the back of it strung up between two ten foot poles. They launched water balloons with fairly precise results from a hundred feet away.

"Go to the left six inches," one soldier told the slingshot gunner. Another balloon went airborne, rotating slowly, hanging like a football kicked to the opposing team. "Fire for effect," he added after zeroing in on the group of fellow balloonists who were scrambling to get out their own homemade slingshot.

The mobile balloon artillery unit was "a collaboration thing," said Pfc. Sidney Slagle. After designing their assault vehicle, they tested it out in secret. "We got pretty accurate with it. We shot at [Staff] Sgt. Newhart and we could get about six inches away at 100 meters," Slagle explained.

Three soldiers from AVUM spent the better part of a day-and-a-half filling water balloons from water bottles. Slagle said,

"I think we filled three bags of 250 and 180 on top of that."

All their hard work was flung through the air in about 15 minutes. But the smiles on their faces and the hearty laughter said it was all worth the effort.

"I think it's fun, but I got doused with water when I first came out this morning," Slagle said. "They put me in a bear hug and threw me in the ice water. It was kind of a shock waking up this morning."



PostOrr

1st Sgt. Michael Mears jumps out of the ice water-filled kiddie pool after being thrown in. Soldiers in Iraq found a way to cool off.

Country trio SheDaisy supports disabled Soldiers

By Jacqueline Garretts
ARNEWS

WASHINGTON — Hit country group, SheDaisy, performed at a charity concert to benefit Homes for our Troops, and help raise money for disabled Soldiers. The country group, composed of three sisters, Cassidy, Kristyn and Kelsi Osborn, performed at the Birchmere Sunday night in Alexandria, Va. for a benefit concert sponsored by local country station 98.7 WMZQ and Potomac mills.

Proceeds went to Homes for our Troops; a non-profit organization mission is to raise money for disabled Soldiers and their families.

The money goes into building specially accommodated houses for the disabled Soldiers and their new needs. Charity founder, John Gonsalves has raised over \$300,000 in the past three months for disabled Soldiers.

"We owe a great deal to these families, its not always just about the Soldier," said Gonsalves.

Coincidentally, SheDaisy's latest

hit song "Come Home Soon" sends out the same message.

"We wanted a song to express the empathy we have for those family members living at home without their loved one, serving overseas," Kristyn said. "It is a somber song and a quite tribute to the families."

A family friend whose husband, is serving with the Army in Iraq was the inspiration for the song "Come Home Soon."

SheDaisy also performed their other chart topping hits, "Little Good-byes," "Mine all Mine," "I Will, But" and "Passenger Seat." The American Legion contacted the Washington country radio station, 98.7 WMZQ to tell them about Homes for our Troops. WMZQ wanted to get involved and have been running advertisements on their Web site and radio shows.

Homes for our Troops has benefited from this recognition.

"We have had a great number of hits on our official Web site that WMZQ has been advertising on their Website," Gonsalves said.

Homes for Troops hopes to get its first project underway for Sgt.

Peter Damon, 126th Aviation Battalion in July.

Damon lost his right arm above the elbow and his left hand and wrist when a nitrogen fire exploded while he was changing it in October while serving in Iraq.

Volunteer engineers and surveyors are testing the plot of land designated for Damon, his wife and two children the week following the SheDaisy concert.

"We hope to have this project complete in about four months after the land has been approved for building," Gonsalves said.

Organizations like Disabled Soldier Support System identify Soldiers in need of outreach services for themselves and their families. They assess the Soldiers needs and give them a variety of different services such as Homes for Troops to go to for more help.

"It can get pretty hard on the family because they get lost in the process and are not only

have to piece things together but have to also overcome the trauma of their disabled loved

one," said Frank Campas, chief of DS3.



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Treatment available to troops suffering from combat stress

By Doug Sample
AFPS

WASHINGTON - The military member who goes to combat and the one who comes back are never the same person, the Defense Department's director of mental health policy said today.

"No one comes back unchanged," said Army Dr. (Col.) Tom Burke in an interview with the Pentagon Channel and American Forces Press Service.

Burke and other DoD health officials try to reach out to those returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan who may be suffering from combat-related mental health problems or post-traumatic stress disorder, he said.

Last week, the Army released a first-of-its-kind medical report that showed front-line action had adversely affected the mental health of some service members.

Burke, who advises DoD leaders on mental health issues, said combat veterans and their families should watch for changes in

behavior that can range from mild depressive and anxiety symptoms to trouble sleeping and nightmares.

"In the majority of the cases, these symptoms are transient; they are common and diminish with time," he said. The service member may have the occasional sleepless night or memories that come back out of nowhere for years, "and that's normal," he added.

Other symptoms to look for, he said, are sad and withdrawn moods, tearfulness, problems sleeping — too much or too little — and problems with appetite, memory loss and concentration. Drug and alcohol abuse also are symptoms of a problem, he added.

But the problems aren't always mild, and the symptoms are not always subtle.

"If a person starts talking about hurting themselves, killing themselves, it's important to not panic but to take that kind of talk very seriously and get them to help," Burke said, "even if it involves calling 911."

Burke said that mental problems can go on for years if not treated, and that symptoms of combat-related mental illness don't always happen right away. "They develop over time," he said.

An Army study published in the July edition of the New Eng-

"If a person starts talking about hurting themselves, killing themselves, it's important to not panic but to take that kind of talk very seriously and get them to help."

Col. (Dr.) Tom Burke

land Journal of Medicine stated that only 6 percent of soldiers and Marines returning from combat duty experienced mental health problems.

Burke said the low number didn't amaze him, based on what the Army has learned from studying prisoners of war suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

"The number of 6 to 12 percent is not surprising," he said. "The experience in the past about POWs," he said, "is (that) about 50 percent have PTSD; among Vietnam veterans, over the years, about 30 percent; Gulf War I, 10-15 percent," he said.

He said that declining percent-

the military healthcare system," he said, "and the proactive preventive services that are provided by the combat stress control units that are assigned with the combat units."

Also, he said, screening now takes place before deployment, preventive service is provided during deployment, followed by more screening during redeployment and follow-up care at treatment facilities.

Burke said the low percentage also indicates that the majority of service members surveyed are faring well under combat conditions. That may be due to realistic training and having the "best equipment in the world," he said.

He said that tougher training and better equipment, along with a more stable rotation schedule "has contributed to the resilience of the service member and their ability to handle the stresses of combat."

Burke said that Defense Department doesn't "want to see the soldiers of today live through years of suffering when there's

help available now.

The military has a number of resources to help those seeking help, he noted, starting with the service member's chain of command. He also encourages service members to talk with comrades or their chaplains.

He added that DoD "really cares" very much about its service members and their families, and he encouraged them to take advantage of the various programs that are available.

"The help doesn't work if you don't come in to use it," he said. "Mental health problems are problems that have solutions."

Service members can get confidential counseling service through the military services.

"One Source" program. The 24-hour-a-day service is for service members and their families, and provides quick, professional assistance with problems.

For more information on Army's One Source program, visit www.armyonesource.com or call 1-800-464-8107.

Demands not hurting Army, Marine recruiting, retention

By Kathleen T. Rhem
AFPS

WASHINGTON - The increased demands of the war on terrorism aren't hurting recruiting and retention for America's combat forces, Army and Marine leaders said recently.

In the active Army, retention rates are still at or near 100 percent of the service's goals, Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Richard A. Cody said in an interview with American Forces Press Service and the Pentagon Channel.

Likewise, the Marines expect to meet 100 percent of their recruitment goals by the end of this fiscal year, Lt. Gen. Jan C. Huly, that service's deputy commandant for plans and operations, said during a separate interview.

The Army also has increased its accession goal by 30,000 Soldiers over the next three years, Cody said, adding that the service is on track to meet recruiting goals for this year.

Cody acknowledged the war on

terrorism has stretched the Army's capabilities, and he said service officials are keeping a close eye on both recruiting and retention issues.

"We're going to keep watching it," he said.

"We'll provide more benefits (and) bonuses as we can. But quite frankly, it's been the selfless service and the patriotism of great young men and women ... who have raised their right hands and said, 'Send me.'"

Both leaders attributed the services' success in recruiting and retention to the high quality of the all-volunteer force.

"I think what we're really experiencing is we're reaping the benefits of the all-volunteer force," Huly said.

"The quality young women and men that we recruit, the training that they receive, ... and just what great young Americans they are."

Cody said soldiers' "warrior ethos" also helps keep the Army's ranks full.

"I think it goes back to the

leadership investment we've made with our noncommissioned officers," he said.

"But it also goes back to an all-volunteer force of young Soldiers who joined the Army, many right after 9/11, who fully understand that this country was attacked, fully understand the dangers of this war and the dangers of this world, and have had the courage and the patriotism to step forward and say, 'We'll fight for America, and we'll fight for our freedom.'"

Both leaders also noted the support of ordinary Americans is important for troops to feel like their work has meaning.

"They all need to know that Americans across this great nation absolutely are proud of what they've done," Cody said.

"The fact that Time magazine took the American soldier and made it the Person of the Year should tell anyone in uniform how America feels about them."

Huly said Americans' support "makes an awful lot of difference" to troops who are deployed.

He said whenever he and other Marine leaders visit troops, the one question they get asked the most is "Does everybody know

what we're doing, and are they still supportive of our efforts?"

"And the answer is always a favorable and resounding 'Yes,'" Huly said.

"And it makes you feel good to be able to say that and to know that the American people are behind you."

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BLJE/July 2004

Call-up allows build-up of cohesive teams

By Kathleen T. Rhem
AFPS

WASHINGTON - The Army's call-up of Individual Ready Reserve soldiers will allow that service to keep cohesive teams in the National Guard and Army Reserve together, the service's No. 2 general said July 15.

Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Richard A. Cody told American Forces Press Service and the Pentagon Channel that the activation of several thousand IRR soldiers will allow that service to "fill critical billets and spaces in the units we call up for our rotation for Operation Iraqi Freedom 3 and Operation Enduring Freedom 6."

Cody said letters went out July 6 to 5,674 members of the IRR, soldiers who have completed an active-duty enlistment but still are within eight years of when they entered the military. All enlistees agree to an eight-year commitment, usually served in a combination of active, reserve-component and IRR service.

Of those who received the letters, Cody said, roughly 4,000 will be brought to active duty. Most of those will be in the specialties of military intelligence, engineers, truck drivers, and other "combat service support" forces, he said.

He explained that having access to IRR soldiers allows the military to fill holes in units without having to call up other units simply to make up for shortfalls "so we have less disruption across the force," he said.

The general said Army leaders recognize a high number of deployments causes "stress and strain" on soldiers and their families. "We're doing everything we can to kind of smooth that out," he said.

Families of activated IRR soldiers bring another set of issues.

Generally, they have no access to support systems in place at military bases or through reserve-component family-readiness groups.

"We know it is going to be more challenging for them because they're, in most cases, away from posts, camps and stations," Cody said.

"And so we have procedures in place and processes in place to make sure that we take care of their families as we deploy their soldiers."

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46,000 soldiers take eArmyU courses online

By Courtney Hickson
ARNEWS

WASHINGTON — More than 46,000 Soldiers have been able to continue their education by taking online classes through eArmyU, including many of the Soldiers deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Since its creation in July of 2000, eArmyU has been part of the Army's e-learning program that allows eligible Soldiers to work toward a college degree or certificate anywhere. eArmyU was designed specifically for enlisted Soldiers, officials said.

Soldiers who have been deployed continue to be able to work on their degrees from Afghanistan and Iraq. Of the 6,984 eArmyU Soldiers deployed in those theaters 2,098 are now enrolled in eArmyU classes.

eArmyU is an educational opportunity for enlisted Soldiers to earn degrees online from one of 29 educational institutions. Soldiers can earn certificates, associate's, bachelor's or master's degrees in 149 degree and certificate programs. The courses are Web-based and allow Soldiers to take classes at any time, no matter where their location. In addition Soldiers can get full tuition reimbursement and a laptop to take the classes with, which becomes their own at the end of the program.

As of June 11 there have been 729 degrees conferred and 122,763 course enrollments. These numbers are up from January 2003 when there were more than 30,500 Soldiers taking classes around the world. The most popular eArmyU degrees are business followed by criminal justice, according to

Director of eArmyU Dian Stoskopf. Currently 72 percent of

Soldiers participating are enrolled in associate-level programs, 21.1 percent are signed up for bachelor's programs, 17.7 percent are signed up for master's programs and 5 percent are signed up for certificate programs.

One of the challenges Soldiers face when they are deployed is not knowing what kind of access they will have, said Gloria Kelsey a supervisory educational services specialist at Fort Benning.

"Also finding the time to study, they have long duty days with training," she said. "Or trying to pull from family time for study time."

"There are little to no out of pocket expenses," Kelsey said.

If a Soldier chooses to be or she can go to a school above the semester hour cap, like the University of Maryland and pay the difference. She also said the eArmyU is extremely beneficial for single parents because they can study at home and do not have to pay for a baby sitter.

There are 16 installations participating in the program, including one in Germany and Korea. The newest installations to offer the program are Fort Riley, Kan. and Fort Stewart, Ga. Other current installations are:

- Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Drum, N.Y.; Schofield Barracks/Tripler Medical Center, Hawaii; Fort Campbell, Ky.; Fort Lewis, Wash.; Fort Bragg, N.C.; Fort Bliss, Texas; Fort Knox, Ky.; Fort Sill, Okla.; Fort Benning, Ga.; Fort Carson, Colo.; Fort Wain-

wright and Fort Richardson in Alaska; Heidelberg Military Community, Germany and in Korea Camp Casey and 2nd Infantry Division (Camps Red Cloud, Page, Howze, Stanley, Greaves and Gary Owen).

With the expansion, Kelsey said it requires more counselors to get involved and know eArmyU, which will allow Soldiers when they transfer to have support from the staff at the new installation.

"They have a difficult time traveling out of the area," Stoskopf said.

Because of the limitations in location, the choices for Soldiers in

Korea are not as expansive as other installations. The no-laptop program allows the Soldiers to still participate in eArmyU but they must provide their own access to a computer to log onto the courses.

Stoskopf said the Soldiers are provided with a boot camp tutorial, which informs them about the eArmyU program and how to configure their personal computers to access the eArmyU portal.

A number of degrees and programs are available through eArmyU, to include associate's degrees, a bachelor's of arts, a bachelor's of science and various master's degrees. They range from an associate's degree in criminal justice to a bachelor's of sci-

ence in professional aeronautics to a master's degree in business administration.

First Sgt. Dexter Dean, from Fort Benning, has been in eArmyU for about two years and has six more classes until he completes his associate's degree in criminal justice.

"So far it's been a good experience," he said.

Dean also said eArmyU is easy if a Soldier has a little computer literacy and can follow a syllabus. While he has not had to transfer bases while enrolled in eArmyU, he said there should be no problems for Soldiers who may.

Sgt. Erick Espinosa, from Fort Wainwright, said his experience with eArmyU has also been positive. Espinosa has been taking classes since

February 2003 and needs only a few more classes to complete his associate's degree in criminal justice. He said some of it depends on the teachers also, and how quickly they respond but the majority has been good.

He said the biggest challenge he faced was sitting down and doing the class work while juggling his Army work.

"It is a great program, you get a free education and laptop if you do your work," he said.

In order to qualify for a laptop computer, 12 semester hours must be successfully completed; once completed the Soldiers will be able to keep the laptops given to them. In order to be eligible for the laptop version of the program, a Soldier must have three years of active duty remaining. If he or she is not interested in owning the laptop, he or she must have one year of service remaining.

Thrift Savings Plan: good way to increase wealth

By Rudi Williams
AFPS

WASHINGTON - Defense Department officials want thousands more servicemembers to invest in their future through the Thrift Savings Plan, and they can begin paying themselves now.

The current TSP open season started April 15 and runs until June 30. This is the time servicemembers can start or change their contributions to their TSP account.

Servicemembers can contribute up to 9 percent of their basic pay each month, and up to 100 percent of incentive pay and special pay, including bonus and combat pay. But their total contributions from taxable pay may not exceed the Internal Revenue Service limit of \$13,000 for 2004.

"You're never too young or too old to start a savings account in TSP," said Gary A. Amelio, executive director of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board and chief executive and managing fiduciary of TSP for federal employees. "The tax deferral benefits are excellent and compounded earnings are simply a phenomenal way to increase your wealth."

TSP assets total more than \$110 billion. The plan maintains retirement savings accounts for

more than 3 million participants. This includes federal civilian employees in all branches of government, U.S. Postal Service employees and members of the seven uniformed services.

Created by the Federal Employees' Retirement System Act of 1986, TSP is a tax-deferred savings option that lowers the taxable income for participants in the 2004 tax year. The savings plan is similar to 401k plans offered by many private employers. It's separate from and in addition to the military retirement system, which is based on years of service and rank.

Administered by the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board, TSP was available only to civilian employees until October 2001, when the program was extended to active and reserve component servicemembers, including the Coast Guard.

The program also was extended to members of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Members of the National Guard and Reserve who are also federal civilians are allowed to have both a military and civilian TSP. "If you're part of both work forces, you can have two different accounts," Amelio noted. "And you can combine the accounts

after you separate from either service."

But Amelio said if TSP participants with military and civilian accounts exceed the IRS limit of \$13,000 before the end of the calendar year, the plan would return the excess contributions. "It's called an excess deferral," Amelio noted.

The government gives matching funds to Federal Employees' Retirement System TSP participants. Uniformed services and Civil Service Retirement System participants normally don't receive matching funds, but the service secretaries can authorize matching funds for servicemembers in critical military occupational specialties.

"FERS employees have a less lucrative defined benefit plan than does CSRS and the uniformed services," Amelio explained. "So the TSP is intended to make up the difference for FERS participants."

He also pointed out that CSRS and military participants are limited to contributing up to 9 percent of their base pay while FERS members are allowed to contribute up to 14 percent of their base pay.

When servicemembers leave active duty, they have several options. They can leave their money in TSP, allowing it to con-

tinue to grow, take a partial or full withdrawal, roll the money into another plan or an Individual Retirement Account, or purchase an annuity. They also could choose to make periodic distributions to themselves, Amelio said.

More than 220,000 uniformed service members signed up for TSP in 2002, the first year they were eligible. By December 2003, more than 390,000 people were investing in TSP.

"Participation numbers have been rising steadily since the plan was made available," Amelio noted. "Today, we have about 410,000 members of the armed forces participating. We've been putting a special focus with DoD

on getting more and more armed service members to participate. So we're very pleased that the numbers continue to go up, and DoD is helping us get the word out to the members."

Amelio attributes the increase in participation to knowledge, familiarity and comfort.

"As members of the armed services become more familiar with TSP the more they like it," he said. "They find that it's a wonderful saving program, easy to participate in, and doesn't cost them anything. The more they talk to their colleagues in the armed forces about it, they become more comfortable about the plan, and they like it more and more. That's

why the participation is going up."

TSP has investment funds that vary in risk and investment mixture: government securities investment (G fund); fixed-income investment (F fund); common stock index investment (C fund); small capitalization stock index investment (S fund); and international stock index investment (I fund).

TSP enrollment can be done online through the MyPay Web site, or by completing a TSP enrollment form (TSP-U-1) and turning it in at the local pay or personnel office. Enrollment forms are available online at the TSP Web site.

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Fort Riley Community Life

Friday, July 23, 2004

America's Warfighting Center

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Community news in brief

Enlisted spouses urge membership

The Fort Riley Enlisted Spouses' Club begins its 2004-2005 season with a family fun night from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Aug. 10, at McCormick Park. Active duty, retiree and widowed spouses of Soldiers in grades E-1 through E-9 are welcome to join. Pixie the Clown and her balloon art, free ice cream cones, free face painting by members of the Manhattan Arts Center and the "Moon Walk" will be a part of the day's activities. Representatives from various organizations on post, will provide information about their organizations. For more information, call Sherri Miller at (785) 770-9219 or Julie Petrucci-Treen at (785) 717-2772 or send e-mail to frileyesc@yahoo.com.

Red Cross sets baby-sitting class

Red Cross will conduct a course Aug. 7, at building 5800 for youth ages 11 and older who are interested in baby-sitting. Youth must be 12 years old to be placed on the baby-sitter referral list. Cost for the class is \$10 and prior registration is required. To register, call Central Enrollment Registration at 239-9478.

Hospital offers school, sports physicals

Irwin Army Community Hospital School and Sports Physical Fairs will be July 24 and Aug. 7. Appointments for both days are available for scheduling by contacting the TriCare Service Center appointment line at (784) 784-1200. About 950 appointments are available. Limited appointments also are available in the Primary Care Clinics for children requiring physicals before July 24. Parents of children requiring physicals should pick up their school and sports physical forms at the hospital's Patient Assistance Desk on the first floor before fair dates. No appointment is necessary for children requiring immunizations only. Walk-in hours for the Immunization Clinic are Walk-in hours for the Immunization Clinic are 7:45 to 11:15 a.m. and 1 to 3:45 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday; 1 to 3:45 p.m. Tuesday; and 7:45 to 11:15 a.m. Thursday.

Chapel staff seeks musicians

The Contemporary Protestant service meeting in Kapaun Chapel needs acoustic and electric guitar players as well as an additional keyboard player. Services are Sundays at 11 a.m.; rehearsals are Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings. Anyone interested should call Chap. (Maj.) James Paulson at 239-3359.

More than \$400,000 donated to program fund

By Judd Anstey
AAFES

DALLAS - Since the Army & Air Force Exchange Service began the "Gifts from the Homefront" program last year, people from all walks of life have rallied around America's troops by contributing \$406,745 toward the program designed to lift the morale of deployed troops around the world. The certificates, which can be purchased by any individual or civic organization, allow service members to purchase items of necessity and convenience at PX and BX facilities around the world.

"Gifts from the Homefront" certificates can be addressed to "any service member" or individual service members. AAFES' charitable partners have been key in the distribution of certificates earmarked for "any service member." The USO, American Red Cross, Air Force Aid Society and Fisher House have distributed more than 7,000 certificates, totaling more than \$120,000, to deployed troops. Friends and family have purchased \$283,645 of "Gifts from the Homefront" certificates for individual service members.

"Working with the USO, American Red Cross, Air Force Aid Society and Fisher House has allowed AAFES to get certificates into the hands of service members that need them most," said AAFES' Chief of Corporate Communications Lt. Col. Debra Pressley. "AAFES' relationship with these charitable partners allows any American to have a direct impact on the morale of a deployed service member, even if they don't have a name or address for a particular Soldier or Airman."

Because the gift certificates can

be used for merchandise already stocked at contingency locations, "Gifts from the Homefront" are a safe alternative to traditional care packages that place unnecessary strain on the military mail system and present Force Protection issues. Service members can purchase exactly what they need with the certificates because they can be applied to a wide range of products.

Those wishing to send a "Gift from the Homefront" can simply log on to aafes.com or call 1-877-770-4438 to purchase gift certificates in \$10 or \$20 denominations. From there, the "Gift from

the Homefront" may be sent to an individual service member (designated by the purchaser) or distributed to "any service member" through the USO, American Red Cross, Air Force Aid Society or Fisher House.

"Gifts from the Homefront" gift certificates can be redeemed at any AAFES facility in the world including OIF/OEF locations.

To date, AAFES operates some 56 stores throughout central and southwest Asia, serving troops and lifting morale of those soldiering in austere, harsh conditions.

Raging Battle



Post/Blackmon

Addictive Behavior's lead guitarist Curtis Feltner (left), bass player Chase McGillis and drummer Jonny Welch rock to the top to win this year's Battle of the Bands competition July 16 at Rally Point.

Addictive Behavior wins Battle of Bands

By April Blackmon
Staff writer

After a third place finish last year, Addictive Behavior rocked their way to the top at Battle of the Bands July 16 at Rally Point.

"We pulled their rock muscle," said bassist Chase McGillis.

Some 180 people gathered to hear the six bands perform. Sponsored by Fort Riley's Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers organization, this year's show included country/bluegrass/Americana music, rock, hard rock/metal and blues/rock.

Four Soldiers were chosen to judge the competition.

"I tried to find judges who appreciate different kinds of music," said Spc. Jason Dunlap, BOSS president. "The most

important factor was open-mindedness. I didn't want them not to vote for a band because they didn't like that particular music."

Bands were rated on vocals, musicianship, stage presence, crowd response and overall performance, Dunlap said.

Addictive Behavior members McGillis, artists Feltner, Eric Starnes and Jonny Welch received a check for \$600 for taking first place. The youngest performers in the competition, the band members are all students at Manhattan High School.

"I think we played the best as we could," said lead singer Eric Starnes.

"It was a good experience to play with great artists," McGillis said.

Taking second and \$300 at the competition was The Rest of Us. Coming in third and winning \$100 was the band Schemata.



Post/Blackmon

Social Rex guitarist Randy Riis breaks out the old school metal at the Battle of the Bands.

Any Soldier Inc. shows support for deployed troops

By Donna Miles
AFPS

WASHINGTON — A family's show of support for their deployed son has evolved into a nationwide drive that a commander deployed to Afghanistan said "optimizes all that is good in the American people."

Recognizing that their son, Army Sgt. Brian Horn, a member of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, was living under very harsh conditions after parachuting into Iraq last March, retired Army Sgt. 1st Class Marty Horn and his wife, Sue, began sending him care packages as often as they could.

Horn requested additional packages for his fellow Soldiers who weren't getting any, and soon his parents were asking their friends and neighbors in LaPlata, Md., to send packages to their son, too. Horn agreed to distribute them to Soldiers who weren't get-

ting mail.

The "overwhelming and nearly monumental" show of support "has provided the simple reminder that any one of us would proudly die for a grateful nation in our ongoing fight against terrorism," said Horn, who has redeployed from Iraq to his unit headquarters in Vicenza, Italy. There, he and his fellow Soldiers are preparing for another deployment after the Christmas holidays - this time to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Meanwhile, Any Soldier Inc. continues to grow. By early June, the organization had more than 100 volunteer contact Soldiers, and requests for packages continue to pour in from units throughout Iraq and Afghanistan.

The senior Horn attributes the effort's success to the fact that "the American public wants to do something to show support." What makes the program particularly appealing to many, he said,

is that it gives people an opportunity to develop one-on-one contacts with deployed troops. "There's no middle man," Horn said, "so people get to feel very attached."

Any Soldier's Web site lists supplies that deployed troops need, such as prepackaged food, T-shirts and even Beanie Babies that they can give to local children. The site provides specific information about how and where to send packages.

According to Lt. Col. Rick Mullen, commanding officer of a Marine Corps aviation unit in Afghanistan, these gifts have a "deeply humbling effect on the individual Marines in our squadron."

Mullen said the packages demonstrate that the American public shares in the price our Marines are paying for freedom and makes the load deployed troops carry feel "a bit lighter." Sergeant Horn expressed

thanks on the Any Soldier Web site for the "awe-inspiring and frankly quite dramatic display of support from the home front." He said the correspondence and care packages have poured in "at an overwhelming and nearly monumental pace."

The campaign, he wrote, "has seen tears from some, given hope to most and has been inspirational

to us all."

The sergeant's father said there's a lot of personal gratification in watching the program grow, "knowing that I'm making a difference — and allowing a lot of other people to make a difference, too."

More information about Any Soldier is posted on the organization's Web site.

More Information

AnySoldier.US started in August 2003 as a simple family effort to help the soldiers in one Army unit, thus the name. However, due to overwhelming requests, the effort was expanded Jan. 1, 2004, to include ANY Soldier.

The program now includes any member of any of the Armed Services, in harms way. As of today, that is about 14,194 folks!

How to Contact us:
Any Soldier Inc.
P.O. Box 1929
LaPlata, MD 20646
Email: Support@AnySoldier.US



More Community News

Society seeks tour docents

The Historical and Archeological Society of Fort Riley needs docents who can volunteer two hours every few months to share the post's history with others.

HASFR docents give group tours of the Custer House and tours of Fort Riley. The training is free and provided by museum curator Bill McKale.

For further information, call Alicia Broadwater at 717-3266.

Readiness Groups remain important

Family Readiness Group members should be aware that, even though many Soldiers have returned, there is still a need for an effective FRG. FRGs provide support, encouragement, and social outlets for family members and Soldiers during deployments and non-deployments.

Commanders, FRG leaders and advisors have worked hard to establish and maintain their FRGs. After the deployment, FRGs should allow their key people and themselves some "down time" but must remember there will be other deployments. Continued support to the FRG and

maintaining all the key tasks will make it easier to get organized when the next mission pops up.

Army Community Service provides on-going training and assistance to FRGs. For information, contact Sonya Brown at sonya.brown@riley.army.mil or Pearl Speer via e-mail at pearl.speer@riley.army.mil, or call the Soldier and Family Support Center at 239-9435.

Child car seat safety checks offered

Anyone wanting a child's car seat checked by a safety expert should call 239-2514 to make an appointment. Appointments are available from 1 to 3 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays at building 407, Pershing Court.

Children younger than 4 are required to sit in car seats. Those 4 and older must wear seat belts. Child safety advocates say children 4 to 7 years old should sit in booster seats which allow seat belts to fit them properly.

Birthline extends service hours

Birthline, the Crisis Pregnancy Center in Junction City, has increased its hours to serve the

public. The center is open from 9 a.m. to noon on Thursdays in addition to its regular hours of 2 to 5 p.m. Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays.

The center also offers childbirth education classes from 7 to 8 p.m. Wednesdays.

For more information, call 238-3242.

Custer House Side B open

Custer House Side B has reopened and is available for rental by units or organizations wanting a special place to hold an event.

Cost is \$20 with a refundable deposit of \$50.

To reserve a date, call Karen Higdon at 784-4044.

The Shoppe sells gift items

The Shoppe sells unique gift items in its new location in the U.S. Cavalry Museum, building 205.

The Shoppe receives new gift items weekly for its stock of handcrafted items, unique farewell gifts, pottery, deployment candles, military items, and much more.

The Shoppe's hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.

For more information, call 239-2743.

Men's group studies Bible

A long-term Promise Keepers men's Bible study group meets from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Thursdays at building 7610 on Custer Hill. All men are invited.

For more information, call Chap. (Capt.) Glenn Palmer at 784-8384 or 239-9565.

Special Olympics group invites participation

The local Special Olympics group invites families who have special needs individuals to join them in their upcoming events.

Special Olympics is a worldwide program providing year-round training, education and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for people age 8 and older with mental and physical retardation.

For more information, call Geary County representatives Otis Scrouggins at 238-1342 or Bob Alan at 762-2149.

Agencies offer free baby-sitting

The Armed Services YMCA in Junction City will provide free baby-sitting for parents attending one of the Soldier and Family Support Center programs or New Parents Support Program, Exceptional Family Member Program, Family Advocacy or social services on post.

Parents must request the respite services through the Soldier and Family Support Center.

The hours of service differ with the different programs and some evening hours are available. The Armed Services YMCA is at 111 E. 16th St. in Junction City.

Private piano lessons offered

Family members can enroll in private piano lessons through Child and Youth Services.

Lessons are given in the music room at the Fort Riley Teen Center, building 5800. Weekly 30-minute lessons cost \$45 per month. Enrollment is accepted whenever vacancies exist.

All participants in classes must be registered with Child and Youth Services. Annual CYS registration costs \$15 per child or \$35 per family. Registration is from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Thursday at Central Enrollment Registry, building 6620.

For more information, call Central Enrollment Registry at 239-4847.

Soldier Show

As part of its worldwide tour, the annual U.S. Army Soldier Show will stop through the Fort Riley area. The group will perform three shows in McCain Auditorium at Kansas State University. The shows begin at 7 p.m., Sept. 14, and at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., Sept. 15. Admission to all three shows is free. Tickets will be available at Information, Tickets and Registration and at McCain Auditorium starting mid-August.

For more information, call ITR at (785) 239-5614, or stop by the ITR office, building 6918.

Newsletter leads to full-time job supporting deployed Soldiers

By K.L. Vantran
AFPS

WASHINGTON — Nine years ago, while her husband was deployed, Arlyn McClaughry started an online newsletter as a way to bring servicemembers and military families information on the Web. She and other spouses also began mailing packages and letters to deployed troops.

Today, Operation Military Pride is a full-time job for McClaughry and several volunteers who lend a helping hand.

The site provides information on several programs, including how to "adopt" a servicemember. "Our Adopt a Military Member" is the most popular," she said. "It gives people a way to let the military know they support them. We also have Operation Postcard or pen pal program, which is an inexpensive way for people to support the troops. Operation Birthday Card is another favorite."

McClaughry said she has received many thanks from the troops, but the story that touches her the most was a message a mother posted on the Operation Military Pride website last September. It said:

"While on my visit with Christopher this last week, he shared a moment in his life every mother dreads hearing. He told me that the end of June he was planning on ending his life and planned on doing it the next day while in Iraq. He said he laid in

his tent all night and prayed to God for strength and an opportunity to talk with his family one last time. He would have to wait almost seven days until payday to get a phone card. He said he felt so alone and very homesick. He then told me that next day at mail call he received nine care packages from your organization from

caring Americans who did not know him. Packages had phone cards and he was able to call home and talk with his father and me. He said after hearing our voice and how much we missed him he knew he could never take his own life and cause us the grief that comes along with suicide.

"I want to thank the sponsors

who sent these care packages. ... Their generosity is the reason I have my son here with me today. They will never know how much I appreciate what they have done for my family."

"I knew from that point that we were really making a difference,"

said McClaughry, "and that even a small thing such as a calling card can really change the morale and spirits (of troops)."

She said that as long as the United States has deployed troops, Operation Military Pride will continue to send care pack-

ages.

"We just want them to know that there are people back home who love them, support them 100 percent, and pray for their safe return," she added. "And that their sacrifice is appreciated and cherished."

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At the movies:

The Barlow Post Theater Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Shows begin at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted. Admission is \$3 for adults, \$1.50 for Children 5 to 11 years old and free for children under age 5, except during children's matinees or expected sell-outs.

- July 23 - Around the World in 80 Days (PG)
- July 24 - 2 p.m., Garfield (PG)
- July 24 - The Terminal (PG-13)
- July 25 - Garfield (PG)
- July 29 - The Terminal (PG-13)

Dog Days announced

People are encouraged to bring their dogs downtown and take them shopping through the sidewalk sales on Poyntz Avenue, Downtown Manhattan. On July 24, various dog contests, including a weenie dog race will begin at 11:30 a.m. Register for the race from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. by the Weenie Dog Race Track on 3rd Street and Poyntz Ave. For more information, call 537-9683.





Fort Riley Sports & Recreation

Friday, July 23, 2004

America's Warfighting Center

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Sports news in brief

10-mile race planned

The Lake Atwood 10-Mile Race is billed as the oldest road race in Kansas and reportedly attracts runners come from a tri-state area. The race begins at 7 a.m. July 25, at Lake Atwood near Atwood, Kan. For more information, call (785) 626-3214.

Tappan Hill hosts shooters

Tappan Hill Black Powder Cartridge Rifle Range will be the site of long range shooting as it was done on the American Frontier in buffalo hunting days. The event begins at 9 a.m. July 24 and 25 at the club's range two miles south and 1 1/4 miles west of the junction of U.S. highways 81 and 24 near Glasco. For more information, call (785) 568-2388.

Fort Riley Prairie Run

The July 24 Fort Riley Prairie Run consists of three races: 10 miles, five miles and two miles race. Each race is open to the Fort Riley military community and the general public. The 10-mile race will be used to select runners for an active duty Army team to represent Fort Riley at the Army 10-Miler in Washington, D.C. For rules and qualification information, contact the Sports Office at 239-2172. The two-mile race is not a fun run. Dogs, strollers, baby joggers, skateboards, roller skates, motorized vehicles, bicycles and headsets are not allowed on the race course. A T-shirt will be included in the entry fee. Runners must pay a \$12 entry fee if registering after July 19. A T-shirt is not guaranteed for late registrants. Runners will start and finish at King Field House, building 202 on Main Post. Runners may pick up packets and register between 6 and 6:45 a.m. July 24 for all three races. The five- and 10-mile races begin at 7 a.m. The two-mile race begins at 7:10 a.m. An awards ceremony is planned for about 9:15 a.m. Awards will be given to the top three finishers in each gender and age category for each race. An overall first place award will be given to the top male and female finisher of each race. For more information, call the Fort Riley Sports Office at 239-2172 or 239-2813.

Royals schedule day

The Kansas City Royals will host the third annual Military Appreciation Day Aug. 21 at Kauffman Stadium. The baseball game begins at 6:05 p.m. Pre-game events include a ceremony honoring all military branches, static military displays, military flyovers and the posting of the colors by Fort Riley Soldiers recently redeployed from Iraq. Discounted tickets ranging from \$6 to \$12 are available for Soldiers and family members at the Information, Ticketing and Registration office at Fort Riley. Concessions at the game will cost \$1. For more information on the events, call Sgt. John Edwards at (816) 318-0007, ext. 2610. To buy tickets, call TTR at 239-5614 or 239-4415. 239-4366.

High jump



First baseman Rubin Rodea (right) of Company A, 1st Battalion, 13th Armor, reaches for the ball while Gersom Jimenez of the Medical Department Activity team lunges for first base during their July 13 game.

Three teams go undefeated, have big wins

Staff reports

Three teams went undefeated in softball July 13 and 15. Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor defeated Detachment D, 15th Personnel Service Battalion, 14-2 and Co. A, 2nd Bn. 34th Armor, 13-1 July 13. The team also upset HHC, 24th Infantry Division (Mech), 11-1 July 15. Company C, 70th Engineer Bn., blew away Det. D, 15th PSB, 24-8 and nudged by 3rd Brigade, 75th Div., 11-10 July 13. Company B, 2nd Bn., 70th Armor forfeited their game to the Engineers July 15. The 342nd Military Police Battalion defeated the 300th MPs, 4-2 July 13. After a forfeit by Co. B, 2nd Bn., 70th Armor July 15, the MPs smoked the 10th ASOS Airmen, 16-2.

In other games July 13: The 300th MPs defeated HHC, 2nd Bn., 70th Armor, 5-4. Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Bn., 70th Armor beat Co. A, 2nd Bn. 34th Armor, 14-12. Company B, 2nd Bn. 70th Armor fell to See Softball Page 17



Preparing for a head-first slide, Gersom Jimenez (left), Medical Department Activity, tries to avoid the tag from catcher Rick Cook of Company A, 1st Battalion, 13th Armor.

Boating accidents avoidable by taking safety class

By Amanda Wiltse
K-State intern

Each year, more than one million people explore Kansas' lakes. With two of the state's largest lakes bordering Fort Riley, Soldiers and family members have plenty of opportunities to take their boats out. While boating is a popular summer pastime, it can also be a dangerous one. Untrained boaters, as well as those who do not wear life jackets and who choose to boat under the influence of alcohol are much more likely to be involved in an accident or drown, said Fort Riley

Occupational Health and Safety Specialist Rodrigo Cruz. "Operating a boat is at least as complicated as driving a car and a boating accident can be just as dangerous as an automobile accident," Cruz said. Alcohol consumption is the primary cause of boating accidents, Cruz said. "Fact is, 50 percent of boating fatalities involved alcohol. Operating a boat while intoxicated is illegal and dangerous," he said. A blood alcohol content of .08 percent is enough to cause impairment, Cruz said. Drinking can also contribute to the leading cause of death for boaters — drowning.

In 2001 alone, more than 3,000 people drowned in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control. A majority of those who drowned could have survived if they had worn a life jacket, Cruz said. "Personal floating devices, or life jackets, should be worn at all times when boating, skiing, jet skiing, or if you don't know how to swim," Cruz said. It's also important to know how to swim in order to prevent injuries and fatalities, Cruz said. Untrained people often operate watercrafts, which can be deadly, Cruz said. Many accidents that occur in water are because of careless and/or untrained people.

These accidents are easily preventable if amateur boaters would take a simple class on water safety, Cruz said. Anyone born after Jan. 1, 1989, must complete an approved boater safety education course in order to operate a motorboat or sail boat on public waters, according to Kansas law. Cruz recommends taking a course from a certified water or boating-safety instructor. An online boating safety course can be taken by visiting <http://www.boat-ed.com>. For more information about boating safety, visit <http://www.rileyarmy.mil>.



Snakes seek refuge from the summer heat

They may show up under piles of toys, in garages, basements, yards

By Gibran Suleiman
Fish and Wildlife Biologist

July in Fort Riley has the reputation of having brutally hot temperatures. Many people prefer to spend as much time as possible in an air-conditioned environment. This is also the time of year when wild critters, especially snakes, also seek refuge from the heat. Unfortunately, snakes sometimes find this refuge in garages, basements and yards. One of the most commonly reported wildlife incidents on Fort Riley is a snake in the housing areas. There are 30 species of snakes that are likely to exist on Fort Riley. They are found in nearly every type of habitat, making it nearly impossible to avoid conflict all together. However, there are certain things that you can do to minimize the chances of an

encounter with a snake. Snakes seek out shelter both for protection from predators and to regulate their body temperature. Some common objects that have been known to harbor snakes include wood piles, toys, dog houses and plastic swimming pools. These items should be picked up or minimized to reduce the chances of a snake seeking shelter under them. Also, be sure to check the plastic/rubber weather stripping on the bottoms of garage doors and other doors leading to the garage. A good seal not only helps out with the winter heating bills, it also can help prevent snakes from gaining access to the garage in the summer. Although about 99 percent of the snake encounters on Fort

Riley involve a harmless snake, there are a few rare encounters with a venomous snake. The copperhead is the only venomous snake known to occur on Fort Riley, although two species of rattlesnakes have been found in the area. As its name suggests, copperheads are normally copper in color, but vary from reddish brown to gray. If you would like to view one in person, visit the Directorate of Environment Safety Conservation Division, building 1020, they have one on display. Building 407 also has some snakes on display that are native to the area. Preventive Medicine informs me that they see an average of about two copperhead bites each year. A copperhead bite can be

very painful, but is not life threatening unless there is an extreme allergic reaction to the venom, which is considered very rare. Remember that most snake bites occur when they are handled, stepped on or cornered. All too often, people are bitten while trying to kill the snake! If you find a snake in your yard, the chances are that it will leave on its own if you leave it alone. If you find a snake in your garage or basement you can call the service order desk at 239-0900 and a wildlife specialist will be dispatched to safely remove the snake. Many people have an ingrained hatred for snakes for different reasons. But the fact that they are very beneficial to man cannot be denied. They are highly efficient predators of rodents, serve to keep nature in balance and their presence indicates a healthy environment. So if you happen to

encounter a snake this summer, remember that they are not trying to threaten you. They are likely trying to escape the heat like the rest of us. If you would like more information on snakes or any other natural resources topic, feel free to contact the Conservation Division at 239-6211, or stop by their office Monday thru Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

More Information

Thirty different species of snakes are on Fort Riley. Snakes are found in nearly every habitat. The Copperhead is the only venomous snake known to inhabit Fort Riley.





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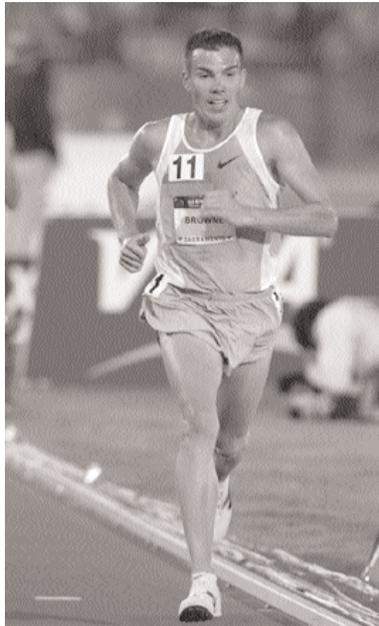
Sports news in brief

Lunch served at lanes

Custer Hill Lanes serves lunch Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Items such as hamburgers, pizza, nachos, salads and more are available from the bowling center's Strike Zone Snack Bar. Diners using the snack bar for lunch can eat a fast, quality meal at a low cost right on Custer Hill without the road construction hassle. After lunch, bowl a quick game for \$10 per lane (up to six people for two hours). Custer Hill Lanes is in building 7485, Normandy Drive. For more information, call 239-4366.

Outdoor Rec offers new boat

Fort Riley's Outdoor Recreation Center in building 9011 on Rifle Range Road now rents a new 21-foot Sun Tracker pontoon boat to eligible users. Cost is \$125 per day or \$200 per weekend. A \$200 deposit is required to reserve the boat. A boater's safety test is required before renting the boat. For more information, call 239-2249.



Photo/USAFSC

Oregon National Guard Capt. Dan Browne, a former member of the U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program, secures his second Olympic berth with a third-place finish in the 10,000 meters with a 28:07.47 clocking in the 2004 U.S. Olympic Track & Field Team Trials at Sacramento State University.

Soldier qualifies for Olympics

Trials determine who will attend games

By Tim Hips
ARNEWS

SACRAMENTO, Calif. - Oregon National Guard Capt. Dan Browne has earned a berth on Team USA for the 10,000-meter race in Greece by placing third in the event at the U.S. Olympic Track & Field Trials.

The only other military athlete to qualify for the USA Track and Field Team so far this week was Air Force 1st Lt. James Parker, who won the hammer throw July 12 with a hurl of 77.58 meters/258 feet. The track and field trials at Sacramento State University ran July 9-18.

Browne, a 1997 graduate of West Point and former member of the U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program, finished the 10,000 meters in 28 minutes, 7.47 seconds on opening night July 9. Meb Keflezighi of Mammoth Lakes, Calif., won the race in 27:36.49.

Browne, who earlier this year qualified for the Olympic marathon, said he hasn't decided yet if he will compete in both events in Athens.

"I'm going to run the marathon, that's for sure, but the 10K is a great precursor," he said.

"I need to sit down with [Coach] Alberto [Salazar] and talk it over."

Army Capt. Ryan Kirkpatrick, a WCAP distance runner, also competed in the 10,000 meters but dropped out around the midway mark to conserve energy for the 5,000 meters July 12.

"I was really feeling fatigued at about 3,000 meters into the race,"

he said. "Then the pace really sped up and I felt the effort was way too much."

Three nights later, Kirkpatrick was running on the leaders' shoulders until the final three laps when he faded to a last-place finish in 14:08.82 in the second semifinal heat of the 5,000.

Army Sgt. Sandu Rebeniciu finished the second heat of the 3,000-meter steeplechase semifinals July 12 in fourth place with a personal-best time of 8:30.45 that propelled him into the final heat scheduled for the evening of July 15.

"It was a [personal record] by only two seconds, but it was a different kind of PR," Rebeniciu said. "I came in strong at the end, looking back, not even pressing that hard. I never really kicked."

A native of Romania, Rebeniciu defected in 1988 and came to the United States in 1990. He joined the U.S. Army in 1998 and entered WCAP one year later. He competed in the 2000 U.S. Olympic Team Trials but failed to reach the final.

"There are a few guys in there who are really, really tough to beat, but they could have a bad day and then it's anybody's run," Rebeniciu said about his upcoming chance to make Team USA.

Army Spcs. Regan Nichols and Quinton Milner reached the 400-meter semifinals but did not advance to the final. Milner finished seventh in the first heat in 51.28 seconds. Nichols was fifth in the second heat in 49.60.

Army Spc. Lakeisha Backus advanced from the first round of the women's 100 meters but was

eliminated in the semifinals with a time of 11.52 seconds.

Army Spc. Pamela Simpson finished 12th in the first flight of the women's long jump qualifying round with a leap of 6.05 meters/19 feet, 7 inches and failed to reach the final.

Army Capt. Michael Mai, a 2000 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., and member of WCAP, fouled on two of his first three attempts in the hammer throw but launched the other 68.41 meters to grab the final of eight spots in the second round of the hammer finals. He finished eighth with a throw of 68.86 meters/225 feet, 11 inches.

Army Staff Sgt. Tonyo Sylvester finished eighth in the shot put with a heave of 19.57 meters/64 feet, 2 1/2 inches. U.S. Olympic Trials record-holder Adam Nelson won the event at 21.64 meters/71 feet.

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MEDDAC's Erick Acevedo lays into the ball in their July 13 game against Co. A, 1st Bn., 13th Armor.



Post/Blackmon

Brad Knepper of 10th ASOS makes an easy catch during his game against 342nd MP Co. July 15.

Softball continued from page 13

10th ASOS Airmen, 1-13.

The 977th MPs lost to both HHC 24th Inf. (Mech), 3-12 and U.S. Army Medical Department Activity, 5-18.

Company A, 1st Bn., 13th Armor defeated the Medics, 13-0 and lost to HHC, 24th ID, 1-6.

Company C, 1st Bn., 13th Armor won both games of its double header. The team defeated Co. B, 2nd Bn., 70th Armor, 17-3 and 568 CSE, 16-11.

The 523rd MPs defeated 3rd Bde., 75th Div., 13-1, and lost to HHC, 2nd Bn., 70th Armor, 2-5.

In other games July 15:

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 937th Engineer Bn. forfeited to D Det., 15th PSB, and

Co. B, 2nd Bn., 70th Armor forfeited to the 300th MPs.

The Medics won both games, defeating Co. B, 2nd Bn., 34th Armor, 16-3 and 3rd Bde, 75th Div., 11-5.

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 24th ID (Mech) lost to HHC, 2nd Bn., 34th Armor, 1-11, but came back to defeat Co. B, 2nd Bn., 34th Armor, 19-18.

The 596th Signal team defeated Co. A, 1st Bn., 13th Armor, 7-0.

Company A, 2nd Bn., 34th Armor defeated 3rd Bde, 75th Div. 9-6.

The 24th Transportation Co. defeated Co. C, 1st Bn., 13th Armor, 11-6. Co. C, 1st Bn., 13th Armor came back to bomb HHC, 937th Engineers, 27-2.



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Travel & Fun in Kansas

Leisuretime ideas

Manhattan:

Riley County 4-H Fair — 4-H and open class exhibits, parade, livestock, children's tractor pull, carnival, turtle races, and rodeo; begins 6 a.m. July 22, 8 a.m. July 23-25, 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. July 26; Cicco Park/Riley County Fair Grounds. For more information, call (785) 537-6350.

Arts in the Park — Summer concert series featuring national, regional, and local musical groups/performers; 8 to 10 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays only, through Aug. 14; City Park. For more information, (785) 587-2757 or visit www.ci.manhattan.ks.us on the Internet.

Charles Marshall Sr. Exhibition — Work by Kansas artist; exhibit runs through Sept. 26; museum open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday; 701 Beach Lane, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art. For more information, call (785) 532-7718 or visit www.ksu.edu/bma on the Web. Hours:

Beloit:

St. John's Festival — Bingo, dance, food, children's games, rides, farmer's market, drawings, and carnival games; 5 p.m. to midnight, July 24; 701 E. Court. For more information, call (785) 738-2851.

Salina:

Smoky Hill Contra Dance — Music by Gary Hughes & Friends; caller to be announced; all dances taught, no partner or experience necessary; wear comfortable, casual clothing and soft-soled shoes; bring water to drink; lessons at 7 p.m., dance 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. July 24; 146 S. Santa Fe, Dance Elite Studio. For more information, call (785) 819-3292 or visit www.kansasfolk.org/contra/salina.html on the Web.

Haddam:

Frontier Days — Basketball tournament, sand volleyball, parade, frontier olympics, dance, and BBQ; 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. July 24-25; downtown. For more information, call (785) 778-3401 or visit www.ci.haddam.ks.us on the Web.

Washington:

County Fair — County 4-H fair featuring exhibits, livestock shows, carnival, parade, and much more; 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. July 27-31; D Street, fairgrounds. For more information, call (785) 325-2121.

Atchison:

Amelia Earhart Festival — Annual tribute to native daughter with music, dignitaries, aerobic performances and fire-

works; 7 p.m. July 23 bird program; LakeFest 2004; 8 a.m. to midnight July 24, 2K/8K Fun Run/Walk, 24th annual River Rod-A-Rama Car show, Breakfast with the Books, downtown festivities, Amelia Earhart Museum open house, speakers' symposium, pre-fireworks festivities, Concert in the Sky Fireworks and street dance; July 23 at Warnock Lake; July 24 downtown and Missouri River riverfront. For more information, call (913) 367-2427 or (800) 234-1854 or visit www.atchisonkansanet.net on the Web.

Paola:

County Fair Parade — Annual parade highlights Miami County life with floats and other entries depicting the theme; 6 p.m. July 28; Paola Park Square. For more information, call (913) 294-2327.

Kansas City:

Woodlands Wiener Dog Nationals — 64 vertically challenged dachshunds racing for glory to win the 2004 Wiener Dog National Championship; 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. July 25; 9700 Leavenworth Road. For more information, call (913) 299-9797 or (800) 695-7223 or visit www.woodlandskc.com on the Web.

Holton:

Banner Creek Antique Festival — Enjoy shopping for antiques, collectibles and vintage goodies at a beautiful lake setting, food, camping, boating, and skiing; 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. July 26; Banner Creek Reservoir. For more information, call (785) 364-4727.

Wichita:

Rails & Trails Celebration — A cattle drive through Old Cowtown Museum is provided by the Moore Ranch of Bucklin both days, first-person interpretations, presentations, demonstrations and activities tell the stories of railroading before 1880 and cowboy life on the cattle trails; the Dixie Lee Dance Troupe and Varieties perform in the saloon while the Cowtown Cowboys and Old Cowtown Museum Gunfighters entertain with skits and scenarios; live music on the boardwalk by the Harmonica Hombres; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. July 24, noon to 5 p.m. July 25; 1871 Sim Park Drive, Old Cowtown Museum. For more information, call (316) 264-6398 or visit www.old-cowtown.org on the Web.

Stay In Step with Fort Riley

See what's happening on Fort Riley cable Channel 2 every day at 6:30 a.m., 8 a.m., noon, 6 p.m. and 10 p.m.

Have you lost your.....

Marbles?

Kansas company just might have them

By Jennifer Anne

When walking into this place, people might think to themselves, "So this is where Peter Pan lives." An amazing place where you can go and feel like a kid again, no matter what age you are, Moon Marble Company has something for everyone. They have every kind of marble you can imagine, not to mention every game to go with them.

Artisan and owner Bruce Breslow and Lynda Sproules created Moon Marble Company seven years ago.

They had been previously making wooden toys and game boards, but they had a difficult time finding marbles to go along with the games they were producing. So Breslow read all the material that he could about how to craft marbles, and today, he is an excellent marble maker.

"My favorite part of my job is showing people, kids and adults, how marbles are made," said Breslow. "I enjoy watching the smiles on their faces. There is just something about marbles that brings people together."

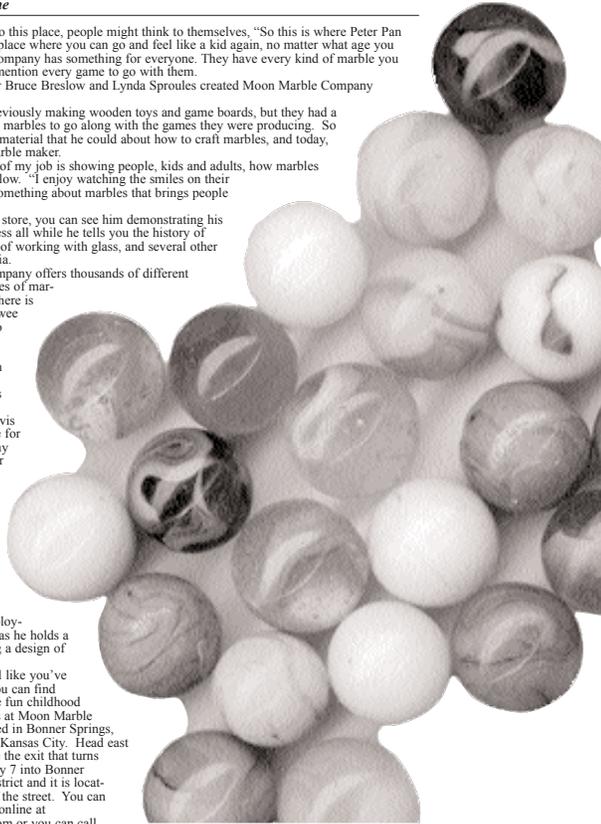
While visiting the store, you can see him demonstrating his marble making process all while he tells you the history of marbles, the process of working with glass, and several other pieces of marble trivia.

Moon Marble Company offers thousands of different

styles, colors and sizes of marbles for purchase. There is everything from pewee size all the way up to 50mm, otherwise known as the toe-breaker size. You can even get a marble with a favorite sports team logo on it, or perhaps you're an Elvis fan, there is a marble for you too. The company even has a marble for each branch of the military. The store also exhibits and sells the work of several other prominent glass workers from across the country.

"You can even hold the whole world in your hand," said J Reyes, an employee of Moon Marble, as he holds a marble encapsulating a design of the world.

So if you ever feel like you've lost your marbles, you can find them and many more fun childhood games and memories at Moon Marble Company. It is located in Bonner Springs, Kan., just outside of Kansas City. Head east on Interstate 70, take the exit that turns onto Kansas Highway 7 into Bonner Springs Business District and it is located on the left side of the street. You can also check them out online at www.moonmarble.com or you can call them at (913) 441-1432.



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