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Weather Forecast	Today	High:46 Low:30
	Saturday	High:53 Low:27
	Sunday	High:52 Low:29

**FRIDAY**

# Fort Riley Post



**March for toys held**  
Christmas took a twist on Wednesday as students from Fort Riley elementary schools and Soldiers and family members from the 70th Engineering Battalion gave Santa toys for Christmas.

See Page 14

## Families, children send supplies to Iraqi schools

By J. H. French  
82nd Airborne PAO

AR RAMADI, Iraq - Every day the Soldiers of Battery B, 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery Regiment

ment of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, wait anxiously for mail from kids at home to be delivered. But it isn't their children they are getting packages from. It is the kids from the 5th grade class at Wocoter

Elementary in Richfield, Conn., and the boxes are for school kids in Iraq. "My wife sent a copy of the battalion newsletter out to family and friends back home and in one we mentioned the schools and

how poorly equipped in basic school supplies like desks, chairs, furnishings and other basic needs they were," said Lt. Col. Richard M. Cabrey, commander, 1st Bn., 5th FA.

"My sister in law, Wendy Bradley, talked with her son, Geoffrey, who is in fifth grade, and they thought it might be a good idea as a project to try to raise some money to buy school supplies for Iraqi children in our area," he continued.



Kids pick out backpacks filled with supplies that were delivered by members of the 432nd Civil Affairs Battalion in an effort to improve conditions in schools.

Through a series of bake sales, e-mails and letters sent to other members of the family across the country, the 5th grade class was able to raise close to \$3,500. Family from California, Utah and Chicago sent money to help out.

"Then my sister-in-law took the money to an office supply store and bought school supplies," he said. "The 5th grade class spent a couple of days tearing apart boxes of pens, pencils, paper and notebooks and packaging it all up into individual packs," said Cabrey.

"My in-laws then spent over \$1,000 for the shipping costs of 85 book boxes to send over here," Cabrey said. Word has spread on this, and Soldiers' families, more schools, churches and civic groups have started their own drives and

begun sending more boxes of supplies, he said. "Once half of the supplies arrived, Battery B started the distribution runs to the schools. In the last few days, more than 1,500 individual packets have been delivered to the school children," he continued.

"We tell them when we come to deliver the supplies that these are not from coalition forces, they are from children back home who want to show their goodwill to the Iraqi children," Cabrey said.

In Iraq, the schools work differently. "Boys go half a day and girls half. We usually get a better reception from girls schools."

According to Cabrey, all of the kids, boys and girls, have been receptive at the dozen schools visited so far to get repair estimates. "The plan is to get them basic necessities like electricity, windows and furniture," Cabrey continued.

Once this environment becomes more safe and secure and the transition from combat operations to civil military and civil affairs operations is possible, projects like this one, where schools are a focus of effort, will be a bigger piece of what the coalition does here, Cabrey said.

"The children are young enough to appreciate what freedom and democracy is. They are seeing it first hand now and seem to be enjoying it.

"If we can influence these young children now, they are the ones in 20 to 30 years that will be the leaders of Iraq and have a better appreciation for what we've done," said Cabrey.

"All of this started as Geoffrey and Wendy Bradley's idea of how to help out the Soldiers over here came about and in doing so children in the states have developed a sense of responsibility by taking care of their fellow school children."

Soldiers have also developed a sense of responsibility by supporting the development of a country," he said. "Our theme and message is — education is the key to unlocking the future of Iraq," he continued, "and you can definitely see it in the children."

## 24th Infantry Division commander receives second star

By Jason Shepherd  
19th PAD

"The President of the United States has reposed special trust and confidence in the patriotism, valor, fidelity, and abilities of Dennis E. Hardy. In view of these qualities and increased potential for increased responsibility, he is therefore promoted in the Army of the United States from brigadier general to major general effective 1 Dec. 2003 by order of the Secretary of the Army."

With this published order, Maj. Gen. Dennis E. Hardy, commanding general, 24th Infantry Division (Mech.) and Fort Riley, received a second star during a ceremony held in the Soldier and Family

Support Center Dec. 12. Lt. Gen. Joseph R. Inge, commanding general, First United States Army, spoke to the audience about Hardy's military career before helping to pin on Hardy's new rank.

"You go back and you look at Dennis Hardy's resume, you'll see all kinds of bios and you'll realize that this man never had an easy job," he said. "He's been blessed with some very powerful and good jobs, and some very career-rewarding jobs, but never an easy one. This man knows how to lead and train Soldiers."

Inge also talked about why he feels Hardy is a great Soldier and capable of handling his new rank. "Everywhere you go, if someone says

"We promote people because they have potential to serve at a higher rank, and this man has the potential to serve as a major general and higher than that."

—Lt. Gen. Joseph R. Inge  
Commander, First Army

Dennis Hardy, there's a good response," he said. "We all know there are people out there that don't get a good response.

This Soldier is on the good guy list, the professional Soldier list and the leader list. We are not promoting this man because he was a good guy once and did hard work. We promote people because they have potential to serve at a higher rank, and this man has the potential to serve as a major general and higher than that."

Hardy thanked several people during his speech. For his wife, Diane, he gave a bouquet of flowers and thanked her for the help she had given him during his Army career.

"I would not be here without her," he said. "There were times when I thought about getting out. This is the rock that loved the Army as much as I did, sometimes, at different times, maybe more.

She kept me here with the power of family, for 32 years, the ups, the downs and the good times."

Hardy was commissioned as an Armor Officer in 1972 after graduating from Gonzaga University. In 1978, he earned his Master's Degree in Business Administration from Washington State University. His military education includes the Armor Officer Basic Course, Command and General Staff College and the United States War College.

His awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, Defense Meritorious Service Medal and Meritorious Service Medal. He also has earned the Parachutist Badge, the Army

See Hardy Page 3

## Memorial services held for Fort Riley Soldiers killed in Iraq

### Field Artillery sergeant honored at memorial

By Steven Cooke  
19th PAD

Friends, family and members of the Fort Riley community gathered at Morris Hill Chapel Dec. 11 to remember one of Fort Riley's recent fallen Soldiers in Iraq.

Sgt. Thomas Sweet II, Service Battery, 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery, died Nov. 27 while serving in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

One of Sweet's fellow Soldiers, Sgt. Dennis Robinson, said Sweet was a kind, generous, smart and helping friend.

"He was always willing to give a helping hand," said Robinson. "He was always trying to make people laugh."

Capt. John Dvorak, scout platoon leader, Delta Troop, 4th Cavalry, read a letter from the parents of Sweet's battle buddy still serving in Iraq. In the letter, the parents wrote that their son often spoke about how much he admired and respected Sweet. Knowing that someone like Sweet would be looking out for their son brought much ease to the parents about their son's deployment.

Lt. Col. Oscar Hall, acting commander, 1st Brigade, spoke at the service about death and the call to duty.

"Death is a debt we all must pay and Sgt. Sweet paid his debt," said Hall. "Sgt. Sweet paid his

debt like thousands of men and women from the 1st Division. He went forward when the nation called."

"The division in which Sgt. Sweet served was born and sustained by nothing less than human duty and sacrifice contributed by hundreds of thousands of men — to include his father — who have served in the ranks and left their individual mark. Sgt. Sweet left his individual mark on the 27th of

See Sweet Memorial Page 4



Sgt. Thomas Sweet II is honored at a memorial service Dec. 11

### Friends remember Armor noncommissioned officer

By Christopher Selmek  
19th PAD

"America is often referred to as the richest country in the world," said Lt. Col. Oscar Hall IV, commander, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor. "From its conception to the present times, the reputation of prosperity in the land of the free has drawn people from all corners of the globe. The unalienable rights granted by our Constitution, however, come at a price, for as we all know freedom isn't free."

"Sgt. Uday Singh persevered," continued Hall. "He accepted the bounty of this free nation, but he also gave. He made the ultimate sacrifice, and in doing so, Sgt. Singh's passing will remind us again that freedom isn't free."

Sgt. Uday Singh, formerly of 1st Battalion, 34th Armor, was killed in action on Dec. 1 while conducting reconnaissance in Iraq. A small memorial service was held at the Morris Hill Chapel Dec. 10, when friends and fellow Soldiers were given one last opportunity to say goodbye to their fallen comrade.

"Sgt. Uday Singh came to this land of the free to pursue his American dream," said Hall, "but in addition to taking what this nation had to offer, he was also willing to give, for he swore to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, and on this note Sgt. Singh became a Soldier, a protector of freedom, a liberator and a centurion."

According to Capt. Jeffery Jurand, commander, 1st Bn., 34th Armor, who read a brief biography of the Soldier, Singh was born April 23, 1982 in India.

"He enlisted in the Army as an armor crewman on Aug. 28, 2000, and completed One Station Unit

A memorial display for Sgt. Uday Singh who was killed in Iraq Dec. 1.

See Singh Memorial Page 4

### Fort Riley Infantry Soldier honored for Army service

By William Biles  
Staff Writer

On a rainy Dec. 9 morning, family and friends of Sgt. Ryan Young, Company A, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, gathered at Morris Hill Chapel to pay tribute to his memory, and to say goodbye to him.

Young, 21, was described as a natural born leader with an enthusiasm that inspired those around him.

"Sgt. Ryan Young was a natural born leader. Soldiers willingly followed him because of his determination and drive to get the job done," said Capt. David Newman, commander, Co. A, 1st Bn., 16th Inf. "When you looked into Sgt. Young's eyes, they sparked with a gleam of enthusiasm that inspired those around him."

Time and time again, as Young's friends and comrades spoke of him at the memorial service, one heard a common theme — how Young was an outstanding Soldier, leader, friend and man.

"For those who haven't met Sgt. Young, he was an ideal leader. He never hesitated to take time out of his personal life to help a Soldier or friend," said Sgt. Michael Clark, Co. A, 1st Bn., 16th Inf. "Sgt. Young was my comrade and good friend. If I could live my life at least half the way he lived his, I would be a better man and leader. We will all

miss you Sgt. Young."

Spc. Aaron Swope, Co. A, 1st Bn., 16th Inf. talked about Young's personality as a leader and a person.

See Young Memorial Page 8



A tribute to Sgt. Ryan Young, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, was held Dec. 9.

# Commentary

## Garrison Commander stresses fire safety

The holiday season is upon us. Thanksgiving has passed and Christmas is rapidly approaching. Everyone including I enjoy spending time with family and friends, and eating turkey and deserts.

Cooking and Christmas decorations can be fun and enjoyable, and yet is a dangerous time in a house. Everyone should take the measures necessary to ensure they have a safe holiday season.

The most effective means of preventing kitchen fires is to never leave cooking food unattended. Most residents have been found responsible for the fires and have had to pay for the cost of repairing the damage.

I highly recommend all families living in quarters or renting off post obtain Renter's Insurance. Besides covering the losses you suffer as the result of a fire,

or play pens.

Many families have put up or are in the process of putting up their Christmas lights and Christmas tree. The beautiful light displays are one of the ways that make the holiday season come to life on Fort Riley.

Christmas lights can sometimes cause more harm than good. Everyone needs to ensure that their Christmas lights are Under-

rugs or furniture. People walking on them and furniture placed on top of the cord can pinch the wires causing a short and a fire.

If you have or are planning to have a real Christmas tree, remember to select a fresh tree and keep it watered. "A dry tree is a significant fire risk," said Cook. A fresh tree will still smell like pine, and its needles will be hard to pull off its branches. Saw about

two inches off the bottom at an angle to help the tree absorb water.

Always ensure there is plenty of water in the stand. A tree can easily use one gallon of water per day.

Avoid decorations that are sharp, easily breakable or very small and edible when young children are near. Avoid trimmings or decorations that resemble candy or food. Additionally keep candles well away from Christmas trees, decorations, curtains and other combustibles, and never put candles in windows or near exits.

Don't leave candles burning unattended or within the reach of small children, and blow them out before you leave the room or go to sleep.

### Around Fort Riley: By Col. John Simpson, Garrison Commander

The kitchen is one of the most dangerous areas in a home, whether on or off post. Since the beginning of this year, Fort Riley has had six kitchen fires in family quarters, all caused by unattended cooking. Taking the wrong action can make the situation worse, not better.

Do not attempt to put out a grease fire with water. Burning grease is easily spread by water and will only cause the fire to spread. In the event you do have a kitchen fire, immediately turn off the stove and, if it safe to do so, cover the pan and evacuate the quarters.

Immediately after evacuating, call 911 from a neighbor's quarters.

they will generally pay the cost of repairing the quarters or apartments.

"Time and time again I hear of families losing property as a result of fire, which they cannot replace due to lack of insurance," said Chief Mike Cook, fire chief, Fort Riley.

"We have had several close calls where toddlers have knocked pots and pans off of the stove. They could easily have been scalded by boiling water or burned by hot foods," said Lt. Col. Wesley Anderson, Public Works. If possible, keep toddlers out of the kitchen, but if they must be there, keep them in high chairs

writers. Laboratories approved, which is easily checked by looking for the UL sticker. This marking shows that the lights are approved and been tested by a certifying agency.

Never use decorative light strings marked "For Indoor Use" outdoors, and don't use more than three standard sets of lights per outlet. Be sure to check the manufacturer's instructions before setting up your lights.

Finally, before you hang your lights, inspect them for cuts, breaks and burned out bulbs. Also, if extension cords must be used, do not place them under

## Fort Riley loses 20th Soldier in Iraq

Staff Reports

The Department of Defense announced that Sgt. Jarrod W. Black, 26, of Peru, Ind., was killed Dec. 12 in Ar Ramadi, Iraq.

Black was assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 34th Armor, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. He joined the Army in September 1999 and has been stationed at Fort Riley since December 2002. He was assigned to the unit as an armor crewman and deployed to Iraq in September.

Black's convoy was hit by an improvised explosive device. He died of his injuries. The incident is under investigation.

He is the 20th Fort Riley Soldier who has died while serving in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Fort Riley commanders, Soldiers, civilian employees and Family Readiness Groups are providing ongoing assistance to all families of Soldiers supporting the war effort and are prepared to continue around the clock assistance throughout this operation.



COLLEGE HEIGHTS BAPTIST CHURCH  
2 x 2"  
Black Only  
ROTATE 4 ADS

## Family thanks Honor Guard for dedication

On Tuesday, Dec. 9, we buried my Uncle Emmet M. Conolly, Sr. in Omaha, Neb. Military honors were provided by members of the Honor Guard from Fort Riley. Today, I am writing this as a small expression of my family's deep gratitude to the wonderful Soldiers who provided the services.

The day of the funeral, there were hazardous road conditions caused by heavy snowfall, yet these Soldiers made the trip anyway. At the cemetery, the hearse had difficulty making it to the gravesite because of slick, hilly roads, but these Soldiers, in dress uniform, complete with white gloves, got out there and pushed

the hearse to get it to the site. The wind was fierce and the snow was falling hard, but they stood there, never once breaking form and provided incredibly powerful, moving honors that none of us will soon forget.

These men and women went above and beyond the call of duty that day, and it is my hope that they receive recognition for this, a wonderful service.

Thank you for providing such a wonderful service.

Sincerely,  
Jacki McIntyre  
Wife of Spc. Joseph McIntyre  
Fort Hood, Texas

ROSS HAROLD  
1 x 4"  
Black Only  
Book Signing/4 paper combo

HOLM AUTOMOTIVE  
3 x 4"  
Black Only  
3x4, holm auto decal

REGULATOR TIME SHOP  
1 x 1"  
Black Only  
DECEMBER&JAN. 03

SPOTTS SPECIALTY COMPANY  
1 x 1"  
Black Only  
leather goods

THE MARTIN AGENCY  
4 x 10"  
Black Only  
Alto#/RH1180059/Post/12-19

KANSAS PRESS  
2 x 2"  
Black Only  
big book/12-16 & 12-19

HOUSE ADS  
2 x 6.5"  
Black Only  
STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP





# Fort Riley troops protect schools

By Conrad College  
372nd MPAD

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Smiling, laughing, happy school children, in first through sixth grades, returned to two newly renovated primary schools in the Abu Ghraib area of western Baghdad in November.

A team from the 490th Civil Affairs Battalion, an Army Reserve unit from Abilene, Texas, managed renovations and repairs at the two schools, Ruqia Primary School and Al-Fayha Primary School.

Capt. Thane Thompson, a team chief for the 490th, was the officer in charge of the project. Thompson, who is from Monterey, Calif., said, "The coalition is doing a lot of positive restoration work and the vast majority of Iraqis that we deal with are appreciative."

More than \$80,000 was spent on the repairs and renovations at the two schools, he explained.

The Ruqia school project cost \$34,000 and the Al-Fayha school project cost \$46,000. The funding was provided by the 354th Civil Affairs Brigade, and came from Commanders Emergency Relief Funds.

Immediately following the main combat phase of the war, both schools - just as with most government buildings - were completely looted. All of the furniture and equipment was stolen from the schools. Even doors and windows were removed and taken elsewhere. All the light fixtures, wiring and switches were taken out of the walls.

So the schools were unusable until the U.S. Army came and started the process of getting everything repaired, replaced or renovated.

Thompson and his noncommissioned officer in charge, Spec. George Black, of Abilene, Texas, led the team of civil affairs Soldiers in getting this mission

accomplished, from the initial assessments to completion of construction and painting.

"My team," Thompson said, "coordinated the project from start to finish. We conducted the initial assessments defining the scope of the work, found contractors to help with cost estimates, prepared the funding proposal, got the funding approved, and contracted with local construction companies to do the hands-on work."

"We also did quality-control inspections every couple days and paid the contractors for their work," Thompson said.

Both schools are in the area of Baghdad and protected by the 3rd Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Armored Division.

Lt. Col. Leopold Quintas, commander, 2nd Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment, 3rd BCT, came and cut the ribbon for the grand reopening of the Al-Fayha Primary School.

# Talk Around Town

## "How do you feel about Saddam Hussein's capture?"



*"I think it's good, but I think it's going to get worse because some of his loyalists are going to be mad he got caught."*

Pfc. Toni Gingrich  
300th Military Police Company



*"It's definitely a big morale booster. Hopefully, it will speed things along in bringing our [Soldiers] back home."*

Capt. Jason Johnson  
924th Military Police Battalion



*"I'm glad he's been caught. I think there are other steps to be taken to ensure there are not other people like him around. We're treating him too nicely."*

Pfc. Michael Yearwood  
568th Engineering Company



Lt. Col. Leopold Quintas, commander, 2nd Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, along with the local school headmaster, cuts the ribbon at the grand reopening of the Al-Fayha Primary School in Baghdad on Nov. 15.

# Hardy

continued from page 1

Staff Identification Badge and the Joint Chiefs of Staff Identification Badge.

According to Hardy, it was fitting to have the promotion ceremony in the Soldier and Family Support Center because everyone should have their thoughts with the Soldiers who are deployed.

"The most important part of the United States Army is our people," he said. "It's not me. It's not Diane. It's about people. That's what this facility represents. There is nothing more important than our Soldiers who are down range. I wanted to do this to show our Soldier and Family Support Center."

Inge also talked about the support center during his address to the crowd.

"I've been in a lot of ceremonies before where people cringe when the phone rings," he said. "I think it's fitting that we be in this place to do this promotion. I think it's fitting that the phone rings. I think that most people know that this is the Soldier and Family Support Center, and if one of those phones ring back there, it may be a Soldier calling in or a family member calling in to get information. What a wonderful place to have a promotion if you're the leader and the commander of such a place as Fort Riley."

PIONEER MILITARY LENDING  
6 x 11"  
Black Only  
PU/PURCHASE POWER/JEWELRY

# Briefs

## Office Closures

The Execution Branch of the Resource Management Office that services DCA, DES, DPTM and Headquarters Activities will have minimal staffing on Wednesday. Plan accordingly and have all necessary budget requests/issues/TDY orders to your budget analyst in a timely manner so it may be completed by COB Tuesday. Emergency Budget Issues on Wednesday may be directed to Dionne Greif, 239-3590.

The CPAC will close at 11:30 a.m. today to join the SWCPOC and ABC-C at their Holiday Social.

The Directorate of Environment and Safety will be closed this afternoon for their holiday party.

The Office of the Staff Judge Advocate will close at 11:30 a.m. today for their annual Christmas party. The office will re-open on Monday.

## Holiday Hours

The Vehicle Registration Office will close at noon on Wednesday and will remain closed until Dec. 29, 8 a.m. The office will be open Dec. 29 and 30, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. and on Dec. 31, 8 a.m. - noon. The office will close Dec. 31 at noon and will be closed until Jan. 5, 2004.

The U.S. Cavalry Museum and Fort Riley Regimental Museum will be closed Dec. 26, per the directive from the President of the United States. The museums will reopen Dec. 27 and 28, at regular

hours. Any questions, call (785)239-2737.

## Refuse Schedule

Due to the upcoming holidays, the Refuse Collection Schedule will be as follows: Monday - Colyer Manor, Main Post Housing, Marshall Air Field Housing; Tuesday - Peterson Heights, Monteth Heights, O'Donnell Heights and Ellis Heights; Wednesday - Warner Heights, Burnside Heights; Thursday - No Collection; Dec. 26 - South Peterson Heights, South Warner Heights, Meade Heights, McClellan Heights; Dec. 29 - Colyer Manor, Main Post Housing, Marshall Air Field Housing; Dec. 30 - Peterson Heights, Monteth Heights, O'Donnell Heights, and Ellis Heights; Dec. 31 - Warner Heights, Burnside Heights; Jan. 1 - No Collection and Jan. 2 - South Peterson Heights, South Warner Heights, Meade Heights, McClellan Heights.

The Refuse Contractor will begin Christmas Tree pick up on Dec. 26 and continue with pickups on Jan. 2, 7, 14, 21, and 28. Trees must have all the decorations and tinsel removed and placed near the curb for pick up. Due to the Holiday schedule there will NOT be any large pick-ups scheduled. Please have carts placed at the curb by 7:30 a.m. the day of scheduled pick up.

For further information, contact the Contract Inspection Branch, 239-2727.

## Custer House

Custer House is closed until further notice for repairs.

# Singh Memorial continued from page 1

Training at Fort Knox, Ky. with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 81st Armor Regiment in December 2000," read Jurrand. "In January 2001, Sgt. Singh was assigned to Co. C, 1st Bn., 34th Armor Regiment at Fort Riley, where he served in a variety of positions, from tank driver to tank gunner. Sgt. Singh deployed with his unit in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in September 2003."

"According to several Soldiers who served with him in Iraq, Singh was a credit to the Army and to the NCO corps. "I worked with Sgt. Singh," said Sgt. Kenneth Wyma, 1st Bn., 34th Armor. "He is a hard worker and a trustworthy Soldier. He was always trying to better himself and others. He was always putting the needs of others ahead of his own. He would do anything for a friend, whether it was loaning him a couple dollars or picking him up in the middle of the night at the airport."

"He also put the needs of the platoon ahead of his own," said Wyma. "He would cancel his plans if even one person stayed working on that vehicle, because he believed the platoon should stick together."

"Among his subordinates, Singh had a reputation for understanding and compassionate leadership."

"I first met Spc. Singh in July of 2002 when I first came in this unit," said Spc. Bobby Laracuente, 1st Bn., 34th Armor. "He was the first guy I met in Charlie Company, and he offered to help me with my bags. Singh would always put everyone else before himself, he was the type of person who would help you with any problem you

had, he would actually listen to you."

"He was more than a leader, he was my friend," Laracuente continued. "I would always listen to him, and he would always listen to me, but now he is gone forever and I will miss him. He will always remain in my heart, and in the hearts of his family. Uday, I miss you, buddy, and I know that God will be with you at this moment and forever."

Singh was also acknowledged for possessing a deep commitment to the Army, and to bettering himself and those around him.

"Sgt. Singh once told me that he couldn't wait to finish his term in the Army, and go pursue a college education," said Laracuente. "He wanted to get a degree and come back and be in the Army as an officer. He said he wanted to be an officer because he always liked to be in charge. In fact, the last thing I remember of Singh was of his leadership skills. He tried to square me away, and I found it was easy to follow him."

Sgt. Singh is survived by his father, Preet, and his mother, Manjit.

"Singh really loved his family," recalled Laracuente. "He would always call his dad and tell him how the work day went along. He was always telling me how much he meant to dad."

According to Hall, Singh was a true representation of what it means to be a Soldier.

"Being a Soldier requires toil and stubborn perseverance to overcome obstacles, like the heat, cold, thirst, mud, snowfall, and all while under a heavy load," he said.

"There is nothing comfortable while being a Soldier. Most people have a difficult time

appreciating the sacrifice and endurance it takes to persevere as a Soldier, but that is what Sgt. Singh did, he persevered."

Hall continued, "He endured the hardship of being a Soldier, he overcame the solitude of being away from his family, he overcame the loneliness of being a stranger in a new country, and while he was overcoming his own apprehensions in this new land, he continued to leave an indelible mark on everyone who he came into contact with."

The Soldiers of Singh's unit said their final goodbyes, with perhaps the most heartfelt, the most meaningful goodbye coming from Hall just before the final roll call and playing of Taps.

"As we come together today to pay tribute to another fallen comrade, saying goodbye doesn't get any easier," Hall said. "We have said goodbye to far too many. We have seen the tears of the wives and mothers, we have felt the cold chill of Taps when played, we heard the final volley in the distance, but we can take it in knowing that Sgt. Singh and those that he followed made the final sacrifice not in vain, they will forever have the gratitude and admiration not only of this nation, but the nation of a people whom for decades have never known the freedom that we have enjoyed for over two hundred years."

"Farewell Sgt. Singh, you have persevered. You have given all a Soldier can give and now it is time for you to rest. Your mission is complete. Well done."

# Sweet Memorial continued from page 1

November 2003.

"When the nation calls, regardless of the uncertainty, regardless of the danger, regardless of the debt, it must be paid. We must continue to go on. We must continue to improve the path laid by those who have fallen before us. We must continue the mission, for there is no mission too difficult, no sacrifice too great. Duty must be first," Hall said.

Sweet was born Oct. 2, 1980. After graduating high school in 1999, he enlisted in the Army as a cannon crewmember and completed basic training at Fort Sill, Okla. In October 1999, Sweet reported to Fort Riley and was assigned to Battery B, 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery. There he served as a Howitzer cannoner and Paladin driver for two years. In October 2001, Sweet trans-

ferred to Service Battery, 1st Battery, 5th Field Artillery as the training room clerk and command driver. In September 2003, he deployed with his unit to Southwest Asia in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Sweet's awards and decorations include the Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal and Army Service Ribbon.

HOUSE ADS  
6 x 12.5"  
Black only  
AUSA--IF POSSIBLE



# Imminent death determination can mean more benefits for families

By Sam Robinson  
Staff Writer

As of Dec. 8, there have been 145 Fort Riley Soldiers wounded in action in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Three received injuries so extensive they were declared medically retired due to imminent death.

The declaration is made when a Soldier is expected to die within 72 hours. A Soldier's diagnosis of imminent death requires expeditious retirement processing.

An active duty Soldier in this situation must be given the best benefit counseling the Army can offer, according to Human Resources Command documentation. Death while in a retired status may result in greater benefits to a Soldier's eligible survivors than when death occurs on active duty.

In order to accomplish the retirement process, imminent death procedures must be carried out between the medical treatment facility, personnel office and the spouse.

The process may be initiated if a Soldier is very seriously ill or injured and not expected to survive longer than 72 hours. The injury must have been received in the line of duty, according to HRC documentation.

Imminent death processing, although expeditious, must meet all regulatory and statutory requirements. For example, if a line of duty determination is mandated, retirement is not executed until the required level of determination is approved and confirms an in Line of Duty finding.

Retirement must be effective before time of death as defined by the laws of the state where the Soldier is assigned, or if the Soldier is outside of the Continental United States, as defined under military medical standards.

It is the attending physician's decision to initiate imminent death processing. Processing moves quickly but is a very thorough procedure.

"It is the doctor's call at the treatment facility. They have to make the determination if death is about to occur," said Capt. Steve Cornelius, deputy G1. "The attending physician initiates the process."

According to Cornelius, a Soldier will be placed on the Temporary Disability Retirement List (TDRL) for five years, when processing is completed.

The Army will provide next of kin with information on the seriousness of the Soldier's injuries and benefits. The Soldier's spouse makes the decision of whether or not to pursue the medical retirement. If the Soldier is not married,

the judgment goes to the insured interest.

"This is a process that moves quickly. The spouse is the one that has to say yes or no. If the Soldier is not married, it falls to the insured party," said Cornelius.

"The decision maker must be someone that has a vested interest in the survival of the Soldier."

According to G1, Soldiers without children or with one child have the option of insurable interest. This allows an annuity to be provided to a relative down to first cousin or a party with a reasonable and lawful basis to expect some advantage from the continued life of the Soldier. This determination is made at the time SGLI paperwork is done, before deployment.

"Injuries must be from the line of duty," said Cornelius. "LOD must be verified for the process to be completed."

According to G1, determining if injuries were received in the line of duty is part of the overall investigation, which takes place with every incident. While estab-

lishing the LOD can be done quickly, the overall investigation can take a considerable amount of time.

"We would rather take a year to investigate the incident and be 100 percent, than six months and be 99 percent," said Cornelius. "Our office must be 100 percent accurate at all times."

"During Operation Iraqi Freedom, three Fort Riley Soldiers have been placed on medical retirement due to imminent death," said Cornelius. "Two Soldiers are currently recovering from injuries at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Alexandria, Va."

Although they are no longer expected to die, their recovery will be limited.

"While some Soldiers have survived after being medically retired, as a result of imminent death processing, the majority of the Soldiers do not," said Cornelius.

"Soldiers that do survive will most likely never return to work due to the serious nature of their

injuries," said Cornelius. "We trust the doctor's decision to medically retire this person and that the injury is so serious that the Soldier will be permanently disabled, if they survive."

"Soldiers and their families could get a decent stipend per month, due to the medical retirement," said Cornelius. "The Army wants to take care of the Soldiers and families that have given so much."

Beneficiaries of Soldiers killed in action receive the SGLI in the amount designated by the Soldier, up to \$250,000, \$12,000 death gratuity, \$255 one time burial allowance, Social Security benefits and, if applicable, personal life insurance premium.

"The bottom line is additional benefits for the survivors," said Cornelius.

One of the key additions to benefits is in the Survival Benefit Plan. The benefit depends on rank and time of service.

"For medical retirement not associated with combat, the Soldier must go before a review board, which is very detailed and takes from three to six months if a Soldier was to go through the normal process at the hospital," said Cornelius. "However, there could be cases where a Soldier is involved in an accident here at Fort Riley, we would do imminent death processing as quickly as if they were in combat."

According to Cornelius, supplements to the SGLI are available but they are costly. Soldiers and their next of kin need to evaluate the long-term cost of these plans versus the benefit.

"Soldiers and their families need to be up to date on the SGLI information and supplemental plans," urged Cornelius. "Be aware of the possible added cost of private plans."

When considering the possibility of a medical retirement, due to imminent death, dependents need to keep in mind two matters, which could pose a hardship. The first is civilian life insurance and the other concerns civilian hospitalization.

If the Soldier has a civilian policy that provides greater benefits if death occurs on active duty, retirement may not be the most

financially supportive option. Usually military oriented associations offer these types of policies. Families need to evaluate which benefits will help them the most.

If the Soldier is in a civilian hospital when retired, he/she becomes responsible for medical costs not covered under TRICARE. The TRICARE catastrophic cap will apply. A Health Benefits Advisor should be consulted for details.

"This is a volunteer Army. Everyone raised their hands and stepped forward. The dependents are part of the Army family," said Cornelius. "This (medical retirement benefit) is just a small way to say thank you for your service and sacrifice. It is a small way to help the family through life."

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FAMILY ACTIVITIES

## Medical Retirement due to Imminent Death Benefits:

**Death Gratuity** paid to family \$12,000. When Soldier is retired Veterans Administration pays the gratuity within 10 to 30 days.

**Servicemen's Group Life Insurance**- Amount elected, which can be up to \$250,000

**Survivor Benefit Plan**- 75 percent of base pays for retiree; beneficiary receives 55 percent. This decreases to 35 percent at age 62, at which time Social Security makes up the difference.

**Dependency Indemnity Compensation**- depending on how many children. Currently \$948 for spouse and \$237 per child with a cost of living raise yearly, until spouse is remarried.

**Social Security**- \$255 one time burial allowance and amount per child depends on how much a Soldier has paid.

**Educational Benefit**- Spouse/children with current full time rate of \$404 for up to 45 months. Spouse must utilize within 10 years of death. Children must utilize by age 26. The total benefits will not exceed \$54,540.

**SDVI (Service Disabled Veterans Life Insurance)**- This is a \$10,000 policy for disabled veterans. A supplemental policy gives certain disabled veterans extra coverage of up to \$20,000. Therefore a family can receive up to an additional \$30,000.

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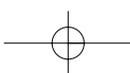
## Master Teacher awarded

Gloria Yates, 6th grade social studies/language arts teacher at Fort Riley Middle School, has been selected by the JCEA Master Teacher Committee as the Geary County nominee for the 2004 Kansas Master Teacher Award sponsored by the Teachers College at Emporia State University.

Yates has been a teacher at Fort Riley Middle School since 1990, and previous to that taught sixth grade at Fort Riley Elementary from 1986-90. She is currently serving as a member of the FRMS student Improvement Plan committee, the social studies/language arts criterion-referenced test revision committee and the district's textbook adoption committee for literature. In addition, she serves as a district teacher-mentor for third-year teachers.



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# Prepare for tax season now: Get forms, information in order early

**By Henry M. DeWoskin**  
*Installation Tax Attorney*

This is the time of the year when everyone is preparing for the holidays and the new year. As the new year approaches, in addition to celebrating, one must start thinking about taxes.

The Fort Riley Tax Center will be open for business Jan. 26, 2004. The Tax Center can save you and your family money. The Tax Center will be offering free tax preparation services to active duty Soldiers, retirees and family members. The Tax Center will be located in building 7034, across from Kapsun Chapel.

In order for the Tax Center to successfully file your taxes, you must come prepared with the following documents: your W-2 (s) and other items as applicable, to include social security numbers for all family members, 1099 DIV, -INT, -R, -Misc, 1098-T, IRS Form 2848 - Power of Attorney and proof of childcare

expenses. If your spouse is deployed and you want to file the tax return for your spouse, then your spouse must give you a signed IRS Form 2848 - Power of Attorney. Without the correct Power of Attorney, your spouse needs to be with you to sign the tax forms in order to file.

Special benefits are available to Soldiers serving in a combat zone or in a qualified hazardous duty area. These include the extension of certain deadlines and the exclusion of certain compensation from gross income. The Tax Center can file your tax return electronically for free. Besides being simpler, elec-

tronic filing is quicker. If the IRS owes you a refund, then the money will be deposited in your bank account approximately 10 days after you electronically file. Now is the best time to start preparing for the tax season. Do not wait until April 15, 2004, especially if the IRS owes you money.

## W2s to be posted online, some already there

*Army News Service*

The end of the calendar year is quickly approaching and that means only one thing in the tax world, tax statements (W2, 1099R, 1042S). The Defense Finance and Accounting Service has compiled a schedule of dates when servicemembers, military retirees and annuitants and defense civilian employees can access their tax statements through myPay.

able around the clock, customers can conveniently make changes online, avoiding the hassles of an office visit.

Military members and Department of Defense civilian employees will once again have access to view, save and print their tax statements from myPay at <https://mypay.dfas.mil>

"During 2003, more than 1.2 million users viewed their tax statements on myPay, and we continue to encourage users to view and print their statements online," said Pat Shine, director of DFAS' Military and Civilian Pay Ser-

VICES business line. "Timely access to W-2s and other tax statements is another way myPay gives users control of their pay information."

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service is the world's largest finance and accounting operation. It provides responsive, professional finance and account-

ing services to the men and women who defend America. In Fiscal Year 2003, DFAS paid about 5.9 million people, processed more than 12.3 million invoices from defense contractors, disbursed more than \$416 billion and managed more than \$194 billion in military trust funds.

### Commissary Holiday Hours

The Fort Riley Commissary will be closing at 3 p.m. Christmas Eve, Dec. 24. The Commissary will be closed Dec. 25 and 26 for the Christmas Holiday. The Commissary will reopen for business Dec. 27.

### W2 posting dates

The DFAS is projecting the tax statements will be posted on myPay during the following periods.

	No earlier than:	No later than:
Military Annuitants	12/13/2003	12/18/2003
DoD civilians	12/24/2003	12/29/2003
Army, Air Force, Navy Reserve and National Guard	12/26/2003	01/01/2004
Military Retirees	01/01/2004	01/05/2004
Marine Corps Active and Reserve	01/13/2004	01/21/2004
Army, Air Force, Navy Active	01/16/2004	01/26/2004

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## Winter driving hazardous: Take precautions now

**By William Biles**  
*Staff Writer*

Fort Riley saw its first snow of the season Dec. 9, and with the snow comes hazardous driving conditions.

Even though driving in adverse weather is the dangerous part of the scenario, just getting your car started could be the losing part of the battle.

Some measures can be taken to aid you in the battle against Old Man Winter, according to [www.icepack.org](http://www.icepack.org)

Now is the time to get your car tuned up, brakes, battery and fluid levels checked. Make sure your heater and defroster are all in good working order and seals on doors and windows in top shape. Replace your wiper blades. Prepare for more snow with antifreeze and winter weight oil for your engine.

Have an emergency car care kit that contains jumper cables, flares or reflectors, windshield washer fluid, a small shovel, an ice scraper, traction material, antifreeze, blankets, nonperishable food and a first aid kit.

To make winter driving less stressful, give yourself more time to get to and from work and more time to stop when you're on the road.

The biggest hazard of winter driving is slippery roads — caused by ice, slushy snow or rain, especially the first rain after a dry spell, when oil and grease have built up on roads.

Reduce the danger of skidding by driving slower and by pumping the brakes as you slow down for a turn rather than holding them down. Use low gears on slick surfaces, especially hills and curves. Test your brakes frequently, and avoid tailgating. If you start to skid, do not brake. Instead, take your foot off the accelerator and

gently turn your car in the direction you want your front wheels to go. Hitting the brakes or turning sharply will only lock you into a skid. If you can't get control of your car, it is better to steer into a snow bank or fence than to risk a collision in traffic.

Visibility is another hazard of winter driving. In heavy snow, keep your lights on. Stop and clean your windshield and lights if necessary.

If you get stuck in snow, avoid spinning your wheels — you'll only dig in deeper. Instead, shovel snow away from the wheel paths and pour salt, sand or cinders around the drive wheels to improve traction.

To sum up, keep your car or truck in top shape, allow extra time and space on the road and listen to the weather forecast. Sometimes the best winter driving strategy is to stay home.

For more winter driving safety tips, visit [www.icepack.org](http://www.icepack.org)

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### New Year's Eve Party

Custer Hill Lanes is having a New Year's Eve Party, 9 p.m. - 2 a.m. Lanes will be \$75 per lane, with six people to a lane or \$35 per couple being placed with other couples. A parent or guardian must accompany all children under the age of 18. Cost includes five hours of bowling, one bottle of champagne per lane, party favors, DJ, breakfast, giveaways and moon light bowling. Reservations should be paid for in advance for a guaranteed slot.

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# Army puts unit, organizational moves on hold

By Joe Burlas  
Army News Service

Effective Jan. 1, the Army will suspend all new unit and organizational moves to permanent locations through May 2005, unless there are compelling operational reasons for such a move, officials said.

However, they said restationing actions approved by headquarters, Department of the Army, before the beginning of the New Year may proceed as scheduled.

The Army intends to avoid unnecessary spending as officials analyze which installations may be affected by Base Realignment and Closure 2005 actions, they said. Office of the Secretary of Defense BRAC 2005 recommen-

dations are due to the BRAC Commission in May 2005.

It doesn't make sense to move people and equipment, as well as build new facilities or renovate older ones, on installations that could be closed in a few years, said Emmett Welch, G-3 Force Management Directorate. Failing to put a stationing restriction in place would be irresponsible because it would make the Army pay twice for unit and organizational moves onto and from installations that end up on the final BRAC list, he said.

Two other reasons for the new restriction, according to the implementing announcement, are to ensure there is no appearance that the Army is "BRAC-proofing" any installation or rendering any as excess before the BRAC

process is complete.

Acknowledging that there is some e-mail traffic with supposed lists of installation names already proposed for realignment or closure, Welch warned not to believe everything you read.

"It is impossible to say Base X will or will not be on the final BRAC list when we don't even have the final judging criteria yet," Welch said.

OSD criteria for determining which installations should or should not be recommended for realignment or closure is due to the services in April.

The military has gone through four previous rounds of the BRAC process — the first in 1988, the last in 1995.

"At a minimum, BRAC 2005 must eliminate excess physical

capacity; the operation, sustainment, and recapitalization of which diverts scarce resources from defense capability," said Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld during a Nov. 15 Pentagon press briefing. "However, BRAC 2005 can make an even more profound contribution to transforming the Department by rationalizing our infrastructure with defense strategy.

BRAC 2005 should be the means by which we reconfigure our current infrastructure into one in which operational capacity maximizes both warfighting capability and efficiency."

A Department of the Army G-3 memorandum, "Suspension of Army Stationing Actions," dated Dec. 4, announced the move restriction.

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## Young Memorial continued from page 1

he will be missed and never forgotten."

Newman spoke about Young being an acting team leader as a specialist, and how he overheard him talking to his team during an After Action Review.

"I thought the tactical and technical points being articulated by this leader were quite good," said Newman. "As I looked around the corner to compliment the speaker on the points, he was stating, and fully expecting the leader of the conversation to be a platoon sergeant, only to be pleasantly surprised to see it was Spc. Young," he said. "One would never know by observing the actions of a fire team or squad led by Sgt. Young, that a Soldier with three years in service, a specialist, was leading them. He was fantastic!"

Newman said Young would not be forgotten by any of the Iron Rangers.

"We will miss him and never forget him, as the memory of Sgt. Young will carry forward in each and every one of us Soldiers. Iron Rangers will continue the mission with a commitment and dedication in the memory of our American hero - Sgt. Young."

Lt. Col. Oscar Hall IV, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor, reminded the congregation of how this was another reminder that freedom isn't free, and how, through Young's ultimate sacrifice, it exemplifies all that is good about the nation and its military.

"We are constantly reminded

that freedom isn't free. From the flag-draped coffin, to the hearing of taps in the far off distance, to the unmarked graves at Arlington, to that empty chair across the room at our Thanksgiving feast, these were just a few constant reminders that the price of freedom isn't free," said Hall. "Today we come together to be reminded that once again freedom is not free. We come together to pay tribute to another fallen comrade... the passing of a son... to the passing of a husband, to the passing of a noncommissioned officer,

to the passing of another Iron ranger - an iron Ranger to the very end," he said.

"Sgt. Young has forever touched the life's of those he came in contact with, and he will be missed by all. Now that the sun has set on his life, it doesn't really matter what individual reason possessed Sgt. Young to sign the dotted line in July of 2000," he said.

"He is with those that have made the ultimate sacrifice. He has exemplified all that is good about our military," Hall said.

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# Fort Riley Community

December 19, 2003

America's Warfighting Center

Page 9

## Fort Riley shows off historical homes, decorations to visitors

By William Biles  
Staff Writer

The Historical and Archaeological Society of Fort Riley had a tour of Fort Riley's historical homes Dec. 12. The public was able to tour 18 homes as well as Custer House and The Shoppe, located on the Main Post.

The idea was to showcase the variety of styles, sizes and shapes of the houses in different locations throughout the Main Post area, as well as the decorative creativeness and individuality of the occupants.

"Today we are showcasing the wide range of homes that Fort Riley has. We have homes built in the 1880s - one that was built in 1855, the oldest home on Fort Riley - we also have homes built in the 1930s," said Tammy Hinkley, tour guide coordinator, HASFR. "We really have the most beautiful homes that I have ever lived in, in the 20 years I have been associated with the Army," said Hinkley. "I hope they see how the Army families are very proud as well, and open up our homes and give the people from the surrounding communities the gift of what we want to show them."

Some of the tourists had a certain house they were looking forward to viewing.

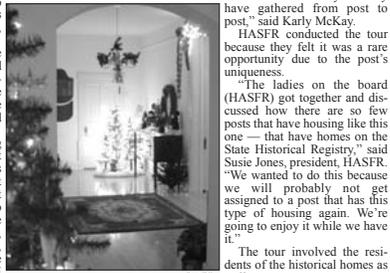
"I'm looking forward to seeing Gen. Hardy's house because I'm sure it's one of the largest houses, and with all the years they have been in, I'm sure there is a lot of history that they have gathered from post to post," said Karly McKay.

HASFR conducted the tour because they felt it was a rare opportunity due to the post's uniqueness.

"The ladies on the board (HASFR) got together and discussed how there are so few posts that have housing like this one - that have homes on the State Historical Registry," said Susie Jones, president, HASFR. "We wanted to do this because we will probably not get assigned to a post that has this type of housing again. We're going to enjoy it while we have it."

The tour involved the residents of the historical homes as well.

"I hope they get an appreciation of the different architectures from house to house. This year is especially nice because we have a huge variety," said Jones. "In every historical housing area we have at least one person who



Christmas trees and other decorations were viewed by visitors on the Holiday Homes Tour.



Fort Riley has an abundance of historic homes occupied by military personnel. The HASFR Holiday Home Tour took visitors to many of Main Post's historic homes.

See Holiday Tours Page 10

## Kansas State University student balances school, family, Army life

K-State Release

MANHATTAN — While experiencing the life of a newlywed for the past seven months, Deah Jackson has been working to balance her family life with school at Kansas State University.

"It is really difficult to balance school and family, and to be successful at both. I have to make sacrifices and commit time to others," Jackson said. "It's definitely a struggle but I make it work."

Jackson, a K-State graduate student in college student personnel, has found out that married life is harder than she imagined.

"Before I got married, I didn't know how tough it would be," Jackson said. "I

underestimated the duties of being a student organizations office, where she monitors the general relationships

between the Black Student Union, the Native American Student Association, the Hispanic American Leadership Organization and the Asian American Student Association. She also serves as a liaison for the multicultural organizations and the office of diversity

**"It is really difficult to balance school and family, and to be successful at both. I have to make sacrifices and commit time to others."**

—Deah Jackson  
Student, Military Support

and dual career development, the organizations' overseeing office.

Jackson chose K-State to pursue her master's degree because she was offered an assistantship and her husband would be able to complete his commitment to the Army.

She received her bachelor's degree from K-State and said she enjoys the university's friendly atmosphere.

"People are always saying 'hi' with a smile," Jackson said. "Everyone, especially the staff, is so helpful and willing to do whatever they can to help make your college experience special."

Jackson said she realizes that as a student of color, there is a demand to be involved in campus activities.

"It's sometimes hard to manage your time between academics and campus involvement," Jackson said. "School can take the back burner to other commitments."

Despite all of the time Jackson puts into her academic and workload, she remains positive.

"I really do enjoy what I do. I have a passion for helping people," Jackson said. "Sure there are times when things get stressful and overwhelming, but when students or my employers say I did a good job on something, I want to push harder."

Jackson is the daughter of Dora and Willard Robinson Jr. She is a 1998 graduate of Leavenworth High School.

## Scholarship deadline approaching

By Steven Cooke

19th PAD

Many Soldiers and military families know Army Emergency Relief can be a great place to turn for help when in times of crisis, but what they may not know is AER can also be of assistance at other times as well.

AER offers financial assistance for undergraduate study for dependent children of Soldiers on active duty, retired, deceased while on active duty or in retired status, and in some cases, reservists.

The AER's Maj. General James Ursano Scholarship Fund is for students who study at undergraduate, technical or vocational institutions accredited by the U.S. Department of Education or for preparation for the service academies. The scholarship funds may be used for education costs, including tuition, books, fees and room and board while attending full-time.

"The scholarships are awarded based on financial need, academic achievements and leadership experience, including paid jobs," said Rosamond Pariseau, education program manager, AER.

Pariseau said this academic year AER awarded 2,800 students \$2.9 million in scholarship money. The average scholarship was \$1,465.

There are criteria students must meet, other than being a military dependent.

A student applying for the 2004-2005 academic year may not reach their 23rd birthday before June 1, 2005. The student must be unmarried and registered in the Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System.

Dependents of Reserve retirees or active duty reservists in the Gray Area Retiree status are also eligible.

forget to send important documentation when applying, which often disqualifies them.

"People should make sure all documents are completed and signed," said Pariseau. "They should make sure they include official school transcripts, the student aid report and military orders."

The military orders, Pariseau said, should state the military sponsor's current military status.

Pariseau also said families should read all instruction carefully and mark calendars with deadlines.

To obtain an application by mail, families may forward their request to Army Emergency Relief, MG James Ursano Scholarship Fund (RTD), 200 Stovall Street, Alexandria, VA 22332. The AER website address is [www.aerb.org/Children\\_Main\\_e\\_duation.htm](http://www.aerb.org/Children_Main_e_duation.htm)

AER also provides college information and other financial aid resources on their website, [www.aerb.org/education\\_collegelinks.asp](http://www.aerb.org/education_collegelinks.asp)

## Servicemembers can win RV vacations

Army News Service

Servicemembers can win a two-week RV vacation through a contest which ends Dec. 31.

The RV Reunion Tour contest will award four grand prizes worth over \$20,000 to servicemembers and women who submit essays with the most compelling stories about the family and friends they would most like to reunite with during an RV vacation.

Each grand-prize winner will receive a two-week vacation in a Class A (bus style) motor home.

Everyone who enters the contest will be provided with a voucher for \$50 to be used toward RV travel.

The RV Reunion Tour contest is sponsored by the military services' Morale, Welfare and Recreation offices and GovArm.com.

MWR provides quality support and recreational services that contribute to the retention, readiness, and mental, physical and emotional well being of its servicemembers and women.

GovArm.com is a travel cooperative of MWR that provides leisure travel discounts for government and military personnel.

## Filling out absentee voting paperwork must be done early

By Christopher Selmek

19th PAD

The Federal Voting Assistance Program yearly delivers support to Soldiers seeking information and materials in order to establish themselves as an absentee voter and to make their vote, but the program is attracting extra attention this year because of the presidential primaries coming up in 2004.

According to Lt. Jamie Peer, installation voting officer, preparations are now being made for the 2004 voting season, which will include adequate training for voting officers in every unit, company and detachment on post.

"Every company and detachment will have at least one primary and one alternate voting assistance officer," she said. "They will be the point of contact for voting issues, and they will also have voting applications available."

These assistance officers, who must be above the rank of 1st lieutenant or sergeant 1st class and appointed by the commander, will attend a workshop conducted by representatives of the FVAP on April 6. The main topic of interest to those attending the meeting will be the correct way to fill out an SF-76.

"An SF-76 is a Federal Post Card Application," said Peer. "This is the application to get an absentee ballot, and although it is accepted by every state, every state has different laws related to the correct way to fill one out. Some states require you to give a formal oath, which the voting assistance officer will then take and sign on the correct line."

The completed application will then be sent to the state and county to which the Soldier is registered, who will mail the proper voting forms as soon as they become available.

In addition to having different laws on the procedure to file the application, states also differ on their state government elections, as well as the presidential primaries.

"Every state has a different primary election timeline," said Peer. "Unfortunately, some of

them are beginning in January, which is why we are trying to get this form out as quickly as possible in order to allow people to participate. The reason the workshop isn't until April is because this is an Army-wide program, and the FVAP has to go through every installation overseas and in Europe before they get to us."

Federal laws establish strict standards for when the forms must be made available, as well as for who receives them. The forms must be mailed by Sept. 15, to allow adequate time for the voting form to reach the Soldier and return.

"By Jan. 15, we have to ensure in hand delivery of this form to every Soldier and family member over 18-years-old who wants one," she said. "It is also illegal for commanders to march Soldiers to something like this. All they can do is encourage, but they can't force anyone to participate."

Although commanders cannot legally force their Soldiers to complete the form, Peer urges initiative programs and incentives to get as many voters as possible.

"Voting Registration Month will be August this year, when we will try make everyone most aware of how to get the forms," she said. "Armed Services Voting Week will be Sept. 3 - 11. Although we can't keep an accountability by name, I encourage commanders to keep track of how many people are voting, based on number, and offer some kind of incentive for the unit with the highest percentage of voting Soldiers."

Peer highly encourages all Soldiers to vote in the coming election.

"In the last election, the decision in Florida was decided by only a few votes, and they were waiting for overseas ballots to come in," she said. "Had those Soldiers not voted, the election might have turned out differently."

"It's definitely important that we vote," she said. "As members of the military, so much of what goes on in politics affects our professions. If you don't vote, I don't think you have a right to complain. No one should waste the opportunity to change things."

# Watching, listening for suicide signs everyone's responsibility

**Myth: "The people who talk about it don't do it."**

According to Dr. Jules Asher, National Institute of Mental Health, studies have found that more than 75 percent of all completed suicides did things in the few weeks or months prior to their deaths to indicate to others that they were in deep despair. "Anyone expressing suicidal feelings needs immediate attention," said Asher.

**Myth: "Anyone who tries to kill himself has got to be crazy."**

"Perhaps 10 percent of all suicidal people are psychotic or have delusional beliefs about reality. Most suicidal people suffer from the recognized mental illness of depression; but many depressed people adequately manage their daily affairs," said Lucy Davidson, MD, EdS, Director of Education and Prevention Practice at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

"The absence of "craziness" does not mean the absence of suicide risk," said Davidson.

"Those problems weren't enough to commit suicide over," is often said by people who knew a completed suicide. Davidson said you cannot assume that because you feel something is not worth being suicidal about, that the person you are with feels the same way. It is not how bad the problem is, but how badly it's hurting the person who has it.

According to Asher, suicidal behavior is a cry for help.

**Myth: "If a someone is going to kill himself, nothing can stop him."**

The fact that a person is still alive is sufficient proof that part of him wants to remain alive. Asher said the suicidal person is ambivalent - part of him wants to live and part of him wants not so much death as he wants the pain to end. It is the part that wants to live that tells another "I feel suicidal." "If a suicidal person turns to you it is likely that he believes that you are more caring, more informed about coping with misfortune, and more willing to protect his confidentiality. No matter how negative the manner and content of his talk, he is doing a positive thing and has a positive view of you," said Asher.

"Be willing to give and get help sooner rather than later.

"Suicide prevention is not a last minute activity," said Davidson. "All textbooks on depression say it should be reached as soon as possible. Unfortunately, suicidal people are afraid that trying to get help may bring them more pain: being told they are stupid, foolish, sinful, or manipulative; rejection; punishment; suspension from school or job; written records of their condition; or involuntary commitment. You need to do everything you can to reduce pain, rather than increase or prolong it. Constructively involving yourself on the side of life as early as possible will reduce the risk of suicide," she said.

**Listen.**

"Give the person every opportunity to unburden his troubles and ventilate his feelings," said Asher. "You don't need to say much and there are no magic words. If you are concerned, your voice and manner will show it. Give him relief from being alone with his pain; let him know you are glad he turned to you. Patience, sympathy, acceptance. Avoid arguments and advice giving," said Davidson.

**ASK: "Are you having thoughts of suicide?"**

**Myth: "Talking about it may give someone the idea."**

According to Davidson, people already have the idea; suicide is constantly in the news media. "If you ask a despairing person this question you are doing a good thing for them: you are showing him that you care about him, that you take him seriously, and that you are willing to let him share his pain with you," said Davidson. "You are giving him further opportunity to discharge pent up and painful feelings. If the person is having thoughts of suicide, find out how far along his ideation has progressed.

"If the person is acutely suicidal, do not leave him alone," she said.

"If the means are present, try to get rid of them. Detoxify the home. Urge professional help.

"Persistence and patience may be needed to seek, engage and continue with as many options as possible," said Davidson. "In any referral situation, let the person

know you care and want to maintain contact."

**No secrets.**

According to Asher, it is the part of the person that is afraid of more pain that says "Don't tell

anyone." It is the part that wants to stay alive that tells you about it.

Asher suggests people respond to that part of the person and persistently seek out a mature and compassionate person with whom you can review the situation.

"Do not try to go it alone. Get

help for the person and for yourself. Distributing the anxieties and responsibilities of suicide prevention makes it easier and much more effective," said Asher.

**Compiled from the American foundation for suicide prevention and staff reports.**

## SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS

### Conditions associated with increased risk of suicide

- Death or terminal illness of relative or friend.
- Divorce, separation, broken relationship, stress on family.
- Loss of health (real or imaginary).
- Loss of job, home, money, status, self-esteem, personal security.
- Alcohol or drug abuse.
- Depression. In the young depression may be masked by hyperactivity or acting out behavior. In the elderly it may be incorrectly attributed to the natural effects of aging. Depression that seems to quickly disappear for no apparent reason is cause for concern. The early stages of recovery from depression can be a high risk period. Recent studies have associated anxiety disorders with increased risk for attempted suicide.



### Emotional and behavioral changes associated with suicide

- Overwhelming Pain: pain that threatens to exceed the person's pain coping capacities. Suicidal feelings are often the result of longstanding problems that have been exacerbated by recent precipitating events. The precipitating factors may be new pain or the loss of pain coping resources.
- Hopelessness: the feeling that the pain will continue or get worse; things will never get better.
- Powerlessness: the feeling that one's resources for reducing pain are exhausted.
- Feelings of worthlessness, shame, guilt, self-hatred, "no one cares". Fears of losing control, harming self or others.
- Personality becomes sad, withdrawn, tired, apathetic, anxious, irritable, or prone to angry outbursts.
- Declining performance in school, work, or other activities. (Occasionally the reverse: someone who volunteers for extra duties because they need to fill up their time.)
- Social isolation; or association with a group that has different moral standards than those of the family.
- Declining interest in sex, friends, or activities previously enjoyed.
- Neglect of personal welfare, deteriorating physical appearance.
- Alterations in either direction in sleeping or eating habits.
- (Particularly in the elderly) Self-starvation, dietary mismanagement, disobeying medical instructions.
- Difficult times: holidays, anniversaries, and the first week after discharge from a hospital; just before and after diagnosis of a major illness; just before and during disciplinary proceedings. Undocumented status adds to the stress of a crisis.

## Holiday Tours continued from page 9

is participating, and people will be getting to see almost every type of floor plan of the historic homes."

The tour was more than looking at the historical homes, it helped to give decorating ideas to the visitors also.

"Other than learning some history about the homes and getting to see how they are built, they will get to see the same house where

two different ladies have decorated it in different ways," Jones said.

The visitors agreed.

"I'm attending because I wanted to learn a little more about the history of Fort Riley by looking at the historic homes, as well as to see some of the decorations," said Robin Blanton. "It's always fun to get other decorating ideas from other people."

Some of the residents felt it was a good opportunity to showcase to the public what Fort Riley has to offer to its Soldiers.

"I think the housing here is far and above the oldest and largest quarters we have ever lived in. Some of the housing on other posts we were at were historical, but they were not as big or as grand as this one, said Diane Hardy, resident, Fort Riley. "The

whole post is so historical that I think it is one of the reasons that makes it fun. This isn't our house and I want people from the surrounding communities to see this house - I want to sell Fort Riley to anybody that wants to come and see it, and this is a good way to showcase what this post has to offer," she said.

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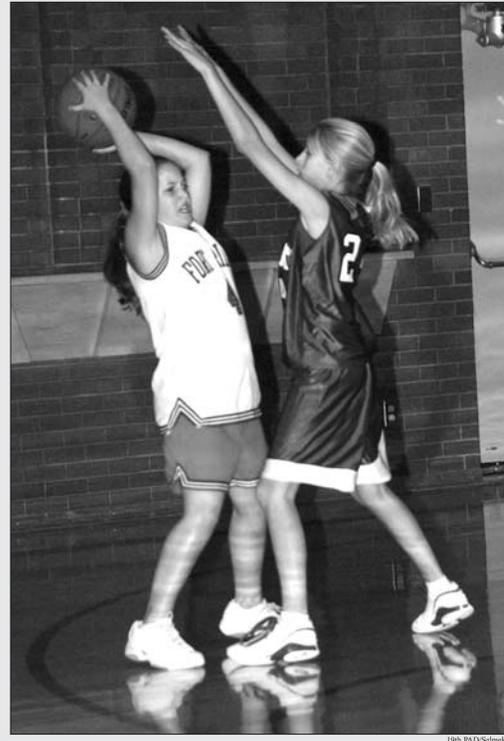
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# Fort Riley Sports

December 19, 2003

America's Warfighting Center

Page 11



Fort Riley Trooper Stephanie Socorro attempts to hold the ball away from Junction City Wildcat Kayla Galloway during a Middle School basketball game.

## Wildcats beat Troopers in C team basketball

By Christopher Selmek  
19th PAD

The Junction City Middle School Wildcats 'C' team smashed the Fort Riley Middle School Troopers 'C' team 10-35 Thursday during a game at Fort Riley Middle School.

Because of a large number of participants, Fort Riley Middle School utilized both gyms, playing two games back to back in each to ensure everyone could participate.

The rules in Middle School basketball differ slightly from regulation basketball, mainly in that the game is broken up into four quarters of six minutes each, instead of the usual division into halves.

"That's the way it's always been," said McCay Tuttle, referee for the game. "High school has eight minute quarters, but middle school has only six. Also, only six players line up for free throws, as opposed to eight."

The game opened with a quick basket for the Wildcats, but the Trooper defense managed to hold them back for three minutes until they were able to even up the score.

Unfortunately the game would not be tied for long. The Wildcats scored again with a minute and twenty left on the clock, and several seconds later, Wildcat Ashley Brown made an impressive layup off of a rebound. With only 10 seconds to go, Wildcat Megan Butler jogged down the court, racing ahead of the defense and scoring an easy basket, finishing the quarter at 2-8.

"I had heard that the Junction City team was really good," said Trooper Yolanda Reid, "so we're a little intimidated. I think we're doing pretty well, though, so far."

"We need to work on passing," said Ashley Brockman.

The Wildcats nearly sunk the ball in the first 15 seconds of the second quarter, but finally the Troopers were able to break away from the congregation to bring the score to 4-8.

The Troopers attempt at a comeback was foiled, however, shortly after Shannel Johnson was injured and removed from the game. Courtney Farrow made three baskets for the Wildcats throughout the second quarter, finishing up with a 6-16 lead.

"I think we're doing really well offensively," said Trooper Chelsea Stonehouse. "We're okay on defense, but our main strength is our offense."

"We are doing excellent for our team, especially since our record is 0-8," said Wildcat Maile Harris. "We have to run the plays more and hit more baskets, but we are going to win this game."

The third quarter saw the scoring trend continue between the two teams and ended at 8-20.

"We're at least doing better than our last game," said Trooper Chelsea Ayala. "We're getting better at rebounds, improving our defense and taking more shots."

"We give the ball away too much," said Brittany Sharp. "We need to keep our heads up and communicate better on the floor."

See Troopers Page 12

## Play Ball: Soldiers set to compete Dec. 29 - 30 in basketball

Staff Reports

During the holidays the Fort Riley Sports office is sponsoring several basketball competitions on post.

A One-on-One basketball competition will be held Dec. 29 at Kind Field House. Play will begin at 1:30 p.m., and the length of the competition will depend on the number of entries.

All participants must be military and will need to present ID prior to playing. Registration for the event will be held 30 minutes prior to the start of the competition.

There will be awards for first and second place and there will be divisions for men and women.

A three-point shot contest will be held Dec. 30, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. The contest is free and open to military personnel only. Players will need to present ID prior to playing.

Sign up for the event will be held on site at Kind Field House from 1 - 1:30 p.m. the day of the event.

There will be a free throw competition Dec. 30 as well.

The event is at not cost and is open to military personnel only. There will be awards for first and second place and there will be divisions for men and women.

Sign up will begin at 1 p.m. and the competition will be held from 1:30 until 3:30 p.m.

Each participant will be given thirty seconds to score as many free throws as they can.

## Kansas State women's team keeps up winning record, moves on to San Antonio

By Sam Robinson  
Staff Writer

Nicole Ohlde made her 100th consecutive start for the Kansas State Women's Basketball team in Sunday's game against Creighton. The 6'5" senior forward and her fellow 'Cats were able to score 94 points for the third straight game.

The Bluejays were able to keep pace with the number 11 Wildcats during the first half.

Both teams hit the boards, shooting 100 percent from the line and over 40 percent from three-point range.

The 'Cats went into the locker room at the half with a 45-30 lead. This was a narrow margin compared to some of the more recent Kansas State games.

The paint was hot in the second half. Creighton posted 14 points and 22 rebounds in the purple zone, while Kansas State nabbed 28 rebounds and nailed 22 points on their end of the court.

Wildcat Megan Mahoney led the game with ten rebounds and six assists for the game.

Only five of the Bluejays hit the boards, four of which were in the double digits. Senior Christy Nemenam, who posted 19 points, led Creighton.

Ohlde hit 83 percent, giving her 32 points for the day. Kendra Wecker followed Ohlde in 'Cat points.

Wecker moved up to seventh all-time in scoring with her 13 points. She has scored 1,355 career points to date.

The team hit 64 percent overall, which included three-point

hits from six of the 'Cats. "We came out really aggressively," said Ohlde. "We just got to spots on the offensive end and did some good things on the defensive end."

Deb Patterson used the talent of all her players for the fourth game in a row. The 'Cats coming in from the bench kept up the pace set by the starters.

Senior, Amy Dutmer posted three points in her two minutes of play. Guard Twiggy McIntyre posted five assists and nine points, including two from the three-point field.

"Creighton likes to play a certain way and they stay true to that way. We minimized their strengths both offensively and defensively," said Patterson.

Patterson stated that "They had tough decisions to make, whether to guard Koehn, who has been so hot lately, or Megan or Claire. We were good with responding with good decisions."

The 94 - 60 win over Creighton improved the Wildcats' season record to seven and two. The Kansas State women are off until Dec. 30, when they travel to San Antonio for the UTSA New Year's Classic tournament.

"There is a lot of stuff we still need to work on. It is a good thing we have this week to practice and work on some things before we go home for Christmas," said Ohlde. "A lot of things are starting to click."

"Hopefully the more practice we get and the more game situations we get in, we'll be better prepared."



Nicole Ohlde forces her way into the lane during the first half of the game against Creighton.

## Mountain lions may, may not be in Kansas

By Alan Hynek  
DES Biologist

The debate continues. Are there wild mountain lions in Kansas? If not, then what are all the reported sightings? These questions have gone on for many years, not only in Kansas but all over in the Midwest. There seems to be no shortage of myths and legends surrounding these big cats. If you have lived in Kansas for very long, you probably know someone who has claimed to see one. On one hand, if all of the stories were true, why is there no solid proof? On the other hand, there are a fair number of witnesses, which by all accounts, should know what they have seen.

Mountain lions (also known as cougars or pumas) are large, slender cats with a small head and a long, heavy tail. They may weigh up to 150 pounds and are normally tan to orange in color. Mountain lions prefer dense vegetation and will rely on wooded riparian areas for travel. Young males have been known to move up to 400 miles in search of an area not already inhabited by another mountain lion. An established territory may be 100 square miles or more (about two-thirds the size of Fort Riley).

Little is known about the habits of mountain lions in the Great Plains. Records indicate that they were found throughout Kansas and were even common in some parts of the state. They seemed to be most abundant in the rugged Red Hills and Chautauqua Hills area of south central Kansas. The last confirmed mountain lion in Kansas was taken in 1904 in Ellis County. Deer make up about 80 percent of their diet and mountain lions may kill up to one per day. They have also been found to consume rats, rabbits, coyotes and bobcats. One strange item on their menu is a particular fondness for porcupines.

Wild individuals have been documented recently in states that border Kansas. The closest recent sighting was in 2000 in Howard County, Neb., about 200 miles north of Fort Riley. There have been 11 confirmed mountain lion sightings in Nebraska since the early 1990s, mostly in the western part of the state. In five of those cases, the animal was either shot or found dead. The most recent sighting was from a trail master camera set up to take pictures near a deer feeder. Imagine the surprise that hunter had when those pictures were developed.

The state of Missouri has had five confirmed sightings of free ranging mountain lions since 1994. Prior to that, the last confirmation was in 1927. Unlike Nebraska, which borders states with resident populations, the cats found in Missouri are a bit of a mystery. The closest known resident population to Missouri is in Texas. It is unclear of the origin of the Missouri cats, although it

See Lions Page 12



# ITR

## Kansas City Chiefs Playoff tickets

The excitement continues as the Chiefs aim toward the Super Bowl. As of this date, it is possible for the Chiefs to participate in one or two playoff games at Arrowhead Stadium. There are a limited number of tickets that will be available through ITR, building 6918. Entries for an opportunity to purchase playoff tickets will be accepted through Dec. 24, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. There is a limit of two tickets per Active Military, Activated National Guard and reservists. Any remaining tickets will be available Dec. 29 to military retirees and DoD civilians. Tickets are \$90 or \$105, to include ticket and transportation. For further information, call ITR at 239-5614.

## Ski Colorado Tour

Join ITR for SnoFest Jan. 30 - Feb. 1. Snofest features much more than world-class skiing and snowboarding -- There will be fabulous lodging, parties, giveaways, races, hilarious cardboard derby, sleigh rides, tubing, ice-skating and more. Even tours and shopping for the non-skiers will be available -- All at heavenly discounted prices. Friday night's after-ski party

and Saturday night's party will be held in the 100,000-square foot Keystone Conference Center.

A performance by Tops In Blue, the Air Force's premier traveling variety show will be showcased on Friday and Saturday.

Non-skiers are an important part of SnoFest! On Friday and Saturday go to Silverthorne Outlet Mall or to Breckenridge for shopping and sightseeing. A mine tour and the International Ice Sculpture Contest and Festival will also take place.

In addition, on Friday an optional tour will go to the Hot Sulphur Springs Resort and Spa will be offered and on Saturday, a tour will visit the Glenwood Springs Hot Springs and Vapor Caves. The tour cost is \$120 for BOSS members (Better Opportunity for Single Soldiers) and \$200 for other military ID card holders, to include retirees and DoD civilians.

Limited space, a deposit of \$50 is due by Dec. 29. The cost includes transportation, two night's accommodations and admission to the Saturday night after-ski party.

## K-State Men's Basketball

Complimentary tickets are available through ITR. See the K-

State Wildcats vs. Bethune-Cookman, Dec. 22, at 7 p.m., at Bramlage Coliseum, K-State University. Limited tickets available.

## MWR Bus

The MWR Bus is available for rent for Command & unit functions, Hall & Farewell's, Family Readiness Groups, retiree groups, church groups and Fort Riley private organizations. Call ITR for further information.

## Armed Forces Vacation Club

AFVC is a "Space Available" program that offers condominium vacations at resorts around the world for only \$249 per unit per week. If you enjoy off-season activities in popular locations without the hassle of high-season prices and crowds, the AFVC offers an incredible vacation value. Call or stop by for further information.

## Santa Suit Rental

Stop by ITR and rent a special ensemble for that special person for your unit, FRG or organizational holiday party. New this year are EIF Suits for Santa's special

helpers. Limited availability.

## KCI Roadrunner

The KCI Roadrunner provides door-to-door service from home to the airport. Let ITR make your reservations. Commissions are paid back to Fort Riley's Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs.

## McCain Auditorium

There are military discounts for upcoming performances at McCain Auditorium, Kansas State University, Manhattan.

There is a limit of two discount tickets per ID. Schedule of performances includes: Feb. 6-Giselle (Moscow Festival Ballet), Feb. 14-The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Feb. 26-Moscow State Radio Symphony, Mar. 4-Rigoletto, Mar. 7-The Importance of Being Earnest By Oscar Wilde, Mar. 14-Lunasa (Irish Folk music for St. Patrick's Day), Apr. 17-Regina Carter Quintet. Stop by ITR for brochure and further information.

## Military Salutes

Many theme parks, regional attractions and vacation destinations will salute the military with

free admissions and deep discounts through late fall and early winter. Stop by ITR for additional information and low rates for hotels near those attractions.

## Holiday Military Appreciation Day

Stop by ITR today or Monday through Wednesday to get an additional 50 cent savings on movie tickets for Carmike Cinemas in Manhattan. Tickets are only \$5 and are a great holiday gift idea.

Stop by and pick up information on ski and all-inclusive packaging, cruises and lots more.

The Information, Ticketing and Registration Office is located in building 6918 (across from the PX).

The hours of operation are: Monday - Friday, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. The office is closed Saturday, Sunday and on federal holidays.

For further information, call ITR at 239-5614 or 239-4415.

Check out the Department of the Army Leisure Travel website, [www.offdutytravel.com](http://www.offdutytravel.com), for more great deals on travel. ITR services and discount attractions tickets are available to active duty military, retirees, National Guard, Reservists, Department of the Army civilians and family members.

## Troopers continued from page 11

The final quarter began with a long shot by Farrow, and passed into the hands of Carolyn Jackson, who made the next three shots. The game ended 10-35; Wildcats.

"They did really well," said Wildcat Brittany Eliot, congratulating the opposing team. "There were a lot of steals, and our own plays ran really well. We're going to have to work on making our shots better. It feels good to win, though. We were just up to it."

"We need to work on our defense," said Trooper Stephanie Socorro. "If we can do that, we'll come back and win the next game. All we need to do is try harder."

## Employee of the Quarter

Tina Knowles was selected as the Public Works' Employee of the Quarter for the 4th Quarter, FY 03. Knowles serves as a telecommunicator for the Fire Department. She was judged on customer care, professionalism, and teamwork. Knowles is always willing to go the "extra mile" to help a customer or one of her co-workers out. Recently, the primary computer in the dispatch office "crashed," leaving about one week's worth of reports to be entered. When the computer was restored, Knowles spent countless hours making sure that all the vital information was brought up to date and re-entered into the computer properly. Knowles will receive a letter of appreciation, time off award, beverage cup with the PW logo, reserved parking place and an invitation to the Blue Chip Social.

## Lions continued from page 11

is a possibility that at least some were captive animals turned loose. Most of the documented sightings in Missouri have been in the southern part of the state near Arkansas.

Considering the recent sightings in surrounding states, it is

probably just a matter of time before a mountain lion is confirmed in Kansas. Some things we do know however, are that the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is not in the business of releasing mountain lions in the state, despite the tenacity of this

urban legend. Another is the occasional black panther story. Such black cats do exist in the wild, but are melanic phases of jaguars and leopards.

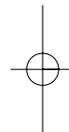
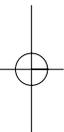
While it is unlikely that a mountain lion resides in the Fort Riley area, it certainly is a possi-

bility. The one thing that is more rare than mountain lions is proof.

If in fact you do find possible evidence, contact the Directorate of Environment and Safety Conservation Office, 239-6211, or stop by building 1020.

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# Toy march brings Soldiers, children, families together for good cause

By Ryan D. Wood  
19th PAD

Christmas took a twist on Wednesday as students from Fort Riley elementary schools and Soldiers and family members from 70th Engineering Battalion gave Santa toys for Christmas.

The event, the Eighth Annual Operation Santa Claus Toy March, was a change from the traditional toy march of years past, as most of the Soldiers from the unit are currently deployed.

Not wanting to let down the families in need, students from local schools and family members of the deployed Soldiers banded together to gather toys and make the traditional march from the 70th Eng. Bn. headquarters building to the Operation Santa Claus headquarters.

The group started off small with a gathering of Soldiers and family members in front of the battalion headquarters building. Col. Thomas G. Luebker, assistant division commander (support), 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) and Fort Riley, was on hand for the march and took a moment to talk to the families and troopers about how special what they were about to do really was.

"We started this toy walk eight years ago," said Luebker.

"Operation Santa Claus was started twenty years ago by a non-commissioned officer. In 1994, the 70th Engineer Battalion, the



Smiles and good spirits reigned as Santa, Soldiers, family members and children from local elementary schools gathered for the eighth annual Toy March Wednesday.

Kodiaks, took over Operation Santa Claus. Now Operation Santa Claus raises over \$50,000 in toys and shares those toys throughout Kansas, and that is really a wonderful thing. You need to understand that because all of that started here in this great outfit," he said.

Led by Saint Nick and the battalion colors, the group moved out onto the road for the half-mile march.

Over 160 smiling children soon met the group, each clutching a

gift that they were going to donate. Santa greeted each group of laughing, cheering children with a hearty "ho, ho, ho!" and with each passing yard, the train of festive givers grew until the combined group stretched out for nearly 100 yards.

Jean Rafalko, school coordinator for the Toy March, said that each child was carrying at least one toy for donation and that, with the large number of deployed parents, this march was very special for the children involved.

"They really looked forward to coming and participating in this," she said.

"When I called them down to load the buses, I could hear them screaming, so I know that they were really excited. I just think that this is something wonderful that the children can participate in."

After reaching the Operation Santa Claus headquarters, each person stepped to the toy vault and handed their donation to the volunteers staffing the event.

After all was said and done, the combined march brought in 275 toys, with an approximate value of \$1,400.

Further donations for Operation Santa Claus will be accepted until Dec. 24, the last day of the event.

Anyone wishing to donate should call 239-6944 for more information.



Col. Thomas G. Luebker, assistant division commander (Support), 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) and Fort Riley, got a little help from Santa greeting the group of more than 150 children who participated in this year's Toy March.

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**Little Apple New Year's**

Celebrate New Year's Eve in Manhattan on Moro Street in Aggieville. On Dec. 31, the "Little Apple" will celebrate in the spirit of the "Big Apple" with a ball drop and a Tribute to Troops. For more information on the free event, visit <http://www.manhattanfestivals.com/news.shm>

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