

Alaska National Guard armory honor pole restored by original artists, Vietnam veteran and son

Spc. Grace Nechanicky
Alaska National Guard
Public Affairs

The Alaska National Guard's honor pole, which is a monument dedicated to the profound contributions of Alaska Natives to the safety and heritage of the state in the past and present, proudly sits in front of the Alaska National Guard armory here and is seen by everyone who enters the building. This 11.5-foot pole, built by George Bennett Sr., a Vietnam war veteran and rural veteran liaison with Alaska's Veterans Affairs, and his son, James Bennett, was refurbished April 16-17 after 12 years of standing tall in front of the building.

Although this structure bears many similarities to the totem poles of the Tlingit culture, it is considered an "honor pole."

"As an honor pole, it is no longer synonymous with one people," explained James.

The honor pole was originally carved out of red and yellow cedar in 2007 in Sitka by the Bennetts. After some help from friends and family with painting it, the pole was sent to Anchorage by 2008, where it arrived at the Construction and Facilities Management Office building. While the pole was there, retired Brig. Gen. Mike Bridges



George and James Bennett, with retired Brig. Gen. Mike Bridges, restore the 11.5-foot honor pole that sits in front of the Alaska National Guard armory April 17, 2021, on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson after 12 years since George and James originally carved it. The pole was originally built in Sitka and serves as a monument dedicated to the profound contributions of the Alaska Natives to the safety and heritage of the state in the past and present. (Photo by Spc. Grace Nechanicky, Alaska National Guard Public Affairs)

took it upon himself to take care of the honor pole until it reached its final destination in front of the armory.

In 2015, the father-son duo traveled up to Anchorage to cleanse the honor pole during a ceremony. At this time, James also showed his appreciation to Bridges for caring for the honor pole by adopting him into their culture during the ceremony.

"With our culture, we treat it [the pole] as it's a person, a living thing, so I highly respected that," said James.

Bridges also bonded with George over their shared military experiences in the 25th Infantry Division. When he first met him, George was wearing a 25th ID hat from his time in service, and Bridges had his 25th ID deployment patch on.

"That struck up kind of a brotherhood conversation, and then I learned he worked for the VA as well," said Bridges. "That was significant, because I was spending more time working with Verdine Bowen [the director of the Office of Veterans Affairs] and veterans at the time."

Bridges assisted the Bennetts with the restoration of the honor pole April 17. To restore the honor

pole, it was taken down, sanded, and putty was put in the cracks to keep the wood from expanding or growing mold.

"In our culture, we actually don't restore totem poles, because when they fall, they are returning to the land," said James. "We just build them back up again. This isn't a totem pole, it's an honor pole, which is why we can restore it."

Bennett said that the due to the symbolism of this particular pole, restoring it is appropriate.

The different parts of the honor pole incorporate symbols of pan-Alaskan Indigenous regional cultures; the bowhead whale is for the north, the caribou is for the interior, the raven is for the southeast, the masks are for the southwest, and the box at the base that has "ATG" carved into it for the Alaska Territorial Guard is the "spirit box" that holds the names of National Guard veterans.

"The ATG box at the bottom, the foundation of it all, contains the military spirit of those volunteers," said George.

"We look at it as restoring history," James added. "That's really what that pole is all these years later; it's history, telling a story in a language that is very unique to this land."

Army flies gear to Denali for National Park Service

Eve A. Baker
U.S. Army Garrison
Alaska, Fort Wainwright Public Affairs

Towering over the landscape at 20,308 feet in height, Denali is the tallest mountain in North America, making it a popular target for mountain climbers. The goal of the National Park Service is to ensure a safe climbing season for all of them, and the soldiers of 1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment, Fort Wainwright, have provided support in making that happen since 1973.

"We put infrastructure in at the beginning of the season that helps us keep the mountain clean and lets us perform rescue operations in a complicated and dangerous environment. We put camps in at 7,200 feet and 14,000 feet. The Army helps us get the gear in and take it back out at the end," said Tucker Chenoweth, the South District Ranger for Denali National Park.

The most recent base camp setup took place April 22, with the Soldiers and CH-



Soldiers and CH-47 Chinook helicopters from 1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment, based out of Fort Wainwright, provide assistance to the National Park Service in setting up the Denali base camp for climbing season. (Eve A. Baker, U.S. Army Garrison Alaska, Fort Wainwright Public Affairs)

47 Chinook helicopters from 1/52 AV providing assistance. Without their help, the setup would have been much costlier and more time-consuming.

"They've been deployed a few times during the mission, and we had to use local air taxis," said Chenoweth. He noted that the air taxis are more expensive to rent and have a much smaller carrying capacity than the CH-47s, so it takes them approximately eight

trips to bring the gear to 7,200 feet, while two Chinooks can get it all up there in one trip.

"The Chinooks can each take up to 10,000 pounds up to 7,000 feet," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Francois Collard, the standardization officer for 1/52 AV and the individual who coordinated the Army's support for this year's base camp setup mission.

In addition to bringing the park rangers' gear and

supplies to base camp, the Chinook pilots and crew also train in the mountains.

"We have an agreement with the National Park Service since 1973 that allows us to do high-altitude training in the park that we couldn't do anywhere else. Training up at Denali helps us with performance and logistics," said Collard.

The unit is also available throughout climbing season, which runs from May through mid-July,



Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment, based out of Fort Wainwright, and park rangers unload gear from a CH-47 Chinook helicopter at Denali base camp. (Eve A. Baker, U.S. Army Garrison Alaska, Fort Wainwright Public Affairs)

to assist with rescue work. Approximately 1,200 climbers make the attempt each year, taking an average of 18 to 20 days to complete the expedition, though it can take anywhere from 15 to 30 days, depending on weather conditions and team fitness, according to Chenoweth.

Sometimes climbers become ill or injured and require rescue. Though the NPS rangers on site are the first responders, sometimes they also need assistance.

"The Chinooks are one of the few helicopters in the area

that can operate at high elevation. In the event we have problems with our own helicopters, they are a backup to our rescue operations," Chenoweth said.

Though the setup and retrieval missions require precise attention to detail and long days of challenging work in conditions that can be unforgiving, Collard finds it rewarding.

"It's beautiful up there – just breathtaking. It's a privilege for us to be able to conduct our training in such an amazing environment," he said.

WEEKEND WEATHER

Friday



Chance of rain/snow. High: 42F.

Saturday



Mostly sunny. High: 47F.

Sunday



Mostly sunny. High: 54F.

IN BRIEF

Trading the warm sunshine of Southern California for the frozen snowscape of the Alaska Interior, a detachment of Soldiers with the California National Guard's 330th Military Police Company arrived at Fort Greely on March 30, 2021.

Read more on page 5.

Nutrition Corner: Minimizing food waste

Did you know that each family in America generates approximately \$2,275 in food waste each year? Fortunately, there are several steps you can take to prevent wasting food in your household.

First and foremost, only buy what you need. Make a menu for the week, make a list based on the menu and only buy what you need. We often find ourselves going to the store and buying what we think we need or whatever looks good at the

time; however, this can lead to many food items going unused and spoiling.

Bulk discounts can be bad news when it comes to purchasing fresh produce. If you do buy in bulk, have a plan for what you will use it for. Do not rely solely on fresh produce.

Frozen and canned produce are nutritious options that have a much longer shelf life. Keep these products on hand but aim for fruit packed in juice or reduced sugar syrup and low

sodium vegetables. This can be particularly useful here in Alaska. Keep your refrigerated produce (berries, leafy greens, mushrooms, etc.) set at 40oF or below. Plan to use berries, fresh herbs, cucumbers, eggplant, leafy greens, mushrooms and summer squash within a couple days.

If you find yourself with more fresh produce than you can use, make your own frozen food. Cut up your fruits and vegetables,

place in an air tight container and freeze. Be sure to blanch your vegetables prior to freezing. You can also make a salsa, pickled vegetables or a smoothie

Featured Food:
Cucumber. Use as a low calorie snack or part of a meal! They can be eaten plain or as part of a salad.

Featured Recipe - Cucumber Salad
Ingredients:
2 cucumbers, cleaned and

sliced
1/2 cup white vinegar
1 tablespoon sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 small onion
1/2 cup sour cream, sliced

Instruction:

- Combine vinegar, sugar, salt and pepper in a bowl and mix
- Add cucumber and onion
- Chill for one to two hours in the refrigerator
- Add sour cream and serve

History Snapshot: Fort Wainwright’s first power plant



The original plan for Ladd Field included a large, four-story power plant that was located adjacent to the current Building 1562. The coal-fired plant generated power for the entire post initially and relied heavily on civilian staffing for its operations and maintenance. Richard Frank, a young man who came from Rampart to work at Ladd Field in early 1945 remembered working long days at the Ladd power plant. Frank’s job was to help fire the boilers, he recalled, “It was busy shift work, [we]’d work eight hour shifts...I enjoyed it. I didn’t mind the pay; I don’t remember how much I made. But it was work, and it was something that I felt that I was making a contribution.”

The North Post power plant remained in use, even after another power plant was built elsewhere on post, until around 1977 when it was fired for the very last time. It remained vacant for several years until it was demolished in 1985. (Photo courtesy National Archives)

MEDDAC Minute

Important Phone Numbers

Emergency: 911
24 Hour Nurse Advice Line: 1-800-874-2273 Opt. 1
Appointment Line: 361-4000
Behavioral Health: 361-6059
Benefits Advisor: 361-5656
Immunizations: 361-5456
Information Desk: 361-5172
Patient Advocate: 361-5291
Pharmacy Refills: 361-5803
MEDDAC-AK Website: www.bassett-wainwright.tricare.mil
MHS Patient Portal: <https://myaccess.dmdc.osd.mil/>
Health Net: www.tricare-west.com, 1-844-8676-9378

Patient advocate

The Medical Department Activity – Alaska Patient Advocate acts on behalf of all patients and the commander to resolve

problems and implement necessary corrections. Beneficiaries needing assistance, or who have questions about the care received at MEDDAC-AK, can contact our Patient Advocate at 361-5291.

Talk with a registered nurse

Think you should go the emergency room but aren’t sure? Wondering if you need an appointment? A registered nurse is standing by 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help. Call the Nurse Advice Line for your immediate health care needs. The nurse can even book you an appointment if necessary. Call 1-800-TRICARE (874-2273).

Clean out your medicine cabinet

The new year is a great time to check your medicine cabinets for expired prescrip-

tion and over the counter medications. A MedSafe box, located inside the main entrance of Bassett ACH across from the information desk, is in place to securely receive your expired or no longer needed medications.

Over the counter medications

Bassett Army Community Hospital Pharmacy offers beneficiaries the ability to receive free over the counter medications. Items such as fever/pain reducers, antibiotic cream, cold and allergy remedies, lice treatment and vitamin D are available. Medicines are subject to availability and families are restricted to a maximum of four items per week. A full list of medications is available at the pharmacy.

Specialist available

Did you know you can see a specialist right here at Bassett urinary incontinence, overactive bladder, pelvic organ prolapse and fecal incontinence WITHOUT a referral from your PCM? Call 361-4000, option 4, option 1, option 1 to

request an appointment with Dr. Christa Lewis.

Third party insurance

Do you have insurance other than TRICARE? Guaranteed no extra cost to the ben-

eficiary, Bassett ACH is required to obtain a copy of private health insurance coverage from all non-active duty beneficiaries. To provide us with this information, beneficiaries will be asked to complete a DD Form 2569 annually.

ALASKA POST

The Interior Military News Connection

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The Chaplain’s Corner

The Good Shepherd

Chaplain (Maj.) Kenneth D. Gillespie
Medical Department
Activities – Alaska
Chaplain

One of the central themes of the Easter season is the idea of God as our good shepherd. This image is found throughout Holy Scripture, but one of the greatest examples is the twenty-third Psalm. In six simple verses, it paints a beautiful picture of the intimacy shared between God and man, between each of us and our shepherd.

“God is my Shepherd, I shall want.” This speaks to us of intimacy. God is not distant and uninvolved in our lives, but rather walks with

us, leads, and guides us in all things, even hardship. We will suffer in this life, but He promises to endure it with us, as our faithful shepherd. The second part of this first verse, I find the most comforting and difficult to accept—I shall not want; I shall lack nothing.

It is too easy for us to twist this sacred truth to fit within our over-indulgent and materialistic culture of consumerism and to receive it to mean every one of our wants will be given. I shall want for nothing. I encourage you to consider that this is less a statement of God’s provision, and more about our attitude.

It implies a deep trust in God, that He

has provided all that is necessary, and a commitment to not living our lives lost in the desire for things we do not have. To trust that we are exactly where we need to be, and have exactly what we need, and if we do lack something we want, to trust that it is likely for our best that we do not have it. In fact, what most often occurs is the more we get what we want—the more we have, the more we want. Our appetites are often insatiable.

Consider that this statement may mean quite the opposite; that it is a statement more about our attitude than the condition of our wants. We shall want for nothing because we trust that

God, our good shepherd, has given us all we need. Much of the suffering in our lives stems from our own desire for more: more money, more affection, more attention, more toys—always more, more, more.

Attachment to things often leads us to obsession and draws us from God. Being content is our choice, and if we can choose to be content with what God has seen fit to give us, we will find ourselves with much more of the happiness we seek and far more resilient.

The theme of trust is reinforced as the Psalm continues with the promise that “He makes me lie down in pleasant green pastures; he leads me beside the peaceful waters.” Our good shepherd will lead us to places of peace and



wholeness. If we do not trust, we often miss what we have in the here and now. We lose ourselves remembering how green the pastures of yesterday were, how good previous assignments or jobs were.

Likewise, we are distracted by always planning for the future pastures, where will we go, what the next PCS move

might bring. We can become so preoccupied, so anxious, so obsessive about these things that we miss what God is doing with us, in us, for us, and through us, right here—right now. Trust in God, seek to find the green pasture and still waters in your current circumstances—look for your peace, it may be right in front of you.

Aerial survey of Jarvis Creek



Soldiers and Civilian staff from Fort Wainwright worked together with personnel from the Salcha-Delta Soil and Water Conservation District to conduct an aerial survey of "aufeis" on Jarvis Creek April 20. Aufeis, or overflow ice, forms when water is forced up onto the frozen surface of a river and can cause water and ice to spread out from the confines of the river bed, potentially causing flooding. The Army and community have worked together for several years to monitor the creek and mitigate problems in the local communities. (Photo by Eve Baker, U.S. Army Alaska, Fort Wainwright Public Affairs)

Army outlines actions taken across the force to implement Fort Hood Independent Review Committee recommendations

U.S. Army Public Affairs
Fort Hood, FORSCOM, CID, and the People First Task Force are working to address safety and cultural challenges

The Army today announced a slate of actions taken across the force to implement the recommendations of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee (FHIRC), which examined the command climate and culture at Fort Hood and the surrounding military community to determine whether they reflect the Army’s commitment to safety, respect, inclusiveness, diversity, and freedom from sexual assault and sexual harassment.

Notably, the Army is in the process of re-structuring the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command and redesigning the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program to address shortcomings identified in the FHIRC report. Fort Hood’s CID detachment is fully manned with

experienced agents and the office also has access to state-of-the-art software and digital-forensic-examination tools.

In addition to taking actions to significantly address each of the 70 recommendations set forth in the FHIRC report, the Army is working to achieve transformational cultural change by executing initiatives such as This is My Squad, the Army’s first-ever NCO strategy, and the Command Assessment Program, which will ensure that only exemplary leaders are placed into critical positions of trust and responsibility.

“The People First Task Force is driving transformational change for the Army’s approach on the prevention of harmful behaviors that undermine cohesion and trust, particularly sexual assault and sexual harassment,” said People First Task Force tri-chairs Lt. Gen. Gary M. Brito, the deputy chief of staff

See REVIEW on page 4

Worship Services on Fort Wainwright

Good Shepherd Catholic Community

Mass: Sundays, 9 a.m., SLC
Holy Hour Adoration: Thursdays, 6 p.m., SLC
Catholic Women of the Chapel: Wednesdays, 9 a.m., SLC
St. George Anglican Parish
Holy Communion: Sundays, 11 a.m., SLC
Mid-Week Holy Communion: Wednesdays, noon, BACH
Cornerstone Protestant Community
Worship Service: Sundays, 11 a.m., NLC
Protestant Women of the Chapel, Wednesdays, 6 p.m., NLC
Cornerstone Youth, Sundays, 1 p.m., NLC
Congregación Protestante Piedra Angular
Servicio de adoración: Domingos, 1 p.m., SLC
Northern Lights Chapel Nov. 22, 2020
Fort Wainwright Religious Support Office, 353-6112
1051 Gaffney, Unit 10
Southern Lights Chapel (SLC), 8th St & Neely Rd.
Northern Lights Chapel (NLC), Luzon & Rhineland Avenues

REVIEW Continued from page 3

of G-1; Diane M. Randon, the assistant deputy chief of staff of G-2; and G-2 Sgt. Maj. Julie A.M. Guerra. “We expect the redesigned SHARP program will look out for the best interest of our Soldiers and civilians by focusing on prevention, survivor support and holding leaders at all echelons accountable. However, it’s important to note that formations are already acting at the grassroots level by expanding SHARP 360 facilities and testing virtual reality technology. We applaud their initiative and will incorporate their best ideas and practices.”

Army implementation actions

In all, the Army has implemented five recommendations across the force, while Fort Hood, III Corps, and U.S. Army Forces Command have implemented an additional 16 recommendations. Responsive actions taken at Fort Hood and Army-wide include:

Army-wide

- Updated CID policies to require full investigations of off-post Soldier drug overdoses, including determination of the source of the drugs and the extent and nature of the Soldier’s involvement with illegal drugs. The updated policy also requires a full investigation of all suspected Soldier suicides occurring on or off the installation. (Recommendations No. 41 and 42)
- In December 2020, the Army issued guidance regarding missing Soldiers to clarify expectations and responsibilities of unit commanders and Army law-enforcement authorities when accounting for Soldiers who are absent from their place of duty. (Recommendations No. 43, 46 and 47)

FORSCOM/III Corps/ Fort Hood

- The FORSCOM commanding general implemented a policy requiring commanders to select investigating officers from outside a subject’s brigade-sized element for formal sexual harassment complaints under Army Regulation 600-20, chapter 7. (Recommendation No. 13)
- The Department of Emergency Services now provides a brief at each III Corps and Fort Hood company commander and first sergeant course regarding the purpose of military protective orders and how they benefit Soldiers, commanders and units. (Recommendation No. 28)
- III Corps now disseminates a monthly “Teal Hash” message to the force that includes the results of court-martial convictions for sexual offenses. (Recommendations No. 29 and 30)
- III Corps commanders are required to update victims on Sexual Assault Review Board results within 72-hours. (Recommendation No.31)
- Fort Hood’s CID detachment has access to state-of-the-art software and digital-forensic-examination tools. (Recommendation No. 36)
- Fort Hood has reinvigorated its Good Order and Discipline Boards and updated its list of off-limits establishments to protect the safety and health of military personnel and their families. (Recommendations No. 52 and 53)
- In October, III Corps and Fort Hood initiated Operation People First, a year-long effort designed to create trustworthy and engaged leaders, and build cohesive teams; the initiative includes a leader certifica-

tion program. (Recommendations No. 44 and 57)

- The Fort Hood installation commander now leads and directs the monthly SARB process. (Recommendation No. 64)
- The FORSCOM commanding general has authorized senior mission commanders to temporarily leverage crisis-response resources including public affairs, medical, legal, logistics and law-enforcement personnel as needed; Fort Hood has also expanded its outreach to key community groups. (Recommendations No. 66, 67, 68, 69, and 70)

People First Task Force

While the FHIRC report focused on the command climate and culture at Fort Hood, the findings impact the entire Army and more than 1.2 million Soldiers. The People First Task Force is developing multi-

ple plans to address FHIRC recommendations for combating sexual harassment, sexual assault, violent crime, and other harmful behaviors that exist in our ranks across the Army.

- People First Task Force-led efforts to redesign the SHARP program are underway and members expect to present their recommendations to Army leadership soon for review and implementation.
- In March, the People First Solarium brought 100 junior enlisted and officers from across the total Army to the U.S. Military Academy to examine Army culture and the behaviors that negatively impact cohesion and trust.
- The People First Task Force is conducting pilot programs to measure unit cohesion and trust, as well as the effectiveness of programs meant to counter harmful behaviors such

as sexual harassment, at select installations. The assessments include: Soldier interviews and small unit visits; surveys measuring morale and trust in leadership; and analyses of formations’ operations with regard to trust and cohesion, leader-development programs, training awards, legal actions and Soldier separation programs.

Background

The Fort Hood Independent Review Committee unveiled the results of a three-month examination of the command climate and culture at Fort Hood and the surrounding military community on Dec. 8, 2020. The independent review arose from the questions and concerns voiced by family members, Congress, and various Hispanic advocacy groups during the investigation into the disappearance and murder of Spc. Vanessa Guillén.

APRIL 2021

...is the Month of the Military Child

Grit — Determination — Perseverance

Military Kids — Tomorrow’s Trailblazers

Ready Army invites children and teens to join in, learn about emergency preparedness, and inspire Army Families all over the world to get ready for emergencies.

Prepare Strong!

As emergencies affect the entire Family, make your children a part of preparedness planning.

For more information visit www.ready.gov/kids and www.militarychild.org

National Guard security force begins Alaska mission

Staff Sgt. Zach Sheely
100th Missile Defense
Brigade

Trading the warm sunshine of Southern California for the frozen snowscape of the Alaska Interior, a detachment of Soldiers with the California National Guard's 330th Military Police Company arrived at Fort Greely on March 30, 2021.

This detachment is the first element of what will be a rotational force to support the security mission.

The added military police Soldiers will integrate with the military police of the ground-based Interceptor Security Company, 49th Missile Defense Battalion, Alaska Army National Guard, to defend and secure the Missile Defense Complex.

Col. Mike Hatfield, 100th Missile Defense Brigade commander, said the added MP Soldiers were necessary due to national security requirements. The 49th Missile Defense Battalion must achieve the highest levels of compliance and training readiness.

Due to the congressionally directed expansion of the MDC, the 100th Brigade conducted a Force Design Update in 2018 to meet current and emerging requirements. This force management process codified the requirement for added security with the



Soldiers with the California Army National Guard's 330th Military Police Company arrive at Fairbanks International Airport in Alaska, March 30. These Soldiers will integrate with the Military Ground-based Interceptor Security Company, 49th Missile Defense Battalion, Alaska National Guard, at Fort Greely, to guard and defend the expanding Missile Defense Complex. (2nd Lt. Desirae Garcia)

necessary legal authorities to perform the security mission.

"As the ground-based midcourse defense mission continues to expand and evolve, so must the security of the Missile Defense Complex," Hatfield said. "We are pleased to welcome the talented professionals of the 330th MP Company to our extended GMD family. We look forward to incorporating them into our mission and sharing our various experiences for the good of the organiza-

tion." The Missile Defense Complex houses ground-based interceptors. Purely defensive, these highly sophisticated projectiles will be launched on order to intercept and destroy threat warheads inbound to the United States and designated areas. Construction is underway on another missile field to hold additional interceptors in the future. The 49th Missile Defense Battalion MP Company, comprised of all active Alaska Army

National Guard Soldiers, guards and defends this facility.

U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command, in coordination with U.S. Strategic Command, generated a request for forces to augment the organic MP company. The 330th Military Police Company of the California Army National Guard's 49th Military Police Brigade was in a deployment cycle and ready to support.

The mission at Fort Greely is solely site secu-

rity. The 330th Military Police Soldiers will integrate into this mission on a phased approach that will include site-specific training, familiarization and ultimately, validation. The Soldiers will operate autonomously after receiving mission essential task certification by the 49th Missile Defense Battalion.

The 330th detachment left California in February and conducted pre-mobilization training at Fort Bliss, Texas, in March. Members arrived at Fairbanks International Airport and traveled by bus to Fort Greely, some 100 miles southeast in Alaska's vast Interior. All 330th Soldiers followed COVID precautions and were tested and restricted their movements for 10 days after arriving at Fort Greely.

This is the first time many of these Soldiers have mobilized away from their home station, and 2nd Lt. Sidonia Vega, 330th MP Company detachment commander, said her Soldiers are excited about the opportunity.

"Our first impressions were exceeded with the newly renovated barracks rooms," Vega said. "And of course, the snow. Many of my Soldiers have not experienced weather like this. We are excited to learn a new mission, explore a new place and make new connections with the other Soldiers here."

BAH provides options while on-post housing exceeds market standards, expert says

Devon L. Suits
Army News Service

The Army continues to develop on-post housing communities that provide Soldiers and families access to safe and habitable living spaces and other amenities that typically exceed what the service member can afford on the local economy, a housing expert said last week.

The Army's on-post housing inventory accommodates an average of 30-35 percent of Soldiers assigned to an installation, with the remaining living in surrounding communities, said Scott Chamberlain, assistant for housing and chief of capital ventures within the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Housing and Partnerships.

Approximately 1 million members rely on basic allowance for housing, a U.S.-based entitlement at the cost of \$22 billion each year. Soldiers receive BAH



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whether they live on or off post.

The percentage of personnel living on an installation can vary, he said. For example, Fort Irwin, California, is roughly 50 miles away from a neighboring community.

The service created enough housing or government quarters to support approximately 90 percent of its military population.

"BAH enables service members to live off post at a level comparable to their ci-

vilian counterparts," Chamberlain said in an interview. "Aside from a few exceptions that apply to essential personnel, the majority of service members living in the U.S. can choose to live wherever they want."

BAH rates

The Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness receives housing unit rental cost data from multiple sources to determine the largest portion of the military's annual BAH rates, he said.

Each rate is based on a location's median rental cost added to an average price for electricity, heating fuel, water, and sewage. A Soldier's BAH rate is not designed to cover all off-post housing expenses.

To determine each rate, the Department of Defense collects rental rate data for apartments, townhouses or duplexes, and single family units of varying sizes. The department then relies

on "anchor points" to set military housing BAH rates based on a Soldier's paygrade and dependent status, Chamberlain said.

"For example, an E-5 with dependents has an anchor point set for a two-bedroom townhouse or duplex," Chamberlain said. "A three-bedroom, single-family home is not an anchor point until the rank of chief warrant officer three, while a four-bedroom, single-family home is not an anchor point until the lieutenant colonel rank."

The Army's Residential Communities Initiative program, or RCI, is responsible for approximately 98 percent of the on-post housing in the United States, with the remaining 2 percent owned by the Army.

"The Army's RCI program contributes to recruitment, readiness, and retention by increasing the on-post quality of life for service

See BAH on page 6

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Fort Wainwright Family & MWR

Weekly Events

May 1 - 8

1 Youth Sports Registration

May 1 - May 14
8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Register for this sport season! Weeball, Baseball, and Track & Field for ages 3 - 18 years old. Must have a current sports physical on file.

Youth Sports & Fitness, Bldg 3414
Call 353-7713, registration required

4 Preschool Story Time

May 4
11 - 11:45 a.m.

Every Tuesday, join the Post Library for a story and activity! Face coverings are required. Registration is required due to limited capacity.

Library, Bldg 3700
Call 353-2642, registration required

5 Summer Concert Reservations

May 5
Starts at 9 a.m.

Join us for the Summer Concert featuring Brantley Gilbert. Pod reservations begin May 5 at Last Frontier. Reservations can be made in person or over the phone.

Last Frontier Community Activity Center, Bldg 1044
Call 353-7755, reservation required

6 B.O.S.S. Meeting

May 6
1 - 2 p.m.

Join us for an Installation B.O.S.S. Meeting every 1st & 3rd Thursday of the month! You will have the chance to provide your input on upcoming B.O.S.S. events, express quality of life issues on Fort Wainwright, and stay informed!


B.O.S.S., Bldg 1045, Top Floor
Call 353-7648 / 353-4145

8 ATV Safety Course

Registration Deadline: May 8
Event: May 15, 1 - 4 p.m.

Are you wanting to tackle the trails via ATV this Summer? Get certified with Outdoor Rec so you can check out the equipment or join us for a guided ATV Trip. Certification is valid for 3 years. Spots fill quickly, register soon!

Outdoor Recreation Center, Bldg 4050
Call 361-6349 / 361-6350, registration required



MAY 5 // 1-5 P.M.

B.O.S.S. ARCHERY

TAKE AIM AND HIT DEAD CENTER WITH B.O.S.S. & OUTDOOR RECREATION CENTER!

INSTRUCTORS WILL BE ON HAND TO SHOW BEGINNERS & ARCHERS OF ALL LEVELS THE FUNDAMENTALS OF ARCHERY

\$10
INCLUDES: EQUIPMENT AND INSTRUCTION
*FACE MASK & SOCIAL DISTANCING REQUIRED.

TO REGISTER, CONTACT YOUR B.O.S.S. REPRESENTATIVE OR THE B.O.S.S. OFFICE.
REGISTRATION ENDS APRIL 30

*Single Service Members, Singles with Dependents, and Geo-Bachelors eligible for this trip. For more information, contact B.O.S.S. at (907) 353-7648 / (907) 353-4145

wainwright.armymwr.com
@WainwrightMWR #WainwrightBOSS

FITNESS BINGO

May 1 - May 31

1) Pick up your card
2) Work up a sweat
3) Turn in & win

Find more details at wainwright.armymwr.com.



May 1 - 5 workout & win with Fitness Bingo! Pick up your bingo card at the Fitness centers or online at wainwright.armymwr.com.
@WainwrightMWR #WainwrightMWR

BAH

Continued from page 5

members and their families," Chamberlain said.

With an inventory of over 87,000 homes, RCI has built close to 37,000 new houses and renovated 44,000 more in the past 25 years.

"Housing allowance rates for junior enlisted are based on smaller housing unit anchor points," he said.

"On-post RCI houses for junior enlisted are built [or renovated] to a three-bedroom, two-bathroom standard," he added.

"Therefore, the junior enlisted RCI homes provided on an installation are larger and better quality."

Chamberlain added that on-post housing is generally larger in square footage when compared to off-post dwellings. Rental costs for similar sized off-post homes could be considerably higher than a Soldier's BAH entitlement.

For example, a three-bedroom, two-bathroom town-home outside Fort

Sill, Oklahoma, can cost around \$1,300 to rent per month, with an additional \$200 for utilities. A Soldier ranked E-4 and below with dependents receives close to \$900 in BAH each month, leaving around \$600 for additional expenses.

Amenities

On-post housing also offers other financial benefits, such as no or low move-in fees, no credit checks, pest control, trash removal services, a yard and 24-hour housing maintenance, he said. There are also no security or pet deposits, and no associated fees to connect utilities.

Depending on the installation, Soldiers and families may have access to community centers with family activities and events, outdoor playgrounds, dog parks, pools, fitness rooms, and other resident services, Chamberlain said.

Further, if a home were to become uninhabitable, occupants

could also reach out to their privatized housing partners to find an alternative place to stay, either through an on-base hospitality suite or in a paid hotel, he added.

"A lot of our housing had to deal with frozen pipes in Texas and Fort Sill during winter storm Uri in February," Chamberlain said. "We had hundreds of families that had to move out of their homes. They packed their bags and went to hotels, all paid for by our privatized companies."

Grade-based housing

The majority of Army communities are based upon pre-determined, military-grade divisions to allow Soldiers and families on similar stages of life to live in the same area. These divisions include: junior enlisted to junior NCO, senior NCO, company-grade officers, field-grade officers, and general officers.

"These groupings work well, as it helps prevent a sergeant from living next door to the commanding general or their first sergeant," he said.

Some situations might require a junior

Soldier with a large family to relocate to a larger four-bedroom home in a higher-ranked neighborhood. Chamberlain said the family's BAH contributions would be comparably less than the other Soldiers living in the area.

"When we set it up to have a three-bedroom home as our minimum, we understood that we were subsidizing costs for the junior ranks," he said. "We aren't trying to subsidize the cost by charging everybody more money. We just built more homes to provide top quality housing for all

Soldiers." Higher-ranked Soldiers receive BAH rates comparable to local market costs. In contrast, a junior enlisted Soldier could not afford to rent a similar larger home off an installation with privatized housing, he added.

"For service members authorized a housing allowance, living on post is voluntary and members have the option of living where they choose," he said. "I think it's great that Soldiers choose to live on our installations because of all the benefits Army housing has to offer."



GOLD STAR SURVIVORS



April 30, 2021

Military pets at Fort Wainwright can fetch Exchange shoppers \$3,000 in prizes in photo contest

Carina DeCino
Army and Air Force Exchange Service Public Affairs

Everybody thinks their animal companion is the cutest. Now, military pet owners at Fort Wainwright can show off their big dogs or top cats with the Army and Air Force Exchange Service and Hills Pet Nutrition Patriot Pet Just Say “Treat” Photo Contest.

From May 1 through May 31, military shoppers at Fort Wainwright can submit a patriotically themed photo of their pet or pets—whether they be furry, feathered or scaly—at ShopMyExchange.com/sweepstakes for a chance to win \$3,000 in Exchange gift cards.

Two grand-prize winners will receive a \$500 Exchange gift card, while eight runners-up will receive \$250 Exchange gift cards.

“Pets can be a great source of comfort and support for Warfighters and their families,” said Fort Wainwright Exchange general manager Gloria Sylvia. “The Patriot Pet Just Say ‘Treat’ Photo Contest



is the Exchange’s way of celebrating these very special members of the military family—and giving their owners a chance to win an Exchange gift card on the side.”

Entries must include the pet’s name, entrant’s legal first and last name, mailing address, email address, phone number and their local Exchange. Photos must be submitted as-is without computer enhancement. All entries must be submitted online. All authorized

Exchange shoppers 18 years or older can enter, including honorably discharged veterans who have verified their eligibility to shop the Exchange online. Veterans can visit <http://bit.ly/VetForLife> for more information. Complete contest rules can be found at ShopMyExchange.com/sweepstakes.

Entries must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. Central Standard Time on May 31. Winners will be selected on or around June 15.

Safe shopping: Fort Wainwright Exchange continues contactless shopping options for military community

Carina DeCino
Army and Air Force Exchange Service Public Affairs

The Fort Wainwright Exchange makes contactless shopping safe, simple and easy for Soldiers and military families trying to physically distance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to providing safe, sanitized and secure shopping inside the store, the Exchange offers contactless shopping options for the Fort Wainwright community:

- ShopMyExchange.com is always open, including to all honorably discharged veterans who have confirmed their eligibility at ShopMyExchange.com/Vets. Shoppers who use their MILITARY STAR® card receive free shipping on all ShopMyExchange.com orders.

- Curbside pickup allows shoppers to pick up online orders at the Fort Wainwright Exchange without leaving their vehicle. When the order is ready, shoppers can park in designated parking spots at the Exchange, and an associate will bring their items to their vehicles.

- Buy online, pick up in store service lets shoppers pick up their ShopMyExchange.com orders inside the Fort Wainwright Main Store.

“The Exchange takes our commitment to our shoppers seriously, and that means doing all we can to ensure their safety,” said Fort Wainwright Exchange general manager Gloria Sylvia.

“Whether shopping in store or online, the Fort Wainwright community can enjoy peace of mind along with tax-free purchases and military-exclusive pricing.”

The Fort Wainwright Exchange adheres to Department of Defense guidelines and health recommendations, requiring face masks and six feet of distance between shoppers in the Exchange. To further protect military shoppers, the Exchange has placed clear acrylic shields at cash registers and

customer service desks and are sanitizing frequently used surfaces such as PIN pads.

Shopping the Fort Wainwright Exchange strengthens the military community as 100 percent of earnings supports Warfighters and military families. Army and Air Force Exchange Service earnings fund critical military Quality-of-Life programs that promote military readiness and resiliency. In the last 10 years, Exchange shoppers worldwide have generated \$2.2 billion for these programs.

Please Join Us!

Airport Way/Steese Expressway Reconstruction Project

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), under the Highway Safety Improvement Program, is pursuing safety improvements at the intersection of Gaffney Road, Airport Way, Richardson Highway, and the Steese Expressway (GARS) in Fairbanks, Alaska. This project is located at the front gate of Ft. Wainwright at the cross streets of Gaffney Road and the Richardson Highway.

You are invited to attend an online public meeting to learn about project updates. Upon completion of the online public meeting, head over to the online open house to learn more about the project! We've selected our preferred design and now we want to hear what you think about it!

Arctic Community Information Exchange

- **Time and Date:** 6:00 pm Tuesday, May 11, 2021
- **Location:** Tune in to the livestream on Fort Wainwright’s Facebook page

Online Public Meeting

- **Tuesday, April 27, 2021** from 4:00 pm–6:00 pm
- **Project Presentation:** 4:30 pm–5:00 pm
- **WebEx Event Link:** <https://meetdtr.webex.com/meethdr/onstage/g.php?MTID=e896bct148d0f4631773c7172565db0ea>
- **Access Code:** 187 803 9575

Online Open House

- **April 20–May 25, 2021**
- www.GARSreconstructiononline.com

Visit www.GARSreconstruction.com for project information. If you require additional information or have questions about the virtual public meeting or online open house, please contact Josie Wilson, Public Involvement Lead, at (907) 644-2000 or info@garsreconstruction.com.

Project Number: 00021385/NFWWY00245 Airport Way/Steese Expressway Reconstruction Project

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by DOT&PF pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated November 3, 2007, and executed by FHWA and DOT&PF.

The DOT&PF operates Federal Programs without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. Full Title VI Nondiscrimination Policy: dot.alaska.gov/tvi_statement.shtml. To file a complaint go to: dot.alaska.gov/civrtv/titvi.shtml.

The DOT&PF complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Individuals with disabilities who may need auxiliary aids, services, and/or special modifications to participate in this Online Open House and Online Public Meeting should contact Josie Wilson, (907) 644-2000 or TDD number 711. Requests should be made at least 5 days before the accommodation is needed to make any necessary arrangements.

EXPAND YOUR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

with the

Expanded Eligibility Pilot Program

What Is It?

The Expanded Eligibility Pilot Program (E2P2) is a new program that gives military-connected high school students without access to a DoDEA brick-and-mortar school the ability to take up to two online courses through the DoDEA Virtual High School. These courses supplement classes offered at your local school. They must be used toward graduation requirements but can include specialized courses such as Advanced Placement, World Languages, or Career Technical Education.

Who Is It For?

The E2P2 is designed for students whose parents are active duty and stationed in remote locations or who are homeschooled. The program is limited to 400 enrollments per year, so be sure and submit your application right away. Applications will be accepted starting on April 28*. The application form will be at www.dodea.edu/dvs/e2p2.cfm.

Find more information and apply at

www.dodea.edu/dvs/e2p2.cfm

Help your learning program take flight!