

# EL MORRO

SENTINEL  
OF THE CARIBBEAN



Special Women's Empowerment Week 2022 Edition

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US Army Garrison Fort Buchanan held its first "Women's Empowerment Week 2022: Providing Healing. Promoting Healing." from March 6 to March 13, 2022. March 8, 2022, second day of the weeklong events, a Symposium with a panel comprised of distinguished women from diverse Puerto Rican backgrounds, businesses and careers was held at the installation's Community Club and Conference Center. The illustrious panel answered a variety of questions providing a wealth of knowledge and experience. Seen here, panel members display a memento presented to them in appreciation for their participation in the symposium accompanied by the Garrison Commander Col. Tomika M. Seaberry; Garrison Command Sgt. Maj. José A. Banks and moderators: Garrison Public Affairs Officer, Grissel Rosa and Director Human Resources, Ulises Marrero.





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## Col. Tomika M. Seaberry Garrison Commander

### Women's empowerment and a child's voice

It all started with an idea to celebrate "Women's History Month" from a different perspective. A dream came to fruition with the help of multiple women, men, garrison employees, tenants, and members of Fort Buchanan's community. We held meetings where female and male participants provided ideas, contacts, and resources in an environment filled with a camaraderie that resulted in the first (of many) "Fort Buchanan's Women's Empowerment Week: Providing Healing, Promoting Hope." It wasn't a gender-driven event, for females only. It was an inclusive event for men and women about being empowered.

Our weeklong event consisted of many activities that went from a Prayer Breakfast with examples of outstanding women in the Bible to including their testimonies and messages of spiritual encouragement. The festivities continued with a symposium full of trailblazers who shared their experiences and some being the "first females" in their fields. We included a Business and Education Expo with presentations of subject matter experts in various areas and exhibits that brought a variety of options to women to help them make more and better choices in their lives. Let's not forget our Health and Wellness Expo that provided a holistic approach with meditation, visualization, mindfulness, and even a fashion show and Zumba class that energized participants to an initiative that promoted child safety.

In the spirit of celebrating women, our mission was to dedicate an entire week to empowering women. We successfully equipped women with opportunities and resources to have the power to control their lives, expanding their abilities to make decisions based on their own choices and allowing them to have a voice.

It is the same voice women use to speak up for those who do not have a voice because they are in fear, terrified, and silenced by circumstances beyond their control, beyond their age. Sometimes we've been taught that silence would save

us from trouble, but this time it won't. I'm talking about Child Abuse Prevention Month. We just celebrated and recognized women who lent their voices to history to make changes and make this world better, equitable, and safer. I ask the women, and men, of our community to help our children, those who do not have a voice, to take action!

Our children deserve to be in a safe environment where they can strive and become happy, secure, and stable adults. However, child abuse happens primarily at home, where our children are supposed to be safe. If you see some of the physical indicators, I ask you to report them immediately. If a child has unexplained bruises and welts, consistent hunger or poor hygiene, consistent lack of supervision, especially in dangerous activities or long periods, stained or bloody underclothing, among other signs, be this child's voice and report it.

If you see any changes in behavior or emotional indicators, don't stay quiet. If a child is being wary of adult contact, afraid to go home, wears clothing that covers their body when not appropriate, has frequent school absences or tardiness, is unwilling to participate in certain physical activities, or has suicide attempts, be this boy's or girl's voice and report it.

One abused or neglected child is too many. Team, become an advocate, and be the voice for our children. Report any suspicion of child abuse and neglect. I, my command team nor our community will tolerate child abuse.

Just as we celebrated the first "Fort Buchanan Women's Empowerment Week," I hope and pray we all can celebrate and advocate a bright and safe future for our children.

## Command Sgt. Maj. José A. Banks Garrison Command Sergeant Major

### Military kids have their own mission



April holds a special place in the hearts of all military parents and USAG Fort Buchanan's community. It is the time when we recognize our children for their sacrifices and challenges they overcome every day as a member of a military family.

Our Commander in Chief, President Joe Biden, recognizes the sacrifices and challenges of military families on behalf of our nation, especially our military children. He emphasized, "Military-connected children shoulder the burdens of service, facing unique challenges from a young age. They move frequently with their families — leaving friends, schools, and communities behind. They say goodbye to deploying family members, not knowing when they will see them again. Some of these young people endure deployments and separations, spending months or even years away from their beloved parent. Birthdays, holidays, graduations, and other important milestones are celebrated with just a phone call or virtual hug."

Military kids are truly impressive. They live all the challenges of military life. Being part of a military family is just like being part of a military unit. Our children

experience deployments, long separations from their parent(s) while they serve in distant places, PCS moves, changes in schools, living in other countries, adapting to new neighborhoods and cultures, and saying good-bye to friends.

However, there are also some great things about being a military child. Kids at their age, and even some adults, would not have the opportunity to live experiences such as meeting new people and traveling to different places in the world. The resiliency of military kids is remarkable as they learn to accept change and adapt to difficulties growing into confident and strong individuals.

Military kids have their own mission. They serve as an inherent part of their parents' support system. They are not only loyal to that mission but carry it out with great pride. May God continue to bless our Soldiers, Service Members, their Families and above all, our military children. The Little Prince said, "The most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or touched, they are felt with the heart."

To my three wonderful children — Jayden, Aiden and Joseph - Thank You!

# Interview with Lt. Gen. Donna W. Martin – The Inspector General of the US Army

Story by Grissel Rosa, Public Affairs Officer



At the start of 2022, Fort Buchanan was honored to receive the visit of Lt. Gen. Donna W. Martin, The Inspector General of the United States Army. A leader that reminds us of the spirit of Women's Empowerment. A "trailblazer" who paved the way for other females, Soldiers, and civilians, to achieve their professional and personal goals.

## Her visits to Puerto Rico

Lt. Gen. Martin is no stranger to Puerto Rico. When she served as the Deputy Commanding General, US Army Recruiting Command between March 2015 and June 2017, she visited recruiters in Aguadilla. In 2022, she returned to Puerto Rico as The 67th Inspector General of the United States Army. A responsibility she assumed on September 2, 2021. "Not the first time, but as beautiful as the first time that I came," she said. Compared to her visit to Alaska with a temperature of -10 degrees, "to be here in beautiful Puerto Rico, specifically visiting Fort Buchanan has been an absolute joy." Despite the differences in the weather, Lt. Gen. Martin highlighted the similarities of its people. She noted, "I still see the same workforce in Fort Buchanan that I saw in Alaska, that dedication, with committed civilian workforce looking after our Soldiers and families at both places, absolutely superb."

## A trailblazer's "firsts"

Lt. Gen. Martin has been a trailblazer throughout her career. She is the first female Inspector General of the Army, and also served as the first female commander of Fort Leonard Wood and the second female Provost Marshal General/Commanding General, US Army Criminal Investigation Command and Deputy Commanding General of the United States Army Recruiting Command, among other leadership positions. She definitely has achieved great success within the Army.

## A family's sense of pride

As she walked the path that led her to the position she holds today, we asked her what she remembered about the day she commissioned. Her eyes sparkled as she recalled, "The first thing comes to mind is how proud my family was that I was going to be commissioned into the United States Army." She added, "I have two brothers that served, both Non-commissioned Officers." She continued, "I don't know if I ever thought that I was going to join the Army. I went to college to play field hockey. Then, when I realized that wasn't the experience I was looking for, I joined Army ROTC."

When asked how her mother reacted to her decision to join the Army, she said, "My mother has always been on my side. She has always been a person who pushes me to do just a little bit more. Unfortunately, she is no longer with us, but I always know that she's been proud of the decision I made to join the Army. I always looked to make her proud." It is the same sense of pride that Lt. Gen. Martin defines as a feeling that "keeps me going knowing that people are always looking at me as a woman and looking to see what is possible. Therefore, I think I stand as a symbol of what is possible for all young women." When the going gets tough... Don't quit! Don't let someone else steal your victory

Lt. Gen. Martin's military awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit with 2 Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters, Bronze Medal with 1 Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with 4 Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters, Army

Commendation Medal with Silver Oak Leaf Cluster, and an Army Achievement Medal. These awards are important if you put them in the context of a person who was bullied during her high school years when others tried to force her out of her dream. However, her mother insisted, "Don't quit."

The story behind the bullying situation was as follows. "My mother was a person who never allowed me to quit anything, no matter how bad it got. I was one of very few African Americans in my high school band. One-of-three in a hundred-piece band. When I was in junior high, I was a saxophone player. I played pretty well. But when I auditioned for the high school band, I didn't make the band. My mother couldn't believe it so she petitioned our school board to do a blind audition. We auditioned by number. When we did the blind audition, I made the band. Life was tough. I got called every name you can imagine. I was bullied to the point I wanted to quit." Lt. Gen. Martin paused, reflected and remembered what her mother said to her. 'No, you are not going to quit because that would be a victory for somebody else.' She said, 'you never let someone have a victory that is yours.' And that has been my motto. Even when it gets hard and even as I've been promoted in the Army, I learned that everybody is not always happy for you. But again, I hear that voice in my heart that says, "Don't let someone else steal your victory."

## Challenges as stepping-stones to your goals

For a leader who was also the Provost Marshal General of the U.S. Army, serving as the principal military advisor to the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff of the Army, overcoming challenges helped her achieve her future goals and to become a better leader. "I believe that every challenge you overcome makes you stronger. Yes, I have had those challenges. I expect to. Because when you are challenged and you get to a place that you are uncomfortable, that's the time when you can grow. I had plenty of opportunities to grow in the Army. As long I don't let those challenges defeat me or define me, I know I'm always growing," said Lt. Gen. Martin.

## Every person needs a mentor

Having a mentor is essential for professional growth. A mentor is a person who can support, advise, and guide you. A mentor helps you grow as a person. Ultimately, a mentor helps you to become the best version of yourself. "I have a very special place in my heart for a fellow general officer. Her name is Lt. Gen. (Retired) Gwen Bingham. She coached me along the way in assuming this role as a general officer. How general officers behave and what's expected from us. Having that mentorship is essential to show people how to be successful. As a result of her mentorship, I feel a huge responsibility to mentor the next generation. That's the only reason I do what I do. It's because I know that there are young women who want to achieve and they need to be shown how it's done. And that's my responsibility."

## Lt. Gen. Martin's secret for her greatest strength as a leader

The answer was quite simple. "My smile," she said laughing. "I believe one of my greatest strengths is my ability to connect with people, and I do that with a smile. I love people. I love what I do. I think that's my greatest strength."

## A message to the new generation of Soldiers

As Lt. Gen. Martin looks back and reminisces on the lessons learned in her military career, her message to the new generation of Soldiers is,

"Don't give up!" "Don't quit!" The Inspector General of the US Army's advice is "It's going to be challenging. It's going to be hard. But anything that is worth achieving is worth going through that hard spot. So don't give up, work a little harder, seek mentorship, and ask for help. Don't be afraid to ask for help. And then, just go for it! Don't let anybody else tell you how far you can go."

## A legacy, a story and words of encouragement

Lt. Gen. Martin's interview took place within the timeframe of two important observances, Black History Month and Women's History Month. A time to reflect and appreciate the tremendous contributions of both groups to our Nation, society, and culture. Lt. Gen. Martin is an example of the legacy of African American female Soldiers who went above and beyond their circumstances to overcome challenges and turn them into success stories. Her words of encouragement for African American Soldiers, especially females, to keep moving to reach their full potential begin with recognizing previous trailblazers. "I think I stand on the shoulders of giants. There are so many great women leaders who came before me. You had General Dunwoody, who was the first woman to reach four stars. Now you have General Laura Richardson, Commanding General of the US Southern Command, who is also a four star general. It is those women, who overcame and broke great barriers that give me hope for the future. I hope that other women can also see me and know that they stand on my shoulders, and can do whatever they put their minds to."

## People, Readiness, Modernization and Reform

The Army's priority is its people and building cohesive teams that are ready, resilient, diverse and integrated. The Inspector General has a great initiative going on. According to Lt. Gen. Martin, "this initiative is an inspection we are going to start at headquarters Department of the Army called, "The New Soldier Experience." We are going to look into how we are transforming Civilians into Soldiers. We are going to look into those areas that help build readiness of the newest members of our force. During my visits across the Army, we're looking for pockets of excellence, for those cohesive teams where Soldiers and Leaders are all on the same page and really getting after the mission. Therefore, as The Inspector General, I use the inspection teams at major commands to facilitate building cohesive teams and leaders to understand themselves and see themselves."

## My message to Fort Buchanan and my hopes for the future

Fort Buchanan is a vibrant community comprised of Soldiers (Active, Reserve, and National Guard), Civilians, Retirees, Veterans, and Family members. "My message to Fort Buchanan is, it is your diversity that makes you the strongest. It is the combination of not just the Soldiers, but the Soldiers and the Civilians, the officers; it is everybody working together that makes you the strongest," said Lt. Gen. Martin. "My hope for the future is that someday you are not spotlighting others because they're minorities, or they are women. My hope is that one day, I am seeing anyone in my position as another leader -- that we don't have female leaders, but we have leaders. We don't have African Americans who are in these positions. We have people. That is my hope for America, that we don't see the things that make us different, we see the things that make us more alike."





# USAG Fort Buchanan kicked-off “Women’s Empowerment Week: Providing Healing. Promoting Hope.” with a Prayer Breakfast

Story and photos by Grissel Rosa, Public Affairs Officer

The Fort Buchanan Religious Support Office sponsored a Prayer Breakfast, Sunday, March 6, 2022 at the Chapel Annex as a preamble to the celebration of USAG Fort Buchanan “Women’s Empowerment Week: Providing Healing. Promoting Hope.”

The event, attended by members of Fort Buchanan’s community, started with an invocation by Garrison Command Chaplain, Maj. David S. Keller followed by messages from various women representing the community. Each one presented her “Prayer for our Women’s Week.” Starting with Sandra Master, member of the congregation who quoted various chapters of the Bible.

Garrison Commander, Col. Tomika M. Seaberry, shared highlights of the recent visit of two non-profit organizations for foster children to the installation and some of her personal experiences. She recalled talking to her mother about this visit and learning for the first time that her grandmother was adopted.

She told the group what this remarkable woman did and her sacrifices. As a reflection, she said “That’s the power of women, their sacrifice, an empowerment of love.”

Another community member, Neysa Pagán asked for blessings for all women and talked about following the examples of the women in the Bible. She concluded with a prayer for peace in Ukraine.

Rosy Rodriguez, garrison employee and member of the Protestant congregation, emphasized women’s roles as mothers, grandmothers, employees, etc. followed by “A Prayer for Women” by Deborah Hirt.



The Prayer Breakfast concluded with words of spiritual encouragement by Mary Keller, which she titled “Equip, Encourage, Empower.” Mary, who along with Stacy Mandock, led Expo II, Health and Wellness, as part of Fort Buchanan’s Women’s Empowerment Week said “What started as a little idea, grew to the week we will be celebrating,” she added, “We are putting the tools into the hands of women for them to be able to face the journey.” Mary invited the group to “find someone and encourage them this week. Encouragement is how we make people succeed.”





# Fort Buchanan celebrates its first Women's Empowerment Week: Providing Healing. Promoting Hope. Symposium

Story and photos by Rosie Irizarry, Public Affairs Specialist



In honor of Women's History Month USAG Fort Buchanan celebrated its first Women's Empowerment Week: Providing Healing, Promoting Hope Symposium, at the installation's Community Club and Conference Center, March 8, 2022.

The symposium was sponsored by the Fort Buchanan Army and Air Force Exchange Services (AAFES) and was attended by members of the Fort Buchanan community, garrison staff, and tenants to include a group of students from the Department of Defense Education Activity Antilles High School. Present were Fort Buchanan Garrison Commander Col. Tomika M. Seaberry; Garrison Command Sgt. Maj. José A. Banks; Deputy Garrison Commander Lt. Col. Brian Mandock and Acting Deputy to the Garrison Commander Raúl L. Rodríguez. The moderators for this event were USAG Fort Buchanan Public Affairs Officer, Grissel Rosa and Human Resources Director Ulises Marrero-Díaz.

The symposium's elite panel members were, Puerto Rican TV Journalist, Luz Nereida Vélez; Natural Resources Specialist in charge of all the State and Private Forestry Programs in Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, Magaly Figueroa; Bristol Myers Squibb, Analytical Technical Services Senior Manager, Anadellys Plata; Nexus Technologies, LLC, Project Manager Eng. Prudence Ryan; Puerto Rico Secretary of Transportation and Public Works, Eng. Eileen M. Vélez-Vega and US Coast Guard Air Station Borinquen Commanding Officer, Capt. Tina J. Peña.

Garrison Command Sgt. Maj. Banks, welcomed all of the participants and thanked the panelist for their contribution to the event.

"In 1978 Women's History Week was celebrated and later turned into Women's History Month, going from a week to thirty days of honoring the role of women in our society. Today we are going to enjoy ourselves, answer a lot of questions and most important, listen to the trailblazers on this panel," said Col. Seaberry.

The opening question to the panel was, **"How do you describe women's empowerment?"**

"Women's empowerment means something different for each of us. For me it started with my mother, she always said to me, I can be anything I want to be and coming from a modest family from Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico,



my education gave me self-confidence. I became an engineer to resolve problems in the world. Empowerment is not just for me, it is for all. I tell this to my daughter all the time," said Eng. Vélez.

"Throughout the years women have been enclosed, fighting for rights when there are no differences between men and women except for the physical. Women have had to fight for equality, we have to continue. We must eliminate discrimination even, age discrimination. Empowerment is believing in yourself," said Luz Nereida Vélez.

"How do you react and handle questions directed only to women but not men, for example, when women are asked how to they manage their careers and kids. Men are never asked that question."

"I have twin boys and was actually asked this question at work, and my response is it's about always showing what you are capable of and always maintaining values," said Figueroa.

"You build a great team, women were part of the US Coast Guard as light keepers in 1776. We can be just as successful away from home as in the home. If you believe it, know you can achieve it," responded Capt. Peña.

**"How can you make the most of being in a successful position?"**

"I have never let success take over my mind. Being humble is most important. Working hard is key, studying all the time to move as the world is moving. Success comes with hard work, keeping it simple, being humble

and respecting others," said Luz Nereida Vélez.

"Success is being a leader, developing others, empowering others, giving them tools and helping others succeed," replied Anadellys Plata.

"I truly believe as women we are more sensitive to others. We make the most out of being successful by listening, being paused, taking a deep breath and helping others succeed," said Eng. Ryan.

"What would you tell young women who are just starting to work in such important fields of work?"

"Work hard, look for information, value others, forget about stereotypes, be yourself and be passionate. If you are passionate you will be successful," said Anadellys Plata.

"Your accomplishments will only be as big as you are willing to dream," stated Eng. Ryan.

"Self-initiative. Don't wait till someone offers you an opportunity. Internships are very important," said Eng. Vélez-Vega.

"Don't worry about fitting in. Be the best at your job. And know that at some time you are going to get a "no" but if you do, make them tell you "no" again, don't give up, persevere," said Cpt. Peña.

"Don't be afraid of challenging yourself. There are many programs, from college to high school grade levels, offering internships, there you will get valuable experience," responded Magaly Figueroa.

Before presenting plaques in appreciation for their participation in the symposium Col. Seaberry said, "A lot of females in positions have not been invited to the "table," it happened to me. But I didn't get angry, I used my brain and my heart. I used tools to build my own table!"

"This was a wonderful experience. I loved the inspirational words and how much it will impact our careers. I am going to remember this experience for the rest of my life!" said Paloma Baez, a student from Antilles High School.

Following the symposium there was a VIP lunch where participants were able to speak to the panelists in a more familiar setting.





## “Women’s Empowerment Week: Providing Healing. Promoting Hope.” Business and Education Expo provides women variety, options and choices in their lives

Story by Grissel Rosa, Public Affairs Officer  
Photos by Rosie Irizarry, Public Affairs Specialist



**USAG** Fort Buchanan conducted the Business and Education Expo as part of the installation’s “Women’s Empowerment Week: Providing Healing. Promoting Hope.” March 10, 2022 at the Fort Buchanan Community Club and Conference Center. Garrison Commander, Col. Tomika M. Seaberry described the event as, “This little dream is the product of multiple women I’ve talked to since taking command in May 2021. This is about empowerment. This is not a male bashing event. This is a celebration of women and the contributions we have done in the world.” Referring to the “Women’s Empowerment Week” and the “Business and Education Expo,” Col. Seaberry said, “This is the first annual event and we are making history!”

Representatives from over 30 different business and education organizations, including: University of Puerto Rico, Pentagon Federal Credit Union, US Forestry Service, Metro Women’s Business Center, Military One Source, United States Navy, The Mission Continues, Escuela Hotelera de San Juan, Federal Contracting Center; America’s SBDC, Puerto Rico, Inter American University; Dr. Chamir Highley, Rendon Mortgage Bankers, Army Community Services, Bristol Myers Squibb, Universidad Ana G. Méndez, Universidad del Sagrado Corazón, LUMA, Banco Popular, Starbucks, Educación Continua y Estudios Profesionales, UPR, Rio Piedras; The Exchange, US Small Business Administration, Centro Para Puerto Rico, Fundación Sila M. Calderón; Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); ESEDERMIC Institute, PR Department of Economic Development and Commerce; Minority Business

Development Center, U.S. Department of Commerce; Transition Assistance Program and Internal Revenue Service, among others.

These business and education organizations provided information through presentations and exhibits.

Garrison resources such as Ivette Dávila, Employment Readiness program Manager and Certified Career Coach from Army Community Services, supported the event providing information on “How to apply for jobs with USAJobs” and “Interview for a Federal Job.”

The Federal Bureau of Investigation conducted a brief conference on “Violent Crimes and Carjacking”, including helpful tips on how to prevent these crimes and what to do in various scenarios and a workshop on “Balancing Life Being a Female Special Agent” given by Special Agent and FBI Legal Counsel Maritza Conde Vázquez.

The Minority Business Development Agency-Puerto Rico Business Center representative Harold Acevedo

provided a talk on “How to Develop your Business Plan and Start your Own Business.”

The Business and Education Expo concluded with the presentation of Dr. Chamir Highley, subject matter expert in professional protocol who did a presentation on “The Virtual Image of the Successful Professional.”







# USAG Fort Buchanan Health and Wellness Expo provided a holistic approach at the first Women's Empowerment Week "Providing Healing. Promoting Hope."

Story by Grissel Rosa, Public Affairs Officer  
Photos by Rosie Irizarry, Public Affairs Specialist

“Fort Buchanan’s Women’s Empowerment Week: Providing Healing. Promoting Hope.” continued on March 11, 2022 with a holistic approach during the Health and Wellness Expo. During the event, Fort Buchanan Garrison Commander, Col. Tomika M. Seaberry inducted 81st Readiness Division Commanding General and Fort Buchanan’s Senior Commander, Maj. Gen. Jami C. Shawley into the Honorable Order of the Sentinels.



Col. Seaberry also presented Maj. Gen. Shawley the Commander’s Coin expressing her gratitude on



behalf of the Fort Buchanan community “for all your support, and thank you for all you have done for Fort Buchanan.”

“Welcome!” said Maj. Gen Shawley, she continued saying, “This is my most sincere welcome to all of you here. The long hard work to put this together, in my history I have not seen this done here, this is real action. I hope we can do this again. Thank you for showing up with your energy and desire to work it has made this great!” concluded Maj. Gen. Shawley.

The Health and Wellness Expo continued with over 30 representatives from 34 different health, wellness and holistic organizations who provided information through presentations and exhibits.

The presentations were more “hands on” starting with the “Self Defense Workshop” with important tips on how to



manage different situations to protect yourself. “Congratulations during Women’s History Month, for me every day is Women’s Day,” said Personal Defense instructor who provided the self-defense workshop Mitzi Gastón. “My goal is that all these ladies leave here with at least two ways to save their lives,” Gastón concluded.

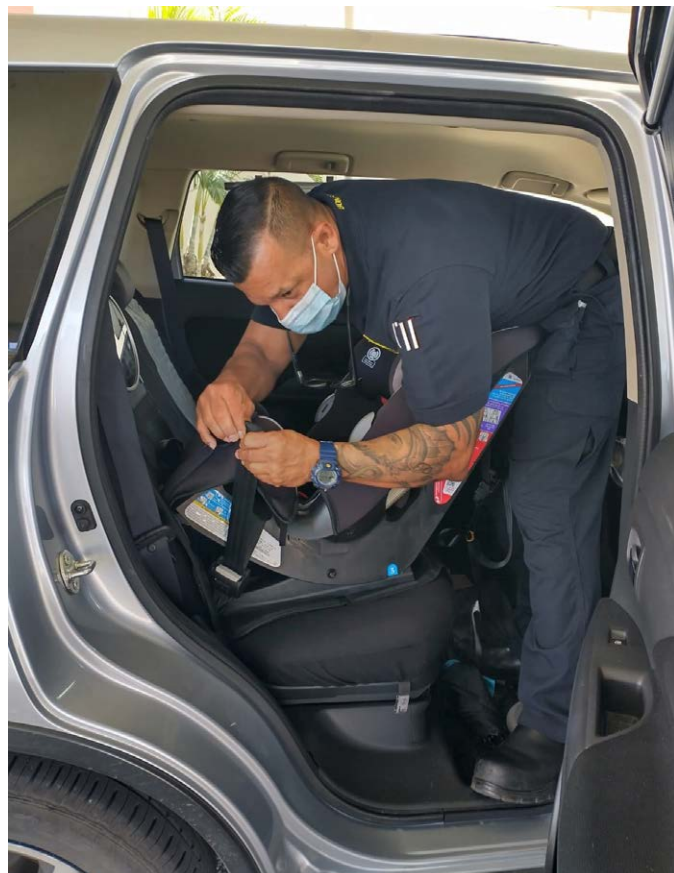
There was a demonstration on “Professional Ethics and Dress for Success” which included a catwalk with garrison employees and members of the community as models in different roles.

Participants also learned to meditate using visualization and hypnosis techniques during the “Mindful Meditation for Stress Relief Workshop.”

The Health and Wellness Expo closed with a Zumba class with an energized and positive vibe that reflected the holistic approach of the event.







## Fort Buchanan Women's Empowerment Week Promoted Child Safety during Health and Wellness Expo with a Car Seat Check Point

Story by Grissel Rosa, Public Affairs Officer  
Photos by the Puerto Rico Fire Bureau Firefighters

**USAG** Fort Buchanan in conjunction with the Puerto Rico Traffic Safety Commission conducted a Car Seat Checkpoint and exhibit table during Fort Buchanan's Women's Empowerment Week: Health and Wellness Expo, March 11, 2022 at the Community Club and Conference Center.

Representative from the Puerto Rico Traffic Safety Commission, Jorge Ferrer Pérez and a member of the Puerto Rico Fire Bureau, Nataniel Rivera Cruz, provided educational material, safety tips and recommendations to those who participated in the Car Seat Checkpoint.

Those who attended the event had the opportunity to



have their car seats inspected to ensure proper installation and use. Among participants were four car seats that were not properly installed.



The team of car seat technicians took the time to educate the parents on the proper ways to install the car seat. According to the PR Traffic Safety Commission campaign, "a car seat properly installed could save the life of your child." The also emphasized that "one death for not using a car seat is too much."



### Join the Fort Buchanan Garrison "Vive Sin Miedo" / "Live Without Fear" Conference

**Date:** Tuesday, 19 April 2022

**Time:** 0900-1100

**Location:** Community Club- El Conquistador

Meet sexual violence survivors and listen to their **testimonies**, learn ways to recover quickly from difficulties no matter the obstacles, understand the principles of preventing sexual violence before it happens and learn new **self defense techniques** that could save your life.

**Guest Speakers:** Rep. Wanda Del Valle; Programa Vive Sin Miedo, Master Victor Rivera; President of XXI Century TKD.



Call or text to  
reserve your seat  
today:

**787-406-4222**

USAG SHARP Office  
POC: Adelina Reynoso



**PREVENTION STARTS WITH YOU**

**Sexual Assault**  
Awareness Month





# USAG Fort Buchanan Garrison Commander participates at PR Veterans Advocate Office sponsored Veteran Woman’s Day event

Story and photos by Grissel Rosa, Public Affairs Officer



Fort Buchanan Garrison Commander, Col. Tomika M. Seaberry, participated in the commemoration of the Veteran Woman’s Day sponsored by the PR Veterans Advocate Office and hosted by the Municipality of Barceloneta’s mayor, Hon. Wanda Soler Rosario, March 9, 2022.

The event, part of “Women’s Week,” recognized various Puerto Rican women in the military and their roles defending the nation “with courage, sense of commitment and responsibility.”

The Governor of Puerto Rico Proclamation read by the Assistant Secretary, PR Department of State, Iraq War veteran and active member of the Air Force Reserve, Félix Lizasuáin, stated that “Puerto Rican women perform multiple roles, including the military, assuming duties on the battlefield with a high patriotic commitment, developing skills and demonstrating their dedication and commitment to the military tasks, both in times of peace and war. This commemoration highlights the transcendental contribution of Puerto Rican women and their extraordinary performance in the various branches of the Armed Forces of the United States of America,” said Lizasuáin.



The PR Veterans Advocate, Agustín Montañez, emphasized that “Currently, around 14% of active service members are female and 17% in the National Guard and Reserve. Therefore, the projection for the next 20 years is that we’re going to have an 18 to 20 percent increase women Veterans.”

Hon. Wanda del Valle Cintrón, member of the PR House of Representatives, who served for 14 years in the Puerto Rico Air National Guard, Security Forces during Iraqi Freedom, highlighted the support of the spouses. She mentioned her husband, who is also a Veteran, and his support during her military career. “Women face a greater challenge when we leave our children (my four children) to support the mission,” she said. Regardless, “there is still a lot to do and being a minority.” She proudly concluded that despite all sacrifices, “It is an honor to serve the United States Army.”

The Mayor of Barceloneta emphasized the exceptional values of female veterans, who “in an exemplary manner served the nation and for decades have faced gender discrimination and obstacles in their goal to promote within the military. It is more difficult for them to reach high-ranking positions within the Army, however, and thanks to their love for defending our rights and the nation, they manage to break through and overcome each challenge by turning it into an opportunity,” said the Hon. Soler Rosario.

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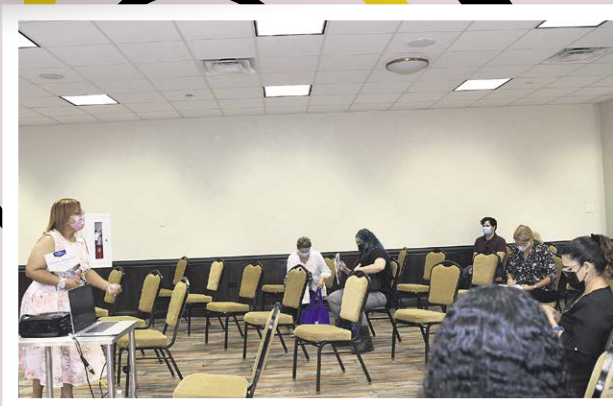


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## Chaplain's Corner

**God will not be stopped by earthly problems**

Column by Garrison Command Chaplain  
Maj. David S. Keller – “Serving with You!”

Recently I was reading a passage of Scripture about Jacob and Esau. If you have read about them, you know that they are polar opposites. Born as twins, it would seem that the only thing that they had in common was their mother. I have a brother like that too. Maybe you have a sibling, parent, child or relative that you might wonder if they are from the same planet let alone your own family.

During a more quiet period of life, I was moved to contact this distant brother. I resolved in my heart that I needed to forgive and forget past hurts and simply take that first step... to make that phone call. Why? Why would I do this? Because God's mercy is unlimited. Because God loves me even when I am obstinate, grouchy, and hypocritical.

With everything going on in the world, the news brings us so much destruction and unrest. Such horrendous events, such evil. It can make us numb. It makes us want to put a blanket over our head and ignore it all. But God, he interrupts all that with the forgiveness, grace and mercy of a loving Father.

Where there is hurt, God heals. Where there is destruction, God builds back up. Where life has taken a turn for the worse, God is our wonderful counselor. Where there is doubt, God offers us his wisdom.

Where there is death, God offers us new life! God's mercy is in all of this.

So when you balance God's love for you, with the divisions and faults you may find in your family and friends, I think it is pretty clear that God's mercy is the greater. So how about this week, this month, show grace to someone in your life who needs it. Read about Jacob and Esau in Genesis 32-33 and ask yourself what changed in Jacob's heart that he would change his attitude towards his brother Esau.

God will not be stopped by earthly problems. When we turn to him in praise and thanksgiving, you might feel that same change of heart that Jacob experienced.

If you'd like to experience the wonder of forgiveness this weekend, please join us for our Protestant services and Catholic mass at the post chapel on Sundays:

**Protestant Service: 9:30 a.m.**  
**Catholic Mass: 11:30 a.m.**

**Search Facebook:**

***Ft. Buchanan Chapel Protestant Service  
or Fort Buchanan St. Francis of Assisi  
Catholic Community*** for more information.

Protestant Service will continue to be live streamed on its Facebook page.





## From your Safety Officer... Home Safety Series: Hand and Power Tools

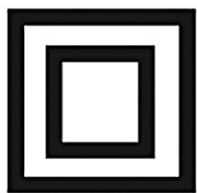
Column by Garrison Safety Officer  
Carlos J. Alvarado

**H**and and Power tools are such a common part of our lives that we can become complacent with the hazards they pose. Hand and power tools account for approximately 400,000 emergency room visits each year. No matter working at home or at your workplace, tool users are responsible for the proper use and maintenance of tools.

### What are some of the hazards?

- Falling and flying objects
- Abrasions
- Splashing objects
- Harmful dusts or fumes, mists, vapors and gases
- Electrical shock and burns

Double Insulated Symbol



### How can you prevent an accident with tools?

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions
- Perform a pre-use inspection. Do not use if damaged.
- All corded power tools shall have a 3-prong grounded plug or be double insulated. All power tools shall be UL listed.
- Maintain tools; keep them sharp and clean for best performance.
- Use tools for their intended purpose.



- Keep fingers away from moving parts.
- Keep all guards in place.
- Secure work with clamps or a vise, freeing hands to operate the tool.
- Be sure to keep good footing and maintain your balance.
- Keep your body outside the zone of operation. The zone should be marked by warning tape, labels, signs, or guarding.
- Do not cut towards yourself.
- Do not use excessive force to cut or drill through hard materials.
- Unplug tools before installing, adjusting and changing, any accessory or attachment. Unplug by grasping the plug.

By following these precautions, you can help prevent injuries and allow you safely complete any projects both at home and at work. Remember the famous words from Benjamin Franklin; "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."



## Your Fort Buchanan Fire Chief wants you to know...

### Building Safety and Fire Sprinklers

**T**o help raise awareness of building safety, the Fort Buchanan Fire Department wants to help our community understand what it takes to create safe, resilient, affordable, energy-efficient homes and buildings.

When our building safety and fire prevention experts inspect buildings and review construction plans to ensure code compliance, they help to ensure the places where you live, learn, work, worship, and play are safe. They work closely with homebuilders, contractors, plumbers, roofers, and other construction industry trades to provide maximum public safety.

Homes and buildings that are built in compliance with building safety codes result in resilient structures that minimize the risks of death, injury, and property damage. Regardless of the department where code officials work — building, fire, planning, or elsewhere — they work hard every day to provide public safety by ensuring buildings are constructed safely. Resilient structures minimize risk of property damage, allowing property owners to pay lower insurance costs and saving millions of taxpayer dollars when rebuilding from natural disasters.

When you enter a house or other type of building, you assume it is safely and properly constructed and that it complies with state and local building codes. Building codes address all aspects of construction, including structural integrity, fire prevention, plumbing, mechanical systems, and energy efficiency. Maintaining building safety requires the active

participation of property owners, code officials, fire inspectors, architects, builders, engineers, contractors, and others in the construction industry.

One of the best ways to keep homes and buildings safe from fire is the use of fire sprinkler systems. Fire sprinkler systems react quickly in a fire dramatically reducing a fire's heat, flames, and smoke. Fire sprinklers can control, and may even extinguish, a fire in less time than it would take a fire department to arrive on the scene.

### Resources:

The following resources are available:

- "Who Needs Building Codes?" pamphlet <https://codes.iccsafe.org/what-are-building-codes>
- Consumer safety tips for your home <https://www.iccsafe.org/advocacy/building-safety-month/safety-toolkit/>
- ICC Media videos (YouTube) <https://www.youtube.com/user/ICCME-DIA/videos84>
- Fire and sprinkler side-by-side burn demo <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1x1S-MmLyJc>
- Fire Sprinkler Initiative, free downloads <http://www.firesprinklerinitiative.org/advocacy-tools/free-downloads.aspx>
- NFPA safety tips – home fire sprinklers <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g73JQ-BFf0vE>
- Free fire sprinkler education materials <https://homefiresprinkler.org/free-fire-sprinkler-education-materials/>

For more information contact the Fort Buchanan Fire Department Prevention Section at (787) 707-3410.



## Garrison Safety Officer safeguards FMWR staff conducts Forklift Safety Training and Certification

Story by Rosie Irizarry, Public Affairs Specialist

Photos by Carlos J. Alvarado, Garrison Safety and Occupational Health Manager

Seven members from the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (FMWR) with the Special Events Division, Outdoor Recreation and Automotive Skills Centers met from March 21 to 22, 2022 at Training Division Classrooms and the Outdoor Recreation Center to receive Forklift Safety Training and Certification.

The FMWR staff that participated in the training certification were from the Special Events Division: Coordinator, Julio A. Capacetti, Adolph Hernandez, Wilkins Zapata, Joel Cruz and Hector “Teddy” Rosado. From the Automotive Skills Center, Facility Manager, Rafael J. Pagan and from Outdoor Recreation Center, José Acevedo.

Garrison Safety and Occupational Health Manager, Carlos J. Alvarado provided the two day training, which covered, classes and designations of Powered Industrial Trucks (Forklifts); energy sources; the differences



between an automobile and a power industrial truck; Forklift characteristics; 29 accident prevention rules for safe forklift operations; load handling; pre-operation inspection and refueling/recharging. The training conducted was a combination of formal instruction,



practical training and performance evaluation.

The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Act and Army Regulation (AR) 385-10 requires the employer to conduct an evaluation of each powered industrial truck operator's performance at least once every three years.

Fort Buchanan implements the Army Safety Program providing tools, informational products and organizing safety activities to protect the force and enhance warfighting capabilities through a systematic and progressive process of hazard identification and risk management.



## Fort Buchanan Police Officer conferred the 3 X 5 Bronze Award

Story and photos by Rosie Irizarry, Public Affairs Specialist

In recognition for outstanding performance during an important inspection and at the Police Desk Operation providing information, ensuring order, maintaining all operational control, and providing precise attention to detail, Police Officer Tali Albarrán was presented the Fort Buchanan Bronze 3 X 5 Award at Garrison Headquarters Flag Room February 10, 2022.

The medal was awarded by Fort Buchanan Garrison Commander, Col. Tomika M. Seaberry; Deputy Garrison Commander, Lt. Col. Brian Mandock and Garrison Command Sgt. Maj. José a. Banks. Also present for the award ceremony were Operations Officer, Police Maj. Russell F. Lorenzo and Supervisory Police Cpt. Rolando Rios.

Officer Albarrán played a key role during a mandatory yearly inspection conducted by the Logistics Readiness

Center (LRC), which was, in Albarrán's words “tough.” The inspection encompassed many facets such as, Arms Room, Armory and sensitive items; verifying paperwork was up-to-date and correct; inventory of new weapons; prepared and assigning weapons, gear, ammo, radios to all officers; ensured the results were good, green and passed with flying colors. The inspection results was one of the best in past years.

His proactive intervention was a direct reflection on the Fort Buchanan Garrison Command. “Your outstanding efforts mean a lot to this command,” said Col. Seaberry. “I would go for the Silver Medal,” she concluded.

“It's a big impact, there are always others watching what you do and it sets a positive example for them. Congratulations,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Banks.



# US Army Garrison Fort Buchanan will always remember and honor the legacy of its Soldiers

Story and photos by Grissel Rosa, Public Affairs Officer



In a simple, dignified and emotional ceremony held March 2, 2022 at the Specialist Frances M. Vega gate, Fort Buchanan Garrison Commander, Col. Tomika M. Seaberry and Garrison Command Sgt. Maj. José A. Banks together with the Benitez family unveiled the plaque re-dedicating the access control point in honor of one of our own. Spc. Vega’s family members, her father, Orlando; mother, Wanda; sister Jeannette and her daughter Gia, as well as garrison employees, members of Puerto Rico National Guard Military Police and Fort Buchanan guards, attended the ceremony in which the plaque was affixed to one of the gates of the military installation.

The original memorialization ceremony,



held July 4, 2008 was the first time in the history of Fort Buchanan and the United States Army in Puerto Rico, that one of its gates was named after a Puerto Rican Soldier and member of the Fort Buchanan community. Spc. Vega was the first female Soldier of Puerto Rican descent to die in combat.

Col. Seaberry highlighted that the ceremony takes place during the celebration of Women’s History Month. A month to celebrate the achievements of brave women like Frances, who honors not only deceased heroes but also represents an inspiration to her fellow Soldiers, and the distinguished men and women of all races in our society.

In the words of Command Sgt. Maj. Banks, “This ceremony exemplifies the best of our Army Values, as we honor a Soldier who served with valor and distinction, one of our own who offered the ultimate sacrifice, someone who deserves to be remembered.”

Spc. Vega’s father, Orlando Benitez, thanked Fort Buchanan’s community represented by the Garrison Commander, Col. Seaberry and Garrison Sergeant Major Banks for the honor of remembering their daughter.

The plaque affixed to the access control point facility reads:



Dedicated in memory of  
SPC FRANCES M. VEGA  
September 2, 1983—November 2, 2003

First female Soldier of Puerto Rican descent to die in a combat zone in Operation Iraqi Freedom. On November 2, 2003, a missile fired by insurgents in Al Fallujah hit the U.S. Chinook helicopter that Vega was in. She was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart, the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and the Iraq Campaign Medal.

After graduating from Antilles High School in 2000 and influenced by her family’s military background and by the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, Vega enlisted in the Army. She was assigned to the 151st Adjutant General Postal Detachment 3.

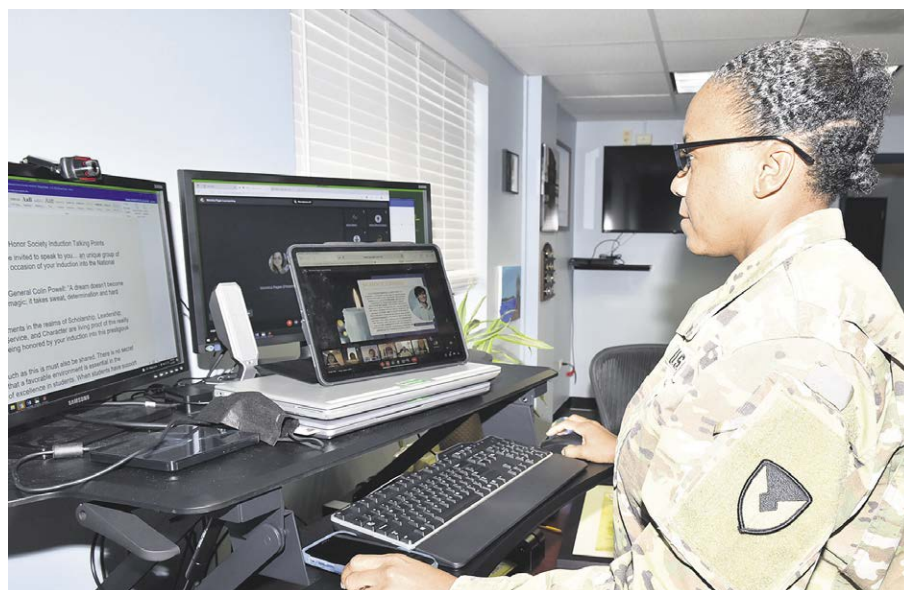
Specialist Frances M. Vega epitomizes the character and patriotism of the countless American Soldiers who have answered the call to defend freedom.

4 July 2008



## Fort Buchanan Garrison Commander participates in Antilles Middle School 2022 National Junior Honor Society Virtual Ceremony

Story and Photos by Grissel Rosa, Public Affairs Officer



success comes from the support these students have at home and school. “It’s your family, your teachers and their combined support that help you renovate your strengths, lift your spirits and make you go further.” She also added, “There is no secret in the fact that a favorable environment is essential in the formation of excellence in students.” She emphasized, “The other fifty percent of success comes from each student of this “unique group of achievers.”

Fort Buchanan garrison commander explained the four

skills and talents that come to the surface when you serve others.

And “Character - it’s what we do when no one’s looking. It’s being honest, not only to others but to yourself. Bruce Lee said: “Knowledge will give you power, but character respect.”

Col. Seaberry highlighted that “Students like you are the dream of any teacher. Individuals like you are the dream of our society. I commend your families for raising such wonderful students, the teachers for the knowledge they bring to your lives and you for being the promise that will make this a better country and our world an even better place for future generations.”

U S Army Garrison Fort Buchanan Commander, Col. Tomika M. Seaberry, participated as guest speaker during the Induction Ceremony of Antilles Middle School (AMS) National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) February 2, 2022. During the virtual event, 23 students from 7th to 8th grades were inducted to the prestigious organization led by Jomary Dominguez, English for Speakers of Other Languages/English Language Arts (ESOL/ELA) 6th grade teacher and Verónica Pagán English Language Arts (ELA) 6th grade teacher.

Both teachers, Dominguez and Pagán, have been working as sponsors for the NJHS Program since the 20-21 School Year. “Working with the NJHS has been a rewarding experience for both of us. It is an honor to be part of their growth, as they develop their leadership skills and work hard to impact our community in a positive, meaningful way. As advisors, we have seen our students embrace with enthusiasm their commitment to the society to accomplish their academic and personal goals,” said Dominguez and Pagán.

Col. Seaberry opened her remarks with a quote from General Colin Powell who said, “A dream doesn’t become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination and hard work.” The garrison commander added, “Your achievements in the realms of Scholarship, Leadership, Community Service, and Character are living proof of this reality as you are being honored by your induction into this prestigious society.”

Col. Seaberry explained the formula for success in academics and life. She said that fifty percent chance of

requirements for membership in which each inductee has excelled: scholarship, leadership, community service, and character. “These are the core of a fulfilling life”, said Fort Buchanan commander. Her advice for the National Junior Honor Society 2022 Inductees was to think about:

“Scholarship – as being eager to learn for the passion of learning something new. It’s not about the grades but the rewarding experience of learning.

“Leadership - is not about a title, a rank, a position. It’s the impact in other’s lives. The influence you have to inspire others. You are an example to your peers. Your vision and determination to do something and be successful are signs of an outstanding person.

“Community Service - is doing what’s right for the right reason. To serve the community is giving the best of you sincerely and with integrity. It is another way for you to grow and develop

### CHILD FIND DAY

Do you think your toddler or preschooler is not speaking as he/she should for his/her age? Are you concerned that he/she does not play or learn like most children his/her age?  
Can your child crawl, walk, run, and jump like other children his/her age?

**Free developmental screening (Child Find) for children from 0 to 5 years.**

**Wednesday, April 27  
8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.  
Community Club Bldg. 660**

Walk-ins are welcome!  
Eligible children from the military community to include supported Federal agencies (Active Duty Military assigned to Puerto Rico title 10, AGR, Coast Guard members, Families that are command-sponsored, DoD employees with transportation agreement and National Guard AGR.)

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## Fort Buchanan Senior Commander and Garrison Command meet new DODEA Mid-Atlantic District Superintendent

Story and photos by Rosie Irizarry, Public Affairs Specialist

The recently appointed Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) Mid-Atlantic District Superintendent, Kent Worford; DODEA Mid-Atlantic Chief of Staff, Dr. Angie Lamonski accompanied by DODEA Puerto Rico Community Superintendent, Dr. Jacob Sherwood met with 81st Readiness Division and Fort Buchanan Senior

Commander, Maj. Gen. Jami C. Shawley; Garrison Commander Col. Tomika M. Seaberry; Deputy Garrison commander, Lt. Col. Brian Mandock; Garrison Command Sgt. Maj. José A. banks and Deputy to the Garrison commander, Raúl L. Rodríguez at Garrison Headquarters Flag room March 11, 2022.

Col. Seaberry, welcomed Worford and Dr. Lamonski to Fort Buchanan and expressed the good relationship between the DODEA schools on post, students, their parents, the community and the command.

Maj. Gen. Shawley inquired as to the student population and those qualified to use the educational benefit.

“I am here following up on what has been started, and to help make things work better,” said Worford. “I look forward to fostering strong family, school, and community relationships that are inclusive and reflect the diversity of our military communities,” said Worford in a DODEA news release.



DODEA Americas Mid-Atlantic District operates 26 schools in two countries, three states, and one territory across three time zones. There are nearly 900,000 military connected children of all ages worldwide, of which nearly 10,000 are enrolled in DODEA Americas Mid-Atlantic District schools and served by thousands of teachers and educational aides. All schools within DODEA are fully accredited by U.S. accreditation agencies.

## Antilles Elementary School children learn through real-life show and tell

Story and photos by Rosie Irizarry, Public Affairs Specialist



Antilles Elementary School children posed with their teachers, teachers' aides, Fort Buchanan Firefighters and mascot Sparky, as they walked to the Army Reserve Center construction site.

Approximately 50 children, ranging from four to five years of age accompanied by teachers and teachers-aides from the Antilles Elementary School (AES) at Fort Buchanan walked to the US Army Reserve Center construction site February 4, 2022 to see firsthand how things are built.

The AES teachers instruct them, as part of the curriculum, things about their daily lives, how they are made, what they are used for and where they come from. They are being taught about tools, how they are used and even

about safety.

The children's first stop during the walk, was at the Fort Buchanan Fire Station where they received a fire safety talk and red fire hats.

Teachers Mara González and Glorimar González explained to the children as they walked from AES to the construction site what they would be seeing. Upon arrival to the 96,000 square meter structure, the children saw bulldozers, diggers, loaders, and other construction equipment they have already learned about in class.



Army Reserve Center Construction Project Safety Officer Cecilio Velázquez spoke to the kids about the structure, safety tools and equipment.



At the site, Project Safety Officer Cecilio Velázquez came outside to welcome the small visitors. Velázquez, who was wearing a safety reflective vest, hardhat, steel toe boots and thick gloves explained to the preschools why he wore these and their use. The children were in awe that upon completion the structure will have 119 bathrooms and more than 89 offices.

The toddler years are full of major milestones, from first words, to walking, becoming more independent, demonstrating their inquisitive and curious nature. By letting the children experience firsthand, some of the subjects they cover in class the AES teachers and teachers' aides help them experience the world around them.



# Once a Soldier – Always a Soldier

Story and photo by Rosie Irizarry, Public Affairs Specialist

It was pouring rain, Saturday, February 5, 2022 and running in uniform from your parked vehicle to the Army and Air Force Exchange (Exchange) main store was done very quickly. However, the minute the Army Officer was able to get under the cover of the Exchanges' entrance she realized she had left her face mask in her car.

As she patted down the approximately 16 pockets on her uniform, retired US Army Sergeant Enrique Marrero Fuentes, observing her, calmly asked the officer if she needed a mask. He explained that he always carried extras with him and he gave her one.

Little did Sgt. (Ret.) Marrero Fuentes know that the officer he was helping is the Fort Buchanan Garrison Commander Col. Tomika M. Seaberry. Col. Seaberry thanked him and his wife, Yolanda Cornier and after a brief conversation, invited them to come by her office

before the next Friday.

Sgt. (Ret.) Marrero with 22 years of service never forgot what it was to obey a request from an officer. Tuesday, February 8, 2022 he and his spouse came to Garrison Headquarters to the Commander's Flag Room. There they were received by Col. Seaberry and Garrison Command Sgt. Maj. José A. Banks and to his surprise was presented



with the Commander's Coin for Excellence.

"Offering and giving me the face mask meant a lot to me. We say taking care of people and that is what you did," said Col. Seaberry.

"I did not expect this! What I did... this is what we learned in the military, to take care of each other," said Sgt. (Ret.) Marrero. "I don't think may people have this coin," he said admiring the colorful coin shaped in the form of the island of Puerto Rico.

Once a Soldier – always a Soldier!

## What is Alcohol Awareness – why is it important?

Story by Maria N. Ortiz, Army Substance Abuse Program Prevention Specialist

### April is Alcohol Awareness Month



April is Alcohol Awareness Month, a good time to reflect on our drinking patterns and the role that alcohol plays in our lives. To know why there is an alcohol awareness month, you must first understand the disease itself. A lot of us have heard of the term alcoholism and assume that this is the only form of alcohol abuse that occurs. Many are not aware that alcohol abuse can come in several different forms. The correct word for alcohol abuse is Alcohol Use Disorder. This can still include alcoholism but is not limited to only that.

Alcohol is the most commonly abused drug in the United States, where one in every 12 adults-suffer from alcohol

abuse or dependence. Several million more attractive in treat drinking that could lead to alcohol problems. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), more than 100,000 Americans die from alcohol-related causes, making it the third leading cause of death behind cancer and heart disease. Alcohol use disorder (AUD) affects about 15 million adults in the United States, and an estimated 88,000 people die from alcohol-related causes annually. These startling statistics brings significant public eye on how critical it is to recognize April as National Alcohol Awareness Month.

As society becomes more technologically advanced, both men and women feel the need to find outlets that effectively help them manage increased levels of stress. According to the NIAAA, research confirms that one of the reasons people drink is to help them cope with daily stress, such as work-life balance, financial stressors, family issues, etc. However, it is not clear just how much stress may lead an individual to suffer from alcohol dependency. Alcohol Awareness Month brings the topic of alcoholism to attention. Many people struggling with alcohol use disorder, don't admit to having a problem, they are in denial, they don't see they need help. Their family members and loved ones may also have trouble talking about this uncomfortable situation.

How do you know if drinking alcohol has become a problem for you or a loved one? Where do you go for help if it has? Seek help; there is several organizations that can assist (see resource list below). In Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rico Administration of Mental Health and Anti-Addiction Services, known as ASSMCA, by its Spanish acronym, 1 (800) 981-0023; and Pan-American Hospital, mental health clinic in San Juan (787) 523-1501 and Cidra (787) 739-5555.

Addiction doesn't discriminate, and it affects all types of people from different backgrounds. Being aware of the issue helps people to open up. Many people fall into the misunderstanding that addiction only happens to people who live in certain parts of the country or have specific backgrounds. However, the truth of the matter is that addiction is a disease. This disease hurts people from all walks of life, some are just better at hiding the condition and not talking about it.

April is National Alcohol Awareness Month, take a moment to pause and reflect on this epidemic and ask yourself if you or someone you love should seek help for alcohol addiction.

**For more information or resources:**  
**USAG Army Substance Abuse Program (787) 707-3125**  
**ASAP Specialist: maria.n.ortiz-navarro.civ@army.mil**  
<https://www.alcohol.org/awareness-month/>  
<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>



# Thinking about your pet's food?

Story by Cpt. Guisele Ballarini, US Army Veterinary Corps Officer

**Y**ou might have wondered whether a food is safe and meets your pet's needs. This can be challenging and time-consuming, because there is a significant amount of misinformation available. Pet food labels and manufacturer websites can contain useful information, but additional essential patient care information is also available from the Veterinary team. Gathering as much information as possible about the food and manufacturer can help guide conversations.

Below are examples of criteria and questions that you could use to determine high-quality pet food:

## 1. COMPANY

Many manufacturers offer a wide spectrum of nutritional expertise but some companies market based on the perception that cost equals quality, which is not always the case. The continued expertise of a nutritionist ensures ongoing quality throughout production and clarifies the level of expertise of the person formulating the pet food. Therefore knowing if the manufacturer employs at least one full time qualified nutritionist or a Veterinarian qualified in nutrition is important.

## 2. QUALITY CONTROL

Not every manufacturer can perform extensive testing, but those that do can provide more information on nutritional adequacy. We need to remember the importance of pet nutrients—not ingredients—and the effects of processing (or not) the food, interactions between ingredients, and the extent of testing for bioavailability and digestibility.

Certifications from national food associations can indicate optimal quality control processes.

Product research provide the most information about the food's bioavailability and digestibility and it goes further than computer based formulations.

## 3. LABEL

Every food, excluding treats, should have an accompanying information describing whether the food is complete and balanced and the life stage for which it is appropriate. Is recommended that foods labeled as complete and balanced have feeding trials in live animals (vs laboratory analysis). Examples of label statements include but not limited to:

- Only intended for intermittent or supplemental feeding.
- Food is formulated to meet nutrient profiles VS feeding tests or trials substantiate the food provides complete and balanced nutrition.

## RED FLAGS

Looking in to companies that focus on negative traits of other pet food companies or companies with lack of nutritional knowledge, such as assumptions that human



nutrition applies to cats and dogs, adding ingredients that are potentially toxic to animals. And nutritionally incomplete food (statement denoting supplemental or intermittent feeding only) marketed in way that implies it provides a pet the nutrition it needs.

## CONCLUSION

The determination about “good” or “bad” foods is based on available information. If you are trying to decide for a food without testing is does not mean is a “bad” diet, but that its adequacy and bioavailability is unknown. To be an informed pet owner, be familiar with the company and the testing it conducts on pet food, read the label and communicate with your Veterinary team.

For additional information, wellness packages, disease testing, vaccinations and additional services, Fort Buchanan Veterinary Treatment Facility, Tuesday to Friday from 8:30 am to 4 pm at (787) 707-2038.



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**Clinicas de Veteranos**  
**Viajes Privados**

**787-712-2030**



Lunes a Viernes 7:00am a 7:00pm  
Sabado y Domingo 8:00am a 5:00pm



FORT BUCHANAN

5k

run/walk

2022  
**STRONG  
B.A.N.D.S.**

BALANCE ACTIVITY NUTRITION DETERMINATION STRENGTH

**Saturday,  
May 21, 2022**

**7:30 a.m.**

**Open to the public.**

**T-SHIRTS** for the first 100  
participants to register.

**MEDALS** for the 1st 100 registered  
participants to complete the  
5k run/walk

**Take advantage of the early bird  
fee until April 30! Register now!**

Registration in advance is encouraged.  
Call or visit the Sports & Fitness Center  
at Bldg. 167, 787-707-3767.

We reserve the right for admission.

**#STRONGBANDS**

STEP

**1**

Attend featured fitness  
events at your garrison

STEP

**2**

Wear your STRONG B.A.N.D.S.  
wristband throughout May to  
show your commitment to a  
healthy lifestyle

STEP

**3**

Gain valuable fitness tips  
throughout May by visiting  
[ArmyMWR.com/STRONGBANDS](http://ArmyMWR.com/STRONGBANDS)

