

# PENTAGRAM

JOINT BASE MYER — HENDERSON HALL

ISSUE 9 • SEPTEMBER 2023



## The WELLNESS Issue





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# WELCOME



**Denise Caskey**  
Public Affairs Specialist

Greetings from Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall – “America’s Post!” – and welcome to the September 2023 edition of the Pentagram.

It’s been determined that the resilience of a workforce has a direct relationship with a variety of wellness issues. In this issue, you’ll learn about a unique approach Religious Support is taking to address the spiritual wellness of our workforce, how lactation rooms help new mothers meet the needs of their growing infants, how a wounded warrior regained his strength with music therapy and was recently awarded one of the highest military police honors and how the installation’s stormwater plan addresses environmental wellness. I’ll also share my thoughts as I begin my journey toward wellness with the help of the Civilian Fitness and Health Promotion Program.

We’ll also introduce Col. Tasha Lowery, the new commander for JBM-HH, and Col. William Hood, commander of the Marine Headquarters and Service Battalion at Henderson Hall.

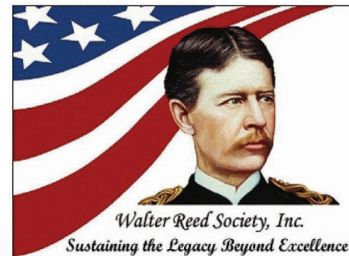
The next issue comes out December 2023 and will feature a year in review, including highlights from 3d U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) and The U.S. Army Band “Pershing’s Own.” As always, we invite you to share with us any ideas you might have for future issues.

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### On the cover:

Left to right: Children of service members graduate from the Cody Child Development Center's Strong Beginnings preschool program June 9 at the CDC on Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall.

(Photo by Denise Caskey, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

A child from the Cody Child Development Center participates in the annual Pinwheel Parade April 3 on Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall. The parade takes place annually to raise awareness about child abuse prevention.

(Photo by Denise Caskey, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

Col. Tasha Lowery, joint base commander, fourth from right, talks with a group of employees from the Directorate of Human Resources and the Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security during Org Day June 16 on Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall.

(Photo by Susan LeRoy, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

Runners participating in the Henderson Hall Semper Fit OohRah Iwo Jima 7K pass a group of rucking service members May 19 on Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall.

(Photo by Denise Caskey, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

Members of The U.S. Army Band "Pershing's Own" and chaplains from the National Capital Region bow their heads in prayer during the 2023 National Military Easter Sunrise service April 9 at Arlington National Cemetery.

(Photo by Sherry Kuiper, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

# ATTENTION:

Becoming an Arlington Police officer leads to higher levels of job satisfaction





# Commander's Corner



Col. Tasha N. Lowery

Commanding a joint base is unique.

My 21 years in the Army and three and a half years in the Marine Corps have led up to this moment, and although there is no military occupational specialty for a garrison commander, I am so excited to be here and lead Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall.

As commander of America's Post, I understand our service men and women, our retirees, our civilian workforce and their families are the backbone of the organization. The people are as important as the mission. The Army, Installation Management Command and the joint base believe in "People First." I will work to build a culture of dignity, trust and respect among the joint base team.

A good relationship with the communities outside the joint base is also important to me because they provide support and many services that our service members and workforce use.

Continuing to foster good partnerships with these communities is one of my priorities as joint base commander.

I look forward to continuing the work on the joint base that allows our partners to continue their missions. Many great infrastructure projects are underway, such as the building of a brand-new Warrior Restaurant, the renovation and construction of barracks and the numerous other projects that keep the joint base operational.

I look forward to working with you and for you as we reach for a common goal of making JBM-HH a place where people will want to work and live.

I am extremely honored to serve as commander for Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall.



Col. Tasha Lowery, right, networks with Dr. Francisco Duran, superintendent of Arlington Public Schools, center and a member of the community, July 6 at the Syphax Education Center in Arlington, Virginia. (Photo by Susan LeRoy, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

**Tasha N. Lowery**  
**Colonel, AG**  
**Commanding**





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# New joint base commander brings ‘people first’ attitude

**Denise Caskey**

JBM-HH Public Affairs

A popcorn machine outside the command suite invites people to stop by and say hello to Col. Tasha Lowery, the new commander for Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall.

“I come from a southern family where the idea of food, whether it’s soul food, snacks, etc., can bring people together,” Lowery said. “Something as small as bringing in a popcorn machine can bring a team together and can, at times, lift spirits.”

Lowery, raised by a single mother, grew up in Blackstone, Virginia. She was 14 years old when she adopted the role of matchmaker and introduced her mother to her stepfather, who was her high school Junior ROTC instructor and a Marine Corps veteran.

She started her military career in the Marine Corps Reserves, something she didn’t tell her mother and stepfather until she was halfway through her “rat” year at Virginia Military Institute.

“My mom and stepdad have always been my biggest supporters,” Lowery said. “There was definitely a sense of pride from my stepdad, who had served in the Marine Corps for so many years.”

Lowery, who matriculated into VMI in 1998, was part of only the second class of students to attend VMI that included women. Her time there was not without its challenges, but she said it made her more determined to prove herself.

“That experience drove me to a point where there was a lot more drive to not quit,” Lowery said. “I credit that time at VMI for that. It probably created a little bit of stubbornness where if you tell me I can’t, then I will.”



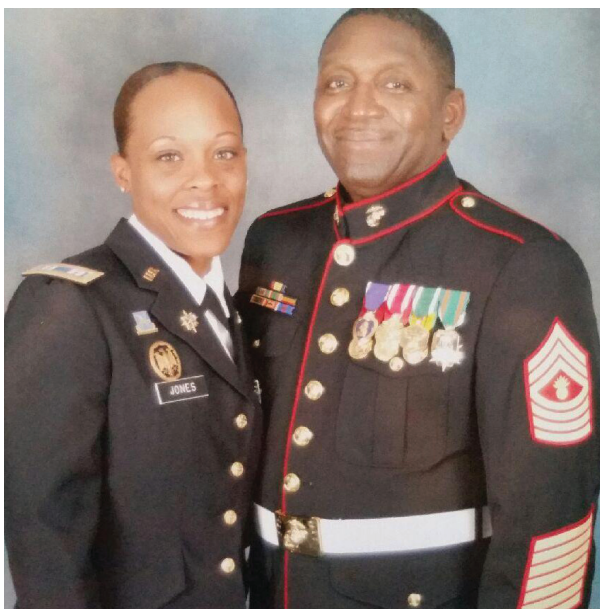
Col. Tasha Lowery, joint base commander, left, enjoys a January 2023 Pittsburgh Penguins game with her son, Shawn Jr., and husband, Shawn Lowery Sr. (Photos courtesy of Col. Tasha Lowery)

## Switching from Marine to Soldier

Lowery served three years in the Marine Corps Reserve while attending VMI and had every intention of going into the Marine Corps full-time when she commissioned in 2002. She also wanted to be in military intelligence.

During her last semester at VMI, she decided to switch from the Marine Corps, where she was a supply lance corporal in her reserve unit, to the Army. Lowery said she felt her chances of being selected for military intelligence would be better,





Joint Base Commander, Col. Tasha Lowery, left, returned to her high school in 2006 for its Junior ROTC Military Ball at Nottoway High School in Crewe, Virginia, as a captain when this photo was taken of her and her stepfather, Master Gunnery Sgt. Harry Elliott.

because the Army is a larger organization with more opportunities.

She ended up getting selected for military intelligence, going through all the training and serving in a variety of assignments as a military intelligence officer, including roles while deployed in Mosul, Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2005 and in Bagram, Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom in 2007.

After all that, however, she realized military intelligence wasn't what she thought it would be, so in 2009, she transitioned to the Adjutant Generals Corps. As an AG, Lowery said she can focus on the human element of serving.

"I feel like there's always a human element," Lowery said. "I think sometimes it's easy to forget that when you're trying to accomplish something. Everyone is just focused on the mission but not who is doing it."

After transitioning to AGC, Lowery held a



Col. Tasha Lowery, joint base commander, left, and her son, Shawn Lowery Jr., snap a selfie Aug. 9 during a trip to Deep Creek Lake, Maryland.

variety of leadership roles at Fort Liberty, North Carolina; Stuttgart, Germany and the Pentagon where she served as the military assistant to the Army G-1 and the aide-de camp for the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army.

In 2021, Lowery graduated from the National War College.

### Family life

Family is important to Lowery and part of what appealed to her when she took the position as joint base commander.

"The family aspect is a big piece of it, if I'm being honest," she said. "Being able to continue to stay in this area, particularly being dual military, I knew my husband would be able to have a job here in the area. And then my son with hockey. That was a big part of it as well. My mom lives with us, so family is close for her, which is really important."



Shawn Lowery Jr., handles the puck during a May 2021 hockey game. Shawn Jr. has played in games across the country and in Canada and aspires to play professionally for the Pittsburgh Penguins when he's older.

Outside of her military duties, Lowery said she is married to a unicorn. Her husband, Shawn Lowery Sr., is a Chief Warrant Officer 5 - the highest rank a Warrant Officer can achieve. They met in Afghanistan toward the end of their second deployments and then got together again after his permanent duty station changed to Fort Liberty, where she was also stationed.

"The rest is history," she said. "15 years later, 13 years married, and he remains the most loving husband who is supportive of me and all of my flaws!"

Part of Lowery's home life revolves around 12-year-old hockey player, Shawn Jr., who aspires to play professionally, hopefully for the Pittsburgh Penguins, someday.

"It's interesting to see him grow," Lowery said. "He's home-schooled because of hockey. We

made that decision because he wanted to devote more time to training. He's very competitive and comes by that honestly."

She also shares her home with her mother, known by all as "Grandma Lucy," and is a pet parent to a pure black German Shepherd named Vader.

### Importance of being real

Lowery can be described as a people person with a warm, infectious smile and bubbly personality, and she expresses a genuine desire to get to know people.

"I think the personal side of people ties in with the professional side," she said. "I want to take the time to truly sit down and just understand somebody. That's how you really build a team."



Lowery said if there was one thing she could consider her greatest accomplishment, aside from raising her son, it would be that she continues to be the woman her mother raised her to be.

She believes in being genuine and tells the story of a three-star general she met who shared the same bubbly, outgoing personality. The moment stuck with her because it spoke to her desire to not change who she was to suit someone else's ideal.

"She went to a military college," Lowery said. "She's outgoing, kind of bubbly, with a kind of quirky personality. She was told, 'You probably shouldn't go into the military. It's just not for you,' and she said to herself, 'I can only be me, and if that's not good enough, then okay, but that's all I can be.'"

### **Coming to Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall**

Lowery, who has been in the Army for nearly 21 years, was serving as secretary for the Joint Staff when the opportunity to serve as commander at JBM-HH arose, and she took command in May 2023.

"We're told what's open, and then we can rack and stack our choices," she said. "This was my first choice. I knew I wanted to command. I've commanded at every level – company, battalion – and now to be able to command at the O6 level, I'm pretty excited, to be quite honest."

Lowery said the love and compassion she has for her son bleeds into her role as a leader.

"The way I lead and the way I want people to see me as a person is how I want my child to see me as a person. I want him to be able to look at me and say, 'My mom's a badass,'" Lowery said. "That's important to me because, again, I'm a person just like everybody else. I just happen to now be an O6 in the Army. But at the end of the day, I'm still Tasha Lowery."

Since she served in the Marine Corps Reserve, Lowery said she found it interesting that she was chosen to be joint base commander



Vader Lowery is the "goodest boy" and a valuable member of the Lowery family.

for the only joint Army/Marine installation. She said her time in the Marine Corps Reserve helps her understand the Marine Corps culture and creates a connection with them. She also served with new Headquarters and Service Battalion commander, Col. William Hood, at the Pentagon prior to coming to JBM-HH.

"He was on the Office of the Secretary of Defense staff, and I was on the Joint Staff prior to coming into both of our jobs, which is great," Lowery said. "So, there's already a built-in relationship there which has been really good."

Lowery said the more she learns about the job, the more she discovers she had no idea what she was getting into. Between the older infrastructure, joint base partners, barracks issues, administrative issues and more, she has come to realize she can't put 100 percent into everything that needs to be done.

She compared the complexity of JBM-HH with a charcuterie board with a variety of different parts that she looks forward to integrating to form a cohesive whole.



“Grandma Lucy,” left, gets a kiss from Joint Base Commander Col. Tasha Lowery in a family photo taken when Shawn Lowery Sr., far right, was promoted to CW5 in May 2022 at the Pentagon in Washington D.C. Also pictured is Shawn Lowery Jr.

“Looking at my role, I am the integrator of all this different stuff,” Lowery said. “It’s really putting 30 percent here, 40 percent there, giving out guidance and allowing the folks who are in charge carry it out. I will never be the subject matter expert in any of it.”

While she is in command of JBM-HH, Lowery said she looks forward to continuing partnerships with the communities outside the gate and making sure the families of the Soldiers and Marines who call the base home are taken care of so they can focus on their mission.

One project she hopes to see started is the long-awaited renovation of Patton Hall, a project that has passed through the hands of other installation commanders. She said if she can get that project off the ground, it would mean that the hard work and dedication of those

who came before her to try to get it renovated will have finally come to fruition.

“Patton Hall is a place in the National Capital Region for strategic outreach and Arlington National Cemetery support,” Lowery said. “Distinguished Americans and guests rely on JBM-HH, and specifically Patton Hall, to provide dignified space to host these events.”

Although she knows she may not be able to see projects completed, she said she would be satisfied that she at least planted the seed.

“What I’ve been told from my previous garrison commanders is that you may develop or start a project on a post, but you may not see it come to fruition,” Lowery said. “What’s that saying? You can plant the tree, but you may never be able to see it grow and sit under it for shade? But I think if I can leave it better than how I received it, to me, that’s success.”





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Headquarters and Service Battalion, Headquarters Marine Corps, Henderson Hall Commander Col. William Hood addresses the crowd at the change of command ceremony June 30 at Henderson Hall on Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall. (Photo by J. Felix Gonzalez, Marine Corps Community Services)

# Henderson Hall welcomes new commander

**Marisol Rivera**  
Henderson Hall Public Affairs

Since taking command of Headquarters and Service Battalion, Headquarters Marine Corps, Henderson Hall in June 2023 at Joint Base

Myer-Henderson Hall, Col. William Hood has continued to dedicate himself to the core values and ethos of the Marine Corps. Honor, courage and commitment are the building blocks that will aid in making the right decisions at the right time.



Like many others, Hood joined the Marine Corps to serve his country. After graduating from law school, he joined the Marine Corps in 2000 as a judge advocate. He grew up in a military family in Athens, Tennessee; his father was in the Air Force, and his grandfathers were in the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy.

Hood comes to Headquarters Battalion, Headquarters Marine Corps, Henderson Hall after serving more than 18 years. This is not his first time in command. He was the commanding officer of Region 2, Marine Corps Embassy Security Group, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates from 2018 to 2020.

Before becoming the battalion commander, Hood worked in the National Capital Region as Commandant of the Marine Corps fellow at the Department of Justice and then as a Marine military assistant to the executive secretary at the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Working for the OSD allowed Hood to interact with other branches of services, and assisted in his transition in becoming the battalion commander of Henderson Hall. He previously worked side-by-side in the Pentagon with JBM-HH commander, Col. Tasha Lowery, and he said he looks forward to continuing that professional relationship at JBM-HH.

“We both came into this looking at ways in which to continue building a joint team and refine the relationship that we have with a heavy focus on the joint base,” Hood said. “Working at Henderson Hall is different from working in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. It was a great opportunity to experience the civilian aspect of decision-making and policy implementation.”

As a commanding officer, Hood said he aims to continue to maintain the momentum of the previous commander, Col. Andrew Winthrop. “We remain focused on taking care of Marines with a service-driven mission.”

“Although I have been in this battalion for three years as a member, I’m not sure I fully understood all the services and functions Henderson Hall provided,” he said. “We have a very important customer

service mission encompassing all aspects of an H&S battalion that serves the entirety of the NCR and beyond.”

Making this a place where Marines want to come, whether it be to receive services and support or as a duty station is a top goal for Hood. He said Marines, Sailors, Soldiers and civilians have tremendous opportunities at JBM-HH to experience living or being stationed in the National Capital Region.

“Headquarters and Service Battalion has an incredible responsibility, a singularly defining purpose, to provide operational, administrative, supply, and logistical support and services for Marine Corps personnel assigned to the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area,” Hood said. “Placing our trust in one another and always doing the right things, the right way, for the right reasons ensures we will meet this awesome responsibility.”



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# Wounded warrior receives one of the highest military police honors

**Christopher Hurd**  
Army News Service

With family, friends and members of the Army's Military Police Corps in attendance, Lt. Gen. Donna Martin, Army inspector general, awarded Capt. Luis R. Avila the Order of the Marechaussee, silver, during a ceremony at the Memorial Chapel on Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Aug. 23.

The award is one of the highest honors given to a military police member by the Military Police Regimental Association, and it recognizes a degree of professionalism, high standards of integrity and morality and esprit de corps.

"I can't think of a more deserving Soldier and member of our regiment to receive this honor," Martin said. "Today, we are here because the impossible was made possible with faith, family, courage and prayers."

On his fifth combat deployment in December 2011, Avila was leading his company from the 720th Military Police Battalion on a search and rescue mission in Afghanistan when a 600-pound improvised explosive device detonated underneath his vehicle, splitting it in half, Martin explained.



Lt. Gen. Donna Martin, Army inspector general, awards Capt. Luis Avila the Order of the Marechaussee, silver, during a ceremony at the Memorial Chapel on Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Virginia, Aug. 23. In 2011, Avila was leading a search and rescue mission in Afghanistan when a 600-pound improvised explosive device detonated underneath his vehicle killing three of his Soldiers and leaving him severely wounded. (U.S. Army photo by Christopher Hurd)

The explosion killed three of Avila's Soldiers and left him severely wounded. He lost his left leg, suffered two heart attacks and two strokes, and a lack of oxygen caused brain damage. The injuries he sustained left him almost completely paralyzed.

Two weeks after the attack, he arrived back in the U.S. in a coma and on life support. His family would stay by his side morning and night, continuing to have faith that he would

recover. They prayed and started playing some of his favorite music in the hospital room.

"During those dark days, the family remained steady in their faith in God, and in Luis' will to survive," Martin explained. "When their faith was tested, they turned to music."

Miraculously, Luis' facial muscles began to twitch, and he eventually woke up from the coma after 40 days. However, he couldn't eat, speak or see for more than three years.





Miguel Avila assists his father, Army Capt. Luis Avila, with archery in qualifying rounds for the 2023 DOD Warrior Games at Naval Base Coronado in San Diego, California, June 8. (DOD photo by E.J. Hersom)



Capt. Luis Avila sings "God Bless America" during his Order of the Marechaussee award ceremony at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Virginia, Aug. 23. He was awarded the Military Police Regimental Association's Order of the Marechaussee, silver, for his professionalism, high standards of integrity and morality, and esprit de corps. (U.S. Army photo by Christopher Hurd)

Luis and his family never gave up hope, and they continued to play music. He even used music therapy as part of his rehabilitation.

"I think what has been very important going through my husband's road of recovery has been his courage and discipline to do things," his wife Claudia said. "Since the day that he was capable of listening and understanding, he has been working on how to get better."

He has taken on the challenge of recovery with the help of the medical team at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, and the support system around him.

"It takes a strong family to endure hardship," Martin said. "I can attest that the Avila family is the strongest family I've ever had the honor to know."

With that support and through years of rehabilitation, Avila has regained some movement in his hands, leg and part of his speech. He now sings at many events throughout the National Capital Region.

He performed on television during the 28th National Memorial Day Concert at the U.S. Capitol in 2017 and during the Joint Chiefs of Staff change of command ceremony in 2019. He also

sang twice during his Order of the Marechaussee award ceremony.

"It's an extreme honor to receive this award, and I am extremely grateful for my (military police) brothers and sisters that have supported me along the way," he said. "We really appreciate all you do for us, your service and sacrifice to our nation."

The Military Police Regimental Association established the Order of the Marechaussee in 2000 to recognize exceptional dedication, competence and contribution to the regiment. The award is presented in either gold, silver, bronze, or steel, based on the impact and years of service to the regiment.

Today, there are nearly 500 recipients of the silver medal.

"Capt. Avila is truly a role model for all Soldiers, peers and subordinates alike," Martin said. "I know I speak for all of us here today when I say that the Military Police Corps Regiment is blessed to have you, Luis, as a member of our family."

Avila continues to recover from his injuries. He has completed four Army Ten-Miler races on a bike with his son, finishing in first place in his category one year, and has won multiple gold and silver medals at the DOD Warrior Games.



Two cozy chairs sit beside a table in the new lactation room within Building 417 on the first floor of the Education Center Aug. 23 on Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall. The space was recently established to expand the base's support of breastfeeding mothers. (Photo by Pamela Kulokas, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

## JBM-HH supports breastfeeding moms, opens new lactation room

**Pamela Kulokas**  
JBM-HH Public Affairs

Support for breastfeeding mothers at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall recently increased with the addition of a fourth lactation room on the base for service members, family members, and Department of Defense civilian and contract employees.

The new room, located within Building 417

in room 104A on the first floor of the Education Center, is equipped with two upholstered armchairs and a table, as well as a mini refrigerator for storing pumped milk and equipment.

“No matter where mothers are on base, they will have a dedicated space to utilize,” said Jonathan Dixon, operations specialist with the Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security, who was the garrison lead for planning and setting up the space.



Although medical research has established the benefits of breastfeeding for both mother and child, and the federal government and Army regulations established lactation support and accommodations for service members and DoD civilians several years ago, continuing to breastfeed after returning to work is not without its challenges.

Meghan Reyes, an administrative support assistant at the Cody Child Development Center who is also a military spouse and mother of three, said her main focus when she went back to work after having her daughter was to continue breastfeeding and pumping at least through her baby's first birthday. At the time this edition of the Pentagonagram hits newsstands, with the ability to use the lactation space at the CDC, she will be close to accomplishing that goal.

"My supervisors were very open, very supportive when I came back to work," she said. "It was very much 'let us know if you need a break,' and having coverage to make sure if I needed to pump I could do so. Anytime that I've needed anything they've been very supportive of that."

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The Andrew Rader U.S. Army Health Clinic's lactation room at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall is equipped with a sink, mini refrigerator and a couple seating options for breastfeeding moms who visit Room 1045. (Courtesy photo)

Reyes' daughter is enrolled in one of the infant rooms at the CDC, so the two can go together to the lactation space and have that closeness to breastfeed, or Reyes can go there to pump milk when she needs to.

"It's nice because if I want to go and feed her instead I can, but I have both of those options because I'm right there with her," she said.

Although Reyes' experience at work has been positive, breastfeeding and pumping in and of itself can be a challenge. Once a mother returns to the office, having the space and finding the time to express milk can be difficult to sort out.

That's why JBM-HH's lactation support rooms and the shared buy-in from all stakeholders across the organization, including supervisors, command team and colleagues, is essential for a mother's success with her breastfeeding goals.



Brightly-colored walls and artwork adorn the lactation space at the Cody Child Development Center Aug. 24 on Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall. (Photo by Pamela Kulokas, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

Without that support from her leadership, Reyes said continuing to breastfeed and pump milk for her baby would have been unsustainable. Knowing her team wanted her to be able to take those breaks to feed her baby was a relief to her as an employee, she said.

"If you haven't done it, you don't realize how stressful it can be; you know, I have to pump this many ounces for each day," Reyes said. "We moms already have enough to worry about."

Not having to stress about lunch being the only time she can pump or feeling guilty about walking away from the front desk to go and pump takes the pressure off, Reyes said.

"Giving employees that space and time to take care of themselves, to pump, and take care of their kids ultimately makes them better



employees,” she said. The CDC’s lactation space is open to employees and parents of children enrolled in the center. It is equipped with seating, shelving, cleaning supplies and breastfeeding support pillows.

The Andrew Rader U.S. Army Health Clinic also has a lactation space in Room 1045 with upholstered chairs, side tables and a mini refrigerator for storage. Also in the room is sink and countertop for hand washing and cleaning pump parts. It is available to employees and patients visiting Rader.

The lactation area on the Henderson Hall campus is similarly equipped in Room 303 in Building 29, home to Headquarters and Service Battalion, USMC.

## RESOURCES ONLINE

For more information for breastfeeding employees, visit: <https://www.womenshealth.gov/supporting-nursing-moms-work/what-law-says-about-breastfeeding-and-work/what-breastfeeding-employees>

For more information for employers who want to support, visit: <https://www.womenshealth.gov/supporting-nursing-moms-work/what-law-says-about-breastfeeding-and-work/what-employers-need-know>

The Army’s breastfeeding and lactation policies as well as resources and answers to frequently-asked-questions can be found here: <https://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/healthyliving/wh/Pages/BreastfeedingandBreastHealth.aspx>

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Religious Support Chaplain (Maj.) Kevin Hovan addresses members of the joint base command team and civilian employees Aug. 30 during the inaugural “faith encounters” devotional luncheon at Building 59 on Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall. (Photo by Denise Caskey, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

## Chaplains use devotional luncheons to engage with workforce

**Denise Caskey**  
JBM-HH Public Affairs

Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall’s Religious Support Office is taking the ministry out of the church and bringing it to the people.

With the help of a robust Chapel Tithes and Offerings Fund, thanks in part to the generosity of congregations on the installation, RSO

is hosting weekly devotional luncheons for the installation’s workforce.

Like prayer breakfasts, food is provided by RSO and a short devotional is shared.

Called “faith encounters,” the luncheons are a unique way to address the spiritual resilience of the installation’s workforce, said RSO Chaplain (Maj.) Kevin Hovan, the family life and operations chaplain.



“Religion is sort of a foundational area of a person’s life,” Hovan said. “What we do in religion has an impact on emotional, behavioral and spiritual health, if you want to separate the religious and spiritual, which in some ways it makes sense to do. It has an impact in other areas of life.”

Hovan said the main focus of the luncheons is to give the chaplains and religious affairs specialists a chance to rub shoulders with the workforce outside of weekly or monthly operational and partner and tenant briefings.

“That’s oftentimes a senior chaplain simply meeting with a director,” Hovan said. “What about all the other employees within that directorate? This initiative gets us to them, and we provide a meal and a short devotional, and then it’s just an opportunity to talk with people. If there are needs, then we can work to meet those needs. If not, then we’ve at least had fellowship.”

The first luncheon was held Aug. 30 at the JBM-HH Headquarters building, where RSO was able to meet with the joint base command team and team members from several directorates including Plans, Analysis and Integration, Public Affairs, Resource Management and Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security.

Other luncheons are planned for areas with a heavy concentration of personnel, such as the Directorate of Public Works, Andrew Rader U.S. Army Health Clinic and Henderson Hall.

Hovan said the idea for devotional luncheons came about because he and other religious affairs personnel recognized there is a lack of variety in how religious voices are heard.

“We recognize that our units have chaplains, and oftentimes our budgetary focus goes toward green suiters, those in uniform. Of course, being on a joint base, that’s our Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Space Force,” Hovan said. “But we recognize that sometimes our civilian workforce, which makes up most of an installation, sometimes doesn’t have access to some of the things that our green suiters do.”

Hovan said the RSO is also looking at connecting with the workforce by offering opportunities such as Bible studies and faith-based book studies.

Hovan said regardless of religious affiliation, everyone is welcome to attend the luncheons.

“I think when we address spiritual resilience, we’re hitting a foundational element of human existence, whether that element is Christian or Hindu or Buddhist or whatever,” Hovan said. “The Army recognizes that everyone has a spiritual life, whether that’s deistic or nondeistic, however that works out in their individual lives. With that being a foundational level, it goes into every area of our life. I think if we can touch on that, if we can help build and improve upon that, then we help build and improve upon the person as a whole.”



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## #PeopleFirst

**Trina Reliford**

Army Emergency Relief officer  
Years of Service: 19

### **How does the Army help you #BeAllYouCanBe?**

The Army is a great institution, and I am so proud and humble to be part of it. After 20 years of active duty and now still serving as a Department of Defense civilian employee, I can say that being part of the Army gave me so many tools and skills that I didn't have before I joined — skills and tools I can use today to help the military community and also apply in my personal life. My previous leaders, mentors and people I meet as I go are the elements that make me all I can be.

### **What is your favorite thing about working at JBM-HH?**

Helping all the military community, including active-duty service members, retired service members and all other individuals, that I can by providing service in accordance with appropriate regulations. It is a great feeling when I see the sense of relief from individuals after I'm able to provide the social services they need. As an Army Emergency Relief Officer, I see those individuals every day and am always willing to provide a first-class service.

### **From Alfonso Lewis, Army Relief Fund supervisor:**

Trina is a retired Soldier, who served in the United States Army for 20 Years. After retiring, she joined the Army Community Service team as an Army Emergency Relief Officer.

Trina has been an outstanding staff member at ACS since November 2004. She has been serving our service members and their families on JBM-HH and the National Capital Region for more than decade. Trina always makes herself available to serve JBM-HH and our community.

Trina exemplifies the Army Values, and her loyalty and integrity are without question.



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Denise Caskey displays medals from virtual races that represent hundreds of miles walked during the COVID-19 pandemic. Completing other virtual races will be her motivation while she participates in the Civilian Fitness and Health Promotion Program at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall. (Photo by Denise Caskey, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

## COMMENTARY

# Test driving the Army's civilian health program

**Denise Caskey**

JBM-HH Public Affairs

“People First” is more than a Big Army talking point. It’s a cornerstone of what makes the U.S. Army one of the strongest forces in the world.

Recognizing that its civilian workforce contributes to its strength, Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall rolled out the Civilian Fitness and Health Promotion Program in 2010. The purpose of the program is to create a more resilient civilian workforce by addressing their health and wellness needs.

As a new employee in 2022, I heard about the program at JBM-HH’s quarterly newcomer’s brief.

I was excited to sign up; however, the program had been halted in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, so I had to wait.

Rumors of it being reinstated began buzzing around the installation in early 2023. As soon as it was officially announced, I made plans to sign up.

## My first thoughts

Civilians who enroll in the program can take up to three hours of paid administrative leave each week, 80 hours total, to do some sort of exercise or participate in other health and wellness activities.

The program isn’t for physical fitness alone. Participants can get a health assessment review, including a BodPod scan from the Army Wellness





Center at Fort Belvoir and can attend health fairs or classes for nutrition, stress management, smoking cessation and financial planning.

I'm in my early 50s and extremely overweight. For some time, I have been contemplating ways to improve my health before I find myself 6 feet under.

The CFHPP came along at just the right time, and I signed up in August.

Signing up was easy. The program manager, Jennifer Souza, a workforce development specialist with the Directorate of Human Resources, emailed me a paperwork packet, which I filled out and sent to my director for approval.

Before I started, I discovered two things about the program that I felt might be potentially problematic for people – how we enter the time in our timecard system and a lack of accountability.

Entering the time in our timecard system is tedious. Each hour must be accounted for separately, and for each administrative leave hour we take, a separate time off request also needs to be submitted.

Beyond entering the time in our timecards, there is no other type of accountability. We're not required to keep track of our progress by weighing in each week or checking in periodically with a trainer.

That's one of the reasons I agreed to write about my experience in the program. If I know I have all of you watching me, I'll be out there three days a week putting in the work.

### Getting started

Long before I signed on the dotted line, I started planning how I was going to keep myself motivated. I knew I would need something tangible to work toward, because goals such as a lower number on the scale or my clothes fitting better don't work for me.

During the first year and a half of the pandemic, I completed more than 30 virtual races, from 5K to races of more than 200 miles, through companies such as Yes.Fit and Virtual Race. I'm not a

runner, so completing many of these races took many days of walking roughly 3 miles each day to complete. The medals I received for each race were great motivators to keep me going.

I wanted to start doing these races again, and the CFHPP was the perfect excuse to purchase a few. I signed up for three short races, all military based, which seemed appropriate given that the Army is essentially paying me to exercise three times a week.

Wish me luck! I'll check in March 2023 to let everyone know how it went.

For more information about the CFHPP, contact Jennifer Souza at 703-696-3520 or [jennifer.s.souza2.civ@army.mil](mailto:jennifer.s.souza2.civ@army.mil).



Denise Caskey starts her day Aug. 16 with a walk around the Myer Campus of Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall. She is participating in the JBM-HH Civilian Fitness and Health Promotion Program which offers civilian employees three hours of paid administrative leave each week, 80 hours total, to participate in some sort of wellness activity. (Photo by Susan LeRoy, JBM-HH Public Affairs)



Calm waters of the Anacostia River flow along the seawall August 2023 on the McNair Campus of Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Jenny Tolbert, JBM-HH Directorate of Public Works)

## Water quality protection is up to everyone

### Jenny Tolbert

Environmental Management Division,  
JBM-HH Directorate of Public Works

Imagine what life would be like without access to clean water for drinking, cooking, bathing, recreating and other daily activities. The Environmental Protection Agency designated August as National Water Quality Month – a month to focus on the importance of protecting the water quality of communities.

For the Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall community, that focus could be placed on the largest estuary in the United States – The Chesapeake Bay. All JBM-HH's storm drains carry stormwater to the Anacostia and Potomac rivers and their tributaries, which flow to the Chesapeake Bay.

Poor water quality can affect the physical health of people and animals living near the Bay.

Stormwater polluted by flowing through urban streets, farm fields, lawns and more adds contaminants and nutrients to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries and can also contaminate private drinking wells. These contaminants include bacteria from pet waste, oils and gasoline from vehicle and fueling leaks, pesticides and other chemicals, all of which can cause minor to serious illnesses in humans and animals.

The health of the Bay not only impacts the physical health of humans, pets and wildlife, but it also impacts the local economy through the strength of the fishing industry. The commercial seafood industry in Maryland and Virginia contributes tens of thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in income to the local economy.



To protect the Bay and its tributaries, it is essential that everyone recognize potential pollutant sources around their homes, workplaces and general community. Typical pollutant sources include vehicles and equipment that can leak oils, pet waste, bare soil (particularly piles of sediment), construction projects, oil and chemical storage areas, car washing and more.

Taking action can prevent the release of pollutants from these sources to the environment.

For vehicles and equipment, this means keeping them well maintained to prevent leaks, noticing when leaks occur and cleaning them up immediately with dry absorbents, and cleaning them at commercial car washes where the wash water is properly treated.

Always clean up pet waste to prevent bacteria from entering the environment. Report excessive

sediment releases from construction project areas to the local city or county. Store all chemicals and oils indoors and in areas where an accidental spill will be contained.

Though the Chesapeake Bay's health has been a concern for decades, there is some encouraging news.

According to the Chesapeake Bay Health Report Cards developed by the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, the overall health of the Bay has improved over the last few years. While this data shows an optimistic trend, there is still work to be done to bring the Bay back to good health.

Therefore, everyone must continue to do their part to protect their local water quality, not just during National Water Quality Month, but throughout the year.



The Potomac River looks calm from the George Washington Parkway in August 2023 in Virginia. (Photo by Jenny Tolbert, JBM-HH Directorate of Public Works)

# Community Matters:

*How the Rosslyn Business Improvement District impacts quality of life for those who live and work on the joint base*

**Sherry Kuiper**

JBM-HH Public Affairs

Outside the fence line.

It's a phrase used to describe the physical barrier that separates a military base from the local community.

However, many who live and work on military bases never really take the time to venture outside that fence line to see what the community has to offer.

Rosslyn is less than a mile from Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, and while it has transformed into the business hub of the future with top-tier companies like Nestle and Deloitte, the neighborhood and the Rosslyn Business Improvement District offer a wide range of activities, events and more to keep your social battery running.

Love to eat? Rosslyn has more than 50 restaurants from fast-casual to award-winning sit-down dining.

Enjoy music? Rosslyn offers a summer music series and an annual jazz festival each September and frequent live music performances.

Got dogs? Rosslyn boasts a popular dog park and hosts dog-friendly events such as "Howl-O-Ween" held every October.

Love the outdoors? Theodore Roosevelt Island is a short walk from Rosslyn. Plus, the Custis Trail and Mount Vernon Trail both run through Rosslyn, giving those who bike, walk, run or roll access to miles of trail to use.

"There is so much to do here in Rosslyn," said Mary-Claire Burick, president of the Rosslyn BID. "We are grateful to have the military community right here in our neighborhood, and we want to



Rosslyn offers a variety of activities that service members, their families and the workforce can enjoy, often at no cost. (Photo courtesy of Rosslyn Business Improvement District)

make sure that our service members, their families and those who work at the joint base know about all the great things they can explore right outside their door."

The Rosslyn BID is a designated 17-block mixed-use, urban center in the heart of Rosslyn.

Through a public/private partnership with Arlington County, the nonprofit organization provides services to enhance, grow and maintain the neighborhood — including the coordination and sponsorship of more than 100 events per year.

"Our family-friendly and often free events are enjoyed by thousands of people each year," said Burick. "That includes our award-winning Rosslyn Cinema movie nights in Gateway Park and regionally-recognized Rosslyn Jazz Fest."

For six years running, Arlington has been named the nation's fittest city by researchers with the American College of Sports Medicine and the Elevance Health Foundation. Rosslyn backs up that point as the home to numerous gyms and fitness activities like Bike to Work Day and the Marine Corps Marathon.

Fitting for neighbors of a military installation.

To find more ways to get involved outside the fence line, visit the Rosslyn BID website at <https://www.rosslynva.org> where you can also subscribe to their weekly e-newsletter.





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