

GUARDIAN

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officially opens
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COVER PHOTO

Those taking part in the USO ribbon cutting ceremony March 4 are (from left to right): Col. J. Adam Barlow, Fort Polk garrison commander, Logan Morris, Civilian aide to the Secretary of the Army, David Thompson, USO Board of Govenors member, Jason Burkett, USO Louisiana, Mississippi and Florida executive director, Lisa Marie Riggins, USO Southeast Region president, Maj. Gen. Jason A. Curl, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general and Jon Lum, Fort Polk USO Center operations specialist. (U.S. Army photo by Porsha Auzenne)



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BOSS rucks with purpose



9

Gabriel Basso visits Fort Polk USO



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MST visits PAO



JRTC AND FORT POLK

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Commanding General
Col. Adam Barlow
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For additional information, please visit the @U.S. Army FortPolk Facebook page.



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Financial Wellness • Mentorship Opportunities

USO TRANSITION PROGRAM

The USO is a not-for-profit organization and not part of the Department of Defense (DOD).



OUTSIDE THE GATES OFF POST EVENTS



7
March

Spring Garden Forum
DERIDDER, LA.

[Click for more info](#)



14-15
March

Louisiana Comic Con
LAFAYETTE, LA.

[Click for more info](#)



19-22
March

Iowa Rabbit Fest
IOWA, LA.

[Click for more info](#)



20
March

DHS presents:
"Little Shop Of Horrors"
DERIDDER, LA.

[Click for more info](#)



21
March

5th Annual CASA Color Run
DERIDDER, LA.

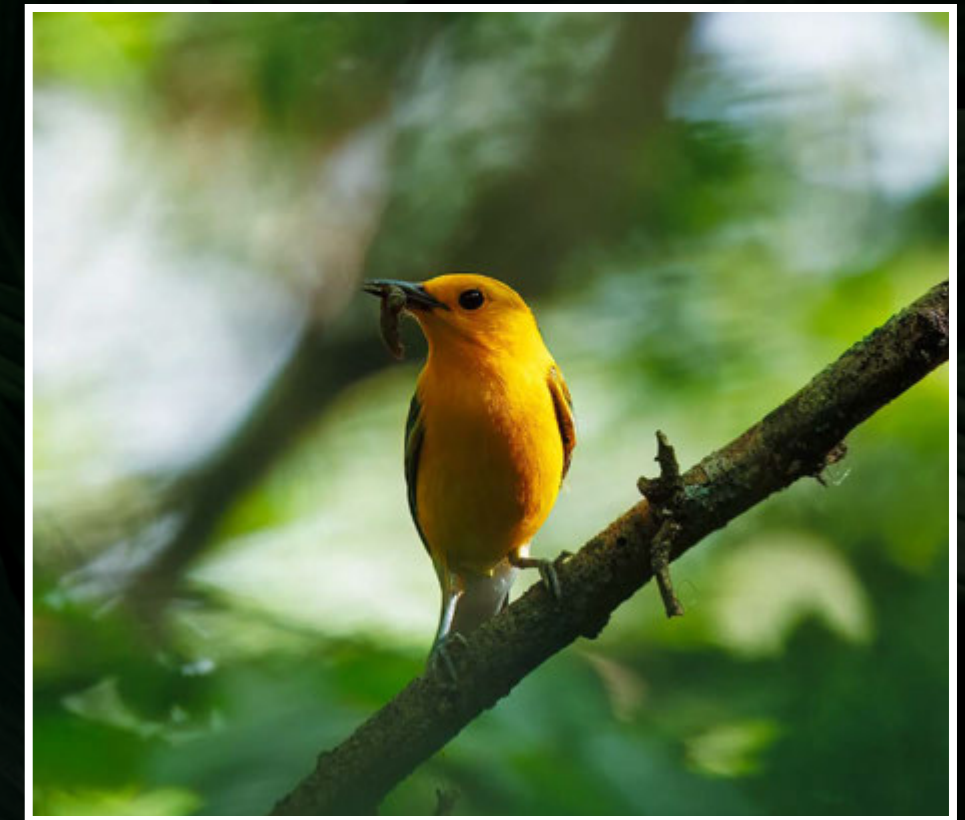
[Click for more info](#)

NO ARMY OR FEDERAL ENDORSEMENT IMPLIED.

Discover Louisiana



LOUISIANA STATE ARBORETUM PRESERVATION AREA



Located within the breathtaking expanse of Chicot State Park, the Louisiana State Arboretum is a living masterpiece of natural beauty and history. Established in 1961, it proudly holds the distinction of being the first state-supported arboretum in the United States — and the first of its kind in the South.

Spanning more than 600 lush acres, this natural sanctuary showcases Louisiana's wild heart. Towering trees, vibrant native plants, and carefully

curated indigenous species create a landscape that feels both untamed and artfully enhanced — a true celebration of the state's botanical heritage.

At the heart of the Arboretum, the Visitor Center — dedicated to outdoor visionary J.D. "Prof" LaFleur — invites guests to dive deeper into the wonders of the forest through engaging interactive exhibits and welcoming gathering spaces.

From there, adventure awaits. Winding nature trails lead you beneath cathedral-like canopies and into serene woodland escapes. Follow longer paths along Walker Branch or Ferguson's Gully,

where converging footpaths guide you through peaceful streams, shaded hollows, and unforgettable views. Every step offers a new discovery in this vibrant, living showcase of Louisiana's natural splendor.

Ready to explore? Plan your visit and start your adventure today.

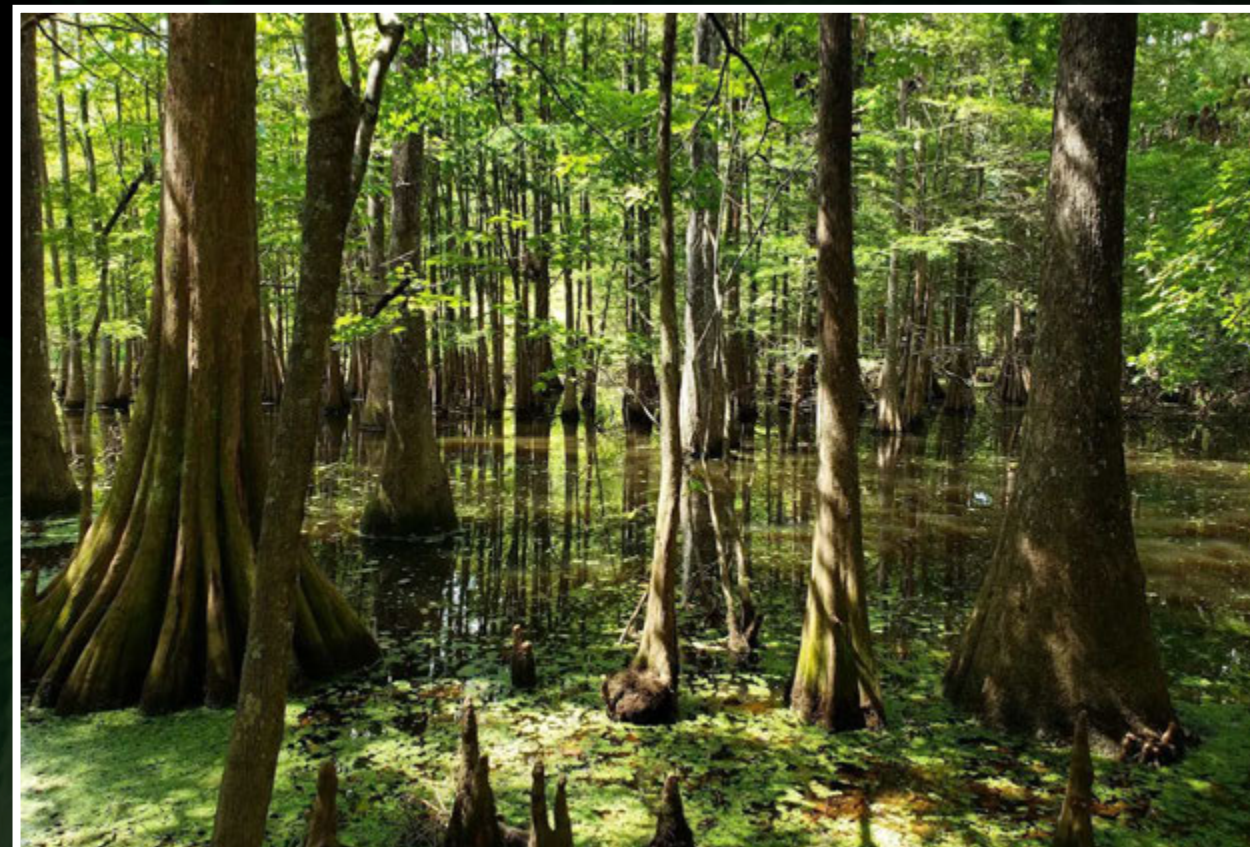


Photo credit: Blue butterfly on pipevine swallowtail, prothonotary warbler and hibiscus by Jonathan Peyton

Louisiana State Arboretum visitor's center by Crystal DeMoura

Bottomland Hardwood Forest by Steven Ardoin

FORT POLK UNVEILS NEW CENTER WITH RIBBON-CUTTING



From left to right: Command Sgt. Maj. Antonio Paparella, garrison command sergeant major; Col. Adam J. Barlow, Fort Polk garrison commander; Logan Morris, CEO of the Greater Vernon Parish Chamber of Commerce; David Thompson of the United Service Organizations Board of Governors; Jason Burkett, executive director of USO Mississippi, Louisiana and Florida; Lisa Marie Riggins, USO regional president for the Southeast; commanding general Maj. Gen. Jason A. Curl and John Lum, USO Center operations specialist, cut the ribbon to Fort Polk's brand new USO Center. (U.S. Army photo by Porsha

By Porsha Auzenne
Public Affairs Office

FORT POLK, La. — Fort Polk officially welcomed the newest United Service Organizations center March 3. Located on North Fort, the facility is dedicated to enhancing comfort, morale, welfare and recreation for all U.S. service members stationed at Fort Polk, as well as their families.

Founded in 1941, the United Service Organizations is a congressionally chartered, private nonprofit dedicated to supporting U.S. service members and their families throughout every stage of military life — from enlistment and deployments to reintegration into civilian communities.

Continuously adapting to evolving needs, the USO operates centers on or near military installations worldwide, including combat zones and remote service sites and provides 24/7 hospitality at airport centers across the

country. The center at Fort Polk will serve as a gathering place, particularly during rotational training, where Soldiers stationed in North Fort can access complimentary food and beverages, escape the Louisiana heat and relax with lounge seating, gaming computers and other amenities.

“Fort Polk — particularly North Fort — is far from a resort assignment. It is where units are tested, leaders are forged and Soldiers sweat, strain and prepare in one of the nation’s harshest training environments,” said Jason Burkett, executive director for USO Louisiana, Mississippi and Florida.

“The training is intentionally austere, complex and demanding because combat is austere, complex and demanding. Even in the most challenging places, morale, resilience and connection matter,” Burkett said.

Today’s opening marks more than a new building; it establishes a place where a young private can feel at home, a platoon can decompress after time in the box and Fort Polk fam-

ilies can find community and encouragement — a reminder to those who wear the cloth of the nation that they are not alone.”

Burkett emphasized the significance of the day on which the ceremony was held.

In 1941, both Fort Polk and the USO were established. Later that year, the first USO center located outside a military installation opened in DeRidder, providing a place of support for Soldiers preparing to deploy for World War II.

“Today, 85 years later, we come full circle with the opening of this new USO Center — the newest in our network and the first modern center in the state,” he said.

Lisa Marie Riggins, USO regional president for the Southeast, said the USO is committed to supporting service members wherever they are stationed.

“The USO goes wherever the military serves, but we especially focus on areas of greatest strain. North Fort is certainly one of those,” she said. “We also know resilience isn’t accidental — it’s developed. We are honored to help build

resilience for our warfighters here at Fort Polk.”

Maj. Gen. Jason A. Curl, commanding general of JRTC and Fort Polk, offered remarks before the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

“The USO has supported our Soldiers in every conflict,” Curl said. “We like to think of the box as our own small combat zone. As Soldiers train and focus on readiness, they can come here to rest, get some relief, step out of the sun and heat and recharge.”

After the formal ceremony, Soldiers, families and guests enjoyed a complimentary lunch and a firsthand tour of the new center.

“Our squad’s morale has already gotten a boost from this event,” said Staff Sgt. Travis Koenig, a Soldier with the 82nd Airborne Division on rotation. “Many of us didn’t want to spend money, so having the grand opening with free food, basketball, cake and air conditioning is a big deal. It gives us a chance to take a break from training and future Soldiers on rotation can come here to decompress as well.”

Koenig, who has visited Fort Polk six times, said he and his Soldiers had never experienced anything like this before.

“I can see this center continuing to provide great entertainment for Soldiers for years to come,” he said.

For more information about the new Fort Polk USO Center and to stay updated on upcoming events, visit their Facebook page at facebook.com/USOFortPolk.



'NIGHT AGENT' STAR BASSO VISITS FORT POLK



By Porsha Auzenne
Public Affairs Office

A Soldier with the 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment (left) showcases a tactical vehicle to actor Gabriel Basso (right) during his visit to Fort Polk, La. Feb. 19. (U.S. Army photo by Porsha Auzenne)

FORT POLK, La. — The Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk rolled out the welcome mat Feb. 19 for a special visitor as actor Gabriel Basso, star of *The Night Agent*, spent the day connecting with warfighters, families and personnel across the installation.

Basso, who portrays determined FBI agent Peter Sutherland in the hit Netflix thriller, kicked off his visit with a command brief from Col. CJ Lopez, JRTC and Fort Polk chief of staff.

Lopez provided an inside look at the installation's storied history, cutting-edge warfighting capabilities and the critical role it plays in preparing units for combat and ensuring Army readiness.

Joining Basso for the visit were representatives from United Services Organizations and Netflix, along with special guest Drew Estell — an Army Special Forces veteran with multiple combat deployments — adding an extra layer of authenticity and connection to the day's events.

Following the briefing, Basso moved from the conference room to the Warrior Center, joining approximately 20 Soldiers from Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers for lunch. In a relaxed and lively setting, the conversation flowed easily — from hometowns and military roles to life on set and the realities of service — offering Soldiers a rare chance to trade stories with one of television's rising stars.

After lunch, Basso linked up with Soldiers from the headquarters of the 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment — better known as



Basso speaks with Soldiers during a static display of unmanned aircraft systems. (U.S. Army photo by Porsha Auzenne)

"Geronimo," the Army's premier Opposing Force.

At the battalion facility, Soldiers showcased what makes Geronimo a formidable adversary on the battlefield, briefing Basso on their cutting-edge drone dominance, lethal capabilities, and the intense training that keeps them a step ahead.

The session offered a firsthand look at how the unit challenges rotational forces at JRTC, sharpening warfighters through relentless, realistic opposition.

Following Geronimo's final brief, Basso was escorted to another battalion facility for an up-close look at the tools that power the fight.

Surrounded by tactical vehicles, tanks, advanced drone systems and an array of weaponry, Basso stepped into the heart of the unit's combat capability — seeing firsthand the equipment and technology that make the Opposing Force a relentless challenge on the battlefield.

Basso and his crew then made their way

Continued on page 11



Basso signs a UAS with 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment Soldiers. (U.S. Army photo by Porsha Auzenne)

to Fort Polk's newly opened USO Center for a meet-and-greet and a special screening of *The Night Agent* Season 3, released earlier that morning.

The event brought Soldiers and family members together for an afternoon of conversation, photos and behind-the-scenes insights from Basso himself — all while enjoying complimentary snacks in the installation's newest gathering space.

Col. Adam J. Barlow, garrison commander, opened the event by showing gratitude to the USO staff.

"I've experienced incredible USO events since day one of my military career," Barlow said. "I've served for 26 years, and no matter where I was — in peacetime or in combat — the USO was there, hosting events like this to boost Soldier morale. Whether it was bringing in celebrities or professional athletes, they've always shown up for us."

Barlow then took a moment to formally introduce Basso to the crowd, welcoming him to the stage with appreciation and applause.

"Before we start the Season 3 screening, I want to share one thing," Barlow said.

"We're all excited to watch Peter Sutherland do his thing, but at the end of the day, this is a small-town guy from St. Louis. He's humble, and he genuinely enjoys connecting with people on a personal level.

In the celebrity world, as he mentioned to me, things can sometimes feel less human. That's why he values opportunities like this — chances to step away from the spotlight and simply meet people face to face. Because of individuals like Basso and organizations like USO, we're able to share moments like this together."

Basso began his remarks by echoing and expanding on Barlow's comments, reflecting on the importance of staying grounded and valuing genuine, person-to-person connections. Basso said that while he's grateful for the praise he receives, recognition is something that should be shared.

"Not everyone gets to hear that they're doing a good job," he said. "So I want to say thank you to all of you for everything you do. I've truly enjoyed meeting you and spending time here today."

Sgt. Karla Buenrostro, a Soldier with 1st Bn, 509th Inf Reg, expressed excitement at the meet and greet.

"Basso's incredibly humble — really down-to-earth and doesn't seek attention at all.

Talking with him was awesome. I even shared my airborne experience with him, and he was genuinely interested," she said.

"He's a super cool guy, and I really appreciated meeting him.

I'm also a huge fan of the show. I started watching a couple of years ago and remember thinking, 'What is this show?' And now, seeing the new season start this morning, it's just amazing. I'm so glad we got to bring this experience here — it's unbelievable. Truly an incredible day."

Season 3 of *The Night Agent* is now streaming on Netflix.

Fort Polk's USO Center will celebrate its official ribbon-cutting ceremony on March 3.



A Soldier shows Basso (left) and Estell a battle tank up close. (U.S. Army photo by Porsha Auzenne)



DES security guards update CPR training

Fort Polk security personnel from the Directorate of Emergency Services study and update their certification in adult and pediatric cardiopulmonary resuscitation Feb. 24. (U.S. Army photos by Karen Sampson)



DRUNK DRIVING ACCIDENTS STATISTICS

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), around 28 deaths a day are attributed to drunk driving accidents.



28% of all accident fatalities involved at least one intoxicated driver



27% of all alcohol-related fatal accidents involves young drivers between 21 and 24



68% of alcohol-related fatal crashes, at least one driver had a BAC level of 0.15 g/dL

Stay safe. Don't drink and drive.

Prevention starts early: Dental readiness begins at home

By Jean Clavette Graves
BJACH PAO

FORT POLK, La. — Civilian and military dental professionals engaged families during the Child & Youth Services Interactive Community Health Fair Feb. 20 at the Middle School & Teen Center, providing education and hands-on demonstrations focused on building healthy oral hygiene habits early in life.

Even though pediatric dental services are not provided on post, the team used the event — held during National Children's Dental Health Month — as an opportunity to promote prevention, awareness and lifelong dental readiness across the military community.

"As soon as a child gets their first tooth, brushing should begin," said Sgt. Miranda King, dental assistant. "Children respond best to routine. The sooner healthy habits are introduced, the more normalized they become."

Capt. Adam E. Fraeyman, general dentist, highlighted key milestones parents should monitor as children grow.

"Around six months, the lower front teeth begin to erupt," Fraeyman said. "By age 6, children begin getting their first permanent molars. Those adult teeth will stay with them for life, so oral hygiene should be stressed early."

Fraeyman encouraged parents to schedule dental visits as early as infancy to help children become comfortable in the dental environment and to remain proactive between appointments by watching for sores, discoloration or changes in the mouth.

He emphasized simple at-home practices such as brushing twice daily with fluoride toothpaste, limiting sugary snacks and drinks, and avoiding bottles at bedtime.

Col. Suzanne Jones, deputy commander of dental services for Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, said outreach events like the CYS Health Fair reinforce the importance of prevention as a foundation of long-term health and force readiness.

"Dental readiness begins at home," Jones said. "When families understand the importance of early brushing habits, regular check-ups and healthy nutrition, they are setting their children up for a lifetime of strong oral health."

Jones emphasized that education and awareness remain essential components of the dental team's mission.

"Prevention is a force multiplier," she said. "Healthy families contribute to a medically ready force, and initiatives like this allow us to strengthen our community through education and engagement."

By promoting preventive health practices and early intervention, Fort Polk's dental professionals support the Army's commitment to sustaining a ready force and strengthening the resilience of Soldiers and families.



Sgt. Sallymatta Yahuza, dental noncommissioned officer, Capt. Adam Fraeyman, general dentist, and Mindy Boline, dental hygienist, teach children about proper brushing techniques and how certain foods affect overall dental health during the Child & Youth Services Interactive Community Health Fair on Feb. 20 at Fort Polk's Middle School & Teen Center, Fort Polk, Louisiana. The event provided an opportunity to promote prevention and lifelong dental readiness. (U.S. Army photos by Jean Clavette Graves)



Mindy Boline, dental hygienist, demonstrates proper brushing techniques using a dental model for children during the Child & Youth Services Interactive Community Health Fair on Feb. 20 at Fort Polk's Middle School & Teen Center. Civilian and military dental professionals provided hands-on education about oral hygiene habits. (U.S. Army photos by Jean Clavette Graves)



Sgt. Sallymatta Yahuza, dental noncommissioned officer, Mindy Boline, dental hygienist, and Capt. Adam Fraeyman, general dentist, pose with educational materials during the Child & Youth Services Interactive Community Health Fair Feb. 20 at Fort Polk's Middle School & Teen Center. The team promoted preventive dental care and early oral health habits in recognition of Children's Dental Health Month. (U.S. Army photos by Jean Clavette Graves)

Behind the portrait: BJACH honors artist who preserved its namesake

By Jean Clavette Graves
BJACH PAO

FORT POLK, La. — A portrait of Brig. Gen. Stanhope Bayne-Jones has hung quietly for decades at Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, its presence familiar to generations of Soldiers, Families and staff who have walked the hospital halls.

But behind the steady gaze of the Army physician is another story — one of artistry, service, faith and community connection — told through the life of the woman who painted it.

Margo Roll, a DeRidder artist and military spouse, painted the portrait in 1983. This week, she passed away at the age of 94, leaving behind a rich legacy preserved in the signature that rests in the corner of the canvas.

The connection between Roll and BJACH came back into focus after Dawn Dunbar, healthcare risk manager with BJACH's Quality Management Division, recognized Roll's name and realized the artist's work had become a permanent part of the hospital's history.

"I just knew there was a story here," Dunbar said. She reached out to the family and discovered a wonderful story that also needs to be preserved.

Marguerite Wood, Roll's daughter, said her mother's artistic gift and devotion to others shaped her life for decades.

"She loved people, she loved her church, and she loved her art," Wood said. "And she always wanted to use her gifts for something meaningful."

Wood spoke alongside her sister, Lisa Stickler, who helped care for their mother in recent years.

During a visit to Roll's home, the family shared paintings, photographs and a scrapbook filled with yellowing newspaper clippings documenting Roll's lifelong involvement in the local community.

Roll was born Sept. 10, 1931, in Rockaway, New York. She later moved to Louisiana with her husband, retired Chief Warrant Officer 4 Ernest R. Roll, who served as an Army Criminal Investigation Division special investigator.

Their family lived across the United States and abroad before settling in DeRidder, where Roll built a reputation as a respected artist, teacher and custom framer.

At BJACH, Roll's legacy extends beyond the Bayne-Jones portrait.

Additional paintings by Roll hang in the hospital, including landscape scenes depicting Louisiana's natural beauty — quiet reminders of the region and the community that has long supported the military medical mission at Fort Polk.

Col. Patrick W. Miller, commander of BJACH, said Roll's work represents the relationship be-



Lt. Col. Amber Smith, chief of logistics at Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, speaks about Spc. Alicia Hansen, a medical logistics specialist, ahead of Hansen's promotion to corporal, Feb. 5, at Fort Polk, Louisiana. The portrait of Brig. Gen. Stanhope Bayne-Jones is displayed behind them. (U.S. Army photo by Jean Graves)

tween the hospital and the people it serves.

"BJACH exists to deliver combat ready care and ensure warfighter readiness," Miller said. "But our mission is only possible because of the people who stand beside us — our staff, our Families, and our community partners. Mrs. Roll's artwork reflects that bond, and her legacy will remain part of this hospital for years to come."

Roll's influence also reached beyond BJACH and into the surrounding community, where her work is displayed at RealArt DeRidder Arts Cooperative.

Betty White, president of the Beauregard Parish Art Guild, said Roll helped shape the organization from its earliest days.

"Her work will continue to be displayed and shared with the community as an inspiration to others," White said.

Wood said her mother's connection to BJACH was a point of pride for their family.

"She didn't talk much about recognition," Wood said. "But she cared about leaving something behind that mattered — something that would still be here long after she was gone."

The portrait of Bayne-Jones remains in place, serving as a reminder of the hospital's namesake and the mission he represented. It



Margo Roll, a longtime DeRidder artist and military spouse, is pictured painting in a newspaper feature highlighting her artwork and community involvement. (Courtesy photo)

serves as a subtle reminder that Bayne-Jones' legacy lives on not only through Army medicine, but through the hands of the community that has supported the hospital for generations.

The painting also stands as a tribute to Roll — a woman whose life reflected the same values of service and dedication, preserved not in stone or plaque, but in brushstrokes.

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- ✓ Fitness facilities
- ✓ Dining and more!

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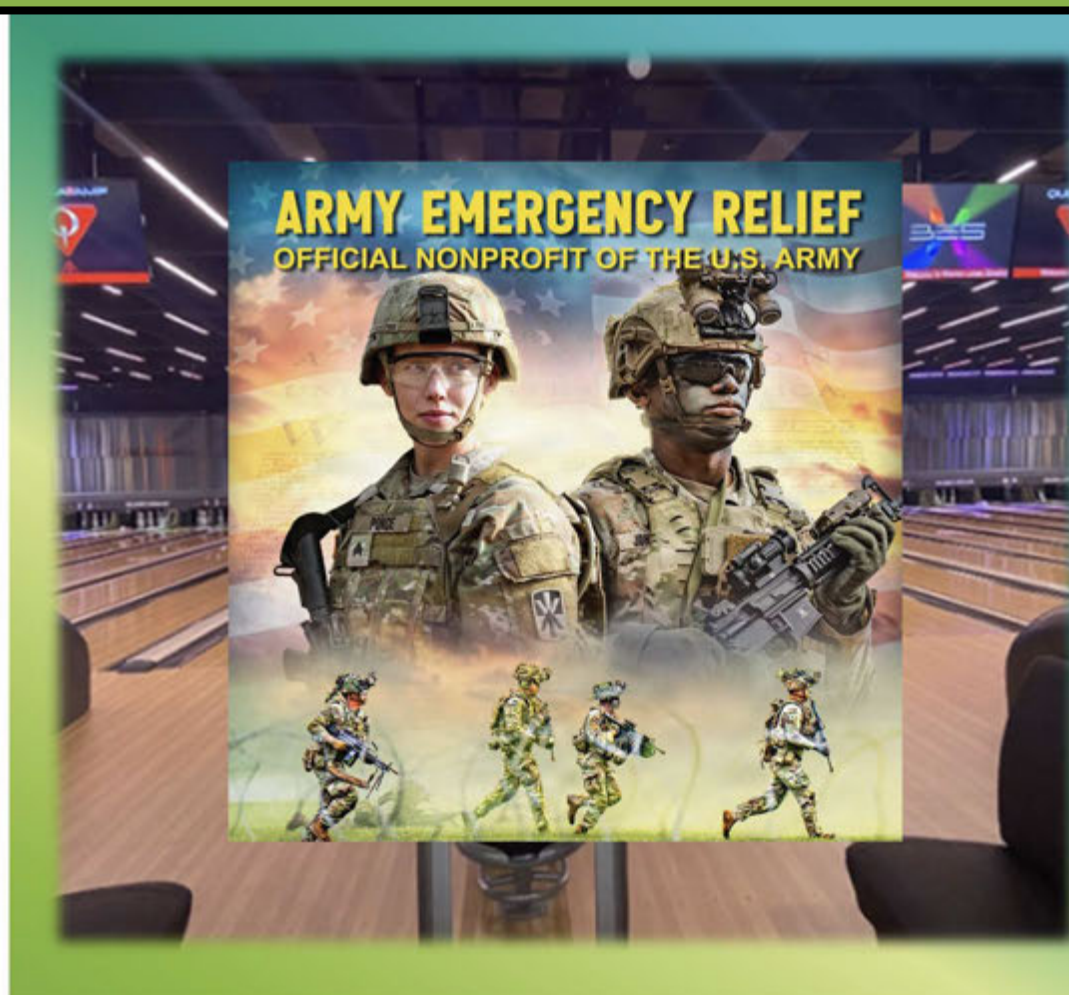
Strike Up Support for Army Emergency Relief

Tuesday March 10th

11:00am-1:00pm

Warrior Lanes Bowling Center

Email the AER Team at
Katie.r.davis.civ@army.mil and
linda.s.smith152.civ@army.mil to register



Does your unit have what it takes? Seeking a two-man junior and senior team per MSC to compete. Supporters are always welcome!

Fort Polk Armed Forces Wellness Center



Conveniently located in the Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital

📍 1585 3rd Street, BLDG 285 (BJACH), Fort Polk, Louisiana

📞 0630-1530, Monday-Friday

📞 726-780-1152 | 726-780-1190



RUCK OUT OF THE DARK: BOSS RAISES SUICIDE AWARENESS & FOOD PANTRY DONATIONS

Fort Polk Suicide Prevention Program, Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers' volunteers, Soldiers and community members participated in "Ruck Out of the Dark," Feb. 26, a ruck dedicated to raising suicide awareness and strengthening communal bonds. The event gained approximately 2300 lbs. of donated food for the Main Post Chapel Food Pantry. Mayor of DeRidder, Michael Harris, shot the starting pistol and joined the Soldiers in the ruck march.



U.S. Army photos by Karen Sampson



Check VIN numbers

The Directorate of Emergency Services Traffic Division will release the following vehicles to MWR for disposal if they remain unclaimed. Vehicles are listed with the last four of their VIN number. If one of these vehicles belongs to you, please contact the Fort Polk Police Traffic Division at 337-531-1806, 6675 or 2675.



2016	Chevrolet	1500	5376
2018	Nissan	Versa	1902
2011	Volvo	XC 90	5453
2015	Nissan	Sentra	9958
2007	Ford	Edge	7768
UNK	Boat trailer	Homemade	none
2011	Chevrolet	Impala	4578
2003	Kia	Optima	2898
2009	Ford	Crown Victoria	2951
2012	Honda	Accord	8762
2013	Nissan	Sentra	5613
2020	Chevrolet	Malibu	9378
2014	Hyundai	Genesis	4966
2003	Chevrolet	Suburban	9751
2009	Chrysler	300	4616
2016	Ford	Escape	6912
2002	Ford	Taurus	5257

**3Rs (Recognize, Retreat, Report)**
Explosives Safety Education Program

All individuals who discover abandoned, unattended or discarded ammunition and explosives, potential unexploded ordnance or a potential explosive hazard should use the Army's 3R process:

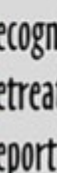
1 - RECOGNIZE: When you may have encountered a munition or potential unexploded ordnance and recognize it is dangerous

2 - RETREAT: Do not touch, move or disturb the munition or unexploded ordnance. Carefully leave the area, informing other personnel in the area of the situation and evacuating the area

3 - REPORT: Report any and all ammunition, explosives and suspected unexploded ordnances immediately to the Directorate of Emergency Services by dialing 531- COPS (2677) or 911. Report as much information as you can like location, description (size/color)

**Recognize**

**Retreat**

**Report**

Contact the Garrison Safety Office at 531-SAFE (7233) for more information



Do You Really Know How Deep the Water is?



- ✓ 6 inches of fast-moving water can knock over and carry away an adult
- ✓ 12 inches of fast-moving water can carry away a small car
- ✓ 18-24 inches of fast-moving water can carry away most large SUVs, vans and trucks

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) AND EQUIPMENT SAFETY



PPE is clothing or equipment designed to reduce employee exposure to chemical, biological, and physical hazards when on a worksite. It is used to protect employees when engineering and administrative controls are not feasible to reduce the risks to acceptable levels.

- Prevents unnecessary injury in the workplace
- Protects employees from excessive chemical exposure
- Prevents the spread of germs and infectious diseases
- Helps the installation comply with regulatory requirements
- Improve employee productivity and efficiency

Contact the Garrison Safety Office for your recommended PPE review at 531-SAFE



Protect Your Back When Lifting



Questions? Contact the Garrison Safety Office at (726)780-1087

Plan before you lift: Know the weight, clear your path, and decide if you need help

Bend your knees, not your back: Squat down, keep your back straight, and let your legs do the work

Keep the load close: Hold objects close to your body to reduce strain

Avoid twisting: Turn with your feet, not your waist, to prevent injury

Ask for help or use equipment: Team lifting, dollies, or forklifts are safer than risking you back

Know your limits: if it feels too heavy, it probably is

A Strong Back is Built by Smart Lifting, Not Heavy Lifting

**EFMP** **Exceptional Family Member Program**

WE WANT TO hear from you

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS & SUGGESTIONS



YOUR FEEDBACK IS IMPORTANT TO US AND WILL ACTIVELY GUIDE IMPROVEMENTS TO OUR EFMP SERVICES AT FORT POLK



Army Community Service & Prevention Center



Army & Air Force Exchange Service to Expand Veteran Benefit Awareness

By **Karrington Bradley**
AAFES Public Affairs

DALLAS — During their midwinter conference, leaders with the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs heard first-hand how the Army & Air Force Exchange Service continues to support all who have served. The aim of the Exchange's Senior Enlisted Advisor, Chief Master Sgt. Richard Martinez, United States Air Force, and retired Army Chief of Staff, Lt. Col. Jose Hernandez, was to strengthen relationships with state Veteran Administration directors and better understand how the Exchange can further strengthen support of veterans and their families.

The hard-earned Exchange benefit is life-long. Since 2017, the Department of War has authorized all honorably discharged Veterans shop tax-free — with military-exclusive pricing — at ShopMyExchange.com. In 2020, service-connected disabled veterans and their caregivers were granted in-store privileges at post and base exchanges.

"State VA leaders play a critical role in connecting veterans to the resources they've earned," said Martinez, noting that this marks the first time the Exchange is presenting at the group's annual conference. "We're here to share information, answer questions and support those efforts by helping ensure Veterans understand how to access their earned benefits."



Martinez and Hernandez attended the NAS-DVA conference March 3 in Washington, D.C. Conferencegoers were encouraged to attend to learn more about how the lifelong Exchange benefit improves Quality of Life for all who served and have served.

"This conference is an important opportunity to collaborate with leaders who are deeply committed to serving Veterans," said Hernandez, who served 26 years the Army, retiring as a lieutenant colonel. "By working closely with NASDVA, we can help close information gaps and support shared goals of improving veterans' Quality of Life."

NASDVA has served Veterans of the United States and its territories for more than 75

years. The organization works to secure uniformity, equality, efficiency and effectiveness in providing services to veterans and their families across all states and territories and is the nation's second largest provider of veteran services.

Veterans with confirmed eligibility can shop tax free at ShopMyExchange.com, enjoying exclusive military pricing on name brand merchandise. Exchange earnings are reinvested, 100%, into military Quality of Life programs, directly benefiting Soldiers, Airmen, Guardians, retirees and veterans. To learn more about eligibility and shopping benefits, visit <https://publicaffairs-sme.com/Community/veterans>.

TGIF! Exchange gives military shoppers chance to Win Each Week

By **Zach Wright**
AAFES Public Affairs

DALLAS – The Army & Air Force Exchange is making Fridays even better for military shoppers with its Free Friday giveaways.

Authorized military shoppers worldwide who comment on the Exchange's Free Friday post each Friday at Facebook.com/ShopMyExchange will be automatically entered to win trending products, including kitchen and housewares, furniture, power tools and more.

"Free Fridays add excitement to the end of the week," said Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Rich Martinez, the Exchange's senior enlisted advisor. "By commenting on Facebook, shoppers have an easy opportunity to win something that adds value to their homes and daily life."

In 2025, shoppers won nearly \$25,000 in Free Friday prizes, including appliances, bedding, patio sets and more.

Since the giveaway started in 2017, military shoppers have won more than \$185,000 in prizes.

Among 2025 winners is Daniel Duplichien,



of Keesler Air Force Base, an Air Force Veteran with 22 years of service, who won a vacuum set.

"I've entered a few sweepstakes hoping to win," Duplichien said. "Then suddenly, I won a Free Fridays giveaway — two vacuum cleaners. The standup one will soon replace my old one, then the other will be a gift to family or friends. Thanks, Free Friday giveaways."

Free Friday giveaways are open to all authorized Exchange shoppers 18 and older, including honorably discharged and disabled Veter-

ans, and Department of War and Coast Guard civilians and retirees.

All comments made on the Free Friday Facebook post by 11:59 p.m. Central time on the day of the post will be entered.

Winners will be randomly selected and notified by Facebook message from the verified Facebook.com/shopmyexchange account and/or email from socialmedia@aafes.com.

Shoppers can find official Free Friday rules at <https://publicaffairs-sme.com/Community/2017/02/01/free-friday-rules/>.



Garrison Public Affairs mentors Middle School and Teen Center youth



Keith Houin, deputy director of Fort Polk's Garrison Public Affairs Office, explains the importance of communication in any chosen career field to several Middle School and Teen students March 2. The teens were also able to participate in a mock podcast, with the Fort Polk Podcast host, Jeff England, about all the MST has to offer them. The students were at PAO as part of the "Mondays Out and About with the Middle School and Teen program." The free program is geared toward students in grades 6-12. It exposes them to a variety of work force development opportunities. (U.S. Army photos by Angie Thorne)



Beyond learning some key communication skills and tips for taking part in a real podcast, the MST students seemed to enjoy their time spent at PAO.



MAIN POST CHAPEL
**FOOD PANTRY
HOURS**

MONDAY-THURSDAY
9-11 A.M. • 2-4 P.M.

FRIDAY
9-11 A.M. • 2-3 P.M.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY
CLOSED

U.S. ARMY FORT POLK
**FOLLOW
US**



SCAN ME



SCAN ME



SCAN ME



SCAN ME



@USArmyFortPolk



/usarmyfortpolk



@usarmyfortpolk



home.army.mil/polok

ACCESS CONTROL POINTS 2 & 5

EXTENDED HOURS

EFFECTIVE
MARCH 9

**Monday – Friday (including training
holidays)**

5:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Saturday – Sunday & U.S. Holidays
Closed

In response to community
feedback, the garrison is
extending operating hours at
ACP 2 and ACP 5 to:

- Provide earlier access for morning
PT and early meetings
- Allow later exit access to Leesville
and nearby schools

GATE LOCATIONS

ACP 2
University Parkway
(near Parkway Elementary)

ACP 5
East side of University Parkway
(near the Post Office)

Thank you for your feedback as we continue working to
improve access for our community!



Celebrating 20 years of impact: Corvias Foundation unveils college connection website

By Corvias

WARWICK, RI — Military-connected students now have a powerful new ally in planning their academic future. Continuing its 20th anniversary celebration, Corvias Foundation, a non-profit committed to the educational success of military-connected families and students, has launched College Connection, a free resource to help military-connected students navigate the college landscape. This launch builds on two decades of impact, including more than \$20 million in scholarships awarded to military-connected families since 2006.

College Connection considers the unique experiences and strengths of military-connected students and provides access to qualified third parties who offer expert advice, including for scholarships and the FAFSA completion process. The curated site also delivers insight into choosing a college, applying, understanding admissions timelines and more.

For a customized experience, military-connected students stationed at one of seven Corvias-managed installations can sign up for the Purple Tassel Program via the College Connection website. Purple Tassel begins with a self-discovery assessment to match a student's interests and learning styles with college majors and careers.

"Military-connected students bring resiliency to the table, often from frequent relocations, an experience they can use to their advantage in college applications," said Corvias Founda-



tion Executive Director Julie Allen. "These students often demonstrate a tenacity for learning and a dedication to study. Corvias is proud to invest in their future, and we believe College Connection will help them achieve their goals."

College Connection and the Purple Tassel Program are the latest investments Corvias Foundation has made in supporting the educational and career goals of military families.

Corvias Foundation's reputation for delivering high-quality educational resources to mil-

itary families has earned national recognition, including an invitation to join the Bob Woodruff Foundation's Got Your 6 Network and acceptance into the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) after a rigorous federal vetting process to ensure the Foundation meets the highest standards.

To learn more about the resources available to military-connected families and students, please visit: <https://corviasfoundation.org/college-connection>

Check your inbox for the Army Housing Tenant Satisfaction Survey!



Open now!





March MADNESS



MARCH 17th-20th

Event #1

Join us!

Corvias families, stand tall!

Help us improve — we're listening to all.

Take the survey, then take your shot —

Guess the number and win the pot!

Stop by your Community Center anytime through March 17th to April 7th OR attend one of our three events to register for your chance to win an exciting family prize!!



PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

★★★ FORT POLK ★★★

CAREER SUMMIT

RESOURCES | TRAINING | CONNECTIONS



📍 Bayou Theater

7830 Mississippi Ave. | Ft. Polk, LA 71450

📍 Warrior Fitness Center

8184 Alabama Ave. | Ft. Johnson, LA 71459

APRIL 2

Transitioning service members, veterans, military spouses, and military caregivers are welcome.

**JOB SEEKER
WORKSHOPS**

9 AM - 12:30 PM

**HIRING
FAIR**

1:30 - 4 PM



Register now!

HiringOurHeroes.org/polk

*The DoW and Service Branches do not endorse any company, sponsor or their products or services.

BE SURE TO REGISTER!

WARFIGHTER BRAIN HEALTH AFTER TBI GUIDANCE FOR LEADERS

Traumatic Brain Injury Center of Excellence

Leaders play an important role in optimizing warfighter brain health after traumatic brain injury. This fact sheet provides guidance on leaders' responsibilities to ensure service member readiness after an injury event.

HIGH-RISK ACTIVITIES

Concussion, also known as a mild TBI, is a head injury resulting from a hit, blast, blow, or jolt to the head. The Department of Defense identifies the following as potentially concussive events:

- Direct blow to the head or witnessed loss of consciousness
- Involvement in a vehicle blast event, collision, or rollover
- Presence within 50 meters of a blast
- Exposure to more than one blast event

SIGNS, SYMPTOMS, AND OPERATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF TBI



Signs—what may be seen at time of injury

- Slow to get up
- Confusion
- Blank or vacant look
- Stumbling
- Labored movements
- Inability to respond appropriately to questions



Symptoms—what service member may report

- Headache
- Visual disturbances
- Ringing in the ears
- Dizziness/balance problems
- Nausea/vomiting
- Memory problems
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability



Operational Consequences

- Poor marksmanship
- Slower reaction time
- Decreased concentration
- Decreased situational awareness
- Difficulty performing quickly under pressure
- Difficulty multitasking

Released November 2018 | Revised November 2023 by the Traumatic Brain Injury Center of Excellence
This product is reviewed annually and is current until superseded. 800-870-9244 • Health.mil/TBICoE
4069.2.1.3



This is the Fort Polk spring religious education program schedule. All requests for changes must be made — in writing — to the Director of Religious Education at chrissa.m.gross.civ@army.mil and approved by the garrison chaplain.

March 2026						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 CCD, CH Lit Unity Kids, Choir	2 RE Synch	3 PWOC	4	5 LDS, CWOC,	6 Stations	7 Pagan RE
8 CCD, CH Lit Unity Kids, Choir	9	10 PWOC	11 PWR WED	12 LDS, CWOC, Polk@ Polk	13 Stations	14 Catholic Community Service Banquet! TBD
15 CCD, CH Lit, Unity Kids, Choir	16	17 PWOC	18 PWR WED	19 LDS, CWOC, Polk@ Polk Confirmation	20 Stations	21 MOA FHC/OCIA / OCIC Retreats?
22 CCD, CH Lit, Unity Kids, Choir	23 PWOC Board Evening Diner Event	24 PWOC	25 PWR WED Virtual Day Vernon Parish	26 Child Protection Class 1300-1500	27 Stations	28
29	30	31	March Child Protection Training day of the week and time adjusted to support daytime availabilities.		Summer RE schedule post-ed March 2026	

Unity Fellowship

A Fort Polk Religious Support Office Worship Community

Praise & Worship

Use your gifts and interests in music to help build up the Body of Christ. Volunteer opportunities based on your schedule—serve weekly or when you're able. Commitment level is up to you. Rehearsals: Thursdays at 6:30 PM at the Main Post Chapel.

Contact Chaplain Devin Lilly today

1-337-718-7238

devin.m.lilly.mil@army.mil



Fort Polk Religious Support Office



SUNDAY WORSHIP & RELIGIOUS ED

Join Us Sunday Mornings.

- 0900 Catholic Mass
- 1100 Unity Fellowship
- Children's Lit. held during Mass.
- Unity Kids Church held during worship
- Unity Kids Choir
- Catholic Religious Ed beginning in Sept.



PWOC

Protestant Women of the Chapel meets Tuesday mornings at Main Post Chapel . 9 a.m.



POWER WEDNESDAY

Christian Community helping you power through your week.

- Youth of the Chapel
- Little Explorers
- Grief Share
- OCIA
- Unity Fellowship Study
- Other Studies



THURSDAY SMALL GROUPS

Looking to belong? We have a space just for you in one of our small groups.

- LDS Womens small group.
- Parents of Little Kids @ Polk.
- Catholic Women of the Chapel (CWOC).



JUMMAH

Jumma Prayer Services.

- Friday afternoons at Glory Chapel (1400)



PAGAN COMMUNITY

Join us , we love community. The Pagan Community gathers every other Saturday for religious education and worship according to schedule. Come check out the grove.



SPECIAL EVENTS & IMPORTANT NOTES

- Fall Fest
- RE Training
- Jewish RE Events
- Christmas RE event
- Vacation Bible School
- Food Pantry
- Family Life Counseling open in OCT
- 24/7 Chaplain Available
- Community Garden
- Volunteer Opportunities



For more information contact Chrissa Gross, the Director of Religious Education at Chrissa.m.gross.civ@army.mil

A Place to Belong ❤️

Rosepine Elementary perform annual *Random Acts of Kindness*



Rosepine Elementary students took part in their annual "Random Acts of Kindness" tour at Fort Polk Feb. 20. The students visited Soldiers to deliver home-made cookies and show them gratitude for their selfless service.

Are you receiving Fort Polk Alerts?

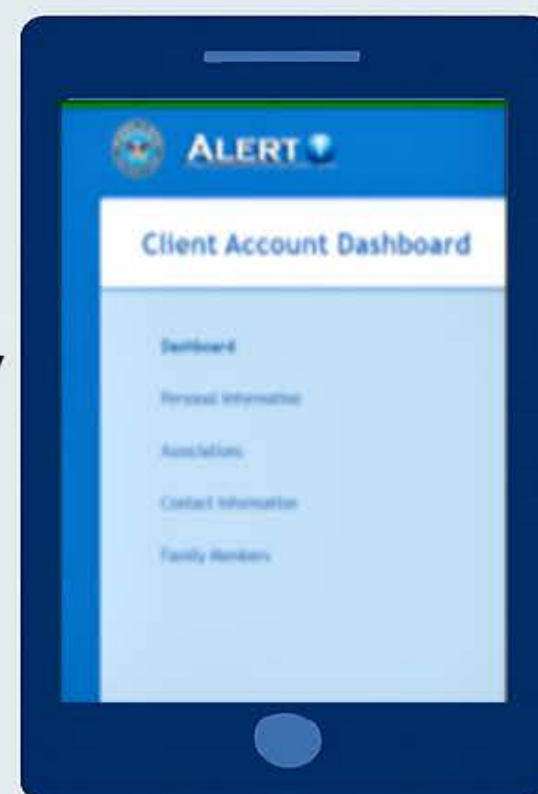


When Soldiers and Civilians (with a CAC) change duty stations, they must make the update in the system themselves.

If they do not, they will not receive Fort Polk alerts. Soldiers and Civilians with a CAC can add family members to the alert system. Family members without a CAC cannot independently sign up for Fort Polk alerts.

It's easy to set up!

1. Go to the ALERTS homepage, <https://alert.csd.disa.mil/AlertSplashPage> (CAC Login)
2. Once logged in, the client dashboard will display.
3. Enter / Update Personal Information.
4. Enter / Update / Select "Associations" (military location, command, YOUR address (work / home) and "Additional Attributes" define your preferred / required "Notification" lists.
5. Under "contract information" once you add your primary numbers, ensure you check the "Receives Text Messages" box.
6. Family Members is NOT required (optional only)



U.S. Army Fort Polk

1.8K followers • 32 following

Official Fort Polk Garrison Facebook page supporting Soldiers, Families, Civilians, and community.

■ Military Base

Following

Message

Search

Look for the above header when searching for the new Fort Polk Garrison Public Affairs Office's new Facebook page and click follow today!

TORNADO SAFETY A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS



Identify Shelter Locations: Use small interior rooms or hallways on the lowest level (away from windows, doors, outside walls).



Warning Alerts: Always know who is in the building. Create emergency response roles (with backups). Have a tornado alert system.



Store Emergency Supplies: Keep first aid kits, food, water, batteries, and a NOAA weather radio in all shelters.



Train Staff: Ensure everyone knows what to do during emergencies. Conduct tornado sheltering drills at least yearly.



weather.gov
osha.gov/tornado

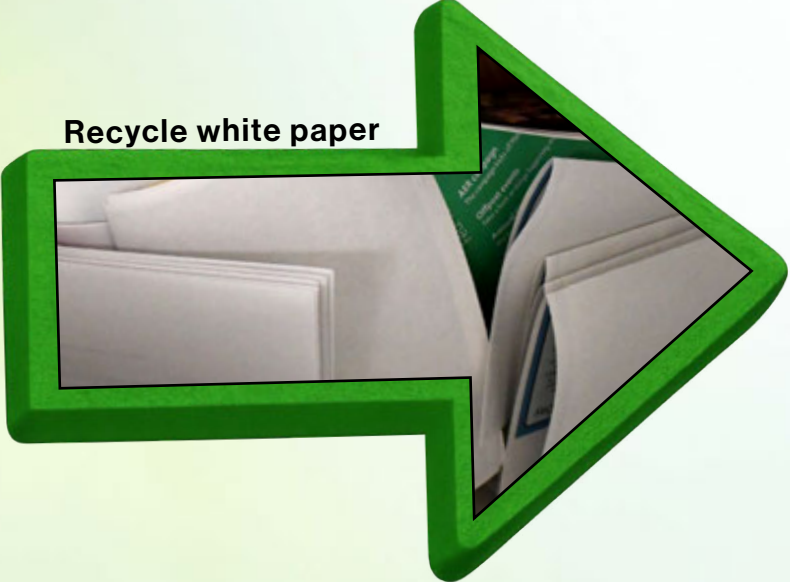


Fort Polk Recycle Center takes what you recycle and turns it into money for fun events for Soldiers and families to enjoy

Recycle cardboard



Recycle white paper



Forge Fest



Catfish Derby



Movie night



Louisiana Hayride



Snowflake Festival



Recycle printer cartridges



Recycle plastic bottles



Recycle Aluminum cans



By Angie Thorne

Fort Polk Garrison Public Affairs Office

The Fort Polk Qualified Recycling Program's Recycling Center, buildings 3620/3622, located at the corner of Georgia and Maine Avenues, (currently under road construction – use the detour to the back entrance) is where Soldiers can take part in the Riches from Recycling program. Beyond the environmental benefits, the Riches from Recycling program highlights how recycling on post can also provide a financial benefit to military units and the larger Fort Polk community. Military units on the installation have the opportunity to earn cash at their battalion level from recycling materials at the Recycling Center. To contribute toward unit funds, units and their Families should: Recycle cardboard and paper (mixed or white) at the Recycling Center's bay #2 during business hours – Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. For Soldiers and Family members to get credit they must bring their recyclables inside, not to the 24-hour drop off. Request that the weight of the recyclable materials be tracked and delegated to the unit upon drop off. A QRP employee will be available to assist in weighing the materials and ensuring it is correctly recorded for the unit. Recycling efforts directly fund community events and projects.

Projects funded for fiscal year 2026 include: Hazardous Waste Drums \$5,000 – Youth Catfish Derby \$10,000 – DFMWR Earth Day \$11,500 – Riches from Recycling Unit Incentive \$11,500 – DFMWR Louisiana Hayride \$18,000 – DFMWR Snowflake and Tree Lighting \$20,000 – Oil Containers Repair \$25,000 – DFMWR Summer Concert \$30,000 – DFMWR Movie Night \$36,000 – Total – \$167,000.

Kris Rector, Qualified Recycling Program operations manager, said recycling turns into money that provides these fun, family events, as well as improving the environment. "By recycling, we preserve precious resources, reduce pollution and create a sustainable future for generations to come. It might sound cliché, but one person can really make a difference"

SHARP



**The Safe Helpline is available 24/7
for victims of sexual assault.**

Talk to someone who understands:

safehelpline.org



Fort Polk's SHARP 24/7 Hotline number is 337-718-7272

**R
YOU
USING
OPSEC
TO DENY YOUR
ADVERSARY VITAL
MISSION INFORMATION**

**1
2
3
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7**

THEY ARE



St. Patrick's Day fun facts



GREEN AS AN IRISH COLOR HAS POLITICAL ORIGINS. THE COLOR DATES BACK TO THE GREAT IRISH REBELLION OF 1641, WHERE CATHOLIC LOCAL LEADERS REVOLTED AGAINST THE ENGLISH CROWN, USING A GREEN FLAG.

LEPRECHAUNS ORIGINATED IN IRISH FOLKLORE. THE SUPERNATURAL FAIRIES, OR SPRITES, WERE THOUGHT TO BRING GOOD LUCK AND PROTECTION TO HUMANS, OR TO MESS UP THEIR PLANS.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY'S NAMESAKE WAS NOT BORN IRISH. ST. PATRICK IS THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN A ROMAN CITIZEN IN BRITAIN WHO WAS ENSLAVED AND TAKEN TO IRELAND.

LEGEND HAS IT THAT ST. PATRICK USED THE SHAMROCK, A THREE-LEAF CLOVER, TO TEACH THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY—FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT IN ONE.

CORNERED BEEF AND CABBAGE IS AN IRISH-AMERICAN INVENTION. THE DISH IS NOT COMMON IN IRELAND.

THE FIRST RECORDED ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE DIDN'T TAKE PLACE IN IRELAND—IT HAPPENED IN ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA, IN 1601!

WHILE ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADES HAVE BEEN A TRADITION IN THE U.S., IRELAND DIDN'T START HOSTING LARGE-SCALE CELEBRATIONS UNTIL THE 1990S. DUBLIN'S FESTIVAL TO RIVAL ANY IN THE WORLD!