

JRTC AND FORT POLK

JAN. 14 VOL. 53, NO. 1

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## COVER PHOTO

*Soldiers, family members, retirees and DOD civilians work out at Fort Polk's Wheelock Fitness Center Jan. 6 as they focus on starting a healthier 2026. (U.S. Army photo by Angie Thorne)*



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## JRTC AND FORT POLK

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For additional information, please visit the @JRTcandFortPolk Facebook page.



# Fort Polk celebrates its 85th anniversary



Fort Polk celebrated its 85th anniversary Jan. 7 at the Warrior Community Center. Spc. Gerald Hardy, Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers vice president (left) and Brig. Gen. Jason Curl, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general (right) cut the cake celebrating the special day. (U.S. Army photos by Kayla Moore)



OUTSIDE THE GATES

# OFF POST

## EVENTS



**15-19**  
Jan.

**Vernon Parish King Day Coalition**  
LEESVILLE, LA.

[Click for more info](#)



**19**  
Jan.

**41st Annual  
MLK Jr. Day Celebration**  
DERIDDER, LA.

[Click for more info](#)



**22**  
Jan.

**Mardi Gras Community Dance**  
LAKE CHARLES, LA.

[Click for more info](#)



**3**  
Feb.

**Quilting Class**  
DERIDDER, LA.

[Click for more info](#)



**14**  
Feb.

**Mardi Gras Gala**  
DERIDDER, LA.

[Click for more info](#)

NO ARMY OR FEDERAL ENDORSEMENT IMPLIED.



# Fort Polk military working dog, Astra, gets emergency medical care

**By Sandra Sarr**  
MFA

BATON ROUGE, La. — Astra, a military working dog who has deployed on Secret Service missions to protect U.S. presidents and assisted soldiers in Middle East war zones, faced a life-threatening crisis of her own in December.

The Patrol Explosive Detector Dog was airlifted from the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk to the Louisiana State University School of Veterinary Medicine's teaching hospital Dec. 10, in a medically equipped Black Hawk UH60 helicopter. She was in the throes of hypovolemic shock.

"Our decision was to medevac her to LSU. We wanted the best and fastest care for her," said Sgt. Pierce Getner, the squad leader who trains, handles and maintains dog teams at Fort Polk, a U.S. Army training base in Vernon Parish, Louisiana.

Astra, an 8-year-old Belgian Malinois, was suffering from a continuously elevated heart rate, lethargy, anorexia and vomiting. Capt. Isabel Grazian-Hobbs, DVM, military veterinarian on duty and a 2023 LSU Vet Med graduate, worked with her unit, Veterinary Readiness Activity, Fort Hood and Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital to help Astra and determine the best course of action to save her.

Grazian-Hobbs briefed the flight crew on what medications and support equipment would be needed in flight. Once the helicopter — staffed with a flight surgeon, handlers, pilots and crew members — touched down, she was rushed into LSU Vet Med's Emergency & Critical Care Service, where an emergency clinical team led by Drs. Jack Lee and Leslie Serrano went to work on saving her life.

Astra was in a life-threatening Addisonian crisis—later confirmed by tests—involving severe dehydration, electrolyte imbalances (low sodium, high potassium), low blood sugar and collapse, requiring immediate emergency treatment with fluids and steroids to save the dog's life.

A severe lack of cortisol and aldosterone (a hormone that controls blood volume and electrolyte concentrations) in dogs with Addison's Disease directly leads to the crisis.

"The ER team stabilized Astra. They were essential her acute care, which allowed her to be seen by Internal Medicine

to get at the root problem. It was a team effort," said Dr. Gregor Boot, resident, Small Animal Internal Medicine, who was called in to take over the case.

Testing with rapid results was crucial to determining the cause of her illness. Maria Smith, LSU Diagnostics, delivered the test results within one hour to Dr. Patty Lathan, Internal Medicine service chief, who interpreted the results that led to the definitive diagnosis.

Astra was diagnosed with Addison's Disease, which affects both dogs and humans, according to Lathan, who is an expert in Addison's and also has the disease herself. Addison's has earned the moniker of "The Great Pretender" because it results in clinical signs that could be caused by many different reasons.

The clinical signs can come on suddenly and severely or chronic signs can emerge gradually resulting in the dog becoming very sick.

Military regulations require that handlers of MWDs stay with the dogs at all times. Getner and Staff Sgt. David Tatterson drove from Fort Polk to LSU Vet Med to be with Astra.

They slept next to her in her kennel to watch over her during nights in ICU as she recovered. When the ICU clinicians heard that the Soldiers planned to sleep inside the kennel, they provided blankets to make their stay as comfortable as possible.

"Overall, it was a fantastic experience at LSU Vet Med. They were so accommodating," Getner said.

Military Working Dogs are highly trained canine service members in the U.S. Armed Forces and are essential for roles like explosives and narcotics detection, patrol, sentry duty and search and rescue while using specialized gear and saving lives.

The dogs form deep bonds with their handlers and are often considered fellow warriors deserving of expert care.

Belgian Malinois are a favored breed for their drive and agility.

Astra has served side-by-side in combat zones with a handler who received the Combat Action Badge, which is earned by U.S. Army Soldiers who personally engage the enemy in active combat in a hostile fire zone.

"We ask a lot of these dogs. Astra was in a bomb shelter for a whole month during

hostile fire while deployed in Iraq for nine months. She's been deployed more than most MWDs, and it'd be hard to imagine her putting in all of that work and not get to reap the rewards of her efforts. We want to see Astra retire, relax and enjoy life knowing she did a good job. We want the best for her," said Getner, who is handler of a different MWD. "It is impossible to describe the bond you have with your dog. With my own, we were newly partnered and deployed overseas, not yet fully trusting each other. Almost overnight, we both realized, 'It's just me and you,' and everything changed. We rely on each other."

"Handlers of MWDs like Astra are great clients because they can tell us specifically what is going on with their dogs. They are so attuned to them," Lathan said.

The disease is significantly more common in dogs than in people.

According to Dr. Lathan, LSU Vet Med diagnoses approximately one case of Addison's per month in dogs brought to LSU. She notes that more Addison's cases are confirmed when testing in LSU Diagnostics is done for other veterinarians in the region.

Astra was discharged from the hospital Dec. 12. She will be on lifelong medications: prednisone and desoxycorticosterone to replace the cortisol (stress hormone that Addison's prevents her body from making) and aldosterone, respectively.

The medications will be adjusted over time and are expected to protect her from further episodes like the one that landed her at LSU Vet Med.

She is expected to recover fully. She will retire pending her disposition evaluation, which determines a dog's suitability to transition to retirement.

"Astra should have a good quality of life for the rest of her days," Lathan said.

**About LSU Vet Med: Bettering lives through education, public service and discovery**

The LSU School of Veterinary Medicine is one of only 33 veterinary schools in the U.S. and the only one in Louisiana.

LSU Vet Med is dedicated to improving and protecting the lives of animals and people through superior education, transformational research and compassionate care. We teach. We heal. We discover. We protect.



Medically equipped Black Hawk helicopter landing across the street from LSU School of Veterinary Medicine. (Photo courtesy of LSU Vet Med)



Dr. Patty Lathan with Astra. (Photo by Sandra Sarr, LSU Vet Med)



Back row from left: Assistant Professor of Small Animal Internal Medicine, Dr. Agostino Buono, Veterinary Technician, Ashley Benjamin, Small Animal Internal Medicine Resident, Grégor Boot, Senior Veterinary Student, Katherine Woolf and Professor of Small Animal Internal Medicine, Patty Lathan. Bottom row from left: Staff Sgt. David Tatterson, MWD Astra, and Sgt. Pierce Getner. (Photo by Chris Jones, LSU Vet Med)



# DENSE FOG IS A ROAD HAZARD



- Turn on your low-beam headlights when approaching fog
- Drive slowly, and keep your distance from other vehicles
- Consider delaying travel when a Dense Fog Advisory is issued

weather.gov



# DON'T UNDERESTIMATE STRONG WIND



- The safest place is inside, in an interior room, and away from windows
- Prepare your home by trimming trees, repairing loose siding & shutters, and securing loose items

weather.gov



## WINTER DRIVING KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

**Check road conditions.**  
Call 511 or visit your state's DOT webpage to check on road conditions. Choose a different route or adjust your travel plans if road conditions are poor.

**Pack an emergency supply kit.**  
Stock your vehicle with a mobile phone, charger, batteries, blankets, flashlight, first-aid kit, high-calorie, non-perishable food, candle to melt snow for drinking water, sack of sand or cat litter for traction, shovel, scraper, and battery booster cables.

**Get the weather forecast.**  
Change your travel plans if hazardous weather is expected.



**Ready your vehicle.**  
Check your battery, wipers, coolant, and other systems affected by cold temperature. Make sure your tires have good tread. Clear snow, ice or dirt from your windows, lights and camera.



## WINTER DRIVING FOCUS ON SAFETY

**Prevent a bad situation from getting worse.**  
If you're involved in an accident, try to pull your vehicle off the road and use hazard lights, flares, reflectors or flashlights to warn other drivers. STAY OFF THE ROAD, dial 911, and wait for the police to arrive. These actions can help prevent multi-vehicle crashes in winter weather.

**Avoid risky driving behavior.**  
Always avoid risky behavior such as texting or phone calls, speeding, or drug/alcohol use. These activities are always dangerous, but the risk is much higher in winter weather.

**Wear your seatbelt.**  
Accidents happen more frequently with wet and icy roads. Always wear your seatbelt and ensure everyone in your vehicle does the same, including young children in proper car seats.



## WINTER DRIVING WHILE ON THE ROAD

**Don't crowd the plow.**  
The road behind an active plow is safer to drive on. Give them plenty of room to work and only pass when it is safe to do so.

**Change the way you drive.**  
Drive slower than normal and leave more room between you and surrounding vehicles when roads are wet, snowy or icy. DO NOT use cruise control, brake quickly or take sharp turns.

**Stay alert.**  
Make sure you keep your gas tank over half full and keep a close eye on road conditions, which can change rapidly. On road trips, take breaks often so you can stay focused on the road.





## Why you should care about AI

By Centers of Excellence

WASHINGTON — Technological advances allow both the private and public sector to use the resources needed to collect, house, and process large amounts of data, as well as to apply computational methods to it. This changes the way that humans interact with computers. AI has already changed the way that businesses interact with their customers. Entire markets have changed around this technology to provide fast, efficient, and personalized service. We should use this transformative technology to enhance and support the many ways that the government serves its people.

We are also facing increasing complexities and interdependencies in our challenges, as well as increasingly large volumes of data we need to use to understand and solve for those challenges. We are past the point where human cognitive abilities can directly process and make sense of all this information. We need AI tools and techniques to support human capabilities to process this volume of information to reveal insights that support better decisions.

Most federal agencies know that input data volumes are increasing relentlessly and not being handled thoroughly. In the past, we have blamed this kind of shortfall on lack of personnel, supplies, or equipment.

But while these factors are still true, there is no practical increase in any of those resources that would itself suffice to address the new information volumes. With thousands or millions of pages of documents, we could never even try to hire enough staff to read through them all.

The federal government needs AI. The use of AI algorithms informed by human domain expertise drive insights and inform decisions and actions. The use of AI will enable the agencies to handle millions or billions of data inputs with a feasible level of personnel and funding.

To keep up with the ever-increasing volume of data and information, we must change the way we think about our work and processes. AI capabilities will allow us to process inputs and understand reality in today and tomorrow's complex world.

# Artificial

# Intelligence

## Basic AI definitions

- **Artificial intelligence** — AI enables machines to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. ([www.tc.columbia.edu](http://www.tc.columbia.edu))
- **Machine learning** — a computational method that is a subfield of artificial intelligence that enables a computer to learn to perform tasks by analyzing a large dataset without being explicitly programmed. ([www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com))
- **Large language models** — a language model that utilizes deep methods on an extremely large data set as a basis for predicting and constructing natural-sounding text. ([www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com))
- **Deep learning** — A type of machine learning that uses multi-layered neural networks to process complex data, such as for image and speech recognition. ([www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com))
- **Generative AI** — artificial intelligence that is capable of generating new content (such as images or text) in response to a submitted prompt (such as a query) by learning from a large reference database of examples. ([www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com))
- **Multimodal models** — Multimodal AI refers to machine learning models capable of processing and integrating information from multiple modalities or types of data. These modalities can include text, images, audio, video and other forms of sensory input. ([www.ibm.com](http://www.ibm.com))
- **Chatbot** — A chatbot is a computer program that simulates human conversation with an end user. Not all chatbots are equipped with artificial intelligence, but modern chatbots increasingly use conversational AI techniques such as natural language processing to understand user questions and automate responses to them. ([www.ibm.com](http://www.ibm.com))
- **Hallucinations** — AI hallucination is a phenomenon where, in a large language model often a generative AI chatbot or computer vision tool, perceives patterns or objects that are nonexistent or imperceptible to human observers, creating outputs that are nonsensical or altogether inaccurate. ([www.ibm.com](http://www.ibm.com))
- **Dataset** — A dataset in AI refers to a structured collection of data points or examples used to train, validate, and test machine learning models. It can be thought of as the "fuel" that powers AI systems. By analysing patterns, features, and relationships within the dataset, AI algorithms learn to make predictions, classify information, or generate new content. ([www.cyberly.org](http://www.cyberly.org))
- **Algorithm** — an AI algorithm is a set of instructions or rules a machine follows to perform a specific task. Step-by-step instructions take inputs (data) and deliver outputs (decisions or predictions). These algorithms learn, improve and adapt over time by uncovering patterns and insights in data. (<https://medium.com>)
- **Prompts** — An artificial intelligence (AI) prompt is a question, command or statement that a person gives to an artificial intelligence model, such as a large language model, to guide it in generating a specific response. The prompt provides the AI with the necessary context or instructions so it can produce output that is relevant to what you are asking or requesting. ([www.geeksforgeeks.org](http://www.geeksforgeeks.org))
- **Copilot** — is a software assistant that is context-aware and is fueled by Large AI-Language Models or domain-specific machine learning algorithms. Copilots can understand spoken language, generate content, evaluate data and compose code in real-time in response to user input and system state, unlike static automation. They use massive pre-trained datasets and continuous learning cycles to deliver intelligent, personalized enterprise workflow support. ([www.xcelligen.com](http://www.xcelligen.com))



today



**\*Check out the  
JRTC and Fort Polk  
Facebook page —  
follow us!**

**\*Download the free My Army Post App (MAPA) for the latest Guardian and installation information.**

**\*Request to be added to the Guardian Distro List at [angela.l.thorne4.civ@army.mil](mailto:angela.l.thorne4.civ@army.mil). The Guardian will be delivered right to your email.**

**\*Go to the  
JRTC and Fort Polk  
home page and  
click on the  
Guardian link.**



# Attention Fort Polk Community, Drones in the Air!

The Fort Polk community may have seen units operating small Unmanned Aerial Systems (sUAS) on the installation. These operations are authorized and part of ongoing efforts to enhance training, proficiency and operational readiness.

However, it's important to note that while sUAS will be conducting authorized flights on post, Fort Polk remains a "No Drone Zone" — personal drones are not permitted. Unauthorized drone operations violate the Commanding General's Policy Letter #19, poses safety risks, and can disrupt military activities.

Your understanding and cooperation are appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns, contact the Warrior Operations Center, [usarmy.polk.imcom.mbx.eoc-ioc@army.mil](mailto:usarmy.polk.imcom.mbx.eoc-ioc@army.mil) or 726-780-0410. Thank you for your cooperation.



# JRTC and Fort Polk's Education Center recognize graduates

The JRTC and Fort Polk College Graduate Recognition Ceremony took place Dec. 10, 2025. Graduates include:

**Central Texas College**  
Jason Stowell  
Associates of Arts — General Studies  
Rebecca Laurent  
Associates of Applied Science — Child Development  
Robert Mitchell  
Logistics and Global Supply Chain Management

**Northwestern State University**  
Nathaniel Madron-Moore  
Evan Teaster  
Associates of General Studies — General Studies  
John Bates  
Alondra Torres  
Bachelor of Science — Psychology  
Karyn Jones  
Doctor of Education in  
Adult Learning and Workforce Development

**Upper Iowa University**  
Dominique Johnson  
Associates of Arts — General Business

**American Public University**  
Ganette K. Hernandez  
Master of Business Administration

**Austin Peay State University**  
Christopher P. Lee  
Bachelor of Science in Sociology  
and Human Development

**Southern New Hampshire University**  
Danae Dixon  
Psychology with Emphasis in Mental Health Counseling

**University of Maryland Global Campus**  
Julius Enriquez  
Master of Science — Cybersecurity Technology



Join us and warm  
up your Fridays!

**HOT COCOA BAR**  
Every Friday in January at  
your Community Center:  
Dogwood, Maple, or Palmetto  
8am - 5pm

Enjoy classic hot cocoa and toppings  
like marshmallows and candy canes.  
We hope to see you!

**Corvias**  
PROPERTY MANAGEMENT



## Corvias Foundation Opens Applications for \$50,000 Employee Family Scholarships

### By Corvias

WARWICK, RI — Corvias Foundation, a nonprofit committed to the educational success of military-connected families and students, is announcing the opening of the application period for its employee scholarship opportunity. This annual scholarship awards up to \$50,000 in total for children of one or more Corvias team members.

Since its inception, Corvias Foundation has awarded more than \$20 million in scholarships to military families and children of Corvias team members.

"For many families, access to higher education can be life-changing," said Julie Allen, Executive Director of Corvias Foundation. "This scholarship reflects our commitment to supporting Corvias employees and helping ensure their children have the resources to pursue college, or other educational pathways with confidence."

To qualify, a student must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Child of a Corvias employee who has been employed at Corvias for at least six months at the time of the application due

- date and is in good standing
  - Aged 16 - 19 at the time of application
  - Minimum 3.0 cumulative unweighted GPA at the time of application
  - Planning to attend a four-year college or university as an undergraduate student for the entire 2026-2027 academic year
- Children of Corvias employees may apply online here. Applications close at midnight, April 10, 2026.

Applicants are evaluated through a blind review process that balances academic performance and financial need. The approach not only strengthens the quality of the awards but also broadens the benefit to Corvias employees, part of a larger strategy to invest in students' futures to achieve long-term benefits.

Previous scholarship award winners include 2025 recipients Malina Jones, Ciara Henley, Melissa Paolino, and Sylvester Jackson. They all exemplify academic excellence, leadership, and engagement in their school communities.

To learn more about joining the Corvias team, available careers, and the many benefits offered to employees, please visit: <https://www.corvias.com/careers>. About Corvias Foundation



2025 scholarship recipient, Ciara Henley with her family, including parent Charles Henley, Assistant Resident and Leasing Manager at Fort Bragg. (Courtesy Corvias)

Corvias Foundation empowers military families to achieve their educational and career goals. With its flagship program, Opportunity Hubs, the Foundation is connecting its community members with partners. The goal is to support educational achievements, create transformative connections, and prepare military-connected students for their life-enriching college and career decisions. Please visit [CorviasFoundation.org](https://CorviasFoundation.org) to learn more.





### EMPLOYERS DAY

Jan. 28

Fort Polk Library and Education Center  
7460 Colorado Ave., Bldg. 660  
Fort Polk, LA 71459

POC: Christopher Ausbun  
Transition Services Manager  
VOIP: (726) 780-1016  
email: [christopher.m.ausbun.civ@army.mil](mailto:christopher.m.ausbun.civ@army.mil)

### PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS

- Air Streams
- Shreveport Police Department
- Dallas Police Department

POC: Clifton Hill  
Transition Services Specialist  
Office: (337) 531-4621  
VOIP: (726) 780-1017  
email: [clifton.hill.civ@army.mil](mailto:clifton.hill.civ@army.mil)

## MILITARY COMMUNITY VIRTUAL HIRING EVENT

TUESDAY, FEB 10, 2026 | 11AM - 3PM ET

### TRANSITIONING SERVICE MEMBER & SPOUSE



[rmvets.com/TSVCF0226](https://rmvets.com/TSVCF0226)

Join us 30 minutes before the event for an interactive session featuring tips, tools, and best practices.

### FROM LOCAL TO REMOTE — OPPORTUNITIES AT EVERY LEVEL

- |                              |                   |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| ✓ PROJECT MANAGEMENT         | ✓ GOVERNMENT      |
| ✓ TRANSPORTATION / LOGISTICS | ✓ HUMAN RESOURCES |
| ✓ MANAGEMENT / SUPERVISION   | ✓ HEALTHCARE      |
| ✓ INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY     | ✓ AND MORE...     |



# Military Working Dogs train with handlers for real world scenarios

By Angie Thorne  
Fort Polk Public Affairs Office

FORT POLK, La. — K-9 units from the 50th Military Working Dog Detachment took part in training Jan. 8 at the field behind the Public Affairs office on Magnolia St.

A decoy (a Soldier with a protective arm pad used to train K-9s) was hidden in the woodline for a handler and their MWD to find.

The handlers taking part in the training event were given a scenario and told to do a perimeter search for a thief who had stolen equipment from the PAO office. If the decoy is found, the team is supposed to capture the criminal and bring him in.

Sgt. Tristin Dowker, one of the trainers observing the MWD training, said there are two main types of training for the dogs and their handlers to go through — detection and patrol training.

“Today falls under patrol training,” Dowker said. “The purpose is to see how the handler and MWD work together to achieve their task. That includes observing how well the dog reacts to clues we have put out to how the handler reacts to the dog’s changes in behavior.”

Staff Sgt. Seth Dotson, another trainer set to observe the K-9 teams as they work through the scenario, said handlers must learn to look for those physiological differences as dogs go from just sniffing the area to when the dog actually smells a decoy’s scent.

“This training enables the team to work better together as they work to accomplish their mission,” Dotson said.

From the time the scenario begins, the trainers watch the handlers and their dogs and how well they work together and take note of any improvements that can be made.

After the training is completed, the trainers outbrief each team.

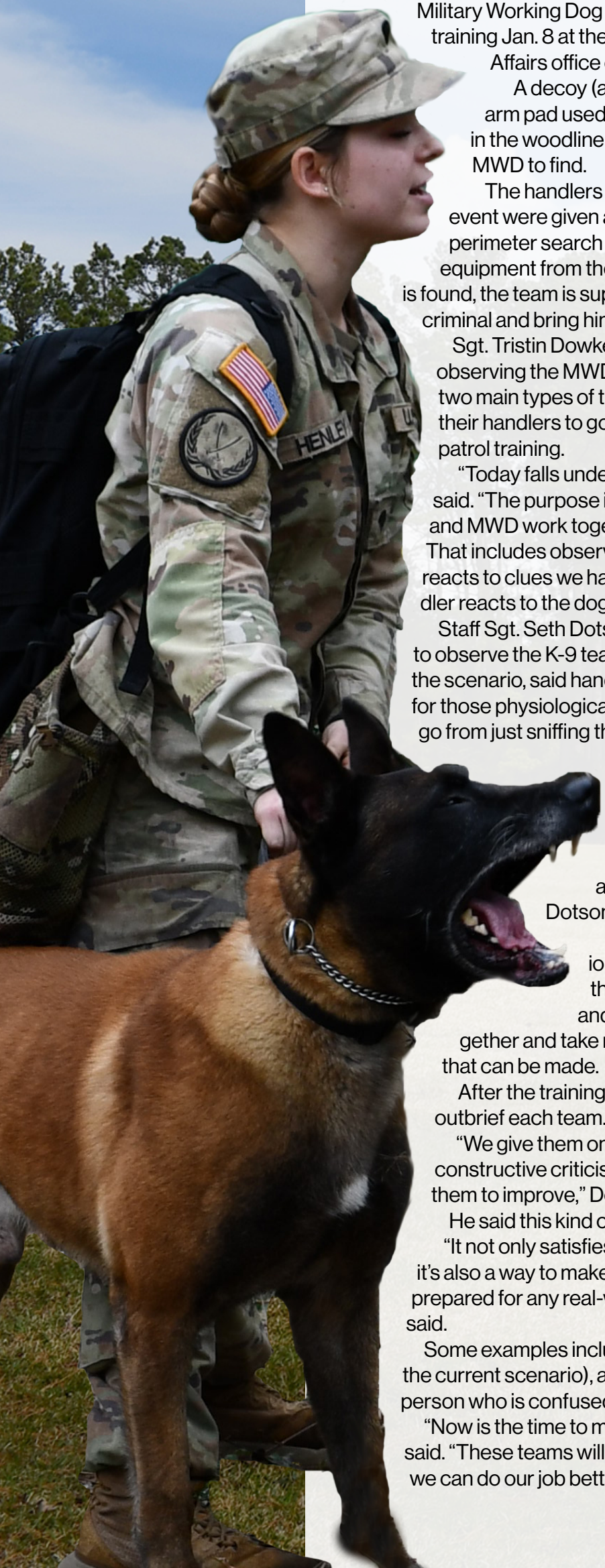
“We give them on-the-spot feedback and constructive criticism on the best ways for them to improve,” Dotson said.

He said this kind of training is important.

“It not only satisfies Army requirements, but it’s also a way to make sure our MWD teams are prepared for any real-world situation,” Dotson said.

Some examples include finding a criminal (like the current scenario), a lost child or an elderly person who is confused and has wandered off.

“Now is the time to make mistakes,” Dotson said. “These teams will learn from this training so we can do our job better when it counts.”



*Spc. Havynn Henley and her Military Working Dog, Gerber, search the perimeter of the woodline while looking for a “criminal.” (U.S. Army photo by Angie Thorne)*



*Cpl. Alesia Grissom and her Military Working Dog, Ijason, sniff out the human decoy and captures him with his jaws. (U.S. Army photo by Angie Thorne)*

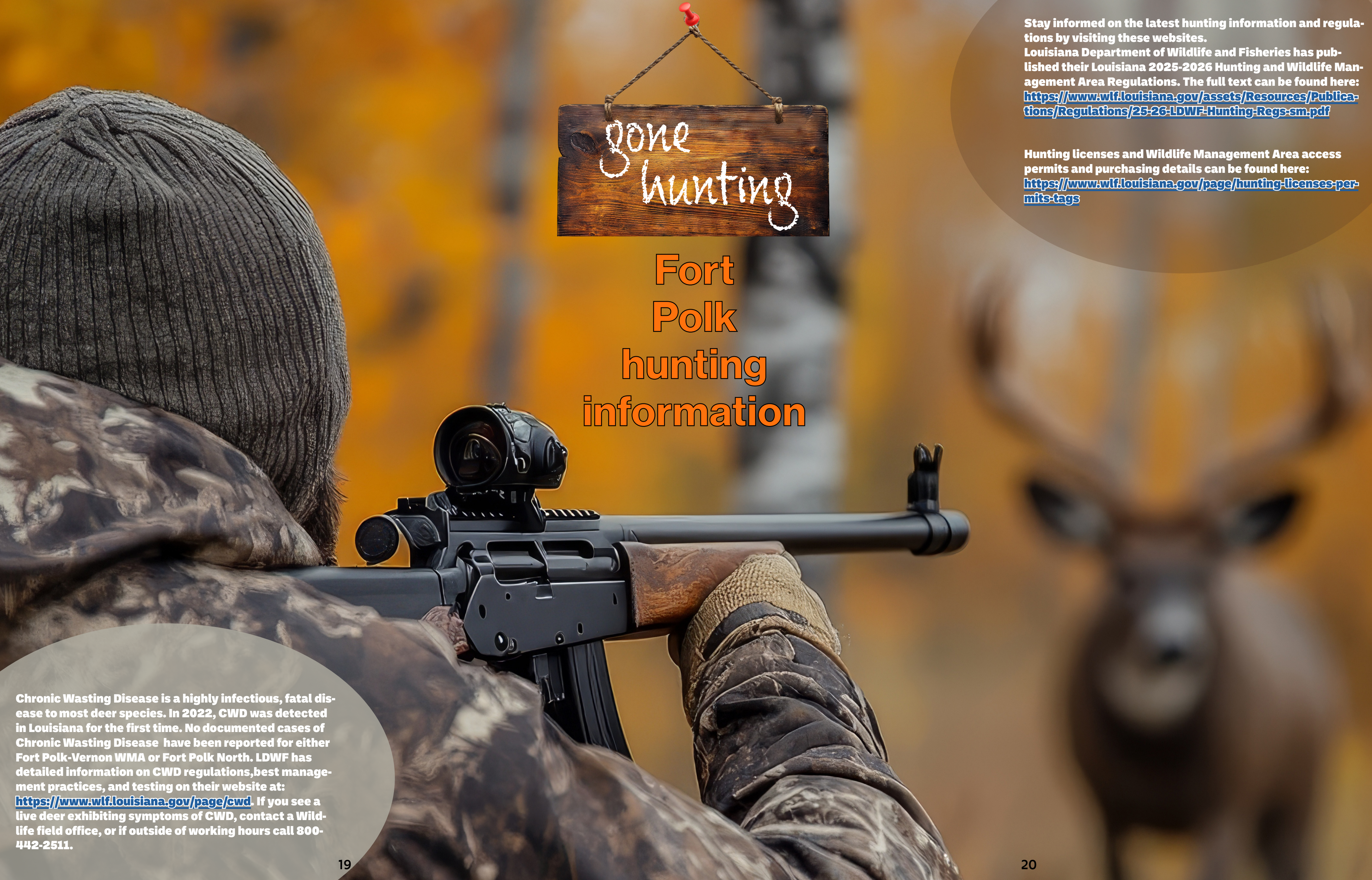


*After Cpl. Alesia Grissom and her Military Working Dog, Ijason, take the human decoy down, he is hand cuffed and brought in. (U.S. Army photo by Angie Thorne)*



*After the completion of the scenario, SPC. Havynn Henley and her Military Working Dog, Gerber, get feedback from the trainers who observed them in action. (U.S. Army photo by Angie Thorne)*





# Fort Polk hunting information

Stay informed on the latest hunting information and regulations by visiting these websites. Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has published their Louisiana 2025-2026 Hunting and Wildlife Management Area Regulations. The full text can be found here: <https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/assets/Resources/Publications/Regulations/25-26-LDWF-Hunting-Regs-sm.pdf>

Hunting licenses and Wildlife Management Area access permits and purchasing details can be found here: <https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/hunting-licenses-permits-tags>

Chronic Wasting Disease is a highly infectious, fatal disease to most deer species. In 2022, CWD was detected in Louisiana for the first time. No documented cases of Chronic Wasting Disease have been reported for either Fort Polk-Vernon WMA or Fort Polk North. LDWF has detailed information on CWD regulations, best management practices, and testing on their website at: <https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/cwd>. If you see a live deer exhibiting symptoms of CWD, contact a Wildlife field office, or if outside of working hours call 800-442-2511.



## Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital Earns Fourth Consecutive Leapfrog Top Rural Hospital Recognition

By Jean Clavette Graves  
BJACH PAO

FORT POLK, La. — The Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, a military treatment facility, has been named a 2025 Leapfrog Top Rural Hospital.

This marks the fourth consecutive year the hospital has earned national recognition for excellence in patient safety and quality of care, according to The Leapfrog Group.

The Leapfrog Top Hospital designation is awarded annually to hospitals that demonstrate the highest performance nationwide on the Leapfrog Hospital Survey.

The survey evaluates key measures such as infection prevention, medication safety, maternity care quality, ethical billing practices, informed patient consent, and surgical safety.

To be eligible, hospitals must also earn an “A” grade in the most recent Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade.

The Leapfrog Top Hospital designation is based on voluntary, publicly reported data, reinforcing transparency as a cornerstone of patient safety and continuous quality improvement.

BJACH was one of 156 hospitals nationwide to earn a 2025 Leapfrog Top Hospital designation. Across the Military Health System, it was one of only 13 military medical treatment facilities recognized with a Leapfrog Top Hospital or Top Ambulatory Surgery Center award this year.

BJACH was also among only 16 rural hospitals nationwide to receive the distinction and one of just two hospitals in Louisiana to earn Top Hospital recognition—both in the rural category.

“This recognition reflects the highest standards of patient safety and quality,” said Leah Binder, president and CEO of The Leapfrog Group. “It takes leadership, teamwork and absolute dedication to patients to achieve this award.”

For patients and families, the designation signals that BJACH has strong systems in place to prevent medical errors, reduce infections, and deliver safe, high-quality care across inpatient and outpatient services.



Leadership from Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital pose with the 2025 Leapfrog Top Rural Hospital Award at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk. Pictured from left to right are Lt. Col. Riliwan O. Ottun, deputy commander for administration; Lt. Col. Ralph T. Salazar, deputy commander for quality and safety; Col. Suzanne L. Jones, deputy commander for dental operations; Col. Patrick W. Miller, hospital commander; Command Sgt. Maj. Victor M. Contreras Jr., senior enlisted advisor; Lt. Col. Ashley D. Cesar, deputy commander for clinical services; and Col. Idongesit Ebeute, deputy commander for nursing. BJACH earned the national recognition for the fourth consecutive year, reflecting sustained excellence in patient safety and quality of care. (U.S. Army photo)

National studies cited by Leapfrog show that hospitals meeting their highest standards experience significant reductions in preventable harm, including health care-associated infections and serious adverse events.

Col. Patrick W. Miller, hospital commander, said the Top Hospital recognition reflects BJACH's unwavering commitment to safe, reliable care.

“Patient trust and readiness go hand in hand,” Miller said. “This award affirms the disciplined, team-based approach our staff brings to every patient encounter — holding ourselves to high standards, learning from data and never losing sight of the people we serve. I’m incredibly proud of this team and the culture they’ve built.”

“Patient safety isn’t abstract to us — it’s personal,” said Alicia Jernigan, a registered nurse and patient safety manager at BJACH. “I come to this work as a nurse first.

Data helps us identify risk, but it’s our clinical experience that drives meaningful change. Every metric represents a real person and a real family, and our responsibility is to build systems that support clinicians at the bedside and protect patients when they are most vulnerable.”

The 2025 Leapfrog Top Hospitals were announced Dec. 15 during the 2025 Leapfrog Annual Meeting and Awards Dinner at the Gaylord National Harbor outside Washington, D.C. The event commemorated Leapfrog’s 25th anniversary and its mission to improve health care safety through transparency.

Founded in 2000, The Leapfrog Group is an independent national nonprofit organization that sets standards for health care, safety and quality and publicly reports performance through its annual Leapfrog Hospital Survey, helping patients make informed decisions about where to receive care.

top-notch care



## U.S. Army Soldiers needed for the MHANES study!

The purpose of the MHANES study is to assess dietary intake, cardiometabolic health, body composition, nutritional status, health, mental well-being, injury prevalence, and physical performance in active-duty Army Service Members.

### To qualify for this research study, participants should:

- Be a U.S. Army Soldier, 18 years of age or older
- Not be relocating or getting out of the Army in the next 30 days
- Not be in Basic Training (BCT) and/or One-station Unit Training (OSUT)

Participation in the study involves attending a study briefing, one in-person visit, and a virtual follow-up.

Compensation of up to \$400 is offered for the completion of this study.

**WHERE:** Warrior Training Center at 6990 Pennsylvania Loop, Bldg. 4213, Fort Polk, Louisiana

**WHEN:** Informational Briefings 0900 & 1300, 20, 21, 22 JAN 26 \*\*Come early, when sample size is reached briefings will be canceled\*\*

### LEARN MORE:

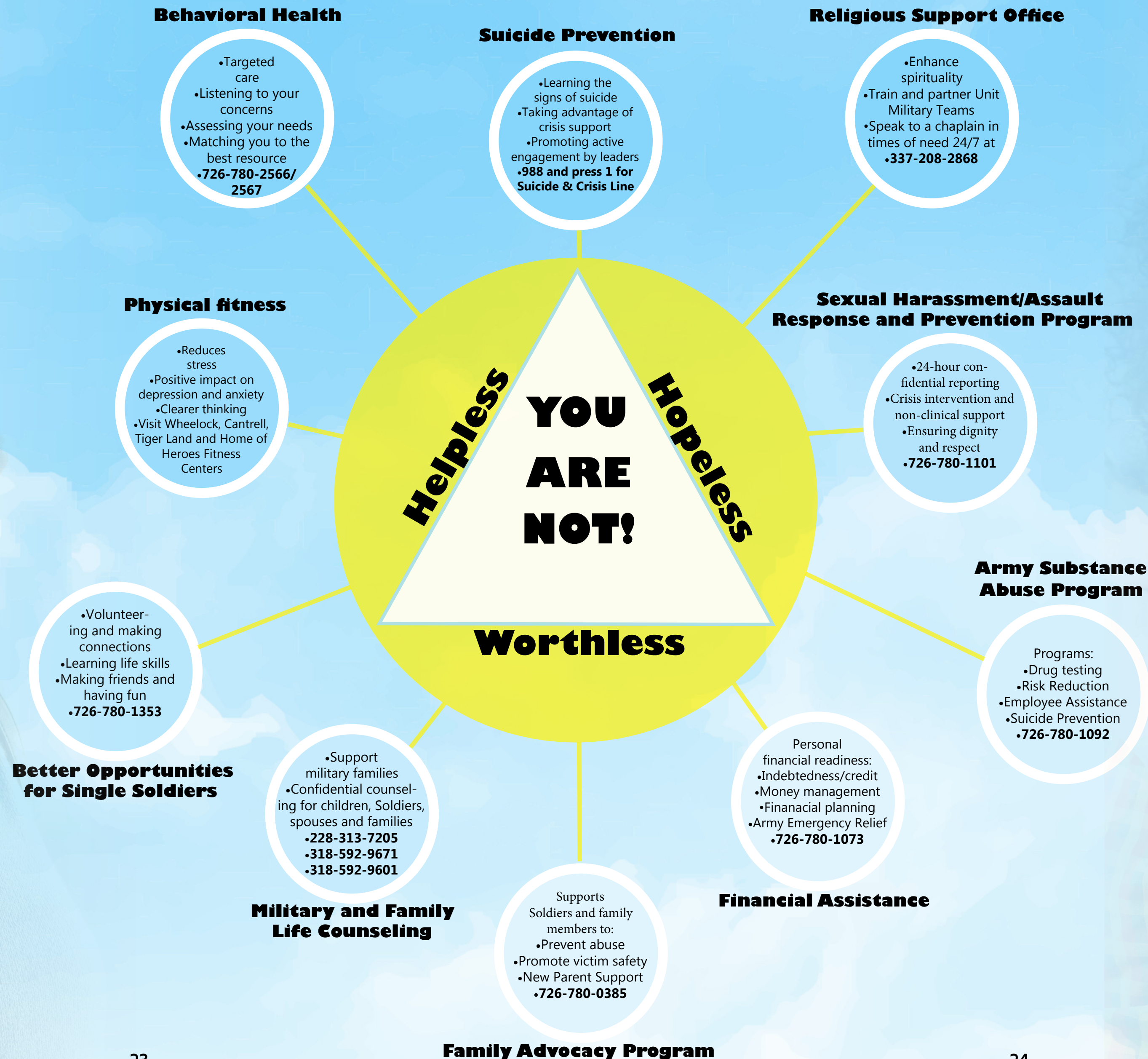
719-310-6708

StandReady@pbrc.edu

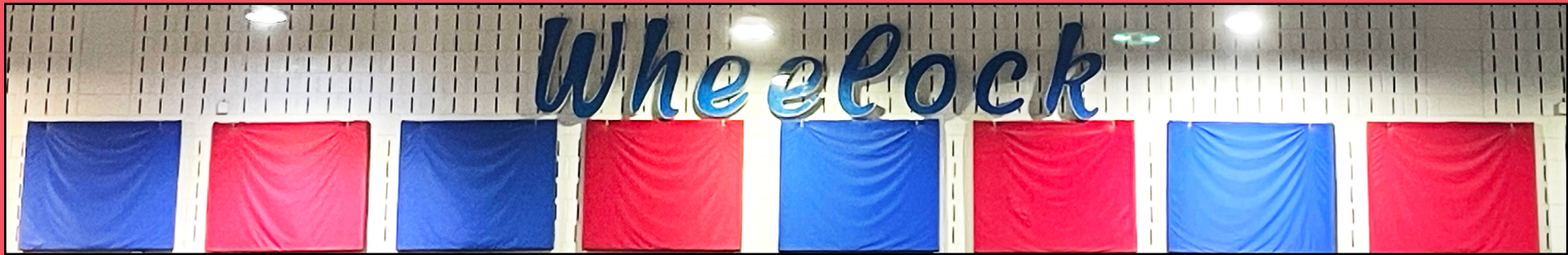




# Supporting Soldiers and family members when they need it the most







Fort Polk community works on exercise goals in 2026



# Wheelock Fitness Center

For more  
information call  
726-780-1415.



## Current exercise class schedule

### Monday

Spin class  
at 6 p.m.

### Tuesday

R.I.P.P.E.D.  
at 6 p.m.

### Wednesday

Zumba  
at 6 p.m.

### Thursday

Spin class  
at 6 p.m.

Each class is \$3



# 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 |

# RELEASE YOUR INNER DRAGON



Think. Protect. OPSEC



x x x x x  
 x x x x x



**DOWNLOAD NOW**  
**MY ARMY**  
**POST**



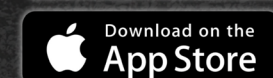
## NEAR REALTIME UPDATES

## INSTALLATION-WIDE ALERTS

## INTERACTIVE BUS ROUTES

## NEWCOMER INFORMATION

## EVENTS + MORE



XXXXXX



MY STRENGTH  
IS NOT FOR  
HURTING



**REAL STRENGTH IS KNOWING WHEN TO LIFT.**

## The mission is each other:

- Alcohol does not erase your **DUTY** to **PROTECT**.
- **ACTIVE INTERVENTION** saves lives.
- **SPEAK UP!** Stop harmful behaviors that hurt our profession.
- Consent is **CONTINUOUS** and can be **WITHDRAWN** at any time.



**SHARP**  
SEXUAL HARASSMENT/ASSAULT  
RESPONSE AND PREVENTION

**If They're Too Far Gone to Walk,  
Then They're Too Far Gone To  
Consent To **ANY** Sexual Activities.**

**JRTC & Fort Johnson SHARP 24/7 Hotline: 337-718-7272**





# Blood Drive

Bayne Jones Army  
Community Hospital

**Blood Mobile – ENTRANCE B**

**Friday, January 30<sup>th</sup> | 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM**

During Mardi Gras, the parades, parties, and celebrations bring joy to our communities—but hospitals don't take a holiday. Blood donations often dip during festive seasons, even though the need for lifesaving blood remains constant. By giving blood during Mardi Gras, you ensure that behind the beads and music, patients in need still receive the gift of life. It's a way to keep the spirit of generosity alive, turning the season's revelry into a true act of compassion.

**Sign Up Today!**



Donate and receive a special edition LifeShare Mardi Gras shirt. While supplies last!



## 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)



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



## Recycle your Christmas tree!

Through Jan. 31, Fort Polk Environmental will be collecting discarded, live Christmas trees to improve wildlife habitat.

The Recycling Center will have a 24-hour drop-off container for those who are able to bring their trees. The Recycling Center is located on the corner of Georgia and Maine Avenues, but due to construction the 24-hour drop-off will be located at the entrance on Illinois Avenue. Environmental will also drive around housing periodically collecting any trees put out on the curb.

*We ask that families please remove all tinsel, lights and ornaments from the trees.*

For more information please contact  
[amy.c.brennan3.ctr@army.mil](mailto:amy.c.brennan3.ctr@army.mil).





AEX Announces Partnership with Metropolis to Deploy New Parking Technology



**ALEXANDRIA, La.** – Alexandria International Airport (AEX) is proud to announce its partnership with Metropolis to implement its drive-in, drive-out AI technology and comprehensive parking services. This collaboration will simplify the travel experience, making it more convenient and stress-free for passengers.

AEX travelers can prepare for the new parking services immediately by downloading the Metropolis app or scanning a QR code at the parking lot beginning Jan. 5, 2026.

To create an account, users must provide their mobile phone number, license plate number, and payment method.

On-site license-plate readers ensure automatic payment once the vehicle exits the parking lot, with confirmation provided via text to the account holder.

View the full press release [here](#).



**Apply:** Now–Jan. 30  
**Class Dates:** Feb. 3–Nov. 18

The FNL Program is a 10-month leadership development course designed to prepare future Fort Polk and Army leaders. Participants gain hands-on insight into garrison operations, build strong professional networks and develop skills to better support Soldiers and families.

- ✓ Command-supported, Garrison Commander’s program
- ✓ Open to GS-06–GS-11 (GS-12 by exception), WG, NAF, military spouses and select military grades
- ✓ 50% promotion rate among civilian graduates

**Apply Today!**

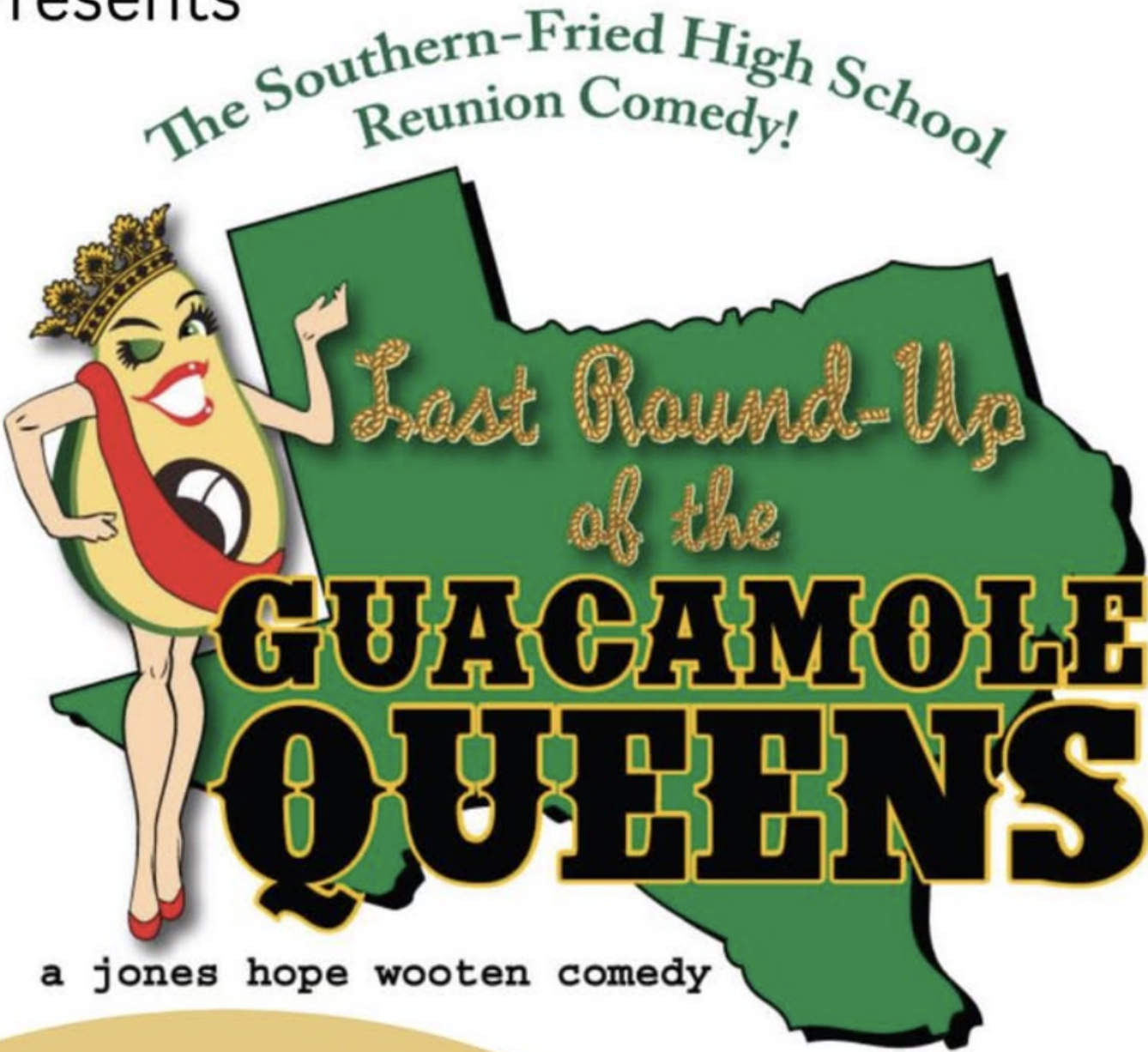
Fill out the forms below and send to [vincent.d.engel.civ@army.mil](mailto:vincent.d.engel.civ@army.mil)

[Soldier/DA Civilian Form](#)

[Spouse Form](#)

\*Space is limited to 25 students

Impromptu Players  
Proudly Presents



**Dinner & Show**

February 27 & March 7  
Reservations needed.  
Adult \$25 Student \$20  
Doors open at 6:30.  
Dinner is served at 7:00.  
Show starts at 8:00.

**Tickets**

[impromptuplayers.com](http://impromptuplayers.com)  
337-221-8543



**Show Only**

Adult \$15 Students \$12

February 28 & March 6                      March 1  
Doors open at 6:30                      Doors open at 1:30.  
Show starts at 7                      Show starts at 2.

Concessions are available.