

JBSA LEGACY

WWW.JBSA.MIL

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO

APRIL 17, 2020



PHOTO BY JOSE RODRIGUEZ

68W Combat Medic Soldiers maintain social distancing while waiting to board a U.S. Army C-27 aircraft.

Army combat medics depart training for follow-on duty stations *Page 7*



Air Force BMT adapts for COVID-19: adds masks, shortens pipeline *Page 11*



JSBA Commissaries, Exchanges require patrons to wear face covers *Page 4*

Five simple words for our coronavirus heroes

By **Capt. Korey Fratini**

U.S. AIR FORCES IN EUROPE AND AIR FORCES AFRICA PUBLIC AFFAIRS

As service members, we are often approached by strangers who want to reach out and say, “thank you for your service.” This kind gesture is something I’ve always appreciated. Serving my nation is a source of pride and a way to be a part of something that is bigger than myself.

But we are truly living in unprecedented times. From social media to the non-stop news coverage, coronavirus has consumed every aspect of our daily lives.

I can no longer go a day without seeing and feeling the impacts of this pandemic. Living in Europe and seeing how this virus has spread here has given me an entirely new perspective.

Daily images of medical professionals and first

responders dominate the news cycle. Dedicated, determined, yet overworked, they are risking everything to care for those most in need.

In the military, we defend our nation, its values and the American way of life. Sometimes that fight takes us to a combat zone in a foreign place.

This pandemic is different than deploying to a combat zone; our daily way of life at home is no longer the same. We are all in a fight for our lives across the globe, and this time those on the front lines are our first responders and medical professionals.

Communities across the globe are grappling with fighting this pandemic, and those needed most are putting their lives at risk to serve others. Every day they go to war with an invisible enemy that shows no remorse or prejudice to its victims.

The men and women on the front lines of this fight are

COMMENTARY

selfless professionals risking their lives to care for others, not knowing what could happen to them. They wake up, go to work and know they are putting their lives at risk to battle an enemy we are still trying to understand. They learn, adapt and stand ready, leading the charge against the newest threat to our way of life.

I have the utmost respect and appreciation for these professionals. I have family, friends and loved ones who wake up every day, ready to tackle this challenge.

To me, this is personal. I see the grueling hours, exhaustion and mental toll of their new daily reality. Our first responders and medical professionals deserve our unwavering gratitude and appreciation during these extremely difficult times.

It is during challenges like

this that we must unite and stand together.

Those serving in the military are often regarded as heroes by many, but in the fight against coronavirus, the real heroes are those standing on these new front lines. The medics, nurses, doctors, first responders and other medical professionals — they are the true patriots. Their selflessness and dedication to serve others during one of the most trying times our world and generation has ever known is inspiring. We owe them our debt and gratitude.

Sometimes it is hard to find the right words to explain how much we appreciate the people in our lives for what they do. At this particular moment, I am reminded of five simple words that I often hear. So to all of those on the front lines of this fight, I want to offer these five simple words:

Thank you for your service.

AF implements options for the EFMP participants

By **Shireen Bedi**

AIR FORCE SURGEON GENERAL PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Air Force is providing additional support to Airmen with exceptional family members during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Exceptional Family Member Program instituted new support to minimize the impact caused by department COVID-19 policies, including the Stop Movement order and social distancing guidelines.

The Air Force is relying more on virtual platforms and tools for screenings. However, families with urgent, humanitarian or hardship duty station changes will continue to have required screenings completed.

Beginning April 15, EFMP families can initiate their Family Member Travel Screening package online.

“This allows Airmen to initiate and track their package, as well as allow for direct messaging to get additional updates,” said Catheryn Mauro, Senior Topic Specialist for EFMP. “We understand how time consuming and frustrating the screening process can be. Using this virtual platform will give these families back precious time they would have otherwise spent on forms

and appointments.”

The virtual platform will be available here, Exceptional Family Member Program Log-In, and is a Common Access Card enabled site, meaning only CAC holders have access.

In response to the pandemic and to ensure all Air Force members and their families are safe, some preventative medical procedures and tasks have been postponed, including a pause on routine medical clearance appointments required for a permanent change-of-station until June 1.

The Air Force is addressing EFMP families concerns on how these changes will impact their ability to get the necessary medical clearances completed once the current Stop Movement orders and restrictions are lifted. EFMP families are often hit the hardest whenever there are changes to routine and support. The Air Force is taking steps to mitigate these challenges and prevent delays as a result of reduced medical services.

“We will continue to take care of our EFMP families,” said Lt. Col. Lisa Hoyt, Air Force Programs for Families with Special Needs program manager. “We have been coordinating closely with the Air Force Personnel Center assignments team

to make sure we identify families who still need medical clearance and make sure they are able to safely transition to their new assignment when travel restrictions are lifted.”

While many EFMP offices are taking precautions to slow down the spread of COVID-19 by teleworking, they are accessible and can assist with enrollments, navigating the virtual travel screening process, and are available for phone interviews.

“The Air Force asks a lot of its Airmen and their families, so it is important they have the necessary support and resources, especially family members with special needs,” said Hoyt. “Caring for a family member with special needs requires patience, resilience and sacrifice, and we will do our best to minimize the impact of COVID-19 on our families.”

Air Force EFMP families rely on the critical services this program provides. The EFMP works to ensure families can access the necessary medical care, educational resources and support in their new assignment. Any changes to care is challenging and the Air Force is taking measures to make sure EFMP families are taken care of during this difficult time.

JBSA LEGACY

Joint Base San Antonio
Editorial Staff

502nd Air Base Wing
and JBSA Commander
BRIG. GEN.

LAURA L. LENDERMAN

502nd ABW/JBSA
Public Affairs Director
MAJ. KIM BENDER

Editor
STEVE ELLIOTT

Staff

TECH. SGT. AVE YOUNG

SENIOR AIRMAN SHELBY PRUITT

DAVID DEKUNDER

ROBERT GOETZ

SABRINA FINE

ALLISON MILLER

LORI BULTMAN

RACHEL KERSEY

JBSA LEGACY
ADVERTISEMENT OFFICE
EN COMMUNITIES
P.O. BOX 2171
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78297
210-250-2052

This Department of Defense newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the DoD. Contents of the JBSA Legacy are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the DoD, or the U.S. Air Force.

Published by EN Communities a private firm in no way connected with the U.S. Air Force under exclusive written contract with the 502d Air Base Wing and Joint Base San Antonio. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the 502d Air Base Wing Public Affairs Office.

Everything advertised in this publication will be made available for purchase, use, or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation or any non-merit factor of the purchaser, user, or patron.

Feedback Fridays

By Brig. Gen. Laura L. Lenderman

502D AIR BASE WING AND JOINT BASE
SAN ANTONIO COMMANDER

Feedback Fridays is a weekly forum that aims to connect the 502d Air Base Wing with members of the Joint Base San Antonio community. Questions are collected during commander's calls, town hall meetings and throughout the week.

If you have a question or concern, please send an email to RandolphPublicAffairs@us.af.mil using the subject line "Feedback Fridays." Questions will be further researched and published as information becomes available.

COVID-19

Q. I'm worried about my son continuing to report to work. His leadership has not sent anyone home, mission-essential or not, and I would like to know why.

My wife is immunocompromised, so out of an abundance of caution, our son has not been able to see us in case he were exposed and affected my wife.

Not being able to see my son has taken a toll on us and it's all because he still has to go to work instead of staying at home like everyone else. I would just like to know why this is continuing to happen. We want to see our son and I'm concerned about him.

A. Thank you for bringing this to my attention. Please know that we understand your concerns regarding your wife and her potential exposure to COVID-19.

While many organizations within JBSA can execute their mission through telework operations, not all critical missions can be accomplished from home.

A major effort across JBSA is supporting the military training mission and the health and safety of the training pipeline. Please know that we will continue to focus our efforts to safeguard your son and your family.

I sincerely thank you for your understanding as we work through this difficult time together.

Q. During the U.S. Army South Town Hall, I asked a question, but due to time, it was not presented. I was told by my command to address it to JBSA.

I understand the need for child

care support for mission essential personnel; however, child care staff that have underlining health conditions are still working.

The child care system put all hourly workers (NAF/TEMPs) on furlough and only kept the permanent GS employees on work call.

Why aren't the employees with health conditions placed on administrative leave, like the employees over 60 were? Why not bring back some hourly employees if permanent employees have to be placed on admin leave? This takes care of the health of the ones most susceptible and allows the others furloughed to earn income.

A. Thank you very much for sharing your question and concerns. Our Child and Youth Programs, or CYP, are concerned with the health and safety of children and staff.

As daily attendance has decreased due to increased telework capabilities, the number of CYP staff needed to operate the program has decreased. At this time, no CYP staff have been officially furloughed, and NAF and APF are both being scheduled to work as required.

Employees should work with their supervisor if they have an identified health condition, as defined by the Center for Disease Control, which puts them at higher risks during the COVID-19 health emergency. These employees will be permitted administrative leave per the OPM guidelines.

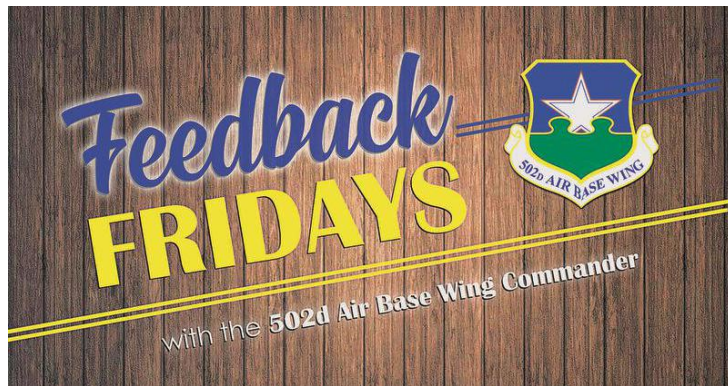
If staff are not required to work due to low attendance, they are placed on paid administrative leave based on the average number of hours worked in the last six months. These staff can be recalled to work if the need changes.

I hope this information is helpful, but if you have any additional questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly.

Installation & Facilities

Q. Trees are such a beautiful part of our installation. Are there any plans to replace the trees that have been or are being cut down or lost to weather at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston? Perhaps, some type of fund raiser might be helpful to purchase and plant trees.

Personally, I would be more than happy to contribute. What about a policy that a tree cannot be cut down, until there is a tree already planted to



COURTESY GRAPHIC

replace it?

As an aside, when I retired from active duty at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston, I knew my colleagues were collecting money to hold a retirement party for me. Instead of a party, at my request, they used the funds to plant a tree in my name.

A. Thank you very much for caring about our installation and helping us keep JBSA beautiful! We currently do not have a policy that mandates a one-for-one replacement for any trees lost due to weather or removed due to new construction. However, generally new construction projects do include planting of new trees and vegetation where possible as part of the final landscaping plan. In the next update of the JBSA Vegetation Management Plan, we will consider adding guidance to maximize replanting where practical.

Q. The Warhawk Fitness Center at JBSA-Lackland does not have air conditioning. When I worked out there before COVID-19, I was completely disgusted by how hot and humid it was, making it a perfect breeding ground for viruses. This should be fixed before the fitness centers re-open.

A. Unfortunately, the Warhawk Fitness Center was not designed to have air conditioning in the main gymnasium, and it is very costly to install equipment to cool this large space. The weight rooms and aerobic rooms are air-conditioned space, and we do have other fitness centers on JBSA that are designed with conditioned gymnasiums.

Regarding concerns for cleanliness, our fitness center staff and custodial services have been working hard to provide a safe and clean space to support our community's fitness needs; if you should experience a specific issue of

concern, please bring it to the attention of our fitness center front desk to assist with resolving.

I would also encourage you to consult with the Fitness Center front desk for details on the wide variety of fitness facilities available for your use. Thank you for your feedback!

Miscellaneous

Q. On rare occasions when we have snow, the commander is authorized to direct later reporting times for employees. Recently, we had some inclement weather, but a later reporting time was not issued.

There were severe heavy rains scattered throughout, and accidents were occurring all over San Antonio. We knew that this was coming, yet we did not prepare for it.

Eventually, the rains stopped, and there was sunlight for increased visibility, but it was still a dangerous trip to work.

Can you please consider doing this in the future? Severe rains are much more dangerous here in San Antonio versus a little snow.

A. Thank you very much for your question. I can definitely consider late reporting due to severe heavy rains in the future.

In accordance with our Severe Weather Plan, if adequate information is available prior to the end of the normal working day, then the Severe Weather Working Group provides a recommendation as soon as possible to the JBSA community with 502d ABW/CC approval for delayed reporting/early release.

Here at JBSA, we strive to make this decision as early as possible so that we

Lackland, Randolph Exchanges offer curbside pick up

From Army & Air Force Exchange Service Public Affairs

The Army and Air Force Exchange Service locations at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland and JBSA-Randolph now offer Curbside Pick Up at the main store locations.

“Social distancing is key during the current climate and this is another avenue that we know will only increase in popularity,” said Carrie M Cammel, general manager, JBSA-Lackland/JBSA-Randolph

Army & Air Force Exchange Service. “It is essentially an extension of our ‘Buy Online-Pick Up In Store’ program.”

With Curbside Pick Up:

- ▶ Customer will order online, select pick up in store, then complete the purchasing transaction online.
- ▶ When the order is ready, an employee at the store will

then call/text the customer to let them know their order is ready and will offer curbside pickup.

- ▶ At the customer’s convenience, they can pull into a designated curbside spot and call the number on the sign.
- ▶ An employee inside the store answers, gets the customer information and proceeds to the customers vehicle with the purchase.
- ▶ Customer will be asked to open passenger side window to go over the order, keeping social distancing in mind.
- ▶ Customer then opens trunk (from inside their vehicle).
- ▶ Associate places packages in trunk, annotates customer’s vehicle tag and closes trunk which completes the transaction.

This service is not presently offered at the current JBSA-Fort Sam Houston Exchange location due to lack of space, but will be available when the new Exchange



COURTESY PHOTO

The Army and Air Force Exchange Service locations at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland and JBSA-Randolph now offer Curbside Pick Up at the main store locations.

opens in September.

In addition, the CLICK2GO service for curbside grocery delivery will be available at the commissary in 2021.

JSBA Commissaries, Exchanges require patrons to wear face covers

From 502nd Air Base Wing Public Affairs

Commissaries and Army and Air Force Exchange Service facilities on Joint Base San Antonio now require all store employees and customers to wear some form of face covering in order to enter the store as of April 10.

The Defense Commissary Agency, or DeCA, guidance, issued April 9, applies to all commissaries, said retired Rear Adm. Robert J Bianchi, Department of Defense special assistant for commissary operations.

This guidance falls in line with the April 5 Department of Defense guidance, and JBSA Guidance Memorandum #23, which require face coverings for all DOD personnel when they cannot maintain six feet of distance.

Army Lt. Col. Angela Parham, DeCA’s director of health and safety, emphasized that PPE is only one part of the preventive measures required to help combat COVID-19.

“DOD’s face covering mandate aligns



Commissaries and Army and Air Force Exchange Service facilities on Joint Base San Antonio now require all store employees and customers to wear some form of face covering in order to enter the store as of April 10.

with CDC guidance to help prevent asymptomatic people, who may not know they’re infected, from spreading the virus to healthy folks,” Parham said. “Even when you wear a mask or other face covering, it is still important to practice

good hand hygiene, social distancing, and refrain from touching your face.”

In addition to requiring face coverings for employees and customers, commissaries have implemented the following operational policies to help make stores safer during this pandemic:

- ▶ Commissaries are installing clear, acrylic sneeze shields in all regular checkout lanes to add extra protection for customers and cashiers.
- ▶ Commissary personnel are wiping down checkout areas, product display cases, restrooms and shopping carts with disinfectant, and practicing routine hand washing and other basic sanitation measures to reduce transmission risk.
- ▶ Hand sanitizer is provided at each register and staff are encouraged to use it at the end of each patron transaction.
- ▶ DeCA encourages its employees to closely monitor their health, and asks them to stay home if they, or someone in their household, are sick.
- ▶ Stores are working with their installations to implement procedures regarding social distancing.

▶ A “no visitors” policy was instituted to reduce the number of people in the stores.

▶ Early bird hours were suspended to allow stores more time to clean and restock the store

▶ Patrons cannot bring reusable bags into the commissary to help reduce the risk of virus.

▶ Cashiers no longer handle patron ID cards. Instead, customers will be asked to scan their own ID or cashiers can use the handheld scanner if available.

▶ DeCA encourages the use of credit or debit transactions to limit the use of cash and coins

▶ Local commissaries work closely with the public health assets on the installation to monitor transmission risk related to staff and patrons.

▶ Commissaries have temporarily suspended the requirement to sign credit card receipts to prevent multi patron handling of the credit card reader pen.

More information on the JBSA coronavirus response is available at <http://www.jbsa.mil/coronavirus>.

FEEDBACK FRIDAYS

From page 3

may inform our personnel quickly. Our weather call should ideally be made in time to make early morning news telecasts to notify our JBSA community.

Our Severe Weather Working Group will take your comments and we can ensure they are brought up at our next Severe Weather Working Group Meeting.

Q. I recently attended a volunteer event about access to information, and some comments a few individuals made brought up an interesting concern.

There are a lot of people at JBSA-Lackland, JBSA-Randolph, and JBSA-Fort Sam Houston that do not receive the 502 ABW/CC Weekly update or Feedback Friday, but I think there is a great deal of useful information (i.e., construction

updates, base events, Q&As, etc.).

Some of the people not receiving them are a part of the 59th Medical Wing, or do not work on the bases directly, but still “fall under” the base. Is there a way these individuals could start receiving some of the great info that you send out weekly?

A. Thank you for your feedback! While the weekly Q&A started as an internal 502d ABW resource, we can definitely send the weekly Q&A to our mission

partners across JBSA.

I will work with our Public Affairs team to ensure we share the information across our installation. I also encourage everyone to check out our Feedback Friday Page on the JBSA.mil website (<https://www.jbsa.mil/Information/Feedback-Fridays/>) and the JBSA Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/502ABWCommander/>) for similar updates and information. Thank you again for your feedback!

CARES Act to provide needed financial relief

By Lori A. Bultman

502ND AIR BASE WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act, became law March 27, 2020. Among the important benefits the act will provide are: emergency financial assistance, unemployment insurance, rent and mortgage payment relief, penalty-free IRA and 401(k) early withdrawals, and funds for food banks and other food security programs.

“The CARES Act, the biggest rescue package in U.S. history, seeks to provide emergency financial assistance to people and businesses as the coronavirus pandemic continues,” said Stephen Parchman, community readiness specialist at the Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Military and Family Readiness Center. “It is meant to relieve financial pressures on Americans.”

Emergency Financial Assistance

As part of the Act, the federal government is sending \$1,200 to each qualified person, or \$2,400 to qualified married couples, Parchman said.

To receive this amount, in most cases people must have an individual adjusted gross income, or AGI, of less than \$75,000, or \$12,500 for heads of household and \$150,000 for joint filers. Single filers who earn up to \$99,000 and joint filers who earn up to \$198,000 should receive reduced amounts.

Those over the thresholds will have their amount reduced by \$5 for every \$100 of income over the limit.

Additionally, eligible families with children will receive \$500 per child under the age of 17.

“In order to determine your AGI, the government will use your 2019 tax return, or your 2018 tax returns if you have yet to file 2019 returns,” Parchman said. “Retirees who receive Social Security benefits are also eligible to receive a check, as are people who receive the Earned Income Tax Credit. Stimulus deposits are expected to be dispersed in mid-April, and recipients should receive a letter in the mail 15 days prior to receiving the payment.”

Helpful hints on how to budget spending emergency financial assistance can be found at <https://www.jbsa.mil/News/News/Article/2129581/financial-planning-budgeting-key-during-times-of-crisis/>.

Unemployment Insurance Program

Families dealing with a loss of employment during the pandemic may benefit from the CARES Act's

unemployment provisions.

The Texas Workforce Commission, working with the Department of Labor, is in the process of implementing the requirements of the CARES Act, while also continuing to process unemployment insurance claims caused by the COVID-19.

For those who have exhausted their unemployment benefits, some may be able to extend their benefits.

“If you recently exhausted benefits, no action is needed from you. The TWC will determine if you qualify and notify you by mail or electronic correspondence of your eligibility,” according to the commission website.

If you are self-employed, a contract worker or previously worked in a position that did not report wages, you may also qualify for unemployment.

“If you applied for unemployment benefits, but lacked the necessary wages to qualify, no action is needed. We will determine if you qualify under the new stimulus bill and notify you by mail or electronic correspondence of your eligibility,” according to the TWC.

The health and well-being of Texas' employees, employers, and communities is commissions top priority, and they are in the process of adapting their systems to the new legislation. If unemployed persons attempt to access the system or call prior to receiving notification, staff members at TWC will not be able to assist.

Updates may be found on the TWC website at: <https://www.twc.texas.gov/news/covid-19-resources-job-seekers>.

If any San Antonio area Department of Defense ID cardholder needs assistance with employment-related questions, they can contact one of the Joint Base San Antonio Military and Family Readiness Centers to arrange a telephone or virtual appointment.

Penalty-Free IRA and 401(k) Early Withdrawals

People who have been diagnosed with COVID-19, whose spouses have been diagnosed, or anyone who has been adversely impacted financially by the coronavirus or disease, can withdraw up to \$100,000 from their tax-advantaged retirement accounts, like a 401(k) or IRA, penalty-free, as provided by the CARES Act.

Normally, early withdrawals come with a 10 percent surtax, on top of normal income taxes, Parchman said.

“A distribution under the provisions of the act will be counted as income, meaning you will have to pay taxes on it spread out over three years,” he said. “Also, people



COURTESY GRAPHIC

who take the distribution will have a three-year window to repay the money if they wish.”

The provision for penalty-free early withdrawals does not apply to pension plans.

Food Banks and Other Food Security Programs

“To help hungry Americans, the CARES Act authorizes \$450 million to go to food banks and other food programs, which is in addition to previous emergency funding,” Parchman said.

Furthermore, \$8.8 billion will go to school meal programs, as well as \$15.5 billion to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, he said.

“For families that have been impacted by the pandemic, we strongly suggest they utilize the available resources to include food pantries, schools and the organizations.”

San Antonio area school districts' meal distribution sites and information may be found on the individual districts' websites.

The San Antonio Food Bank emergency food distribution mobile sites or home delivery, and Farm Fresh Saturdays produce box distributions require registration which can be completed at <https://safoodbank.org/cvresponse/>. For assistance finding a food pantry near you, call the food bank at 210-431-8326.

JBSA military and civilian members, families, and retirees may contact one of the local M&FRCs listed below for information on available M&FRC programs or to arrange a telephone or virtual appointment. If connected to voicemail, leave a message and someone will get back to you.

▶▶ JBSA-Randolph: 210-652-5321 or email Randolphmfr@us.af.mil

▶▶ JBSA-Lackland: 210-671-3722 or email 802fss.fsfr@us.af.mil

▶▶ JBSA-Fort Sam Houston: 210-221-2705/2418 or email usaf.jbsa.502-abw.mbx.mfr@mail.mil

NEED SUPPORT DURING THIS TIME OF UNCERTAINTY?

Call the Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC) Behavioral Health Support Line to speak with behavioral health personnel.

210-539-9567 or 210-539-9565

Monday – Friday 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The behavioral health hotline is not intended for emergent care or to replace medical counseling.

If you need immediate help, call 9-1-1, or call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) anytime and you will be connected to a professional counselor.

FORT SAM HOUSTON

Combat medics depart training for follow-on duty stations

By Tish Williamson

U.S. ARMY MEDICAL
CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Recent graduates of the 68W Combat Medic Course at the U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence, or MEDCoE, at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, were transported in controlled air and ground movements April 9 to their next duty of assignment as an exception to the Department of Defense stop movement enacted to stop the potential spread of the 2019 Coronavirus Disease, or COVID-19.

With only 96 hours' notice to the execution of the first mission, MEDCoE coordinated four separate air missions to seven different locations.

Nearly 60 active duty soldiers flew by military air transport to duty assignments at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Campbell, Kentucky; Fort Polk, Louisiana; Fort Benning, Georgia; Fort Stewart, Georgia; Fort Carson, Colorado; and Fort Bliss, Texas. Simultaneously, the organization planned and conducted a controlled ground movement for over a dozen soldiers going to Fort Hood, Texas.

In March, the Department of Defense announced a stop movement order for all uniformed and civilian personnel and sponsored family members that began with overseas COVID-19 hot spot areas and were later extended to all travel within the United States in response to the increasing threat of COVID-19.

The stop movement order, in effect until May 11, has provisions that allow exceptions to policy under certain circumstances, to include those missions that are deemed

essential.

"Our mission of getting Army Medicine soldiers trained and prepared for what comes next is absolutely essential to force readiness," said Maj. Gen. Dennis LeMaster, MEDCoE Commander. "It's about readiness. This is about the Army being able to take soldiers and move them through Basic Combat Training to Advanced Individual Training and getting them to their first unit of assignment to make sure we have a fully manned force."

MEDCoE instructs nearly 37,000 soldiers annually in more than 360 medical-related training and education programs. Their motto is, "Army Medicine Starts Here," as all Army Medicine personnel, regardless of component, will attend training at the MEDCoE at some point in their career. They are the Army proponent responsible for envisioning and designing responsive Army Medicine capabilities and structures that support the fielded force and the future force.

Many of the soldiers who completed the controlled movements this week are going to units to backfill someone who is forward-deployed in support of the national COVID-19 mission; still others may soon find themselves on the front lines in direct combat against the disease.

Lt. Col. Cory Plowden, 232d Medical Battalion Commander, served as officer in charge for the screening, out-processing and controlled ground movement to the airport. The controlled air movements were planned and lead by Capt. Cotrena Brown-Johnson, Medical Logistics Officer in Charge, Emergency Operations Cell, MEDCoE. Three days of



68W Combat Medic Soldiers maintain social distancing while waiting to board a U.S. Army C-27 aircraft.

flight support, April 7, 8 and 9, was provided by a special operations aviation unit through coordination with the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, MEDCoE's higher command.

"Usually Soldiers are released after graduation and move to their first units of assignment on their own," Plowden said. "For this controlled movement, we will load them on the buses at a staging area on JBSA-Fort Sam Houston, move them to the airfield to put them on a dedicated aircraft and that aircraft will take them to their first unit of assignment. So it is very different from what we typically do."

Plowden, who has been in command since July 2018, described this type of highly synchronized mission as very unique but necessary to ensure the safety of, not only the soldiers being transported but also the safety of the aircrew who transported them and the MEDCoE cadre and soldiers who helped execute the

operation.

Equally important is the safety of personnel in their new organizations who will expect the combat medics to arrive healthy and able to quickly integrate into their current operations alongside other soldiers.

"We owe it to all involved, especially the gaining unit and their surrounding communities, to get the screening and controlled movement right," Plowden said. "Fortunately, our outstanding team of professionals at the Medical Center of Excellence is uniquely qualified to execute the screening, sterile transport and controlled movement flawlessly."

The departing trainees, many of whom arrived late 2019 for the 16-week combat medic course, have been in a so-called "protective bubble" the training environment often affords.

These trainees have been particularly insulated from the outside community since their graduation was restricted to the

public and then canceled altogether to promote social distancing.

The group has also been restricted to base without contact from the outside community and verbally screened for symptoms daily by drill instructors due to COVID-19 concerns.

Since these combat medics have been insulated by this level of isolation since even before the disease became a global threat and have not had any demonstrative symptoms, the trainees were assessed as very low risk for COVID-19.

Despite the low probability of carrying the disease, all of the soldiers were again verbally screened through a series of questions about their health and had their temperatures taken prior to out-processing. The MEDCoE command surgeon was also on hand to perform any medical assessments if needed.

Command Sgt. Maj. Clark Charpentier, the MEDCoE command sergeant major and senior enlisted advisor, said the best advice he can offer these soldiers is to trust in their training and their abilities to provide critical medical support to their gaining commands as they begin their next chapter as fully qualified combat medics.

"As these soldiers move forward to do America's missions and what we need to do as part of the Army, I am fully confident in their abilities to safely accomplish their mission, regardless of the situation they are put in," Charpentier said. "They are prepared to meet the demands required of them as soldier medics; this virus is just another enemy that they are dealing with."

Leader perspective: Be the calm in the storm

By Command Sgt. Maj. Chantel Sena-Diaz

U.S. ARMY MISSION AND INSTALLATION CONTRACTING COMMAND

The U.S. Army Mission and Installation Contracting Command is answering the call to one of our nation's greatest challenges as we aggressively fight to kill the enemy we all know as Coronavirus, or COVID-19.

All of our teams are collectively engaged with COVID-19 contract requirements, while staying ahead of our primary mission of contracting support to the Army enterprise.

Whether you find yourself walking the grounds and assessing the blank canvass of the next field hospital or executing contracts in your favorite sweatpants at home, we all play a vital role in this critical mission.

We can't turn on the television, crack open a newspaper or check our social media without the sober reminder that we are at war with an invisible enemy seeking to kill, steal and destroy our lives as we know it.

I'm encouraged by the response of our leadership and thankful to serve in the fight

through contracting. Team MICC readily moved to lock arms with mission partners in effort to identify and forecast base support requirements in response to the U.S. Army North Joint Force Land Component Command's emerging Defense Support to Civil Authorities and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions. Incredible work is happening across the force by many of our MICC and Army Contracting Command teammates to support contingency contracting operations, led by Col. Jason Jefferis and the COVID-19 fusion cell.

As we aggressively engage and work to stay in front of the problem, we must remain agile and innovative in our execution. We need to see ourselves, the enemy and viable solution sets.

Are you honestly and accurately assessing your capabilities and identifying gaps? Remember, this is not the enemy you've trained for at the last external evaluation. As such, we need to execute our mission with intentionality, understanding risks and employing mitigation strategies.

Our people remain our No. 1 priority in the fight. We continue to demonstrate our

commitment and flexibility to excel while operating in a constrained environment.

However, as we execute personal and professional distancing at work and home, don't lose sight of the "person" behind the work.

On the other side of that Global Video Services connection, teleconference call and email is a teammate who is striving to give their very best to the organization while facing their own set of challenges or concerns. Find ways to continue to invest in your people and cultivate community while exercising social distancing. Without a healthy and motivated force, our mission will inevitably be compromised.

Stay engaged with your mission partners and all things that support readiness. Do not lose the bubble on your personnel readiness, training and reporting requirements. We can't make the mistake of focusing solely at the 50-meter target such as COVID-19. We have to anticipate contracting requirements that must be accomplished by year's end, not waiting for the last-minute surge.

We need every MICC professional to be leaders in this time of uncertainty. Communicate consistently,



DANIEL P. ELKINS

Command Sgt. Maj. Chantel Sena-Diaz highlights key points with leaders from across the Mission and Installation Contracting Command during a recent annual training conference.

accurately and broadly; always asking who else needs to know.

Let's operate with the "facts" and not in assumptions. This environment is fast and often unforgiving, so don't operate in ambiguity with an assumption that someone else will filter through the requirements. Help your people to "see the big picture" and don't jump on the uncertainty bandwagon.

Finally, be the calm in the storm and know that together

we will see victory. Thank you for your dedication and continued care for Soldiers, Department of the Army civilians and contractors. Be encouraged that the work you do every day matters.

I along with the rest of the command team sincerely appreciate your leadership and tireless efforts in support of the MICC. Stay the course, stay encouraged. Contracting for Soldiers ... with Honor!

MICC team awards machine learning contract for COVID-19 support

By Ryan Mattox

U.S. ARMY MISSION AND INSTALLATION CONTRACTING COMMAND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Contracting professionals from the Mission and Installation Contracting Command-Field Directorate Office at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, have awarded a contract for a special non-traditional supplier research project that supports the Army's response for a robust pipeline of equipment and supplies to combat the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

The research project uses machine learning-driven investigations to

identify untapped markets for acquisition personnel to match requirements from Army units to purchase supplies that support the response to COVID-19.

"We are fully engaged in supporting the whole-of-nation effort to counter the COVID-19 threat," said Dr. Dean Angell, a procurement analyst with MICC-FDO Fort Sam Houston. "This contract and the information and reports it generates are particularly significant because it meets the extremely time-sensitive intent of the Army's task to locate suppliers that will be able to produce medical supplies and equipment to fight

COVID-19."

In March, the office was contacted with the COVID-19 support requirement. After reviewing the requirement, proposal and determining the best course of action, it issued a notice-to-proceed letter and began to quickly put the acquisition together.

The contract calls for non-traditional medical equipment and supply reports and uses machine learning algorithms to analyze millions of data points related to the medical supply industry and specifically the COVID-19 virus, including up-to-the-minute information, medical studies and reports provided by

the scientific community to fight the COVID-19 virus.

The contractor will use market data and automated methods such as machine learning to rapidly identify a set of potential suppliers, with emphasis on non-traditional and emerging suppliers that can create new or add additional manufacturing capacity.

The contractor is responsible for reviewing each supplier to validate capabilities to refine vendor-specific information and create a final list of potential suppliers for acquisition personnel to match with incoming requirements.

Army offers guidance on leases affected by DOD travel restrictions

By Jim Tripp

U.S. ARMY SOLDIER LEGAL SERVICES

The U.S. Army has published guidance to assist Soldiers with permanent change of station orders who are affected by the current Department of Defense COVID-19 travel restrictions and face potential conflict with landlords.

All Army Activity, or ALARACT, Message 033/2020 explains how to seek help if a landlord won't negotiate about a Soldier's inability to PCS.

The ALARACT also includes annexes with easy-to-understand guidance and sample requests from a Soldier to a landlord. Soldiers may obtain a copy of ALARACT 033/2020 from their command or a legal assistance attorney.

Section 3955 of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, or SCRA, allows for termination of leases (auto and

dwelling) upon receipt of certain types of military orders, including PCS or deployment orders. The orders must be for a period of at least 90 days.

The DOD Stop Movement Order, however, is not considered a PCS order for purposes of the SCRA.

There is a way around this. If you have signed a lease at a new duty location, but are prevented from moving due to the Department of Defense Stop Movement Order, consult with a legal assistance attorney. They can help you prepare a letter to the landlord asking them to voluntarily allow you to either terminate your lease or suspend rent payments until you can move in.

If the landlord will not agree, then work with your legal assistance attorney and your command to seek new orders. The new orders should order you to your current duty location for at least 90 days.



COURTESY PHOTO

The U.S. Army has published guidance to assist Soldiers with permanent change of station orders who are affected by the current Department of Defense COVID-19 travel restrictions and face potential conflict with landlords.

Once you have your new PCS orders, your legal assistance attorney can assist you to then validly terminate your lease under the SCRA. If done properly, the lease termination will be effective 30 days after the first date on which the next rental payment is due.

If you have already requested to terminate your

lease at your present duty station, but are not able to move due to the DOD Stop Movement Order, contact the landlord right away to see if the landlord will agree to voluntarily extend your lease.

If the landlord refuses, you may need to conduct two moves — one from your current residence to a temporary residence, and then

again to your new duty location when PCS orders are re-issued to you.

There are provisions in the Joint Travel Regulation that authorize a short-distance move when vacating local private-sector housing due to an involuntary tour extension.

Unfortunately, if you have obtained a home loan to purchase a home at your new duty location, but are now prevented from moving due to the DOD Stop Movement Order, there is no protection under the SCRA. The SCRA pertains to leased, not mortgaged, premises. Soldiers facing this situation should still consult with a legal assistance attorney to discuss their options.

Soldier Legal Services at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston is located at 2422 Stanley Road, building 134, at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston and can be reached at 210-808-0169.

BAMC leading the charge against COVID-19

By Lori Newman

BROOKE ARMY MEDICAL CENTER
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

From the very beginning, Brooke Army Medical Center has led the way in the fight against COVID-19, implementing stringent measures to protect patients and staff as the pandemic spreads throughout the nation and the world.

About a month ago, key leaders throughout the organization quickly came together to formulate a strategic plan to help mitigate the spread of the virus. The measures include limiting the entry points to the facility, leveraging virtual health for routine care, rescheduling elective surgeries, closing dining areas, and implementing curbside pharmacy services.

“Together we have led the charge on this virus, caring for our patients and each other while maintaining our vital healthcare and trauma missions, and our commitment to our crucial role in combat casualty care,” said Brig. Gen. Wendy Harter, BAMC commanding general. “We are maximizing our virtual health capabilities to protect our providers, clinics and beneficiaries and supporting the shelter-at-home national effort to slow the spread of COVID-19.”

Additionally, BAMC has restricted its visitation policy to people deemed to be essential support for patients and has been screening all visitors before they enter the facility. Screening and testing areas were also set up in the parking lot for beneficiaries with COVID-19 symptoms such as fever, cough or shortness of breath.

“We know these measures are tough, but we believe they are absolutely necessary to preserve the health and wellness of our patients and staff and to stop the spread of this virus,” Harter said. “We



JASON W. EDWARDS

Army Spc. David Pyke, medical laboratory technician, loads a patient sample for rapid COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction testing at Brooke Army Medical Center, Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston April 9.

ask for everyone’s patience, support and understanding during this challenging time.”

Experienced Team

The battle against COVID-19 is taking a concerted, multidisciplinary effort.

“Our lab, pharmacy, infectious disease, public health and medical logistics teams are at the forefront of this fight alongside our nursing, Emergency Department, clinics, specialty care, housekeeping and administrative personnel,” Harter said. “It’s a tremendous effort by all of Team BAMC.”

Air Force Col. (Dr.) Heather Yun, BAMC Department of Medicine chief and infectious disease physician, said she has trained for this type of situation her entire career. Because of her background in infectious disease and outbreak management, she was chosen as a consultant to the BAMC commander and the San Antonio Military Health System director for the COVID-19 planning and response efforts.

“We are building some interdisciplinary teams that will continue to function after this crisis is over,” Yun said. “This is forcing us to look at some of our

processes and understand how we could do things better in the future, more effectively cross-leverage resources across the organization, and I expect we will gain a lot from the additional experience with virtual health.”

Army Lt. Col. Elizabeth Markelz, BAMC Infection Prevention and Control Services medical director, and Bernadette Thompson, chief of Infection Prevention and Control Services, have played a significant role in organizing an infection prevention strategy to keep BAMC staff members, beneficiaries and patients safe. This includes educating the staff on the safe use of personal protective equipment (PPE) using infection prevention and control strategies, research and evidence-based practice, and collaborating with internal and external experts.

“This has brought many parts of our organization together in ways I haven’t seen before,” Markelz said. “I have developed professional relationships that will endure because of the trust we have in each other. We have grown to appreciate the important role we each play in the care of

patients and each other.”

U.S. Air Force Capt. Matt Bezzant, assistant program director for research for the Internal Medicine Residency program, agrees. Bezzant helped develop the triage protocols and inpatient processes for the wards that care for COVID-19 patients.

“Having a single crisis team at a hospital composed of people who are actually doing the work day to day seems to be the most efficient way to deal with pandemics,” he said. “I think we can learn a lot from what is happening now so we can stay better adapted to handling crises and be a stronger healthcare team going forward.”

Facing Challenges

Nationwide, healthcare facilities are seeing shortages in testing materials, PPE and healthcare personnel.

Yun said one of the biggest challenges for BAMC has been the rapidly changing guidance on a national level.

“We have to be incredibly agile to stay ahead of the evolving situation, and getting the entire San Antonio market to move on a dime within hours of new guidance is really important to keep everyone, including our patients, on the same page,” Yun said.

Another challenge has been keeping up with the demand for testing.

“The materials we use to perform the test have been in national shortage,” said Army Lt. Col. Robert Cybulski, director of Microbiology, Department of Pathology and Laboratory Services at BAMC. “It’s been a challenge to maintain enough materials on hand to be able to provide the testing support the clinicians need.”

For Markelz, “The biggest challenge has been dealing with a lot of unknowns regarding this virus, particularly with transmission.”

“This is reminiscent to my time deployed in environments

where you don’t have all the resources you may need,” Cybulski added. “You are having to make regular adjustments to try to find the best way to support the people you need to support.”

“We are very fortunate to have the expertise, support and knowledge needed to surmount obstacles as we combat this virus,” Yun said.

The Way Ahead

In the coming days, BAMC will continue to work closely with its mission partners at the 59th Medical Wing, the U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence, the Medical Education and Training Campus, and service members at Army South and Army North to fight the pandemic.

“Preparation is critical,” Harter said. “We are bringing in some of our partners and enhancing BAMC’s capabilities in preparation for what we think may occur in the future.”

BAMC also is in close coordination with its community partners, to include the South Texas Regional Advisory Council, or STRAC.

“We are poised to support an increased need for trauma and acute patient care while maintaining protections for our patients and healthcare workers,” Harter said.

Team BAMC will continue to rise to the challenge in support of the military and the nation, she added.

“The coronavirus has taken our entire world, and our nation by storm,” said BAMC Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Oates. “We must do our part and ensure that we combat this virus with everything possible. Our healthcare professionals are the most important people in the world right now.”

Someday our grandchildren will ask us what it was like during the COVID-19 pandemic, Yun said. “We will tell them about how we all worked together so hard and took care of each other.”

LACKLAND

BMT adapts for COVID-19: adds masks, shortens pipeline

From 37th Training Wing Public Affairs

To prioritize safety and continue providing ready Airmen to fuel tomorrow's Air Force, Basic Military Training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland is moving to a 7.5-week training pipeline.

There's no doubt the COVID-19 pandemic has presented unique challenges that require adaptability and the 7.5-week training program is one of many measures implemented at BMT to limit the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus.

More than 1,400 trainees became Airmen at BMT graduation April 9, with a total of 30 flights graduating. Fourteen flights are graduating at their 8.5-week mark, alongside 16 flights graduating in 7.5 weeks.

Graduating both classes in the same week creates additional space on the BMT campus and lessens the number of total trainees present at a time, allowing the BMT team to further implement health and safety measures.

A variety of approaches are being used to shorten the training length, such as decreasing time spent on certain drill and ceremony items (i.e. parade).

To prioritize safety, BMT is transitioning from large-classroom settings to smaller-classroom settings,



1ST LT KAYSHEL TRUDELL

Trainees in basic military training learn defensive fighting positions in preparation for BEAST (Basic Expeditionary Airman Skills Training) at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland April 8.

when applicable, which also saves on transit time. Another change is streamlining the uniform issue process, which not only saves trainees' time but minimizes strain on mission partners during this time. BMT leadership team is also working to procure face

masks to provide to staff and trainees. In the meantime, BMT is using CDC guidelines for staff and trainees to fashion their own cloth face covering.

As previously announced, the Gateway Wing will now receive a reduced amount of new trainees, approximately 460 to Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland each week.

This week, 60 trainees shipped to Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, to complete a BMT proof of concept. All new trainees will continue to be placed into a 14-day Restriction of Movement as an added safety measure. ROM is included as part of the 7.5 week BMT pipeline.

Throughout Air Force history, the duration of the pipeline has adapted to the needs of the nation. This environment is no different. BMT is adjusting curriculum to ensure flexibility as CDC health guidance develops. Regardless of the challenges faced or number of training days that make up the pipeline, the mission remains the same: to create ready and lethal Airmen who fuel the Air and Space Force.

For the most up to date information and to watch BMT graduation live, visit the USAF Basic Military Training (<https://www.facebook.com/USAFBMT/>) and the 37th Training Wing (<https://www.facebook.com/37thTrainingWing/>) Facebook pages.

59th MDW leverages telehealth to keep patients, staff safe

From 59th Medical Wing Public Affairs

While San Antonio is under a "Stay Home, Work Safe" order, members of the 59th Medical Wing at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland have found new ways to continue providing high-reliability care through virtual appointments while keeping patients and staff safe.

Beginning in early March, 59th MDW providers began going through their scheduled patient appointments to determine which could be conducted vi telephone, particularly appointments for elderly patients more at risk for contracting COVID-19.

"We had the ability to do

telephone consults, but we wanted to take that a step further," said Maj. Christopher McMillian, 59th Medical Support Squadron information systems flight commander.

The wing quickly put together a team to evaluate how to convert traditional in-person visits to telehealth appointments. The team developed user guides and telework plans for providers and technicians, pushed technical updates to desktop computers for home use, issuing laptops and more.

"At this stage, 95-98 percent of our appointments in both primary and specialty care have been converted to telehealth appointments," said Lt. Col. Sarah Whitson, 59th

Medical Operations Group senior group practice manager. "Anecdotally, our patients and providers appreciate it. In addition to staying safe, it is also saving patients' time — they don't have to drive to their appointment or wait in the waiting room."

This also allows providers and technicians required to work from home during this time to continue providing patient care, thus augmenting urgent or emergent care clinics.

"Almost a quarter of our regular users are able to do their jobs without having to come to work at Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center, which is minimizing the physical footprint of the workers and minimizing our exposure to one another," McMillian said. "The work of the medical wing is able to go on, irrespective of where the workers or the patients are."

With the additional help of the Army Virtual Medical Center at Brooke Army Medical Center, the team also developed an audiovisual appointment capability for those appointments that need face-to-face interaction.

"It's often important for the provider to actually see the patient," said Maj. Julene Durisma, 59th Medical Specialist Squadron allergy and immunizations flight commander and virtual health champion. "When we are being isolated, this can be incredibly valuable for people who need that connection. Additionally, the provider can see the patient's cues and non-verbals to best treat them."

"Losing that face-to-face interaction with the people they trust with their health can be a real challenge," said Capt. (Dr.) Shane Riggs, 59th Medical Operations Squadron

psychiatrist. "The technology we're using allows a close approximation to that. It's a step closer than just a voice over the telephone."

Appointments are scheduled as they always have been, by calling the Consult Appointment Management Office at 210-916-9900. At the time of the appointment, a provider calls or sends the patient a link to the audiovisual platform being used for the visit. The link can be accessed on a patient's home or work computer, cell phone or tablet, without creating an account.

"I truly believe this will change our operations for the future," said Col. (Dr.) Karen Bowman, 59th Medical Operations Group primary care department chairman. "We are going to continue to capitalize on this innovation."

RANDOLPH

Agile recruiting methods now required

By Wes Fleming

AIR FORCE RECRUITING SERVICE
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Travel restrictions, canceled flights and social distancing guidelines due to the COVID-19 pandemic aren't getting in the way of the Air Force Recruiting Service's mission.

As the world is telling people to stay at home, the Air Force is finding new and diverse ways to ship applicants to Basic Military Training.

"Today's Air Force calls for our recruiting team to adapt to the constant changes in their current needs and requirements for each new ship week to Basic Military Training," said Capt Eric Roe, 364th Recruiting Squadron, director of operations. "Our recruiting team must be ready to pivot, prioritize, and match applicants to an optimal job and enter active duty date on a weekly and sometimes hourly basis".

This requires Agile Shipping which AFRS has employed in the past.

"We've always had to be agile, make changes during shipping days," said

Master Sgt. Dana Bazile, 360th Recruiting Group operations officer. "For example, if an applicant's health condition has changed at the last minute this could delay their departure. Each week we'd see one or two applicants in this situation and we'd have to quickly adjust ship dates or switch to an applicant from another location."

The biggest difference is now, those changes are significantly larger in scale.

"We've had to adjust on the fly to Military Entrance Processing Station closures just two days before shipment," said Bazile.

As MEPS locations shut down, or come back online due to COVID-19, AFRS finds ways to transport recruits to adjacent MEPS in order to complete their final medical checks before going to BMT. This allows AFRS to continue to meet Air Force accession requirements while minimizing the pandemic's effect on the MEPS operational status at any given time.

Bazile says there is a reason the Air Force continues to bring in new

recruits.

"We have to balance our mission to build and maintain the strength of the Air Force with the need for public safety, but we also have to understand that we have a promise of a career to these people joining our team," Bazile said.

Communication between the recruiter and the applicant is the single most important part of this process. Normal applicant engagement is centered upon recruiters meeting face-to-face with potential applicants and members in the Delayed Enlistment Program, or DEP, to discuss options and go over accession paperwork.

"Technology has allowed us as recruiters to maintain our relationships with our applicants and DEPpers," said Tech. Sgt. Charles Giertz, a 317th Recruiting Squadron enlisted accessions recruiter. "It has been the unbelievable receptiveness of the applicants to flex to this new way of doing things that have made this transition as seamless as possible. Their understanding and willingness to adhere to the



COURTESY PHOTO

Lt Col Nora DeLosRios, 341st Recruiting Squadron commander, administers the oath of enlistment to future Airmen at a recruiting office in Live Oak, Texas, on April 7.

ever-flowing changes coming down from AFRS has been nothing short of amazing and has me so excited to see where they take our Air Force!"

Staying at home poses challenges, opportunities for families

By Robert Goetz

502ND AIR BASE WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Millions of Americans are paying heed to stay-at-home directives during the COVID-19 pandemic, a necessary step in protecting themselves from the deadly virus that continues to ravage the nation.

However, for families, all that togetherness poses its own challenges as parents step in as surrogate teachers while tending to their job duties through telework and children used to the routine of school and extracurricular activities try not to go stir crazy.

Those challenges are compounded if the parents are worried about family finances because one or both of them are laid off from work.

"Parents are concerned over their finances and being able to provide food, medicine and supplies for their families,"

said Chantelle Stoops, Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Family Advocacy Program outreach manager.

It is also possible that families are experiencing changes in sleep, changes in alcohol consumption and some increased conflict between partners, Stoops said.

"In addition, parents are having to adjust to playing the multiple roles of employee, spouse, parent and teacher at the same time," she said. "All of these challenges can feel especially demanding and families may feel the pressure considering they do not have access to their usual self-care routine and do not have the opportunity to enjoy social engagements with extended family and close friends. Many of these support systems are still accessible through phone and social media; however, there is nothing better than being able to hug,

touch and interact with your social support."

There are a number of ways families can surmount these obstacles and become stronger in the process, said Angela Nance, JBSA-Randolph FAP intervention specialist.

"Making sure that families take care of themselves is valuable during this time," Nance said.

Going out for walks, sitting in the backyard or on the balcony, playing board games and even reaching out to friends and families via social media sites are just a few examples of what families can do to stay emotionally healthy while they are at home, she said.

Staying at home offers unique opportunities for family bonding, Stoops said.

"Our fast-paced life has slowed down dramatically and this is a good time to

learn about being mindful and in the present with our families," she said. "Talk about family history, values and traditions and maybe take the time to teach them a family recipe."

Although parents may be overwhelmed by the stress of being a substitute teacher to their children, they can always reach out to their classroom teachers, Nance said.

"Parents should make sure they are connecting with their children's teachers for additional resources by going to the school district's website or emailing the teacher directly," she said.

Finding time for themselves now that they are with their children most of the day is another challenge for parents, Nance said. That "alone" time can help them recharge for the next day.

AT HOME continues on 14

558th Flying Training Squadron holds virtual change of command

By Ben Faske

12TH FLYING TRAINING WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The 558th Flying Training Squadron conducted a virtual change of command ceremony April 3 at Crawford Hall, Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph.

Lt. Col. Corey Hogue, 558th FTS incoming commander, assumed command from Lt. Col. Eric Bissonette.

Hogue previously served as the director of operations for the 867th Attack Squadron at Creech Air Force Base, Nevada.

A graduate from the U.S. Air Force Academy, Hogue began his career flying the EC-130H aircraft with the 43rd Electronic Combat Squadron at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, and later served as a wing executive officer with the 432nd Air Expeditionary Wing and contingency planner at Headquarters U.S. Southern Command.

The change of command ceremony is a military tradition that formally signifies the transfer of responsibility for a unit from one commanding officer to another,

symbolized through the passing of a guidon.

However, due to the social distancing guidelines from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention regarding the COVID-19 coronavirus, the change of command was conducted virtually without the attendance of family and friends.

Bissonette, who is headed to U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, reflected on his time leading the squadron.

"I cannot thank you all enough for your dedication and commitment to the mission, this is truly a unique time in the history of our Air Force," Bissonette said.

Col. John Ludington, 12th Operations Group commander shared his confidence in the new commander's abilities.

"Welcome to squadron command. I hope you create some memories of today that will last for a very long time," Ludington said. "We wish you the very best and know that you are excited to take command and take care of this squadron and their families."

559TH FLYING TRAINING SQUADRON PILOTS TAKE PRECAUTIONS WHILE TRAINING



COURTESY PHOTO

Second Lt. Frank Toohy (left) and Lt. Col. Dan Healey, 559th Flying Training Squadron instructor pilot, receive a brief from operations superintendent Lt. Col. John Urso and Jeff Madison of the 12th Operations Support Squadron. Pilots from the 559th Flying Training Squadron wear masks as they take the necessary precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, while also continuing the essential mission of flying training.

AT HOME

From page 13

"Make sure the children have a specified bedtime in order for the couple to connect with one another at the end of the evening," she said.

Trying to maintain a routine, especially for small children, is also helpful, Stoops said.

"Change can be stressful for little ones, which in turn can lead to stress on the parents who are trying to help them adjust," she said. "It's okay to be flexible and it is still OK to have to take time for self-care. Maintain good and healthy communication with the members of your family."

For couples without children, alone time is harder to come by when they are together 24/7, but finding it is important, Stoops said.

"We are always struggling to make time for each other, and now that we have it, it can feel as if we need to share and cherish every single moment," she said. "It is OK to still need alone time."

The pandemic's requirements for social distancing and staying at home have also impacted JBSA's FAP specialists, but they continue to provide their services

through other means, said Maj. Melanie Roserie, JBSA-Randolph Family Advocacy officer.

"Outreach has shifted to being heavily reliant on technology — social media, email, webinars, online support groups, online meeting platforms — to provide helpful resources to families," she said. "Face-to-face outreach or interaction with clients is very minimal at this time, but we thankfully have the technology to connect with our FAP beneficiaries."

This pandemic is like no other time most people have seen in their lifetime, but it will pass, Nance said.

"Take this time for self-care, spend meaningful time with the family, laugh and be thankful for those who are out there taking care of those who are in dire need of it," she said. "Remember to follow the guidelines that have been set out by the state and county regarding how to stay safe and healthy, and remember this is just a temporary situation."

JBSA Family Advocacy Program offices can still be reached at the following phone numbers during regular duty hours, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday: JBSA-Fort Sam Houston, 210-221-1996; JBSA-Lackland, 210-292-5967; and JBSA-Randolph, 210-652-6308.