

JBSA LEGACY

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JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO

APRIL 24, 2020



Lt. Gen. Louro Richardson (left), Commanding General Army North, and Maj. Gen. Gary Keefe (right), Adjutant General of the Massachusetts National Guard, and their staff tour the Boston Hope Medical Center in South Boston, Massachusetts, April 14.

U.S. Army North continues response to COVID-19

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433rd AES crew deploys to support COVID-19 response

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METC mission vital to force readiness, COVID-19 response

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Reporting paramount to slowing virus, maintaining readiness

By Lori A. Bultman

502ND AIR BASE WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 is a serious responsibility — a responsibility that all Americans share and one that is vital to preventing unnecessary illness, further nationwide financial crisis, and even death.

It is also crucial to ensuring the nation's military forces maintain readiness for any mission that may arise, including assisting with pandemic response efforts.

“During this time, it is vital that we continue to maximize physical distance to combat the spread of the virus while also ensuring resiliency and social connectedness across JBSA,” said Brig. Gen. Laura L. Lenderman, 502d Air Base Wing and Joint Base San Antonio commander.

To reinforce that goal, and to ensure all JBSA members understand the importance of reporting symptoms of the illness, Lenderman released an updated self-reporting general order. The order is applicable to all U.S. military personnel presently assigned to, or serving on, JBSA, and it is highly encouraged that Department of Defense civil service employees, contractors and family members also abide by the order.

According to the order, all JBSA military members must report any restriction of movement, quarantine, isolation, or persons under investigation, or RQIP, status, as well as positive COVID-19 test results, to their chain of command immediately, but absolutely within 24 hours of notification.

Civil service employees should report to their

supervisory chain of command; contract employees should report to their employer, who will report to their contracting officer; and family members should report to their sponsor, who will then report to their chain of command.

“It is extremely important that everyone reports health status changes to their chain of command promptly,” said Col. Robert York, 502d ABW Public Health Emergency Officer. “Timely notification allows commanders to follow up with you to ensure you are recovering well. It also enables public health to track possible contacts that may have also been exposed. Ultimately, but acting quickly, this helps break the transmission chain and flattens the pandemic curve, protecting everyone.”

Lenderman's self-reporting order is intended to remind everyone how essential early

reporting is to ensuring forces remain ready and essential missions continue.

“As the JBSA commander, I have a duty to promote and safeguard the morale, physical well-being, and the general welfare of persons under my command,” Lenderman said.

“It is the Department of Defense and Military Service policy that military installations, property, personnel, and other individuals working or residing on military installations, will be protected under applicable legal authorities against communicable diseases associated with biological warfare, terrorism, or other public health emergencies,” she said.

“Reporting RQIP status and positive COVID-19 test results allows us to protect our military members, families, and local community.”

Patients can now book virtual appointments at TRICARE Online

From TRICARE
Communications

Patients are now able to schedule telephonic virtual appointments through TRICARE Online, or TOL.

To schedule a virtual appointment, simply log into the TOL website and select the Appointments button. Once on the Make Appointment page, select a Virtual (Telephonic) Visit within or beyond the next 24 hours, based on your needs.

Remember that these are virtual visits conducted over the phone. A member of your provider team will call you at the phone number you provide

to conduct your virtual visit.

During this time, we are doing our best to accommodate the needs of all of our patients in a timely fashion. Our staff will make every effort to call you at or before your scheduled appointment time; however, we ask for your patience and understanding if they are unavoidably delayed while caring for other patients.

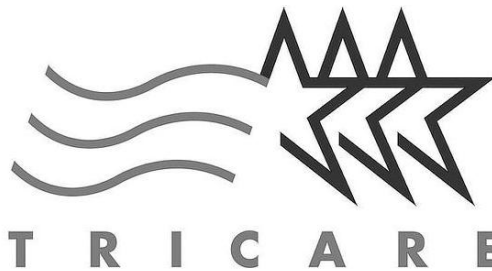
Please keep in mind virtual appointments are not for emergent medical needs, wellness examinations or any visit which requires a hands-on physical examination.

Virtual appointments can be used for healthcare needs such

as medication refill requests, lab and radiology results, cold and allergy symptoms, urinary tract infections and routine follow-up appointments in which a physical exam isn't required.

If in doubt as to whether your medical need should be addressed through a virtual appointment or not, call your clinic. For your safety and the safety of the healthcare staff, do not come into the clinic without calling first.

Beneficiaries also can call the



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San Antonio Military Health System COVID-19 Nurse Info Line at 210-581-2266, Option 6, to book a CAMO appointment or for home-care instructions. The advice line is available Monday-Friday from 7 a.m.-5 p.m.

After hours, call the MHS Nurse Advice Line at 1-800-TRICARE (874-2273), option 1. If you are experiencing a medical emergency please call 911, or go to the nearest Emergency Department.

JBSA LEGACY

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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.

Special Shout Out!

ANONYMOUS: I would like to compliment Airman Graves and others on his shift. He's one of the Security Forces troops who works a lot on the Valley High gate at JBSA-Lackland. This young man is always professional and has exceptional customer service skills. It's a pleasure to see and interact briefly with outstanding Airmen like him and others doing an exceptional job each day guarding our military bases. Thank you for all you do!

Personnel Issues

Q. Why are plumbers the lowest paid trade throughout JBSA structures? The interior and exterior electric, power pro, and even vehicle maintainers are all WG-10s. It's apparent that the locality pay is not a priority. Other bases seem to do better in terms of locality pay, which is why many are leaving the trade. Are there plans to fix this?

A. Thank you very much for your question. Our Wage-Grade work force is essential to the success of all JBSA missions, and we are so appreciative of everything they do.

The Federal Wage System, or FWS, is a uniform pay-setting system that covers general appropriated fund employees who are paid by the hour. Under this uniform pay system, everyone's pay is comparable to prevailing private sector rates in each local wage area.

A wage survey is conducted each year to ensure the current pay is comparable to that in the private sector. In addition, locality rates for Federal Wage System employees are embedded within the

established hourly rate of pay.

Based on your concerns, I will work with our Civilian Personnel Office and Civil Engineers to verify the results of the wage survey and amount of locality pay to ensure our plumbers' pay is comparable to the local area civilian sector as well as local cost of living.

Q. Legal assistance appears to be another retirement benefit that was promised, but is now being denied.

I'm a retiree — a commissioned officer — from JBSA-Randolph and have been trying to get a will and power-of-attorney done at the JBSA-Randolph Legal office since early January 2020. However, after multiple attempts I've found there is NEVER an appointment available. Why?

A. Thank you for sharing your concern. I sincerely apologize for the lack of available appointments since the beginning of the New Year.

The purpose of the legal assistance program is to support and sustain command effectiveness and readiness, and legal assistance services are subject to the availability of legal staff, resources, and expertise. Priority must be given to Air Force personnel in need of mobilization or deployment related assistance.

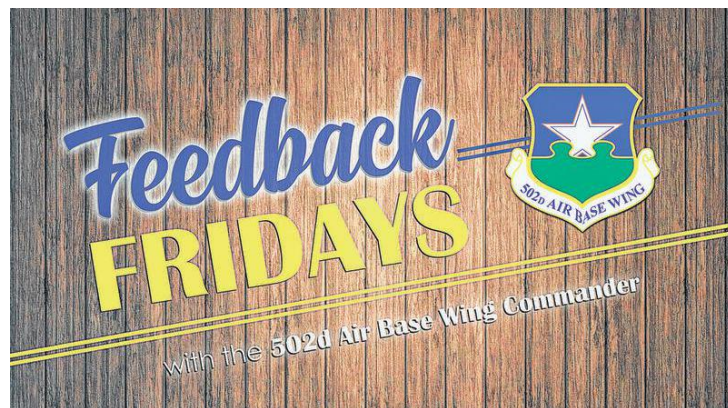
Subject to these limitations, the JBSA-Randolph Legal Office makes available weekly estate planning appointments for retirees on Mondays and Wednesdays.

As you've experienced, appointments are in high demand, and typically booked a month in advance. However, all legal offices across JBSA provide estate planning services. If you are unable to make an appointment with the JBSA-Randolph office, the JBSA-Fort Sam Houston or JBSA-Lackland offices may have availability.

Please keep in mind that being in the middle of the ongoing public health emergency, all legal assistance services are currently limited to only active duty personnel.

Installation & Facilities

Q. I, like many others, use public transportation to get to work. I get off at the JBSA-Lackland Selfridge Gate, go through the gate and walk



COURTESY GRAPHIC

to building 5725). Now that both sides of Selfridge are closed, I find myself having to go to Luke Gate, then making my way back to the other side.

Would it be possible to open either one of the Selfridge Gates, for two hours in the morning (6-8 a.m.) and two hours in the afternoon (3-5 p.m.)? I am a disabled veteran and have a hard time walking for great distances.

A. Thank you very much for your question. The COVID-19 health emergency has been challenging on multiple fronts as we work to protect the JBSA community from unnecessary exposure risks.

Under HPCON Charlie conditions, we planned to close all non-24-hour gates, leaving the remaining four 24-hour gates at JBSA-Lackland open. However, based on the daily usage of the non-24 hour gates, balanced with the availability of Security Forces members that are not dedicated to working specific HPCON Charlies measures, we retained Security Hill and Growden Gate at their existing hours; however, we were not able to support keeping Selfridge open.

I sincerely apologize for your inconvenience and please know that re-opening gates will be one of my first considerations when the situation improves.

Q. When will JBSA-Fort Sam Houston receive a 24/7/365 Civil Engineering Customer Service Center to better serve their customers? This question has been

raised several times for over a year. The Johnson Controls Metasys front-end is up and running and operational.

A. Thank you for your great question! Our Civil Engineer team is in the process of creating the positions needed to staff the 24/7 Energy Management Controls System, or EMCS, after-hours desk.

This new staff will be responsible for monitoring and controlling critical HVAC systems across JBSA-Fort Sam Houston with secondary capability to handle after-hours emergency calls. CE expects it will take six months to tie all JBSA-Fort Sam Houston facilities into the new system. The JBSA-Fort Sam Houston EMCS system is expected to be operational by December 2020.

Current after-hours emergency calls for JBSA-Fort Sam Houston are currently managed by the EMCS Desk at JBSA-Randolph.

Q. This concerns building 738's men's bathroom, nearest to parking lot (simulator building).

It is extremely small, but sees high traffic flow, and it does not have any ventilation fans. It is a Coronavirus and normal virus breeding area. The building manager has refused to install a ventilation fan because of the supposed cost/effort.

Please have a ventilation fan installed in this pandemic/epidemic timeframe—we have exhausted all efforts to make this change beforehand.

A. Thank you very much for bringing

FEEDBACK FRIDAYS continues on 15

JBSA chaplains, counselors use technology during pandemic

By David DeKunder

502ND AIR BASE WING

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Mental health specialists, chaplains and counselors throughout Joint Base San Antonio are utilizing technology and finding resourceful ways to keep in touch with their clients who seek counseling and guidance during this time of social distancing.

With restrictions put into place at JBSA in response to COVID-19 that has limited in-person contact at installation facilities, mental health specialists, chaplains and counselors are using teleconferencing and social platforms to communicate with their clients who still seek counseling during the pandemic.

Chaplain (Maj.) Mark Smith, Family Life Chaplain at the Vogel Resiliency Center at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston, said by utilizing teleconferencing and videoconferencing with his clients, he can keep attuned to the emotional struggles they are going through as they practice social distancing and work from home to stay safe.

Smith said the combination of social distancing and being at home can take an emotional toll on people who are dealing with stress from work, in their personal life or family relationships.

“For some people, the additional stress has intensified areas of their lives where they were already struggling and then for others, it has added a new struggle that they weren’t facing,” Smith said.

Also, he said people can experience feelings of isolation as they are separated from certain family members, friends or co-workers and lack the community support to which they are accustomed. He emphasized that it is one’s community that often provides the strength, encouragement and assistance a person needs to deal with life’s challenges.

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 through 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.

He said parents, especially, face a very tough balancing act of educating and homeschooling their children, who are now out of school indefinitely as campuses have shut down to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In addition, parents still have to provide meals, oversight and attention for their children who are now home all the time.

“People are trying to manage their lives,” Smith said. “They are trying to telework and homeschool their kids. I hear comments frequently from people that they are trying to adjust to having their kids at home, having to provide additional meals and helping the kids do their homework.”

Smith said as a Family Life Chaplain he can provide help to JBSA members in coping with their feelings both emotionally and spiritually.

“We provide that opportunity to share their struggle with another person,” Smith said. “Then we can explore their coping mechanisms and provide them with resources they can access and engage in so that they are responding to their challenges in a way that is healthy and life-producing.”

“The other aspect I get to provide is the religious support through prayer and encouragement that many people often desire,” Smith added.

Smith is available for counseling from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday. To set up an appointment, call 210-221-9445 or email mark.a.smith143.mil@mail.mil.

At Brooke Army Medical Center, hospital staff members are providing counseling to

patients and clients, in person and through telephone and video teleconferencing.

Chaplain (Capt.) Joe Sherwin, BAMC chaplain clinician, said BAMC chaplains, including himself, are still conducting in-person meetings with clients and patients in a conference room by adhering to social distancing procedures, spreading people six feet apart, as well as utilizing proper hygiene techniques and the appropriate personal protective equipment.

Chaplains are also utilizing telephonic and video teleconferencing platforms to provide counseling when face-to-face meetings are not feasible or available.

BAMC is ramping up and increasing its technological tools to reach out to more clients who need help.

Capt. Collin Mullins, BAMC outpatient behavioral health senior postdoctoral psychology resident, said BAMC behavioral health specialists and counselors are utilizing the web and video conferencing platforms, including Adobe Connect and other secure applications.

“Behavioral health has been utilizing video teleconferencing for a while,” Mullins said. “This global pandemic has increased the awareness of this known capability.”

BAMC has a behavioral health support line people can call that is staffed by a licensed counselor or a graduate-level provider they can talk to from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday-Friday. The helpline numbers are 210-539-9567 or 210-539-9565.

Mullins said the behavioral health support line provides counseling for active duty, military family members, dependents, retirees, JBSA members and BAMC employees.

“By utilizing the behavioral health support line, people will be provided with a lot of problem-solving and relaxation techniques and a lot of education to be able to deal with stress and anxiety,” Mullins said.

People who need immediate help can call 911 or 1-800-273-TALK (8255) anytime and they will be connected to a professional counselor.

During this time of COVID-19, Sherwin said chaplains like himself can help provide guidance and counsel to people experiencing a wide range of emotions.

“These are unparalleled times with heightened emotions and anxieties,” Sherwin said. “We want to enable people to normalize and assess their emotions, helping them process and make meaning out of their current situation. It is vital to their overall health. We are thinking holistically – mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually – to assist them in making meaning out of what they are experiencing. We enable them to remain resilient and healthy.”

Sherwin emphasizes the need for faith in helping people get through a trying time.

“As chaplains, we appreciate the unique times we are in and we believe that one of the ways that people cope during times of crisis is to lean upon their faith, which gives them strength and

hope regardless of their circumstances,” Sherwin said.

Sherwin said BAMC chaplains are utilizing technology to assist people in maintaining their faith connections by broadcasting messages of hope and encouragement that allows them to exercise spiritual disciplines and participate in elements of their faith. These faith messages can be found on channels 59 and 60 at BAMC and on the JBSA Garrison Chaplains Office Facebook page.

JBSA members who are looking for classes about financial counseling and wellness can do so through the Vogel Resiliency Center, which is offering classes on those topics through social platforms.

Geremy Chavez, VRC personal financial counselor, is conducting virtual financial counseling sessions. For more information, contact Chavez at 210-243-3752 or by email at PFC2.JBSA.USAF@zeiders.com. Chavez serves active-duty, Guard, Reserve, Gold Star families and recently retired military up to six months out of service.

The Army Wellness Center, also located at VRC, is holding weekly online classes on Facebook via Zoom. The wellness center can be found on Facebook with the keywords, “JBSA Army Wellness Center,” or at <https://www.facebook.com/JBSAAWC/>. For more information, call the Army Wellness Center at 210-539-1254.

Information on services and programs at VRC can be found at <https://www.jbsa.mil/Resources/Resiliency/Vogel-Resiliency-Center/>.

VRC Director Dr. Patricia Ruiz said the VRC continues to offer services and programs via social platforms in an effort to stay connected with the JBSA community.

“Now more than ever, our connection to self and others is extremely important,” Ruiz said.

SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS AND PREVENTION MONTH

Special Victims' Counsel provides support, legal guidance

By Lori A. Bultman

502ND AIR BASE WING PUBLIC AFFAIR

When victims of sexual crimes need assistance navigating processes and the legal system, the Joint Base San Antonio Special Victims' Counsel program is available to help.

Special Victims' Counsels are made up of attorneys and paralegals specially trained to represent victims of sexual assault. They have litigation and military justice experience and can provide information and answer questions victims may have regarding the process.

Any Department of Defense ID cardholder, service member, spouse, dependent, or government civilian, may request services from the SVC.

"The Special Victims' Counsel are able to help victims navigate the military justice system and assist them in their decision making in various stages — from investigation to the conclusion of the case," said Tech. Sgt. Luis Hans, Special Victims' paralegal at the Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston SVC office.

"SVCs are also able to provide legal advice to their clients on topics that have a connection with the assault," he said. "For example, if a victim is still living in the apartment where they were sexually assaulted, their SVC can discuss what their options are, such as moving to a new apartment, moving on base, or applying for an expedited transfer."

The process for each victim's case can vary, depending upon the circumstances surrounding the assault. However, many cases tend to follow a general order of events.

"Typically, a victim reports a sexual assault through an agency on Joint Base San Antonio and is provided information about Special Victims' Counsel services. A common referring office is the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office," Hans said.

"Agencies send a referral form to the SVC office where the Special Victims' paralegal receives and processes the form, conducts a review, ensures the victim is eligible for SVC services and finds an available Special Victims' Counsel, attorney, who can represent the victim. Normally, we try to assign SVCs near where the victim is located,



COURTESY GRAPHIC

if that counsel is available."

If the victim chooses to do an interview with law enforcement, the SVC coordinates a mutually agreeable time with the applicable law enforcement personnel and is available to attend the interview with the victim, said Capt. Heather Hathaway, SVC at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston.

"Normally, interviews occur while investigators are also working other aspects of the case," Hans said. "Depending on how complex the case is, investigation times may vary. Once an investigation is completed, the SVC works with the servicing legal office regarding next steps for the case."

"The SVC then discusses the facts of the case with the victim and ensures he or she understands what the options are," Hathaway said. "The client will provide input, in writing, to the commander of the accused through the legal office. The commander then works with the legal office to determine the disposition of the case."

The important thing is, the SVC will represent the victim through all the associated hearings and the court-martial, Hathaway said. The SVC will also explain the legal processes and the client's legal rights.

"It is important for victims of sexual assault to request an SVC as early in the process as possible, so the SVCs can help them navigate the justice system and maximize the tools and

resources available to aid them in their quest for recovery and justice," Hathaway said.

If a victim eligible for services does not initially request a referral or

assistance, Hathaway said they can always contact the SVC later for advice, services or legal representation at 210-221-3796 for JBSA-Fort Sam Houston and JBSA-Randolph, or 210-671-4748 for JBSA-Lackland and Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention month and on March 31, 2020, a presidential proclamation was issued to recognize the devastation the crime causes.

"No person should ever have to endure the anguish and indignity of sexual assault. This horrific crime affects Americans of every age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status," according to the proclamation. "This month, we pause to recognize the devastation caused by sexual assault and to recommit ourselves to eliminating this atrocious crime."

The entire proclamation can be found at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-national-sexual-assault-awareness-prevention-month-2020/>.

FORT SAM HOUSTON

U.S. Army North continues response to COVID-19

From U.S. Army North Public Affairs

U.S. Army North, as U.S. Northern Command's Joint Force Land Component Command, or JFLCC, continues the rapid integration of medical capabilities in several locations around the country, while remaining flexible to rapidly respond to emerging needs as part of the Department of Defense's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Across the United States, approximately 9,000 service members in the JFLCC are working through the Federal Emergency Management Agency to assist state and local government COVID-19 response efforts.

The JFLCC currently has medical professionals and teams in seven states including Connecticut, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York and Texas, and is setting the conditions for employing them in Pennsylvania.

The JFLCC is working with Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, to assess other locations requiring Department of Defense resources to help in the whole-of-nation response to COVID-19.

"We continue to respond aggressively in support of NORTHCOM's coordinated campaign plan to provide the medical capacity to help reduce the burden on local governments, agencies, and hospitals fighting COVID-19," said Lt. Gen. Laura Richardson, JFLCC and Army North commanding general. "We have rapidly employed scalable and tailorable medical capabilities — everything from medical staff for alternate care facilities to integrated medical teams from various services and components — to assist in multiple states."

The JFLCC has fully integrated more than 530 Army, Navy and Air Force medical providers into 10 New York City public hospitals to augment staff there.

Approximately 800 military medical professionals from the Army and Navy are providing care at the Javits Center and have treated 915 patients to date. More than 50 JFLCC Soldiers continue to



CHIEF PETTY OFFICER BARRY RILEY

Soldiers assigned to Javits New York Medical Station conduct check-in procedures on an incoming COVID-19 patient in the facility's medical bay April 5.

provide 24-hour mortuary affairs support at three New York City Office of the Chief Medical Examiner sites.

The JFLCC has employed or allocated 14 Urban Augmentation Medical Task Forces, each consisting of 85 medical personnel.

► Six UAMTFs are employed in New York City.

► One UAMTF is employed in Boston, with another planned to deploy there soon.

► One UAMTF is employed in Edison, New Jersey; another is employed in Newark, and a third will deploy soon to Atlantic City.

► One UAMTF is employed in Stamford, Connecticut.

► One UAMTF is employed in Detroit, Michigan.

► One UAMTF has been allocated to

Pennsylvania.

A Navy Expeditionary Medical Facility in Louisiana continues to staff the personal housing unit site in New Orleans that is designed to house patients who are unable to return to their residence for self-quarantine.

In addition, the EMF has begun integrating Navy medical personnel from Dallas and New Orleans at Baton Rouge General-Mid City to augment staff there.

Providing medical support in communities across America takes a team of federal forces including operational planners, logisticians, human resources and information specialists, Defense Coordinating Officers/Elements, and nearly 300 Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers who work around the clock to integrate and synchronize a multitude of

"We continue to respond aggressively in support of NORTHCOM's coordinated campaign plan to provide the medical capacity to help reduce the burden on local governments, agencies, and hospitals fighting COVID-19"

Lt. Gen. Laura Richardson,
Joint Force Land and Army North
commanding general

planning efforts to facilitate support to emerging areas and any shift in operations.

Military History Detachments are deploying to document this unprecedented response effort. Behavioral health specialists and military chaplains are also providing support to our service members to ensure they can continue their crucial work in the COVID-19 response.

The JFLCC is working day and night with National Guard Dual Status Commanders and federal, state and local officials to refine its planning efforts and operations in support of civil authorities to rapidly meet our nation's need and save lives.

Coined the "Strength of the Nation," Army North plans, exercises, and trains year-round with federal, state, and local partners. We stand ready to provide life-saving and life-sustaining capabilities in support of federal, state, local, tribal and territorial partners to help the American people in their time of need.

BAMC dials in virtual healthcare to combat COVID-19

By Elaine Sanchez

BROOKE ARMY MEDICAL CENTER PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Deb Deja's follow-up visit with her provider at Brooke Army Medical Center was fast approaching when COVID-19 hit the news and the city.

With a citywide stay-home order in place but pressing questions for her doctor, Deja became concerned by the thought of holding off on the appointment until a later date.

When the call came to offer her a virtual appointment instead, Deja jumped at the opportunity. "I was very happy to do it," she said. "My trip each way is 30 to 45 minutes, so it was very convenient."

Her three-month follow up took place last week via phone. "The initial contact person asked all the questions just as if I was there in person and my doctor answered all of my questions completely," Deja said. "I wouldn't hesitate to participate in a virtual appointment again."

Virtual medicine is a globally burgeoning field that's exploded in recent weeks due to COVID-19 spread concerns and stay-at-home city and state orders. At BAMC, traditional face-to-face appointments for most routine care have increasingly shifted to virtual care to ensure social distancing as well as patient and provider safety.

Reducing COVID Exposure

BAMC has been leveraging every virtual asset to its fullest extent over the past month, starting with the San Antonio Military Health System COVID-19 Nurse Information Line, where nurses administer an initial COVID screening, and the Central Appointment Management Office, which offers telemedicine appointments for primary care needs.

"These avenues are really the foundation in connecting with people," said Army Col. Timothy Switaj, chief, BAMC Department of Family and Community Medicine. "The majority of our conversation is spent actively listening to our patients while taking a thorough medical history."

Virtual appointments can be used for medication refill requests, lab and radiology results, cold and allergy symptoms, urinary tract infections and routine follow-up appointments in which a physical exam isn't required.

In some cases, the doctor may determine face-to-face care is necessary and will immediately shift the appointment back to in-person. "We always keep patient safety in focus," Switaj said.

Virtual appointments have proven beneficial on several fronts. "They are not only a hit with patients who enjoy the convenience of an at-home appointment, but it affords staff an additional platform to care for our patients' needs in a timely and efficient way, thus improving overall access to care," Switaj said.

"This gives staff more time to proactively manage patients and their health, especially focusing on preventive care," he added.



COURTESY PHOTO

Deb Deja speaks to her provider during a virtual health appointment at her home in San Antonio. Brooke Army Medical Center has been leveraging virtual health to help reduce foot traffic and protect patients and staff from COVID-19.

Critical Capability

The shift to virtual healthcare is one the Military Health System has been anticipating for several years. Two years ago, BAMC became an innovation focal point with the launch of the military's first Virtual Medical Center. The center's intent is to serve as a test bed for new capabilities and a centralized program structure to advise and oversee global virtual health efforts.

Since that time, virtual health has proven invaluable in supporting troops on the battlefield with real-time health assessments, preventing lengthy trips to other locations for routine or certain types of specialty care, such as dermatology, explained Army Lt. Col. Sean Hipp, director, Virtual Medical Center. BAMC providers and specialists also serve in a virtual advisory capacity to their counterparts downrange.

Additionally, the center's Mobile Medic program educates medics around the world, enabling them to conduct medical assessments in the field while communicating with a health care provider via video conferencing.

"By doing so, we are saving time and resources vital to our wartime and humanitarian efforts," Hipp noted. "This capability will be increasingly critical to ensure that service members will survive war wounds and make it home."

Future Innovation

While the majority of BAMC's virtual appointments are conducted via telephone at this point, Hipp sees a tremendous future application for video-based platforms. "Just one example is a virtual

lactation consult," he noted. "Our experts can use video to teach new parents how to latch in the comfort of their own home."

While video would be a welcome asset, the challenge has been in developing a virtual platform that's able to be integrated with government software and electronic health records. This type of secure platform is still being researched, Hipp noted.

"Ideally, it will be a seamless product, transferring data between virtual and in-person appointments, while also transitioning data to the VA," he said.

In the meantime, Hipp is exploring the expansion of tele-critical support, noting the success of the Joint Critical Care Network in San Diego. This network of providers and other specialists monitor smaller wards in facilities throughout the military, providing overwatch and support for patients in intensive care units. With COVID-19, there's a feasible tele-critical application at BAMC.

"We are looking into the possibility of installing cameras and central monitoring equipment for wards in which COVID patients are being cared for," Hipp said. "Critical care providers are a finite resource and having this capability would enable them to provide invaluable care to a greater number of patients."

The long-term vision is to have providers centrally view the platform from home or another site, he added.

Redefining Delivery of Care

Hipp is hoping the current virtual trend will lead to lasting benefits.

"On the readiness side, we already have a robust readiness clinic and the ability to see patients all over the world rapidly. Now, we are gaining a better understanding of what can be done over the phone or on video, which will lead to better access to care throughout the San Antonio Military Health System," he said.

For BAMC's patients, one of the key benefits has been the ability to stay safe at home. Barb Mahoney's husband, Pat, had a telehealth visit last week, which also saved the couple two hours in travel time. "It went very well," she wrote in a BAMC Facebook comment.

Deja said her doctor reassured her several times during the call to call the clinic if she needed further guidance.

"I didn't feel this pandemic stopped my care; it just changed the process," she said.

As for the future, "This could potentially redefine how we deliver primary care," Switaj said.

To inquire about a virtual appointment for non-urgent care, beneficiaries should call the Consult Appointment Management Office at 210-916-9900.

For COVID-related questions, call the SAMHS COVID-19 Nurse Info Line at 210-581-2266, option 6. The advice line is available Monday-Friday from 7 a.m.-7 p.m. and weekends from 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

After hours, call the MHS Nurse Advice Line at 1-800-TRICARE (874-2273), option 1. For medical emergencies, please call 9-1-1.

METC mission vital to force readiness, COVID-19 response

By Lisa Braun

MEDICAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
CAMPUS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

While military and civilian healthcare workers around the globe do their part in the fight against COVID-19, the Medical Education and Training Campus, or METC, is preparing the future enlisted medical force to provide critical support to these frontline providers.

Located at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, METC's mission — to train the world's finest medics, corpsmen and technicians — is vital to force readiness and the nation. The tri-service schoolhouse facilitates training for nearly 50 allied health career fields for the Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard.

As students graduate, many will augment active duty, Guard and Reserve component military medical teams in the COVID-19 response effort. Whether heading to new assignments around the world or returning home to support their local communities, these new graduates will be ready.

Establishing precautions to safeguard the health and safety of METC students and staff in the training environment is paramount to the mission.

"As we support the METC mission, we are concurrently strengthening the service components in their mission to ensure METC trainees safely meet the challenges that will be asked of them as military allied health professionals," said Navy Capt. Thomas Herzig, METC commandant.

To mitigate potential risk, METC, by working closely with the Army, Navy, and Air Force, sought opportunities to meet the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's social distancing guidelines, whether



OSCAR LOPEZ

Students and instructors in the Medical Education and Training Campus Respiratory Therapist program practice safe distancing and wear face coverings while training with mechanical ventilators.

it be by spacing students six feet apart in the classroom and labs, transitioning to distance learning, or other mitigating strategies.

METC's Respiratory Therapist, or RT, program has mitigated risk by successfully transitioning to online learning in conjunction with other measures.

"RT students are distance learning by utilizing Joint

Knowledge Online (JKO) to deliver lectures and testing," said Oscar Lopez, clinical education program director.

Lopez explained that when practical exercises are scheduled, the class is divided into two or three smaller groups and each group is assigned a different time slot for hands-on practice.

Students and instructors are spread out among the various

lab rooms in order to maintain appropriate distancing while wearing face coverings to conduct the practical exercise.

Because RT students are prior enlisted and therefore more senior, they tend to live off post and can engage in distance learning from their residence.

However, some programs are too large for the infrastructure to support

online learning. To work around that issue, some of the larger programs, like the Department of Combat Medic Training, have turned to implementing split training shifts. Half of the students conduct training from 5 a.m. to 2 p.m., while the second half trains from 2 p.m. to 11 p.m.

By split training, there are fewer students sharing classroom and lab space, allowing them to maintain at least six feet of separation while also wearing face coverings for further protection.

Other steps have also been taken to protect students and staff members.

"To promote social distancing and assist with minimizing contact within common areas, breakrooms within the medical instructional facilities have been closed until further notice," stated Chief Master Sgt. Joshua Barr, METC senior enlisted advisor. "We also expanded some 'no cover, no salute' areas in the outdoor courtyards to provide students more area to spread out."

Barr said all formal graduation ceremonies have been suspended as well.

Transitioning an entire course from classroom to online during a short span of time, as well as the hands-on aspect of the curriculum, can make social distancing in any form a complicated task but Herzig had no doubt that METC could do it.

"The dedication and professionalism of our uniformed, civilian, and contractor personnel during this time is truly inspiring," he declared. "It may not be 'business as usual,' but they have all demonstrated these last weeks that we can adapt and still achieve success during this crisis."

AAFES supports ARNORTH, service members with mobile store

By David DeKunder

502ND AIR BASE WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

To provide necessities for service members and personnel who are supporting operations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Army and Air Force Exchange Service opened a Mobile Field Exchange store at the Mission Training Complex at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston April 6.

The Mission Training Complex is the primary operations center for U.S. Army North, or ARNORTH, which is leading the Department of Defense response to COVID-19 in the U.S., working with federal partners to provide support to the American people.

Tammar Tracey, JBSA-Fort Sam Houston Exchange store manager, said a Mobile Field Exchange store, or MFE, is a temporary mobile store housed in a trailer that provides essential items for customers. ARNORTH requested the facility and is responsible for providing security and diesel fuel for the generator providing electricity for the trailer.

The MFE is open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week and provides 150 items for purchase, including snacks, sandwiches, beverages and office and



COURTESY PHOTO

A customer purchases items inside the Mobile Field Exchange trailer at the Mission Training Complex at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston.

health supplies. Tracey said the mobile store will allow servicemembers and personnel at the Mission Training Complex the convenience of purchasing essential items, without having to go to

the main post exchange.

"The Mission Training Complex is a 24-hour operation," Tracey said. "With the heightened emergency we are currently in, it's just a convenient way to

support ARNORTH because they are working long hours. This is the first time at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston that an MFE has been put into operation."

The MFE is staffed by five AAFES associates per day, including a manager, stockers and cashiers. It is connected to a storage trailer, which houses merchandise to restock the mobile store when needed. The facility will remain in operation until it's no longer needed.

Tracey said by opening a mobile store at the Mission Training Complex, AAFES is adhering to its priority of serving active-duty members wherever they are.

"It's our mission," she said. "It supports our motto: 'We go where you go.'"

Col. Nivae Knell, ARNORTH and Joint Forces Land Component Command chief of staff, said ARNORTH is extremely grateful for the support it has received from AAFES for the mobile store.

"Their flexibility and willingness to deploy a mobile store to support us ensures that everyone in our organization can remain focused on helping the American people in this challenging time," Knell said.

JBSA Support Line available to help lessen COVID woes

By Lori A. Bultman

502ND AIR BASE WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Are you struggling with telework, unemployment, homeschooling or a lack of daycare? Do you have bouts of anxiety, fear or stress?

The Joint Base San Antonio Behavioral Health COVID-19 Support Line has personnel available to listen and provide guidance on how to cope with the multitude of issues brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and the persisting stay-at-home orders.

The Behavioral Health COVID-19 Support Line can be reached from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, at 210-539-9567 or 210-539-9565. The call will be confidential unless referral to emergency services is required.

"You may have children at home 24/7 and family members working from home. Maybe there are financial concerns or a loss of employment. There might also be concern over the health of your family and yourself, or maybe it's just plain boredom," said Dr. Adriana L.

Gutierrez, a forensic and clinical psychologist at Brooke Army Medical Center.

Any of these situations can lead to overwhelming stress and anxiety, and while it may be easy to recognize the signs in others, it can often be difficult to recognize them in yourself, Gutierrez said.

"Signs of stress or anxiety might include loss of sleep; being easily frustrated or angered; being tearful; having feelings of panic; feeling overly tired; drinking more than usual; arguing with loved ones; having a loss of interest in activities; boredom; oversleeping, pacing or overeating; not wanting to go to work; having physical tension in the shoulders, neck, back and other parts of the body; headaches; or gastrointestinal issues," she said.

While anyone can suffer some or all of the signs, medical providers and first responders are at particular risk for high levels of stress, Gutierrez said.

"They face workload demands, concern for family members, and have a fear of contracting the virus and

infected their loved ones," she said.

That is why the support line was established, to help those struggling during trying times.

"The support line is available to help anyone who might need assistance dealing with their situation, and calls to the center are not considered medical encounters, so no documentation kept on the calls received," Gutierrez said.

The line is open to military personnel, Department of Defense civilian employees, family members, DOD contractors, and all other beneficiaries.

"When you call, you will be asked very minimal personal information — just your name and contact phone number, in case you get disconnected, or in case an emergency arises," Gutierrez said. "During the call, you will be approached in a nonjudgmental manner and will be provided brief, behaviorally based stress management techniques, coping skills, problem-solving approaches and information on resources, including smartphone applications. You might also receive information on financial, legal or other

resources if needed."

In some cases, callers may be referred for formal behavioral health services, if it is warranted, Gutierrez said.

"This support line is a non-medical response to support the military community, but it is not intended to be a crisis line," she said. "Callers will be screened for suicidal behaviors and will be referred to appropriate agencies via BAMC Behavioral Health personnel if needed. It is also not for emergent care, nor does it replace medical counseling."

Anyone eligible who feels they may benefit from extra support during this time; if things are feeling tense at home with the kids or your partner; if the pressures at work are getting to you; or if you are feeling bored and are maybe drinking more than usual; then Gutierrez said calling the BAMC support line would be a good idea.

Calls will be confidential unless a referral to emergency services is required. If you are in crisis and need immediate assistance, please dial 911 or call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to be connected with a professional counselor.

LACKLAND

433rd AES crew deploys to support COVID-19 response

By Master Sgt.
Kristian Carter

433RD AIRLIFT WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Approximately 20 Reserve Citizen-Airmen from the 433rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland mobilized April 15 to support COVID-19 patient care.

The Citizen-Airmen will be assigned to the COVID-19 Aeromedical Evacuation hub at Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina, and will deploy as needed.

The troop commander, Lt. Col. Alex Schwan, 433rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron chief nurse, explained the role of the Citizen Airmen.

“Aeromedical evacuation plays a critical role, which is specific to patient transport,” Schwan said. “For this tasking, it could be COVID-19 patients, or it could be wounded



MASTER SGT. KRISTIAN CARTER

Personnel with the 433rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron board a C-17 Globemaster III April 15 at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland.

duty enlisted Airman and returning with a commission, hasn't deployed since Desert Storm.

“This is a whole new Air Force for me,” Tucker said. “I was an electronic technician. I worked with radio equipment, video equipment, and TVs. Back in those days, there were VCRs and stuff like that. It has been a long time since I deployed. I'm looking forward to it.”

When not on duty with the Reserve, Tucker is a nurse at Brooke Army Medical Center at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston.

The call for aeromedical support came just days after the Air Force Reserve mobilized more than 120 medical personnel across the nation to Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, to help with the fight against COVID-19 in New York City.

warriors we are transporting.”

Schwan continued, “We're not only sending crews of flyers, but we're also sending a ground crew, which includes communications personnel, our medical service corps officers, and our admins, who are critical to supporting the

mission. They will be playing a role in the aeromedical evacuation operations team, which is the ground component that supports the aircrew movement.”

In his civilian capacity, Schwan is a primary care clinical case manager for the

Veteran's Administration at the Audie L. Murphy Memorial Veteran's Hospital in San Antonio.

This crew spans a variety of backgrounds. Maj. Tracy B. Tucker, 433rd AES flight nurse, who had a break in service between her time as an active

149th FW maintenance team makes face masks for Guard members

By Master Sgt. Mindy Bloem

149TH FIGHTER WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

When guidance came out that personnel on base should wear face coverings when within 6 feet of each other, one Air National Guard member with a personal 3D printer figured he could help.

Staff Sgt. Paul Renker, a 149th Fighter Wing hydraulics technician at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, stepped up to assist those who needed to adapt to the guidance quickly but did not have a suitable face covering.

“I've always tried to help

other people if I can,” Renker said. “I also wanted to prove to myself and to my family the worth of buying a 3D printer in the first place because it has been printing baby Yodas and random stuff, so now that I actually have a useful purpose for it, it's pretty cool.”

After Renker gave away his first 3D printed mask to a coworker, word soon spread to his leaders, who asked him if he would make as many as he could.

Renker asked some members of his squadron's aircraft metals technology shop — more commonly known as the machine shop —

if they wanted to help print some out, too. They did.

“Before I got my 3D printer, I went over there a lot to learn from them because their shop has one, so I developed a good rapport with them,” Renker said. “With those guys being over there, I knew they would want to help, too.”

When newer guidance specific to 149th Fighter Wing members came out stating that coverings should be solid colors or of current service camouflage pattern, Renker and the machine shop members once again began printing masks, this time of solid color.

Members were given some time to adjust to the changes but were asked by wing leadership to get help from their supervisors if they did not have something readily available.

Thanks to Renker and the machine shop staff's volunteer efforts, supervisors have been able to provide an easy way to meet the guidance, which allows Air Guard members to stay focused on the F-16 flying mission without having to stress about where they can find a proper face covering.

“A lot of us already have 3D printing machines at home as part of our hobbies,” said

Master Sgt. Carlos Gil, 149th Maintenance Squadron aircraft metals technology. “We're able to print at home so that way we don't interfere with the flying mission.”

Gil said even though it preoccupies a large part of his home time, he loves what he does and that it feels patriotic to him.

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” Gil said. “It's better to have one than not have one. They are here for anyone that needs one, and I'm going to keep doing it until we are told to stop.”

MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD

Purple flags honor military children in uncertain time

By Rachel Kersey

502ND AIR BASE WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

A team of 10 youth and three adults went out from the Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Youth Center April 16 planting purple flags around the base in honor of military children everywhere.

April is the nationally recognized Month of the Military Child and this flag-planting, which is occurring at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston as well as JBSA-Randolph, is part of a larger initiative called Purple Up!, which is celebrated April 17.

Purple Up USA, a San Antonio organization, approached Brig. Gen. Laura Lenderman, 502nd Air Base Wing and JBSA commander, with the idea to donate 1,000 flags per installation in celebration. Kimberly Gilman, assistant Child and Youth Services flight chief, learned April 13 of the initiative, called her team together and pulled the whole thing off in three days.

On JBSA-Lackland, the flags were placed in housing areas, outside of the Child Development Center and Family Childcare Center, in front of Youth Programs, in the area around the Commissary and by one of the gates.

"It worked! We all came together as a community," Gilman said. "We're here to celebrate the sacrifices and everything these military kids go through."

With the spread of COVID-19 and implementing safety precautions a priority for JBSA and the whole world, many military children's lives have been upended again.

"I personally think that it's important to recognize them still because there are other things that can potentially



CHRISTOPHER CAMPBELL

Abrielle (left) and Michala Janaros (right) join volunteers and members of the 502nd Force Support Squadron Child and Youth Services Flight in placing purple flags in front of houses at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland April 17 in honor of Month of the Military Child, observed in April. They are the daughters of Col. Jason Janaros, 37th Training Wing commander.

overshadow them," said Shalanda Wideman, JBSA-Lackland Youth Director. "So aside from what is happening right now, we wanted to focus in on [telling military children that] we still recognize you guys and we still thank you for being so empowered to continue to go no matter where you are in the world, to continue to grow, and to adapt to whatever environment you're faced with."

Donning blue latex gloves

and a black face mask, Michala Janaros, the 16-year-old military child and daughter of Col. Jason Janaros, 37th Training Wing commander, planted flags outside the homes on Chapman Training Annex. She and her sister, Abrielle, explained how making friends in San Antonio after moving from Illinois has been a challenge.

"Me and Abby had a really hard time connecting with the girls at our church," Michala said, referring to Abrielle.

"Some of them have lived here their whole life. They're best friends. So we felt like the new kids. My brother connected really well, but I just kinda had a hard time."

Abrielle said that they had gone to a church in Illinois where they were one of many military families and they fit in well there, but things were different here. And although he made friends in San Antonio easily, their brother, Jadon, would say that socializing is

both the best part and the worst part of being a military kid.

"I think the hardest, and the most fun thing is meeting new people because you make those connections along the way, and then, unfortunately, you have to leave those connections," he said. "But just making new friends and starting new adventures, I've always loved that about the military."

Texas weather has been a challenge for him, too.

"Certain times of year here I do like, but during the summer, it gets way too hot," he said. "And then I do miss the snow, too."

The family spent some time in Colorado as well as New York, where they got plenty of snow.

"I'm definitely a cold weather person," Alaina agreed. "So the weather wasn't my favorite here. But I like the people. And the food's good."

The Janaros children were quick to elucidate the upsides to their moving around. Michala and Abrielle relayed the joys of traveling the country in a recreational vehicle. They had their RV for many years until recently, when they sold it. The RV allowed them to reconnect with friends around America and camp in National Parks like Yellowstone.

"Military kids are very resilient," Gilman said. "This is their month and we want to celebrate. Unfortunately, we had to cancel some things. But we still wanted to recognize them and do something special."

"With everything going on, the majority of the kids are spending 90 percent of the time in a house," Wideman said. "So with them being at home, we just really want to go around and touch a little bit of their area and let them know hey, we haven't forgotten you. We put this little marker to show that you are in our hearts."

RANDOLPH

M&FRCs rely on virtual platforms to serve JBSA community

By Robert Goetz

502ND AIR BASE WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Like many of Joint Base San Antonio's facilities, the Military and Family Readiness Centers on each installation are closed to the community as a result of shelter-in-place guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although in-person activities and services are suspended temporarily, the centers' commitment to serving the needs of military members and their families, retirees and Department of Defense civilians continues unabated.

"JBSA Military & Family Readiness Centers stand by ready to assist virtually in all program areas," said Kathleen Moree, JBSA-Randolph M&FRC chief. "Phone lines are being monitored throughout the day and all messages will be returned."

Classes and one-on-one appointments are being offered in a variety of virtual ways, Moree said.

"I encourage our customers to contact the center and leave a message, check our Facebook or reach out to staff members if they previously worked with them," she said.

In addition, Military & Family Life Counselors are providing telehealth services temporarily to the military community, Moree said.

"These services include telephonic and video non-medical counseling in areas where face-to-face support is restricted due to COVID-19," she said.

Services that occur at large group settings such as reverse job fairs, which include or require other on- and off-base agencies and organizations to be present, may not be provided, said Joseph Catahay, JBSA-Lackland M&FRC chief.

"However, we continue to provide the community with guidance and access to telephonic one-on-one consultations and information," he said.

Mandatory sessions for active-duty members are provided virtually, Catahay said.

"Some of these sessions require that service members access them only at specific dates and times and have to be completed within certain periods," he said. "Suspense dates are established, monitored and followed through by program managers and consultants."

At JBSA-Fort Sam Houston, the M&FRC is working to adapt as many classes as possible to a virtual format, said Frances Anderson, director.

"Each week we will be posting to our Facebook page the schedule of virtual classes for the following week," she said. "We are currently offering classes in employment readiness, pre- and post-deployment resiliency and financial readiness, among others."

"Because some of our classes are offered in partnership with other organizations or may not lend themselves to a virtual format, we can't promise to offer everything that's listed in

How to contact JBSA's M&FRCs

JBSA-Fort Sam Houston M&FRC

210-221-2705 / 2418

Email: usaf.jbsa.502-abw.mbx.mfrc@mail.mil

Employment Org box: Usaf.jbsa.aetc.mbx.jbsa-employment-org-box@mail.mil

JBSA-Lackland M&FRC

210-671-3722

Email: 802fss.fsfr@us.af.mil

Tech Training Airman Readiness Element (210) 671-4057

Email: 802fss.fsfr.student@us.af.mil

JBSA-Randolph M&FRC

210-652-5321

Email: Randolphmfrc@us.af.mil

Voting Assistance: randolph.vote@us.af.mil

Additional M&FRC program information can be found at:

JBSA M&FRC Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/mfrcjbsa>; <https://www.jbsa.mil/Resources/Military-Family-Readiness>

Military & Family Life Counselor tele-health sessions

JBSA-Fort Sam Houston: 210-421-9387; 210-672-0529

JBSA-Lackland: 210-984-1076; 210-488-2962

JBSA-Randolph: 210-744-4829; 210-996-4037

our calendar of events, but it's a great reference," Anderson said. "If there's a class listed in the calendar of events that someone would like to attend virtually, all they have to do is call or email and we will let them know if there will be a virtual offering of that class."

For active-duty members' mandatory requirements, the JBSA-Fort Sam Houston M&FRC has developed a virtual class or process, Anderson said.

"For example, since switching to a virtual-only service, we have conducted two virtual newcomers orientation/right start briefings,

meeting the in-processing requirements for close to 100 active-duty members," she said. "In addition, the Soldier for Life-Transition Assistance Program team is providing virtual services and ensuring that service members will continue to be able to meet all mandatory milestones as they prepare to transition to civilian life."

"It would be difficult to describe the virtual option for every requirement a service member might have, but anyone with a question should call or email our centers and we will ensure they get the assistance

they need," Anderson said.

The M&FRC chiefs want members of the JBSA community to know that social distancing does not mean they're on their own.

"We may not be able to offer in-person services in our center right now, but Military & Family Readiness is still here to help," they said. "Our mission of supporting military members and their families in developing readiness and resilience continues and is as vital as it ever has been. We just want everyone to know that we are just a call, or an email or a Facebook message away."

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY - APRIL 21, 2020

Holocaust refugee turned American Soldier will never forget

By Sabrina Fine

502ND AIR BASE WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Dr. Guy Stern is a man of many titles. Literary scholar, Bronze Star Medal recipient and published author — to name just a few.

“Beyond the fighting spirit of all GIs, the knowledge of the Holocaust was an added incentive to put forth our utmost effort in the war, we were refugees; our own families were being murdered,” Stern said.

Stern was born in Hildesheim, Germany, in 1922. He escaped from Nazi Germany and relocated to the United States in 1937 with the help of an uncle and an American Jewish organization. He hoped that his parents and two siblings would follow.

In 1943, he was drafted into the Army and in 1944 landed in Normandy after D-day as a “Ritchie Boy.” Ritchie Boys were a military intelligence unit made up of mostly German, Austrian and Czech refugees and immigrants, many of whom were Jewish.

Since Stern spoke German he was tasked with the interrogation of prisoners of war and defectors. Stern's story was highlighted in the book “Sons and Soldiers: The untold story of the Jews who escaped the Nazis and returned with the U.S. Army to fight Hitler.”

Stern, along with fellow Ritchie Boy Fred Howard, devised a plan to extract information from German soldiers after previous more traditional methods did not work.

“My friend and comrade Fred Howard found that the German soldiers were afraid beyond everything else of landing in Russian captivity,” Stern said. “We played on that fear by telling the enemy soldiers that we had orders to



COURTESY PHOTO

Dr. Guy Stern, former Soldier, received a Bronze Star for his method of gathering important intelligence for the Air Force during World War II. Stern's story was highlighted in the book “Sons and Soldiers: The untold story of the Jews who escaped the Nazis and returned with the U.S. Army to fight Hitler.”

turn them over to the Russians if they did not cooperate. We got vital info for our Air Force that way. I disguised myself as a Soviet commissar and liaison officer. I donned a Russian uniform for that purpose; Fred played a soft-hearted American.”

Stern also adopted a Russian accent, despite not knowing how to speak Russian. Stern's method allowed him to gather important intelligence as well as earn him a Bronze Star.

“I could make a contribution to the war effort as an interrogator of POWs by introducing mass interrogations in order to assess the strength of the last

German replacement divisions and to report on the German potential for gas warfare,” Stern said.

Stern was born in Germany, yet never once hesitated in his allegiance to the United States. He felt very much American.

As a Jew, American soldier and a human, he never erased memories of what he witnessed in Buchenwald. In a 1990 oral history recording for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, he spoke of the horrors. When he arrived at Buchenwald, Stern remembered feeling queasy.

His unit helped set up food and water for recently liberated prisoners, yet the

“My friend and comrade Fred Howard found that the German soldiers were afraid beyond everything else of landing in Russian captivity.

We played on that fear by telling the enemy soldiers that we had orders to turn them over to the Russians if they did not cooperate. We got vital info for our Air Force that way. I disguised myself as a Soviet commissar and liaison officer. I donned a Russian uniform for that purpose; Fred played a soft-hearted American.”

Dr. Guy Stern, Holocaust refugee turned American Soldier

prisoners were still dealing with shock and not fully comprehending they were free.

When speaking of the experience, Stern's demeanor changed. His eyes became heavier and he looked off to the side in search of words to describe the almost indescribable.

He recalled a story of a man who was stooped down to a puddle of muddy water and was readying himself to drink from it. From Stern's perspective, it looked like something routine. Stern's unit had just set up clean water in the camp for the recently liberated survivors.

The survivor needed to be gently reminded and pointed in the direction of the clean water. Only then did he abandon the dirty puddle.

“To summarize it, it was almost as if you had to unlearn the concentration camp experience,” Stern said about the survivors.

Before leaving Buchenwald, Stern recalled despite their grim conditions and poor health, the survivors seemed very grateful. He remembers the scene of them coming to the fence to greet the Americans.

After the war, Stern learned his whole family had perished in Warsaw.

In 1948, he graduated Hofstra and went on to receive his Ph.D. from Columbia

University in German Literature and Culture. Doing so required Stern to wrestle with some deeply personal decisions.

“I could have entered a variety of fields,” Stern said. “I found to my satisfaction, and that of my professors that I had some gifts for German literature and German cultural history.”

Yet the troubling thought was, if he continued studying German, he would be constantly reminded of Germany and its past and the terrible memories of his youth.

“I came to the recognition I indeed had a gift and to deny it, or to let it lie fallow would be an act of self-amputation, very much like the one they were going to inflict on me, it was doing the work of the enemy,” Stern said. “So, I decided to stay in German.”

He also believed he could make a difference for the victims of Nazi Germany.

“I've made the right decision because I've lent voice to some writers who may otherwise have been forgotten,” Stern said. “I have in a way kept their memory and the memory of their writings alive.”

Dr. Guy Stern currently directs the Harry and Wanda Zekelman International Institute of the Righteous at the Holocaust Memorial Center in Farmington Hills, Michigan.

FEEDBACK FRIDAYS

From page 3

this issue forward. Our Civil Engineers have validated this deficiency and are working with the facility manager to resolve the issue as quickly as possible.

Miscellaneous

Q. I realize that we have an Air Force-mandated formal recognition program at JBSA and we have our quarterly and annual awards.

However, it appears that only a very small fraction of the entire JBSA workforce is ever recognized. This to me is very wrong and unjustified.

There are many reasons for this. One of them is that many supervisors are either too lazy, don't care, don't know how to write a good awards package, or too busy to nominate their people for awards.

Another reason is the strict and rigid grading criteria for these quarterly and annual awards. They then have to go through a panel of board members and the list goes on and on.

It is a pyramid effect where only a small few rise to the top in-order to be officially recognized. How can that be a fair, caring, and realistic way to recognize people at JBSA, when only a few people win the top honors?

I would like to see JBSA institute an informal recognition program. That way more people at JBSA would get recognized, morale would improve, people would feel valued and appreciated, and there would be many other benefits associated with an informal recognition program.

Many companies have already successfully instituted informal recognition programs in their organizations across the U.S. and they have found that continual recognition influences everything and everyone in their individual companies!

Employees thrive in this type of environment, and organizations using this informal recognition strategy see a dramatic improvement in both morale and productivity.

A. Thank you so much for your question. I agree with you; we have an amazing team of professionals who deserve to be recognized for the outstanding work they do every day.

In addition, to quarterly and annual awards, there are several other

programs available through which leadership can recognize their personnel for outstanding performance.

For example, there are numerous functional awards such as the American Legion Spirit of Service Awards, Excellence in Government Awards, Outstanding DOD Employee and Service Member with Disability Awards, Blacks in Government Awards, etc. These awards are open to many different categories of civilians and military personnel, and the list is by no means all inclusive.

Please check the Task Management Tool operating system as there are many awards that become available on a monthly basis.

Additionally, after I assumed command, Chief Lantagne and I created the Mission, Values, and People (MVP) Award. These three elements are the guiding principles that are the very foundation of our Wing. This program enables leadership to submit a super simple write-up about an individual or team that has impacted the 502d Air Base Wing's mission, helped other people, or demonstrated the values we stand for as a Wing. There is a schedule associated with this program, and it rotates through each squadron giving every Commander the opportunity to submit deserving personnel.

Commanders can also recognize their personnel at the 502d ABW staff meeting that is conducted every Thursday. Historically, Commanders have simply submitted names of deserving personnel with a short narrative about their accomplishments to the 502d ABW Commander's Action Group (CAG) so their personnel can be recognized at our staff meeting.

We also recognize our personnel at Commander's Calls to the greatest extent possible. In addition, when the Chief and I do out-and-about, we recognize star performers with a Commander and/or Chief coin.

These informal recognition programs allow informal recognition for our personnel, even if they are not nominated for a quarterly or annual Award. I will continue to emphasize the importance to formal and informal recognition with our leadership team.

Thank you very much for sharing your question in this forum which helps get the word out about the various informal recognition programs currently offered here at the 502d ABW.