

JBSA LEGACY

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JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO

MAY 22, 2020



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Guard's COVID-19 response is largest since Hurricane Katrina

By Tech. Sgt. Erich B. Smith
NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU

Almost 47,000 Soldiers and Airmen from the National Guard are activated to help fight COVID-19 in the Guard's largest domestic response effort since Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

More than 51,000 Guard members responded to Katrina.

While Katrina response efforts were in a concentrated area along the Gulf Coast, COVID-19 response efforts have taken place in all 50 states, three territories and the District of Columbia.

"In every single state across our nation, we have Guardsmen ... who are working together with first responders and all of the organizations and agencies to help shepherd us through to the other side of this pandemic," said Air Force Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel, chief of the National Guard Bureau.

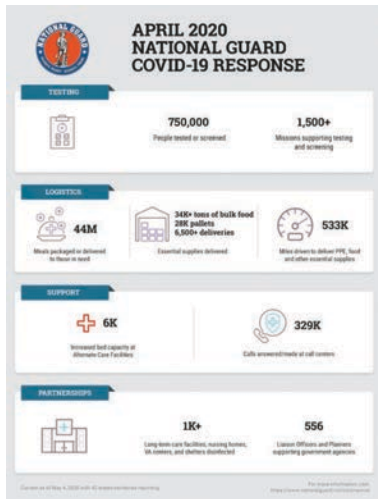
As the Guard begins its third month responding to the pandemic, efforts are focused mainly on COVID-19 testing sites and distributing medical supplies and food.

In April, Guard members packaged, served or delivered more than 44 million meals to those in need while also transporting more than 34,000 tons of bulk food to support food banks and other community-based programs.

"I have been unloading pallets, stocking food, packing boxes and bags, loading supplies into waiting cars, and assisting with cleanup," said Air Force Staff Sgt. David Stefaniak, a boom operator with the Washington Air National Guard's 16th Air Refueling Wing. "It's very fulfilling to get to directly serve Washingtonians who are in need."

Also in April, Guard members supported just under 1,600 screening sites nationwide and tested more than 750,000 people.

"As medics, we handle certain challenges that others may not experience," said Army Sgt. Valerie Hodges, a combat medic with a Florida Army National Guard medical readiness detachment who has been on duty at a testing site in the Miami area. "Everyone chose the medical profession for personal reasons and due to that



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choice, we are here today helping the citizens of South Florida."

Meanwhile, the West Virginia Army National Guard set up one of the first mobile testing labs approved by the Department of Defense.

"Once we arrive on-site, there's about a 60-minute setup period in which we calibrate the machine," said Army 1st Lt. Samantha Fabian, commander of the West Virginia Army Guard's 1201st Forward Support Company. "Once we complete calibration, then our lab is certified and ready for operation."

Across the nation, Guard members also distributed critical items of personal protective equipment, or PPE, in April.

"One of our Soldiers made a delivery to a smaller nursing facility and he was greeted by 15 to 20 staff members who were in tears because he showed up with this PPE they needed," said Army Staff Sgt. Jacob Schrot, with the Michigan Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 125th Infantry Regiment. "That really opened my eyes to what's really going on out there."

Guard members have supported other

missions as well.

In eight states, Guard members staffed call centers and took almost 330,000 calls regarding COVID-19 matters.

"COVID-19 is a unique situation that directly threatens our communities," said Army 1st Lt. Michel Flickinger, with the New York Army National Guard. "Although staffing a call center is not what many of us foresaw when we joined the National Guard, it is a way for us to assist our fellow citizens and connect them with the information they need."

The Guard also added almost 6,000 beds at alternate care facilities in April. In Connecticut, Airman 1st Class Arielle Robles, an administration specialist with the Connecticut Air National Guard's 103rd Airlift Wing, was part of her unit's response in setting up a recovery center on a college campus.

"It's crazy to see that where we would normally go for class or to workout is being turned into a field hospital, but it feels good to be helping the community and my school in this way," Robles said.

Guard members have also disinfected almost 1,100 long-term care facilities, nursing homes, correctional facilities and numerous public areas. "[We spray] things like your doorknobs, handles on anything — things that you are going to touch with regularity — and then [go over the surfaces with] rags and a mop to ensure that our solution spreads and has a lot of good contact time," said Army Sgt. Christina Burgess, with the Oklahoma Army National Guard's 63rd Civil Support Team. "That way, we can control any infection that could be around."

The Guard has also provided about 600 liaison officers who facilitate communication with state and local agencies seeking assistance and support.

Army Command Sgt. Maj. Brian Webb, the senior enlisted leader with the North Carolina Army National Guard's 60th Troop Command and a liaison officer with state officials, said Guard members have a stake in what happens in their communities.

"We bring our civilian skill sets into a military environment," he said. "That plays a tremendous part in our success."

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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.

Installation & Facilities

Q. I really appreciate your leadership and friendship! My question is, why have the flower shops at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston, JBSA-Lackland and JBSA-Randolph been closed for operations?

A. Thank you very much for your kind words! Regarding the flower shops, our AAFES concession partner chose not to renew their contract due to low demand and decreased customer traffic. AAFES is currently working with new vendors to expand their capabilities and gain more customer throughput. We hope to have more updates to share in the future **Q. My question concerns mail delivery. When our daughter was in week 4 of Basic Military Training at JBSA-Lackland, I subscribed to Sandboxx, which guarantees next-day delivery of mail.**

When we spoke to our daughter on the phone, she told us that she had only received two of the 10 letters that I had sent her in the last 10 days. I know that there have been disruptions caused by COVID-19, and by the related fact that she transferred from a temporary flight and dorm to a permanent one.

Nonetheless, I would think that it is not too hard to get a letter to an Airman on base within no more than a day or two after its arrival. This standard does not appear to have been met. Is there any information that you can provide me on this matter?

A. Thank you very much for your feedback. I sincerely apologize for the delay in mail delivery. Even with COVID-19 operations, there should not

have been a disruption in JBSA mail service.

In accordance with postal instructions and directives, we have 24 hours to place received mail in the appropriate students' postal boxes or in the designated organizational AO boxes. Our postal contractor sorts all BMT mail and places them in the designated training squadron distribution mailbox. MTIs then pick up and distribute the mail to assigned Airmen.

Even with guaranteed delivery, there is still a process that our Post Offices must follow before mail is delivered, especially to our trainees which may have contributed to the delays. Again, I apologize for the inconvenience, but we appreciate the feedback!

Miscellaneous

Q. I have two children with special needs who receive respite care through the EFMP respite program. The program was recently brought in-house after being outsourced for some time.

Our respite provider brought it to my attention that she and all the other providers nationwide were grossly underpaid in the month of November (up to \$40/hour less than what they were promised).

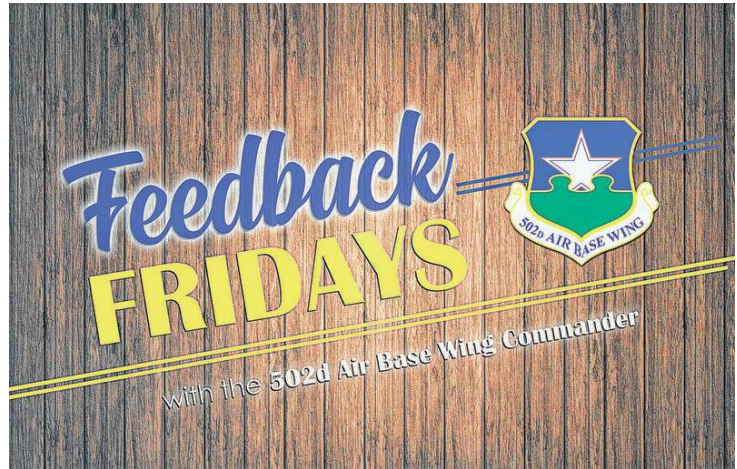
A number of weeks ago, their point of contact told them the situation would be rectified within a week, but to date, they have not been paid and their contactors are no longer responding to emails or phone calls.

I have spoken to multiple respite providers that are considering leaving the program and as a result, leaving a number of military families with special needs family members without respite care.

We are counting on this program and its success and it really reflects poorly that since being brought in house, it isn't running as it should.

A. Thank you very much for sharing your concerns. I also share your concerns and asked my team to research this issue. I learned that while our Installation Family Child Care Coordinators do not have the capability or rights to review the Respite Care Providers timesheets and submission, the Respite Care Providers program managers are located at Air Force Services Center.

I've asked our team to reach out to the services center to help rectify this issue.



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However, in the future, if you have any additional questions or concerns, please reach out to the AFSVC/SVPY Respite Care Providers POCs: Jessa Stone, Lisa Martinez and Erin Lopez. They can all be reached at AFFCCSystem.Admin-02@us.af.mil

Q. I am writing to ask for assistance with the MyBiz Disability section.

Currently, when it comes to having multiple disabilities, there is only a single choice of a disability available to choose from and the only other alternative for a person with multiple qualifying disabilities on that list is to select "I do not wish to identify my disability or serious health condition."

Problem Identified: Choosing the option to not disclose a disability may not be the truth for some people, but choosing only one disability is not the whole truth either for other people. That is why this is a problem that needs serious attention brought to it in order to fix it.

Is there a way to add a function to select more than one disability on our profile? Or is there a way to add a button that says, "I suffer from multiple disabilities listed here" and then add a space to let the person list the other disabilities?

A. Thank you very much for your question. I am committed to ensuring a fair and inclusive workplace environment for our teammates with disabilities.

The SF-256 (Self-Identification of Disability) was recently revised to assist organizations in monitoring the hiring, development and retention of Federal employees with disabilities, including targeted disabilities. Unfortunately, the SF-256 does not allow for the input of more than one disability.

In October 2016, the Office of Personnel Management modified the form to reflect changes to terms used to describe targeted disabilities, serious health conditions, and other disabilities which in turn simplified the description of conditions and provided employees with options to identify that they have a medical condition without specifying a diagnosis.

While completion of this form remains voluntary, the collection and/or update of this information assists employers in gaining a broader understanding of their diverse workforce. The information being collected from this document assists employers in identifying the percentage of employees who have a disability and those with a targeted disability.

JBSA employees are voluntarily requested to update their disability on an annual basis in order to provide the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) with data. We ask each individual who might have more than one disability to identify a "targeted" disability over a disability. If you have several disabilities, we ask you to identify just one.

JBSA LEGAL NEWS FOR SOLDIERS

Do gift and fundraising rules still apply to active-duty Soldiers during a pandemic?

By Capt. Chris Holbolth
U.S. ARMY NORTH
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW ATTORNEY

These are tough days for everyone, including Department of Defense employees. Even if we still have a job, family members might be laid off or sick, or we may have friends in need of support.

Regardless of our circumstances, however, the basic ethics rules governing federal employees continue to apply, including the rules on accepting gifts and fundraising.

Before discussing gifts and fundraisers, remember that Soldiers in financial need may seek assistance from the Army Emergency Relief program at <https://www.armyemergencyrelief.org/>

In regards to rules on gifts and fundraisers, all of us should have received, at some point in our careers, information about accepting gifts.

The Code of Federal Regulations (5 CFR §2635) lays out a couple of basic



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gift rules to remember:

- ▶ We are generally prohibited from soliciting or accepting gifts that were given to us because of our status as Soldiers or Army employees, and
- ▶ We are not to accept gifts from prohibited sources, which are organizations that do business/seek to do business with the DOD.

Note that these rules apply to all

gifts, including donations of personal protective equipment, or PPE, and other COVID-19 responsive items.

The gift rules are simple enough, but as with any set of rules, there are always exceptions, such as the 20/50 rule, which allows an employee to accept a gift worth up to \$20 in value per occasion from a single source, and no more than \$50 total value per year

of all gifts from a single source.

Employees may also accept gifts, from any source, that have been made available to the public in general or to all military members. A complete list of exceptions is found in 5 CFR 2635.204.

What about fundraising through applications that facilitate crowdfunding? Remember the other half of the gift rule: in addition to prohibitions on acceptance, Soldiers are prohibited from soliciting gifts in their official capacity.

The rules on fundraising and gifts are complex — if you have a question on a fundraiser or gift, see your chain of command or ethics advisor in the command's office of the staff judge advocate.

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

DOD launches financial education website for military spouses

Defense.gov

Military spouses often are the family's chief financial officer. From managing permanent-change-of-station moves to unexpected emergencies and changes in pay, there is little doubt about the importance of understanding the unique circumstances of managing personal finances in military life.

In recognition of military spouses and the important role they have in keeping the force financially ready, The Department of Defense Office of Financial Readiness introduces MilSpouse Money Mission, a new financial education resource just for military spouses.

MilSpouse Money Mission is the DOD's primary resource designed for and to provide military spouses with trusted information they can use to be

more empowered and actively be involved in making financial decisions for their families' financial well-being and achievement of financial goals, officials said.

MilSpouse Money Mission offers military spouses accessible, free financial education and resources, including:

A guide to support the education of spouses in tackling a variety of financial topics most relevant to their current situations

MilLife Milestones: A resource to empower spouses to make smart money moves during life's big moments;

Videos: Featuring financial tips and tools by fellow military spouses;

Blog: Real conversations covering the latest money-related topics and issues;



MilSpouse Money Mission™

EDUCATE • EMPOWER • ELEVATE

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Resources: Military support links, financial calculators, quizzes and more to elevate financial literacy; and

Social Media: A community of support and motivation to help spouses lead

their best financial lives.

MilSpouse Money Mission aims to create a community for military spouses and help them know where to turn for trusted financial education, officials said.



THOMAS COMEY

The United States Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron “Thunderbirds” fly over Brooke Army Medical Center at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston during their America Strong salute May 13.



JOHNNY SALDIVAR

The United States Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron “Thunderbirds” perform a flyover at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland during their America Strong salute May 13.

Air Force Thunderbirds honor San Antonio in Operation America Strong flyover

502nd Air Base Wing Public Affairs

The U.S. Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron Thunderbirds conducted flyovers May 13 over San Antonio and Austin as a salute to frontline healthcare workers, first responders, military, and other essential personnel, while standing in solidarity with all Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

After a slight delay due to weather conditions, the formation of six F-16C/D Fighting Falcons began their San Antonio flyover at 2:20 p.m., lasting approximately 30 minutes. Flyovers in Austin started at 3:40 p.m. and lasted approximately 25 minutes.

For more photos and video for Operation America Strong, visit <https://www.dvidshub.net/feature/americastrong>.



SEAN M. WORRELL

The United States Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron “Thunderbirds” fly over the Taj Mahal at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph during their America Strong salute May 13. The flyover salute recognizes healthcare workers, first responders, military, and other essential personnel while standing in solidarity with all Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

FORT SAM HOUSTON

JBSA firefighters learn universal incident skills

By Lori Bultman

502ND AIR BASE WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

When firefighters respond to a call, good communication is essential. If the personnel responding speak different technical languages, the information could be incorrectly relayed or received. That is why 70 of Joint Base San Antonio's 212 firefighters will soon begin earning Blue Card Incident Command certifications.

The Blue Card training program provides fire departments with a training and certification system that defines the best standard command practices for common, local, everyday strategic and tactical emergency operations, according to Blue Card.

"The Blue Card certification program is utilized by many of the major fire departments in the local area," said Master Sgt. Ryan Willoughby, assistant chief of health and safety at JBSA. "It is absolutely critical that when we arrive on scene when called to help these departments on mutual aid calls, that we fit in immediately. Any time lost, or any confusion could have bad consequences."

Avoiding those bad outcomes is imperative to maintaining a safe community, on and off base.

"Blue Card will help every member who is lucky enough to receive the training in their decision making, which can sometimes mean life or death for a responder or the people of the community they are serving," Willoughby said.

In addition to improving communication skills, the program also teaches partici-



COURTESY PHOTO

Incident commander Bob Ashley, deputy fire chief at Joint Base San Antonio Fire Emergency Services, communicates information to the Emergency Operations Center and requests additional resources to the scene during a mass casualty exercise at JBSA-Randolph.

pants to become better incident commanders.

"This certification program is known worldwide and produces much more efficient incident commanders that will make better decisions on scene at any emergency across JBSA and in our nearby communities," Willoughby said.

Blue Card certifications, when added to the myriad of training JBSA firefighters already receive, will strengthen the overall force.

"We teach several courses to our JBSA firefighters, like wildland fire management, water rescue, auto extrication and various aspects of fire response," said Matthew Morris, supervisory firefighter at JBSA. "Our incident commanders also have vast train-

ing in incident command, but this training will sharpen our skills and teach us to utilize the same terminology and command structure used by our mutual aid partners in the local community."

Being able to communicate well with other departments could be key to saving lives and structures.

"Me personally, I have been chasing this course my entire 14-year career knowing the impact it will make on not only my own career progression as an incident commander but the entire installation's safety and well-being," Willoughby said.

"It is of the utmost importance that we not only train like our mutual aid partners, but we integrate with them

from time to time and practice these skills," he said. "This course will bridge a gap in our involvement with our local community and provide a much more seamless response."

Completing the training will be no small feat for those selected to participate.

"The first part of the training involves 40 to 50 hours of online coursework," Morris said. "Then, we will have fire department personnel from Vandenberg Air Force Base, California, and the Schertz Fire Department, Texas, who are certified train-the-trainers come to Joint Base San Antonio to conduct a three-day course. The three days will be intensive and will include simulation and evaluation sessions

to ensure we are all ready to be certified."

Once certified, participants will still need to participate in continuing education and be re-certified every three years, but there is a plan in place to ensure this occurs.

"Several JBSA members who will become certified this time will go on to complete instructor training so they may help certify our personnel in the future, saving the cost of bringing in outside trainers," Morris said, who hopes eventually all JBSA firefighters will become certified.

He is not the only one looking forward to JBSA incident commanders completing the certifications.

Luis Valdez, fire chief at the Converse, Texas, Fire Department, is also excited for JBSA personnel to obtain their certifications.

"Blue Card certification is essential in today's fire service, especially in multiple-company responses involving mutual aid departments," he said. "It provides a common base language and process for on-scene emergency management."

While firefighters all over San Antonio train in different ways, Blue Card certifications allow them to work together, as a team.

"It allows us to train independently with a common theme and process, as well as together from the same playbook," Valdez said. "Blue Card ensures that we are using the same language, including technical jargon that keeps our firefighters safe, and following best practices, and we are very grateful for JBSA to take this step in leadership in obtaining this Blue Card standard."

Don't have a shocking experience at home, office

By Richard S. Campos

FIRE INSPECTOR/LIFE SAFETY EDUCATOR

The concept that the electrical system in our home or office will operate without failure is taken for granted.

But what if you enter a room flip the light switch and immediately smell something burning? What are your actions at this point and time?

When using electrical appliances extension cords, light bulbs and other equipment, safety tips should be encompassed in household rules and daily behavior expectations for members of the family.

Simple prevention measures can be effective solutions, because it only takes one mistake to trigger an electrical fire.

Appliances

Appliances are an essential part of every household. Follow these safety tips to keep appliances operating safely:

- » Any appliance purchased should be approved by Underwriters Laboratories, or UL, or another reputable consumer laboratory.
- » Unplug unused appliances and stow cords safely out of reach of pets, young children or hazardous situations.
- » Appliances that generate heat, such as clocks, televisions and computer monitors should be monitored for excessive heat. Do not drape clothes, toys or other items over warm appliances.
- » Always follow appliance instructions carefully. Do not attempt amateur repairs or upgrades.
- » Keep electrical appliances away from all sources of water.
- » Do not operate any electrical appliance with wet hands or while standing in water.
- » Keep clothes, curtains, toys and other potentially combustible materials away from all heat sources.

Extension cords

To increase the range of electrical outlets many homes use extension cords for their electrical appliances. To help keep cords in good condition for safe operation follow these safety tips:

- » Always check cords for frays, cracks or kinks, including power tool cords, holiday lights and extension cords.
- » Cords should never be used for anything other than their intended purpose.
- » Cords should be firmly plugged into

outlets. If the cord is loose and can pull out easily, choose a different, tighter outlet.

- » Do not staple or nail cords in position at any time.
- » Cords should not be placed beneath rugs where they can become a trip hazard or where frays will not be noticeable. Additionally, covering a cord will prevent it from keeping as cool as possible.
- » Do not make modifications to a cord's plug at any time – do not clip off the third prong or attempt to file down a wider prong to fit in a different outlet.
- » Use of extension cords should be minimized whenever possible.
- » Use the proper weight and length of the extension cord for the appropriate task. Be sure the cord is rated for indoor or outdoor use, whichever is required.
- » When unplugging a cord, pull on the cord at the outlet rather than tug on the cord itself.

Electrical safety tips

When an electrical short or spark does occur, it is vital to understand what to do to prevent or put out an electrical fire.

Call 911 or other appropriate emergency services immediately in case of electrical injury or fire. The United States Fire Administration of the Federal Emergency Management Agency offers these tips for preventing electrical fires:

- » Do not allow children to play in proximity to small or large electric appliances.
- » Exchange any tools that put off even mild electric shocks.
- » Exchange any light switches that have a tendency to flicker.
- » Exchange any light switches that are hot to the touch.
- » Do not overload extension cords, sockets and plugs. Do not daisy chain!
- » Do not ever force a three-prong plug into a two-receptacle socket.
- » Recognize where fuse boxes and circuit breakers are located as well as how to properly operate them.
- » Have a professional certified electrician make electrical repairs.

For more information, visit the National Fire Prevention Association website at www.nfpa.org/education, the USFA website at www.usfa.gov/prevention/ or the FEMA website at www.fema.gov or contact our fire prevention offices at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston at 210-221-2727, JBSA-Lackland at 210-671-2921, or JBSA-Randolph at 210-652-6915.

BAMC staff members cheer healthcare heroes

By Daniel J. Calderón
BROOKE ARMY MEDICAL CENTER
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

To honor Florence Nightingale's birthday, Brooke Army Medical Center's critical care staff stood, with room for appropriate social distancing, along the elevated covered walkway that leads from the BAMC parking garage to the hospital and cheered for the staff as they made their way into work May 12.

"We normally host events every day during Nurses Week," said Marie Mayfield, assistant chief nursing officer in charge of 3 East Progressive Care at BAMC. "But, with everything that's happening right now, we couldn't do that."

Nurses Week is May 6-12 each year, but because of the restrictions in place due to COVID-19, large gatherings were not an option. Instead, Mayfield and the critical care staff came up with something different to help boost the morale of BAMC staff.

"This year has been very difficult for our staff," said Lt. Col. Kirk Giles, chief nursing officer in charge of the 2 North surgical ICU and head nurse at BAMC. "It's been challenging."

Both Mayfield and Giles discussed the deployments their staff members made to New York City to help with the COVID-19 issues there.

Staff members were also being rotated through various departments within BAMC to help cover for staff members who had deployed due to COVID-19 and other missions.

They wanted to hold some kind of event to help boost the morale for their staff members but decided to make it an event that would benefit all of BAMC.

For more than an hour, Mayfield, Giles, and members of their staff clapped, cheered, and shouted encouragement as BAMC staff members as they made their way into the hospital to start their day. Surprise showed on the faces of the staff members who passed through the inspiring gauntlet, but there were also tears of appreciation coming down the cheeks of more than one BAMC staff member.

"They just said they were very appreciative," Mayfield said. "We all know that no one here can do the job without the housekeepers, the doctors, the nurses, and all the other staff



Staff members from the Brooke Army Medical Center's critical care department line the walkway to cheer on BAMC staff members as they come to work May 12.

PHOTOS BY GERARDO ESTRADA



A member of Brooke Army Medical Center's Critical Care gives a "thumbs up" to BAMC staff members as they come to work May 12.

members who come to work with us every day. We all need each other and we wanted to make sure everyone knew how much they are appreciated.

NMFSC honors Navy Nurse Corps 112th birthday



PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS DAVID KOLMEL

Cmdr. Louise Nellums, the senior nurse at Naval Medical Forces Support Command, cuts a cake in honor of the Navy Nurse Corps 112th birthday.

By Petty Officer 1st Class David Kolmel

NAVAL MEDICAL FORCES SUPPORT
COMMAND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Members of the Naval Medical Forces Support Command, or NMFSC, at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, honored the Navy Nurse Corps 112th birthday May 13.

During the ceremony, the cake was cut by Cmdr. Louise Nellums, NMFSC operations department, the senior nurse, and Lt. Cmdr. Kellie Haney, the NMFSC executive assistant and the junior nurse at NMFSC.

The reading of the birthday message was from Rear Adm. Cynthia A. Kuehner.



Navy Nurses assigned to Naval Medical Forces Support Command (NMFSC) attend a ceremony to honor the Navy Nurse Corps 112th birthday.

METC dean wins AAPA Military Service Award

By Lisa Braun

MEDICAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
CAMPUS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

From the time he was a young private on his first duty assignment as a combat medic, Army Col. Richard Villarreal, dean of academics for the Medical Education and Training Campus on JBSA-Fort Sam Houston, aspired to do more in the healthcare field to help others.

While under the tutelage of his battalion's medical officer, a physician's assistant, Villarreal chose his path.

"My first unit of assignment in the Army was with an Airborne Combat Team in Vicenza Italy," he recalled. "There I met our battalion medical officer.

He was a PA. Up until that time, I did not know what a PA was. I had never met one in my young life."

Villarreal learned firsthand from his battalion PA what it meant to serve, to train, and to take care of Soldiers. "During that first assignment, I started working on my prerequisites to apply for the Army PA program."

Although it took him seven years to complete his qualifications and prerequisites, he applied and was accepted into the Army PA program (now the Interservice Physician Assistant Program, or IPAP) on Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Upon graduation, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant, and his career took off.

"The most important part of being a PA for me is taking care of people. Whether it is in a clinic in the states or forward operating base in Afghanistan, for me it is all about service to others and service to my country. As a military PA, I get to do both."

Villarreal's dedication and passion for his work have been the catalysts for a successful career spanning 37 years - 27 of those as a PA- and led to his selection as the 2020 recipient of the American Academy of Physician's Assistants Military Service Award.

Villarreal said he is honored by the award.

"So many compete for it, and to be named the AAPA Service Member of the Year is a great

honor," Villarreal said. "I am one of the thousands of past and present military PAs. All of us chose to help people and serve our country. To be among that group is the greatest honor of all."

So far his career has seen him through deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, a tour in the Republic of Korea, a PA Orthopaedic Surgery Fellowship, a Ph.D., and numerous clinical and teaching assignments. But it's taking care of people that he enjoys most about being a PA.

"The gratification that I get from taking care of service members, their families, and all Department of Defense beneficiaries is hard to describe," Villarreal told the AA-



COURTESY PHOTO

Army Col. Richard Villarreal
Dean of Academics for the
Medical Education and Training
Campus at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston

PA, "but it is a feeling like nothing else I have experienced."

MEDCoE NCO Academy lends expertise in support of Fort Hood

By Tish Williamson

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATION
U.S. ARMY MEDICAL CENTER OF
EXCELLENCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS

U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence Cadre in the Non-commissioned Officer Academy, or NCOA, lent their expertise as stewards of the Soldier profession in support of Fort Hood's NCOA.

Several local students attending Fort Hood's Basic Leader Course – virtually due to COVID-19 constraints – were trained and evaluated at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston on critical tasks necessary for course completion and graduation.

MEDCoE Cadre helped the Fort Hood NCOA maintain their high standards of professional-

ism by evaluating those tasks that could not be effectively assessed in a virtual environment.

The students were evaluated using tactical dispersion mitigation measures on their ability to move a team or squad (drill and ceremony), lead Physical Readiness Training, conduct individual training / "hip pocket" to standard, and their ability to present a 10-minute military information brief to a small group (public speaking).

The coordination between the Fort Hood NCOA and MEDCoE NCOA ensured the successful completion of the course for these seven junior Soldiers.

Without this collaboration, these Soldiers would have had to wait until travel restrictions are lifted to complete BLC. BLC

prepares them to advance to the rank of sergeant and strengthens key skills, which will be essential for leadership in the future.

MEDCoE Command Sgt. Maj. Clark Charpentier lauded the NCOA for their efforts.

"This is a great opportunity to assist the NCO Academy at Fort Hood while they conduct their PME courses virtually," Charpentier said. "By providing local subject matter experts to validate hands-on skills, our team has reinforced the Army standard at this foundational NCO course."

For information about the Army's Basic Leader Course, visit <https://www.goarmy.com/soldier-life/being-a-soldier/ongoing-training/leadership-training/warrior-leader-course.html>.



COURTESY PHOTO

Seven local Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston Soldiers attending Fort Hood's Basic Leader Course virtually were evaluated using tactical dispersion mitigation measures by U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence NCOA Cadre on their ability to move a team or squad, lead Physical Readiness Training, conduct individual training to standard, and their ability to present a 10-minute military information brief to a small group.

West Point cadets brief ARSOUTH deputy commanding general



COURTESY PHOTO

During this year's Projects Day at the U.S. Military Academy April 30, the Department of Foreign Languages virtually hosted U.S. Army South's Deputy Commanding General-Interoperability General-Brigada Alcides V. Faria Jr.

By Maj. George Gurrola and Capt. John Schield

USMA DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN
LANGUAGES AND U.S. ARMY SOUTH

During this year's Projects Day at the U.S. Military Academy April 30, the Department of Foreign Languages virtually hosted U.S. Army South's Deputy Commanding General-Interoperability General-Brigada Alcides V. Faria Jr.

The Spanish group, Class of 2020 Cadets Alex Bayer, Jack Provost and Michael King, briefed Faria on China's influence in Argentina and Chile. The Portuguese group, Class of 2020 Cadets Brandon Roseborough, Wonha Kim and Christian Halcomb, discussed China's influence in Brazil.

Both briefs were conducted in Spanish and Portuguese, respectively, demonstrating the cadets' ability to communicate and analyze complex problems in support of an

Army service component.

Faria's lecture, titled "Brazil Army Perspective of South American Security Concerns," provided cadets a unique glimpse into South American security challenges and how the Brazilian army tackles these issues.

"This is a very good opportunity to show a different perspective from a partner... to make people think a different way," Faria said of the opportunity to attend Projects Day and give a guest lecture.

Throughout this section of Projects Day, more than 200 participants from across U.S. Southern Command, U.S. Army South, West Point, the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation and many other education institutions participated.

As part of the DFL capstone course, the cadet groups collaborated with officers and analysts from U.S. Army

South. The presentation to the DCGI was a culmination of months of research and interviews. In January, both cadet groups traveled to Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio to visit with key stakeholders at U.S. Army South Headquarters.

Cadets were able to interact and discuss their research with officers from the Security Cooperation Division including partner nation liaison officers from Chile, Argentina, Peru, Brazil and more. Maj. Ruben Ramos, U.S. Army South's Chile and Argentina desk officer, was instrumental in driving the collaboration between both organizations.

The cadets were able to broaden their perspective on how the U.S. Army South partners with other countries and embodies the motto, "Defense and Fraternity."

"It is important, as a senior

officer, to educate our future leaders by expanding their horizons of thought and making them deconstruct challenges through the lenses of other cultures," Faria said.

The Department of Foreign Languages seeks to develop leaders of character through education in the languages and regional knowledge. The faculty and staff seek to instill cultural and linguistic proficiency to help cadets thrive in tomorrow's security environment.

West Point academic departments conducted the Remote Projects Day to virtually showcase their cadets' senior theses, capstone design projects, and multi-year interdisciplinary research efforts. Remote Projects Day events highlighted the combined intellectual capital of cadets, faculty, and external collaborators from across the Army, Department of Defense and beyond.

Key Spouse program promotes communication, supports military families

By Lori A. Bultman

502ND AIR BASE WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Whether a seasoned Air Force family or one brand new to military life, unit Key Spouses are available for support.

"Key Spouses are an essential part of the leadership team and the connective tissue which ensures our families are represented and cared for," said Lt. Col. Kyle Bressette, commander, 35th Intelligence Squadron at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland.

"I consider the Key Spouses a strategic capability within the 35th IS. From greeting newcomers to celebrating and supporting squadron events, and representing the concerns and sacrifices of our squadron families; I could not effectively lead without my Key Spouse team," he said.

The Air Force Key Spouse program is a commander's program created to enhance unit family readiness, and the role of the Key Spouse team is to lead that effort, helping build readiness and resilience, and establish a sense of community within the unit. The program is similar to the Navy's Ombudsman Program or the Army's Family Readiness Program.

The Key Spouse program also promotes partnerships between unit leadership, families, volunteer Key Spouses, centers, and other installation and community agencies.

Key Spouses are not just for active duty units.

"In addition to our JBSA-Fort Sam Houston and JBSA-Randolph counterparts, we partner with Key Spouse points of contact at local Air National Guard and Reserve units to provide support and training for their Key Spouses," said Valerie D. Barber, JBSA-Lackland Military and Family Readiness Center. "We also share information and resources."

Individual unit commanders are responsible for establishing and maintaining the program, as well as selecting Key Spouse leaders and building the unit's Key Spouse team.

While the primary key spouse oversees the program, the commander sets the roles and responsibilities of the team based on the unit's mission, and



COURTESY PHOTO

Military spouses share information at the Key Spouse initial training Jan. 15, 2020, at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland. The Air Force Key Spouse program is a commander's program created to enhance unit family readiness.

the Military and Family Readiness Center provides training.

"Our staff members provide initial and refresher training to the Key Spouses, as well as continuing education," Barber said.

"One of the Key Spouses' primary responsibilities is to provide timely information and referral services to families, and who better to help spouses navigate the military community than a military spouse," said Daniel A. Borkowski, JBSA-Lackland Military and Family Readiness Center community readiness specialist.

Aubrea Boyd, a 35th IS Key Spouse, said she decided to become a Key Spouse when she realized she could help other spouses feel connected, supported and informed.

"We work directly with the commander and the first sergeant to ensure we meet their goals for the Key Spouse program, and we try to foster a sense of military family and community in our units," Boyd said. "I love being a Key Spouse because it gives me the opportunity to help other spouses and families, whether that is through information, encouragement, a hot meal, or a

hug."

"I started the Key Spouse program within my husband's squadron because I never wanted another spouse or family member to feel as isolated as I felt when we moved here," said Nicole Solis, 502nd Security Forces Squadron and JBSA's 2019 Key Spouse of the Year. "As a Security Forces family, we face unique challenges which sometimes make it difficult to connect with others. I love being a Key Spouse because I love taking care of others and welcoming families to their new home."

Brenda Reesman, a spouse at the 833rd Cyber Operations Squadron, also became a key spouse because she loves to help people.

"It's hard being a spouse in the military," she said. "I know about all of the struggles, and I feel like I can offer people a lot."

When families do struggle, Key Spouses often know right where to turn for assistance, linking service members and families to the local community and to the multitude of resources available.

The 502nd Security Forces Squadron Key Spouse team often coordinates a

Welcome Wagon for newly arrived families, support for new mothers, dormitory dinners, picnics, sporting events and holiday gatherings.

"Ms. Solis organizes meal trains and social outings, she works as a liaison for families of deployed members, and she hosts spouse's calls with the commander," said Master Sgt. Thomas M. Rayniak Jr. from the 502nd Security Forces Squadron. "The Key Spouse program allows families to have a voice within the unit, and allows leadership to focus on the primary mission, while still ensuring the needs of the unit's families are met."

Rayniak said the SFS's program has brought about change and opportunities within the unit.

"Having an outsider's perspective has helped cultivate an atmosphere of positivity and a feeling of inclusion," he said. "As the members of the unit form tighter bonds due to all of the hard work put in by Ms. Solis and the other Key Spouse team members, it has allowed unit members to be more forthcoming on issues they see as relevant to them being able to better accomplish their tasks."

The 35th IS commander agrees.

"My wife and I are in awe daily by the amazing thoughtfulness and impact our Key Spouses have on the well-being and success of the 35th IS Bulldog family," Bressette said. "To any command team: I strongly urge your investment in the Key Spouse program. It's a force multiplier that will make your squadron stronger and, most importantly, it will strengthen the Air Force families which provide the tremendous opportunities we have to serve."

For more information, contact the primary Key Spouse at your spouse's unit or the program manager on your assigned installation; JBSA-Fort Sam Houston at 210-221-2705; JBSA-Randolph at 210-652-5321; or JBSA-Lackland at 210-671-3722.

Additional information on the Key Spouse program can be found in Air Force Instruction 36-3009, 3.9.2 at https://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_afi/publication/afi36-3009/afi36-3009.pdf.

Local teen requests blood drive for 16th birthday

By Lori Newman
BROOKE ARMY MEDICAL
CENTER PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Most kids dream about getting a car or having an elaborate party when they turn 16, but one local teen has a less traditional birthday wish.

Amber Miller asked her parents if she could have a blood drive for her "Sweet 16." The sophomore at Health Careers High School has wanted to be a doctor since she was nine.

"I plan to be a neonatologist because I discovered I like taking care of children through babysitting," Miller said.

The teen volunteered at Brooke Army Medical Center through the American Red Cross Summer Youth Volunteer Program last year and was hoping

to do it again this year. Unfortunately, this year's youth volunteer program was canceled due to the COVID-19 virus.

"When I volunteered at BAMC, I saw the blood drives they had there regularly," she said. "I realized there is always a need and wanted to help. Blood has a shelf life of 42 days and cannot be stockpiled indefinitely, so there is always a need."

Miller's mother, Marcy Edwards, and stepfather retired Air Force Master Sgt. Jason Edwards were quick to step up to the plate and volunteer. The couple scheduled an appointment to donate to the Armed Services Blood Program at Akeroyd Blood Donor Center at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston and



JASON W. EDWARDS
Amber Miller, youth volunteer, works in the Simulation Center at Brooke Army Medical Center July 9, 2019. Miller hopes to inspire others to donate blood during the COVID-19 crisis.

posted the challenge to their family and friends on social media.

The Akeroyd Blood

Donor Center provides blood and blood products to BAMC as well as other military medical facilities throughout San Antonio.

"We're very proud of Amber," Marcy Edwards said. "She has talked about becoming a doctor since she was 9 years old and has never lost sight of her goal."

Miller won't be able to donate blood herself yet because donors must be at least 17 years old to donate blood through the Armed Services Blood Program; however, some states will allow 16-year-olds to donate blood with parental consent.

"I won't be able to donate at Akeroyd on my birthday as originally planned, but it means the world to me that my parents are donating and trying to get others to donate as well," Miller said.

Since the challenge was posted on social media, several of their friends and family members have agreed to donate as well.

"One friend even orga-

nized a blood drive for the 325th Operations Group at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, and has participants in the 43rd Fighter Squadron and the 2nd Fighter Training Squadron," Jason Edwards said. "They are also trying to spread the word to the other groups at the base.

"We have already had one donor in Ohio and are expecting several from Florida," he added.

"Hopefully, we can get a lot more from JBSA as well!"

The timing couldn't be better, according to Mark Salcedo, ASBP blood donor recruiter.

"We have seen a sharp decrease in blood donation since the COVID-19 pandemic hit because we aren't able to hold our regular blood drives," he said.

According to the givingblood.org website, about one in seven people who are hospitalized need blood. Only 37 percent of our country's population is eligible to give blood, and less than 10 percent of those who can donate actually do so annually.

BAMC is the only Level I trauma center within the Department of Defense and one of two Level I trauma centers within San Antonio. Alongside University Health System, BAMC administers life-saving care to more than 4,000 trauma patients each year, including 750 burn patients, from an area that stretches across 22 counties in Southwest Texas and encompasses 2.2 million people.

Blood is always needed to treat accident victims, cancer patients, hemophiliacs and surgery patients. On average, 40 or more units of blood may

be needed for a single trauma victim and eight units of platelets may be required daily by leukemia patients undergoing treatment. A single pint of blood can sustain a premature infant's life for two weeks.

The ASBP provides quality blood products for service members, veterans and their families in both peace and war. Since the ASBP's inception over 60 years ago, more than 1.5 million units of blood have been provided to treat battlefield illnesses and injuries.

Army 1st Lt. Nicholas Vogt is proof of the importance of blood donation. Vogt received more than 500 units of donated blood after being injured by a roadside bomb while deployed to Afghanistan.

While ASBP blood recipients are most often thought of as deployed service members injured in the line of duty, the ASBP also supports the peacetime needs of military personnel and their families.

Additionally, the ASBP's recipient base extends beyond the military community. In cases of natural disasters or other catastrophes, the ASBP is called upon to serve civilians in need, not only here at home but globally during humanitarian missions.

To donate blood to the ASBP, contact the Akeroyd Blood Donor Center to schedule an appointment or go online to www.militarydonor.com; enter the sponsor code: ABDC.

"I want to spread the word as far as possible and get people everywhere to donate," Miller said.

LACKLAND

Volunteers serve food to new BMT recruits

By Rachel Kersey
502ND AIR BASE WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Meals Operating on Wheels, or MOW, began serving food to Basic Military Training trainees at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland March 30 to feed Airmen who are quarantined in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control social distancing guidelines put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This MOW is the brainchild of 502nd Force Support Squadron leadership," said Master Sgt. Asim Siddiqui, Career Assistance Advisor at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston. "The moment this operation was shaping up, all FSS subject matter experts huddled in a room and produced this awesome operation. The needs of the Airmen are what drove that concept and it has worked to fulfill these needs."

The MOW initiative was put together completely by FSS, who decided everything from who will be fed, where it will come from, and how the food will get to them. The operation is comprised entirely of volunteers and staff who work at JBSA-Lackland.

Even though the CDC social distancing guidelines have changed his job description and he does most of his work from home, Siddiqui is happy to volunteer in-person safely.

"I'm a senior non-commissioned officer in the United States Air Force and we're fighting this invisible enemy. I didn't want to just sit on the sidelines," he said. "I want to be a participant in whatever way I can. I wanted to help my fellow Airmen during these uncertain times and



PHOTOS BY AARON A. MORENO

Airmen 1st Class Grae Fitzpatrick, assigned to the 343rd Training Squadron at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, delivers meals to Airmen trainees in quarantine in Basic Military Training May 15.

providing food to my Airmen is my weapon of choice."

MOW delivers breakfast, lunch, and dinner to the Airmen. Siddiqui coordinates every meal and he has a team of Airmen to help him deliver them. The day starts at around 5 a.m., when they place the order for breakfast, giving the cooks the number of meals they

need to provide. Siddiqui and his team pick the meals up at 6:45 a.m. and deliver them by 7 a.m.

The food is shuttled back and forth from the dining facility and the various locations on the base where trainees are staying. The 502nd Logistics Readiness Squadron provided three bread vans to deliver the meals, and

"I'm a senior non-commissioned officer in the United States Air Force and we're fighting this invisible enemy. I didn't want to just sit on the sidelines. I want to be a participant in whatever way I can. I wanted to help my fellow Airmen during these uncertain times and providing food to my Airmen is my weapon of choice."

Master Sgt. Asim Siddiqui, Career Assistance Advisor at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston



Airmen assigned to the 802nd Force Support Squadron and 343rd Training Squadron are a part of the meal delivery team at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland.

the menu changes every day.

"We have delivered more than 10,000 meals," he said. "It can be fish, barbecue, whatever. It changes based on what is required for the caloric intake and medical and religious preference. It's got a mix of vegetables, like corn and salad, different milk to drink, sports drinks, chicken nuggets ... just all sorts of food."

At the height of operations, there were 26 Airmen and 10

civilian contractors feeding these trainees, but the mission is flexible and has operated with only 10 workers as well. And even though it has been a sacrifice and has taken additional time, Siddiqui is happy to serve.

"I didn't want to just quarantine myself. I wanted to go out there and help people," Siddiqui said. "It's been a really unique and harmonious experience."

RANDOLPH

National Police Week parade honors first responders

By Robert Goetz
502ND AIR BASE WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Members of Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph's housing community stood outside their homes, cheered and waved as sirens wailed and a procession of security forces, medical and fire department vehicles, along with percussionists from the Air Force Band of the West, paraded past them on the morning of May 13.

The parade marked the 902nd Security Forces Squadron's tribute to all of the JBSA location's first responders, health care professionals and another special group of public servants during National Police Week.

"We truly want to showcase not only our base law enforcement, but all of our first responders, including fire and medical personnel," said Capt. Nathan Bratka, 902nd SFS operations officer. "This year also differs because we want to recognize our teachers who have been doing a tremendous amount of work given the current environment."

In years past, National Police Week activities have included obstacle courses, military working dog and marksmanship competitions, and candlelight vigils, but the COVID-19 public health emergency altered plans this year, Bratka said.

"This year is different because we could not host our normal events due to social distancing guidelines and public safety concerns," he said.

Adherence to public health guidelines during the coronavirus crisis was evident as Band of the West members wore face masks and kept their distance from each other during their



PHOTOS BY TECH. SGT. AVE I. YOUNG

The lead vehicle of the procession during the National Police Week parade drives through base housing at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph May 13 as spectators cheer and show appreciation for security forces, fire department and medical team members. Due to COVID-19 and social distancing, the 902nd Security Forces Squadron invited other first responders to join them in the parade through base housing so the community could show their appreciation.



Air Force Band of the West percussionists march behind the lead vehicle during the National Police Week parade on C Street at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph May 13.

ceremonial march through base housing.

But those restrictions didn't diminish their enthusiasm as they kept a joyful beat throughout the parade, nor did it prevent housing residents from expressing their appreciation for their first responders, medical workers and teachers.

National Police Week dates back to 1962, when President John F. Kennedy proclaimed May 15 as National Peace Officers Memorial Day. That same year, Congress established by joint resolution the week in which May 15 falls as National Police Week.

"Police Week is a week set aside to truly honor all of our

police and law enforcement officers across the United States," Bratka said. "It is also a time for us to remember our fallen brothers and sisters who have given their lives in the line of duty."

Bratka expressed his gratitude to the community for their support.

"Thank you for all of your continued support for your base first responders," he said. "We strive to ensure the safety and welfare of all of JBSA and appreciate all that you do."

A live feed of the National Police Week parade can be watched on the JBSA Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/JointBaseSanAntonio>.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Resiliency, wellness key to stability of active-duty, veterans and Wounded Warriors

By Shannon Hall

AIR FORCE WOUNDED WARRIOR PROGRAM

May is Mental Health Awareness month and this year it comes during a time of uncertainty and physical distancing that can be hard on everyone. Mental health plays a huge role as a priority for the Air Force Wounded Warrior Program, or AFW2, which sprung the creation of the Wellness and Resiliency Program, or WAR.

The WAR team's goal is to help ensure there is a resilient community being built and maintained throughout all areas of a Wounded Warrior's life to include their physical, spiritual, mental and social fitness. During COVID-19, the team assists warriors, caregivers and staff cope with the mental stresses a pandemic can cause.

"The wellness program was created last year due to the increase of Air Force suicides," said Armando Franco, wellness team lead and resiliency

interim. "Resiliency has always been a part of the AFW2 mission, and this program offers a multitude of activities and skills to help enable Airmen to make sound choices."

During this time it may be hard, almost impossible, for people to get out of, not only their homes but their own heads and create a positive energy within themselves. Some activities that the WAR team teaches on live social media is journaling, different forms of art, improv, resiliency skills and live music. All activities apply the resilient skills in day-to-day living to promote healthy wellness.

"Keeping a healthy mental state during this time is more important than before because many people have never had to focus on it as much as they do now," said Candace Escobedo, WAR program manager. "The activities and skills taught through our program will help people maintain a well-balanced healthy lifestyle to continue beyond this



COURTESY GRAPHIC

pandemic."

There are many resources available to help people through difficult times like these to include websites, social media groups, phone apps and many 24/7 hotlines. If you find yourself just needing a short breather put some

music on and dance, tackle a quick workout, do a puzzle or just step out in your yard and get some fresh air. Most importantly, make sure to stay socially connected to family and friends, even if it is a simple text. Always check on one another.

"Be mindful of where you are and the here and now," said Armando. "Join our events and witness for yourself the love, compassion and growth they can provide you."

AFW2 is hosting daily virtual socials live on Facebook to help everyone get through their stay at home.

Visit the program's Facebook page to hear stories of resiliency and engage in wellness activities hosted by Air Force Wounded Warriors. For additional information, visit www.woundedwarrior.af.mil to refer an Airman to the program, read about the program's mission, or learn about additional services offered to caregivers and families.

Air Force photo contest launches July 1

By Debbie Aragon

AIR FORCE INSTALLATION AND MISSION SUPPORT CENTER
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The 2020 Air Force Photo Contest is set to launch July 1, following a short delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We did a quick check of our program and revised the theme to better reflect what our Airmen and families are going through right now," said Darlene Johnson, community and leisure programs manager at the Air Force Services Center.

The theme for this year's contest, which runs July 1-31, is "We Are Family."

"This national health crisis reminds us what truly matters," Johnson said, "and that's our people, our connections, our families at home and in the workplace, and we wanted a theme that reflected that."

People are experiencing sadness, joy, humor, and, for some, great loss, said Johnson and she encourages everyone to share their special family moments through the Air Force Photo Contest.

"In this time of together, yet apart, we're capturing those moments and the photo contest gives you a greater opportunity to share those human emotions

with your Air Force family," Johnson added.

The contest, that highlights and celebrates photography created by Airmen and families, is open to ages six and older, in five categories:

Adult categories, for those 18 and older at the time of entry: Novice for new photographers and accomplished for those with knowledge based on training or experience, or those who operate as professional photographers.

Youth categories, based on the age of the photographer at the time of submission: Children for ages 6-8, pre-teens for ages 9-12 and teens for ages 13-17.

Starting July 1, photographers can submit up to two original images in JPEG format at <https://airforcephotocontest.wishpondpages.com>.

Images must be between three and nine MB. As part of the Air Force's Arts and Crafts Program, the contest is open to all authorized patrons of Air Force morale, welfare and recreation programs.

The new Air Force Photo Contest Facebook page offers Air Force photographers the latest contest information, news, photographic tips and photo challenges.

"The photo contest itself is a small part of our overall goal, which is to support and connect our Air Force photographers with each other," said Johnson.



COURTESY GRAPHIC

When the contest closes July 31, expert photographers will evaluate each entry based on impact, creativity and technical excellence. Winners will be announced a few months later with the top three photographers in each category winning Amazon gift cards of \$500 for first place, \$400 for second and \$200 for third.

Look for more information on the program in the next few weeks on Air Force Services Center, force support squadron and installation social media platforms and web sites.