

Bavarian News

Vol. 5, Nr. 2

U.S. Army Garrisons Grafenwoehr, Hohenfels, Ansbach, Schweinfurt, and Garmisch

January 28, 2009

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IN THIS ISSUE

The Army has announced 2009 as the **Year of the NCO**. It's no secret that NCOs lead the way and are the keepers of our standard. This year, our senior military leadership has decided to highlight the stories of the men and women who make up the NCO Corps. See Page 22 to find out more.

Our Army also has a **new commander in chief**. For a glimpse at President Barack Obama's first moments spent with service members after his inauguration, and for a preview of his plans for the military, see Page 3.

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For road conditions and the latest community news, visit www.grafenwoehr.army.mil

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Abandoned pets may pose hardship on host nation

by ADRIANE FOSS
Editor

Longtime veterinarian Hartmut Burkhardt has two Huskies that he found abandoned in an apartment in Vilseck when they were 3 days old.

He said the animals were abandoned by an American family who flew back to the United States, leaving the young pups to

fend for themselves. Burkhardt took the dogs home, where his wife nursed them back to health using a baby bottle and lots of tender loving care. Today, the 1-year-old Huskies are strong and, typical of their breed, pulls a sled for the Burkhardt family.

"They turned out to be very nice dogs," said Burkhardt.

He also said the abandonment of the dogs was very unusual behavior for an American family. He

See PET OWNERS Page 25



Local national tierheims regularly take in abandoned pets.

Wonder what you can do to help?

While there are no on-post animal shelters, pet owners who decide they want to get rid of an animal can submit a free classified ad in the Bavarian News.

Pet owners can also submit a photo and information about the animal to run in the Adopt Me corner of the Bavarian News.

E-mail usagnews@eur.army.mil or call 475-7113 today for more information.

HAIL TO THE CHIEF

Grafenwoehr swaps out command photo



Photo by Mary Markos

U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr Commander Col. Chris Sorenson replaces the photo of the former commander-in-chief of the United States armed forces and president, George W. Bush, with the photo of the newly elected U.S. president, Barack Obama. Sorenson made the switch at garrison headquarters shortly after the inauguration. FOR MORE ON THE NEWLY ELECTED PRESIDENT, SEE PAGE 3.

Wuerzburg chapter in Army history comes to a final close

The beginning

Wuerzburg came under the control of U.S. occupational forces April 7, 1945, with GIs taking control of the hospital the next day.

Our thanks

"On behalf of those who have called Wuerzburg home, thank you for the unwavering friendship and partnership and dedication," said Haager.

by MARK HEETER
USAG Ansbach CI Chief

"Well, I got here in '79." A little farther down the line, in the back of the crowd, another voice began its reminiscence. "More than 50 years ago..."

These two storytellers were among the last to walk the snowy ground on Leighton Barracks in Wuerzburg, an installation the Army returned to German authorities Jan. 14. A brief ceremony marked the end of a relationship with the city of Wuerzburg and its surrounding communities that began in the closing days of World War II.

"Our Army was lucky to spend so many years in this beautiful city," said Lt. Col. Anthony Haager, who, as the

See WUERZBURG Page 25

Never forget

"The U.S. Army freed this land from the Nazi regime. The United States also, through the Marshall Plan, massively supported its rebuilding," said Dr. Paul Beinhofer, president of Lower Franconia. "For that, (Lt.) Col. Haager, we are thankful, and will not forget this."

"You are welcome in Lower Franconia, you know that."

REDEPLOYMENT

WAQ program not for naught

by ADRIANE FOSS
Editor

If the initial feedback is any indication, the Army's new high-adventure recreation program could be a huge success—even a life-saver for some of its participants.

Warrior Adventure kicked off its largest rotation Jan. 14 at U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr with the high hopes of helping recently redeployed Soldier transition from high-intense combat zones to the tamer garrison home-life.

WAQ introduces Soldiers to high-adventure outdoor recreation activities such as sky-diving, rock climbing, mountain biking, stock car racing,

See WAQ Page 6

Call

DSN

475-

6116 for

more

info!

INVESTIGATION

18th CSSB Soldier found dead

PRESS RELEASE
21st Theater Sustainment Command

A Soldier from the 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, Grafenwoehr, Germany, was found dead in the barracks on post at 10 a.m. Friday after failing to report at morning formation.

Dead is Pvt. Chipper Rodgers, 21, a native of Keene, N.H. Rodgers was a motor transport operator with the 41st Transportations Company.

The cause of death is unknown. An investigation has been initiated by the 16th SB and the Grafenwoehr MPs and Criminal Investigation Div.

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE



South Camp improvements the foundation for better community

Western Union, Sports Store, wine shop on the way in coming months

With the start of the New Year, I'd like to focus on what's new at South Camp (Vilseck). The redeployed Soldiers of 2SCR have probably noticed that there have been quite a few changes, and we are still working on improvements.



First, as may have noticed, in-out processing moved to Bldg. V215. For further convenience, driver testing moved into the in-out processing area. Bldg. V305 underwent total renovation to house the new 2SCR Headquarters and from the feedback I've received, these are excellent facilities!

2SCR also has a new aid station (not a health clinic) in Bldg. V701.

Bldg. 134, the Multipurpose Center, was used for reintegration and is now serving the community for a variety of uses.

The completion of the WTU building last year also provided South Camp with another vital facility, and Yesterday's Club was renovated to create the Soldiers Family Assistance Center.

Probably the biggest job we faced was repairing and renovating barracks,

and I'm proud to say that prior to 2SCR's redeployment, almost every barracks underwent minor repairs or complete renovations.

Our newest tenants at South Camp are the Bavarian Medical Activity, commanded by Col. Theresa Schneider, and the Bavarian Dental Activity, commanded by Col. John Etzenbach.

This move has resulted in MEDDAC and DENTAC relocating to Bldg. V700. With the redeployment of 2SCR (which gained numbers during deployment) and the arrival of the Bavarian Medical and Dental Activities, South Camp's Soldier population is now more than 4,300!

This sudden influx of Soldiers has not been without its challenges.

More Soldiers reporting to duty each morning, combined with unit PT being conducted on the main road, has resulted in traffic backing up at South Camp's Gate 1 during the peak morning hours.

We've addressed this issue by opening up an alternate access into South Camp's Gate 2 by way of Gate 5, for Soldiers only on weekdays from 5:30-6:30 a.m. In response to suggestions from civilian employees, we've expanded the hours of South Camp's Airfield Gate from 6:30-9 a.m. weekdays. I'm confident that as more our tenants become aware of the alternative morning routes, the

traffic situation will continue to improve.

AAFES also continues to add new services to its operations at South Camp. A wine shop is scheduled to open Feb. 17 in the Vilseck PXtra where the old PX florist shop was located.

AAFES management is also working with two antique vendors to take over the old Bookmark area in the mall. And the much anticipated Sports Store is progressing with an approximate completion date of late March. The Sports Store will carry athletic brand name clothing and shoes, sporting goods, sports nutrition and equipment, high-end bicycles, camping gear, and more.

A full service Customer Service operation will also be open for customers in the rear of the PXtra furniture store by the end of March. This will include Western Union, euro exchange and the school lunch payment service currently at the Shoppette. AAFES is also looking at extending the PXtra hours once the Sports store opens.

AAFES has aggressively pursued

operations that you've indicated you would like to see at South Camp, and are a great addition to the traditional stores at East Camp (Grafenwoehr). Other garrison tenants are making our garrison their weekend shopping destination because of the great selections AAFES offers here.

Finally, I want to emphasize that to keep up with all the changes and improvements, such as the alternate gate openings, please visit our Web site or tune in to AFN.

Both the Web site and AFN immediately post and announce, respectively, all our changes in real time.

Our Web site is also running an excellent video, the History of the Grafenwoehr Training Area, produced by the JMTC Public Affairs Office. It's astounding to see this history when you consider all the changes we've seen in just the last three years!

*Col. Chris Sorenson
Commander, U.S. Army
Garrison Grafenwoehr*

“ In response to suggestions, we've expanded the hours of South Camp's Airfield Gate from 6:30-9 a.m. weekdays. ”

Cyber security can be gone in a flash



Commentary by ED BEEMER
Army News Service

This Christmas, Soldiers sang, "all I want from Santa is my thumb drive back." This sad song could have been prevented. The recent decision to ban thumb drives and other flash memory products from military computers was based on a technical vulnerability and the situation was made worse by human error and poor judgment.

Not having thumb drives at our disposal is a major headache, as some are finding out. The current situation exists because complacency and familiarity had set in. The protections available on government-issued drives were being bypassed frequently just to save a few seconds of effort.

Unfortunately, the use of personal drives in government computers contributed to opening the door for the introduction of potentially dangerous code.

Notably, it was a general threat, not some insidious super virus targeting only the U.S.

military.

As we kick off a new year, we need to give ourselves the gift that keeps on giving - information assurance.

It is time for all people with access to government computers to upgrade to Personal Responsibility 2.0. The earlier version is no longer supported and will not run on any machines connected to the Global Information Grid.

The training and information is out there and there is more on the way.

We have seen that if you play dangerously and someone gets hurt, they take away your toys.

Armed conflicts throughout the ages have had days when no spear was thrown, no bullet fired, no missile launched.

Even the Hundred Years War (Valois versus Plantagenet for the French throne - you remember) only had 80 or so years of actual

fighting.

We should be so lucky. The fact is we are now embroiled in a conflict with no end, no ceasefires, no time outs. This war is not a shooting war in one of the world's hot spots. This unending struggle is in cyberspace and will be a raging conflict until the last circuit board is fried.

This crisis requires constant vigil because the enemy, ranging from state-supported hackers to the kid in the coffee shop, is probing our defenses every nanosecond.

They can reach us from every corner of the globe at any given moment. To many, that's a sobering thought. While some discount it as fear mongering, the daily news and reports from international cyberspace experts drive home the point - the war is ongoing with no end in sight.

Solid defenses against cyber attacks exist. Many of these defenses rely on strong and constantly adapting computer safety technologies. Unfortunately, the weakness in this defensive perimeter is usually human.

In Remembrance

In Remembrance and Celebration of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday and Army Diversity

Jan. 15 marked the 79th anniversary of the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King devoted his life to achieving his vision of a world free from prejudice and injustice...a world that values people for who they are and what they can accomplish. As the Nation remembers Dr. King's achievements and celebrates his life, it is useful to reflect on how far we have come, and on the work we must still do.

Today we live in the world's most free and open society. Our greatness as a country is because we are a people committed to the common cause of freedom for all. We are a pluralistic society that is diverse in our ethnic, racial, and religious make-up. This diversity is one of our Nation's greatest strengths and the reason why so many want to live in the "land of the free."

Our Army is a reflection of our society. We are a diverse force that is strengthened by different perspectives, approaches, and skills. There is strength in diversity. Our military shares Dr. King's vision, and one of our principles is equality-regardless of race or gender. Military leaders understand that the very effectiveness of military units depends on our ability to leverage our differences and work together.

Our Army is the Strength of this Nation. Today we have more than 220,000 Soldiers -supported by their Families and dedicated Army Civilians-deployed around the world, defending our country and our allies against a global terrorist network that is determined to destroy our freedom and way of life. This team of brave Americans is willing to do this because they believe in the principles of freedom and equality for everyone - the very principles Dr. King believed in.

Although the Army has come a long way, we still have work to do. We must keep working at it, never losing sight of Dr. King's vision for America. We share his beliefs and are committed to turning his dream into reality.

Signed by Secretary of the Army Pete Geren, U.S. Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Casey, Jr. and Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth Preston

What's your opinion?

Have an idea or issue you'd like to address? Kudos for a Good Samaritan, or a suggestion for a community-wide issue?

We want to know! Write a letter to the editor today! Call 475-7113.

Bavarian News

Grafenwoehr, Hohenfels, Ansbach, Schweinfurt, and Garmisch

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Op-Ed page

Gates highlights Warrior Care this Veterans Day

American Forces Press Service

In his 2008 Veterans Day message, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates underscores the Defense Department's commitment to the nation's wounded warriors and their families.

Here is the secretary's message:

"On Veterans Day we pay tribute to those who have fought for our country from its earliest days to the present. This day reminds us of how important it is that the men and women who wear this country's uniform know how grateful their fellow Americans are for that service.

"The holiday's birthplace is my home state of Kansas. Over half a century ago, a shoe store owner in Emporia named Al King promoted the idea of changing what had been Armistice Day – honoring veterans of the First World War – into a celebration of veterans of every conflict, and every era.

"What started in Emporia went national in 1954, when Congress passed and President

Eisenhower signed a bill making the November 11 holiday the one we know today.

"As important as it is to publicly recognize the service of our troops returned from the battlefield, it is more important – indeed a sacred obligation – that we make sure they receive the care, benefits, and compensation they've so courageously earned.

This is one of the pre-eminent challenges facing our nation. Aside from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, I have had no higher leadership priority.

"Since reports of substandard recovery facilities emerged last year, the Department of Defense has launched major reforms and improvements in outpatient care.

Each of the services provides a multi-faceted approach to care. The Army, for example,

gives each soldier a case manager, squad leader, and a primary care provider. Coordinators have been assigned to help guide troops and their families through what can be a bewildering system during a difficult period in their lives.

"The Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs are expanding a pilot program to streamline the Disability Evaluation System into a single process producing one disability rating.

We must also continue to improve coordination and information-sharing between these two departments so that wounded warriors making the transition out of the military health system are not burdened by excessive delay or duplicate processes.

"To draw attention to the service and

sacrifice of these extraordinary Americans, to take stock of what has been achieved, and to reflect on how much more needs to be done, I have designated November as 'Warrior Care Month.'

The Department of Defense has launched a one-stop website at www.warriorcare.mil, where service members and their families will be able to find out about the full range of resources available to them.

"On this Veterans Day, let us redouble efforts to see our men and women get the care and the recognition that are their due.

"And if there are veterans in your family, in your community – or even if you see them walking down the hall or down the street – take a moment to say 'thank you' for all they have done for us. They deserve no less."

Robert M. Gates

Secretary of Defense

Letter to the Editor

VFW seeking Christmas support for orphan program

Members of VFW Post 9334 conduct a toy and clothing drive for the Orphans in the Czech Republic each year and are assisted by the Torch Club Dragons and the Keystone Tigers from the Netzaberg Youth Center. Persons who are interested in contributing to our Annual Christmas Program can sign for cards, purchase a present, and return it to the Netzaberg Youth Center or the Vilseck Commissary beginning Nov. 8.

Our youth clubs will wrap the present for you if it is not gift wrapped. Once the card and gift is returned, you may keep the picture as a memento.

We support the Detsky Domov Orphanage and the Most Baby Clinic. There will be two collec-

tion points. Persons residing in the Vilseck community may make donations at the Vilseck Commissary during normal operating hours and the Netzaberg Youth Center Bldg. 9080 Monday through Saturday from 2-6 p.m.

If you have any questions concerning the program, please contact Jim Dicks at DSN 475-9393 or CIV 0171 710 6647.

Both communities have responded well to this program for the last six years.

Please assist our organization with making children happy for Christmas because they have no one else to count on except you.

James Dicks



Anniversary of fall of Berlin Wall celebrated on World Freedom Day

On World Freedom Day, we celebrate the anniversary of the historic fall of the Berlin Wall and honor the brave citizens of East and West Germany who helped secure freedom and liberty for future generations.

The Berlin Wall stood as a barrier that isolated the victims of imperial Communism and totalitarian power from the promise of the free world. Standing in the presence of the wall, with an unshakable belief in the power of liberty, President Ronald Reagan issued a resounding challenge on behalf of the free and the unfree alike: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall."

On Nov. 9, 1989, the citizens of East Germany finally triumphed over their Communist oppressors, and the Berlin Wall came tumbling down. As the hope of freedom spread, the Soviet empire collapsed, the Iron Curtain was lifted, and Eastern and Central Europe were liberated from decades

of cruel tyranny.

The Cold War demonstrated once again that freedom is precious and cannot be taken for granted, that evil is real and must be confronted, and that if they are allowed to do so, harsh rulers will subjugate others in the name of hateful ideologies.

History has also proven that the transformative power of liberty overcomes this oppression. Today, many former Communist countries are using their sovereignty to aid the rise of other young democracies and to shine the light of conscience on human rights abuses.

Our belief in the universality of freedom is challenged time and again, but we continue to go forward with confidence that free nations will always prevail over the enemies of liberty, peace, and justice.

On World Freedom Day, we are reminded that injustice overseas can threaten our way of life at home, and we renew our commitment to helping

those who suffer under the weight of oppression.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Nov. 9, 2008, as World Freedom Day.

I call upon the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities, reaffirming our dedication to freedom and democracy.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventh day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-third.

George W. Bush

U. S. President

No matter where in the world you go...

beauty follows

Commentary by
Pfc. CHRISTOPHER GAYLORD
13th Public Affairs Detachment

For many us, home is where the heart is and nothing compares. Anyone who knows me knows I'm a huge proponent of that, and though cliché, the saying still stands true for most.

Our individual concepts of beauty, often times, are influenced by what we knew first; by the things we learned early on were good. After all, familiarity breeds contentment, and whether raised in the Pacific Northwest or the deserts of the Middle East, we grow to embrace our surroundings.

Sometimes it's the simple beauties that catch us off guard. Just when the world seems it's falling apart around us, a savior of thought steps in, and we realize that those simple beauties are all around us, if we're willing to search for them.

Upon my arrival to Iraq, I was a bit displeased. I didn't expect much to begin with, but nonetheless, I was unimpressed. It's a far cry from the thick woods and mystic mountains

of the Northwest that I'm used to. Much to my surprise, however, it didn't take long to find my own simple beauty.

Leaving the broadcast studio at Al Faw Palace late one afternoon, I caught the sun setting over the lake at what must have been the perfect time of day. The sight was so amazing that all worries and concerns I'd had about the next year of my life seemed to float painlessly away.

The realization that beauty remains around us despite war just seemed to comfort me.

Although mortar and rocket attacks have shown to be relatively frequent here, life goes on in its breathtaking and sometimes funny little ways.

Even the simplest of things can reassure us that life is beautiful. As a child, I always enjoyed feeding the ducks and geese at the lakes and ponds near home. It seems nothing has changed. My fellow journalists recently re-introduced me to the act. I guess I had forgotten how much fun I could have just watching birds gobble down food like crazy men.

In the strangest of places, I

was reminded of home. I instantly remembered when my grandfather and I would throw bread to the birds while up in the mountains of Oregon, or on walks, generally in the lush spring and summer months, just bonding in the sun as grandfather and grandson; the new and the old sharing a moment.

I always enjoyed the time I spent with my grandparents, and the moment really took me back. I

It was then that I realized those memories really do go with you no matter where you go. They're kind of like AAFES. And even here in Iraq, similarities to home can be found.

Though my example is far from the best, it gives me the hope to always look for those things that can counter my worry and concern; my fear and my sadness. It's so reassuring that the smallest things in life can lift our spirits.

It's just like the other day when I passed by a street near the palace and happened to see two geese bolting down it, side by side. I mean, they were seriously tearing up pavement.

I'd like to think that at the other

end they agreed to race for some sort of prize, or some food some journalist had thrown them earlier. Maybe it was a bet between the two geese, just like humans often do. For some reason, though, it was absolutely hysterical to me. Perhaps it's because geese don't have arms, so it's funny seeing them waddle so speedily from side to side. Either way, it put an ear-to-ear smile across my face. Laughter is a wonderful medicine.

Being far from home, away from familiarity and loved ones, isn't easy for anyone. Feelings of loneliness and depression generally ensue, but no matter where you are, even if in the midst of war, beauty can be found. You have only to search for it.

So if you see increasing amounts of food floating in the waters around the palace, just know that's all the food the birds wouldn't eat. Still, I'll now make it my personal duty to see that the geese of Camp Victory are properly nourished, even if that means wasting a few green apple and carrot cake energy bars. And so I say, "to each his own therapy."

This column was originally published April 10, 2008.

Berrios congratulates troops for electing new commander in chief

continued from Page 2

\$26 for employees who received bimonthly pay.

For this amount of money, children can be fed, cancer research and youth ministries can be funded. For this relatively small amount of money, we can change the world!

Election

And finally, congratulations to everyone who voted!

I congratulate you not on whether or not your candidate won, but because you exercised an important constitutional power and a most solemn trust by casting your ballot and voicing your choice for the leader of our great nation!

Gate 5 opens for morning traffic

by **MARY MARKOS**

USAG Grafenwoehr Public Affairs

The U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr opened Gate 5 to Soldiers traveling to South Camp (Vilseck) for morning physical training last week in an effort to ease traffic congestion on Bavarian State Road 2166.

The temporary gate, which is open to Soldiers on workdays, Monday-Friday from 5:30-6:30 a.m., came after a large volume of vehicles began accessing the Vilseck main gate, Gate

1, during the early morning hours every day, said Kirk Jackson, the garrison security operations chief.

"The intent is to reduce the traffic congestion at Gate 1 and the resulting backup of vehicles onto St 2166 and other various roads in the area, thereby mitigating the safety and security risks associated with such," he said.

To avoid traffic congestion at South Camp Gate 1, Soldiers need to travel B299, and turn onto 2166 toward Vilseck. At the Axtheid-Berg intersection drivers need to turn right

(signs will point to the Ammunition Supply Point) onto Bergstrasse. Soldiers will then proceed until the road ends at the railroad crossing, veer right at the "Y" intersection, and travel to Gate 5 which will be immediately in front of them.

Entering Gate 5, drivers take a left onto the tank trail, and travel approximately 2.8 kilometers to Gate 2, where they will turn left into South Camp.

The alternate entrance to South Camp is open to Soldiers only, and

Jackson said civilians and family members will not be permitted to travel the route.

"We will turn (civilians and Soldiers with civilians in their car) around, absolutely," Jackson said. "I will not let civilians in there without a tank trail pass. There are various safety risks associated with travelling on the tank trail and in the training area in general that we don't want civilians to encounter."

Jackson said military police officials will be patrolling the route and

roads surrounding it to ensure the safety of the Soldiers.

"We are also there to control access to the tank trail. Soldiers can't come from Grafenwoehr and turn right onto the tank trail before leaving the training area at Gate 4 in Tanzfleck, to travel the entire tank trail to Gate 2. They have to leave the installation, come to Axtheid-Berg, Gate 5, and then reenter there," Jackson said.

The South Camp Airfield Gate will remain open workdays from 6:00 a.m.

It's that time again! Have your taxes prepared, e-filed free of charge at your military tax center



It's the Law

JMTC Legal Center

Last year, the military tax centers saved the Bavarian communities over \$1.3 million dollars in electronic filing fees.

They prepared 12,945 federal and state tax returns resulting in over \$19.7 million in refunds. Preparing individual tax returns can be confusing, especially with frequent changes in the tax law, but your military tax centers are here to assist you. And the best part is that it is FREE!

With the exception of Garmisch, all of the military tax centers in Bavaria will open Tuesday. The Garmisch Tax Center will open Feb. 17. Most of the tax centers provide both walk-in and scheduled appointments. You can schedule appointments beginning tomorrow.

W-2s for civilians and service members are already available online from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service at www.dfas.mil. Most banks and investment companies mail interest and dividend statements by the end of January.

Bring the following to your appointment:

- ID card, and all W-2 forms, 1099 forms, and 1098 forms;
- Social Security cards for spouse and dependents;
- Copies of last year's federal and state returns (if available);
- Blank check or bank card bearing both the routing and account numbers of checking or savings account;
- If filing jointly, bring your spouse with you, or bring a general power of attorney or a special power of attorney for filing tax returns;
- If filing with a spouse who has no social security number, bring spouse's Individual Taxpayer Identification Number; if spouse has no ITIN, we can help you apply for one; and
- The amount of the economic stimulus payment received in 2008.

You will be required to list the amount of the economic stimulus payment received in 2008 on your tax return, but you are not being taxed on that money.

It will be used to determine whether you are eligible for the recovery rebate credit.

The recovery rebate credit is figured just like the economic stimulus payment except that your 2008 tax information is used to figure the credit, instead of your 2007 tax information.

The maximum credit is \$600 (\$1,200 if married filing jointly) plus \$300 for each qualifying child. The credit is reduced by any economic stimulus payment you received.

You may be able to take the credit if you did not get an economic stimulus payment in 2008, or you qualify for more than you did in 2007.

For example, if you had a child in 2008, the child was not included on your 2007 tax return, so you did not receive a \$300 payment for that child. You will likely be eligible for a \$300 recovery rebate credit on your 2008 tax return.

If you do not remember how much you received, you can find that information on www.irs.gov, under How Much Was My 2008 Stimulus Payment?

Tax returns are typically due April 15, with

some exceptions.

If you are a U.S. citizen or resident, and you lived overseas on April 15, then you are allowed an automatic two month extension (until June 15, 2009) to file your 2008 return and pay any federal income tax due.

However, if you owe taxes, you will be charged interest from April 15th until the date that the tax is paid. So, if you think you might owe taxes, it is better to file by April 15th.

If you served in a qualified combat zone, you have at least 180 days after the last day you are in a combat zone plus the number of days you had left during tax season (Jan. 1-April 15) to file your taxes.

In other words, if you were in a combat zone during the entire tax season, you would have 180 days plus 105 days (Jan. 1-April 15) from the time you returned to file your taxes.

For example, if you deployed to Iraq on Aug. 1, 2007, and returned Nov. 1, 2008, your 2007 tax return would be due Aug. 12, 2009 (180 days from the date of return plus 105 days away during tax season, Jan. 1-April 15).

If you have any questions, or would like to make an appointment, call your local military tax office.

Katterbach

Hours: 9 a.m.-4 p.m., walk-in and scheduled appointments

Location: Building 5817 (Law Center)

Phone Number: 467-2324; 09802-83-2324

Illesheim

Hours: 9 a.m.-4 p.m., walk-in and scheduled appointments

Location: Building 6506 (Law Center)

Phone Number: 467-4511; 09841-83-4511

Garmisch

Hours: T/W/Th: 9 a.m.-4 p.m., appointments only

F: 9 a.m.-12 p.m., appointments only

Location: Building 202

Phone Number: 467-2324; 09802-83-2324

Grafenwoehr

Hours: T/W/Th: 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m., walk-in and scheduled appointments

M/F: 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m., walk-in and scheduled appointments

Location: 216, 2nd floor

Phone Number: 475-9258; 09641-83-9258

Hohenfels

Hours: M/W/F: 9 a.m.-4 p.m., walk-in and scheduled appointments

T/TH: 10 a.m.-5 p.m., walk-in and scheduled appointments

1st Saturday of each month: 9 a.m.-12 p.m., appointment only

Location: Building 313 (Law Center)

Phone Number: 466-2836

Schweinfurt

Hours: M-F: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Location: Building 1 (Law Center)

Phone Number: Will be published shortly (office is in the process of moving)

Vilseck

Hours: M/W/F: 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m., walk-in and scheduled appointments

T/TH: 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m., walk-in and scheduled appointments

Location: Building 245 (Law Center), 1st Floor

Phone Number: 476-2714; 09662-83-2714

Did you know that the Earned Income Tax Credit increased? Find out more about the 2008 tax law changes on Page 25.

Recalled peanut butter products removed from shelves

Europe Regional Medical Command

Europe Regional Veterinary Command food inspectors are assisting in the recall of peanut butter products from store shelves, vending machines, theaters, dining facilities and other places on U.S. bases where those items may be sold or distributed.

"Peanut butter products identified by the FDA and corporate recalls have been removed from U.S. military outlets in Europe," said Lt. Col. Martin LaGodna, deputy commander of the Europe Regional Veterinary Command. "Our inspectors will continue to assist as needed to remove additional food products if any are identified."

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced corporate recalls of peanut butter products, including some pet foods, following a Jan. 10 notification by the Peanut Corporation of America of potential Salmonella typhimurium contamination in bulk peanut butter and peanut butter paste produced after June 30 at its Blakeley, Georgia, processing plant.

The bulk peanut butter products in question may have been used in a variety of commercially produced food products. A list of the potentially affected foods is on the FDA Web site at www.fda.gov.

A peanut butter recall link is also on the AFN Europe Web site at www.afneurope.net.

The Centers for Disease Control reports as of Jan. 21 the case count is 488 in 43 states.

Col. Evelyn Barraza, Europe Regional Med-

ical Command Preventive Medicine Consultant, said medical treatment facilities have been made aware of the recall and are prepared to assist authorized beneficiaries who may present symptoms of salmonella.

Salmonella can cause diarrhea, fever, and ab-

dominal cramps 12 to 72 hours after infection. The illness usually lasts four to seven days, and most persons recover without treatment. The elderly, infants, and those with impaired immune systems are more likely to have a severe illness. Persons with diarrhea usually recover

completely, although it may be several months before their bowel habits are entirely normal.

If there is any question about whether a product in the commissary, AAFES Shoppette or vending machines is safe, contact your local Veterinary Services.

Defense Commissary Agency Europe Information Sheet

This following information is provided as quick reference material in a fast-changing scenario surrounding the peanut butter food alert/recall. As of Jan. 23, the following items covered by the recent manufacturers' voluntary recalls have been pulled from commissary shelves.

PRODUCT REMOVED FROM SALE, followed by the UPC

ZonePerfect Health Foods Chocolate Peanut Butter Bar 63810220101

ZonePerfect Health Food Strawberry Yogurt Bar NOT A RECALL

Clif Crunchy Peanut Butter Bar 72225210120

Clif Health Foods Black Almond Cherry Bar

Clif Health Foods Chocolate Chip Peanut Bar

Luna Nutz Over Chocolate Bar 72225210310

Keebler Cheese and Peanut Butter Crackers

Keebler Toast and Peanut Butter Crackers

Austin Cheese and Peanut Butter Crackers

Austin Toast and Peanut Butter Crackers

Austin Cheese and Peanut Butter Crackers

Austin Toast and Peanut Butter Crackers

Austin Cheese and Peanut Butter Crackers

Austin Toast and Peanut Butter Crackers

Austin Snack Cracker Variety Tray 07978348635

NOTE: IMPACTED AUSTIN AND KEEBLER CRACKER PACKAGES COME IN SIZES FROM 7.4 OZ TO 62.1 OZ CLUB PACKS

For information on salmonella and the recalled products, visit <http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/salmonellatyph.html>.

The listing included on this site is extensive. To use the search feature it offers, understand the most UPC numbers are not included in the database. Make sure you type the brand name correctly or it will not be found. You may also look at the complete Excel database offered on the site in alphabetical order by brand. Only the items listed in table above are normally carried by DeCA Europe.

These items were quickly pulled from all commissary shelves and will remain on hold pending further notification.

DeCA continually works with military public health officers and food safety specialists to handle all matters relating to food alerts and recalls.

These products are part of several voluntary manufacturers' recalls under advisement of the Food and Drug Administration following an outbreak of salmonella in the U.S. involving peanut butter and peanut paste supplied by the Peanut Corporation of America. While the products have not been linked to this outbreak and no cases have been directly connected to these products, the voluntary recall is made in the interest of safety and quality.

Customers are advised not to consume these products. Commissary customers who may have these products at home from an earlier purchase may bring them back to the commissary if they so choose. A full refund will be made.

Penalties outlined for fuel card users who exceed ration limits

by **ROBERT SZOSTEK**

USAREUR Provost Marshal Public Affairs Office

The recently introduced Army and Air Force Exchange Service fuel card system eliminates the need for authorized U.S. personnel in Europe to buy and fill out gas coupons for their fuel purchases.

Officials with the U.S. Army Europe Office of the Provost Marshal said the automated features of the system also make it much easier for customs investigators to check when people pump gas without authorization or go over their fuel ration limit.

"Since the use of the fuel card began earlier this year, customs investigators have been able to some suspected fuel ration violators," said Fred Evans, chief of customs services and investigations at the USAREUR OPM.

To boost the enforcement effort against fuel ration abuse, U.S. Forces Customs-Europe has set up a special fuel violation task force.

Using the fuel card database, investigators

receive daily reports on several kinds of violations and can see when and where fuel was pumped.

PMO officials said people who exceed their monthly fuel ration limit make up nearly 65 percent of the 1,500 violations uncovered to date.

People who go over their ration allowance will receive up to two warning letters, officials explained.

Customs personnel will also send the letters to violators' commanders or civilian supervisors.

Subsequent violations may result in an official military police report documenting a police investigation of possible unlawful activity.

"In an effort to protect duty and tax-free gas privileges, U.S. Forces Customs is strictly enforcing compliance," Evans went on. "We will identify each and every violator and take the necessary action to prevent abuse."

In addition to penalties under the Uniform Code of Military Justice and administrative action, anyone abusing the system may also face

German fines and penalties that result in a German police record, PMO officials said.

Sustained abuse could eventually result in violators losing their tax-free fuel privileges and having to buy gas at economy prices.

"Fuel card holders have a responsibility to know their fuel ration balance before pumping gas," Evans added.

This can be done in several ways.

"You can check the receipt you get from the gas station," Evans explained.

"Down at the bottom of the receipt, the number of remaining liters of fuel for that month is shown."

Additionally, fuel card holders can call the AAFES 0800 number printed on the card, check their balance online, or ask an AAFES associate to check on the ration allowance left for that month.

Eligible fuel card holders who have to drive very long distances between their homes and workplaces can apply to get extra fuel rations.

Fuel purchase policies for eligible AAFES patrons in Europe, including information on violations and procedures for requesting supplemental fuel rations can be found in Army in Europe Regulation 600-17 (Retail Sales of Motor Fuel to Individuals in Germany), available online at www.hqusareur.army.mil/rmv/regulations/aer600-17.pdf.



All Soldiers required to take foreign language test by March 15

USAREUR news release

U.S. Army officials have announced that all Soldiers have until March 15 to complete a brief one-time self-assessment of their foreign language skills.

The survey is mandatory for active and reserve component Soldiers, according to the Army's Human Resources Command. Army civilian employees are being encouraged, but are not required, to complete the assessment as well.

The mandatory survey complies with a Department of Defense initiative to improve foreign language expertise and have an accurate assessment of its personnel's language capabilities, Army officials said.

The Army will use the results of the survey "to close the data gap between traditional means of recording language capabilities and expertise acquired by other than formal Army/Department of Defense training or testing."

Traditionally, Soldiers' foreign-language capabilities have been assessed by having them complete the Defense Language Proficiency Test, said Lt. Col. Kate Crusan of the U.S. Army Europe personnel directorate.

Crusan said the purpose of the survey is to identify Soldiers and civilian employees who have language capabilities which may not have been identified by the DLPT that could be put to use on short notice as needed for national defense.

The colonel stressed that there is no intent to create additional deployments for any Soldier or civilian employee whose survey results indicate that they are fluent in a foreign language.

Soldiers who meet speaking, reading and writing requirements for specific languages may also be eligible for bonus payments, even if they are not filling positions for which that language is required, Crusan added.

A portion of the survey allows participants who speak only English to submit that information, according to information on the HRC Web site.

Soldiers can access the self-assessment survey via the HRC site at:

<https://perscomnd04.army.mil/langsurv.nsf/langsurvcentopen?openform>

Civilian employee can access the survey via MyBiz on the Army's Civilian Personnel Online Web site at www.cpol.army.mil.

For more information, contact HRC in Alexandria, Va., at 703-695-7697 or DSN 312-225-7697.

WAQ: Warrior Adventure Quest

continued from Page 1

or skiing, and combines it with Battlemind training. The goal is to allow Soldiers to experience high-risk activities in a safe, controlled environment.

Grafenwoehr WAQ Coordinator Geoff Farrell says he certainly could've used such a program after two combat deployments left him inadvertently risking his life in search of the fast-paced adrenaline rush that was routine on the battlefield.

"This is the kind of program I was looking for when I came back from Iraq," said Farrell. "I transferred from being a platoon leader, which was high-intensity, to a low intensity job at home; and it was like nothing else was going on, so on my way home from work every day I'd drive down this twisty mountain road at 100 miles an hour. I'd put the hammer down every day. That's something I wasn't doing before I deployed.

"I would leave my office and felt like the pressure of the world was on me and I'd drive home at unbelievable speeds. By the time I got home," said Farrell, "I like everything was better. I was self medicating, but with the wrong medication."

If hindsight is 20/20, Farrell has perfect vision now and can see clearly what was going on—and how crucial an outlet WAQ is for Soldiers, fresh off the battlefield and laden with feelings of invincibility, boredom, or numb-

ness.

"We're dealing with combat veterans who have gone to the edge, and what we don't want is for guys to push over that edge because we lose them. They die, and that's exactly where we don't want them to go," said Farrell, a former infantry officer.

Unfortunately, many recently deployed Soldiers have pushed too far as they seek to fill the void left by a supercharged combat environment. At least 186 Soldiers have died in accidents within one year of returning from combat, officials said, and 168 of them within the first six months of their redeployment. More than half of the accident fatalities are E-5 or below and involve high speed, alcohol, or both.

As of Jan. 20, the Army had documented the death of 50 Soldiers to accidents between Memorial Day and Labor Day, 2008—a mind-boggling loss of one Soldier every other day throughout the summer.

As thousands of Grafenwoehr's 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment Soldiers rotate in groups of about 20 through the WAQ's rock climbing, scuba diving, and kletterstieg (via ferratta) events, Farrell said he recognizes what he considers the program's early success.

Several of the Soldiers who have participated in the day-long adventure program have visited the Outdoor Recreation Center days later to sign up for the recreational program they took part in during their WAQ session.

"They're coming back—looking for more!" said Farrell. "That's hugely telling, that these guys have found something they can enjoy, an outlet."

And that's the whole point.

Farrell explained that one day of fun activity is not a solve-all for what the Soldiers are going through. The goal, rather, is to introduce them to activities they can take up on their own. And once they've found their high-risk, controlled passion, the need for the uncontrolled high risk behavior will diminish—and lives will be saved.

It's no secret, he said, that service members have needed this program for a very long time.

"Just look at the fighter pilots who came home after World War II to form biker gangs, or the guys who broke the sound barrier—they were WWII fighter pilots, or the Vietnam veterans who came home and couldn't quite fit in.

"This program tells them that it's okay to get an adrenaline rush, seek some danger," he said. "We're in a risky job; it's okay to take risks, but we have to do it in a controlled environment and mitigate the risks."

"I think this program is working," said Farrell. "After we do the WAQ activity for the day, we go to a guesthouse to sit, eat, and talk, and the guys have told me that just coming out and doing these activities, getting away from the day-to-day grind, has helped them put something back in place."



USAG Graf Commander Col. Chris Sorenson shares his favorite storybooks with students at Grafenwoehr Elementary School Jan. 22, as part of the schools' second annual "Bedtime Stories" event.

Army Emergency Relief program kicks off March 1

The Army Emergency Relief program will begin March 1, 2009, and go through May 15.

More than \$73 million in AER assistance in 2008 was provided to more than 63,000 soldiers and their families.

AER is a private nonprofit organization incorporated in 1942 by the Secretary of War and the Army Chief of Staff. AER's sole mission is to help soldiers and their dependents.

AER is the Army's own emergency financial assistance organization and is dedicated to "Helping the Army Take Care of Its Own".

AER provides commanders a valuable asset in accomplishing their basic command responsibility for the morale and welfare of Soldiers. Funds are made available to commanders having AER Sections to provide emergency financial assistance to Soldiers - active & retired - and their dependents when there is a valid need. AER funds made available to commanders are

not limited and are constrained only by the requirement of valid need.

For these reasons, the AER assistance program is conducted within the Army structure by major commanders and their installation/organization commanders through AER sections and other related organizations.

All units within USAG Grafenwoehr geographic footprint are requested to provide an AER Representative. The USAG Grafenwoehr HRD will be hosting a special training session for all AER unit representatives on 23 February 2009 at 0900 hours in Grafenwoehr Bldg.244. Training will last approximately one and half hours. All AER representatives should attend this training.

For receipt/allotment forms (DA Form 4908) or questions, contact Christine Nunez at DSN 475-8432 or e-mail: christine.nunez@eur.army.mil

ALASKA DAYS

“Cubbies” descend upon Garmisch, battle the elements, earn belt loops

Story and photos by
Lt. Col. JAMES TURNER
Special to the Bavarian News

Fourteen Cub Scouts Packs totaling 159 “Cubbies” from across Bavaria and beyond trekked to the Kean’s Lodge in Garmisch Jan. 10-11 to participate in the “Alaska Days” Cub Scout day camp.

Cub Scouts from as far away as Ramstein and Vienna participated in seven events. In total, 412 people including Cubs, parents, siblings, and local volunteers enjoyed the fun all while taking in the breathtaking vistas.

On Jan. 10, the boys made ice cream, went sledding, learned about cold weather clothing and skiing, shot

targets with slingshots, launched bean bags with a large rubber-tube launcher and took a hike to learn how to keep our environment clean.

Some boys even tried racing in snowshoes!

At the end of the first day, teams from each pack hooked themselves up and “mushed” homemade sleds in an “Iditarod” of their own.

Pack 48, Sled 1 from Bamberg turned in the fastest time.

The next morning, 32 Cubs earned their Snow Ski and Board Sports belt loops and pins by taking a two-hour ski or snowboard lesson courtesy of local volunteer ski instructors.

The many volunteers from the Garmisch community and the pack leaders from all over were praised for leading their boys to participate.

Edelweiss District Executive Leigh Jackson called the event “a phenomenal success.”

Alaska Days is held annually during the second week in January.

The event was sponsored by the Edelweiss District of the Transatlantic Council of the Boy Scouts of America.



Alaska Days gave Cub Scouts a chance to go sledding, earn their Snow Ski and Board Sports belt loops, and make ice cream. During the two day event, the boys practiced their marksmanship skills as they shot targets with slingshots (left), and teams formed to compete in a human Iditarod (above). Pack 48, Sled 1, from Bamberg proved victorious in the race.



Volunteers police Artillery Kaserne for MLK Service Day

Community member determined to make a difference, even if alone

by **JOHN REESE**
USAG Garmisch Public Affairs Officer

All across America Jan. 19, tens of thousands of volunteers participated in the Martin Luther King National Day of Service.

The call to service in Garmisch was answered by community resident Cristina Michta.

“We did work on Monday and it was cold!” said Michta.

Initially it was just Michta collecting trash around Artillery Kaserne, and then later she was joined by Claudine Lee and her daughters Justina,

5 and Anne, 3.

“We cleaned the areas around the Garmisch Elementary-Middle School playground, the Pete Burke Community Center, the Child Development Center, and the (AFRC) Vacation Village (campground),” said Michta.

After a while a passing Pond Security guard joined them for a few minutes, helping a little with their impromptu police call.

The MLK National Service Day began in 1994, but not until Jan. 19 2009 has it generated so much interest.

This year’s event had increased turnout nationwide as then President-elect Barack Obama called upon Americans to take part and do something for their communities, and on the day before his inauguration he visited wounded warriors and helped fix up a homeless shelter for teens in Washington D.C.

Michta, also feeling the spirit of community

service, chose to be proactive and do something. Her call for volunteers went out late, but she was determined to participate even if she was alone. Ultimately she and her helpers collected and properly disposed of “many bags of trash.”

“I was very glad to join the over 80,000 projects in the USA,” said Michta.

A fresh blanket of snow that followed on the heels of Michta’s clean-up made the garrison look all the more fresh and clean.

Cristina Michta (right) takes a break with her volunteer helpers, Claudine Lee and her daughters Justina, 5, and Anne, 3, while they policed-up Artillery Kaserne for the MLK National Service Day Jan. 19. The temperature was below freezing as Michta set out to make a difference in her community.



Courtesy photo

GARRISON SNAPSHOTS



Photo by John Reese

Gen. Carter F. Ham, Commander, U.S. Army, Europe and 7th Army (left), takes a moment to meet the MPs of U.S. Army Garrison Garmisch during a Jan. 7 visit. The general toured the facilities on Artillery and Sheridan kasernes accompanied by USAG Garmisch Manager Karin H. Santos, USAG Grafenwoehr Commander Col. Nils Sorenson, and USAG Grafenwoehr Command Sergeant Major William Berrios.



Photo by Karin H. Santos

The changing of the stole, a ceremony where the outgoing chaplain passes the authority and responsibility for his flock to an incoming chaplain, took place at the Garmisch Community Chapel Jan. 18. Chaplain (Col.) David P. Hillis (center), USAG Grafenwoehr, is about to pass the stole from Chaplain (Capt.) Vernon Lyle Shackelford (left) to Chaplain (Maj.) Allen Larry Pundt. Shackelford was reassigned after only a year as the USAG Garmisch chaplain when the need for a Warrior Transition Unit chaplain in Heidelberg arose and the Iraq veteran answered the call. Working with wounded warriors is where his heart and passion are, said Shackelford. Pundt, a veteran of several tours in Germany, was welcomed to the community at a dinner Jan. 22.

General challenges audience to uphold Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream



Story and photo by
KRISTIN BRADLEY
Bavarian News

Maj. General Anthony Jackson, director of operations and logistics for U.S. Africa Command, remembers why we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

When Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus, an event that sparked the Montgomery bus boycott, Jackson was living in Germany at the time and can remember celebrating the events with his family.

He can remember his sister defying a bus driver and he himself sat at lunch counters in non-violent protest.

He remembers graduating from high school in Oakland, Ca. in the sixties, a city that he said was about 65 percent black at the time, and being faced with the choice of what kind of activist he would be.

Would he align himself with the Black Panthers and other militant groups forming across the country?

Or would he, like many others, choose to follow the message of peace and hope preached by Baptist minister Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.?

Speaking at the U.S. Army Garrison Hohenfels dining facility Jan. 15 during a celebration honoring King's birthday, Jackson explained why he chose the latter.

"Dr. King said we must know each other so we don't fear each other, so we can respect and love each other, and treat each other with love and justice," he said, adding that it is for this same reason that the Department of Defense holds many celebrations throughout the year honoring different people and cultures.

Jackson was the keynote speaker at a celebration that began with a recording of King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech with a slideshow of photographs from civil rights protests and included the elementary school choir singing various songs honoring King.

Before he began speaking, Jackson led the audience in a round of "Happy Birthday" to remind guests of the reason for the holiday.

"We work hard, we look forward to these



Maj. General Anthony Jackson, director of operations and logistics for U.S. Africa Command, speaks at the U.S. Army Garrison Hohenfels dining facility Jan. 15 during a luncheon honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Jackson recalled how King's life and work inspired him and many others, and urged attendees to be "dream keepers" by working to ensure that all people "know the joys of freedom."

days off . . . and sometimes we don't stop and remember and reflect on the historic events and who we are really celebrating. But I want to remind you that today is indeed a celebration."

As he addressed a packed dining room, Jackson reflected on what King's actions and legacy have meant to him.

"There were great tensions in this country—

destructive tensions. But one man rose above them all because, as he simply and eloquently said, 'The time is always right to do what is right.' And in his doing right in the years of his life . . . he gave our nation, and the world, a beacon of light in a world of unjustness," said Jackson.

He said that King was carrying on the work of the Founding Fathers, that if one listens to his speeches, one can hear the ideals of men like Thomas Jefferson and John Adams.

Jackson recited, from memory, parts of the Declaration of Independence and said, "Dr. King, he grabbed hold of those words and he used their promise of freedom and justice for all Americans, but particularly for the civil rights of Americans of African descent."

"He served as the moral conscience of the nation during a time when it was certainly needed. He taught us how to break down walls of prejudice and injustice. He gave us his dream. And, as he put it, a dream deeply rooted in the American dream."

Jackson recalled what it was like to hear King's "I Have a Dream" speech as a teenager and spoke about how King's legacy has inspired him throughout his life.

"In many ways, I consider myself the culmination of his dream. I am just once of many, that's for sure, but like Condoleezza Rice, like General William Ward (AFRICOM commander), my current boss, and our President-elect, we are the culmination of Dr. King's dream . . . without Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., we may still be another hundred years from (then) President-elect Barack Hussein Obama."

At the end of his speech, which, upon completion, earned an immediate and passionate standing ovation, Jackson left his audience with a task to complete.

"I ask you to join me as a dream keeper by ensuring that we treat all people, everyone, with dignity and respect and by ensuring that we, as Dr. King said, 'from every mountain side let freedom ring.' The way we can continue to honor the legacy of Dr. King and the destiny of America is to continue to assist all people in knowing the joys of freedom."

Online service enables patients to schedule clinic appointments

by **KRISTIN BRADLEY**
Bavarian News

Patients will soon find making appointments at the U.S. Army Garrison Hohenfels health clinic much easier thanks to an online system set to be activated Feb. 1.

All TRICARE beneficiaries are eligible to use the online service which Lt. Col. Derek Cooper, clinic commander, said he hopes will "minimize traffic on the phone lines and maximize care for our beneficiaries."

Cooper said 100 percent of the clinic's appointments will be web enabled as of Feb. 1, allowing patients to make appointments online 24 hours a day without having to call the clinic.

In addition to the availability of web-enabled appointments, the TRICARE online website at www.tricareonline.com also provides information and services to beneficiaries such as an online drug interaction checker, personal health journal, benefits links, and more.

Once a patient registers on the site, they can click a link to make an appointment.

The system will prompt them to state the nature of the appointment,

then will show all times available starting that day and up to 30 days in advance.

If nothing is available with the patient's primary care manager, the patient may choose to go back and select all care managers.

According to Cooper, if a patient has an acute problem and no appointments

are available, they should call or come to the clinic to be fit in.

Other than the occasional acute patient, though, he said he does not foresee many patients being unable to find an available appointment online.

"We have flexible and willing providers that will go the extra mile to take care of whoever comes in regardless of how many (appointments) are available," he said, adding that though

there may be a few disconnects at first, the system will allow them to better serve the Hohenfels community.

Patients should be sure to enter the correct information for their appointment, as different appointments have different lengths.

If, for instance, a patient makes an online appointment for a cold, then comes in asking for a physical, they will be asked to re-schedule.

Patients that encounter problems registering or making their appointment should call the clinic at DSN 466-4565 or 466-1750.

Though the online system offers patients more convenient options to meet their needs, many things at the clinic will not change, like Soldier sick call hours.

Sick call will still be available Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings at 7 a.m., and Thursday afternoons at 1 p.m.

However, Cooper said Soldiers are also encouraged to make appointments online, saving them the time and effort of coming to sick call.

The care wounded warriors receive will also remain unchanged.

If a Soldier from the Warrior Transition Unit calls and says he was unable to make an appointment online, he would be encouraged to walk in and be seen as soon as possible.

The clinic has other initiatives in place to increase patient care, such as the kiosk installed in the waiting area in December.

The machine currently has four buttons enabling patients to make their primary care appointments, visit the pharmacy, get information on referrals, and make appointments for immunizations.

Cooper said he plans to add six more buttons to the kiosk within the next six weeks, further streamlining the clinic's operations.

Visit www.tricareonline.com to make appointments, use the drug interaction checker, and get benefit information.



It's cookie time

Girl Scouts prepare for annual cookie sale



photo by Kristin Bradley

Girls from kindergarten through sixth grade learn cookie selling techniques at a cookie rally held by the Hohenfels Girl Scouts Jan. 16 at the Hilltop Chapel Center. Troops are now selling cookies at the Post Exchange and Commissary, as well as taking donations for their Troops to Troops program which provides deployed Soldiers with the much beloved cookies and a little taste of home.

Community remembers Soldiers as inspiring leaders, proud fathers

by KRISTIN BRADLEY
Bavarian News

Three Soldiers from Team Cherokee, 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment were killed Jan. 9 when their vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device in Zabul Province, Afghanistan.

Grieving family, friends, and community members met Jan. 23 at the U.S. Army Garrison Hohenfels Community Activities Center to honor the lives and service of Maj. Brian M. Mescall, 33; Cpl. Joseph M. Hernandez, 24; and Sgt. Jason R. Parsons, 24.

"As I spoke to each of their families, one truth resonates: they were proud of their comrades and proud of their service to this nation," Lt. Col. John Lange said at the ceremony while trying to hold back tears.

"And even in their grief these families expressed to me pride in their husbands and sons, and they know that these men served in harm's way without fear or reservation."

Indeed, both Hernandez and Parsons volunteered in December to meet up with the team, already deployed to Zabul province since June, taking the place of wounded Soldiers.

Once in Afghanistan, Hernandez served as a gunner for the Headquarters Platoon Personnel Security Detachment. Parsons was also assigned to the PSD, serving as a driver.

Staff Sgt. Swindell White spoke about Hernandez, describing him as a loving and devoted father.

Hernandez leaves behind his wife, Alison, 22, whom he married in 2005 and his two young sons, Jacob, 2, and Noah, 8 months.

"His absolute favorite thing in the world was just to be home with his boys," said White.

Still, the caring father was also an eager Soldier.

His family and friends say he always wanted to join the Army, which, according to the Chicago Tribune he did after studying mechanical engineering and biology at Purdue University for two years before enlisting.

White recalled that on the first day of his assignment to the battalion anti-tank platoon a year ago, Hernandez asked his first sergeant what he needed to do to deploy.

When he was called to serve with Team Cherokee, he gave up his plans to spend his holiday block leave in the U.S. with family to serve in Afghanistan.

Originally from Hammond, Ind., his mother and father, Elva and Jessie, and brothers Jesse and Jason also survive him.

According to the Army Times, Hernandez will be the first junior enlisted Soldier to receive full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery, where he used to serve as part of the honor guard during military funerals, since the option was



extended to all service members Jan. 1.

Parsons also had lifelong aspirations to be a Soldier and had planned to make his career in the Army.

"He had the makings of a great future leader," said Spc. Austin Swanda.

Swanda described Parsons as a man always willing and ready to laugh, even if it was at himself.

Originally from Lenoir, N.C., after he completed training at Ft. Benning, Ga., Parsons was assigned to I-4.

Soon, he met and married his wife Elvira and became a proud step-father to her three children, Manuel, 12, Jasmine, 11, and Daniel, 5.

"Elvira was his first and only love and when he married her he gained an instant family," said Swanda, who added that Parsons said he always wanted a large family.

Parsons is also survived by his sister, Brittney Pritchard, older brother Chris, step-father Ken Pritchard, and mother Margaret.

He was buried with military honors near his hometown in North Carolina.

Mescall was serving as the deputy commander, the highest-ranking U.S. officer, in the Romanian-led task force that included Team Cherokee.

Originally from Hopkinton, Mass., Mescall

graduated from The Citadel in 1997 with a degree in history.

He served overseas for two years in the Republic of Korea, two years in Iraq, and two years in Germany, and has been Task Force Zabul's chief of staff in Afghanistan for the past seven months.

1st Lt. Phillip Swintek, who served briefly as the executive officer for Cherokee, said Mescall would always go to bat for his guys to get them what they needed.

"As a member of Team Cherokee, I can say the whole company appreciated the risks he took for us," said Swintek.

He described Mescall as "a man of many words, always willing to tell stories to anyone who would listen."

The only thing he didn't joke and tell stories about was his six-year-old son Nathan.

When it came to his boy, Swintek said Mescall would relate his love for his son with quiet pride.

"He wanted to be more than just a father to his son," said Swintek, "he wanted to be a great father."

Mescall also leaves behind his parents John and Margaret, his brother John, and his sisters Jamie and Stacey.



Tax season brings new benefits for military members

by SERENA BUSHEE
USAG Hohenfels Tax Center

Taking advantage of (tax) credits... could potentially result in hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars of your hard-earned money coming back to you this year.

This tax season a number of new credits are available to qualified filers along with some old credits which will remain on the books for one more year.

Taking advantage of these credits by carefully filing your return at the U.S. Army Garrison Hohenfels Tax Center could potentially result in hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars of your hard-earned money coming back to you this year.

Among the returning tax breaks being offered are the educator expense deduction of \$250 maximum per individual offered to all qualified teachers, and the tuition and fees deduction, with a maximum of \$4,000 if you meet the qualifications.

In addition to deductions, the government is still allowing Education Credits, the Child Tax Credit, the Saver's Credit, the Additional Child Tax Credit, and the Credit for Child and Dependent Care.

The Earned Income Credit is also

still available this year to military members and due to new changes to the law, may assist service members even more than last year.

The most popular of tax credits, the Earned Income Credit is a refundable tax credit that means you could qualify for a tax refund even if you did not have federal income tax withheld.

This year, a change to the tax law affecting military members will allow them to include non-taxable combat pay as earned income.

Depending on your circumstance, electing to do so may increase or decrease your EITC.

Unfortunately, the Earned Income Credit is not available to Civilians stationed overseas.

Due to special rules for the military, members of the Armed Forces are the only ones who qualify.

Two new credits making their

debut this year are the Recovery Rebate Credit and the First-Time Homebuyer Credit.

The Recovery Rebate Credit is simply a credit to recover any remaining stimulus payments you might qualify for or the entire amount if you did not receive it last year due to a change in circumstance that made you eligible.

If you fall into the categories described below you may be eligible for the recovery rebate credit this year:

- Individuals who did not receive an economic stimulus payment.
- Those who received less than the maximum economic stimulus payment in 2008 — \$600 per taxpayer; \$1,200 if married filing jointly — because their qualifying or gross income was either too high or too low.
- Families who gained an additional

qualifying child in 2008.

• Individuals who could be claimed as a dependent on someone else's tax return in 2007, but who cannot be claimed as a dependent on another return in 2008.

• Individuals who did not have a valid Social Security number in 2007 but who did receive one in 2008.

The First-Time Homebuyer Credit is a new tax credit that operates like an interest free loan because it must be repaid over a 15-year period in equal annual installments beginning with the second tax year after the year the credit is claimed.

The credit is 10 percent of the purchase of the home, with a maximum available credit of \$7,500 for purchasing a home costing \$75,000 or more.

Only the purchase of a main home located in the United States qualifies

if purchased after April 8, 2008, and before July 1, 2009.

Taxpayers who owned a main home at any time during the three years prior to the date of purchase are not eligible for the credit.

Tax assistance is available free of charge to ID card holders at the Hohenfels Tax Center, located at the Hohenfels legal office, Bldg. 313.

During the month of February the office will have walk-ins only.

From March through June 15, appointments will be necessary for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday. Thursdays will be open for walk-ins.

The Tax Center is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and on Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For those who can't make it in during regular weekday operating hours, the office will be open the first Saturday of every month from 9 a.m. to noon and will only take appointments on that day.

For more, call DSN 466-2401/2402.

Passport to reading

Students travel the globe through books

Sgt. First Class Bryan Smith reads to his children Addison and Corbin at Hohenfels Elementary School's Passport to Reading program Jan. 15.



Zerina Coley reads a book about Asia with her children Isaiah and A'Janae during Hohenfels Elementary School Passport to Reading night.

Photos by Kristin Bradley

What's Happening

Grafenwoehr/ Vilseck Briefs

Technology Exposition

There will be a technology expo tomorrow at the USAG Multi-Purpose Center in Vilseck, Building 134, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Hosted by the 69th Signal Battalion, all military, civilian, and contractor personnel are invited to attend.

For more information contact at Ann Marie Griffith at griffithh@ncsi.com.

To pre-register, visit www.Federa-Events.com, click on "Grafenwoehr/Vilseck," and choose the Government/Military link.

Future of Army on display

Come see the latest in cutting-edge innovations in Soldier equipment and weapons systems at the Program Executive Office Soldier Force Modernization Roadshow at the Vilseck PXtra Food Court Feb. 3-5 from 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

For additional information on PEO Soldier, visit www.peosoldier.army.mil.

"Miss Nelson is Missing"

Grafenwoehr Performing Arts Center will hold auditions for "Miss Nelson is Missing" Feb. 3-5 at 7 p.m., Feb. 4 at 4 p.m. in Bldg. 102/103.

Tax centers opening soon

Beginning Feb. 2, scheduled and same day appointments (walk-ins) will be available daily with extended hours several days a week to better serve our community.

Call DSN 475-DSN 475-9258, CIV 09641-83-9258 in Graf, and DSN 476-2714, CIV 09662-83-2714 in Vilseck for more.

Estate claims

Anyone having any claims on or obligations to the estate of MAJ Brian M. Mescall, of C Co 1-4 IN BN, should contact the summary court officer, CPT Stephen Estes, at DSN 466-4043.

Anyone having any claims on or obligations to the estate of SGT Jason R. Parsons, of C Co 1-4 IN BN, should contact the summary court officer, 1LT Jeffrey R. Hecox, at DSN 466-2030.

Anyone having any claims on or obligations to the estate of CPL Joseph M. Hernandez, of C Co 1-4 IN BN, should contact the summary court officer, 2LT Matthew K. Hilderbrand, at DSN 466-3071.

AFN Europe survey

Go to www.afneurope.net before Feb. 19 and take the "Become A Resolutionary" survey. The information you submit will help AFN improve the radio and

television programming they provide. All answers submitted are confidential and anonymous.

Military History Group

The Grafenwoehr Library will host a Military History Group meeting Feb. 4 from 6-8 p.m.

Travel opportunities

To sign-up for these trips, call Vilseck ITR DSN 476-2563, CIV 09662-83-2563 or Grafenwoehr ODR DSN 475-7402, CIV 09662-83-7402.

Daytrips

- Prague, Czech, Feb. 1
- Karlovy-Vary, Feb. 8
- Brussels and Brugge, Belgium, Feb. 12-16

- 2 Castle Trip, Feb. 22
- Salzburg, Austria, March 13-15
- Barcelona, Costa Del Sol, Granada and Seville, Spain & Avignon, France Trip, April 3-12

- Euro-Disney and Paris Trip, April 6-9

- Mosel Wine and Medieval Castles, May 1-3
- Cinque Terre, Pisa and Lucca Italy, May 21-25

Thrift Shop news

The Vilseck Thrift Shop will be open the first Saturday of each month from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. For more info, call DSN 476-2649, CIV 09662-83-2649.

ODR ski trips

The following trips are being offered:

- Ski the Italian Dolomites, Feb. 14-16
 - Zillertal Ski Safari, March 13-15
- Call Rose Barracks ODR at DSN 476-2563, CIV 09662-83-2563, or Graf ODR at DSN 475-7402, CIV 09641-83-7402 for information.

German Classes

German classes for beginners, intermediate and advanced learners will begin Feb. 2. Both morning and evening classes will be offered.

Class locations are Grafenwoehr and Eschenbach.

For more information, email ursulafrankenberger@web.de, or info@vhs-eschenbach.de.

Babysitters certification

The American Red Cross will hold a babysitters certification course Feb. 10-12 from 3-6 p.m.

For information call the Grafenwoehr ARC at DSN 475-1760, CIV 09641-83-1760, or in Vilseck DSN 476-1760, CIV 09662-83-1760.

Valentine's Bunco

The Lagenbruck Center in Vilseck will host Valentine's Bunco Feb. 11 at 6 p.m.

Superbowl party

B.O.S.S. will host a Superbowl Party at The Zone Sports Bar Feb. 1.

Youth skiing

Beginning Feb. 6, CYSS will offer weekly ski trips to Mehlmeisel ski slope Wednesday afternoons for youth 8 to 10 years of age, and Friday evening for youth 11 to 18.

For more information, call DSN 476-4037, CIV 09662-83-4037.

Dental assistant training

The American Red Cross is now accepting applications through Feb. 11 for its free Dental Assistant Training Program that it offers in conjunction with the Hohenfels, Grafenwoehr and Vilseck Dental Clinics.

The program will run March-Sept. 2009 and requires 62 hours of classroom training and 300 hours of chair-side training. Applications are available and the Grafenwoehr and Vilseck Red Cross offices and are do back no later than Feb. 11.

VFW news

Open House every Wednesday at 6 p.m. Business meetings held on the second Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m.

POC Commander, James Holliman 0160-91423858, or Sr. Vice Commander Roger Schneider 0160-95877025.

Children's market

Interested in selling your children's clothing/toys/etc. at the second hand market? The Kindergarten in Hutten will host an open house and second hand market Feb. 28 from 2-4 p.m.

Those interested in signing their child up for the upcoming Kindergarten year will have the opportunity to register for a possible Kindergarten spot on-sight.

Contact Stefanie by Feb. 26 at 09641-454043 via email at S.Spears@ymail.com.

Instructors needed

CYS needs instructors to start new instructional programs within the SKIES Unlimited Program.

CYS is looking for instructors for guitar and instructors. For information, call DSN 475-6655, CIV 09641-83-6655, or DSN 476-2760, CIV 09662-83-2760 for more.

KONTAKT Club

Check out your local KONTAKT Clubs in Grafenwoehr, Vilseck and Amberg. The KONTAKT Club is a German-American friendship organization, sponsored by the U.S. Army that includes Soldiers, families, and other Americans supporting USAG Grafenwoehr, and German citizens from the surrounding communities.

Ask your Garrison Public Affairs Office for assistance, DSN 475-8885, CIV 09662-83-8885, or DSN 475-1600, CIV 09641-83-1600. Visit: <http://www.kontakt-vilseck.de/>.

Soldier Show

Army Entertainment Division needs vocalists, dancers, musicians, technicians, and specialty acts which include but are not limited to, comedians and magicians. Drivers are also needed to help keep the show on the road.

If you are interested please visit the following link for more details, contact information and application requirements: http://www.armymwr.com/portal/news/display.asp?NEWS_ID=900.

Volunteers Needed

Looking for creative people who care about our community, and have ideas on how to improve it.

Volunteers will participate in public awareness campaigns which focus on spring and fall clean up, recycling, energy reduction and water conservation.

Volunteers will help organize Best Yard contests to get people excited about summer inspection/award programs as well as art and recycling contest with the schools. Duties performed can be added to the volunteers resume as public service/relations experience as well as work with print media and commercials.

For more info, contact Gloria Mike at DSN 475-6457 or e-mail Gloria.mike@eur.army.mil.

Spring Sports

Registration begins Feb. 2 for CYSS

Spring Sports Programs. Sports offered are T-Ball, Baseball, Softball, and Soccer. Sign up at Central Registration in both Grafenwoehr and Rose Barracks.

Hohenfels Briefs

Estate claims

Anyone having any claims on or obligations to the estate of Maj. Brian M. Mescall, of C Co., 1-4 Infantry Battalion, should contact the summary court officer, Capt. Stephen Estes, at DSN 466-4043.

Anyone having any claims on or obligations to the estate of Sgt. Jason R. Parsons, of C Co., 1-4 Infantry Battalion, should contact the summary court officer, 1st Lt. Jeffrey R. Hecox, at DSN 466-2030.

Anyone having any claims on or obligations to the estate of Cpl. Joseph M. Hernandez, of C Co., 1-4 Infantry Battalion, should contact the summary court officer, 2nd Lt. Matthew K. Hilderbrand, at DSN 466-3071.

AFAP is coming

Army Family Action Plan is a brilliant way to get good ideas you have about improving programs, organizations and services in Hohenfels in front of decision makers.

Currently, there are red boxes with "Issue Forms" located conveniently around post. Look for them and use the form located with the box to submit your ideas and comments.

The form is also on our website at www.hohenfels.army.mil, and you can email them directly to the AFAP Program Coordinator Carol Stone at carol.stone@eur.army.mil or contact at DSN 466-4771.

ODR one-day ski trips

Let Outdoor Recreation do the driving and enjoy a quick winter getaway to the Bavarian Alps for only 30 Euro.

The Winklmoosalm mountain community in Reit im Winkl, Germany, offers alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, hiking in the snow and much more.

Trips are scheduled for Jan. 31; Feb. 7 and 21; March 7, 21, 24, and 28; April 4 and 18.

The 30 Euro includes transportation only. Outdoor Recreation does have equipment rental available for \$15 per day for adults. For more information or to make reservations call Outdoor Recreation at DSN 466-2060.

Travel week at the library

Jan. 26 to Jan. 30 the Hohenfels Library will focus on travel, something all members of the Hohenfels' community should do while living in Europe.

Each weekday of that week, the library will offer Brown Bag Travelogues from 12:30-1:00 p.m.

Bring your brown bag lunch and enjoy watching travel DVDs on our big screen television. Displays of travel books and other information will also be available.

Interested in sharing your travel tips and experiences, as well as learning from other folks and their experiences?

Come to the first meeting of the Travel Club on today from 5-6:00 p.m. Help us make decisions on what would be most useful, entertaining, practical for a Travel Club, pick a more original name, plan future meetings, etc. Call the DSN 466-1740 for information.

AFTB Level Two

This is where you step from regular person to super (Mom, Dad, Soldier, Spouse, etc) by learning how to manage life, change, family, the Army, etc; refine time managements techniques so life is not a total sprint while your interpersonal skills will be refined producing a whole new you.

Reserve your spot for Jan. 28 and 29 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at ACS, Bldg. 10.

For more information call Carol Stone, AFTB coordinator, at DSN 466-4771.

Job search and exploration

Jobs in Hohenfels. If you don't believe they are out there, maybe you're just looking in the wrong place.

This workshop is designed to teach you the basics and a little bit beyond. Know how to take advantage of today's ever increasing technology. In addition, we will discuss how to create a career vision and stay on course once you've decided.

The Employment Readiness Program will save you a seat today from 3-4 p.m. at ACS, Bldg. 10. For more information call Lara Clagett, Employment Readiness Program manager, at DSN 466-4088.

Augsburg trip

The Catholic Community has organized a trip to visit the historic city of Augsburg, Germany. The group will depart from the Main Post Chapel, Bldg. 2, at 7 a.m. Jan. 31 and arrive back around 6 p.m.

Contact the parish office at DSN 466-2226 or email Naomi.evans@us.army.mil for more information.

Ice skating

Ice Skating at the Volksfestplatz in Neumarkt will be held through March. Drinks and hot snacks are available at the Polar Bear Bar. The ice skating rink has lights for night skating, and is open Monday 1-7 p.m., Wednesday 1-6 p.m., Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 1-9 p.m., Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Entry prices are 4 Euro for adults, and 2 Euro for children ages 6-18. Cheaper seasonal or family tickets are available.

Rental skates cost 3.50 Euro and a security deposit.

Red Cross health and safety classes

Feb. 7: CPR and First Aid combined from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Bldg. 10, ACS conference room.

Feb. 18: First Aid from noon to 5 p.m. in Bldg. 10, ACS conference room.

Feb. 20: CPR from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Bldg. 10, ACS conference room.

Cost is \$35 for CPR, \$30 for First Aid, or \$40 for both.

Call DSN 466-1760 with questions or to register, or stop by the Red Cross office in Bldg. 10.

Dental assistant training

The American Red Cross is now accepting applications through Feb. 11 for its free Dental Assistant Training Program that it offers in conjunction with the Hohenfels, Grafenwoehr and Vilseck Dental Clinics.

The program will run March-Sept. 2009 and requires 62 hours of classroom training and 300 hours of chair-side training.

Applications are available at the Red Cross office in Bldg. 10. Call DSN 466-1760 for more information.

EVERY SOLDIER, EVERYWHERE, EVERY DAY

PEO Soldier to Display the Latest Soldier Gear

Come see the latest in cutting-edge innovations in Soldier equipment and weapons systems at the Program Executive Office (PEO) Soldier Force Modernization Roadshow.

3-5 February, 0900-1600

Vilseck, Germany

Vilseck PXtra food court

Bldg number V 2203

Rose Barracks

Equipment on display will include:

- The **Land Warrior** fighting system, which combines state-of-the-art technologies to improve situational awareness, mobility, sustainability, survivability, and lethality.
- The **Air Warrior** ensemble, which provides helicopter crews with state-of-the-art protective and survival gear that is fully integrated with operations support equipment and clothing.
- The latest in modern weaponry, including the **XM25 Counter Defilade Target Engagement System**, a 25mm airbursting individual weapon; and the **Lightweight .50 Caliber Machine Gun**, which delivers lethality at half the weight of the M2 .50 Caliber Machine Gun, with 60 percent less recoil and no requirement for the setting of headspace and timing.
- Enhanced force protection equipment such as the **Interceptor Body Armor Improved Outer Tactical Vest** and **Advanced Combat Helmet** with helmet sensors.
- Uniforms that enhance mission effectiveness and comfort, such as the **Generation III Extended Cold Weather Clothing System**, the fire-resistant **Army Combat Uniform** and **Army Combat Shirt**, and the new **Army Service Uniform**.
- Advanced sensors and laser devices that enhance Soldiers' ability to see in all battlefield and lighting conditions, such as **Thermal Weapon Sights**, **Generation II**; the **Enhanced Night Vision Goggles**; and next-generation aiming lights.

PEO Soldier will also collect feedback on equipment from Soldiers in its continuous efforts to improve equipment.

PEO Soldier, based at Fort Belvoir, Va. is an Army organization responsible for developing, acquiring, fielding, and sustaining the best weapon systems and equipment available. PEO Soldier is committed to saving Soldiers' lives, increasing their combat effectiveness, and enhancing their quality of life.

For additional information on PEO Soldier, visit www.peosoldier.army.mil.



HELP WANTED

Grafenwoehr Community & Spouses' Club (GCSC)
Thrift Shop is looking to hire!

Part-Time Manager

- Approximately 26 hours weekly
- Monday - Thursday & (1st Saturday of month)
- Pay range is \$8.50 - \$10.00 per hour
- Retail and/or Managerial experience preferred

Send resume and cover letter to gcscmembership@yahoo.com



Bookkeeper

- Approximately 5-10 hours per month
- Rate of pay is \$15.00 per hour
- Must have accounting credentials

Send resume and cover letter to gcscmembership@yahoo.com



What's Happening

Ansbach Briefs

Save your gym

The Katterbach Fitness Center no longer allows users of the gym, fitness rooms or cardio rooms to use their street shoes in the facility.

The staff requires people to bring a dry pair of shoes with them to use the facility.

When entering the facility, people should go to the locker room and change into their dry shoes before using the equipment.

This restriction is necessary to avoid unnecessary wear and tear due to salt and water damage tracked in on people's shoes.

For more, call the fitness center staff at DSN 467-2771, CIV 09802-83-2771.

Burger King hours change

The Burger King on Katterbach will no longer be open for breakfast on Sundays. AAFES officials said low volume of sales at that time is the reason for the change.

Burger King's hours are Mondays-Fridays from 7 a.m.-7 p.m., Saturdays from 8 a.m.-7 p.m., and Sundays from 11 a.m.-7 p.m.

Tax Centers opening soon

The Tax Assistance Centers at Katterbach and Storck Barracks will open Monday.

The offices are currently closed while the staff prepares for the upcoming tax filing season.

Each office will be able to prepare and E-File 2008 tax returns as well as past year returns.

U.S. taxpayers living overseas on April 15 have until June 15 to file their tax returns. However, the extension does not apply to those who owe money and those people should file as soon as possible.

Here are some important documents that the taxpayer should make sure they have before coming to the tax office.

- Identification cards and all Social Security numbers for you, your spouse and any dependents.

- All W-2 forms, 1099 forms and 1098 forms.

- Copies of last year's federal and state tax returns (if available).

- Bank routing numbers and account numbers for Direct Deposit.

- Rental Property Worksheet completed--if applicable.

- Any and all other documents that have been sent to you containing tax information.

- If filing jointly, bring your spouse or a General or Special Power of Attorney for tax filing purposes. This is required by the Legal Office to e-file your joint tax return.

Appointments are available at Katterbach from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Mondays-Fridays with walk-ins accepted from 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

At Storck, appointments are available from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and walk-ins are accepted from 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Contact the Katterbach Tax Center at DSN 467-2324, CIV 09802-83-2324 or Storck Barracks Tax Center at DSN 467-4511, CIV 09841-83-4511 for more information.

Preschool drama on hiatus

The preschool creative drama program is on hiatus until April 1.

The program will start up again April 1 and will meet Thursdays at the Terrace Playhouse.

For more, send an e-mail to ansbach-marketing@eur.army.mil.

Wanted: fishing instructor

Family, Morale, Welfare and Recreation needs a certified fishing instructor to lead classes at Soldiers Lake in Ansbach. The instructor needs to be ready to begin teaching in March.

People interested in the position should call DSN 468-7305, CIV 0981-183-305, or CIV 0151-2415-4055.

Regular unleaded phase out

Army and Air Force Exchange Service officials report that Esso in Germany is phasing out unleaded regular gasoline to come in line with the German government plans for the phase out and move to higher octane fuel.

Esso stopped delivering unleaded regular gasoline to AAFES facilities throughout Germany Jan. 1.

Upon exhaustion of unleaded regular Gasoline, AAFES facilities will only carry super and super plus unleaded fuels.

Rental car fuel cards

U.S. forces personnel who rent cars are eligible to get tax-free fuel cards for use with the vehicles, report Ansbach U.S. Customs officials.

To get authorized to receive a short-term fuel ration card, bring the rental agreement and the German vehicle registration certificate (Fahrzeugschein) to the U.S. Customs Office on Barton Barracks in Bldg. 5254, Room 316 during normal duty hours.

After 4 p.m. or on weekends or holidays, the form can be picked up at the Ansbach Military Police Station in Bldg. 5257 on Barton Barracks.

At Storck Barracks, people can get the form at the MP station during and after duty hours.

For more, call Ansbach's U.S. Customs-Europe Field Office at DSN 468-7847, CIV 0981-183-847.

Free concert

The Longbow Lounge on Storck Barracks hosts a free concert Jan. 31 at 7:30 p.m. featuring the band, Virginia Coalition. Tickets are available at the Katterbach and Storck Barracks bowling centers.

For more on the concert, send an e-mail to ans-mwr@eur.army.mil.

Stretch that dollar

Want to get more from your dollar? Check out the Storck Barracks and Katterbach Yellow Ribbon rooms.

Both keep a "huge" selection of manufacturers coupons, said ACS officials, adding that the coupons are good

for up to six months past their expiration date.

For more on the free coupons, stop by the YRRs or call the Storck facility at DSN 467-4397, CIV 09841-83-4397, or Katterbach at DSN 467-2553, CIV 09802-83-2553.

Crafty children

The Katterbach and Storck Barracks Yellow Ribbon rooms host children's crafts every Tuesday from 3-4 p.m.

The crafts offer parents a free activity to do to spend an hour one-on-one with their children. Supplies, crafts and instruction are provided.

For more, call the Storck YRR at DSN 467-4397, CIV 09841-83-4397, or the Katterbach YRR at DSN 467-2553, CIV 09802-83-2553.

Schweinfurt Briefs

Learn the German language

Want to learn how to speak German? Sign up for Army Community Service's free beginning conversational German language class starting Monday for 11 sessions.

Class is held Mon, Wed, Fri at the Ledward Yellow Ribbon Room from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. For information, call DSN 354-6933, CIV 09721-96-6933.

Spa relaxation

Would you like to relax your weary body with the treatment of a spa visit?

Sign up for the trip sponsored by Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers to KisSalis Spa in Bad Kissingen Feb. 7.

Transportation departs at 10 a.m. and returns at 6 p.m. Deadline to reserve a spot is Feb. 6. Call CIV 09721-96-8476 for information.

Night ski

Sign up to go night skiing in Wasserkuppe, Rhoen with Outdoor Recreation beginning in January. Depending on snow conditions ODR will take a trip each Thursday from 5 p.m. to approximately 11 p.m.

Cost is \$25 which includes transportation and equipment rental or \$15 without rental. To sign up, call CIV 09721-96-8080, DSN 353-8080.

Evening Bible studies

Come join an evening Bible study sponsored by Ledward Chapel's protestant service.

For a co-ed group including dinner on Wednesdays from 6-8:30 p.m., email dan_500@yahoo.com for directions to the home in Schweinfurt or call CIV 0170-277-8980.

For a women's only group, come to the Ledward Chapel fellowship hall Thursdays from 5:30-7 p.m. or email pwoc.schweinfurt@gmail.com for information.

Spring soccer registration

Registration for youth soccer is now open to ages 3 to 15. Cost is \$25 for ages 3 to 5, and \$36 for ages 6 to 15.

Registration ends Feb. 13. For information, call CIV 09721-96-8476, DSN 353-8476.

For more information, call CIV 09721-96-8234, DSN 354-8234.

Prolong vehicle life

When it comes to cars, do you feel like you don't know a thing?

Come to the Auto Skills Center at 2 p.m. on the follow dates to learn about your own vehicle and how to tell if mechanics are overcharging. For more information, call CIV 09721-96-8224, DSN 353-8224.

- Feb. 12 - Auto Skills Equipment Orientation

Learn how to safely use shop tools for do-it-yourself maintenance.

- Feb. 26 - Vehicle Passive Restraints

How do air bags work? Is your child safely secured? Worry no more.

Black History Month

February is Black History Month. Recreate the underground railroad and participate in a freedom quilt throughout the month.

In partnership with the Crafts Studio, free materials and instructions are available at the studio and the Ledward Library.

The finished quilt will be displayed at the library. For information, call CIV 09721-96-1740.

Sponsorship training

Come learn the ropes of helping new Soldiers and families integrate into the community.

By attending Army Community Service's "Sponsorship Training" class Feb. 10 from 9 a.m. to noon, you will obtain skills to become a valuable resource to Schweinfurt newcomers. Call CIV 09721-96-6933 for information.

Sign up for a night off

Do you need a night away from the kids to hang out with friends or relax at home?

Sign up now for the next Parent's Night Out event Feb. 20 from 6:30-11:30 p.m. The cost is \$16 for children ages 6 weeks to fifth-grade. The program includes one meal.

Children must be registered with Child, Youth, and School Services with current immunizations.

Deadline to sign up is Feb. 13. For information, call DSN 354-6517, CIV 09721-96-6414.

Valentine video station

Come to Ledward Library Monday from 10 a.m.-7 p.m. to make a Valentine gift for your employed spouse.

The library hosts a pre-Valentine card and personal video station for spouses and children to send to nonrange.

For more information, call CIV 09721-96-1740.

Newcomers orientation

Are you new to the Schweinfurt community?

If so, then the five-day Schweinfurt Newcomers Awareness Program is the fit for you from Feb. 2-6. Free childcare is available the entire week.

Get acquainted with the military community as well as the German town of Schweinfurt.

For more information or to sign up, call DSN 354-6933, CIV 09721-96-6933.

Bulk trash

Bulk trash is scheduled to be picked up from Askren Manor, Yorktown Village, and government-leased housing Feb. 10.

Please put bulk items out prior to 7 a.m. on day of pick-up but no earlier than the day before.

Bulk trash is only those items too large to transport in your vehicle. For information, call SORT coordinator at DSN 354-6201, CIV 0162-270-9403.

Babysit for extra cash

Want to make money babysitting? Youth ages 12 to 18 can get themselves prepared by becoming a certified babysitter through Child, Youth, and School Services' three-day class scheduled to take place over the schools' spring break in April.

Prospective babysitters will receive instruction on CPR, first aid, and more. Upon completion of the training, youth will be put on the community babysitters list.

Parents can pick up forms at central registration in the Commons. For information, call CIV 09721-96-6414, DSN 354-6414.

B.O.S.S. wants your input

Want to help plan events for single Soldiers or just give your input into how things run?

Attend Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers' council meeting on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month.

The next meeting is Feb. 10 and all single Soldiers are invited to attend. The meeting is held at Finney Recreation Center at 2 p.m.

For information, call CIV 09721-96-8476, DSN 353-8476.

Women's Bible studies

Protestant Women of the Chapel welcomes all women in the community to join a small group Bible study at Ledward Chapel Wednesday mornings at 9 a.m. Childcare is provided.

For more information call, CIV 0170-277-8980 or email pwoc.schweinfurt@gmail.com.

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Barcelona

A perfect escape from the frosty winters of Bavaria



by SANDRA WILSON
Bavarian News

Pack your sunglasses because it's time to escape Bavaria's dreary winter months and travel to sunny Barcelona, Spain.

Although the temperatures in Barcelona this time of year don't welcome comfortable beach-lounging, the weather is still mild with a jacket and offers rarely a moment without the warming rays of the sun.

With little more than an hour flight into the Girona airport, a trip to Barcelona can be taken over a three- or four-day weekend.

Tickets on budget airlines can be found at dirt-cheap prices and nightly accommodations in Barcelona can be booked inexpensively as well.

To get the most benefit out of a trip to Barcelona, travelers should plan to visit several of the key points of interest in the city.

Sagrada Familia

Perhaps the number one highlight of Barcelona is a visit to the Sagrada Familia, a monumental church—still a work in progress.

The massive structure boasts the artistic imagination of Antoni Gaudi who began his work as the principal architect in 1883.

The numerous tower cranes looming around the church are telltale to the fact that only 50 percent of the building is complete and the construction still continues today.

Charitable giving, the 11 euro entry fee, and the worthwhile 4 euro audio guide finance the construction project which is estimated to be completed in 2030.

Visitors can easily spend two hours wandering the grounds, learning about the outside facades, viewing the forest-like interior, and getting a taste of Gaudi's inspirations in the museum below.

La Pedrera

From there, in lieu of a one-mile walk, travelers can choose to take the metro from Sagrada Familia to the next destination of La Pedrera, another of Gaudi's architectural wonders.

Traveling from each attraction in Barcelona can be done easily by foot and by underground metro.

Each metro ticket sells for 1,35 euro or two- to five-day passes can be purchased if frequent metro travel is expected.

Two hours spent at La Pedrera is ample time to view the Modernista rooms, go through the museum in the fantastically crafted attic, and take countless photos of the bizarre, magical rooftop.

Passeig de Gracia

Exiting La Pedrera, you will find yourself walking down the Passeig de Gracia which offers many shopping opportunities and cafes to relax.

Spain is known for its good prices on quality leather products. In addition, January and February offer the biggest sales (rebaixes) of the year in many shops.

The street is also home to several other feats of artistic architecture like Casa Batllo.

Good walking shoes are important in Barcelona, because next is another long stroll down La Rambla, the city's wide pedestrian street.

The walk starts in the lively hub of Plaça de Catalunya where hordes of pigeons gather around anyone offering food. La Rambla offers delight for the whole family with spray-painted human statues, entertainers, and countless booths selling small furry animals, reptiles, birds, and flowers.

With all the excitement and activity, travelers must be aware of pick-pockets and scams as well as overpriced shops. A side street trip into the Mercat de La Boqueria will expose the cavernous market of the city with piles of fruit, candy, seafood, and meat.

Palau de la Musica Catalana

Nearby is also located the Palau de la Musica Catalana where more than 300 concerts and dance shows are performed.

Tickets for performances are sold there and a tour of the beautiful facility, designed by Lluís Domènech i Montaner, can be taken with an

English guide.

Another jog off the path of La Rambla will bring you to the Barcelona Cathedral to see the lavish choir stalls, the cloister graced with a fountain and roaming geese, and the view from the roof top.

Returning to La Rambla and walking to the end, Port Vell makes way for L'Acquarium, Europe's largest aquarium, equipped with an underwater tunnel.

Castell de Montjuic

Sometime during a stay in Barcelona, time should be made to take the aerial cable car (8,30 euro roundtrip) up to Montjuic.

The Castell de Montjuic offers spectacular views of the city and the port where cargo and cruise ships come and go.

Close by, the 1992 Olympic stadium can be found as well as manicured botanical gardens.

No visit to Montjuic is complete without spending a considerable amount of time going through the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya which houses amazing Romanesque painted interiors of churches from the 11th and 12th centuries specially transported to the museum for preservation.

The museum also displays masterful pieces of Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque art.

Parc de la Ciutadella

For a change of scenery, a visit to the Parc de la Ciutadella shows off its grand entrance of the Arc de Triomf.

Inside can be found a cascading fountain and a zoo with an enormous adventure playground where children can run wild.

On the south and east sides of the park, Barceloneta and Port Olímpic boast clean, sandy beaches and nearby there is a 15-screen movie theater with cheap tickets for films shown in their original language.

To top off a spectacular trip to Barcelona, a sampling of the tasty churros con chocolate for breakfast—crispy fried dough dipped in thick hot chocolate—and the wide selection of seafood dishes for dinner will leave a taste in your mouth for more of Spain in the future.



Visitors will find a place to relax at Parc de la Ciutadella (above). Barcelona offers travelers beautiful architecture, and grand history throughout the city. The hospital (below) makes a statement with its grand entrance and cross.



The magnificent Sagrada Familia (right), which is still under construction today, boasts the imagination of Antoni Gaudi. Construction is expected to be completed in 2030.



La Pedrera (left), with its bizarre and magical rooftop features a crafted attic, museum, and Modernista rooms.

Photos by Dan Wilson

Diet, lifestyle lead to significant health risks in obese children



by Pfc. GREGORY SOREL
U.S. Army Health Clinic Schweinfurt

According to the World Heart Federation, about one in ten children from the ages of five to seventeen are overweight.

Children all over the world are becoming less active and consuming more calories.

The health risks are significant. Atherosclerosis is characterized by the clogging of the arteries and that it is a risk factor for heart disease and even stroke.

Another risk is obstructive sleep apnea- the child will experience episodes where they actually stop breathing while they sleep.

OSA is also a significant risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

Alarmingly, more children are developing type-two diabetes, which is characterized as non insulin dependent, while type-one is insulin dependent.

Diabetes can be managed through exercise and eating right. Diabetes

is also a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

Obese children are three times more likely to develop CVD, which accounts for 50 percent of all fatalities in people with diabetes.

One reason for the trend in children becoming obese is the consumption of energy-dense foods that most often come from fast food restaurants.

A big kid's meal at Burger King consisting of a double cheeseburger, small fries and 1% milk has approximately nine hundred twenty calories and 44.5 grams of fat.

Fast food companies are also pretty smart at getting the attention of our children. They know kids are watching a lot of TV.

That exposes children to approximately fifteen to twenty minutes of commercials in just one hour. About thirty-four percent of those ads are for fast food.

Take a step in the right direction to getting your child healthy. Limit how long children play video games, work

on the computer or watch TV.

The American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend any "screen time" for kids under the ages of two, and thereafter children should only have time for about an hour a day.

Children can exercise during the commercials. They can do jumping jacks, sit-up, push-ups or even simple stretching.

It's a fun way to incorporate activity and prevent them from running to the kitchen to get snacks.

Encourage physical activity by getting them into after school activities like sports, such as basketball, soccer or even flag football.

Americans need to take an active role in reversing the trend towards overweight and obese children.

To do this, we as adults must lead the way by improving our own eating habits and helping our children maintain active, healthy lifestyles.

For more information, go to www.worldheart.org, and www.aap.org.



The World Health Federation reports one in 10 children suffer from childhood obesity.

Vilseck Health Clinic pediatrician Dr. Renata Lukezic will be discussing childhood obesity live on the AFN morning show tomorrow from 8-10 a.m.

Courtesy Photo

Genital human papillomavirus common, carriers may not show signs, symptoms

Special to the Bavarian News

Genital human papillomavirus is the most common sexually transmitted infection.

The virus infects the skin and mucous membranes.

There are more than 40 HPV types that can infect the genital areas of men and women. HPV is passed from one person to another when their skin touches.

The risks

HPV types are often referred to as "low-risk" (wart-causing) or "high-risk" (cancer-causing), based on whether they put a person at risk for cancer.

In 90% of cases, the body's immune system clears the HPV infection naturally within two years.

Most people show no signs of an HPV infection, but others may have genital warts, which usually appear as small bumps or groups of bumps, most commonly in the genital area.

They can be raised or flat, single or multiple, small or large, and sometimes cauliflower shaped. They can appear on the vulva, in or around the vagina or anus, on the cervix, and on the penis, scrotum, groin, or thigh.

Warts may appear within weeks or months after sexual contact with an infected person. Or, they may not appear at all.

If left untreated, genital warts may go away, remain unchanged, or increase in size or number. They will not turn into cancer.

Cervical cancer does not have symptoms until it is in advanced stages.

Nearly 75% of Americans contract some

Nearly 75 percent of Americans contract some type of HPV in their lifetime. Anyone who has any kind of sexual contact with another person infected with HPV can become infected; actual intercourse isn't necessary.

type of HPV in their lifetime. Anyone who has any kind of sexual contact with another person infected with HPV can become infected; actual intercourse isn't necessary.

Many people with HPV do not show any signs or symptoms, and they may spread the disease without being aware they are doing so.

HPV vaccine

The latest news in women's health is the recently available Human Papilloma Virus vaccine.

Like other vaccines, the HPV vaccine works to prevent illness. The earlier in life a woman is vaccinated, the higher chance of prevention against the types of HPV which cause 70% of cervical cancers as well as genital warts.

To receive the vaccine's full benefit, females should be vaccinated before they become sexually active.

The vaccine, given in a series of three doses over six months, is recommended for females between the ages of 9 and 26 years old.

How can women receive the shot?

Contact your local Bavaria MEDDAC immunization clinic.

Screening necessary

While being vaccinated helps prevent against genital warts and cervical cancer, it is not intended to take the place of regular cervical cancer screenings.

Cervical cancer does not have symptoms until it is in advanced stages, making regular screening essential. Getting a regular Pap test from your health care provider is a crucial part of staying healthy as a woman.

Pap tests look for abnormal cells in the lining of the cervix before they have a chance to become precancerous or cervical cancer.

Because most women are diagnosed with HPV through Pap tests, an abnormal Pap test result could be due to HPV infection.

Pap testing is a great screening tool that helps identify an abnormality before it becomes a cancer.

If your pap test is abnormal, your provider will recommend another pap test or a colposcopy-a procedure done in the office that allows your health care provider to take a closer look at your cervix.

In some cases, during a colposcopy your

provider may take tissue samples know as a biopsy.

Your health care provider will develop a treatment plan with you based on the results of the colposcopy.

Treatments

There's no cure for HPV infection.

In most cases, your immune system rids your body of the virus, and warts often go away without treatment.

A number of treatments are available to remove warts. These treatments appear to reduce the concentration of HPV, but they don't eliminate the virus.

For example, even though you may have genital warts removed, you can still transmit HPV to a sexual partner.

Treatments for genital warts include: prescription medications applied as a cream that may enhance your immune system's ability to fight HPV and destroy the warts, a chemical treatment that burns off genital warts, freezing with liquid nitrogen, electrical therapy, surgical removal, or laser surgery.

There are a variety of treatments for abnormal cells on your pap test, and your doctor will decide with you the most appropriate treatment.

Treatments may include: cryotherapy, electrocautery, surgical removal, laser surgery.

Where to get help

For more information and to schedule an appointment, please contact your local Bavaria MEDDAC health clinic.

Information for this article was gathered at www.cdc.gov, www.ashastd.org, www.womenshealth.gov, and www.mayoclinic.com.

Spc. James Dick, a Vilseck Warrior Transition Unit Soldier, talks to a job recruiter from General Dynamics during the AUSA Stuttgart Job Fair Jan. 17. The WTU and Soldier Family Assistance Center in Vilseck partnered with AUSA Stuttgart to bring 17 Soldiers and spouses to the event. Look for the full story in the Feb. 11 issue of Bavarian News.



Photo by Anne Torphy

Vilseck Health Clinic News

Due to renovations at the Vilseck Health Clinic Annex Bldg 225, service locations have changed:

- Tri-Care Service Center has moved to building 168 (near the WTU buildings).

- Walk-in hours are Monday and Tuesday from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., Wednesday and Friday from 8 to 11 a.m., and Thursday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information, call DSN 476-2000/3323, CIV 09662-83-2000/3323.

- Tri-Care Enrollment is located in the main Vilseck Health Clinic, Bldg 250, and sees patients on a "walk-in" basis.

- Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Optometry, Community Health Nursing, and MEB services are now located in a modular building behind Bldg 225. Contact numbers remain the same for each service.

For more info, call DSN 476-3322, CIV 09662-83-3322.

Griffins welcome new leader

■ Doerer takes command reins from Edens

by Pfc. SONJA McNAIR
12th CAB PAO

Col. Robert C. Doerer took command of U.S. Army Europe's 12th Combat Aviation Brigade, known as the Griffin Brigade, in a change-of-command ceremony Jan. 9 at Katterbach Army Airfield.

Doerer assumed command from Col. Timothy J. Edens, who served as Commander of 12th CAB for just over 3 1/2 years.

"Please know if you wore or wear the Griffin patch, or worked for U.S. Army Garrison Ansbach's medical clinics or dental clinics, outstanding aviation and ground maintenance contractor teams and all the civilian agencies on Katterbach and Storck Barracks, you were and are a part of the greatest unit and command I have had the privilege to be a member of," said Edens.

The 12th CAB recently returned from a 15-month deployment, organized as Task Force XII, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Task Force XII served at Joint Base Balad, Iraq as the Corps Aviation Brigade under Multi-National Corps-Iraq. Units assigned to the brigade worked in all six multi-national divisions.

"The spirit of teamwork and the feeling of family forged over my time here, highlighted while we were in Iraq, is something I am very proud of and for which I will always be thankful," said Edens.

For his service as commander, Edens was awarded the Legion of Merit, presented by USAREUR Commanding General, Gen. Carter Ham.

Doerer comes from the U.S. Army's Human Resources Command where he served as branch chief for aviation officers. His career began in 1985 when he was commissioned an Aviation Officer upon graduation from the United States Military Academy.

"My goal, first and foremost, is to continue on where Colonel Tim Edens has left off and to continue to support the unit, the Soldiers and the Families," said Doerer.

The new commander summarized his goals during the ceremony, "We will continue on with the great tradition this command has upheld thus far to get ready for our next mission."



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

Outgoing 12th Combat Aviation Brigade Commander, Col. Timothy Edens expresses his gratitude to his wife, Leslie, at a change of command ceremony Jan. 9. Edens led the Griffin Brigade for more than 3.5 years, and recently returned from a combat tour with the unit in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Renovated PX an answer to customer needs, brand new facility on the drawing board

by RONALD H. TOLAND Jr.
Bavarian News

More space, more products, easier access, and shorter checkout lines!

These are just some of the improvements the Katterbach Post Exchange spotlighted Jan. 15 during a grand opening celebration on Bismarck Kaserne.

The improvements got a thumbs up from many of the hundreds of community members in attendance to take advantage of the promotional sales and get a first glimpse at the improved facility, said Lisa Avallone, Katterbach's AAFES store manager.

"Because Ansbach is an enduring base, we need to be here for the customer and the facility was not sufficient," she said. "With the troop units we have here, there are more families and less options for them to shop—the closest place was Graf and that is two hours away."

Most in the community would agree that it was definitely time for an upgrade.

"The community here deserved a better PX—they needed something where they could access it easily," Avallone said. "Our wounded warriors had issues getting up stairs, and also expectant mothers and those with children. The remodeling has made it much easier for everyone to get in and get out."

Most people at the grand opening were pleased with the improvements, and impressed Avallone and company could even set early for Valentines.

"I know it is early, but we are set up for that," she said. "I was able to bring

in some specials: Nachtmann crystal to supplement my giftware section, Fossil handbags for the ladies, and I am bringing in newer updated equipment—newer models—to the Power Zone in the coming months."

Avallone also invited everyone to check out one specific section.

"Our shoe department is finally complete—which is huge. We are able to stock more shoe varieties. It is not as big as Graf's, but it is a nice size though," she said.

"Many of the items that were brought at meetings (with community members) have been added. We have brought in several different lines, so it is larger all the way around—the children's department, by volume; men's, souvenir section, plus a larger sports and outdoor section for men and women," she said.

But she noted that there is one area that benefits all her customers.

"The entire store has expanded in size more than half of what it was before—about 200 square feet, added to what we had before."

Avallone stated that even with the expanded store space, the idea is not to stockpile items in the warehouse, but to get the items to the floor immediately for the customer.

"What comes in we try and get straight to the floor—and keep it that way; not run out before the next delivery comes in, and to reduce the lead time or delivery gap that we had before, but that will come with time as we settle in more," she said.

And the improvements feature another crowd pleaser—speedier

checkout lines.

"We now have four registers, one of which is strictly customer service—school lunches, Esso card charging, refunds. That, we did not have before. That frees up the other three registers for regular checkout, which helps with the speed—10 minutes versus 20, and sometimes even five minutes versus 10," said Avallone.

And all that is a definite plus for shoppers.

"They have the store a lot more organized and it looks a lot nicer," said shopper Charity Johns. "The selections are also a lot better—more feminine attire that women need; socks for women and men."

For shopper Susan Squires, the expansion may mean less trips to Grafenwoehr.

"I like the layout better, but mostly I shop for my daughter," said Squires. "Normally we go to Graf to get clothes for her, but now they actually have something here for her. I think from now on I'll look here first."

With the new and expanded product selections, customers can expect the same quality, and with more staff, increased services in the future.

When the store is fully staffed, checkout times will be even better, and AAFES always needs extra staff, Avallone said.

But these renovations to the PX don't mean AAFES will be resting on its laurels at Ansbach.

AAFES is looking at spring and summer community engagement support promotions—donation of a cake for the upcoming AFAP meeting, Feb. 9-11 (see related article at right), in June a Furniture Expo at Storck Barracks, and a July 4 fashion show with Youth Services.

Further down the road, Avallone and AAFES look forward to the brand new store to be constructed at Urlas and "we have put in a plug for a new gas station—a much larger one with about five to 10 pumps, with the Class Six and Shoppette all in one area to make it easier [for customers] at Urlas."

Overall, Avallone was pleased that the renovation project went well during this time.

"The community has been very patient with us; we worked as fast as we could with as little inconvenience to the community as possible. There are still a few areas to smooth out, but we were able to stay open the entire time and the community was very supportive."

AFAP conference helping find a 'fix' for your problems

by RONALD H. TOLAND Jr.
Bavarian News

You sounded off and now Army Family Action Plan officials are working your issues.

Ansbach's annual AFAP conference kicks off Feb. 9 and will run through Feb. 11.

The event will feature a community delegate board, consisting of about 13 members, who have collected over 100 concerns and will go to work finding solutions, said Heather Lammers, Army Community Service program manager for mobilization and deployment.

"The idea behind AFAP is the opportunity for our Soldiers, family members, and civilians who work for the Army to speak directly to their commander," Lammers said.

"It is the opportunity for people to come together as a community, work out the issues the community is having, determine which of the issues are of major importance—that affect total Army living—and then come up with solutions that can be presented to command to be able to fix on a local garrison level and a total Army of living issue as well," she said.

AFAP has been collecting the community's issues for some months now and will continue to do so up until the start of the conference.

"It may be something local that only affects the garrison and can be fixed here, or may be something that affects the total Army and needs to be sent up to headquarters to be fixed—like a policy or regulation issue which has to be changed from there," she said.

AFAP is not the ICE program, and Lammers notes that these topics affect quality of living—child care usually being a big one—and are usually widely varied.

"A big one right now is computers," she said. "Are there enough computers available for people to do their work?"

In addition to computers, Lammers lists a few others that have been issues before, like the size of the AAFES facilities and unavailability of clothes.

Others issues include community services and categories that have Army-wide impact, like how reintegration is conducted, an issue that has surfaced during previous conferences.

"While there are local pieces to reintegration, there are mandates that

are coming out of the Department of the Army—so that would be something that needs to be forwarded up to headquarters," she said, adding that local issues can become Department of the Army issues.

But submissions are not limited to just Soldiers and family members.

"This is a process for everybody in the community," said Lammers. "From your private, family member, retiree, civilian—all the way up to your senior enlisted and commander. Anybody can write an issue."

"AFAP ensures community members are receiving the quality of life they deserve as they work for the Army and as they move from base to base," said Lammers.

She explained and listed some examples of regulations and policies that govern what is done and how people live, and the impact and importance those policies and regulations have on people, i.e., the way the garrison runs, the way the garrison is situated and how it meets the needs of its members.

"If you have a better quality of life, then there will be a better sense of mission readiness, and if you do have a good quality of life, members will more likely be retained," said Lammers.

As a results-driven community, Lammers said the delegates will hash out the concerns and make the changes happen for the community.

"It shows that the garrison cares about its members, will take action and will make things better—do what needs to be done to take care of the community."

And because they care, AFAP delegates are allowing a special group to attend this cycle.

"There is a whole day dedicated to the teens this year, so they have a say in their community as well," said Lammers.

"They will be represented by teen delegates from the schools and the teen community. They have issues too—which are a completely different set of issues, but they are a part of the process as well."

AFAP is a conference for you to be empowered to present your concerns to the command, Lammers said.

"It does not matter your age, station, or whatever—as long as you have an affiliation with the military, AFAP is a program and a conference for you," she said. "It's all about Army family living, Army community living and about making it a better place for everybody."



Courtesy photo

(From left) USAG Ansbach AAFES Facility Manager Lisa Avallone, AAFES General Manager Matt Mennona, and Ansbach Garrison Commander Col. Christopher Hickey, with the help of a young community member celebrated the newly renovated Katterbach PX during a ribbon cutting ceremony Jan. 15.

Online school survey hopes to enrich learning, address trends, concerns

by **MARK HEETER**
Schweinfurt CI Chief

The halls of learning around Schweinfurt, and around the world, for that matter, are looking for a few good comments.

Fourth- through 12th-graders and their sponsors are encouraged to complete the Department of Defense Education Activity 2008 customer satisfaction survey by Feb. 28.

"The purpose of the survey is to get some feedback from parents on programs, activities and issues, with the goal of trying to respond to those concerns that parents bring to our attention," said Dr. George Carpenter, Schweinfurt Middle School principal.

While sponsors and students are invited to fill out the survey online now, teachers will take a survey aimed at their feedback later.

As of Jan. 22, 85 percent of students at SES and 91 percent at SMS had completed the survey, while 46 percent of sponsors with SES and 42

percent with SMS had completed the survey, according to a progress report generated by the Bavaria District office.

"It's really an opportunity to hear the voice of all of our stakeholders," said Beverly Erdmann, SES assistant principal.

"It's an opportunity to get input as to what things are working and what things we can improve as a system."

DoDEA officials deeply analyze the responses and look for systematic issues that can be addressed, while also providing pinpoint feedback tailored to each school.

"When there's a trend, you can't really argue with that," Erdmann said.

Schweinfurt School officials are pulling out all the stops to make the online survey accessible to parents who are unable to complete it at home.

"If someone does not have a computer, they can come in any time, and we will make something available to them," Carpenter said, adding that

parents were able to complete the survey before, during, and after a recent band concert.

The survey opened shortly before the last parent-teacher conferences at SES.

"We opened up the lab and have the survey on the screen, so they (could) go straight to the lab and fill it out right then and there," Erdmann said.

Some teachers even set up computers in their classroom, she said. Parents are always welcome to come to the school for assistance with the survey, according to both principals.

The bottom line, according to Carpenter, is that survey results will help the schools and the entire DoDEA system meet their primary mission.

"We want (parents) to know that the only reason we are here is to provide an education for their kids," he said.

The DoDEA customer satisfaction survey is available at www.dodea.edu/home/index.cfm.

Sponsors should complete one survey per child.



Photo by Jennifer Evetts

Sixth-grade teacher Dan Wilson works the computer-projector while his students dissect cells at Schweinfurt Middle School, where students and sponsors are urged to take part in the annual customer satisfaction survey.

Unique hobby prepares SMS student for geography bee

Story and photo by
SANDRA WILSON
Bavarian News

Mexico City is located on the site of Tenochtitlan, the island capital of what empire that was conquered by Spanish explorers in the 16th century?

Miguel Guevara won Schweinfurt Middle School's first National Geographic Society geography bee with the correct answer to this final question: the Aztec empire.

Ten SMS finalists, determined by scores on written geography tests, gathered in the cafeteria Jan. 8 for the competition.

Questions covered locations of natural animal habitats, sites of national parks and historical battles, zones of agriculture and weather, and more. Each contestant was given 15 seconds to answer their question.

The competition quickly dwindled to the final two competitors—both eighth-graders—Derek Luna and Guevara.

The two friends explained afterwards that they spend a considerable amount of time debating with each other about politics and various other topics.

"Politics interest me. I always join in if there's a political discussion," Guevara said, explaining how he hopes to someday pursue a career in

that field.

Guevara spent time taking online quizzes to increase his knowledge for the geography bee but overall said he didn't study much for this one.

"I've been to a lot of places, but I kind of pick it up in a lot of history books ... having the curious mind about it," Guevara said, adding that he does plan to study for the upcoming

competitions.

"He knows amazingly a lot about the world and historical things. That is his hobby," said Guevara's mother, Heide, who attended the competition.

"I was hoping for (him to win). Most of the questions were about the U.S., and actually, the U.S. is his weak side," she added.

As the winner of the school-wide contest, Guevara now competes with fourth- through eighth-graders throughout the Department of Defense Dependent Schools by written test.

The first-place winner from DoDDS and each U.S. state and territory will advance to the national championship in Washington, D.C., in May for a chance at the \$25,000 college scholarship.



From left, Kayree Files, Devin Propst, Robert Miska, Devin Peciak, and Miguel Guevara listen for the question from moderator Sara Maka (right) at the Schweinfurt Middle School geography bee Jan. 8. Guevara took first place in the competition.

SPELLING BEE

Can you spell winner? SES student captures title for third year in a row



Photo by Sandra Wilson

Heather Miska, fifth-grader, spells a word in the Schweinfurt Elementary School spelling bee contest Jan. 13. Out of 17 contestants, Miska took the win for the third year in a row after spelling "benefactor." Next, she will travel to Ramstein Air Base to compete in the European Bee March 14.

Program gives women the knowledge to tackle the ins and outs of automobiles

by **EMILY ATHENS**
Bavarian News

The stereotype remains: women and cars don't mix. The USAG Schweinfurt Auto Skills Center wants to help end the misconceptions by providing experienced mechanics, ready to answer questions and offer assistance to those in need.

Beginning this month, classes are available through the Auto Skills Spouse Awareness Program in an effort to educate the less-car-savvy individuals in all areas of vehicle maintenance.

"Since the Soldiers are deployed right now, we're going to do our best to support the spouses. That's going to be our main concentration," said Tom Woditsch, ASSAP program director.

Classes are free and open to all military ID cardholders. Tomorrow, learn how to prolong the life and reliability of your auto.

On Feb. 12, see how to safely use the tools in the Auto Skills Center for do-it-yourself maintenance.

Attend Feb. 26 and observe how airbags work and find out if your child is safely secured.

Classes are held at the Auto Skills Center on Conn Barracks at 2 p.m.

Furthermore, Woditsch hopes to conduct classes twice a month throughout the year, covering topics of equipment orientation, vehicle passive restraints, airbag regulations, and more.

"We're not going to fix their cars for them, but we're going to try to make them understand cars, so they become capable of fixing the cars themselves. Of course we're going to help them out, but this gives them more awareness," Woditsch said, adding that they will also teach about the dangers of vehicles and how to avoid future problems.

He explained that, not only will participants learn maintenance skills, but they will also be able to identify money saving techniques.

"Once they know a little about

it, they'll be able to tell whether a mechanic is telling the truth or lying to them and ripping them off. It will protect you against cheating car shops," Woditsch said.

“We’re not going to fix their cars for them, but we’re going to try to make them understand cars, so they become capable of fixing the cars themselves.”

Tom Woditsch
ASSAP program director

The classes begin with the basics giving step-by-step instructions that break the information down for those who possess little knowledge about auto care, he explained.

"One spouse who didn't know anything about cars came down, learned, and became a mechanic," Woditsch said, emphasizing that anyone eager to learn can do it.

"We're here to help and the more you apply yourself, the better the result," Woditsch added.

For more information, call CIV 09721-96-8224.

FRGs provide essential support for Soldiers, unit, family success

Story and photo by
EMILY ATHENS
Bavarian News

With the recent deployment of the 172nd Infantry Brigade (Separate), the Soldiers and families of the community have become even more of a priority.

A lot of that attention comes from the family readiness group, a command sponsored organization within a unit that has one goal in mind: support for Soldiers and families.

"The FRG is designed to meet the needs of Soldiers and especially their families.

"We provide activities and want to maintain the flow of information," said Nichole Fougner, 9th Engineer Battalion, Alpha Company FRG co-leader.

As a source of support, information, and assistance, FRGs strive to enhance the livelihood of all Soldiers and families continuously throughout the year.

Leaders of the group ensure needs of the family are met and concerns are addressed, Fougner explained.

"We hold many meetings and

fundraisers to keep our FRG active. That sense of family helps a lot," Fougner said.

Through successful FRGs, especially during deployments, family members can maintain readiness towards the Army mission by understanding the facts of the deployment.

As a result, this extra cushion of comfort and care stabilizes Soldiers and helps them focus on their mission at hand, giving them the emotional readiness to successfully complete that task.

To uphold support, monthly steering committee meetings are conducted where FRG leaders convene to discuss upcoming events and suggest ways to improve their

organization.

"People don't realize how much time and effort we put into (the FRG). It's all volunteer work. We do it for them," Fougner said.

And it doesn't stop there.

Gen. Carter Ham, commanding general of U.S. Army Europe, visited Schweinfurt Jan. 12 in an effort to "exploit success."

After enjoying a lunch with spouses

The FRG is designed to meet the needs of Soldiers and especially their families. We provide activities and want to maintain that flow of information to be a better Army.

Nichole Fougner
FRG co-leader



Gen. Carter Ham, commanding general of U.S. Army Europe, responds to comments made by the spouses at a luncheon held Jan. 12 in Schweinfurt.

of the Schweinfurt community, Ham opened up the floor for comments, questions, or concerns.

"We want to slowly but surely chip away at the stigma of seeking care. The spouses are the key to that," Ham said, emphasizing the need to constantly

provide care for Soldiers and families dealing with a deployment and to prevent anyone from getting lost in the shuffle.

"No matter if you are a single Soldier, or have a family, you will always be recognized by the FRG,"

Fougner said.

For more information about the FRG, contact your company FRG leader.

It's never too late to get involved and help improve the Army quality of life.

Program makes moving to Germany a SNAP

Story and photo by
EMILY ATHENS
Bavarian News

New members of the community can hit the ground running with the orientation program offered by Army Community Service.

Schweinfurt Newcomers Awareness Program is designed to familiarize new arrivals with the Schweinfurt community and surrounding areas.

"Especially with deployments, we want the spouses to feel comfortable within the community. We want to take out the fear," said Beate Williams, SNAPS program coordinator.

Open to all members of the community, SNAPS is a week-long program that provides speakers, tours, and coping strategies.

"I want to show them how to save, how to budget, where to get a VAT, how to get downtown, and where to shop," Williams said, naming only a few of the many topics she covers throughout the week.

More specifically, the program visits organizations around Ledward Barracks and learns how to sort trash, how to maneuver public transportation, where the off-post hospitals are if an emergency arises, and where to enjoy other



Beate Williams (front) introduces herself to the class on their first day of Schweinfurt Newcomers Awareness Program. SNAPS is available the first week of every month to ease the transition for those new to the community.

activities, such as the swimming pool and the animal park.

"We have all kinds of support networks. They need to know what kinds of services are available for them," Williams said.

The week concludes with a relaxing day trip to Wuerzburg for SNAPS students to learn how to utilize the train.

Newcomers can really benefit from the wide range of information they receive and it is a

great way to transition into a new community, Williams explained.

"Based on the agenda, we'll get a nice feel for the base and take a tour downtown. The class provides an addition you wouldn't normally get," said David Blakeman, who arrived Dec. 31, 2008, and attended the SNAPS classes.

As a result of the program, Williams hopes newcomers will be encouraged to get out of the house and explore their surroundings.

"People wait a lifetime to come to Europe. There are so many fun things to do, so take advantage," she said.

SNAPS classes are offered again starting Monday through Feb. 6 in the ACS classroom, bldg. 242.

For more information or to sign up, call ACS at 09721-96-6933. Free childcare is available on a first come, first serve basis by calling Child, Youth, and School Services at 09721-96-6517.

Savings plan leads to financial readiness for deployed Soldiers

by **EMILY ATHENS**
Bavarian News

As Soldiers deploy, many things start to add up on the to-do list.

Near the top of the list are finances, a major concern for numerous deploying Soldiers and their families.

One option to save the extra money accrued while downrange is to invest in the Savings Deposit Program.

Established by the Department of Defense, the SDP enables service members serving in a combat zone for more than 30 days to build their financial savings.

"This savings plan allows the service member and their families to save and earn a set interest rate while the Soldier is deployed," said Darryl Jones, financial readiness program manager for Army Community Service.

Soldiers are eligible to open an SDP account once they have scanned into a qualifying combat zone.

Once the SDP is activated, they can deposit all or part of their net pay each month into the account up to \$10,000. Any amount in the account over \$10,000 will not earn interest.

Interest is computed at the rate

of 10% annually and is compounded quarterly, Jones explained.

"Per annum pays out 2.5% every quarter. So your account will earn interest based on what amount you have in there each quarter," Jones said, emphasizing that the most anyone can earn off interest is \$1,000 and to earn the full interest amount, \$10,000 has to be in the account by the first quarter.

"This is a great opportunity to get a great interest rate that you can't get anywhere else. We have a lot of Soldiers out there who would like to make additional money so I think it's a good way to do that," said Steve

Kamau, internal control analyst of the 106th financial management company.

Service members may close their SDP accounts after returning from the combat zone.

Emergency withdrawals can occur during deployment, but must be authorized.

Requests for withdrawal can be made through the myPay system and is the easiest approach, explained Kamau, but other options are available. Service members can also submit requests by e-mail, fax, or mail.

"Every deployment we do briefings

to financially prepare the Soldiers and families," Kamau said, noting that they always strive to inform Soldiers and families of SDP at pre-deployment preps because of the program's guaranteed benefits.

"The benefits are the money is safe, guaranteed by the federal government. It is not subject to the hostile environment of today's stock market. It is a good way for the family members to start good savings patterns to save money," Jones said.

For more, call ACS at DSN 354-6751, or the finance office at DSN 354-1730.

SMA Preston: 'NCOs the glue that holds the Army together'

by J.D. LEIPOLD
Army News Service

The noncommissioned officer is the glue that has held the Army together over the last eight years said the Army's senior enlisted advisor.

During a presentation at the Pentagon Jan. 8, Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston discussed the contributions of the NCO to the Army mission and why the service has named 2009 the year of the NCO.

"This is an opportunity for us to showcase the contributions of the NCO corps," he said. "It's those noncommissioned officers out there every day who are not only winning the fight on the global war on terror, they're also the ones who directly influence their piece of the Army by being the first line supervisor for two or three Soldiers who they are responsible for. They're the ones who create command climate and train the Soldiers in their occupational specialties."

Preston told the audience of Soldiers and Army civilians that being an NCO was all about teaching from experience and that the two basic responsibilities of the NCO come from the NCO creed.

"It's accomplishment of the mission and the welfare of the Soldier," Preston said. "One of the principal ways an NCO looks after the welfare of his Soldiers is through training -- it's about being a subject matter expert. We want our young Soldiers to study, to train and be the best Soldiers they can be, because as they move up into positions of increased responsibility they will be responsible for teaching from a position of experience. It's the experience that allows our NCOs to be trainers."

During the year of the NCO, the Army will work toward enhancing education, fitness, leadership development and pride in service by implementing programs and policies that support growth of the NCO corps,

the sergeant major said. Additionally, the Army wants to recognize the leadership, professionalism, commitment and courage of the NCO through outreach events that are being planned throughout the Army.

With respect to education during the year of the NCO, the sergeant major said there were three pillars of learning for all Soldiers in the Army.

The first pillar of learning is institutional learning -- in the school house. The second pillar is that of operational experience -- the kind of learning that can only be learned in the field and by doing, Preston said.

"The third pillar is largely an untapped resource: self-development and self-study," Preston said. "One of the big initiatives coming out of this is the Army Career Tracker where we can begin to provide more guided and structured self-development initiatives. There are a lot of things out there we want our NCOs to be, know, and do to take them to a whole new level."



U.S. Army photo

The Career Tracker will identify a Soldier's path and their career track, mapping out specifically what they need to do to advance through the Army's ranks.

Preston said as Soldiers continue to develop and grow with their education, by the time they reach sergeant they've become very articulate, very smart and great spokespersons.



Courtesy of Fort Bliss Public Affairs

Secretary of the Army Pete Geren, U.S. Congressman Silvestre Reyes, Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. George W. Casey Jr., and Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston announce the Year of the Noncommissioned Officer during a press conference, Jan. 5, at the Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas.

Senior leaders kick off 'Year of the NCO' at Texas installation

Army News Service

The Army's most senior leaders officially kicked off the service's year-long focus on the noncommissioned officer corps during a media event at Fort Bliss, Texas, Jan. 5.

While at Fort Bliss, home of the Army's Sergeants Major Academy, Secretary of the Army Pete Geren, Chief of Staff of the Army George W. Casey Jr., and Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston revealed a letter the three had signed that announced the "Year of the NCO" -- year-long set of initiatives designed to focus on better developing the service's noncommissioned officer corps.

"With our effort -- the year of the NCO -- we have many things we want to accomplish," Geren said. "One is to just recognize the contributions that our NCOs make -- past and present -- and recognize them for internal and external audiences. We want to inform the country, inform the Congress, and also inform young people about what NCOs do for our Army and help them better understand what an exciting opportunity and a career the choice of being an NCO in the United States Army is."

The secretary also said the Army has planned to initiate programs over the course of the year to help improve the professional development of our NCO corps.

General Casey said the year-long recognition would focus on making enhancements to areas like NCO education, fitness and leadership. The

recognition is also meant to foster pride in service amongst NCOs and let the American public know what a "national asset" they have in the NCO Corps, the general said.

"We're taking this year and making it the Year of the Noncommissioned Officer, so we can recognize their courage, their commitment, their competence, and their contribution to this war," Casey said.

According to the Year of the NCO Web site, the Army will implement several education initiatives to include the Army Career Tracker pilot and Phase 1 of Structured and Guided Self Development. The Army will also launch the Warrior University Web site, including the "College of the American Soldier" and will begin transformation of the NCO Education System.

Additional education initiatives during the Year of the NCO include expanding the number of online colleges under Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Army Degrees, and digitizing the Learning Resource Center at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy.

"There is no doubt in my mind that our noncommissioned officer corps is the glue that holds this Army together and allows us to accomplish the impossible," said Casey. "We wouldn't be the Army we are today without our noncommissioned officer corps, and I would not be the officer I am today without the noncommissioned officers who trained and mentored me throughout the years."

We announce 2009 as the *Year of the NCO*. During this year, we will accelerate previously approved strategic NCO development initiatives that enhance training, education, capability, and utilization of our NCO Corps. We will showcase the NCO story for the Army and the American people to honor the sacrifices and celebrate the contributions of the NCO Corps, past and present.

Today's NCO operates autonomously, with confidence and competence. We empower and trust our NCOs like no other army in the world. In fact, many of the world's armies are looking at our NCO Corps as a model for their own as they recognize the vital roles NCOs play in our Army.

Our NCOs lead the way in education, in training, in discipline. They share their strength of character with every Soldier they lead, every officer they serve, and every civilian they support.

NCOs are the keepers of our standards. From the recruiting station to basic training to combat zones; civil affairs to medicine to logistics; natural disaster assistance to graveside attendance at Arlington; whether Active, Guard or Reserve, our NCOs take the lead. Hence the phrase, *Sergeant, take the lead!*

signed by Kenneth O. Preston, Sergeant Major of the Army; George W. Casey Jr., General, U.S. Army Chief of Staff; and Pete Geren, Secretary of the Army

Army chief of staff praises NCOs, says two more tough years ahead

by J.D. LEIPOLD
Army News Service

The Army's chief of staff said Jan. 14 that the Year of the NCO actually consolidates two decades worth of thanks to noncommissioned officers.

Gen. George W. Casey Jr. began his breakfast speech to members of the Association of the United States Army by reiterating that 2009 was the Year of the NCO, something that hadn't been recognized since 1989. Speaking at AUSA's Institute for Land Warfare breakfast in Arlington, Va., he said NCOs have been the glue that keeps the Army together, particularly since Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

He said the Army set out to show its appreciation this year to NCOs on three tracks - to recognize them for what they provide the Army and country; to inform the country about what a national asset it has, and to enhance what the Army can do for NCOs.

"When you go around the world and talk to different armies, they say they want to be like us, like our sergeants. I watched the Iraqi soldiers who were just mesmerized by what our sergeants are doing," Casey said. "We want to enhance what we are doing for the NCOs, so we have initiatives that we'll bring on line this year that will enhance how we develop our noncommissioned officers and enable them to gain even more skills."

After a round of applause for the NCOs at the breakfast, Casey told the 400-strong audience the Army still has two tough years

ahead, saying that he sees deployments and "committed strength going up slightly and staying up maybe until about the middle of (2010) when we start seeing a net reduction in deployed forces."

"That's going to put continued pressure on the force," he said, "so we're not out of the woods yet."

Casey said the Army has been "out of balance" since the summer of 2007 because the Army is deploying at an unsustainable rate. He explained that it is "unsustainable from the perspective of sustaining our Soldiers and families and developing the flexibility to do other things."

He added that while the Army has made progress over the last year and a half, there are still two tough years ahead for the service.

The Army is on track with recruiting and retention and expects to meet both goals by year end. Last year, he said, 290,000 men and women enlisted or re-enlisted in the Army, Guard and Reserve. "That's a staggering number," he said.

Casey also said the Army needs to increase the dwell time Soldiers have.

"As I've looked at this over the last 20 months or so ... it's become clearer and clearer to me that increasing the time Soldiers spend at home is the most important element to getting ourselves back in balance," he said. "Soldiers will need increasingly more time at home because of the cumulative effects of repeated deployments to get themselves back in balance."

Army's latest high-tech equipment tours Europe

by ANGELIKA LANTZ
21st Theater Sustainment
Command PAO

The next generation of Army gear and technology, including advanced weapons systems, communications equipment, clothing and other gear will be on display at several locations in Germany and in Vicenza, Italy in the coming weeks.

The exhibition is presented by the Army's Program Executive Office Soldier, the organization responsible for all equipment Soldiers wear or carry.

The equipment that will be on display includes:

- Interceptor Body Armor with Improved Outer Tactical Vest and associated plates
- The Advanced Combat Helmet with ballistic protective nape pad and helmet sensors
- The Electronic Data Manager, a light, portable, touch-screen "kneebord"

computer

- The Generation III Extended Cold Weather Clothing System
- Thermal Weapon Sights, Generation II
- Enhanced Night Vision Goggles and the Sniper Night Sight
- The XM25 25mm Counter Defilade Target Engagement System
- The Lightweight .50 Caliber Machine Gun
- The M26 12-Gauge Modular Accessory Shotgun System

The display will also feature a preview of the new Army Service Uniform, scheduled to arrive in military clothing sales stores by next summer.

PEO Soldier's objective is two-fold, according to information on the organization's Web site -- to develop the best gear and field it as quickly as possible. In the past

Soldiers were outfitted one piece of equipment at a time, with little or no regard to how individual pieces worked together.

PEO Soldier's mission is to look at Soldiers as systems and evaluate how each piece of equipment works together as part of an integrated system.

PEO Soldier officials use the Interceptor Body Armor to illustrate this concept.

Initially designed to be worn over the Army Combat Uniform, Soldier feedback indicated that wearing it over ACUs created bulk and produced heat stress.

As a result, PEO Soldier engineers helped create the long-sleeve Army Combat Shirt designed to reduce heat stress and increase comfort.

For more information on the Army PEO Soldier program, visit the organization's Web site at peosoldier.army.mil.

For information on the exhibits in Europe, contact Sgt. Maj. Lisa Hunter at lisa.hunter@eur.army.mil.

The exhibit is scheduled for the following locations:

Jan. 26-27: Kaiserslautern, Germany, Rhine Ordnance Barracks special events building (Bldg. 237), 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Jan. 31 to Feb. 1: Bamberg, Germany, Warner Barracks Freedom Fitness Facility, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Feb. 3 to 4: Vilseck, Germany, Rose Barracks PXtra Food Court (Bldg. V 2203), 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Feb. 9 to 10: Vicenza, Italy, Caserma Ederle, The Arena (Recreation Center), Second Floor, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.



U.S. Army photo

America's Army 3 to be released this year, offers realistic training, authentic weapons

Army News Service

Six years after the U.S. Army revolutionized military action games with the launch of the free personal computer game America's Army, the Army has announced the upcoming release of America's Army 3.

America's Army is the only free action game that delivers an authentic Army experience, officials said, by reflecting the training, technology, actions and career advancement of a Soldier within a unique exciting game experience.

AA3, which will be rated T for Teen by the Entertainment Software Rating Board, will be released later this year.

As with previous versions of America's Army, officials said AA3 will be constantly updated to include new features and missions and to highlight new technologies being incorporated in today's Army.

Using the state-of-the-art Unreal Engine 3, America's Army game developers brought the most popular trademark gameplay features from the previous versions to AA3.

Highlights include authentic weapons and technologies, realistic training and exciting gameplay missions.

More detailed interaction AA3 will provide players new insights into the Army and Soldiering while making the game easier to play, easier to install and easier to download, according to its producers.

"In AA3 we've taken all of the best features in AA2, incorporated feedback from the AA community and added the latest technology to develop a high-tech game that can be customized by the player to create a much more detailed interactive experience," said Michael Bode, executive producer of the America's Army game.

"One of our key design philosophies is to make the game easily accessible to a new player, while at the same time keeping a deeper layer of complexity for the more advanced players to discover and take advantage of."

AA3 highlights different aspects of the Army from Army Values and the Warrior Ethos to Army career opportunities and lifestyles both on and off duty.

Through their in-game characters, AA3 players will be able to experience the way Soldiers train, live, and advance in the Army.

AA3 players will also experience



Courtesy photo

A partial screen shot depicts an operating environment in the America's Army 3 game, to be released later this year.

different types of technologies and equipment used by the Army's high-tech Soldier.

Values integral to ROE Players are bound by Rules of Engagement, or ROE, and gain experience as they navigate challenges in team-based, multiplayer, force-on-force operations.

In the game, as in the Army, accomplishing missions requires teamwork and adherence to the seven Army Core Values.

In the game, a player's actions and demonstrated Army values will have consequences that are integral to success in gameplay and will affect a player's career progression.

"With AA3, we're taking military gaming to an all new level where every detail counts," said Col. Casey Wardynski, originator and director of the America's Army game project.

"We want our America's Army 3 players to have a greater understanding of the Army and its values. Our Soldiers are aspirational figures and our players are able to virtually experience many aspects of a Soldier's life from their training, to their missions, to the way the Army has influenced their lives."

As with the previous America's Army games, AA3's authenticity is second-to-none, Wardynski said.

The Army development team worked closely with subject-matter experts from across the Army to make sure that everything about the game is as realistic as possible.

Unreal Engine 3 delivers realism AA3 has more authentic military elements including training, technology, weapons, and audio than any other military game.

Built on Unreal Engine 3, AA3 delivers stunningly realistic environments, lighting effects, animations, and team-based experiences.

AA3 players will have persistent characters that they customize by embarking on career paths in which they advance by completing specialized training and accomplishing missions.

The evolution of the player's career follows the same progression as it would in the Army.

Players are rewarded at significant milestones, such as graduation from basic training or returning from a deployment, through pride moments -- vignettes represented visually as an achievement screen, movie or a slide show.

These pride moments transition the player from one state of training or character progression to another.

Initially, the core of the gameplay

focuses on an Infantry Soldier (11B military occupational specialty). Players can select from a variety of roles that the 11B performs such as Rifleman, Automatic Rifleman, Designated Marksman and Grenadier.

New specialties coming

The first additional MOS players can explore is 68W Health Care Specialist (Combat Medic) which will be added this summer.

Players who complete advanced individual training modules can take on new MOS roles that will affect gameplay.

For example, by completing medic training, players will be able to treat minor and major injuries in single-player training missions and render advanced medical aid in multi-player missions.

In subsequent game releases, players who complete Combat Engineer training will be able to assist in mission pre-planning, such as emplacing an obstacle to impede the mobility of enemy forces.

Training is a key element in the AA3 game just as it is in the Army, the game producers say. The game offers a variety of new training levels that will give players an advantage.

After completing basic training,

players can go to advanced training to increase their in-game skill level and progress in their Army career.

Success in the game earns players the privilege of taking specialized training. This specialized training allows players to unlock new abilities and gear, and to customize the gear they carry as well as their equipment layout.

As players advance, they will be able to 'cross-train' on many different MOSs available in today's Army.

Such players will be highly sought after - according to the game producers -- due to the capabilities they bring to multi-player missions.

Additionally, as a new feature, players will have the ability to join online games with limited capabilities using the "instant action" feature.

About America's Army

The Army creates and distributes America's Army so that young Americans can virtually explore Soldiering in the U.S. Army like Soldiers experience it - as individuals and as members of teams, the game producers said.

Through the game's virtual experiences, young Americans can explore the Army from basic training at Fort Benning, Ga., and medic training at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to operations in defense of freedom.

Along the way, they can join elite Army units and experience the strength of Army teamwork, values and technology within an engaging environment.

The game has become an online phenomenon, consistently ranking among the most popular PC action games played online.

The games are rated T for Teen and can be downloaded free from various partners listed on the www.americasarmy.com site.

They are also distributed at local Army Recruiting stations, ROTC Detachments and Army events.

The Army launched the first version America's Army in July of 2002, and has released major updates to the game every few months.

These releases feature new technologies, missions, Army units and occupations.

In keeping with the dynamic nature of Soldiering, the America's Army game will continue to expand and will allow players to explore the Army of today, tomorrow and the future, officials said.

Tigers put a good fight, fall behind Bamberg during Jan. 16 matchups

Story and photos by
KRISTIN BRADLEY
Bavarian News

The Hohenfels Tigers and Lady Tigers both put up a good fight against the Bamberg Barons and Lady Barons during back-to-back bouts at Hohenfels Jan. 16, but Bamberg squeaked past in both matchups.

The Lady Tigers managed to keep the score close throughout their game, ending just three points behind at the half and finishing with a final score of 29-34.

"Overall I think we played pretty well," said Joyce Dusenberry, Hohenfels head coach. "I am pleased with our boxing out and rebounding. But we missed a lot of layups. If we had made them we would have been

right in this game."

Bamberg coach Pete Streker commended his team on staying in their zones and not letting themselves be pulled out of place.

Top scorers for Hohenfels were Mandy LaVanway with 8 points, Tatiana Patterson with 8, and Artasia Hall with 6.

For Bamberg, Jenna Cepe led the game with 11 points. Teammate Olivia Cuba was close behind with 10. Streker also noted that Nichelle Rodriguez went in as a sub and scored 6 points for the Lady Barons.

The Tigers also managed to keep their tempo up against the Barons through the last moments of play in the last game of the night which ended with the Barons besting Hohenfels 75-60.

Bamberg coach Tim Smith said

Hohenfels' intensity definitely kept the heat up on his team.

"Sometimes since we had the lead we would lose the intensity and made some lackadaisical passes. They did a good job pressuring us."

Coach Kathlene Clemmons said her team pressed the ball well in the second half, but that their biggest downfall was boxing out and allowing Bamberg to get second shots.

"We need to work on defense," she said. "We don't have any height so we really need to work on our skills."

Top scorers for Hohenfels were Justin Battley with his game leading 31 points, Miguel Chestnut with 9, and James Robinson with 8.

For Bamberg, Joshua Robinson led his team with 18 points, Daniel Kieser scored 12, and Joshua Fletcher had 10.

(Right) Lady Tiger Tatiana Patterson tries to break through the Bamberg Lady Barons defense during a game Jan. 16 at Hohenfels. Bamberg ended up edging out Hohenfels 34-29.

(Far right) Bamberg's Quadel Webb tries to block Miguel Chestnut's attempt at a basket in the last few minutes of the Friday night game between the Barons and Tigers Jan. 16 at Hohenfels. Despite never-wavering intensity on the part of the Tigers, Bamberg ended ahead 75-60.



Schweinfurt now bigger than local league

Story and photo by **SANDRA WILSON**
Bavarian News

With the telltale banner hung in the gym, Schweinfurt youth basketball now has an added bonus for those involved with the sport. Through the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, youth basketball has been granted the sponsorship of the Jr. National Basketball Association and Women's National Basketball Association for the duration of the season here in Schweinfurt.

"We offer (the youth) the games, and now they just have another reason to be around and participate in the sport," said Derek Walker, assistant director of youth sports and fitness.

"It's not a money thing—it's being able to say that I'm part of something bigger than just the local league. 'I'm now part of the NBA. Somebody outside of Schweinfurt cares,'" said Daniel Jones, director of youth sports and fitness, explaining the significance of the new label.

Included in the membership, players get posters and a chance to practice with NBA drills as well as the opportunity to "learn a little bit more about the sport," Jones said. The benefit is not only to the players but also to the coaches, parents, and officials. Sponsorship also allows permission to use the official NBA Web site which provides a variety of education and guides for basketball.

"We're trying to take the military youth and get them more exposure to the national clubs and give them kind of a back-home feeling—not for

a lack of funding but for a lack of being able to take part in the stuff in the states. So we try to take these national programs and bring them over here," Jones said.

Outside of the United States, only 65 leagues

are recognized under the Jr. NBA/WNBA title, according to the official Web site. Membership is provided free to qualified recreational youth basketball leagues. The aim of the organization is to emphasize fundamental skill

development, teamwork, and sportsmanship within participating leagues.

"This is outside the scope of what we normally do," Jones said, explaining how the youth sports staff takes extra time to seek out opportunities, such as this one, and send in applications to various organizations for consideration.

Schweinfurt's geographic location makes it impossible for youth to participate in stateside activities, so the youth sports staff has found other ways to get affiliated with big name sports.

"I can't take the kids to professional basketball NBA games; I can't take them to a baseball game; I can't take them to a football game—but, you know, I can bring ... the materials. It's stuff that you can't walk into the PX and get. This came from the NBA to these kids," he said.

In the past, youth sports has gotten sponsorship and donations from Major League Baseball as well as the National Football League.

"Now with the NBA, it's a full circle," Jones said.

In honor of the Jr. NBA/WNBA title, youth sports offers a triple play tournament Feb. 28 for their basketball teams.



Kindergartener Angel Costilla prepares to pass the ball as first-grader Robert Angulo anchors himself in a blocking position at the PeeWee youth sports basketball game Friday in Ledward Gym.

Beer for troops in Baghdad this Super Bowl? Two's the limit for some

by **JAMES WARDEN**
Stars & Stripes, Mideast Edition

Units that fall under Multi-National Division-Baghdad will likely be the only troops enjoying a beer in Iraq during this year's Super Bowl.

Other divisions do not plan to allow their service members to partake, officials have said in recent days.

MND-B has received permission to allow service members to enjoy

two beers in military dining facilities during the NFL title game Feb. 1 in Tampa.

The Baghdad festivities will be a temporary exception to General Order No. 1, which bans the consumption of alcohol in Iraq, among other things.

But other divisions and commands say they are not following suit.

Joint Base Balad does not plan to allow beer in its DFACs, said Capt. Lindsey Hahn, a spokeswoman for the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing.

Multi-National Division-Center, which is responsible for areas in and around Baghdad, is not considering an exception to the order either, said Maj. Daniel Elliott, a division spokesman.

The alcohol ban will apply to all MND-C service members—including personnel stationed at bases within MND-B's geographic area, such as the Victory Base Complex.

"They are to continue doing a great job completing their mission while remaining in compliance with GO 1,"

Elliott wrote in an e-mail response.

General Order No. 1 has banned U.S. forces from drinking alcohol in Iraq since troops deployed to the Middle East.

There has been at least one previous instance in which units could drink in Iraq, military officials said, but it is not known exactly how many times this has been done in the past.

This Super Bowl will be a strictly controlled exception to the longstanding policy, Baghdad division

officials have said. Troops will be limited to two drinks, and the beer must be consumed in the dining facility where Soldiers can watch the game.

MND-B stressed that it is always on duty and vigilant, and that it never relaxes its posture.

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Wuerzburg closure is end of an era

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U.S. Army Garrison Schweinfurt commander, was responsible for carrying Leighton Barracks across the finish line.

"On behalf of those who have called Wuerzburg home, thank you for the unwavering friendship and partnership and dedication," Haager said, addressing the crowd, which included Dr. Paul Beinhofer, president of Lower Franconia, and Wuerzburg Lord Mayor Georg Rosenthal.

Haager also thanked the many workers – several of whom were among the attendees – who kept the community going for so many years.

Wuerzburg came under the control of U.S. occupational forces April 7, 1945, with GIs taking control of the hospital the next day, according to Beinhofer, who reflected on the importance of the American military presence in Wuerzburg and Germany.

"With the retreat of the Stars and Stripes – the American flag – today, a long era, more than 60 years of the U.S. Army here in Wuerzburg, is ending," Beinhofer said.

"The U.S. Army freed this land from the

Nazi regime. The United States also, through the Marshall Plan, massively supported its rebuilding," Beinhofer said. "For that, (Lt.) Col. Haager, we are thankful, and will not forget this."

The First Infantry Division called Wuerzburg home from 1945 to 1955 and returned its "Big Red One" colors to Leighton Barracks in 1996, remaining until the summer of 2006. The "Rock of the Marne," the Third Infantry Division, was headquartered there from 1958 to 1996.

Beinhofer, switching at the close of his remarks to English and speaking directly to Haager, seemed to address the many thousands of Soldiers, families and civilians who called Wuerzburg home.

"You are welcome in Lower Franconia, you know that. We are and will be friends now and in the future. God bless you," he said.

So the time had come.

Soldiers from the 15th Engineer Battalion, the newest unit in the Schweinfurt military community, lowered the American flag for the final time over an installation with one of the longest histories in the German-American partnership.



A flag detail of Soldiers from the 15th Engineer Battalion lowers the flag over Leighton Barracks in Wuerzburg for the final time, Jan. 14.

Pet owners encouraged to be considerate, act responsibly

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admitted that on occasion military families opt to abandon their pets instead of spending the time and resources necessary to transport them back to the United States, but Burkhardt is adamant that after a decade and a half of close contact with U.S. families and their pets, he's certain the abandonment issue is the exception, not the rule.

Some community members may disagree after the most recent high profile case in which an American family living in Grafenwoehr is said to have left their dog tied up outside while they went on a three-week Christmas vacation to Puerto Rico.

Burkhardt said he is aware of the case, but "I have American friends and customers who give their pets all the love they have to give, and all the money it takes to keep the animals healthy, and all the time it takes to care for the animal.

"I have been a vet for 14 years in Amberg and have frequently dealt with Americans and their pets, several per day or week," he said, "and I really don't think this was normal behavior."

Whether or not the behavior was normal, most local animal shelter workers agree on one thing—they do not typically allow Americans to adopt their animals.

The reason? Because the animals they adopt end right back up at the shelter, according to Roswitha Geiger of the Amberg Tierheim (animal shelter).

Geiger agrees with Burkhardt, saying that most of the time when Americans bring pets to Germany, they transport them back home with them. But for those who adopt animals here, she feels there may be a higher risk of leaving the animals behind.

One can only guess at the reason for this behavior, said Burkhardt, noting a possible lack of finances, prior planning, sense of responsibility, and education about taking care of a pet as the culprits for this behavior.

German animal shelters are funded by taxpayers. Concern has been raised locally that

if the animal shelters become overrun with dogs due to pet abandonment by American citizens, local taxpayers would be funding a service (the sheltered pet's food, board, medical care) for residents who are not bearing any of the financial burden for the services.

"The county has been concerned over the possibility that so many abandoned animals from the U.S. community will end up at the shelter and pose an unnecessary hardship on the facilities," said U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr Community Relations Officer Franz Zeilmann.

Zeilmann also noted that with an approximate population of 25,000 U.S. citizens in the area, if only one percent are irresponsible pet owners and abandon their animals, that amounts to 250 abandoned pets—still a significant number—and all of the difficulties that go with it.

Helping to alleviate some of the burden, Grafenwoehr Elementary School's student council donated to a local shelter more than 300 items, including food, treats, and a cat climbing structure Dec. 18.

But for the time being, Burkhardt said area shelters are not overrun and "most people in Germany are not talking about the money it costs to take care of an animal."

The larger problem, he said, is the lack of discipline and training that many of the sheltered animals display.

"They don't know how to sit (and follow simple commands) when you tell them," he said. "Many of them sleep in cages and are at home alone all day and do not know how to behave with other dogs and people, and that contributes to the bad behavior and training. That's really the problem, I think, more of a problem than the money it costs to shelter and care for the

animal.

Pets in German shelters are not euthanized, and many stay in shelters for long periods of time, even years, before being adopted. Animals tend to be well cared by German citizens, even to the extent that well behaved pets are

allowed to accompany their owners into restaurants and stores. This strong national compassion for their four-legged friends provides a wealth of volunteers who help feed and walk the dogs in the local shelters, but "a dog doesn't belong in a tierheim," said Burkhardt. "He belongs in a family. In nature, dogs socialize in packs. In homes, they socialize with their human family. They love to live with people."

The solution, said Burkhardt, is for potential pet owners to think long and hard before adopting.

"They must learn about raising a dog, decide if they will want to take care of the dog (long-term). They need to talk to people who own dogs and to veterinarians, and ask where the vets are located, think of the cost of food and time," he said. "Think a lot about the long hours that a dog might be left at home alone. Ask yourself if you have enough time to walk them every day."

Another possible solution, said Geiger, is to include a pet checklist as part of the family's out-processing. In other words, she said, "If a family arrives with a pet and it is noted during in-processing, the family should be asked during out-processing if they still have that same pet, and there should be someone to track it."

Geiger also asked individuals to bring the animals to the tierheim before abandoning them.

"Regardless," she said, "we will accept them."

With 25,000 U.S. citizens in the area, if only one percent abandon their animals, that amounts to 250 abandoned pets.

Franz Zeilmann
USAG Graf Community Relations



Photo by Franz Zeilmann

The Grafenwoehr Elementary student council collected and donated over 300 items to the Weiden Tierheim (animal shelter) Dec. 18 during the school's S.T.A.R. Assembly. Weiden Tierheim Director Frau Jutta Boehm (center) accepted the donations. She said the food, treats, and cat climbing structure would ensure the animals have a happy holiday season. The student council started this community service project in November and collected the donations in one month, showing just how many S.T.A.R.'s (Safe, Try their best, Act responsibly and Respect others and things) there are in Grafenwoehr Elementary School.

Highlights of 2008 Tax Law Changes

The 2008 tax law changes include:

- The Recovery Rebate Credit is a one-time benefit for people who did not receive the Economic Stimulus Payment in 2008 or for those whose circumstances have changed making them eligible now for some or the entire unpaid portion (for instance a child was born). Taxpayers will be asked to enter the amount received on their tax returns. The Economic Stimulus Payment received is not taxable on the taxpayer's 2008 return but is used to calculate whether or not the taxpayer can receive the Recovery Rebate Credit and the amount of the credit. There is a link on www.irs.gov called "How much was my 2008 Stimulus Payment?" to find out how much the taxpayer received.
- The personal and dependency exemptions increased to \$3,500.
- The standard deduction has increased to \$10,900 for married filing joint and qualifying widowers, \$8,000 for heads of household, and \$5,450 for singles and married filing separate. An additional standard deduction was added this year based on state or local real-estate taxes paid in 2008. Taxes paid on foreign or business property do not count. A taxpayer may also increase his or her standard deduction by net disaster losses suffered from a federally declared disaster.
- Several expiring tax breaks were renewed for the 2008 tax year. These include:
 - The deduction for state and local taxes on Form 1040 Schedule A
 - The educator expense deduction on Form 1040 line 23 or Form 1040A line 16
 - The tuition and fees deduction on Form 8917 and
 - The District of Columbia first-time homebuyer credit on Form 8859
 - Residential energy-efficient property credit is extended through 2016. Use Form 5695 for properties that qualify.
- First Time Home Buyer Credit- for homes bought between April 9, 2008- June 30, 2009. A credit of up to \$7,500 is available but must be repaid each year as additional tax (works like a 15 year interest free loan). It is claimed on Form 5405. Income limits and other rules may apply.
- Tax Relief for Midwest Disaster Areas- special tax relief is available for those in portions of Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, and Wisconsin that were affected.
- The phase out limits for the Retirement Savings Credit increased.
- The standard mileage rates have been adjusted for 2008.
- Earned Income Tax Credit Amounts Increased.
- Taxes have been lowered for some investors. The five percent tax rate on qualified dividends and net capital gains is reduced to zero.
- The Kiddie tax has been revised to include students between the ages of 18 and 24 with investment income greater than \$1,800.