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Color Guard Duty an Honor for Sailors Page 4



La. Guardsmen Reflect on Efforts During Flood Response Pages 8 and 9



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THE Currents™

Vol. 27 No. 9

Serving the New Orleans Regional Military/DoD Communities

September 2016

25th Anniversary Celebration for VR-54

By Carey Mavor
For The Currents

Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VR) 54, also known as the Revelers, celebrated 25 years of service July 16 at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve (NAS JRB) New Orleans, in Belle Chasse, La. The squadron was established June 1, 1991 as the first Naval Air Reserve's C-130T Hercules Squadron.

More than 80 guests, including past and present members of VR-54 as well as family and friends, gathered in the squadron's hangar to celebrate this milestone in the squadron's history. The hangar was named after Navy retired Master Chief Aircraft Maintenceman James Rohlfing, the squadron's first command master chief. Guests included many plank owners, as well as the first commanding officer, Navy retired Capt. Charlie White. He spoke of starting the unit from scratch, including visits

to the Lockheed C-130T Hercules production line in Marietta, Ga., to observe the assembly of the first Navy Reserve C-130T.

Other memories included operating out of trailers until the squadron's hangar was finished in 1999. The backdrop of the event was the first Navy Reserve's C-130T, aircraft 762, "The Dixie Belle" and fittingly flown by VR-54 today. Tours of the C-130T were enjoyed by guests.

The current iteration of VR-54 builds on the history of the original VR-54 founded in 1972 and decommissioned in 1981. Originally based at NAS Atlanta with detachments to NAS New Orleans, the squadron operated the Douglas C-118B Liftmaster providing worldwide airlift for the active-duty fleet.

Today, VR-54 is staffed by 146 full-time support personnel as well as 81 selected reservists. The unit's four C-130T aircraft fly more than 4,000 hours annually, providing responsive, flexi-



Navy retired Capt. Charlie White speaks to a group at NAS JRB New Orleans, during a 25-year anniversary celebration for VR-54. White was the first commanding officer for the squadron.

Photo by YN2 Vanessa Gutierrez

ble and rapidly deployable air logistics support required to maintain combat operations at sea.

Two Changes of Command for MARFORRES

By Lance Cpl. Melissa Martens
Marine Forces Reserve

Force Headquarters Group (FHG) and 4th Marine Logistics Group (MLG), Marine Forces Reserve (MARFORRES), welcomed new commanders during change of command ceremonies held at the Federal City Auditorium, New Orleans, Aug. 13.

Brig. Gen. Helen Pratt relinquished command of FHG to Brig. Gen. Michael Fahey and assumed command of 4th MLG from Brig. Gen. Patrick Hermesmann.

While addressing the crowd, Pratt expressed gratitude for all of the support she has received throughout her time at FHG and her confidence in the work that Fahey will accomplish.

"It's been an honor to serve as the commander for Force Headquarters Group," said Pratt. "We couldn't have a better candidate to turn the command over to."

Fahey, who previously served as the commanding officer of Intelligence support Battalion from September 2013 to June 2015, and more recently as the deputy of operations in support of Operation Freedom Sen-



Brig. Gen. Helen Pratt (right), incoming commander of 4th Marine Logistics Group, receives the colors from Brig. Gen. Patrick Hermesmann, former commander of 4th MLG, during the change of command ceremony at the Federal City Auditorium, New Orleans, Aug. 13.

Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Melissa Martens

tinel, stated to those in attendance that he will strive to bring great things to FHG.

"I am very much looking forward to this opportunity

and I appreciate the support of everyone here today," said Fahey.

Change of Command, Page 10



Keith L. Magness

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From the Flightline

By Capt. Mark Sucato
NAS JRB Commanding Officer

In case you have not noticed, this is a presidential election year for our country. While the right to vote is recognized as a fundamental human right in the United States, this is not the case for millions of people around the world.

It only takes a few quick steps to make sure your vote is counted no matter where you are in the world. To register and request your ballots, go to FVAP.gov and complete the Federal Post Card Application. If you need any assistance please see the NAS JRB New Orleans Voting Assistance Officer, Lt. Cmdr. Stephen Simmons in Building 46, telephone number 504-678-9877. I encourage you to exercise your right to vote!

This year marks the 123rd anniversary of chief petty officers in our Navy. Unlike petty officer first class and below, advancement to chief petty officer not only carries requirements of time in service, superior evaluation scores and examinations, but also carries an added requirement of peer review. It is my great privilege to salute those NAS JRB New Orleans Sailors recently reviewed and selected for advancement to chief. Congratulations.

With summer's end, classes are back in session at Belle Chasse Academy and local schools. These changes significantly impact traffic flow on base and off, activating speed zones along Highway 23 and increasing



pedestrian traffic on base along Russell Avenue. I ask that you be on the lookout for young pedestrians and bicyclists. Speed can lead to unintended consequences and we should drive slowly, especially in school zones or near bus stops. Obey school crossing guards and stop for all school buses picking up and dropping off children. Parents should remind their children to walk, not ride bicycles, across crosswalks. Also, what occurs inside your vehicle has an impact on road safety. Remember that cell phone use while driving is not permitted on base and text messaging while driving is illegal. It's a safe bet to say that law enforcement, rightly so, will be closely monitoring traffic. Keep it safe!

As we all witnessed recently, it does not take a hurricane or tropical storm to wreak havoc that results in disastrous flooding and the sometimes nightmarish consequences. While viewing the water's rise from mid-to-western Louisiana on Aug. 12th I could not help but realize how fortunate we were. Hurricane season does not end until Nov. 30. We will not let our guard down!

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The next issue of The Currents will be published on Saturday, October 1, 2016. Questions concerning content for publication are heartily encouraged and must be received at the Public Affairs Office, Naval Air Station, Joint Reserve Base (NAS JRB), 400 Russell Ave., New Orleans, LA, 70143-5012, phone (504) 678-3260, by close of business on Friday, September 21, 2016.

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Naval Air Station JRB New Orleans
Capt. Mark Sucato
Commanding Officer



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Rendering Honors Remains Sailor's Duty

By Mass Communication Specialist
1st Class John Hulle
The Currents' Staff

It is a sweltering 104 degrees Fahrenheit with the heat index, as a trio of fighter jets taxi down the ramp of the flight line at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base (NAS JRB) New Orleans.

A crew of Sailors from airfield services spring into action. Pilots are directed where to park, planes are fueled and operations continue as normal.

It's hard, sweaty and often dirty work, but it's vital to the air station's mission: provide superior operational and training environments for active-duty and Reserve components from all branches of the armed services.

"We have coveralls that get pretty trashed especially when doing maintenance on the arresting gear," said Aviation Machinist's Mate Airman Christian Rossi.

Originally from Menifee, Calif., this 21-year-old takes the pride in his job. "Joining the Navy was the best decision I have ever made," he said.

With just as much zeal, sev-

eral days a week Rossi dons a dress uniform and to represent naval heritage and all the Sailors that came before him. He is part of the color guard detail at NAS JRB New Orleans; nineteen Sailors who sacrifice their free time, one of the most precious commodities a service member has, to represent the Navy during ceremonies, events and funerals across the state.

"It's an honor to do it. To stand and be the face for the base and the Navy is something I like to do," said Rossi.

"It's a tremendous amount of work. We are always on call," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 1st Class Josh Schmeck, airfield services acting leading chief petty officer and color guard coordinator. "The Sailors work all the time. It's a constant juggling act between normal duties, deployments and other responsibilities."

The color guard team is a group of Sailors from departments and commands around the base, from Rossi in airfield services, to Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Tyler Garlick assigned to Navy Operational Support Command New Orleans.

So far this year the color guard has supported more than 22 ceremonies and veterans functions. Schmeck said they always get a positive reaction; people are very happy and thankful. However the bulk of their work is augmenting Reserve Sailors with funeral details.

According to Hull Technician 2nd Class Bryant Curtis, funeral honors coordinator at NAS JRB New Orleans, there are as many as seven funeral details in one day. He said they usually support more than 50 a month. They often drive for three or more hours to funerals in Southeast Louisiana and Southwestern Mississippi. Curtis said it can be emotionally draining and exhausting, but "the veterans deserve that honor and so do their families."

"It's held to the same priority to base security and air operations. We take it very seriously," said Curtis. Rossi echoed that sentiment.

Curtis said his job helping honor fallen veterans is extremely personal. He lived his entire life in Baton Rouge before joining the Navy. "It's a lot of work, but it's worth it to give



AME3 Dylan Deryp, top photo, assigned to airfield services and HM2 Lemar Simmons, assigned to Naval Branch Health Medical Clinic Belle Chasse, practice flag folding at NAS JRB New Orleans Aug. 18. NAS JRB New Orleans Sailors that volunteer with the color guard and funeral honor detail practice weekly.

*Photos by
MCI John Hulle*

back not just to Navy veterans, but to the community where I grew up," he said.

"I am going to do this as long as I can. It's not something I do to put down for my annual eval-

uation. It's more than that. It's an amazing experience. I recommend anyone in the military to give it a shot. It's more than just standing in your whites," said Rossi.

Federal Employees - Get Ready for 2016 Life Insurance Open Season

The Currents' Staff

The Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FGLI) Open Season opened Sept. 1 and runs through the end of the month.

This is the first FGLI open season since 2004. Eligible employees can elect or increase any coverage FGLI offers, including Option C - Family. No medical exam is required and employees are not required to answer any health questions. However, elections made during the 2016 open season will be effective Oct. 1, 2017; a year later. Employees who do not make an election will keep their current life insurance coverage.

The easiest way for federal employees to make a life insurance election is to use EBIS, a self-service Web application. EBIS allows users to independently make an election without waiting for a customer service representative. Since the EBIS password expires every 60 days, users may need to reset it to make an election.

To access EBIS, employees must go through the Office of Civilian Human Resources (OCHR) private portal and must

use a government computer; have a ".mil, .edu or .gov" email address and a Department of Defense (DoD) Common Access Card (CAC). When prompted, select the email certificate.

Users must register when first accessing EBIS. Information about establishing an EBIS account name/ password and accessing EBIS is available here: <https://portal.secnav.navy.mil/orgs/MRA/DONHR/Benefits/Pages/EBIS.aspx>.

Employees may direct questions about the FGLI Open Season or accessing EBIS to the Benefits Line at (888) 320-2917 from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday - Friday, except on Federal holidays. The TTY number is (866) 359-5277. Employees may also email their questions to navybenefits@navy.mil. Employees must include their full name, pay plan, grade, and contact telephone number. Please do not include Privacy Act or other Personally Identifiable Information such as date of birth or Social Security number in your email correspondence.

For more information visit: <https://portal.secnav.navy.mil/orgs/MRA/DONHR/Benefits/Pages/FGLI-Open-Season.aspx>.



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Feds Feed Families Campaign Concludes, Helps Flood Victims

By Mass Communication Specialist
1st Class John Hulle
The Currents' Staff

Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base New Orleans finished the Feds Feed Families food drive campaign Aug. 31. The drive ran from June 1 through Aug. 31, and collected more than 9,000 pounds of food.

Feds Feed Families is a government-wide effort launched in 2009 as part of President Obama's United We Serve campaign. The program was designed to help food banks and pantries stay stocked during summer months when they traditionally see a decrease in donations and an increase in need. Since 2009 the food drive has collected nearly 57.2 million pounds of food for those in need. Last year alone, more than 17.9 million pounds were donated and provided to food banks and pantries.

Federal employees were asked to bring non-perishable food items and place them into a designated collection box located in their workplace or take them directly to a local food bank.

The religious ministry team at the NAS JRB New Orleans chapel ran the base's program with donations going to the Second Harvest Food Bank in New Orleans.

"The program is awesome. It is an opportunity to for us to help the community that

supports us. It's all about giving back," said Chief Religious Program Specialist Celeste Shield, leading chief petty officer for the base chapel and Feds Feed Families coordinator. "The food drive is flourishing. All of the tenant commands on base are really coming together. It's very rewarding and making a difference."

According to Second Harvest food bank, one in six households in Louisiana is at risk of hunger. Across the state and region, the rising cost of food, housing, and utilities, coupled with high unemployment and low-wage jobs have increased the need for emergency food assistance. They provide food to 582 partners and programs across 23 parishes. Together, they make up the largest anti-hunger network in the state.

Lt. Cmdr. Shawn Turpin, chaplain at NAS JRB New Orleans, said with the recent flooding in Baton Rouge, donating food is more important than ever. Affected food banks lost hundreds of thousands of pounds of food and the flooding also impacted logistics and distribution process.

Second Harvest Food Bank is responding to the third major natural disaster to hit South Louisiana in just six months, sending thousands of pounds of food, water, and cleaning supplies to flood victims in Tangipahoa Parish, Lafayette, and Baton Rouge. As this unprecedented disaster



RP2 Christopher Bowlin, assigned to NAS JRB New Orleans, packs donated food to delivery to Second Harvest food bank Aug. 2. The Feds Feed Families food drive at NAS JRB collected more than 9,000 pounds of food.

Photos by MCI John Hulle

unfolds, Second Harvest is committed for the long haul to support those in need.

"Everything is going to flood victims," said Turpin. Even though the food drive is over, he urges people to continue to donate through local food banks.

"The scale and impact of the flooding is unbelievable," said Second Harvest president and CEO Natalie Jayroe. "As we continue to send supplies of water, food and cleaning materials to impacted areas such as Tangipahoa and Lafayette, we are also helping the Greater Baton Rouge-area

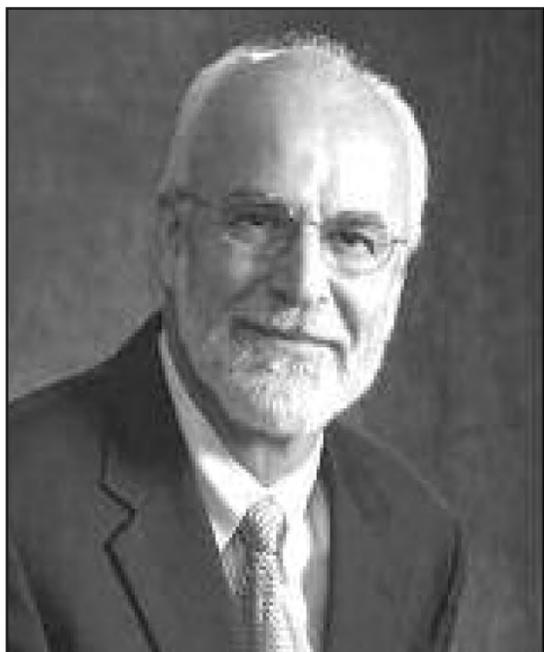
in their time of need as the Baton Rouge Food Bank continues to recover from being flooded."

Donations of food and funds are needed to support Second Harvest's disaster response efforts and ensure that food, water and disaster supplies are available to the thousands of families impacted by the flooding.

"Disaster response has been a core part of our mission for more than thirty years. It's distressing to see our neighbors having to deal with this yet again, but we are prepared as always to help in any way

we can," Jayroe said.

Anyone who may be unable to donate food can participate in the many volunteer opportunities at Second Harvest. Shield said Second Harvest needs volunteers to sort and pack food, prepare hot meals for children and seniors, provide enrollment support public assistance programs, and teach nutrition assistance classes. For more information on how to donate or volunteer, call the NAS JRB New Orleans chapel at 504-678-3525 or Second Harvest's toll-free Helpline at 1-855-392-9338.



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La. Guardsmen Reflect on Efforts During Flood Response

By Spc. Garrett L. Dipuma
Louisiana National Guard
Public Affairs Office

BATON ROUGE, La. – Since being activated on Aug. 12, the Soldiers and Airmen of the Louisiana National Guard (LANG) have been working tirelessly around the clock conducting several missions including evacuations, search and rescue missions, engineering missions, commodities distribution and security at several shelters.

As of Aug. 19, the LANG had more than 3,820 Air and Army Guardsman assisting with emergency flood operations and had rescued more than 19,040 citizens and 2,660 pets. The LANG had also issued more than 78,945 MRE's, 465 tarps, 439,515 bottles of water and 961,500 sandbags. The Guard had also issued more than 2,200 cots and 1,700 blankets for shelter support.

Although wet and dirty and tired, morale among the LANG members was high.

"It brings me back to when Hurricane Katrina passed in 2005, and I saw the National Guard around all the neighborhoods. That's what persuaded me to join," said Sgt. Bryan Campo of the 2225th Multi-Role Bridge Company out of Marrero, La.

"I signed up to protect my state and country, and it's rewarding to see the impact and the sense of hope we give the community."

Campo said that at one point his unit was spread out in three Louisiana cities: Livingston, Ponchatoula and Independence. Their main mission was to use their powerful bridge erection boats to navigate floodwaters too deep for high-water vehicles to get through and where the currents were too strong for other boats. "This is one of my proudest moments," he said.

Susan Black, wife of Sgt. Kevin Black of the 843rd Engineer Company out of Franklinton, La., said that she has been worried about her husband being out in the flood.

"When the cell towers were down, I couldn't call or text him, and it made me very nervous," she said. "I'm incredibly proud of him though. I'm proud of the entire Louisiana National Guard for helping the community and the state. This is what they do." Sgt. Black is a high-water vehicle driver operating in the Denham Springs area dur-



Sgt. Chad McCann of Deville, La., crew chief with F Company, 2-135th MEDEVAC, brings a young child to a waiting UH-60 Blackhawk to be taken to safety after flood waters threatened his home in South Louisiana, Aug. 15. Nearly 4,000 Louisiana National Guardsmen are still engaged in flood response efforts, to include rescues, evacuations, security patrols, engineering missions, and commodities distribution.

Army National Guard photo by Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jesse Curtis



Louisiana National Guardsmen haul Super-Sac and slings to be loaded into a helicopter for future aerial drops in Gueydan, La., during flood response operations in Baton Rouge, La., Aug. 19.

Army National Guard photo by Capt. Joseph Barlow



Soldiers with the 1023rd Engineer Company, 528th Engineer Battalion, attach SuperSac sandbags to a Louisiana National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk to be dropped at Alligator Bayou Control Structure by Elayn Hunt Correctional Facility at St. Gabriel, La., Aug. 17. Mississippi National Guard supported the operation with 10 personnel and two CH-72 Chinooks, and together dropped 303 sandbags.

Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Glenn Childress



Soldiers of the Louisiana National Guard offload citizens and pets displaced by rising floodwaters in Baton Rouge and the surrounding area at Celtic Studios in Baton Rouge, La., Aug. 14.

Army National Guard photo by Spc. Garrett Dipuma



A Louisiana National Guardsman guides a Humvee through floodwaters off of Interstate 12 outside of Denham Springs, La., Aug. 14.



Louisiana National Guardsman 1st Lt. Tykeem Finley from the 921st Engineer Company loads water into a citizen's vehicle at one of the points of distribution (POD) sites in Walker, La., Aug. 19.

Army National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Paul C. Meeker



Col. Kenneth Donnelly, officer in charge of the Louisiana National Guard's shelter support at the Baton Rouge River Center, briefs Gen. Joseph Lengyel, chief of the National Guard Bureau, on the operations at the shelter in Baton Rouge, La., Aug. 19.

Army National Guard photo by Spc. Garrett Dipuma



Sgt. Trevor Farkas with the Louisiana National Guard's 843rd Horizontal Engineer Company, 205th Engineer Battalion, checks on a citizen in Maurepas, La., in Livingston Parish, Aug. 17.

Courtesy photo by Omar Villafranca, CBS News



Tech Sgt. Roger Butterfield, with the 259 Air Traffic Control Squadron, Louisiana Air National Guard, utilizes his skills as a full-time firefighter with the Lake Charles Fire Department to assist a flood evacuee that suffering from heat exhaustion at a shelter located at the Celtic Media Centre in Baton Rouge, La., Aug. 15.

U.S. Air National Guard Photo by Master Sgt. Dan Farrell

ing this emergency operation.

Although floodwaters in hard-hit areas are receding, the LANG is not slowing down. Search and rescue missions continued for a week and Guardsmen are readying for further rescue missions as water moving south could produce more flooding.

"We are agile, forward postured and prepared to flex in any direction ... for any mission," said Col. Cindy Haygood, commander of the 225th Engineer Brigade.

Soldiers and Airmen have also been working at shelters, assisting local government agencies and law enforcement in providing security and support so that who have also been working tirelessly can have a lighter load on their backs.

Spc. Amanda Rishton of Zachary was posted in a gym at the expo center surrounded by piles of clothing, shoes, diapers, cases of water and other essentials that evacuees may need. After receiving a call the night of Aug. 12, she quickly reported seven hours later to the Gillis W. Long Center in Carville, La., where the 239th is headquartered.

Rishton said that although the 12-hour shifts can be grueling, she feels that providing security is time well spent. "It's rewarding knowing that I can be here," she said. "Doing what I need to do ... making them (the evacuees) feel comfortable and protected feels really good."

Guardsmen in the 139th Military Police Company out of New Orleans and the 239th MP Company out of Carville are providing security at shelters at the River Center in Baton Rouge and the Lamar Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales.

Capt. Dan Gaskins, executive officer of the 773rd MP Battalion, said their main focus now is to help direct evacuees as they come into shelters and ensure that families know and feel they are in a safe environment during their stay.

"These Soldiers volunteer to do this," said Gaskins. "Many of the guys in our units are also affected, and it resonates with me that they would take time from their own personal lives and sacrifice that time to assist those in need."

"Our main job here is to keep the peace," said Staff Sgt. Caleb Guillory, non-commissioned officer in charge of area security at the Lamar Dixon Expo Center. "I'm very humbled that I'm able to be here with my team and be able to support them."

PABI Holds Monthly Luncheon At NAS JRB

By Mass Communication Specialist
2nd Class Edward Gutierrez
The Currents' Staff

The Plaquemines Association of Business and Industry (PABI) held its monthly meeting and luncheon aboard Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base (NAS JRB) New Orleans, Aug. 18.

PABI was formed in June 2004 by a group of business owners who recognized the need for the business community to have an active voice in Plaquemines Parish. Monthly meetings are held to discuss a variety of topics of interest to parish business owners. The group works closely with government officials and other economic organizations in the region to promote economic development in the parish.

The group was given a guided bus tour by NAS JRB Commanding Officer Capt.

Mark Sucato, who then delivered remarks to the group following the tour. Sucato spoke about the history of the installation as well as some of the construction projects that will be occurring on the base in the future.

According to Robert Thomas, executive director and chief executive officer of PABI, NAS JRB New Orleans is a major economic engine for Plaquemines Parish.

"We recognize that NAS JRB New Orleans is the fifth largest employer in the state of Louisiana," said Thomas. "So we know the impact that the base has on Plaquemines Parish. The base brings more than 8,500 jobs to the parish and we see the men in women in uniform throughout the area at our businesses. We see them in the restaurants at lunch time, we see them in the gas stations, and we see them when we pick up our dry cleaning. The base is very much a good neighbor to

our community."

Construction projects are taking place throughout NAS JRB New Orleans with more in the pipeline preparing to begin. According to Thomas, these projects may be built aboard the installation, but they have a major impact on the community as well.

"Some of these projects, like the new front gate design, have a major effect on the parish," said Thomas. "Some of the traffic backups on Belle Chasse Highway will be alleviated, which will make things easier for not only people who live and work on the base, but for those who live in the community."

The installation's hosting of the 2017 New Orleans Air Show will be a major boon to businesses throughout the parish, said Thomas.

"The air show will give Plaquemines Parish major publicity. We know that with 100,000 people coming into the



Robert Hopkins, 2016 PABI chairman, speaks to members during the August meeting and luncheon at NAS JRB New Orleans, Aug. 18. PABI is made up of officers, board of directors, committee chairs, and a general membership. PABI members include multinational corporations as well as many small business owners. PABI is a non-profit, non-governmental affiliated organization financed entirely by the investment of membership dues and is led by an all-volunteer board elected from the general membership.

Photo by MC2 Edward Gutierrez

area to attend the air show each day, they'll be stopping for food and drinks or other things. Any

time they see the names Belle Chasse or Plaquemines Parish it gets our brand out there."

Summer Break Done, Schools Back Open-Stay Safe, Be Aware

Here in Plaquemines Parish, the Sheriff's Office patrol units are out in full force to ensure the safety of all traveling through school zones. Violations, especially speeding and cellular telephone usage in school zones, will be strictly enforced. In Belle Chasse, La., when the beacon warning lights are flashing, the speed limit in all active school zones is 25 mph. The exception is at Belle Chasse Primary school where the speed limit is 15 mph when lights are flashing.

According to AAA, every fall, more than 55 million children across the United States head back to school. With 13 percent of those children typically walking or biking to their classes, AAA warns drivers to be especially vigilant for

pedestrians before and after school hours. The afternoon hours are particularly dangerous – during the last decade, more than one-fourth of child pedestrian fatalities occurred between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Below are some valuable recommendations and tips from AAA and the National Safety Council regarding ways drivers can help to keep children safe.

Watch for school buses. It is illegal to pass a school bus that is stopped with red flashing lights while loading or unloading children. Louisiana law says that on an undivided roadway, traffic in both directions is required to stop when children are entering or exiting a school bus. But, the rule

does not apply if the bus is on the opposite side of a divided road. On a divided road (four lanes or more) only traffic on the same side with the school bus is required to stop. Traffic traveling behind the school bus (same direction) must always stop.

Slow down when lights are flashing. A pedestrian struck by a vehicle traveling at 25 mph is nearly two-thirds less likely to be killed compared to a pedestrian struck by a vehicle traveling just 10 mph faster.

Cell phone free zones. Cellular telephone usage, such as calling and texting, while driving in active school zones is illegal. If you absolutely have

to make that phone call, use a hands-free device.

Additional school bus safety. The area 10 feet around a school bus is where children are in the most danger of being hit. Stop far enough from the bus to allow children the necessary space to safely enter and exit the bus.

Watch for bicycles. Slow down and allow at least three feet of passing distance between your vehicle and a bicyclist. If your child rides a bicycle to school, require that he or she wear a properly fitted bicycle helmet on every ride.

Eliminate distractions. Research shows that taking your

eyes off the road for just two seconds doubles your chances of crashing. Reduce the risk by not using your cell phone or eating while driving.

Come to a complete stop. Research shows that more than one-third of drivers roll through stop signs in school zones or neighborhoods. Always come to a complete stop, checking carefully for children on sidewalks and in crosswalks before proceeding.

Reverse responsibly. Every vehicle has blind spots. Check for children on the sidewalk, in the driveway and around your vehicle before slowly backing up. Teach your children to never play in, under or around vehicles.

Change of Command: *from page 1*

As the ceremony drew to a close, Hermesmann took the stage and expressed much thanks to his family and fellow Marines for the continuous support that they have shown him throughout his time at 4th MLG. He assured the Marines

that Pratt will continue to accomplish the mission as the new commander.

"I could not be more pleased to pass this organization to her," said Hermesmann. "I will miss all of you and I look forward to watching Pratt take

4th MLG to the next level."

Hermesmann will continue his Marine Corps career as the deputy director of Marine Forces Command located in Norfolk, Va.

Lt. Gen. Rex McMillian, commander of MARFORRES

and Marine Forces North, also addressed new and previous commanders.

"Thank you for prepping the Marines to be ready to go all over the globe and ready to fight tonight," said McMillian. "I appreciate all of your serv-

ice and sacrifice."

With strong leadership, both new and old, ensuring that the Marines are prepared, McMillian expressed his confidence in the ability of his commanders to take on the needs of the total force.

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NAS JRB Sailor Joins Forces With Habitat For Humanity To Help Community

By Mass Communication Specialist
2nd Class Edward Gutierrez
The Currents' Staff

After Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast in 2005, volunteers streamed into the affected areas of Louisiana and Mississippi to help clean up and rebuild.

One of the largest volunteer groups in the aftermath of Katrina has been the New Orleans Area Habitat for Humanity (NOAHH). Founded in 1983, NOAHH is a non-profit organization working in partnership with hard working, low-income families in New Orleans to build and finance new, safe, affordable homes.

NOAHH has made its presence known in New Orleans' post-Katrina landscape by recruiting and deploying tens of thousands of volunteers to construct new homes in damaged, blighted neighborhoods.

Among those volunteers is Air Traffic Controlman 2nd Class Nicholas Whelton, assigned to Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base (NAS JRB) New Orleans air operations.

He works directly with NOAHH to coordinate volunteer opportunities where local service members may participate.

"I noticed that there seemed no events being put out around base for Habitat for Humanity," said Whelton. "I called to see if there was anyone that was contacting them from the Navy to volunteer in the local community and they said no, so I took it upon myself to coordinate upcoming volunteer events for them."

NOAHH has had an enormous impact on the New Orleans metropolitan area since Hurricane Katrina made landfall. Before the storm, NOAHH built between 10-12 homes a year. Post-Katrina, the organization has built approximately 25-30 homes a year. However, the group's impact is not found only in brick and mortar. NOAHH has had a \$307,000,000 impact on the economy of New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina and has created 3,434 jobs since 2006.

While Habitat for Humanity may be best known for the physical construction of housing, there are other ways for

people to donate time.

"There are two ways to help. Construction, which is building homes in all stages from the foundation to painting the final coat," said Whelton. "The second way is with ReStore. ReStore is a retail outlet that sells donated goods in order to raise funds to support NOAHH's mission in the community. Volunteering with ReStore would consist of organizing, cleaning, picking up deliveries and helping serve customers."

Volunteer events with NOAHH for local service members are plentiful. Although the events may start and end at a certain time, volunteers are encouraged to give any time they are able. There are volunteer events on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays in September and October. The events are not just held in Orleans Parish, but throughout the metro area. Whelton can be reached by calling 985-705-7179 or by email at wheltonnicholas@gmail.com.

For Whelton, volunteering with Habitat for Humanity isn't just a way to give back to the community but a way to better himself as well.

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wheltonnicholas@gmail.com

"Helping out in the community is vital to building a strong relationship with our city," said Whelton. "Not everyone feels like they are qualified to help with their hands in the building process, but you learn as you go with trained professionals ensuring you are doing it right the

entire way. I love volunteering with NOAHH because at the end of the day, you can see what you were able to do for a family in need and also learn some valuable skills"

For more information and volunteer opportunities visit: <http://www.habitat.nola.org>.



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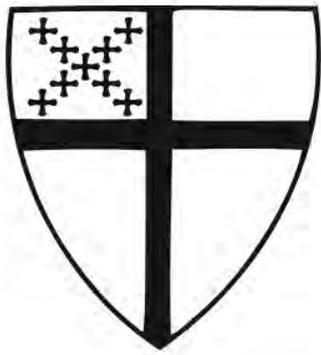
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Small Things Add Up, Make Larger Picture

By Lt. Cmdr. Shawn Turpin
NAS JRB Chaplain



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I don't sweat the small stuff; I focus on big things.

Recently I was at the Commissary and I looked down on the grass facing the galley and saw many small bits of trash lying around. Several months ago we had an Earth Day base-wide cleanup with dozens of black bags filled with small trash items. Are you one of those who fails to place empty cups, cigarette butts and shopping carts where they belong? I

hope not. Those who do are not necessarily lazy; perhaps they are busy thinking of other things.

Small things are important.

Recently, I forgot an obligation. Was it a small thing in the light of eternity? Yes, but it still cost me in the present. And the disappointment it caused was memorable.

You miss the bus by only one

small minute. You miss the A- by one small point, securing a B+ and thus a 3.0 instead of a 4.0 grade. You speed down Russell Avenue only by a small bit. You roll through the stop sign only a small amount. You tell only a small lie to your supervisor. You raise your voice in impatience just a small bit to your kids. Worse, you hit someone with only a small punch. Does that matter?

Small things are indicative of bigger things. Don't get me wrong—we do need to choose our battles wisely, decide what hills to die on and select which

aspects of our kids' growth or our department's goals that we need to focus on. But do not fail a small responsibility that already exists without very serious thought.

(Protecting yourself from too many small responsibilities in the first place is another article altogether.)

Two verses from the Christian scriptures come to mind. Ecclesiastes 10:1 states, "Dead flies cause the perfume to send forth a stinking smell: so does a little folly to him that has a reputation for wisdom and honor." A great reputation can be destroyed by

one small act. In Matthew 25:14-30, we read an illustration of three servants who handled their boss's money during his trip abroad. Two of them were responsible, while the third considered it such a small matter that he didn't want to be bothered. Regardless of his motivation for failing his duty in such a small matter, the master told the two good servants, "Well done; you have been faithful in small things, here now take responsibility over big things."

Blessings,
Chaps

Watch for signs of Medical Identity Theft, Health Care a Target

By The Currents' Staff

Identity theft affects millions of people every year. Health care is the number one target, nearly as much as retail, finance, and banking combined, for identity theft and fraud. Health information is important to individuals and their health care provider. But in the wrong hands, it can be valuable to someone else.

The Federal Trade Commission offers several steps to take

to make sure health care information remains secure.

First, read all medical and insurance statements regularly and completely. They can show warning signs of identity theft. Look for services not received or providers not seen. This is like seeing bogus charges on a credit card statement.

Next, read the Explanation of Benefits (EOB) statement or Medicare Summary Notice that health plans send after each treatment. Again, check the name of the provider, the date

of service, and the service provided. Make sure the claims paid match the care received. Any mistakes need to be reported to the health care plan.

Also, watch for bills for any part of the health care that was not covered. If a bill doesn't show up, look into it.

Fraudsters often target TRICARE beneficiaries, including active-duty service members. Examples include fake surveys used to collect personal information or offering gift cards to get personal information, then

billing TRICARE for services a member didn't need or never received.

Anyone who thinks they are the victim of TRICARE related fraud can report it to the Defense Health Agency. People can also report cases where they think someone is trying to defraud TRICARE. For example, if a TRICARE explanation of benefits shows a bill for services not received, tell the TRICARE Regional Contractor.

TRICARE usually doesn't contact individuals asking for

personal information, such as a military ID number or Social Security number. Only provide that information to a trusted entity, such as a doctor, a claims processor, or a TRICARE regional contractor. Be wary of an unknown person offering a gift or reward in exchange for providing a health service. This may be a way to get personal information to commit fraud. For more information about fraud, visit www.health.mil/fraud.

Information obtained from <http://www.tricare.mil>



LS2 Kelley Yang, left, assigned to Fleet Readiness Center Mid-Atlantic Det. New Orleans (FCRMA), receives a group welcome home by her command Aug. 17. Yang recently returned from an individual augment deployment as a logistic specialist to Joint Task Force (JTF) Guantanamo for 274 days. This is the third FCRMA Sailor deployed to JTF Guantanamo since 2012. Photo by MCI John Hulle



MWR Spotlights September 2016

Library Happenings

Author Reading

Book reading with best-selling author, John A. Connell, writer of World War II military thrillers. Reading set for Sept. 14 at 6 p.m. Call 504-678-3078 for more information.

Captain's Cup Bowling

The 2016/2017 Captain's Cup bowling league has begun. The league organizational meeting is set for Sept. 20 at 5:30 p.m. and league begins Sept. 27. Rules will be four-weekly bowlers per team with no male/female limitations. Details and sign-up are posted in the bowling center at NAS JRB New Orleans. For more information call 504-678-3514.

Couples Painting With a Twist

Painting With a Twist is back with a couples class on Sept. 21, at 6 p.m. at MAG-T. Choose a partner or a friend to complete your picture. Space limited to 20 couples. Must be 18 years or older and cost is \$20 per couple. Payment must be cash only. Call 504-678-3034 to make a reservation.

Arts and Crafts

This Community Recreation leisure skills event allows people to paint a personal ceramic birdhouse. The free event will be Sept. 10 from 10 a.m. until noon at MAG-T. Call 504-678-3034 for more information.

For all spotlight information visit www.facebook.com/MWRNOLA

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