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THE RAIL GUNNER NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 1

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Sgt. Zachary Mahaffey, a field artillery firefinder radar operator with Battery A, 26th Field Artillery Regiment (Target Acquisition Battery), Task Force Pegasus Fires starts a generator at Fort Hood, Texas Sep. 26. Mahaffey and his fellow team members are competing in a battery-level competition to determine which of the two radar sections is top dog.

Task Force Pegasus Soldier compete for top radar team

Story and photos by
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez
Task Force Pegasus Fires, Public Affairs

During a calm September morning, Soldiers from Battery A, 26th Field Artillery Regiment (Target Acquisition Battery), Task Force Pegasus Fires, traveled to a grassy meadow here to settle a lingering question within the battery.

Who is the top radar section in the battery?

The Soldiers have been competing in a weeklong challenge to prove which of the two Field Artillery Firefinder Radar Operator teams in the battery is at the front of the pack.

The competition was designed to test Soldiers' technical knowledge of the Q-37 target acquisition radar with which they work, as well as their physical abilities and shooting skills.

Sgt. Shawn Hidalgo, a field artillery firefinder radar operator



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RAIL GUNNER 6 & 9 SEND



**Colonel
William E. McRae
41st Fires Brigade CDR**



**Command Sergeant Major
Antonio Dunston
41st Fires Brigade CSM**

hind us and the icy hands of winter loosening its grip, I implore you all to continue this trend of excellence and enjoy time with your fellow Soldiers, friends and family.

In closing, I urge you to all to continue to strive for excellence in all that you do. Your commitment to the Army Values and your fellow Soldiers matters each and every day. So whether you're in Kuwait or Texas, at the National Training Center or in the motorpool, whether doing PRT or enjoying family time, remember that your legacy as an individual is based on your approach, hard work and effort to live a good life to the fullest.

Thank you for your service, and what you do for our great Nation and the Rail Gunner team.

would like to extend my personal thanks to everyone in the Rail Gunner family for supporting our outstanding Soldiers.

The Fort Hood Resiliency Campus on the corner of Battalion Ave. and 31st St. is open for Soldiers and their families. I urge everyone to take advantage of the resources available through the Army.

If your family has seen tough times and you've made it back onto your feet, reach out to those around you who are facing hard situations. Share your experience, lend a hand and show your support.

As always, Rail Gunner Strong!!

Rail Gunners,

Greetings from Kuwait and Happy New Year! 2014 is here and what better way to ring in the New Year than by continuing to give 100% and then some in everything we do.

Last year was an outstanding year for the Rail Gunners. I am extremely proud of the hard work, dedication and devotion our Soldiers have shown in every aspect of their professional and personal lives.

If you're doing well in your career, find ways to be better. If your kids are excelling in school, continue to inspire them to achieve! In all things, I challenge everyone to build on the successes we've had over the last year.

It's been a cold winter in Texas and I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone for remaining vigilant and staying safe. Winter can be a dangerous time of year, and you have proven, once again, that this brigade is successful because of its people; the Soldiers and their families.

It only takes one major injury to derail an event, whether it's training in the field, chopping fire wood or going hunting. With the holidays be-

-Rail Gunner 6

Rail Gunners,

Happy New Year Rail Gunner family! I hope this year finds you well. I would like to suggest a resolution for the New Year if you have not already made one: increase your ability to be resilient!

I'm not only writing to our Soldiers but our families as well. It's vital that our Soldiers remain resilient, and it is equally important that our families be equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to bounce back from adversity as well.

When families are able to bounce back from tough times, it makes it easier for everyone to handle the challenges of Army life. Our families have to deal with more than their fair share: deployments, training exercises, permanent change of duty station, financial challenges, and the occasional helicopter buzzing overhead.

Our families are strong and they make our Soldiers stronger. I

-Rail Gunner 9

Task Force Pegasus Fires top radar team (cont'd)

with Battery A, said competition makes things fun.

The teams were evaluated based on the time it took to complete an obstacle course, scores from an M-16 rifle qualification range, a written test and technical radar knowledge.

A critical challenge awaited each member of the radar sections: a hands-on quiz on various parts of the Q-37 radar and their functions.

The Q-37 target acquisition radar is used to detect and track an artillery round as it flies through the air.

Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Soto, a platoon sergeant for Battery A, said this part of the competition was important because of changes to the system.

The hardest part of the competition was the physical challenge that kicked off the contest, said Staff Sgt. Bryan Vickers, section 1 leader.

Going into the last test – where each team was timed on setting up and taking down the radar system – the two sections were tied, each having won two events, but in the end, only one team would be crowned the winner.

Radar Section 1, led by Vickers, took top honors after all the points were tallied. Vickers said that it felt good to win top radar.

The team won bragging rights and their names will go on a plaque that hangs in the battery's headquarters building until next year when the team will have to defend its title.



Spc. Roscoe Evans, a field artillery firefinder radar operator with Battery A, 26th Field Artillery Regiment (Target Acquisition Battery), Task Force Pegasus Fires, drags a cable from his High Mobility Multi-Wheeled Vehicle to a Q-37 target acquisition radar at Fort Hood, Texas, Sep. 26. Evans and his fellow team members competed in a battery-level competition to find out which of two radar sections is the best.

Fighting for fitness

Story and photos by
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez
Task Force Pegasus Fires, Public Affairs

The Army has a vested interest in the health and physical abilities of its Soldiers. Soldiers conduct physical training each morning in order to stay healthy and fit. Many units follow the field manual on physical readiness training but that is not the only way Soldiers are deciding to stay in shape.

One way some Soldiers are choosing to stay Army Strong is through the Army's combatives program.

For two Soldiers from the Task Force Pegasus Fires, the Army's combative program has helped them stay in peak physical



Spc. Micah Barro (black shirt) from 41st Fires Brigade goes on the offensive by throwing a right jab at his opponent. Barro took first place for his weight class in the 2013 Fort Hood Combatives Tournament Feb. 23.

condition.

Spc. Micah Barro, an Army Field Artillery Automated Tactical Data System specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, and Capt. Nathan Thobaben, the interim Operations Officer for

1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, spent their days conducting intensive combatives training at the Kieschnick Physical Fitness Center in preparation for the All Army Combatives Tournament.

After getting word that the All Army combatives tournament was canceled, the Soldiers were not dissuaded from continuing on with their training. They just redirected their focus and turned their efforts to training for a Jiu-jitsu tournament being held in Austin, Texas.

Their days started like any typical Fort Hood Soldier's day with physical training, said Barro, a native of Wahiawa, Hawaii. Their PT sessions typically involved weight training or some type of cardio workout.

Fighting for fitness (cont'd)



Capt. Nathan Thobaben strikes at his opponent while maintaining the dominant position during the light heavyweight championship at Abrams Physical Fitness Center on Fort Hood, Texas Feb. 23.

But when most Soldiers conduct personal hygiene and report to work, these Soldiers began working on jiu-jitsu, a martial art dating back to 17th century Japan that focuses on using throws, grappling and joint locks to force an opponent to submit.

After lunch the Soldiers worked on wrestling or stand-up fighting techniques until the end of the day.

These two competitors have seen many health benefits from the intense training. Both Soldiers shed pounds and experienced improvement in their cardiovascular health.

“My cardio is way above where it used to be,” said Thobaben, a Wilmington, Ohio native

Besides taking one Army Physical Fitness Test during his

time training at Kieschnick gym, Thobaben said he has seen a great improvement in his running.

It wasn't until working on their combatives level three certification that they realized how far they had come, Thobaben added.

Both Soldiers plan to continue training at combatives and maintaining their weight loss. Barro plans to compete in more local mixed martial arts tournament during his off time.

While most other Soldiers are content with traditional forms of physical training, for these two Soldiers, Army combatives and mixed martial arts will remain a way of life.

Ministry Team challenges Soldiers' resiliency

Story and photos by
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez
Task Force Pegasus Fires, Public Affairs

Soldiers set off along a lonesome road just before day break on a cool and calm October morning here. A majority of them walked briskly into the darkness while others jogged down the road and out of sight.

Every battery from across the brigade sent a team of four Soldiers to compete in the inaugural Task Force Pegasus Fires Unit Ministry Team's Olympics at Fort Hood, Texas Oct. 25.

Teams competed in five events for a chance to win a

streamer for their battery's guidon. The events included a timed four-mile ruck march, bench press, sit-ups, pull-ups, dead lifts and ended with a written test on world religions.

Staff Sgt. Kevin Stevenson, the brigade chaplain's assistant with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, TF Pegasus Fires, said this challenging event is intended to build esprit de corps and camaraderie.

Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, TF Pegasus Fires set the tone from the very first step when Spc. Christian Vazquez, a

logistics specialist, finished the ruck march ahead of everyone else, completing the course in 38 minutes.

“I don't like rucking, so I run as fast as I can, so I get it over with,” said Vazquez.

According to the noncommissioned officers in charge of grading each event, the ruck march time gave the team from HHB, 1st Bn., 21st FAR, a sizable lead.

While they didn't win any of the other events, they had enough of a lead that they didn't need another win to secure their first place finish. The team members were able to maintain their lead by putting forth hard

Ministry Team challenges Soldiers' resiliency

work and relying on each other.

The TF Pegasus Fires Chaplain, Maj. Alan Irizarry said he thought it was beautiful to see how everybody on the teams came together during each event. The Soldiers were supporting, motivating and coaching each other and that was the main goal of this occasion..

"Everyone realizes everyone's weaknesses and strengths, and we gave each other

advice," said Spc. Alex Garcia, a multiple launch rocket system operations and fire direction



specialist and a member of the winning team.

Soldiers From 324th Network Support Company, Task Force Pegasus Fires, watch as Pfc. Joshua Zibolis tries to complete as many sit-ups as he can in three minutes at the Applied Physical Fitness Center on Fort Hood, Texas, Oct. 25. Zibolis is competing in the inaugural TF Pegasus Fires Unit Ministry Team Olympics, which tested Soldiers physical, mental and spiritual resiliency.

Soldiers, families ruck march to Santa's Workshop

Story and photos by
Capt. John Farmer
Task Force Pegasus Fires, Public Affairs

The holiday season arrived a bit early on Fort Hood as Soldiers and their families from Task Force Pegasus Fires and the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade gathered at Clarke Elementary School Nov. 16. Nearly 500 people from the two brigades came together to participate in Santa's Ruck March: a one-mile march to donate toys for those in need.

"We've got Soldiers. We've got families. We've got kids. We've got strollers. We've got dogs. This is a family event to support our community," said Maj. Julian Urquidez, Task Force Pegasus Fires operations officer. "The purpose of this event is the opportunity to give back to our own — officers, Soldiers, noncommissioned officers giving back to other NCOs, officers and Soldiers."

Of the Soldiers and families participating, almost everyone had a rucksack, an assault pack, a back pack, or a satchel of some sort all stuffed with toys. The toys donated to Santa's Workshop support Fort Hood families who are in need of help this holiday season.

"I was shopping at Toys "R" Us last night for this event, and I thought to



Soldiers and their families from Task Force Pegasus Fires and the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade donated toys to Santa's Workshop on Fort Hood, Texas, Nov. 16. More than 400 people joined the Santa's Ruck March in which participants walked about one mile to the workshop and dropped off their toys to be donated to Soldiers and their families who are in need this year.

myself, 'Everybody needs a bike, so why not?' said Capt. David Elmo.

Elmo, the commander of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, had strapped to his backpack a lavender and powder-blue bike, complete with tassels on the handlebars.

Elmo said he, like many others, believes small gestures like donating toys adds up to creating an exceptional Christmas memory for families, who may not have the funds or resources to provide their kids with gifts.

"These Soldiers give a lot. They give 100 percent every day, and it's great

Ruck march to Santa's Workshop (cont'd)

to be able to take care of them and give something back to them, give something back to the community," Elmo said. "That's what makes a community, small gestures like this ... it's all these people together that are going to make this possible."

"It's amazing how many of them are out here today," said Lt. Col. Lance Cangelosi, commander of the 589th Brigade Support Battalion, Task Force Pegasus Fires. "Everybody's out here. They're not only wearing Christmas gear, they're wearing unit gear, showing their pride, showing their community support. It's just a tremendous event."

After a short speech from Col. Cory Mendenhall, the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade commander, the march began.

Dogs barked, stroller wheels squealed, and unit guidons flapped in the wind. Moving slowly toward their destination, the combined mass from the two brigades made their way down the road and finally reached Santa's Workshop.

Rucksack after rucksack was emptied onto two long tables in the middle of a large room. The tables



Soldiers and their families from Task Force Pegasus Fires and the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade donated toys to Santa's Workshop on Fort Hood, Texas, Nov. 16. More than 400 people joined the Santa's Ruck March in which participants walked about one mile to the workshop and dropped off their toys to be donated to Soldiers and their Families who are in need this year.

quickly became overwhelmed, and toys had to be placed on the floor underneath the tables.

Lisa West helped direct families through the workshop after they delivered their toys. As the president of Santa's Workshop, West said she was thrilled to see the turn-out.

"Each child gets two toys, a book, and then every family gets a game," said West, who has been involved with Santa's Workshop since 2012. "They also get stocking-stuffers, so they walk out of here with a big bag

of goodies for their children."

The workshop provides toys for children from age 6 months up to 12 years old. Parents have a two-week window from Dec. 4 to 16 to pick toys for their kids.

Last year, Santa's Workshop accepted applications to provide toys for 1,700 families. This year, that number has grown to 1,845 families, which means Santa's Workshop will be providing toys, games and Christmas memories to almost 4,000 children on Fort Hood.



Soldiers and their families from Task Force Pegasus Fires and the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade donated toys to Santa's Workshop on Fort Hood, Texas, Nov. 16. More than 400 people joined the Santa's Ruck March in which participants walked about one mile to the workshop and dropped off their toys to be donated to Soldiers and their Families who are in need this year.

Bouncing back from adversity

Story by
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez
Task Force Pegasus Fires, Public Affairs

With initial entry training and advanced individual training behind him, he reported to his first unit.

After picking up his new motorcycle on his way back to Fort Hood, he was injured in a crash.

His Army career was over two months after it had started.

Spc. Ryan Whitt, a multiple launch rocket system crewmember from Battery B, 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, had suffered life-changing injuries in May 2011.

Once Whitt had regained consciousness, doctors informed him that his heart had stopped beating two separate times during the short helicopter flight to the hospital.

Whitt's doctors then informed him of the laundry list of injuries he had suffered: broken ribs, collapsed lung, broken collarbone, separated shoulder, torn ligaments and tendons in his knee, and broken vertebrae.

Finally, as if the all the injuries he suffered were not enough, the doctors told Whitt there was a strong chance he would never walk again.

He spent the following seven weeks in the hospital with two of those weeks in the intensive care unit. It took another three weeks for him to learn to walk again.

After fighting his way back to health in the hospital, he was released back to his unit; however, he was still unable to take care of himself. He needed help with seemingly simple tasks, such as getting out of bed and putting on his socks and boots.

Not everyone possesses the



Contributed photo

Spc. Ryan Whitt, a multiple launch rocket system crewmember from Battery B, 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, puts up the rock and roll sign as he recovers in Scott and White hospital in Temple, Texas, after a motorcycle accident that nearly ended his military career, May 2011.

skills or knowledge to recover from such a horrific trauma, but the Army has a program in place that provides Soldiers the tools necessary to cope with an emotionally devastating situation.

The Master Resiliency Training program is designed to provide Soldiers with the knowledge to help them overcome emotional hardships they may encounter throughout their lives.

The resiliency training really kicked in when he was stuck in his room by himself, said Whitt, a native of Riverside, Calif.

While traveling his road to recovery, Whitt found himself in a dark place. Recognizing he needed help and remembering the resiliency training, he reached out to the battalion's master resiliency trainer, Staff Sgt. Randell Traxler.

"A couple of months after

he was doing physical therapy and rehab he reached out to me on Facebook," said Traxler. "He said, 'My mind is not in the right place. I'm in a deep, dark hole mentally and physically, and you seem to be the person to help.'"

Traxler started Whitt's recovery by teaching him to "hunt the good stuff," a mental exercise that helps build optimism as opposed to focusing on the negative.

Traxler said that Whitt was very upset and felt worthless as a Soldier, because he couldn't do physical training. So Traxler helped Whitt find a way to feel more like a Soldier.

Unable to be as active as Whitt wanted, Traxler was able to assist him in other areas. Traxler lent a hand to Whitt as he studied for the battery's Soldier of the Month board, which he won.

Whitt didn't stop there. He went on to win the battalion's board and subsequently won the brigade Soldier of the Quarter board.

Traxler used the training he received as a master resilience trainer to help steer Whitt on his path to recovery. Traxler walked Whitt through the resiliency training by talking with him and pointing out what Whitt was doing.

Traxler explained that one of the major issues Whitt encountered was "catastrophizing." Catastrophizing is where a person sees a problem and then comes to an illogical conclusion that stems from the problem. For example, when someone who stubs his toe and then believes his foot will have to be amputated because of the injury.

Whitt said that Traxler taught him how to identify

Bouncing back from adversity (cont'd)

“icebergs,” small problems that have a much larger cause; how to avoid thinking traps, patterns of negative thinking; and how to identify stressors.

Once Whitt learned about his pessimistic behavior, he used the tools Traxler made available to him to overcome it.

“I had to find ways to keep myself driven, motivated to want to keep going,” said Whitt.

He also set goals for himself. The goals ranged from getting out of bed without help to passing the

Army Physical Fitness Test and one day achieving the rank of sergeant.

He has worked hard, both physically and mentally, to overcome his devastating accident.

He was told he was going to be medically retired just months after starting his Army career, and now he has reenlisted for his choice of duty station, Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

He was told that he would never be able wear his protective gear, and now he is well on the

path to being promoted to sergeant. Now that he has bounced back from his this experience, Whitt has become a mater resiliency assistant, who helps the Soldiers put training into use at the battery or company level. He hopes to become a master resiliency trainer when he is promoted to sergeant, he said.

“The way I look at things now is completely different than I ever would have,” said Whitt.

Educating the future leaders

Story and photos by
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez
Task Force Pegasus Fires, Public Affairs

“A sergeant’s business is to train and lead Soldiers, every hour of every day,” said Staff Sgt. Jaime Salaza, narrator of the 20th Field Artillery Regiment’s recent non-commissioned officer induction ceremony on Fort Hood.

Getting Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 20th FAR, “Deep Strike” ready for their nonstop job as non-commissioned officers comes down to professional development. That is where Sgt. Maj. Edgar Fuentes steps in.

Fuentes, the senior enlisted advisor for 2nd Bn., 20th FAR, Task Force Pegasus Fires, started a professional development forum, which will help prepare Soldiers to become NCOs.

The first installment of the program, which resembles the NCO professional development program already in place, was held Nov. 1, at Howze Theater, Fort Hood,

Texas.

First on the agenda was a class on the education benefits available to Soldiers, NCOs and their family members.

Francis Judkins, a counselor with the Fort Hood education center, said pursuing education can only help the Soldiers throughout their career and in their lives outside the military.

“We try to empower Soldiers by telling them about the resources that the Army has made available to them and their family members, so that they can achieve their educational goals,” said Judkins.

“I know myself, I’m going to



Sgt. Maj. Edgar Fuentes of 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, Task Force Pegasus Fires, presents the newly inducted noncommissioned officers to the battalion at Howze Theater, Fort Hood, Texas, Nov. 1. After the inaugural Soldier professional development class, the new NCOs were inducted into the Corps of the Noncommissioned Officer.

get more education and start college courses,” said Sgt. Adam Smigielski, a multiple launch rocket system crewmember with Battery A, 2nd Bn., after attending the briefing.

The second class of the day focused on the Army as a profes-

Educating the future leaders (cont'd)



Sgt. Maj. Edgar Fuentes of 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, Task Force Pegasus, leads the newly inducted noncommissioned officers in the oath of the noncommissioned officer at Howze Theater, Fort Hood, Texas, Nov. 1. After the inaugural Soldier professional development class, the new NCOs were inducted into the Corps of the Noncommissioned Officer.

sion, outlining what will be expected of Soldiers as they prepare to become NCOs.

“Because I learned the right way to do things, I can teach my Soldiers the right way to do things,” said Smigielski, a native of Lynn, Mass.

The battalion plans to continue the training on a quarterly basis, said Fuentes.

The next lessons are scheduled for January and will feature classes on team building and counseling.

“They [the senior sergeants] are showing that if you want to stay in the Army, they are going to help, so you can further your career,” said Spc. Fredrick Puff, an MLRS crewmember with Battery A, 2nd Bn. from Portland, Ore.

The first time they came out of the training every Soldier was more excited about the Army, said Staff Sgt. Nicolas Weisenberger and

MLRS crewmember and section chief with Battery A, 2nd Bn. They were more excited to be in the Army. They were more excited to be the future leaders of the Army,

Weisenberger said he noticed changes within some of the Soldiers in the battery.

“When I say ‘I need this to happen,’ I don’t have to give them [Soldiers] the step by step on how to do it,” said Weisenberger, a native of Tracy, Calif. “They are going out there with the initiative and drive of, ‘If I want to be a leader, I should be able to do this mission on my own.’”

The quarterly training has not only benefitted the intended audience, but it also helps leaders.

“There are a lot of times when you get so focused on your section level tasks and MOS tasks. Not everyone can always be caught up to what is going on outside that,” said Weisenberger. “It helps

me with my Soldiers, because if I have insight on that, I can immediately start setting up my Soldiers career paths by sending them to schools and professional development that the Army looks for in its future leaders, so this helps me tweak where my focus is with Soldier development.”

After the professional development class, the junior Soldiers were invited to watch as new NCOs were inducted into the NCO Corps. Fuentes explained that the reason for the induction ceremony was to instill a sense of pride and esprit de corps in the new NCOs.

The ceremony featured a performance by NCOs from the Fort Hood Noncommissioned Officer Academy as they acted out the progression of NCOs throughout America’s history. After the performance, the newly promoted NCOs were called on stage, one by one, each passing under a doorway inscribed with the words, “NCOs Lead the Way.”

Each NCO received a copy of the Creed of the Noncommissioned Officer and the Oath of the Noncommissioned Officer, both signed by the inductee and Fuentes. After receiving the items, all of the new NCOs came back on stage to take the Oath of the Noncommissioned Officer and recite the NCO Creed.

The day’s events were especially meaningful for Smigielski.

Not only did he attend the development briefing, but he was subsequently promoted and inducted as an NCO all in the same day.

“This is the first one I have seen,” he said. “I’m just glad I got to be a part of it.”

Trunk or treat in a haunted hangar

Story by
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez
Task Force Pegasus Fires, Public Affairs

Scary ghosts, knee-high zombies and cute little witches took up residence in a hangar on Fort Hood Army Air Field, for one night, Oct. 30.

The hangar played host to the Task Force Pegasus Fires trunk or treat event when the weather threatened this spooky night before it even started.

Despite the threat of rain, families packed into the hangar where instead of decorating the trunk of their car or back of an SUV they set up tables and moved everything but the vehicles inside.

The event was put together for Soldiers' children in the brigade as a way to give back to them.

"The kids really had a blast," said Spc. Alex Young, a signal support system specialist



Soldiers and family members from across the 41st Fires Brigade came together on Fort Hood, Texas, to participate in the brigade's annual Trunk or Treat, Oct. 30. The event included games, a costume contest, a bouncy castle and, of course, trick or treating (U.S. Army photo by Capt. John Farmer, Task Force Pegasus Fires Public Affairs).



Soldiers and family members from across the 41st Fires Brigade came together on Fort Hood, Texas, to participate in the brigade's annual Trunk or Treat, Oct. 30. The event included games, a costume contest, a bouncy castle and, of course, trick or treating (U.S. Army photo by Capt. John Farmer, Task Force Pegasus Fires Public Affairs).

with 324th Network Support Company and native of Buckholts, Texas. "There was plenty of fun stuff to do, not only trick-or-treating but there was a jump house, games and balloons. It was really great."

For the older crowd there was a haunted hallway, music and candy, but the event's target audience was the kids.

"Even though they [children] didn't enlist, even though their other parent didn't enlist, they are still a part of the Army just as much as anyone else," said Master Sgt. Chad Johnston, the brigade planning and operations noncommissioned officer from Fontana, Calif. "They are still part of the Army Family and we want to ensure that they know the Army loves them."

The event was originally to be held in the TF Pegasus Fires parking lot before the weather forecast made a move necessary. Thanks to the 1st Air Cavalry

Brigade the event was able to continue.

"We want them [the children] to see that even though they are the child of a Soldier or a relative of a Soldier, that they are still important," said Johnston. "They are still a part of something bigger."



Soldiers and family members from across the 41st Fires Brigade came together on Fort Hood, Texas, to participate in the brigade's annual Trunk or Treat, Oct. 30. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. John Farmer, Task Force Pegasus Fires Public Affairs).

Troopers compete in combat lifesaver games

Story and photos by
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez
Task Force Pegasus Fires, Public Affairs

Soldiers made their way through the brush while on patrol near Belton Lake on a cold December morning at Fort Hood, Texas. Suddenly the team of four heard the sound of incoming indirect fire.

Someone yelled “incoming,” and the Soldiers dropped to the ground. The team from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, Task Force Pegasus Fires took part in the battalion’s combat lifesaver warrior games, Dec. 10.

“We are incorporating warrior tasks and combat lifesaving tasks into a lane where they can practice as a team-sized element and test themselves on these tasks, in order to prepare for combat,” said 1st Lt. Jacob Portalatin, the medical operations officer for 1st Bn., 21st FAR.

For one medic overseeing the games, this was more than just a training event. Spc. Isiah Stewart, a native of Compton, Calif., saw these lifesaving skills in action during a 2011 deployment to Afghanistan.

While on a convoy from Logar province to Kandahar province, Stewart’s patrol came under attack from rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire. Shortly after that, one of the vehicles struck an improvised explosive device. The convoy took casualties during both engagements, and Stewart found himself in a situation where he had to depend on the CLS qualified Soldiers to treat the minor injuries so he could tend to the more critically injured Soldiers.



A team of Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, Task Force Pegasus Fires, transports a simulated casualty during the battalion’s combat lifesaver games at Fort Hood, Texas, Dec. 10. The competition was designed to test each team’s proficiency in CLS and common warrior skills.

“It’s important because, if I’m out of the fight or my comrades [other medics] are out of the fight, that these Soldiers know exactly what to do if a medical situation pops off or if any of these guys are needed to perform these skills, we want to make sure they know it,” Stewart said.

Stewart’s experience in Afghanistan illustrates the need for training events like the CLS Warrior games.

The competition took place over two days with the first day geared toward military operations in urban terrain operations. The teams engaged in simulated combat lanes in a virtual shoot house at the Fort Hood Training Support Center.

On the second day, the Soldiers moved out to the field for the culminating event. They had to demonstrate their knowledge of CLS and warrior tasks through a hands-on test. The Soldiers were required to perform such tasks as reacting to indirect fire, calling in an unexploded ordinance report, caring for wounded while under fire, buddy carrying and dragging,

and loading litters into the back of a high mobility multi-purpose wheeled vehicle frontline ambulance.

Spc. David Morgan, Spc. Fredrick Stone, Pfc. Shawn Campbell, and Pvt. Jacob Patch from 575th Forward Support Company, 1st Bn., 21st FAR, TF Pegasus Fires, clenched the number one spot during the battalion’s CLS warrior games.



A team of Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, Task Force Pegasus Fires, treats a simulated casualty during the battalion’s combat lifesaver games on Fort Hood, Texas Dec. 10.

Throughout the Brigade



Breast cancer awareness run, Kuwait



Rail Gunner Challenge



Centerville toy donation



St. Barbra's Day Ball



Task Force Pegasus Fires Run



Fright Night Run, Kuwait

Rail Gunners

REENLISTMENTS

Rail Gunners reenlisted during the months of October, November and December:

1-21st FAR

SPC Bolton, Timothy Wendell
 SPC Broussard, Geoffrey Noel
 SPC Bursik, Amber Lynn
 SPC Chavez, Moises Uriel
 SPC Haywood, Tara Melanie
 SPC Losavio, Sean Michael
 SPC Robinson, Maurice Brooks
 SPC Weld, Jacob John
 SGT Daniels, William Robert Jr
 SGT Davis, Braxton Leonard
 SGT Hardney, Derrick Dewayne
 SGT Hedgecock, Joshua Whitney
 SGT Montgomery, Ricky Antonio
 SGT Ramosrojas, Guillermo Jose
 SGT Trepanier, Andrew Jon
 SGT Valentine, Kara Francesca
 SSG Duran, Michael Daniel
 SSG Severson, Eric John
 SSG Sonnenburg, Brandon Joe

2-20th FAR

SPC Adgate, Mavrick Shane
 SPC Burrus, Gruver Mitchiner Jr
 SPC Floyd, Danny Leo
 SPC Havenhill, Timothy Louis
 SPC Joseph, Fallon Elizabeth
 SPC Mcclanahan, Korry Michael
 SPC Moore, Andrell Renee
 SPC Zehr, Joshua David
 SGT Hernandez, Juan Jose
 SGT Killen, David Ryan
 SGT Romero, David Alexander
 SGT Starr, Zachary Lewis
 SGT Taveras, Roy Martin
 SGT Young, Jacob Leonard
 SSG Bishop, Danny Howard Jr
 SSG Kress, William Alexander
 SSG Rose, Cameron Jovan

589th BSB

SPC Degonia, Steven Arren
 SPC Eubank, Dario Glenndecamara
 SPC Johns, Synae Juanita
 SPC Narte, Jhoynier Ayson
 SGT Diaz, Pete Rene Jr
 SGT Faison, Jennifer Antionette
 SGT Harrell, Rayne Alexander
 SGT Kelly, David Edward
 SGT Pasquel, Matthew Scott
 SGT Vandross, Andre

HHB

SPC Johnson, Natalia Patrice
 SPC Selman, John Jordan Iii
 SGT Horta, Jorge Alejandro
 SGT Noel, Dannicia Marie
 SSG Lopez, Raul

A/26 FAR (TAB)

SPC Franklin, Devin Lloyd

PROMOTIONS

We would like to congratulate all of the Rail Gunners that were promoted during the months of October, November and December:

October

SGT Anjain, Linda
SPC Cravens, Cyrus
SGT Whitted, Stevens
SGT Irwin, Jeremy
SSG Taylor, Tommy
SGT Colmire, Curtis

November

PFC Davis, Sarafina

December

SGT Meyer, David
SGT Broussard, Geoffrey
SGT Diskin, Joshua
SGT Halona, Jeffery
SGT Killen, David
SGT Pappas, Kyle
SGT Troung, Cherish
SGT Vandross, Andre
SSG Hatch, Justin
SSG Jones, Kareem

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Check out the unit's Website at www.hood.army.mil/41stFires, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/41stFiresBrigade, or Flickr at www.flickr.com/41stfiresbrigade for additional information.



I WANT YOU

To send your story ideas and pictures to the 41st Fires Brigade
Public Affairs Office!

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