

ARCTIC WARRIOR

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON'S SOURCE FOR NEWS

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WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA



By **AIRMAN 1ST CLASS CAITLIN RUSSELL**
JBER Public Affairs

Members of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson and local community gathered to honor fallen service members by placing wreaths on their gravestones at the Fort Richardson National Cemetery Dec. 15.

The annual event is sponsored by Wreaths Across America. The nonprofit organization was founded to continue and expand the annual wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery begun by Maine businessman, Morrill Worcester, in 1992 when his company, Worcester Wreath, had a surplus of holiday wreaths. The program is held annually on the second or third Saturday of December.

The theme for this year's program is "Be their witness," and was chosen because Wreaths Across America works to be the witnesses for service members, while sharing the stories of their service and sacrifice for the next generation. The mission of Wreaths Across America is to ensure that every veteran's gravestone is decorated with a wreath.

"Wreaths Across America emphasizes the importance of not only honoring the veterans' gravestones, but teaching others about what service members have sacrificed for our freedom," said Terry Michalski, Wreaths across America site coordinator. "It's rewarding to see the respect and support from the community."

Nearly 1,200 wreaths were distributed to the Fort Richardson National Cemetery by Wreaths Across America in 2017; this year, approximately 1,700 were placed at the cemetery.




Sara Mullen, a Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson civilian, places a wreath on a gravestone at the Fort Richardson National Cemetery Dec. 15. Wreaths Across America's mission is coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery, as well as other veteran's cemeteries around the world. (U.S. Air Force photos/Airman 1st Class Caitlin Russell) LEFT: Marine Corps and Air Force wreaths are displayed.

"My goal when I joined the Wreaths Across America program was to increase the businesses involved and the amount of wreaths donated, with the hope of eventually placing a wreath on every gravestone," Michalski said. "This year

we've been able to do both, so I think we're on the right track. I look forward to what we can accomplish for next year's Wreaths Across America."

Members of the military community and local representatives,

members of the Civil Air Patrol, JROTC programs and the Boy Scouts of America were present to honor veterans.

For more information on how to donate or volunteer, visit <https://wreathscrossamerica.org>. 

**Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson/
 673d Air Base Wing Commander**
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**Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson/
 673d Air Base Wing Vice Commander**
 Col. Adam W. Lange (USA)

**Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson/
 673d Air Base Wing Command Chief**
 Chief Master Sgt.
 Charles C. Orf

**Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson/
 673d Air Base Wing Sergeant Major**
 Sgt. Maj. Jerry H. Byrd Jr.

ARCTIC WARRIOR

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JBER Public Affairs Chief
 Lt. Col. John Ross (USAF)

Public Affairs Operations Chief
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Public Affairs Superintendent
 Senior Master Sgt. Matthew McGovern

Arctic Warrior staff
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Command Information NCOIC
 Tech. Sgt. Jonathan Foster

Cutting your own tree this year? Be safe

By **AIR FORCE STAFF SGT. CURT BEACH**
JBER Public Affairs

The Christmas season is in full swing and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson has trees available for cutting. Proper safety procedures should be observed to ensure safe, fire-free holidays.

The JBER Christmas Tree Cutting Program offers permits through Dec. 21, which are valid through Dec. 29.

To harvest a Christmas tree on JBER-E, a Department of Defense ID card is required, or the person must be DoD ID card-sponsored.

Additionally, tree cutters must have an iSportsman recreational permit and must sign in to the correct recreation area within iSportsman. Family members and guests of a permittee don't need a separate permit.

On JBER-R training areas, harvesting hopefuls must register in the Defense Biometric Identification System at dbids.dmdc.mil and have an iSportsman recreation permit.

To obtain a permit, contact the 673d Civil Engineer Squadron at 384-3380.

"Folks should be very cautious

about getting a healthy, green, full tree lacking signs of stress like dried brittle branches or needles that very easily fall off," said Charlene Johnson, 673d Civil Engineer Squadron biological scientist. "Make sure to inspect it from trunk to tip looking for signs of damage, disease or stress. This will be the best choice to last through the season."

All Christmas tree harvests must be documented when signing out of iSportsman. This helps JBER manage its natural resources and maintain a successful recreation program.

Authorizations are completed during normal business hours and may take one to two days to complete. Authorizations are not completed on weekends. Applicants will receive an email confirmation when authorization has been completed.

For maps of designated tree-cutting areas, visit <https://jber.isportsman.net/Christmas.aspx>.

While harvesting and decorating Christmas trees can add to the spir-



A boundary sign for the Christmas Tree Harvest program hangs from a tree at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. Christmas tree permits are available through Dec. 21 and may be used through Dec. 29. (U.S. Air Force photo/Airman 1st Class Crystal Jenkins)

it of the season, successful safety procedures can prevent one from becoming a statistic.

"We can achieve a season of safety and enjoyment when good safety habits are practiced," said Adam Montoya, JBER Fire Prevention assistant chief.

The National Fire Protection Association recommends cutting two inches from the base of a tree trunk before placing the tree in a stand.

It also recommends ensuring Christmas trees are placed at least

three feet away from any heat sources, such as fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents or lights.


According to the National Fire Protection Association, one of every four home Christmas tree fires is caused by electrical wiring, so be sure to follow manufacturers' instructions when installing lighted decorations and be sure not to overload your electrical outlets.

"Use only lights from a recognized testing laboratory and only use them for their

intended purpose, such as indoor or outdoor," Montoya said. "Always turn off lights before going to bed, and never use flames or heat sources around live trees."

Water should be added to tree stands daily, as the dry winter climate can dry out trees quickly.

Only artificial trees are permitted in government buildings, including dormitories, Montoya said.

For more on fire safety, visit <https://www.jber.jb.mil/Services-Resources/Fire-Prevention/>. 

Thrift Shop offers Warrior Wednesdays

By **AIRMAN 1ST CLASS
CRYSTAL JENKINS**
JBER Public Affairs

Beginning Nov. 1, the Fort Richardson Thrift Shop at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, implemented new hours of operation. Tuesday and Thursday hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and the Warrior Wednesday Program's hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Warrior Program will still continue to offer both active duty and retired families, E-5 and below a \$50 monthly credit, which is then split into \$25 clothing and \$25 household-item credits.

This credit cannot be carried over to the next month, but can be used in conjunction with other incentive programs such as the \$10 Brown Bag fill-up.

"The biggest change affecting the program is that

it can only be accessed on Wednesdays, while before, it could be used any day we were open," said Jo Rachow, Fort Richardson Thrift Shop manager. "In an effort to provide a better-quality program for our patrons, we decided to consolidate the program and extend the hours. We want to make sure customers and volunteers are able to meet their current needs."

Since the shop's debut in the 1950s, the thrift shop has experienced numerous changes in location, programs, and recently in 2015, management. Currently, the non-profit store is managed by the Richardson's Spouses Club and mostly run by volunteers.

"Our main goal is meeting the needs of everyone in our JBER community by providing a place for them to access the things they need or want

for a fraction of the price," Rachow said. "We are a non-profit organization – 100 percent of the proceeds from this store go straight back into local charities and programs benefitting service members and community. Warrior Wednesday gives us the opportunity to witness our program benefitting them directly on a weekly basis."

The store is open to all branches of active duty, the National Guard, Reserves, retired military personnel, their dependents, and anyone with access to JBER.


"If you are on a budget and need to shop, this is the perfect place to come," said Melody Undiener, wife of



Spc. Elizabeth Wilson, a 17th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 109th Transportation Company motor transport operator, and Pfc. Travis Cameron, a 17th CSSB, 109th TC, petroleum supply specialist, use the Warrior Wednesday program at the Fort Richardson Thrift Shop, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Dec. 12. (U.S. Air Force photo/Airman 1st Class Crystal A. Jenkins)

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Johnathan Undiener, a 732d Aircraft Maintenance Unit crew chief. "Living in Alaska is very expensive; additionally, having young children who are growing super-fast can be costly. This store is one of the first

places I come to, and when I can, I always seem to find things we need."

For information about the Fort Richardson Thrift Shop, visit www.facebook.com/Ft-Richardson-Thrift-Shop-JBER or call 384-7000 during operating hours. 

Choose your retirement system now

By AIR FORCE STAFF SGT.
ALEXANDRE MONTES
25th Air Force

With the deadline only days away for certain service members to opt in to the new Blended Retirement System, Department of Defense officials are making a push to remind service members they have a choice to make and they need to make it soon.

About 19 percent of the 1.6 million people eligible have chosen the new system, according to Defense officials.

While DoD has no target or goal for the number of people to enroll in the BRS, they want to make sure everyone is informed of the choice available – and that the deadline is Dec. 31, said Jeri Busch, DoD's director of military compensation policy, during a Wednesday press call.

Among other things, they're sending notifications through the Defense Finance and Accounting Service's Smartdocs email system to every service member who is eligible and hasn't made an opt-in decision; and they're including reminders on Leave and Earnings statements, she said.

About 1.6 million active-duty and reserve troops are eligible to opt into the new retirement system, which promises a smaller pension check for those who complete a 20-year career but offers cash payments into a personal retirement account that service members can keep regardless of how long they stay in the military, as well as other benefits such as continuation pay at 12 years.

Traditionally, only about 20 percent of service members stay long enough for the traditional retirement.

All troops entering the military starting in 2018 are automatically enrolled into the new Blended Retirement System. But those with fewer than 12 years of service as of the end of 2017 can make the choice in 2018 to either stay with the legacy system or switch to the new BRS.

They must actively choose and opt in to BRS either in MyPay (Army, Air Force and Navy) or Marine Online.

"For some, this can be a difficult decision, that requires weighing both options, and considering personal and professional goals," said Busch.

"We're certain there are individuals out there who may not have made their decision yet ... or as we all tend to do, may just be procrastinating," she said.

For those, there are a number of



About 1.6 million service members are deciding whether they want to stay with the legacy retirement system or switch to the new Blended Retirement System in 2018. The deadline is Dec. 31 – anyone who has not yet decided needs to check the options through the BRS website and comparison calculator, with a financial manager, or through Military One Source. If a service member does not opt into the BRS, they will automatically remain enrolled in the traditional retirement system. (Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Alexandre Montes)

credible resources and tools that are available for free, she said, to include certified, qualified personal financial managers on installations or available through Military OneSource.

Officials said 307,213 service members had made the decision to opt in as of Nov. 26, including 243,715 active duty and 53,498 Guard and Reserve members.

DoD's position is still that there is no target or goal for the number of service people to opt in to the new BRS.

Instead, their goal is to make sure troops have the resources to help this highly personal decision, Busch said.

The Dec. 31 deadline is set in law, and DoD doesn't have the authority to extend that deadline.

Officials are also prepared to handle any last-minute surge in the online enrollment systems that could happen, Busch said. The DoD MyPay system, for Army, Navy and Air Force, as well as the separate Marine Corps system, MarineOnline, have been fully tested, including stress-tested, she said.

The Army, Navy and Air Force don't require their service members

to take any steps if they're going to stay with the legacy retirement system. If they do nothing, service members will automatically remain enrolled in the traditional retirement system.

But in order to choose the BRS, they must actively take the steps to opt in and fill out paperwork stating that intent.

The Marine Corps is the only service that requires its members to register their decisions regardless of whether they opt in to the BRS or stay with the legacy system. Of those eligible, nearly 37 percent of Marines had opted in to the BRS as of Sept. 30, a higher percentage than the other services.

And more than half of the eligible Marine Corps members had made their decision as of Sept. 30.

But officials don't attribute the Marine Corps participation rate to the requirement to register their decision, regardless of the choice, Busch said. "We think it's more the fact that the Marine Corps, as is their culture [is] very much engaged from a leadership perspective, all the way down to the squad level, to make sure their mem-


bers are aware of all the information about BRS, and are taking action," she said.

Consequently, DoD will continue to engage with the leadership within all the service branches as the deadline approaches, she said.

Resources available for those making their BRS decision:

- BRS Website: <https://military-pay.defense.gov/BlendedRetirement/>
- BRS Comparison Calculator: <https://militarypay.defense.gov/Calculators/BRS/>

- Installation Personal Financial Managers: These trained professionals can provide free financial counseling to service members and their families, and have received training on the BRS. Ask the family center or finance office where the personal financial managers are located, and make an appointment. Contact information is also available on MilitaryOneSource.

- MilitaryOneSource: Provides free financial support 24/7, which is especially helpful for Reserve and National Guard members and those stationed in remote areas. Call (800) 342-9647. 

**Through Thursday
Fit to Fight skiing**

Cross-country skiing at Eagleleglen Fitness Park is now open seven days a week (excluding federal holidays). Bring your own gear or check out free equipment from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

For information, call 552-2023.

**Friday
Winterfest**

Enjoy a day of free skiing, snowboarding and more at Hillberg Ski Area from noon to 8 p.m. with plenty of activities for everyone including families all day, and singles events in the evening.

For information, call 552-4838.

Winter break bowling

Kick off winter break with the Polar Bowl, with specials from noon to 3 p.m.

For information, call 753-7467.

**Saturday and Sunday
Dog sledding**

Head to Hillberg Ski Area for the quintessential Alaska experience of dog sledding from noon to 5 p.m. For information, call 552-4838.

**Monday
Santa Day at Hillberg**

Dress as Santa, an elf, or a reindeer and get a free lift ticket at Hillberg Ski Area. For more information, call 552-4838.

**Tuesday
Holiday Meal**

Enjoy the traditional Christmas meal without the hassle of cooking. Head to the Iditarod Dining Facility from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. for all your favorite holiday treats.

For more information, call 552-3114.

**Wednesday
2Rivers cooking club**

Youth Center members can hone some kitchen skills from 2 to 4 p.m. with this cooking club. For information, call 384-1508.

**Wednesday - Friday
Snow Camp**

Children ages 6 to 13 can participate in this camp from 1 to 4 p.m. at Hillberg Ski Area, learning to ski or snowboard. For information, call 552-4838.

**Thursday
Winter break bowling**

Kick off winter break with the Polar Bowl, with specials from noon to 3 p.m. For information, call 753-7467.

Free movie day

The Arctic Oasis hosts this showing of Gremlins; doors open at 12:30 p.m. and the film starts at 1. Cash-only concessions are available. For information, call 552-8529.

**Ongoing
Elmendorf pool closure**

The Elmendorf Fitness Center Pool is closed for post-earthquake repairs. Buckner Fitness Pool and the Polar Paradise Pool will be under normal operations. For more information, call 552-5353.

Polar Nights First Friday

The Anchorage Museum's Friday After Hours program has live music, art activities, food and more. The museum stays open Fridays through April with free admission from 6 to 9 p.m. on the first Friday of the month.

For more information, visit anchoragemuseum.org.

Civil Air Patrol

Adult members of the Civil Air Patrol meet at the Aero Club Hangar the first and third Tuesdays of each month; cadets meet Saturdays. For more information, call 350-7951.

Thursday science club

Youth are invited to the JBER Library to conduct experiment and think about science from 6:30 to 7 p.m.

For more information, call 384-1640.

Library story times

The JBER Library hosts preschool story times

Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 to 11 a.m.; Toddler Tales is Wednesdays from 10 to 10:30 a.m. All-ages story time is Tuesdays from 6:30 to 7 p.m.

For more information, call 384-1640.

Model railroading

The Military Society of Model Railroad Engineers meets at 7 p.m. Tuesday and 1 p.m. Saturday in the basement of Matanuska Hall. They also host an open house every third Saturday through April; everyone is invited.

For more information, call 552-5234, e-mail msmrre@gmail.com or visit facebook.com/msmrre.

Christmas chapel schedule	
Christmas Mass	Protestant
Christmas Eve 6 p.m. – Arctic Warrior Chapel	Christmas Eve candlelight 6 p.m. – Midnight Sun Chapel
Christmas Day 11 a.m. – Arctic Warrior Chapel	

Chapel services

Catholic Mass

Sunday
9 a.m. – Arctic Warrior Chapel
Monday and Wednesday
11:40 a.m. – Arctic Warrior Chapel
Tuesday
Noon – JBER Hospital Chapel
Friday
Noon – JBER Hospital Chapel

Confession
Confessions are available anytime by appointment or after any mass. Call 552-5762.

Protestant Sunday worship services

Gospel
9:30 a.m. – Midnight Sun Chapel
Contemporary
11 a.m. – Arctic Warrior Chapel
Traditional
11 a.m. – Heritage Chapel

Religious Education
For schedules, call the Religious Operations Center at 552-5762.

Winter Wonderland



A member of the 773d Civil Engineer Squadron snow barn removes snow from the flightline after the first heavy snowfall of the season at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Dec. 13. The team conducts around-the-clock snow removal operations for the installation's streets and airfield. The snow barn was recognized for their dedication and hard work with the Balchen/Post Award for the best military snow removal team in the Air Force for the 2016-2017 winter season. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Curt Beach)

What children really want for Christmas

By **AIR FORCE CHAPLAIN (MAJ.) DAVID HALTOM**
3rd WSA Chaplain

Last night my kids watched “A Christmas Story” for the first time. My kids anxiously hung on the edge of their seats to see if Ralphie would actually get his Red Ryder BB gun. Oh, the joy of receiving the perfect Christmas gift! As I watched my three blond-headed dreamers react to the film, my mind was filled with our family’s Christmas story. Its pages are packed full of similar extremes, revealing moments of selfishness and selflessness, grumbling and rejoicing, joy and disappointment all at the same time, leaving my wife and I wondering – where did we go wrong? What a waste of time and money!

We all want our kids to feel loved, especially at Christmas, yet sometimes the best gift we can give our kids isn’t something that can fit under a tree. I know a lot of folks have read *The 5 Love Languages* by Gary Chapman and realize that giving and receiving of gifts is only one of five ways children understand love.

Sometimes creatively packaging words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service or physical touch (the other four love languages) can have a much greater impact than any present Santa may finagle down the chimney. So how do we know what to give our kids that will have the most impact and demonstrate our deep love?

First, observe how your child expresses love to you. Then observe how your child expresses love to others. Third, listen to what your child requests most often. Fourth, listen to your child’s most frequent complaints. Fifth, give your child a choice between two options. Gift giving may be the least understood of the love languages. Parents who have run the gantlet of Black Friday may doubt buying a toy will demonstrate their deep love. But in truth, giving and receiving gifts can be a powerful expression of love. Meaningful gifts become symbols of love for your child and will continue to convey that love long after they are given.


Giving and receiving gifts is unique among the love languages. In order for it to be truly effective, the

other four must be spoken as well. Your child must recognize that you truly care before he or she can accept a gift in the spirit you intend it. We have to use a combination of all five to become fluent in our child’s love language of gifts. At first glance, it would seem gift giving is the simplest language; in fact, it’s one of the most complex. It’s not the gift itself that matters; it’s how it’s given. And you’d be surprised how many ways there are to give in the wrong spirit.

True gifts are not given as payment for “services rendered.” Offering a new iTunes gift card for helping you shovel snow is not a gift; it’s a payment. Promising a trip to McDonald’s if your child will let you get your work done is not a gift; it’s a bribe. Second, true gifts are not substitutes for emotional involvement in your kid’s lives. You can’t shower your children with gifts because you’re uncomfortable with communicating on a deep level, and then expect their love needs to be fulfilled. If you do, your children will become materialistic and manipulative, and will learn to use people to

get the things they want. Third, true gifts are given in moderation. When children are so inundated with toys and gadgets the local toy store calls your house to see if you have an item in stock, those gifts lose their meaning, and your children will become emotionally dead to gifts.

Rather than concentrating on the quantity, try focusing on the quality. Give gifts you know will be meaningful to your child (perhaps a set of favorite books or leather bound diary) rather than simply impressive (say, a six-foot-tall stuffed gorilla). As your child gets older, let him help you choose gifts. There will come a time of definite and specific opinions practically everything.

Also remember gifts don’t have to come from a store. A paper-clip structure, created by you during your downtime, may be just as meaningful as an expensive light saber. If your present stimulates creativity, and if your child recognizes the love that went into it, it can bind the two of you together and create a lasting love... and isn’t that what we all really want for Christmas? 

Disposition of effects

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Irving Miranda, 98th Maintenance Company, is authorized to make disposition of personal effects of Pfc. Joshua Collins McKaskle, 95th Chemical Company, as stated in Army Regulation 638-2.

Any person or persons having claims for or against the estate of the deceased should contact Miranda at (337) 348-9891.

Firewood permits

There is a cost of \$35 per cord of firewood, and \$17.50 for a half-cord. To receive a permit, an iSportsman permit is required. For information, visit <https://jber.isportsman.net/Firewood.aspx>.

Main Pharmacy hours

The main JBER pharmacy, on the first floor of the JBER hospital near the Bear entrance, is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The pharmacy at the Exchange is open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays through Fridays for civilian

prescriptions and refills, and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. for refills only.

iSportsman enrollment

Anyone choosing to recreate in JBER training areas must obtain an iSportsman permit and sign in and out using the iSportsman system prior to recreating. A pass costs \$10; \$5 for those 60 and older and disabled persons. Passholders may also need an installation access pass. For information, visit isportsman.jber.net or call 552-8609 or 384-6224.

Reserve 'Scroll'

Officers wanting to transition to the Air Force Reserve must have their commission transferred to a list called "the Scroll" and approved by the Secretary of Defense.

The process averages 120 days, but can take longer, and must be approved before participating in the Reserve, which may mean a break in service. Even if you're unsure about transitioning to the Air Force Reserve, the process can be initiated. For

information, call 552-3595.

Pothole repair

The 773d Civil Engineer Squadron encourages all Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson personnel to report potholes. For holes in housing areas, contact Aurora Housing at 753-1051. Other requests are tracked by 773d CES. Note the location, including cross-streets or building numbers. Then email 773ces.ceoh.potholerepair@us.af.mil or call 552-2994 or 552-2995. Include contact information in case crews need to follow up.

U-Fix-It Store

The U-Fix-It stores, open to all Aurora Military Housing tenants, issue home maintenance items. Availability is subject to change and limits; some items may have a cost.

U-Fix-It allows occupants to make minor improvements and repairs.

The JBER-E location, at 6350 Arctic Warrior Drive, is open 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Friday,

closed from 1 to 1:30 p.m. for lunch, and Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m.

The JBER-R office is at 338 Hoonah Ave., open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and closed from 1 to 1:30 p.m. for lunch.

A blind-cleaning machine is available at the JBER-E location; priority goes to those PCSing. For information, call 375-5540.

DLA Document Services

Defense Logistics Agency Document Services duplicates and prints documents, including color, large-format photos, engineering drawings, sensitive materials, manuals and training materials.

They design, print and distribute business cards, letterhead, invitations and programs, and provide devices to print, scan, copy and fax while providing maintenance and ink cartridges. They offer document automation and content services for building digital libraries.

To register, go to <https://>

www.dso.documentservices.dla.mil. For information, visit documentservices.dla.mil or call (808) 473-1699 or (315) 473-1699.

OTC pharmacy counter

The pharmacy at the JBER hospital has over-the-counter medication for DoD beneficiaries from 7:30 to 10:30 a.m., Monday through Friday. Flyers and those on personnel reliability program status, pregnant, or under the age of 2 are not eligible.

The clinic offers pain relievers; cough, cold and allergy medications; ointments; constipation and diarrhea medications, and others.

For information, visit facebook.com/JBERPharmacy.

ASYMCA Bargain shop

The ASYMCA Bargain Shop, 8515 Saville Ave. on JBER-E, is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and the first Saturday of the month from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For information, call 753-6134.

Tyndall F-22s begin arriving at JBER

By **AIRMAN 1ST CLASS
CAITLIN RUSSELL**
USARAK Public Affairs

Following the recent catastrophic damage to Tyndall Air Force Base caused by Hurricane Michael on Oct. 10, Tyndall F-22 Raptors have landed at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

Tyndall F-22s and personnel with the 95th Fighter Squadron and Aircraft Maintenance Unit have been reassigned to JBER as Tyndall begins its long-term recovery from the high-end Category 4 storm. Most personnel are scheduled to begin arriving in early 2019.

“Our Air Force has acknowledged the strength of Tyndall comes from its Airmen and families. We are honored to welcome them to our team and committed to ensuring a smooth transition to the Indo-Pacific,” said Air Force Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., Pacific Air Forces commander. “This relocation not only ensures our ability to maintain the readiness and lethality of our Airmen and this fifth-generation fleet, but also enhances our capabilities to support the national defense strategy

in this critical region.”

JBER is one of three bases absorbing the Tyndall F-22s; Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., and Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., are receiving the others.

“As the personnel arrive, we’re going to absorb them into our current operations tempo and then build up the flying mission,” said Air Force Lt. Col. John Krellner, 3rd Operations Group deputy commander.

When the 95th FS and AMU were stationed at Tyndall, their mission included defensive counterair, offensive counterair and attack operations.

“Their mission at JBER is expected to run similarly,” Krellner said. “The goal is to continue safe and effective flying operations, in addition to training and equipping our Airmen to be ready to go at any moment.”

Throughout the movement, our priority has been focused on the Airmen,” Krellner said. “They’ve had their lives completely uprooted and any challenges we’ve had in this process pales in comparison to what they have gone through.


“We’re eager to accept them and I



U.S. Air Force F-22 Raptors assigned to the 95th Fighter Squadron from Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, sit on the flightline after landing at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Dec. 17. Following the damage from Hurricane Michael on Oct. 6, several Tyndall F-22s have been reassigned to JBER as Tyndall begins long-term recovery efforts. The aircraft and personnel will begin to integrate into JBER operations over the next several months as families arrive from Florida. Other F-22s from Tyndall moved to Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., and Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. The 95th FS conducted similar missions at Tyndall as they will at JBER. (U.S. Air Force photo/Airman 1st Class Caitlin Russell)

think that the additional Airmen and aircraft will have a positive effect on our mission.”

The exact numbers of aircraft

and personnel, as well as the precise timelines of their movements are being withheld for operational security purposes. 

USARAK hosts valor award ceremony

By **SGT. 1ST CLASS**

JOEL GIBSON

USARAK Public Affairs

A 4th Infantry Division Soldier was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the second-highest Army award for extreme gallantry and risk of life in actual combat with an armed enemy force, in a ceremony at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Dec. 15 for his actions during the battle of Kamdesh in Afghanistan Oct. 3, 2009.

Staff Sgt. Justin T. Gallegos, then 27, a team leader with Troop B, 3d Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th ID, was originally awarded a Silver Star for his part in the battle that saw about 300 Taliban fighters attack fewer than 60 U.S. Soldiers.

Army Col. Dave Zinn, commander of the 2nd Infantry BCT, 4 ID, presented the Distinguished Service Cross to Gallegos' son MacAiden, and Sen. Lisa Murkowski presented him a folded flag.

Although Gallegos never served with U.S. Army Alaska, USARAK hosted the ceremony because MacAiden and his mother, Amanda Marr, are residents of Alaska.

"As the battle kicked off on the early morning of Oct. 3, this group of men were outmanned and outgunned

by an enemy force that numbered up to 300," said Lt. Col. Michael Meyer, commander of 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division and master of ceremonies. "The enemy had better positioning and surprise, hiding in the micro terrain and scrub trees of the mountains of Nuristan."

The commander of Troop B at the time of the battle, Maj. Stoney Portis, said, "When I heard the news that Justin's Distinguished Service Cross had finally been approved, I knew one of the discrepancies in the narrative of the Battle of [Combined Outpost] Keating had finally been corrected."

"Justin Gallegos risked his life to save Stephan Mace. It was that event, which we were not able to articulate in the narrative of Justin's Silver Star, that called for an upgrade to the Distinguished Service Cross," Portis said.

Portis read from the Distinguished Service Cross narrative describing the actions of the event, which neither Gallegos nor Mace survived.

"We had always known Justin is a hero, but within the context of his saving Stephan Mace, we are reminded Justin is not only a great hero, but




Army Maj. Stoney Portis talks with Staff. Sgt. Justin T. Gallegos's son MacAiden after a Distinguished Service Cross ceremony at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Dec. 15. Gallegos was posthumously awarded the nation's second-highest honor for valor for actions during the battle of Kamdesh in Afghanistan Oct. 3, 2009. Portis was the troop commander at the time of the battle at COP Keating and spoke during the ceremony. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Joel F. Gibson)

he is also a good man," Portis said. "Justin's actions that day, as well as the actions of Josh Hardt, Josh Kirk, Stephan Mace, Michael Scusa, Chris Griffin, Kevin Thomson, and Vernon Martin, preserved the lives of so many others."

The battle of Kamdesh claimed eight American lives and resulted in the awarding of two Medals of Honor, 27 Purple Heart medals, 37 Army Commendation Medals with "V"

device for valor, 18 Bronze Stars with "V" device, and nine Silver Stars.

"Medal upgrades aren't unheard of but in fairness they are rare, they are very rare," Murkowski said, "It's said they almost require an act of Congress. In this case it did require an act of Congress."

Medal of Honor recipients Staff Sgt. Clint Romesha and Staff Sgt. Ty Carter, veterans of the same battle, attended the ceremony. 

Vehicle add-ons can raise purchase price

By **PATRICK BRICK,**
PATRICK CAMPBELL
CFPB

Like a well-prepared servicemember, you did your homework. You shopped for auto financing. You decided whether a new or used car was right for you. If you traded in your old car, you got a great offer and the right price for the car you wanted. You worked out a great rate. As you near closing the deal, and are dreaming of a victory lap in your new car or truck, the car dealer may bring up another topic: how many and which add-on products they might interest you in.

Add-ons are additional products or services offered by the dealer, and they can add significant cost to the deal. They may be physical additions to your car like window etching; rustproofing; security items; or accessories like spoilers, pickup truck bed covers, or pin or racing stripes. Add-ons can also include extended warranties; service contracts; guaranteed auto protection (GAP); or tire, dent, paint, and fabric protection packages. When promoting these items, some dealers may emphasize the utility of these and other add-ons to servicemembers or military families.

Add-ons may significantly vary in cost from dealer to dealer, so be sure to shop around if you think you want one or more of these products. Negotiating for the lowest price you can get is always a good idea. Also, unless you're paying cash for these add-ons, the extra items will increase your monthly payment and the total amount financed on the car.

These add-on products and services are generally optional, so you're not required to purchase them.

Be ready to say "No, thank you" if you're offered add-ons that you don't want or need. And be certain to review your contract to ensure it doesn't include items you don't want.

If you do want certain add-ons, be sure the amount in the contract is what you agreed on. And keep in mind that you can shop and compare alternative sources for most add-ons offered by the dealer.

This way, you can compare any products and services you may want, take time to consider them rather than deciding on the spot, and look at payment options that aren't financed with the car, on which you pay interest.

Certain add-ons may also be cancellable for a refund after purchase of the car. Here are some tips from the Federal Trade Commission.

Guaranteed Auto Protection

GAP covers the difference – or gap – between the amount you owe on your auto financing and what your insurance pays if your vehicle is stolen, damaged, or totaled. The terms in GAP contracts vary, so if you're interested in this product, check in to the coverage and cost from different sources.

You only need GAP during the time that you owe more on the car than it's worth. It may be useful to find out in advance what you need to do to cancel the coverage.

You can purchase GAP from different sources. If you purchase GAP from the dealer, the amount is added to your amount financed, and you'll pay interest on it, increasing your monthly payments and total cost.

GAP is also offered by some insurance companies – check to see if it's already included in your auto policy. A bank or credit union may also offer GAP if you finance with them. And you may be able to pay for GAP upfront, avoiding additional interest in your monthly payments.

If you're considering GAP, here are some things to keep in mind:

GAP may not cover overseas travel, including servicemembers on deployment. Check to see if there are exclusions from or conditions on coverage, including loca-



Buying a car can be a confusing process, with plenty of unfamiliar terms thrown out. Don't end up paying for add-ons and extended warranties you don't want – or need. Do your research and comparison shop before you feel pressured in a finance office. (Courtesy illustration)

tion, in any GAP plan you're considering.

We heard from one servicemember who paid nearly \$700 for GAP only to find out that the coverage was void if the accident occurred overseas. When his vehicle was in a crash while he was deployed in Germany, the GAP provider didn't reimburse him for the loss.

If you don't make regular payments when due, you could be in default and lose your coverage. One servicemember missed a GAP payment and when a family member totaled the car, the GAP provider wouldn't pay for the loss due to the missed payment.

Check to see if the GAP you're considering covers amounts that are rolled over into the new financing, if you still owe money on your trade-in. Some plans may not cover this "negative equity" situation.

Some GAP plans may require a deductible payment before they apply. Find out if there is a deductible on the GAP you're considering, and how much it is.

Contracts and warranties

A service contract is a promise to perform, or pay for, certain repairs or services. Sometimes called an "extended warranty," a service contract isn't a warranty as defined by federal law.

A service contract may be arranged at any time and always costs extra.

A warranty comes with a new car and is included in the purchase price. Used cars also may come with some type of warranty coverage. Look for information about the warranty for used cars on the FTC's Buyer's Guide, which dealers must display on every used car for sale and must give to buyers after the sale.

While an extended warranty that you purchase might be worthwhile for some buyers, extended warranties sold at the dealership might add hundreds of – or in some instances, more than one thousand – dollars to your purchase, plus financing costs.

There may also be exclusions or conditions that apply. Look through all of an extended warranty or service contract to find out what is actually covered. Few service contracts cover all repairs.

Common repairs for parts like brakes and clutches are generally not included in auto service contracts.

The best advice: if an item isn't listed, assume it's not covered. Watch out for absolute exclusions that deny coverage for any reason.

For example: if the contract specifies that only "mechanical breakdowns" will be covered, problems caused by

"normal wear and tear" may be excluded.

If the engine has to be taken apart to diagnose a problem and during the process the mechanic discovers non-covered parts that need to be repaired or replaced, you may have to pay for the labor involved in the tear-down and re-assembly of the engine.

If you're considering buying an extended warranty or a service contract from a dealer, be sure to ask the following questions:

Will the warranty or service contract work overseas?

Does the service contract duplicate any manufacturer's warranty coverage?

What is the length of the extended warranty or service contract?

Who backs the extended warranty or service contract?

How much does it cost?


What specifically is covered?

How are claims handled?

Are new or reconditioned parts authorized for use in covered repairs?

What are my responsibilities?

Is the warranty or service contract cancellable?

If you're interested in an extended warranty or service contract, try to avoid making the decision on the spot in the dealer's finance office. Instead, research your options and comparison-shop in advance. 

Veterinarians work at JBER despite quakes



Army Capt. Angela Jackson, Public Health Activity-Fort Lewis performs a mass removal surgery on a privately owned animal on Nov. 27. Jackson is part of the Veterinary Training Assistance Team, which is providing surgical support to the Veterinary Treatment Facility at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. The team safely completed 11 procedures on privately owned animals within three days despite the 7.0 magnitude earthquake in the vicinity. Additionally, the team conducted an inspection of the local military working dog facility and exposed Jackson to the daily operation requirements of a geographically isolated VTF. (U.S. Army photo)

