

MEDDAC-AK holds change of responsibility ceremony

Brandy Ostanik
Medical Department Activity
– Alaska Public Affairs

Medical Department Activity – Alaska welcomed a new command sergeant major during a change of responsibility ceremony June 10 held at Bassett Army Community Hospital. Command Sgt. Maj. Matthew R. Gritta assumed responsibility from Command Sgt. Maj. Jesus R. Rios, who retired after 27 years of service.

Col. Constance L. Jenkins, MEDDAC-AK commander, served as the commanding officer, presiding over the ceremony. During her remarks, she spoke of his dedication to MEDDAC-AK.

“He is a talented, yet humble leader,” said Jenkins. “He is a devoted teacher and he has a steadfast commitment to soldiers and taking care of others. Under his care, MEDDAC-AK achieved numerous accomplishments which is a testament to his servant leadership and people-oriented focus.”

As one accomplishment, Jenkins commended Rios for his contributions to quality of life for Soldiers.

“In his passion to take care of Soldiers, he led the barracks improvement line of effort within the Fort Wainwright Quality of Life Task Force,” said Jenkins. “Those efforts ultimately led to the funding of the ongoing barracks improvements across the installation.”

Jenkins also credited Rios with supporting the development of Soldiers.

“Command Sgt. Maj. Rios spent countless hours engaging Soldiers and



Col. Constance Jenkins, Commander, Medical Department Activity - Alaska, right, presents Command Sgt. Maj. Matthew Gritta the MEDDAC-AK colors during a change of responsibility ceremony June 10 at Bassett Army Community Hospital. Gritta took over the responsibility of troops from outgoing Command Sgt. Major Jesus Rios, who retired after 27 years of service.

working to ensure they were on the glide path to success by securing additional training, education and leadership opportunities, as well as career counseling as part of his talent management efforts,” said Jenkins.

“The Army is reaping the benefits of his efforts as many of our [MEDDAC-AK] non-commissioned officers are going off to key leadership assignments across the enterprise.”

In addition to these contributions, Rios helped lead the way for quality and

safety.

“He was a phenomenal champion of process improvement in which MEDDAC-AK was recognized as a High Reliability Organization by earning the Gold Seal of Approval from the Joint Commission for Accreditation.”

While Jenkins hailed the accomplishments of Rios, he also reassured staff and family members that they were still in good hands.

“Command Sgt. Maj. Gritta comes to us with a wealth of knowledge and experience,” said Jenkins. “He has held many key

positions, most recently, as the former Brigade Operations Sgt. Maj. and Clinical Operations Sgt. Maj. for 62nd Medical Brigade at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington.”

“He is absolutely the right person to continue moving MEDDAC-AK forward as we continue to support readiness and provide high quality healthcare to the Soldiers, families, retirees and veterans across Alaska.”

Gritta, who is no stranger to Alaska with past assignments at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, ad-

ressed those in attendance expressing his gratitude and excitement for this new assignment.

“I look forward to working with this team and would like to express my utmost gratitude to represent you all as your command sergeant major,” said Gritta.

“I accept this privilege and look forward to the challenges ahead. If 2020 has shown us anything, it may be saving the best for later. We will meet those challenges head-on and should the burden together as one team.”

Explore Fairbanks Launches “Explore Local” Campaign

Similar to a “Buy Local” campaign, Explore Fairbanks invites Armed Services personnel and their friends and family to “Explore Local.” “Explore Local” was created in order to mitigate the impact COVID-19 is having on the Visitor Industry by encouraging community members to participate in activities, attractions and tours commonly geared towards visitors. Taking outings to other local businesses that also typically benefit from visitor expenditures such as the five distilleries, four breweries, multiple eateries and made-in-Alaska shops

is also encouraged.

For those interested in more extensive activities, there are plenty of adventures to choose from. Entrepreneurial tour companies offer nature walks, hikes with huskies or reindeer, photo treks into the Interior, ATV tours and ziplining in Denali National Park, guided fishing tours, and unforgettable trips above the Arctic Circle to name just a few.

Many local businesses offer Military Discounts. These discounts serve not only to encourage soldiers and families to “Explore Local,” but also as a way of showing appreciation for the

dedication, hard work and sacrifices those in uniform make. A list of businesses as well as information crafted just for military personnel and their dependents to help them discover their new surroundings and the exciting opportunities available to them in Alaska’s Golden Heart City, can be found at explorefairbanks.com/armed-forces. Explore Fairbanks’ Armed Forces page is specifically designed to welcome members of the Armed Forces of the United States of America and their friends and families.

“Explore Local in Alaska’s Golden

Heart” is the title of a new blog post with current information about the “Explore Local” campaign which can be accessed from the Armed Forces page. There, Explore Fairbanks maintains a current list of hundreds of visitor industry partners’ “Open for Business” status. Travel industry business information, opportunities and safety protocols are also being updated on a regular basis. Find current information, including resident and military discounts, on the explorefairbanks.com website or by calling (907) 456-5774.

The “Explore Local”

campaign is employing a multi-pronged approach utilizing online, print, radio and a series of new mini-videos featuring engaging facts about iconic area wide locations and activities. The first four mini-videos showcase the Golden Heart Plaza, Fairbanks’ many exceptional museums, parks and recreational facilities and travel above the Arctic Circle. More mini-videos will be released in coming weeks as the “Explore Local” campaign continues.

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About Explore Fairbanks

Explore Fairbanks is a non-profit marketing and management organization whose mission is to be an economic driver in the Fairbanks region by marketing to potential visitors and optimizing the visitor experience. Explore Fairbanks markets Fairbanks as a year-round destination by promoting local events, attractions and activities to independent travelers, group tour operators, travel agents, meeting planners and the media as well as by developing public policy and infrastructure to achieve marketing objectives. Find out more at explorefairbanks.com.

WEEKEND WEATHER

Friday



Showers. High: 65F.

Saturday



Scattered showers. High: 69F.

Sunday



Showers likely. High: 63F.

IN BRIEF

Many people are unsure of what to eat on a daily basis. With so many food choices in stores and dining out options, how does someone choose? Keto? Paleo? Whole 30? Low carb? Low fat? Many of these styles of eating may promise weight loss and improved energy, among other health claims. However, these styles of eating often remove, or limit, much-needed macronutrients, such as protein, fat or carbohydrates. Read more on page 5

History Snapshot: June 1942 – Consolidated B-24 Liberator on Umnak Island

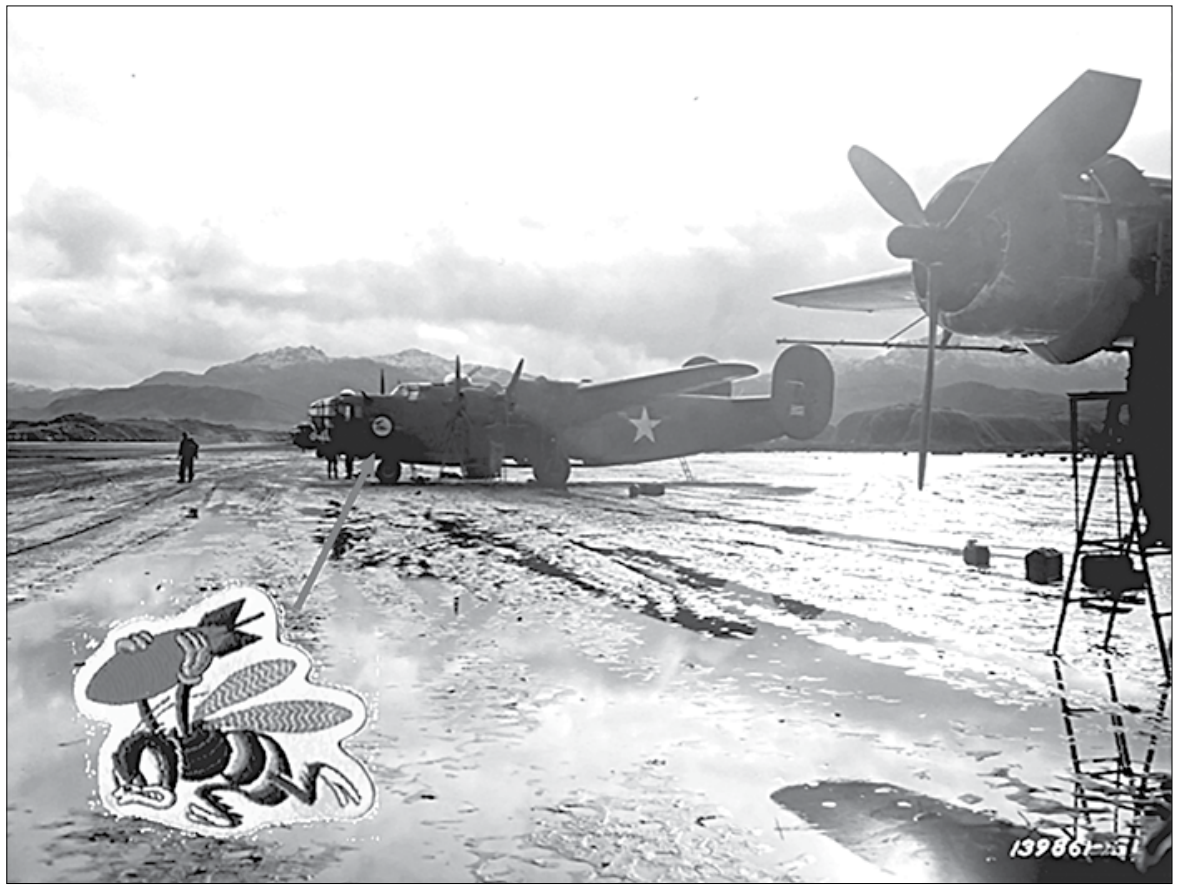
The 21st Bombardment Squadron was deployed to Alaska as part of the 11th Air Force on 11 June 1942. Their first assignment saw the squad operating Consolidated B-24 Liberators and Douglas B-18 Bolos from Fort Glenn Army Air Base on Umnak Island as part of the Aleutian Campaign.

The distinctive logo of the 21st Bombardment Squadron was one of the many insignia designed by Disney Studios during World War II. Over the course of the war, the Disney Studios emblems were in such high demand that five artists were dedicated to the task and around 1,200 different designs were created.

While Donald Duck

was the most requested Disney character, virtually every character was eventually used. It isn't completely clear why these insignia were so popular, given the incongruousness of the light-hearted Disney characters and the horrors of war, but some sources point to this discord as the very reason the characters were so popular; Disney cartoons embodied a connection to pop culture, innocence, and, most importantly, American values.

The insignia reminded the troops of home and may have so held more meaning than a generic heraldic symbol. The "Wee Willie" design shown here was based on a concept by Sgt. Don Cooley.



Army's new Civilian Implementation Plan emphasizes talent management

Devon Suits

Army News Service

The Army is improving the way it acquires, develops, employs and retains its civilian workforce under the new Civilian Implementation Plan, or CIP.

Tied to the Army's People Strategy, "the plan will ensure that Army civilians are the most ready, professional, diverse, and integrated federal workforce," said Todd Fore, the deputy assistant secretary of the Army for civilian personnel.

The CIP outlines a wide range of efforts to utilize each individual's knowledge, skills, behaviors and preferences, or KSB-Ps, to achieve organizational outcomes and sustain force readiness, Fore said.

Third-largest employer

According to the plan, the Army is the third-largest federal employer with close to 300,000 civilians operating throughout the entire force.

The Army Materiel Command, Army Medical Command, and Army Corps of Engineers continue to lead the force in employment numbers, with the majority of these organizations comprised of Department of the Army civilians, the plan reads.

"Our ongoing efforts will include additional tasks to encourage and increase diversity, equity and inclusion," Fore added.

The CIP looks to update many of the Army's human resources and management processes.

"We realized that there are many individual, decentralized efforts currently used to manage the civilian workforce," Fore explained.

"It was clear that we needed one integrated plan for all civilians," he added. The CIP provides "strategic guidance to help grow mission-critical occupations at critical-fill locations, along with defining career requirements to execute career opportunities and training."

Part of the CIP will also include changes to the Army's Career Program Proponency, or CPP, in support of the Army's mission, Fore said. Currently, the Army has 32 career programs that vary significantly in staffing levels.

According to the regulation, the CPP provides structured plans, processes, and activities that direct and support the organizational, occupational, and individual growth of Army Civilians in serving in designated career programs throughout the force. Leaders intended the pro-

See TALENT on page 3

MEDDAC Minute

Important Phone Numbers

Emergency: 911
24 Hour Nurse Advice Line: 1-800-874-2273 Opt. 1
Appointment Line: 361-4000
Behavioral Health: 361-6059
Benefits Advisor: 361-5656
Immunizations: 361-5456
Information Desk: 361-5172
Patient Advocate: 361-5291
Pharmacy Refills: 361-5803
Tricare On-Line: www.tricareonline.com
Health Net: www.tricare-west.com, 1-844-8676-9378

Stay Vigilant

While much of the state has opened back up, COVID-19 cases are once again on the rise. Please wear masks when in public even when social distancing is possible, practice good hand hygiene and stay home when possible.

Tobacco Free Campus

As a reminder, Medical Department Activity – Alaska facilities are now tobacco free. This includes Bassett Army Community Hospital, Preventive Medicine, Behavioral Health, DENTAC/ASAP, Veterinary Clinic and Kamish. Tobacco products include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, electronic nicotine delivery devices (e.g. e-cigarettes, e-pipes, e-cigars, etc.) stem pipes, water pipes, hookahs and smoke free products that are chewed,

dipped or sniffed.

Talk With A Registered Nurse

Think you should go the emergency room but aren't sure? Wondering if you need an appointment? A registered nurse is standing by 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help. Call the Nurse Advice Line for your immediate health care needs. The nurse can even book you an appointment if necessary. Call 1-800-TRICARE (874-2273.)

Family Therapy

Behavioral health offers family members assistance to improve communication, resolve conflicts, and improve interacts in order to build upon strengths and make useful changes in relationships and life. To make an appointment, call 361-6059

Patient Praise

"Very impressed with how quickly we were triaged in the ER and escorted to a room. Staff were sympathetic to my daughter and helped her be at ease. Treated very professionally and compassionately, and were not dismissive of our concerns. I failed to remember the names of the staff, but wanted to thank them for making the emergency room experience as low stress as possible."

Domestic N95 mask production expected to exceed 1 billion in 2021

C. Todd Lopez

Defense.gov

Thanks to work by the Defense Department's COVID-19 Joint Acquisition Task Force, U.S. industry is expected to greatly increase the production of N95 masks next year, the task force's director said.

During a House Armed Services Committee hearing yesterday, Stacy Cummings told lawmakers that nationally, the U.S. was consuming about 50 million N95 masks each year. During the COVID-19 crisis, demand for masks increased substantially to about 140 million during a 90-day peak-use period.

DOD investments to help domestic industry ramp up production of those masks and other equipment will help ensure that in the future the U.S. will better be able to meet demand for personal protective equipment with domestic production, she said.

Based on the investments made by the department, Cummings told the House panel, an increase in production of 450 million masks a year will be attained by October, with a rate of more than 800 million masks per year by January.

"Starting in 2021, we anticipate our total domestic production to be in excess of a billion per year," Cummings said.

Ellen Lord, the undersecretary of defense for acquisition and sustainment, told lawmakers that increasing domestic production capabilities has been a focus of the department.

"In order to decrease our dependence on foreign suppliers for medical resources, DOD has focused on increasing domestic industrial capacity and capabilities," she said. "To that end, we executed some \$284 million in industrial expansion efforts during the first two weeks of May 2020. Reconstituting domestic production or creat-

ing new production that shifted offshore years ago often requires capital expenditure, capital equipment expenditures, retooling and retraining of the workforce."

Lord also said DOD has been focused on maintaining the health of the defense industrial base during the COVID-19 pandemic. The DIB includes a wide array of businesses that produce weapons, equipment and supplies for the U.S. military.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses that make up the DIB suffered as other U.S. businesses did, Lord said. Should some of those businesses fail as a result of COVID-19-related disruptions, it might result in the department not being able to procure important defense-related supplies, equipment or weapons, she added.

Lord said the department is using \$688 million of CARES Act funding to address impacts to the DIB by directly offsetting financial distress and providing investments to regions most severely affected.

She also said that increased communication between the department and the DIB were key in allowing defense officials to better understand where the industry was hurting most, and where the need existed most. When first she stepped into the A&S leadership role in 2017, she said, she set up quarterly meetings with DIB representatives to better assess their needs. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated that communication.

"When the pandemic hit and we saw how catastrophic it could be to our defense industrial base, what we did was just really amped up those engagements," she said. "So starting on March 17, we had our first [teleconference] with industry, and we broadened beyond just the three industry associations that we worked with, to really start including nontraditionals and others."

ALASKA POST

The Interior Military News Connection

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The Chaplain’s Corner

How Will You Respond to Today’s Tensions?

Chaplain (MAJ) Daryl Densford
U.S. Army Garrison Alaska, Fort Wainwright, deputy garrison Chaplain

As we consider the news about what is going on around our country with the protests and riots, many are watching things happen they have never seen before and likely never expected to see, at least on such a large scale. Others, however, may have seen similar uprisings in years past. The older among us may remember Martin Luther King, Jr. and his fight for civil rights, the Watts Riots or the na-

tionwide rioting after King was murdered. Those not as old may remember the riots following the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles. Some younger folks may remember the Ferguson Riots. What all of these events have in common is that they were responses to unloving attitudes and actions between races. One side felt their rights were being trampled on. Others thought justice was not being done. Some saw privilege and racism, while others saw lawlessness and disrespect. None of these attitudes – which often lead to actions- can be present

in people who wish to live in community. The problem is that too many times we work for our own welfare while neglecting the welfare of others, or worse: we walk over other’s freedoms in pursuit of our own happiness. There are many solutions being offered to solve today’s tensions but most of them will only provide temporary relief, at best. Fortunately, we have guidance, principles, even mandates, from sacred texts that if followed will alleviate, if not eradicate, many of the divisions we see today. One of these is found in the words of

Jesus, in Luke 6:27-28: “But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” To make it even simpler to follow, Jesus later said in verse 31 what would become known as the Golden Rule, “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” How much easier could it get? Before I speak I just need to consider whether that word would be one I would like to hear said about me. Before I act I just need to ask myself whether that action would be one that I would receive



well if directed toward me. No? Then don’t say it or do it! Maybe during these tumultuous times, instead of adding to the anger, hatred and strife by the things that we say to each other or do to one another,

we should recommit to living more by the “Golden Rule,” showing others respect and dignity, treating others as we would like to be treated. This is my commitment today and in the days ahead, will it be yours?

TALENT

Continued from page 2

gram to be adaptive and flexible by integrating policies and procedures to deliver the right person, to the right place, at the right time. "All developmental efforts will be more effectively integrated to achieve synthesis across the various career programs," Fore said. "We are in the process of consolidating [into 11] career programs, and moving this operational function to the Civilian Human Resource Agency to achieve integrated enterprise-wide career management and provide consistent direction to all career fields."

Four priorities

Making changes to the Army's civilian force will take time. Some employees will see an immediate change, while it may take years for others to notice a difference, Fore said. To aid in the process, leaders have identified four critical priorities to serve as a foundation for the civilian enterprise. Under the first priority – transform workforce planning and management – the Army targets the proper employment of its civilian workforce to reduce capability gaps. Leaders are working to incorporate the Defense Civilian Human Resources Management System across the force to accomplish this task. According to the system’s website, the DCHRMS is a cloud-based HR system designed to standardize and streamline personnel processes. Through the system, the Army will have access to a single employee database to execute core HR and performance management functions. Currently, the Army leverages multiple systems to maintain its civilian workforce, Fore said. And while most of these processes are completed online, the Army cannot aggregate employee information, performance reviews, and individual development plans under one system. The rollout of the new DCHRMS

is slated for fiscal year 2022, Fore added. The plan's second priority – modernize civilian talent acquisition – looks to improve how the Army acquires new employees through up-graded marketing processes. Under that line of effort, program leaders will make improvements to marketing and recruiting programs to improve the Army's access to highly-qualified employment candidates. The Army is also looking to streamline its hiring and onboarding processes to quickly hire new talent, which will help the force remain competitive in a highly-contested job market, according to the plan. Priorities three and four – evolve career programs to be integral to the people enterprise, and to build world-class supervisors – will look to grow, manage and sustain talent throughout the civilian workforce, Fore said.

Career progression

Many civilians have identified a clear line of career progression, similar to the Army Career Tracker, or ACT, program used by Soldiers. The ACT is a leadership development tool that integrates training and education, and allows Soldiers to monitor their career development. The Army looks "to build a series of on- and off-ramps throughout a civilian's career, so they can decide when they need to be on or off [the road] to find a balance between work and family life," he said. By providing a clear line of progression, individuals will be able to transition throughout their career on a road that suits their professional development goals and continues to support the Army's overall mission, Fore said. Additionally, many Army civilians have identified a need for increased educational and leadership training opportunities through the recent Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, Fore added.

Fort Wainwright Exchange, Commissary team up to sell each other’s gift cards

Carina DeCino
Army and Air Force Exchange Service Public Affairs

The Army and Air Force Exchange Service and the Defense Commissary Agency have joined forces to sell the other’s gift cards in their stores. Starting June 22, Fort Wainwright commissary gift cards from \$5 to \$300 will be available at the Exchange for purchase. In addition, Exchange gift cards from \$5 to \$1,500 will be available at the commissary. Gift cards must still be redeemed at their respective agency or online. “The Exchange and commissary are working together for the good of the military community, bringing convenience and value to all who serve,” said Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Luis Reyes, the Exchange’s senior enlisted advisor. “Both retailers are all-in to support our Warfighters and their families.” The joint effort showcases

the strength of military resale, said Army Command Sgt. Maj. Tomeka N. O’Neal, DeCA’s senior enlisted advisor to the agency director. “This initiative is another example of the military resale community partnering to offer our customers the best that the installation has to offer for commissary and Exchange shopping,” O’Neal said. “Collaborative efforts such as this help reinforce the value of the installation as the No. 1 destination to best serve



New research facility speeds changes to Army helicopters

U.S. Army CCDC Army Research Laboratory Public Affairs

The U.S. Army is opening a new \$6.7 million vehicle drivetrain facility this summer to research lighter, more reliable and more efficient transmissions for future military rotorcraft. The research inside the Vehicle Innovative Powertrain Experimental Research, or VIPER, facility will focus on technologies to increase power density and transmission efficiency to enable greater speed, range and payload for future rotorcraft.

Upon opening, the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command’s Army Research Laboratory’s facility will feature a main gearbox from a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter. The facility’s 2,000 horsepower-class transmission testbed is flexible and can be configured to perform experiments on a wide variety of gearboxes including AH-64 Apache, V22 Osprey, V280 Valor and next-generation rotorcraft transmissions.

“VIPER will be used to forecast technology development in areas like hybrid gears made of steel and composite materials, and multiple-speed transmissions,” said Dr. Jaret C. Riddick, director of the laboratory’s Vehicle Technology Directorate. “These efforts ultimately align with the performance goals embedded within the Army’s Future Vertical Lift Modernization Priority.”

The Army’s corporate laboratory is investing in research focused on discovery and innovation in the areas of autonomous air



The U.S. Army plans to open its VIPER lab soon to conduct experiments on rotocraft drivetrains. This work is part of larger efforts to improve efficiency and reduce weight of vehicle transmissions. The testbed will allow for research on a number of vertical takeoff and landing platforms, including the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter. (Photo by Sgt. Shawn Keeton)

and ground vehicles, next generation propulsion and power and disruptive concepts for vertical lift and mobility.

VIPER will explore and enable innovation in next generation power transmission systems and disruptive transmission concepts for vertical lift and mobility, said Dr. Ryan Emerson, chief of the lab’s propulsion division.

“VIPER lab will allow us to perform experiments on helicopter transmissions to generate data and fundamental knowledge that doesn’t exist anywhere else. The validated models and diagnostic tools we are developing will lead to lighter transmissions,” Emerson said. “Every

pound of weight we pull out of a helicopter platform enables another pound of sensors or Soldier payload, and improves combat maneuverability and endurance.”

Inside the VIPER lab, researchers will rely on deep learning tools to analyze component response data from acoustic sensing instruments to hear what a healthy transmission sounds like, and to detect what it sounds like when a transmission starts to lose health, he said.

This kind of data can be used with drivetrain dynamics analysis and survivability studies, to validate dynamic computer models of transmissions and ultimately impact the

readiness and reliability of future vertical lift platforms.

Historically, researchers had to rely on data – nearly exclusively – extracted from aircraft health-monitoring systems, which essentially acts as onboard data recorders. Emerson said these systems provide a valuable source of safety, maintenance and operations data, but only on undamaged components. The experiments planned at VIPER will fill-in the gaps and extend the usefulness of the historical datasets.

“The CCDC Aviation and Missile Center has enjoyed a long and productive relationship with our partners in the CCDC ARL Vehicle Technology Direc-

torate,” said Carvil Chalk, deputy director for the Aviation Technology in the Technology Development Directorate at the center. “We look forward to the benefits this new facility will bring to Army Aviation drive system development.”

Chalk sees this research space as an enhancement to the command’s inherent capabilities to foster continued technology maturation and transition from applied research to demonstration flight test. Key to that is the partnership between the center and the Army’s corporate lab, he said, to deliver adaptive and affordable advanced drive systems for Army Aviation.

June 19, 2020

Food: What to eat

Justine DuchonMedical Department Activity – Alaska
registered dietician

Many people are unsure of what to eat on a daily basis. With so many food choices in stores and dining out options, how does someone choose? Keto? Paleo? Whole 30? Low carb? Low fat? Many of these styles of eating may promise weight loss and improved energy, among other health claims. However, these styles of eating often remove, or limit, much-needed macronutrients, such as protein, fat or carbohydrates. When cutting out or limiting a macronutrient, it may also remove or reduce a variety of micro-nutrients, vitamins and minerals, which are needed in small amounts for the body to function at its best.

With that in mind, the question still remains, what to eat? As humans, we need to eat whole foods containing a balance of lean proteins, heart healthy fats, fiber rich carbohydrates and nonstarchy vegetables. Since we eat food, one way to look at what to eat is to envision a dinner plate and consider the balance of lean proteins, heart healthy fats, fiber rich carbohydrates and nonstarchy vegetables.

Taking a nine-inch dinner plate and dividing it into a few sections, here are a few questions to consider for a balanced meal:

Is ¼ of that plate a lean protein option such as baked or grilled fish, poultry, lean meats or even plant based proteins such as beans, nuts, lentils, tofu, etc.?

Is ¼ of that plate a fiber-rich carbohydrate such as a brown rice, 100 percent whole wheat bread or pastas, corn, peas, sweet potatoes or less commonly known whole grains like quinoa, farro, barley, etc.?

Is the other ½ of the plate a non-starchy vegetable such as a dinner salad, peppers, onions, asparagus, tomatoes, cucumbers, broccoli, cauliflower, etc.?

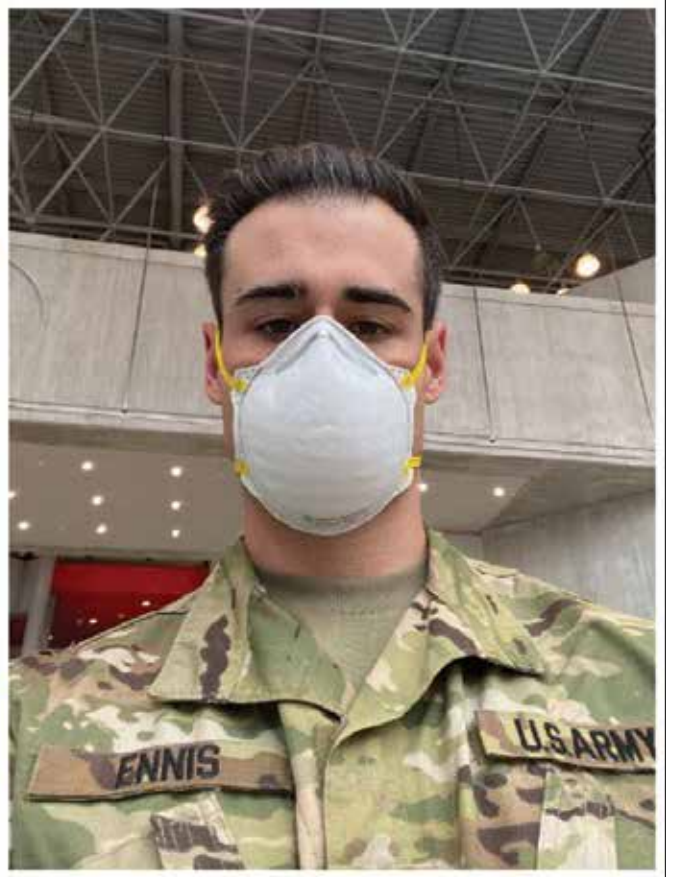
The last component is a dash of heart healthy fats, which may often be included in the cooking process such as when roasting veggies or meat with an olive or avocado oil. Heart Healthy fats may also be present in lean meats, fish and/or if you add items like avocado, olives, nuts and seeds.

Eating meals with all of these components can be challenging in today's time crunched society. Most people are working long, busy days. Many are often navigating family life with children, extracurricular activities, taking care of aging parents. Additionally, finances play a role in what types of foods are brought into the house and how much convenience foods may be purchased. How do we balance all of life's priorities and still support ourselves and families with wholesome, balanced meals? There is no simple, easy, one size fits all answer to this. What can be done is to start making changes, no matter how big or how small.

Remember, progress not perfection. Consider current habits and be realistic about commitment to change and willingness to make changes right now. Any step, no matter how big or small, is still a step, and that's ok. The following are a few ideas to consider.

To help increase veggie intake, consider a pre-cut veggie tray or cutting your veggies when you first bring them home, frozen veggies so they last longer or a bag of salad mix that you can pour from at meals. To increase fiber rich carbohydrates, opt for brown rice instead of white rice, maybe a baked sweet, white or red potato instead of French fries or potato chips, or experiment with a new to you grain like barley. For lean proteins, maybe it's reducing the portion to a ¼ of the plate or about three to four ounce serve or experiment with a plant based protein meal one time per week like black bean burgers? Maybe it's looking at how often you are dining out and is there opportunity to cut back on frequency? If you can't cut back on frequency, how do you opt for balance instead? Maybe it's just starting to support the body with eating breakfast, lunch and dinner if you often skip meals?

Looking to make changes to achieve your health and wellness goals but still unsure of where to start? Set up a nutrition consult with the Outpatient Registered Dietitian at Basset Army Community Hospital for further discussion by asking your provider for a referral or by calling 907-361-5163.



After overcoming brain surgery as a child, Army reservist 1st Lt. Jim Ennis went on to have a successful college hockey career at the University of Massachusetts-Boston. Ennis recently deployed to New York City as a member of an Urban Augmentation Medical Task Force. (Courtesy photo)

Childhood tumor leads hockey player to health care career, the Army and COVID-19 battle

Joseph Lacdan
Army News Service

He had taken hits on the ice before. But not like this.

During a hockey game in 2001, an opponent knocked 13-year-old Jimmy Ennis to the floor and swiped him briskly on the chin. The blow left Ennis shaken and dizzy.

"I didn't feel right," he said. "I knew I was off and my coaches did, too."

Ennis didn't know then, but the hard hit may have saved his life.

Fearing a concussion, Ennis' coach told him to stay on the bench for the remainder of the contest.

But the pain in his head wouldn't subside.

After the game, Ennis' parents took him to see an ER physician at Boston Children's Hospital for an MRI. Doctors found an abnormal growth in one of the ventricles of his brain.

As he waited for the test results, he didn't expect the injury could be serious.

A neurosurgeon said he had a choroid plexus tumor and, if left untreated, could develop into cancer. The impact of the ensuing health care treatment Ennis received led him to pursue a career in health care.

"It changed my life forever," Ennis said. "One of the things when you're that young is your focus is not on your health; you're not really in tune with the fact that maybe you could die."

Now a 32-year old first lieutenant in the Army Reserve, that pursuit has taken him to the front lines of a health care battle that has gripped much of the world. Ennis recently returned to Boston after a two-month deployment in New York City. There, he cared for patients who had to face their own mortality.

In the summer of 2001, Ennis had to face his.

An Adolescence Shaken

As a preteen, the concept of life's fragility had not yet dawned upon him. His world revolved around the game he loved, exercising and spending

time with friends. He didn't expect to face the possibility of serious illness or death before his high school years began. Doctors found the tumor just before it became serious. "According to the surgeon, it was only a matter of time," he said.

An avid hockey player since kindergarten, he faced the possibility of leaving it behind for good. Doctors told him that he might never compete on the ice again.

The doctors and nurses at BCH guided him each step of recovery. They told him that chemotherapy would not be needed and that surgery could be the answer.

It would be months before he could attempt a return to the ice. When he did nearly a year later, he struggled with hand-eye coordination and couldn't keep his balance on the ice.

"I had to relearn a lot of things," Ennis said. "Your coordination is off. Just your mental status is very slow thinking-wise."

After more than a year of rehab and recovery, his condition began to improve. He began to develop more confidence in his skating and keeping his balance. But doctors continued to monitor Ennis' health for the next 10 years.

Ennis worked his way back into shape and competed with the Bridgewater Bandits of the Eastern Junior Hockey League and the Boston Latin High School varsity squad.

In the years after surgery, he read how patients with the same condition suffered from long-lasting consequences including brain damage. Some had cognitive and learning disabilities. Or, the tumor sometimes returned. Fortunately for Ennis, he had none of those conditions.

He realized he had received a gift from the health care professionals and wanted to return the favor.

"My early years were really developed by just being aware that life is very fragile," Ennis said.

Ennis spent four years playing college hockey at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, first joining the Beacons as a

walk-on and eventually rising to team captain. The forward capped his college career by scoring a career-best nine goals, recording 10 assists and totaling 19 points.

Ennis graduated from UMass-Boston with a bachelor's degree in health and exercise science in 2012. But the work of the nurses and doctors at BCH during his youth remained on his mind. After a conversation with the school's chancellor, Ennis to enrolled in UMass Medical School's Graduate School of Nursing.

New Purpose

Ennis hoped to serve the public the same way the doctors and nurses at BCH took care of him years ago. After earning his graduate degree in nursing, he had served two years as a nurse and nurse practitioner when he decided that he wanted to do even more.

"I wanted to be like those health care professionals" Ennis said. "I wanted to someday be in a position to help others the way that I was helped."

His blue collar roots growing up in a working class neighborhood of Boston pushed him toward a higher calling. Ennis' father, Jim Sr., worked long hours as a diesel mechanic to put his children through college and Ennis' mother still works as a dental assistant to this day.

He commissioned into the Army to serve as a military nurse practitioner in 2019 and currently serves with the 5th Medical Brigade in Birmingham, Alabama.

During a shift while working as a nurse practitioner at Partners Urgent Care in Boston in March, he received a phone call from his unit. Ennis had been ordered to join an Urban Augmentation Medical Task Force and he needed to be on a plane the next day to travel to Forest Park, Georgia, for training.

Six months after commissioning into the Army Reserve, he would join a medical task force unit with no knowledge of where he would be working or when he would return home.

In The Eye Of The Storm

The news media dubbed the 360,000-square-foot Elmhurst Hospital as "the epicenter of the epicenter" of coronavirus. The New Yorkers treated here faced the uncertainty of not knowing the full severity of the illness. They laid in hospital beds while disconnected from their families and the outside world.

"They were either on high amounts of oxygen or coming from an ICU setting," Ennis said. "They were very tired; a little bit confused."

From April 8-May 22 on the west side of Queens, he evaluated and treated COVID-19 patients from the New York City borough's diverse neighborhoods. Each day, Ennis worked alongside dozens of masked nurses and doctors treating a steady number of patients.

The patients harbored growing uncertainty, Ennis said, similar to what he faced as a teen after his head injury. He did his best to make the patients' hospital stays comfortable. He helped them use FaceTime to speak to their families and tended to their health needs. "With a novel disease, it's hard to know how to manage correctly and you know, we're sort of doing things to the best of our ability at the time," Ennis said. "As ... more information came out, you could change gears."

One of the COVID-19 patients was a middle-aged man who suffered a stroke while incubated at Elmhurst. Ennis and fellow Soldiers in the task force treated the patient for several weeks after he processed out of the ICU until his discharge.

"It allowed our team to use every part of the medical team: physical therapy, your providers, your nurses, your leadership, the organic staff of the hospital with discharge planning through the nurse managers and some of the other folks that social work," he said. "So it was a true team effort to care for this person."

"I think that's the effort it takes every day in the Army - that's core to us."

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Fort Wainwright Family & MWR

Weekly Events

June 20 - 27

21

Gulkana Glacier Hike

June 28
7 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Venture down south to the Gulkana Glacier situated in the Delta Mountain Range. We will hike to the foot of the glacier, and possibly strap on crampons and go for a walk. Registration deadline is June 21.

Outdoor Recreation Center, Bldg 4050
Call 361-6349, registration required

21

Red Rock Canyon ATV Trip

June 28
8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Spend the day exploring one of Alaska's most visited sports, Denali! Cantwell Glacier is one of the Glaciers in Denali County. Enjoy riding an ATV to the 3-mile long Glacier. ATV Safety Course completion is required. Registration deadline is June 21.

Outdoor Recreation Center, Bldg 4050
Call 361-6349, registration required

24

Youth Sports & Fitness Workout Wednesday

June 24
Varies

Workout with Youth Sports & Fitness every Wednesday by checking out the video on the Wainwright MWR Facebook page. Check off your Summer Challenge checklist too!

Youth Sports & Fitness, Bldg 1045
Call 353-7482

25

FREE FlingGolf

June 25
5 - 6 p.m.

Try to the newest craze at Chena Bend Golf Course—FlingGolf! Every Thursday in June you can come out and test out FlingGolf for FREE.

Chena Bend Golf Course and Clubhouse, Bldg 2090
Call 353-6223

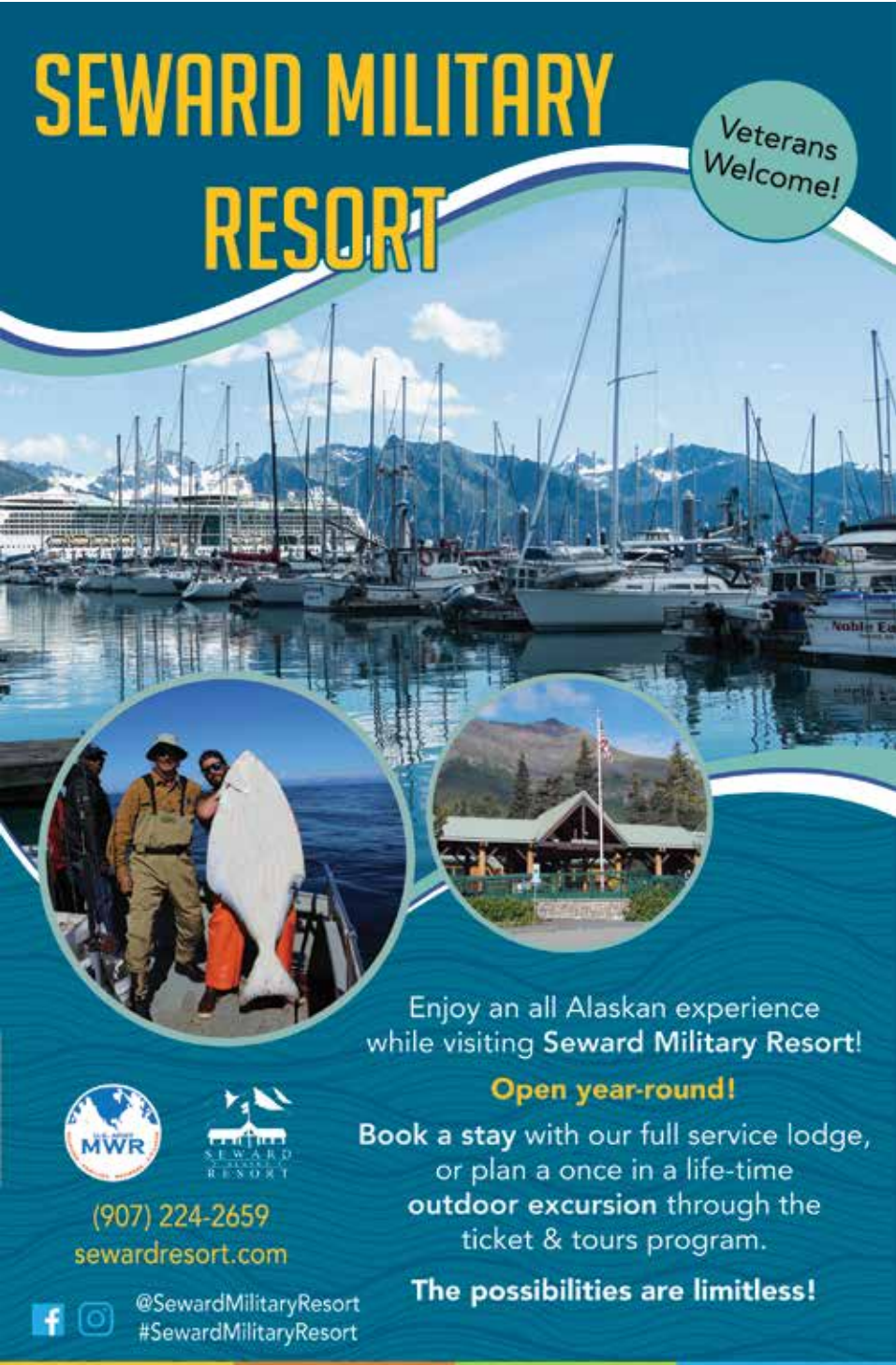
26

Movie Night

June 26
6:30 p.m.

Every Friday is movie night at the Warrior Zone! Be sure to get there early to grab a bite to eat.

Warrior Zone, Bldg 3205
Call 353-1087



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New Beginnings: Fort Carson infantry brigade converts to Stryker brigade

Neysa Canfield

Throughout history the U.S. Army has proven, through multiple spectrums of operations and locations, that it is the most lethal and capable ground combat force.

To continue to shape the Army to remain lethal and ready for any type of mission, in September of 2018 the Army announced the conversion of two brigade combat teams, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division out of Fort Bliss, Texas and the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division out of Fort Carson, Colorado.

Nearly two years after the announcement, leaders and Soldiers gathered, both physically and virtually, in order to abide by social distancing guidelines, for the brigade's re-designation ceremony, June 15, on Fort Carson, Colorado.

"Today the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team officially becomes the 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team," said Col. Scott Knight, commander of the 2nd SBCT during his speech. "This is a day that will be added to a long and rich history for our unit. A history that we will honor and carry forward."

During the ceremony, Knight and Maj. Gen. Matthew W. Mc-

Farland, commanding general for the 4th Inf. Div., talked about the brigade's history and future from an infantry brigade to Stryker brigade.

"When this re-designation was first announced, then Secretary of the Army Esper said this shift was part of a broader strategy to ensure that our Army remain the most lethal ground combat force able to deploy, fight and win against any adversary, anytime, anywhere," said McFarland. "And while we don't know where or when the next fight will take place, Stryker's will certainly be a key part of that fight against any potential threat."

Knight added that the brigade began their conversion process in the fall of last year. Since the beginning of the brigade's conversion the unit has turned in more than 11,000 pieces of equipment no longer need for a Stryker brigade and has received more than 30 percent of Stryker vehicles, as well as adjusting personnel manning.

Since the beginning of the process, organizationally, the brigade has closed three infantry companies across the units maneuver battalions and gained one new troop, Echo Troop, to the brigade's squadron.

The brigade's efforts throughout the conversion have not been

unnoticed by senior leaders.

"Today's conversion of 2nd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division to a Stryker Brigade represents the culmination of a major Army transformation effort, which began in 2013 with the addition of a third maneuver battalion for each BCT (brigade combat team)," said Lt. Gen. Charles Flynn, director of operations and strategic plans for the Department of the Army. "Soldiers of 2nd Brigade should take pride in their hard work as they complete this conversion and prepare for their certification exercise at Fort Irwin. Soldiers of 2nd Brigade, 4th Infantry, can be very proud of what they've already accomplished as they look forward to future challenges."

According to the brigade leadership the unit plans to finalize their conversion in late 2021.

"You've spent countless hours working through property books and paperwork and you've initiated your OPNET (operator new equipment training) and your FLMNET, (field level maintenance new equipment training) and all of it is essential to making the conversion such a success," said McFarland. "I am proud of the work you've done to date and I look forward watching you as you continue to embrace this vehicle."

Feeling patriotic? Anyone can send Army and Air Force Exchange gift cards to the troops

Carina DeCino
Army and Air Force Exchange Service Public Affairs

Civilians who want to spread patriotic cheer for the Fourth of July can reward service members and their families with gift cards purchased from the Fort Wainwright Exchange.

Anyone can show their support for the troops by purchasing gift cards from the Exchange’s website, ShopMyExchange.com. Physical gift cards can be used at any Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps or Coast Guard exchange worldwide, as well as at ShopMyExchange.com, MyNavyExchange.com and ShopCGX.com.

eGift cards that never expire can be sent to any authorized Exchange shopper but can only be used at ShopMyExchange.com.

“An Exchange gift card is an affordable way to recognize

our Nation’s service members, retirees and veterans,” said Fort Wainwright Exchange general manager Gloria Sylvia. “As the Fourth of July holiday reminds us of our Nation’s fight for independence, it’s good to remember that Warfighters are still fighting for our nation’s guiding principles.”

Veterans who have signed up for their lifelong Exchange online benefit can also use gift cards to shop the online exchanges. Veterans can find out more on the Exchange’s community Hub page at <https://bit.ly/Vets4Life>.

Civilians can purchase gift cards ranging from \$10 to \$500 addressed to a specific Soldier, Airman, Sailor, Marine, retiree or veteran by visiting ShopMyExchange.com and clicking “Purchase Gift Cards” at the bottom of the page. Authorized shoppers can also purchase gift cards through their ShopMyExchange.com accounts.

National Safety Month Ergonomics as risk management

Julie Shelley
Communication and Public Affairs
U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center

It might not be a well-known subject, but ergonomics the study and prevention of work-related musculoskeletal disorders, or WMSD is a guiding principle in everything the Army does, from equipment design to individual Soldier movement in everyday tasks.

It also should be a major part of every leader’s safety and occupational health program, whether a field unit with Soldiers scattered across locations or a predominantly civilian organization with employees on a depot production line and everything in between.

“Ergonomics isn’t flashy and it’s not something many people give a lot of thought to,” said Command Sgt. Maj. William L. Gardner II, U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center. “But it’s incredibly important in keeping our Soldiers and workforce healthy and ready for not only today, but a long career as well.”

According to John Pentikis, Ph.D., ergonomics branch chief and ergonomist Kelsey McCoskey, both of the Army Public Health Center at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, WMSD risk factors include non-neutral postures, repetition, force, mechanical compression, duration, vibration and temperature extremes.

“Limiting exposure to these hazards reduces potential for worker fatigue, errors and unsafe acts and increases effectiveness and efficiency,” Pentikis said. “This can be achieved by designing and modifying

work environments through engineering and administrative controls. It’s really about fitting the workstation to the worker.”

Not doing so is costly. During 2018, 53 percent of Soldiers reported a new musculoskeletal injury, with 71 percent of those cases resulting from cumulative, micro-traumatic overuse, McCoskey said. The year prior, material handling was the No. 1 cause of civilian injury claims for Department of the Army civilians, outpacing slips, trips and falls and motor vehicle mishaps. Lower back disorders accounted for nearly half those cases.

“Even those who are physically fit may face undue risk of musculoskeletal discomfort and injury in physically demanding jobs,” she said.

The single-most important mitigation measure leaders can take to help prevent these all-too-common disorders is relatively simple: commit to and maintain a functioning ergonomics program at all levels of management.

“It should be evident that safety, health and readiness are as important as production,” Pentikis said. “The easiest way to do this is to be involved in how people are working. Don’t assume just because the job is being done that it’s being done without harm.”

As a first step, leaders can engage their local safety office or unit safety professional for advice and input on establishing an ergonomics program. They may also reach the APHC via their website, <https://phc.amedd.army.mil>, to request an ergonomics consultation or assessment.

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