

# PENTAGRAM

JOINT BASE MYER — HENDERSON HALL

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**Balancing  
motherhood with  
military service**

See page 8

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# WELCOME



**Denise Caskey**  
Public Affairs Specialist

Greetings from Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall — “America’s Post!” — and the latest edition of the Pentagram.

I am constantly in awe of the women who serve our country - even more so when those women are also trying to raise the next generation of service men and women. For this issue, I was honored to speak with some of these women from around the National Capital Region and find out how they balance motherhood with their military service.

In this edition, we also say goodbye to JBM-HH Command Sergeant Major Matthew Majeski and introduce you to Londia Goodine, the victim advocate for the JBM-HH SHARP Program, and Army Master Sgt. Amaka Anderson, a SARC at the Pentagon, and dive into the Headquarters Battalion’s Leader Professional Development program - plus so much more.

Our next issue comes out in June 2023. As always, we invite you to share with us any ideas you have for future content.

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Col. David Bowling
- ★ **Deputy Commander**  
Lt. Col. John Dexter
- ★ **Director of Public Affairs**  
Sherry Kuiper
- ★ **Command Information Chief**  
Pamela Kulokas

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**Flickr.com/photos/jbm-hh**



**President**  
Jim Normandin  
[jim.normandin@adamspg.com](mailto:jim.normandin@adamspg.com)



**Executive Editor**  
Eli Wohlenhaus  
[ewohlenhaus@dcilitary.com](mailto:ewohlenhaus@dcilitary.com)  
240-801-2258



**Account Executive**  
Ryan Ebaugh  
[rebaugh@dcilitary.com](mailto:rebaugh@dcilitary.com)  
443-963-6013

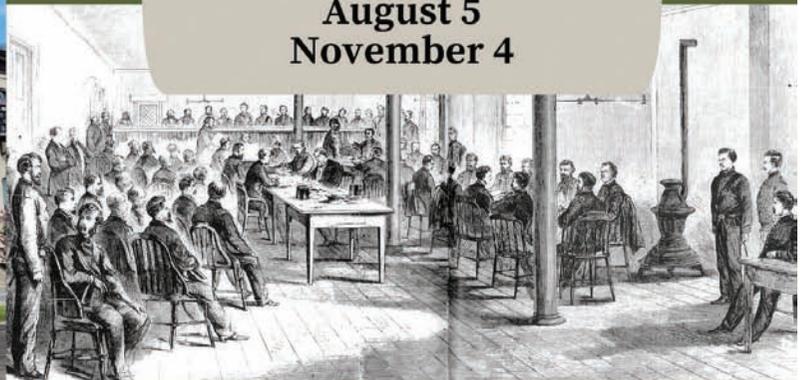


**Graphic Designer**  
Sally Covey  
[scovey@chespub.com](mailto:scovey@chespub.com)



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Staff Sgt. Retanya Collier, second from the left, and her family grin after a recent escape room adventure in Arlington. (Courtesy photo)

# Serving on two fronts – finding balance between motherhood and military service

**Denise Caskey**  
JBM-HH Public Affairs

The military has come a long way in the last 50 years, putting its people first and making it easier for women to serve, especially when it comes to motherhood.

In 1970, the case of Air Force Capt. Susan Struck, a nurse in Vietnam, was the catalyst

for change. In the case *Struck v. Secretary of Defense*, Struck had been honorably dismissed from service because she was pregnant.

Struck's case went all the way to the Supreme Court, with her attorney, Ruth Bader-Ginsburg, but was never heard. At the urging of Erwin Griswold, solicitor general of the United States, the Air Force decided to abandon its pregnancy policy.

Today, motherhood no longer hinders a woman's ability to serve in the military, and many women have found ways to balance service to their country with serving their families. Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall Public Affairs recently spoke with service members from around the National Capital Region to discuss the challenges of being a mother in the military.

**PA: What has been the most challenging aspect of being a mother in the military?**

**Army Staff Sgt. Retanya Collier, Fort Belvoir:** It just depends on the leadership and where you're stationed. Fort Belvoir is really nice, because you have leadership that is more about the Soldier and making sure their family is good. They say if your family is good, then they know you will do what you need to do to effectively execute your job and your mission.

**Army 2nd Lt. Shawna Laity, National Guard Bureau in Arlington:** Being a Soldier in the reserve sometimes can bring its own unique set of challenges that people wouldn't think of if they're a full timer, because almost 100 percent of what we're called to do is done on a weekend, and almost all the fun things happen on a weekend. There are birthday parties and trips and things such as that. Sometimes you're like, 'I want to go to my kid's birthday. Can I duck out early?' and you might have leadership that says, 'yes' or 'you can make up that day,' or you might have someone that says, 'I've missed every birthday of every kid I've ever had.' That's when even a reserve component Soldier will have a sacrifice to make that sometimes you don't anticipate.

**Army 1st Sgt. Corrine Geiger, National Guard Bureau in Arlington:** Being in a leadership role in the reserve is a lot more than one weekend a month. Not a day goes by that I don't spend at least two hours doing reserve stuff. I work full time as well as a Department of the



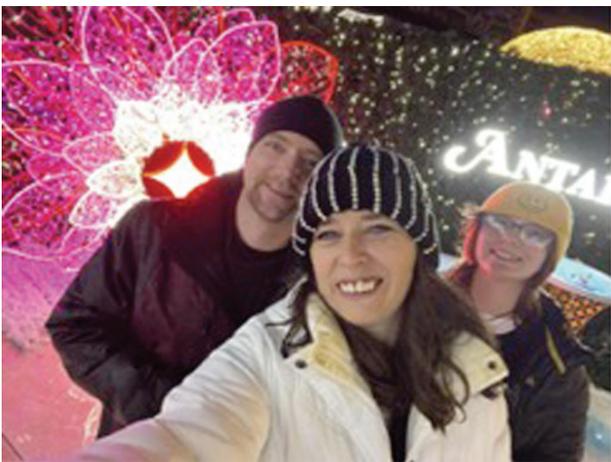
2nd Lt. Shawna Laity, back right, is with her husband, George, and two daughters, Zia, left, and Aurora, right, dressed as characters from "Stars Wars" for Halloween in 2022. (Courtesy photo)

Army civilian, so I'm trying to juggle that with making time for my daughter and making sure she gets the attention she needs from me. That, as a reservist, even more so than the drills themselves, is challenging. My unit is in Fort Dix, New Jersey, so I have to travel for my reserve duty. Me not being there for the weekend puts a lot on my family. My husband's whole weekend revolves around my reserve duty too, because it's not like I'm just gone for an eight- or 10-hour block of time. I'm gone from Friday afternoon until 10 or 11 o'clock Sunday night. They make a lot of sacrifices on my behalf.

On the cover: 2nd Lt. Shawna Laity and her children, Aurora, left, and Zia, right, stop to pose for a photo at Laity's Basic Officer Leader Course graduation at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. (Courtesy Photo)



1st Sgt. Corrine Geiger, right, poses with her husband, Will, and daughter, Fiona, at Enchant Washington D.C. light display in December 2022 at Nationals Park. (Courtesy photo)



Sgt. 1st Class Ashley Boyer, center, enjoys the Enchant Washington D.C. light display with her husband, Josh, and daughter, Emma, December 2022 at Nationals Park. (Courtesy photo)

**Army Sgt 1st Class Ashley Boyer, National Guard Bureau in Arlington:** Having served in both a Guard capacity and a full-time capacity, there's drastic differences between the two. When you're doing drill weekends, some leadership is more understanding. If you don't request it at least a month out, or if it's not something significant like a wedding or a funeral, you don't necessarily get that acceptance or that extension to make it up another day or another weekend. When you are full time, you get your weekends, but sometimes you give up your evenings or early mornings to meet the mission. It's kind of six of one, half a dozen of another. Both require extra time and extra effort that could, and sometimes should, be spent with your family. There are sacrifices either way you go.

**Army Capt. Amanda Damian, Fort Belvoir:** It's hard to practice self-care. I'm always focused on my family and my job, so there's not a lot of Me time. Finding that balance has been difficult as well, but I know that in order to give my family and my military service 100 percent, then I need to get myself to that 100 percent. I know there's also days when I only have 50 percent to give, but if I'm able to give 100 percent of that 50 percent then that's what I can give for that day. But just trying to remind myself that at the end of the day I'm human and trying to take care of myself and my family, and as long as I'm getting my work done, it's not the end of the world if there's a little imbalance every now and then.

**Army Staff Sgt. Christy Charity, Fort Belvoir:** The most challenging part about being a mother and serving in the military is being intentional about the time I do get with my children. I have a 1- and a 2-year-old. By the time I get home in the evenings, I have about two hours with my children before it is time for them to go to bed. During those two hours, they still need to be fed dinner, have bath time and then conduct their bedtime routine. It feels like there simply isn't enough time in the day to spend quality time with my kids.



Capt. Amanda Damien, left, is pictured with her daughter, Daniella, and her husband on the first day of daycare at the Child Development Center on Fort Belvoir, Virginia. (Courtesy photo)

**Army Maj. Meadow Reeder, National Guard Bureau in Arlington:** I am a geo-bachelorette in the National Capital Region. I maintain housing in Virginia, but my husband and daughter still live in Pennsylvania. I get a lot of questions about this. It is common to hear of men being geo-bachelors, but people tend to have a hard time imagining a mother not seeing her child every night, by choice.

### What skills have you learned as a mother that help in your military service?

**Laity:** A broader understanding of unconditional love. Some people might think it's a little too fluffy to say love, but love comes in all forms. It's that dedication and commitment – 'I'm not going to give up on you. We're in this together. If you need resources, I have resources. If I don't have the resources, I will find the resource. If you're sick, there are answers. If you're in trouble, there are answers. If you need a push...' – Those are the same kind of qualities that I walk through in life with my children. And then, for the Army itself, the idea of a community coming together for a greater purpose, for wanting excellence in the smallest and most menial tasks. So, from being a mom and into the military, it's a broadening understanding of love for me.



Staff Sgt. Christy Charity, right, her husband, Lawrence, son, Ari, and daughter, Ava, enjoy a walk around Belmont Bay in summer of 2022. (Courtesy photo)

**Damian:** Being able to prioritize what's important and trying not to dwell too much on little things as much, because if everything's a priority, then essentially nothing can be a priority.

### How did the military prepare you for children?

**Reeder:** The patience and communication and analytical skills I developed in the military helped me be a better mother. Instead of being frustrated with my daughter for doing something she wasn't supposed to or making a bad decision, I try to find out what her reasoning was and talk through it like a counseling session with a brand-new lieutenant. I can see that it has made her a better communicator too.



Maj. Meadow Reeder, right, with her husband, Trevor and daughter, Aurora, pose for a picture following a gymnastics competition in January in which Aurora received her best personal scores in the beam and floor events. (Courtesy photo)

**Charity:** The military has prepared me for being a parent by teaching me how to work well under stress, as well as simply cope with the stress. The Army preaches about resilience, and having personal resilience prepared me for the occasional stresses of parenthood.

### Has there ever been a time when you thought it would be easier to leave the military and just be a mom?

**Boyer:** I would have to say no. I joined at 17, and so the military for me has given me everything I have to this point, so I wouldn't change a thing.

**Laity:** I was a band director on the civilian side for 10 years, and being a band director would actually take me away from my family far more than my military career has so far with football games and marching competitions and all of the morning and evening rehearsals. So far in the military, I've been surrounded by leadership that is family first and making sure that your family's taken care of. When you're a band director, there's nobody saying that. But also, just the financial aspect. The better health insurance and the better base pay is something that's helped me be able to provide better for my family, and I appreciate that.

**Damian:** There's definitely been multiple times when I thought it would be easier to leave service and just be a mom - whenever she gets sick or right before I went back to work from maternity leave, because, to me, there's no better caretaker for my child than myself or my husband.

### What are some tips or advice you have for service members who are mothers or are thinking of becoming mothers?

**Laity:** Never underestimate the example that you give to your children by just wearing the uniform. I think one of the best things that I do as an example to my daughters is wear the uniform, and whether it's that they see their mom in a position of leadership or balancing home and work and taking the things that I've learned - from resilience to structure to discipline - and applying it, even if they don't understand the concept or the broader reason why that is, they can benefit from it.

**Geiger:** Try to find and connect with other women who have children and have maybe gone through some of the difficulties or challenges you might face as a mom trying to continue to serve. That way, you have kind of a sounding board and other people to talk to when things do get stressful or you're not sure how to deal with something. It's always good to

have that guidance from others who have been there in the past or sometimes even someone to just listen when you're frustrated.

**Damian:** Make time for yourself as a mom. Try to find that balance and not lose yourself in the whole of just being a mom. A lot of the time it is easier said than done, but try to make time for yourself and do things that you enjoy. Remember that at the end of the day, you're more than just a mom. There are other aspects of your personality, of your life, that you need to focus on as well.

### Anything else?

**Laity:** I just encourage leadership to think outside the box and consider those times when something that may seem menial becomes paramount in our lives. The littlest

thing that leadership can do to is consider that hierarchy of family first. If you put that investment into the family for the mothers in uniform, it will come back tenfold.

**Boyer:** Our children, not just our daughters, see how we're treated as mothers in the military. When my daughter was little, she would run around in my patrol cap saying, 'I'm going to be an Army girl like mom.' And she still says that today. I truly feel that it's because she has seen the opportunities the military has afforded me as well as the treatment that I've received. Even into her teenage years, she still says, 'Mom, I want to do it.' As long as Soldiers, but especially mothers, are treated with dignity and respect, they'll continue to recruit for future generations to come.

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# Majeski looks back on his time at JBM-HH

**Denise Caskey**

JBM-HH Public Affairs

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Matthew Majeski was a 17-year-old kid looking for adventure when he decided to join the Army in 1993. He had never been out of New York state, and he wanted to do and see something different. He never imagined he would one day become command sergeant major for Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall.

“I couldn’t even see myself at this age, for one,” Majeski said. “I didn’t think I’d make it a career back then – not before basic. There’s rules and regulations on everything to do and not do. If you follow those, it’s pretty easy. Yeah, you do hard stuff, but there’s a structure to it, and I think I needed that structure for my own growth and discipline. I definitely did not grow up or join thinking I want to be a garrison command sergeant major. I didn’t know what that was, to be honest.”

Majeski said a lot of his early Army career was spent preparing for conflicts that never came. Then 9/11 happened, and the story changed.

“We’d always been focused on the away game,” he said. “9/11 changed the priorities a lot, and shortly thereafter, conflict was a reality with Afghanistan. In hindsight, when I first got to Fort Bragg as a private in the 82nd Airborne Division, there were tons of combat patches running around, and I was like, ‘That’s what I want.’ I didn’t know any better. Fast forward to the end where you’re seeing a few different rotations and you’re like, ‘Yeah. That’s not something to be wanted. That’s something you just do if you are in that position.’”



Photos above and throughout the story highlight moments from Command Sgt. Maj. Matthew Majeski’s 30-year career. Majeski joined the Army in 1993 at age 17 and relinquished his role as command sergeant major in February 2023. (Courtesy photos)





### **Different has its rewards**

Majeski, who has a background in logistics, said being the command sergeant major for the joint base is the first job he has had that didn't align with his military training and is something he will never forget.

"This is the first job I've ever worked with a ton of government civilians and civilians in general," he said. "There's so much good you can see and do. You see a lot of not-so-good stuff, too, but then you can work to fix that, and I think that's really very rewarding. It's not what I expected. I don't know what I expected."

Beyond interacting with civilians in a professional capacity and being part of changes that will improve the quality of life for Soldiers and Marines living on JBM-HH, Majeski said it's rewarding just being part of the joint base and experiencing what it offers.

"I come to work every day, and I can see the Washington Monument and look out over Arlington National Cemetery," he said. "The amount of history here – the fact that military aviation was born here, the first military aviation fatality happened here, the courthouse reenactment – is amazing and fascinating."

As he looks toward retirement, Majeski said he will also leave with fond memories of events like Twilight Tattoo, hearing the U.S. Army Band "Pershing's Own" practice regularly and seeing children excited to see Santa every holiday season.

### **Leading through the pandemic**

Majeski took responsibility in March of 2020, just as COVID-19 was taking hold around the world, so he said his experience as command sergeant major has been different than that of other command sergeants major.



“I went to a sustainment course down in San Antonio for a couple weeks and heard rumblings of something going on in Korea. Then we came back here, and it was pretty much masks and COVID. For everyone, that was a new experience,” Majeski said, noting that a garrison command sergeant major’s job involves community engagement and a lot of face-to-face interaction with the public. Because of COVID, less of that was happening.

Keeping the lines of communication open during the pandemic was important to Majeski, and leading with empathy and compassion for

the unique situations that others were experiencing was key to his ability to put “People First” during a time of uncertainty.

He said the platforms used to help keep lines of communication open during the pandemic, like MS Teams and email, helped, adding that it was months before he met face-to-face with the directors on the joint base.

Despite COVID, Majeski said he is proud of the projects he was part of during his time at JBM-HH, from the beginning of the barracks renovations to the renovation of the dining facility.

“The swing space arriving is a big win, because that means when those are ready, the Marines can move out (of their barracks) and move into the swing space,” Majeski said. “Then their barracks can be renovated. It shows progress rather than 120 Marines trying to find an apartment somewhere. I’m curious to see the DFAC finished. I will probably come back just to see that. Walking by, I see they’re making some good improvements on it. That would be a huge improvement to the lives of service members here.”

### **Future is in the air**

Majeski, who grew up loving film and special effects and studied, of all things, cosmetology as a vocational-technical class in high school, said his plans after retirement are up in the air, but he doesn’t think special effects or cosmetology will factor into the future.

“Logistics is my background, but I’m looking for more like program management or a program analyst because that’s kind of what you do as a command sergeant major,” Majeski said. “You just fix things and adjust things and tweak things to make stuff work a little better. I enjoy that.”

As far as where he sees himself and his family living, Majeski said although he and his family love the area, he doesn’t see them staying in the National Capital Region. His wife and daughter love beach life, so they will most likely pick someplace close to the water.

### **Parting words**

When he thinks about tasks he is leaving unfinished at the end of his tenure at JBM-HH, Majeski said mentoring Soldiers, helping them figure out their path, sharing his experience and hearing the experiences of others are things he has always enjoyed and wishes he had more time to do.



As he gets ready to pass the torch to the next command sergeant major, Majeski wants Soldiers to know it is okay to ask for help, and sometimes just talking about a problem with someone they trust will give them more clarity and help them come up with solutions. Trust is a big part of the success of the Army, he said.

“I had a really good leader who said when Soldiers stop bringing you their problems, it’s because they think you don’t care about their problems,” Majeski said. “I think that’s true, because it requires trust for someone to tell you, ‘These are my problems,’ and trust that you will keep that confidence, and it’s not going to be water cooler conversation down the line. It’s a foundational block for the military: trust. Mentoring and sharing is part of our culture. The power of the Army is its people, so if you’re trusting the person on your left or right, and they’re trusting you, it’s amazing the stuff that you can accomplish.”



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May 11-13



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Commander of Headquarters Battalion, Lt. Col. Jay Bao, addresses his Soldiers during the “People First” session of the Leader Professional Development program December 9, 2022, at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall. (Photo by Rachel Everett, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

# Army priorities fuel JBM-HH Headquarters Battalion Leader Professional Development program

**Sherry Kuiper**

JBM-HH Public Affairs Office

Adding value, promoting the profession, understanding the Army Priorities and experiencing the Army’s history are just a few of the driving forces behind the Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall Headquarters Battalion’s Leader Professional Development program.

“We are doing so much in terms of people; we are sometimes not connected with the big picture and what the Army is doing,” said Maj. Matthew Allen, the battalion executive officer who also oversees the LPD program. “We brought the Leader Professional Development program to help increase knowledge about what the Army is doing so that Soldiers feel connected and build their knowledge.”

Soldiers spoke candidly about issues they and their fellow service members face during an LPD session Dec. 9, 2022, focused on “People First,” which is the Army’s top priority.

## Wellbeing mindset

In addition to the open discussion, the session included a panel of six experts in the areas of mental, spiritual, physical and family health, which Master Sgt. Timothy Fisher called his ‘People First’ pillars.

“This LPD gave me a good opportunity to think about what “People First” truly means in today’s Army. When you consider that we’re a peacetime Army for the first time in a long time,” said Fisher, the battalion’s S1 NCOIC who organized the session. “We can reset our

top priorities and look at ways to improve how we take care of our Soldiers, civilians and families. While reviewing the Army Chief of Staff’s “Army People Strategy,” it was obvious that there was heavy emphasis on the health of our minds, our families, our spirituality and our bodies.”

Throughout the session, the Soldiers in the room shared their own experiences and how they lead with the “People First” mindset.

Fisher said Army leadership has proven their willingness to tackle difficult subjects that tear at the fabric of the force, and this was a great opportunity to have a very candid leader-led discussion about that effort.

### Building future leaders

In developing the LPD, Allen said the battalion is building a culture of learning.

“We are incorporating what we are learning



Soldiers from the Headquarters Battalion at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall candidly discuss issues they and their fellow Soldiers face in the “People First” session of the Leader Professional Development program Dec. 9, 2022. (Photo by Rachel Everett, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

in the LPD and reinforcing it in everything our Soldiers do,” he said.

Allen added it’s important to give the Soldiers a voice, which was demonstrated during the session.

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Panelists engage in discussion with Soldiers in the Headquarters Battalion during a session of the Leader Professional Development program focused on “People First” Dec. 9, 2022, at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall. (Photo by Rachel Everett, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

The organizational core values for the Headquarters Battalion serve as guiding principles for how Soldiers execute the mission and are defined by “PEOPLE.”

*People First and Mission Always*  
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**Professionalism**  
**Leadership and Service**  
**Engaged Workforce**

The battalion’s leadership program strives to balance the needs of the Soldiers with the leadership requirements of the organization, seeking to support their Soldiers’ current and future service in the Army by expanding upon their knowledge about the Army’s Priorities.

“We must invest in our next generation of Soldiers, because they are the ones who will make sure we have the best military in the world and continue to fight for Americans and keep our country safe,” said Lt. Col. Jay Bao, Headquarters Battalion commander. “I believe if we, as leaders, do not take the time to teach, coach and mentor, then we are forgoing opportunities to cultivate the most powerful and lethal capability our Army has to offer.”

The battalion is taking a holistic, long-term approach with the program, which will not only focus on technical skills, but also leadership soft skills, building trust, shaping positive morale and value systems and improve camaraderie.

Bao believes these are the things that will help individuals be successful not just in the Army but also beyond the Army.

“If done right, the return on investment is exponential in the form of improved lives, relationships, mission capability, resiliency and readiness,” he said.

### **Moving forward**

Upcoming themes for the series are readiness, leadership, and trust and respect.

The Headquarters Battalion’s Leadership Professional Development program uses a variety of resources to engage Soldiers, such as scheduled programs, guest speakers, off-site learning opportunities and brown bag luncheons with the battalion’s command sergeant major.

The program is also led by the Soldiers themselves, giving them the opportunity to hone their own leadership skills.

In addition, the program also provides opportunities for Soldiers to learn about Army values from those who demonstrate those values best: our nation’s Medal of Honor recipients.

The Medal of Honor series portion of the program focuses on studying four different recipients each year, but the battalion also seeks out living Medal of Honor recipients to come and speak to the Soldiers.

In the end, the program is about one thing, and that is investing in Soldiers, according to Bao.

“Our people are worth the investment, because the current and future state of America’s freedom and way of life is worth fighting for.”



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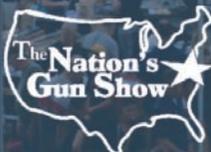


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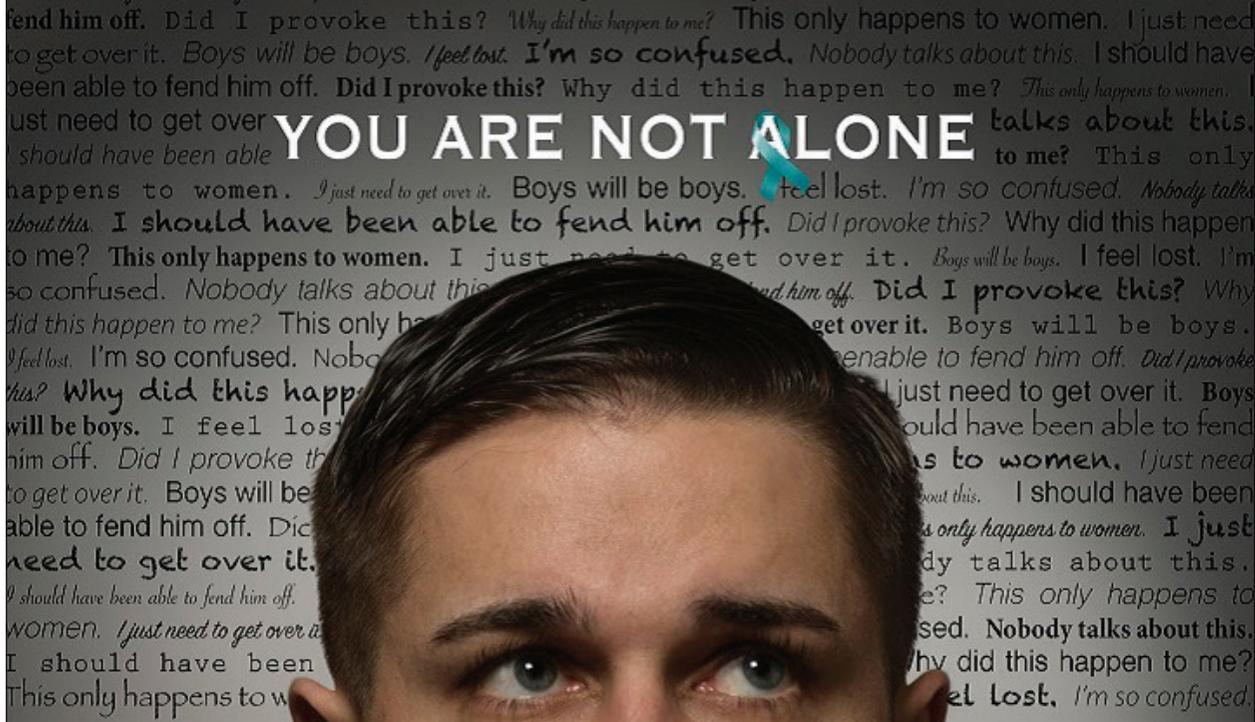
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The Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention victim advocate at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall and the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator at the Pentagon reminds victims they have someone in their corner who can help them through difficult times and that they should never be afraid to come forward. (U.S. Air Force illustration by Staff Sgt. Sarah Denewellis)

## Advocates lend their voices to sexual assault and harassment victims

**Denise Caskey**  
JBM-HH Public Affairs

The military is a community coming together for a singular purpose, so when one community member experiences sexual assault and harassment, it can lower the morale and cohesion of the entire community – making it harder to fulfill its mission.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, on his first day in office, addressed the issue of sexual assault in the military by saying, “I take the issue of sexual assault very, very seriously. We’ve been working at this for a long time in earnest, but we haven’t gotten it right. In my commitment to our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines and dependents, we’re going to do everything in our power to get it right.”

To address the issue of sexual assault and harassment, the Department of Defense immediately began implementing some of the 80 recommen-

dations laid out in a 2021 Independent Review Commission on sexual assault in the Military.

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center estimates that in 2018, only around 25 percent of sexual assaults were reported to police. According to the report, victims often don’t report the assault out of fear of reprisal or retaliation or because they’re embarrassed or ashamed.

“It’s difficult when you have been sexually assaulted, or you’re getting harassed, and you have to tell your boss about it,” said Londia Goodine, Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention victim advocate. “It’s so personal and humiliating. You don’t know how it’s going to be perceived.”

Coming forward can be a difficult decision, but for those who decide to report their assault, the JBM-HH SHARP victim advocate and the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator at the Pentagon can offer guidance and support.

“The victim advocate supports the victim from the time that the trauma happens,” Goodine said. “We are the response people, able to meet the victim anywhere to support them when they disclose that they have been sexually harassed or sexually assaulted. We give them the resources, referrals and support they need. We also support them through the legal process.”

Goodine is new to her position at JBM-HH, but she is not new to dealing with individuals in crisis. Before coming to JBM-HH, Goodine worked with children in a crisis center in St. Louis.

“I chose to be in the field because I like helping get people through the process of healing and assisting them with resources and referrals,” Goodine said. “I’m an advocate, so I get to be their voice, and that is super empowering to see them go from me being their voice to them gaining their voice and their thoughts and regaining their independence and their sense of freedom and joy.”

As a survivor of sexual assault, Army Master Sgt. Amaka Anderson, a SARC at the Pentagon, uses her insight into what victims go through to educate command on how they should view the situation, and she agrees with Goodine.

“It gives me a sense of fulfillment helping others through the process,” Anderson said. “It’s seeing the victim bounce back through their recovery and healing process from all the trauma and backlash of what happened. I think that’s the best feeling ever – to see someone go through that and come out on the other side.”

The victim is the main priority of the victim advocate, but beyond assisting and supporting victims, Goodine’s job also includes community outreach and providing support for SARC.

“We have to know who’s at the crisis centers, who’s at the hospitals and make sure they know that we are here and that we are available for them,” Goodine said.

As a SARC, Anderson shares some of the victim advocate responsibilities, but her daily duties also include informing command about how victims

who filed unrestricted reports are progressing through the healing process, providing guidance to command and the victim advocate on dealing with Soldiers and providing training to leaders and supervisors who then train the rest of the force.

“The Army has made a big shift in regard to reprisal,” Anderson said. “That’s the reason the commanders and supervisors are given training. They want the victims to know that reprisal will be handled, so they don’t have to be fearful of coming forward.”

Sexual assault and sexual harassment are often deeply personal experiences, Goodine said. For victims, just knowing there is someone who will be their voice and advocate for them can ease some of the emotional burden.

“We can also act as a third party,” Anderson added. “If somebody wanted us to go in and address something that’s going on, and they didn’t want to go in directly, we can address the situation for them.”

The SARC and the SHARP victim advocates work hand-in-hand with the command, Goodine said, and it’s important for victims to know that the command cares about them and wants to help.

Bringing an end to the scourge of sexual assault in the military is a top priority for everyone from the Secretary of Defense to garrison command. To that end, during Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month in April, JBM-HH Commander David Bowling and the rest of the command team will sign a proclamation pledging to end sexual assault and harassment on the base.

The JBM-HH SHARP office and the Department of Defense offer several points of contact available around the clock. The DoD Safe 24-hour helpline 24/7 is 877-995-5247 and can be accessed by visiting <https://safehelpline.org>. To reach JBM-HH SHARP/Pentagon 24-hour Helpline, call or text 202-498-4009.



Goodine



Anderson

# Presidential Salute Battery honors dignitaries and events

Kevin M. Hymel  
Arlington National Cemetery



Soldiers of the 3d U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) Presidential Salute Battery fire 21 active rounds to greet Ecuador's President Guillermo Lasso to Arlington National Cemetery, where he came to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Dec. 19, 2022. The Soldiers spaced their rounds by nine seconds so they could complete their shots exactly when the president reached the Tomb. (Photo by Kevin M. Hymel for ANC)



Soldiers of the 3d U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) Presidential Salute Battery fire one of 21 rounds from their Howitzer cannons to greet Ecuador's President Guillermo Lasso to Arlington National Cemetery, where he came to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Dec. 19, 2022. (Photo by Kevin M. Hymel for ANC)

On Dec. 19, 2022, the Soldiers of the Presidential Salute Battery stood before their cannons, awaiting the arrival of Ecuador's President, Guillermo Lasso. The Soldiers had set up three polished and gleaming 105mm howitzers at Section 37 of Arlington National Cemetery, and their two-man teams were ready to fire. Behind them stood four senior Soldiers and a captain.

"Settle down!" ordered the captain. "Stand by!" Then, the signal came from Lasso's caravan. The captain, who had been standing with his right arm out, curled his fingers into a fist. The gunner at the first cannon pulled the lanyard. "Boom!"

Nine seconds later, an NCO standing near the captain pointed at the second gun and called out

"Top!" and the second gun fired. Then he pointed again at the first cannon, waited nine seconds and the first cannon fired again.

The process continued with each cannon firing, and empty shells clinking onto the street, until they fired a combined 21 shots. The last shot rang out just as the motorcade arrived at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

The gunners at the third cannon -the backup known as "Thrape" - stood quietly, ready to take over if one of the other two cannons malfunctioned. While the NCO shouted out "Wap" - short for "One Gun" - and "Top" - short for "Two Gun," - another Soldier stood by the captain, holding a chart with one-through-21 on it.

He pointed at each number as the gunners fired so that the captain could keep count. Even though the battery fired off 21 shots, the mission was not over. They would repeat the process when the president left the cemetery.

Such is the work of the 3d U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard)'s 1st Battalion, Presidential Salute Battery, which fires its cannons at presidential inaugurations, foreign dignitary visits, funerals for high-ranking officers, and other events, such as the Fourth of July and the Army Ten-Miler race.

For a visit from a dignitary such as Lasso, a communications representative in the lead vehicle radios Capt. Nathan Lundquist, the battery officer in charge, as the vehicle passes by McClellan Gate. That starts the firing sequence. "We found through trial and error," explained Lundquist, "that nine seconds is the interval spacing that gets the last round fired as they get to the Tomb."

Surprisingly, none of the gunners are trained artillerymen from the U.S. Army's Field Artillery School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. They're actually mortarmen.

"Because this is an infantry battalion," said 1st Lt. Nicholas Lami, "there are no artillerymen." Instead, they are trained on ceremonial procedures at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall and drill both there and at the cemetery.

The maintenance and performance training is intense, according to section leader Staff Sgt. Colin Cooper.

"The Soldiers learn how to pull everything apart," he said. "Everything is cleaned and shined before it goes out for a mission."

Once the men learn loading procedures on the primary cannons, they learn it on the backup cannon, which is always present in case a primary cannon fails.

"We don't mess around," Cooper said. When the men finish training on the backup, they

learn how to be gunners, first on the primaries, and then on the backup. "Our backup gunner is typically the best gunner in the platoon," he said. "He'll be there to guarantee that everything goes smoothly and there are no hiccups."

The Soldiers take acute care of their weapons. They hand-sand all the stainless-steel pieces to shine like chrome, using everything from 80-grit to 3,000-grit sandpaper. The cannon block itself requires eight hours of manual sanding.

"The point being to make these as shiny and pristine as possible when they come out here," Cooper said.

Lami agreed.

"I'd never seen 3,000 grit sandpaper in my life, and I show up on my first day, and they are laser focused on one singular piece that you can't even see because it's in the (cannon's) inner workings," he said.

Lami then listed the unit's two major functions: "One: Make sure it shines; and two: Do not have a misfire."

The battery operates 10 cannons in all. They are 105mm Howitzer cannons that saw service in World War II and have been "sized down to take a 75mm blank," Cooper said.

The blank rounds look like a candle inside a shell casing, with a wax seal holding in the gunpowder and filament. The cannons themselves were used in North Africa and Europe. One even knocked out a German tank.

The officers and NCOs take a great deal of pride in their men and their ceremonial weapons.

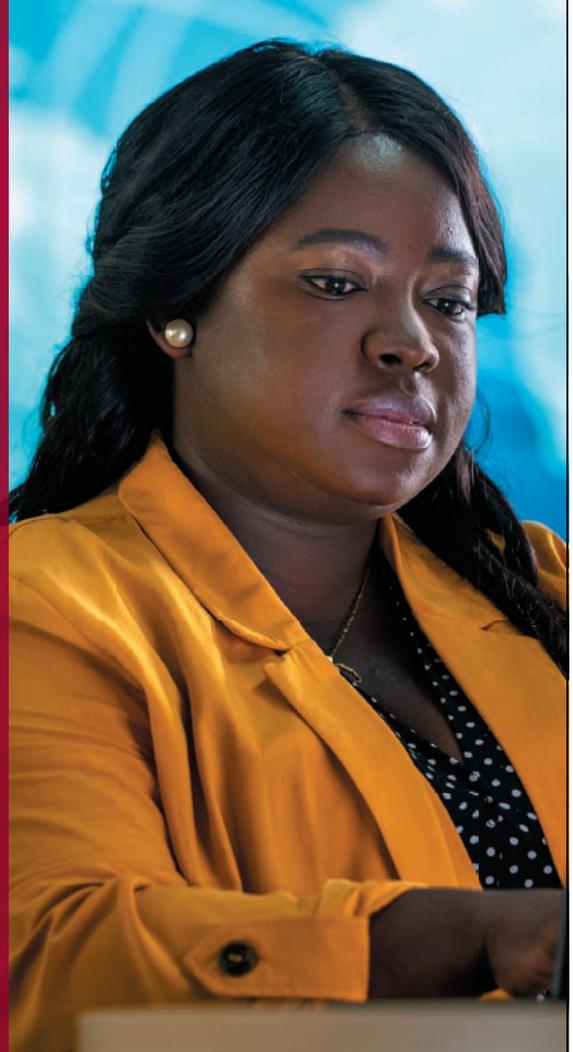
"Things are down to the second here," Lami said. "The men's level of proficiency between maintenance and the amount of care the guys put into doing their job is impressive."

Cooper proudly pointed to the three Howitzers in Section 37 and said, "These are, by far, the nicest 105s you'll find in the Army."

It was no boast. It's simply part of the mission for the Presidential Salute Battery.

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Maj. Gen. Allan M. Pepin, commanding general, Joint Force Headquarters - National Capital Region and the U.S. Army Military District of Washington, visits his alma mater, Wentworth Institute of Technology and speaks with an attendee, during a Veterans Day luncheon Nov. 4, 2022 in Boston. He delivered a keynote speech and interacted with fellow service members, veterans and faculty. (U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Josue Patricio)

# Army leaders celebrate Boston homecoming with local schools

**Hannah Frenchick**

Joint Task Force-National Capital Region/  
U.S. Army Military District of Washington

Army Maj. Gen. Allan M. Pepin and Command Sgt. Maj. Franklin Velez, commanding general and command sergeant major of the Joint Task Force-National Capital Region/U.S. Army Military District of Washington and natives of the northwest suburbs of Boston, received homecoming salutes from local high school and university students when they

returned home Nov. 3 to 5, 2022, to talk with students about the impacts of their military service.

Pepin focused on Tewksbury Memorial High School and Wentworth Institute of Technology, where he attended school, and Velez visited Greater Lawrence Technical School, where he attended high school. Both leaders brought with them Soldiers from The U.S. Army Band “Pershing’s Own” and members of the U.S. Army Drill team, 3d U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard).

While in town, the group of Soldiers also visited Methuen High School, and the city of Boston invited Pepin to serve as Grand Marshal of its Boston Veterans Day parade. The Soldiers were overwhelmed with the warmth of the visit.

When Velez arrived at Lawrence High School to speak with the JROTC program and freshman class, his visit became a family affair. The 9th grade vice principal, his cousin Melissa Melendez, introduced him to the students, and his sister, Carmen, and her husband attended the school assembly.

“We knew a long time ago that Command Sgt. Maj. Velez was going to end up in the Army somehow, because I can’t tell you how many times I stepped on those little plastic Army green Soldiers (growing up),” Melendez said. “I’ll be honest, I had to look up what command sergeant major was, because I did not understand that it was such a high rank.”

While in Lawrence, Velez returned to Greater Lawrence Technical School, his high school alma mater. Locals greeted him with a hero’s welcome by suspending a large American flag between two fire truck aerial ladders that extended nearly 100 feet high.

“I’ve spent 32 years of my adult life in the military and have gone so many places and have seen so many things,” Velez said. “I started here in Lawrence. I graduated in 1988, left here in 1990, and it was a long journey to get to where I’m at, but it went quickly.”

Colleen Abdulla, a student at Greater Lawrence Technical School, said Velez returning to Lawrence is incredibly important, because it reminded her that senior leaders like him were once in their shoes as high school students too.

“This is a truly humbling experience,” said Pepin, reflecting on his return to Wentworth. “I have not been back on this campus since I left when I got my commission, and I went off to do the Army’s mission.”

While the schools asked Pepin and Velez to share their Army experiences, the leaders en-

couraged Soldiers of the U.S. Army Band “Pershing’s Own” and of the 3d U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) traveling with their group to share their stories as representatives of the new generation of service members.

“The folks I (brought up here), they’re a little bit younger than I am. They’ve got maybe a year or two, maybe three years in the Army,” Velez said. “I really don’t want to talk about myself, because these kids have a more amazing story than I do.”

“The (band) obviously looks and sounds amazing,” said Pepin while speaking at Wentworth. “Our drill team, they look awesome, but what you see behind that (are) Soldiers who joined with a unique skillset. The lead drill member you saw, he’s actually a medic. He’s not a professional drill team member; we don’t have an MOS (military occupation specialty) for that.”

In fact, the drill team member that Pepin spoke of, Spc. Reace Fitzgerald, from Fort Wayne, Indiana, competed in the World Drill Championships as an individual and is currently ranked #2 in the world.

While visiting their hometowns Pepin, Velez and their supporting assets from The Old Guard stopped by the Methuen High School JROTC program.

“Honestly, I was expecting it to be incredibly formal, not nearly as stress free as the major general and command sergeant major made it,” said Lt. Col. (Ret.) Timothy O’Flaherty, senior Army instructor at Methuen High School. “Both men are incredibly modest in their accomplishments. It was a relief that they were both down to Earth.”

During their time at Methuen High School, Pepin and Velez cut their speaking time short and allowed the Soldiers who accompanied them to tell the audience their own stories.

“Just like everything else we do in the military, we don’t do it alone,” Pepin said. “I’m not going to really talk to you about what I do at this level. The people behind us are representatives of the phenomenal Soldiers (in the Army).”



Soldiers and senior leaders assigned to Joint Task Force - National Capital Region, Military District of Washington engage with Methuen High School's JROTC program Nov. 4, 2022, in Methuen, Massachusetts. Maj. Gen. Allan M. Pepin and Command Sgt. Maj. Franklin Velez, commanding general and command sergeant major of Joint Force Headquarters - National Capital Region and the U.S. Army Military District of Washington, spoke with students about opportunities within the Army and praised the talents of Soldiers from the U.S. Army Drill Team, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Platoon and the Continental Color Guard. (U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Josue Patricio)

Currently serving as a Sentinel Tomb Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier located at Arlington National Cemetery, in Arlington, Virginia, Sgt. Kamille Torres joined Pepin and Velez on the trip to share her story. She is the sixth woman to earn the Sentinel Badge since 1958 and is the first Latina to hold the high honor.

Torres shared her story about joining the Army to become a cook with hope of infusing the food she would be making for service members with her Dominican and Puerto Rican culture. She said when the opportunity to join one of the most prestigious units in the Army came along, she couldn't resist interviewing for The Old Guard.

"The stories and experiences of the younger Soldiers were just as important as the ones from Maj. Gen. Pepin and Command Sgt. Maj. Velez because their age group is a lot closer to ours," said Alexa Schaal, JROTC cadet command sergeant major at Methuen High School. "We can relate to where they are in life now and how they got there, since we can picture ourselves in their positions just a few more years down the road."

Four members of the U.S. Army Drill team also performed for the JROTC cadets. They displayed discipline and precision while conducting their maneuvers.

"Watching a real-time armed exhibition from the Army, from young Soldiers, was a true honor and privilege," Schaal said. "It's motivated me to become just like one of those young Soldiers who can make something so difficult look so easy."

Throughout their time in the Boston region, Pepin and Velez shared one common message: they have to believe the future generation of the Army can be successful.

"Some little things you're learning in this junior ROTC program will help you be successful in whatever you do," Pepin said. "It makes me proud for those who are going to serve and those who are going to go out into society. This is why we serve. We want our nation to be prosperous. We want our nation to represent all people. There is no doubt that you are going to do that (when) your generation graduates."

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# Fort McNair Health Clinic celebrates inauguration

**Michelle Gonzalez**

Kimbrough Ambulatory Care Center  
& Fort Meade MEDDAC

Leaders from the Military Health System, Military District of Washington and Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall celebrated the inauguration of the Fort McNair U.S. Army Health Clinic at a ribbon-cutting ceremony Feb. 3 in Washington, D.C.

“The modern-day Fort McNair Clinic is responsible for providing medical readiness through the delivery of safe, high-quality care in support of our nation’s finest,” said Brig. Gen. Mary Krueger, Medical Readiness Command, East commanding general.

Patients of the Fort McNair Army Health Clinic will include approximately 500 enrolled beneficiaries along with nearly 4,000 students and faculty assigned to the National Defense University, Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy and the Inter-American Defense College, among other organizations located on the McNair campus of Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall and throughout the National Capital Region.

“This newly-renovated clinic is what our beneficiaries deserve, and it demonstrates the Military Health System’s unrelenting pursuit of excellence as we support the Total Force and those that we are privileged to serve alongside,” Krueger said.

The Fort McNair Army Health Clinic has provided health care services dating back to the Civil War era and represents the legacy of Maj. Walter Reed, whose work contributed to the discovery of the cause of yellow fever.

“This small but mighty clinic carries on its shoulders the sacred responsibility of ensuring



From left to right: Command Sgt. Maj. Rebecca M. Booker, Medical Readiness Command, East; Brig. Gen. Mary Krueger, Medical Readiness Command, East commanding general; Lt. Col. Elizabeth A. DeSitter, commander, Andrew Rader U.S. Army Health Clinic; and Master Sgt. Freddy Mexicanos, senior enlisted leader, Andrew Rader U.S. Army Health Clinic, celebrate the inauguration of the Fort McNair Army Health Clinic, at a ribbon cutting ceremony Feb. 3 in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Michelle Gonzalez)

that our nation’s military leaders and their families remain medically ready,” Krueger said.

The main medical facility for JBM-HH is the Andrew Rader U.S. Army Health Clinic, which is located on the Myer campus, and is a part of the Fort Meade Medical Department Activity headquartered on Fort Meade, Virginia.

The Meade MEDDAC is part of MRC, East and National Capital Region Market and includes several health, occupational and environmental health clinics at locations throughout Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia.



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