

PENTAGRAM



JOINT BASE MYER — HENDERSON HALL

ISSUE 13 • SEPTEMBER 2024



In this issue

- JBM-HH says 'ciao' to traditional dining
- AFWC opens satellite office at JBM-HH
- Myer Fitness Center gets upgrade

...and more



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EDITOR'S NOTE



Denise Caskey
Public Affairs Specialist

Greetings from Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall – “America’s Post” – and welcome to the September 2024 issue of the Pentagongram.

The readiness and resilience of our fighting forces and the civilians who support them is a top priority that drives recent changes that have taken place on the joint base. For example, we cut the ribbon opening the new warrior restaurant, America’s Kitchen in June, and a new Armed Forces Wellness Center that is co-located with our dining facility also opened its doors. Soldiers and their families transitioning to civilian life will also find the Transition Assistance Program in the same location as America’s Kitchen. Read more about all these exciting changes inside.

In this issue, you will also learn about the extensive renovation of our Myer Fitness Center. Phase one was completed a week ahead of schedule and our new state-of-the-art facility can more effectively address the functional fitness of our Soldiers, DA civilians, retirees and veterans. September is Suicide Awareness Month, and the Directorate of Prevention, Readiness and Resilience provides insight into the power of connection in preventing suicide within our ranks.

The next issue of the Pentagongram comes out in December and as always, we invite you to share with us any ideas you might have for it and future issues.

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On the cover:

Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall’s new warrior restaurant, America’s Kitchen, buzzes with activity as servicemembers and civilians alike line up at the various stations Aug. 23 during the lunch rush. The new facility opened June 12 and features a large full service salad bar, sandwich station, pizza oven and more.

CONTRIBUTORS

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- ★ **Deputy Commander**
Lt. Col. John Dexter
- ★ **Director of Public Affairs**
- ★ **Command Information Chief**
- ★ **Pentagram Editor**
Denise Caskey

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CONTACTS



Website
home.army.mil/jbmhh



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★ **President**
Jim Normandin
jim.normandin@adamspg.com

★ **Executive Editor**
Eli Wohlenhaus
ewohlenhaus@dcmilitary.com
240-801-2258

★ **Account Executive**
Ryan Ebaugh
rebaugh@dcmilitary.com
443-963-6013

★ **Graphic Designer**
Steve Baird

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Commander's Corner



Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Fisher

Each echelon of command is dedicated to creating and sustaining an environment that supports the readiness and resilience of our service men and women. The readiness and resiliency of our civilian professionals is equally essential to the execution and sustainment of our mission at America's Post.

Recently, we completed renovations of the JBM-HH warrior restaurant, America's Kitchen, to deliver premium nutrition options to sustain peak levels of performance on duty and prepared meal kits for personnel on the move. The Armed Forces Wellness Center also provides a satellite office within America's Kitchen to optimize health, readiness, and resilience for our personnel. Additionally, we redesigned the lower-level Myer Fitness Center to better promote both individual

fitness goals and provide squads and teams the ability to execute collective and targeted physical training to ensure combat readiness.

Moving forward, future renovations to single service member barracks, an upgrade of the upper level of the Myer Fitness Center, and health and holistic fitness partnerships will further enhance our ability to influence healthier lifestyles and behaviors, focus on health readiness, injury and illness prevention, and promote the professional development of small, cohesive, and lethal formations.

JBM-HH offers many services that target different aspects of readiness and resiliency; social, financial, spiritual, physical and behavioral health, through programs like the Armed Forces Wellness Center, Religious Support Office, Military and Family Life Consultants, Army Community Services, and Family, Morale, Welfare and Recreation. Each program is structured to answer specific needs and achieve favorable outcomes to ensure our personnel and families are ready to answer the call of our nation and be the very best version of themselves.

In closing, individual readiness and resiliency begin with each of us, but the collective strength of our military community is reflected within each of our service members, civilian professionals, and families. We're honored to serve with each of you at America's Post.

Michael Fisher
Command Sgt. Maj.
Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall



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Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall commander, Col. Tasha Lowery, commanding general of Joint Task Force-National Capital Region and the U.S. Army Military District of Washington, Maj. Gen. Trevor Bredenkamp and others cut the ribbon on June 12, 2024, for the grand opening of America's Kitchen, the new, state-of-the-art Warrior Restaurant dining facility on the joint base. (Photo Susan LeRoy, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

JBM-HH says 'ciao' to traditional chow hall with America's Kitchen

By Sherry Kuiper
JBM-HH Public Affairs

The long-awaited Warrior Restaurant, called America's Kitchen, served its first meals during the grand opening June 12, at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall.

The ribbon cutting included the sounds of The President's Own Marine Corps Band, along with brief remarks from garrison commander, Col. Tasha Low-

ery, and commanding general of Joint Task Force-National Capital Region and the U.S. Army Military District of Washington, Maj. Gen. Trevor Bredenkamp.

"As a commanding general, it's pretty rare to get to see a project like this come to fruition," said Bredenkamp. "I wish I could stand up here and take credit for such an incredible facility, but it's really the outcome of years of hard work from many people."

The \$21.5 million design-build contract was awarded in September 2020 with the idea of making

the warrior restaurant modern and welcoming.

Bredenkamp acknowledged the project wasn't 'smooth sailing,' and that it took longer than expected to complete.

"Despite it all, I couldn't be more proud of the facility we are opening today," he said. "It is hands-down the nicest warrior restaurant I've ever seen."

America's Kitchen is a state-of-the-art facility with several Made-to-Order stations, giving service members healthy and fresh food options, and a seating area complete with tables, lounge areas and big screen TVs.

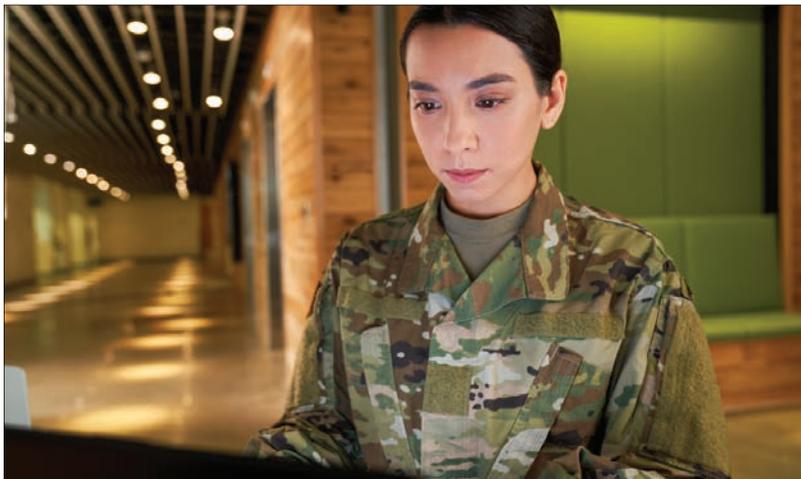
The line was out the door for over an hour as Soldiers, Marines, and DoD Civilians lined up to check out the dining hall and sample the food, which had some special features including Cornish hen, steak, lobster and cake, as the opening aligned with cele-

brating not only the opening, but also the 249th Army Birthday on June 14.

The building is much more than a dining facility, boasting many unique features that will benefit service members, such as a culinary training center and space for the Transition Assistant Program and Armed Forces Wellness Center.

"At the end of the day, we want to ensure we are doing everything we can to take care of our service members," said Col. Tasha Lowery, JBM-HH commander. "Places like this, that offer a variety of services in an area easily accessible to the service."

America's Kitchen is open daily serving breakfast, lunch and dinner through the week and brunch and dinner on weekends costing \$5.35 to \$7.05 depending on the meal service. The dining hall is open to military service members and DoD ID Card holders.



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AFWC opens satellite office at JBM-HH

By Denise Caskey
JBM-HH Public Affairs

At the same time Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall celebrated the June 12 opening of America's Kitchen, Armed Forces Wellness Center celebrated the opening of a satellite office in the same building.

It is the first AFWC office to share space with an Army dining facility, a concept which was first discussed at the November 2021 Army's Commitment to Improving Overall Nutrition forum.

"Having an AFWC within a dining facility footprint allows for the delivery of nutritional education, assessments, and coaching to take place at the point of need within the same space in which the service members will be making their food choices," said Noelle Austin-Jones, lead health educator for Fort George G. Meade and JBM-HH AFWC.

With the goal of improving individual and unit readiness and resilience, the AFWC at JBM-HH offers services that support mental and physical fitness goals such as biometric screening, metabolic testing, nutrition education, stress management and wellness coaching.

Previously, AFWC only provided services to the JBM-HH community twice a month through a partnership with Andrew Rader U.S. Army Health Clinic. The JBM-HH AFWC is open the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month, and in August will add the first and third Wednesdays. The satellite site offers the same services as all standardized AFWC locations.

The JBM-HH location will have the InBody 770 available for body composition assessments. The InBody 770 has been authorized to be used as a supplemental measurement for soldiers who do not pass height/weight or body circumference measurements.

People interested in using the BodPod instead of



The Armed Forces Wellness Center satellite office inside America's Kitchen at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall will offer all the same services as other AFWC offices, except the BodPod, which is replaced with an InBody 770 composition scanner. (Photo by Nicole Leth, Armed Forces Wellness Center)

the InBody 770 would need to contact their closest AFWC. For JBM-HH the closest offices would be at either Fort Belvoir or Fort George G. Meade.

A visit to AFWC is part of a comprehensive care plan and is integrated with the Patient Centered Medical Home, said Austin-Jones.

"The primary goal of the AFWC program is to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injury, improve overall performance, and enhance the self-efficacy of individuals to maintain lifelong healthy behaviors," she said.

Services are available to all Department of Defense beneficiaries including active duty, activated Guard and reservists, retirees and their spouses and DoD civilians.

A referral is not needed; however, clients may be referred by their primary care physician or unit command, and while walk-ins are accepted, appointments are recommended.

Before clients make their first appointment, the AFWC will ask clients to complete a health and wellness tracker questionnaire, which they will complete every 30 days for follow-up. Further requirements will be dependent upon the type of assessments being conducted. Clients will receive detailed instructions upon scheduling.

To learn more about the AFWC and to see a comprehensive contact list for all 35 AFWCs worldwide, please visit: <https://ph.health.mil/organization/hpw/Pages/ArmyWellnessCenters.aspx>, and AFWC clients can call Fort Belvoir AFWC at (703)806-1323 or Fort George G. Meade at (301)677-2006



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**Richard
Pulignani**
*Supervisory Sports
Specialist*
Directorate of
Family and Morale,
Wellness and Recreation



How does the Army help you #BeAllYouCanBe?

The Army gives me the opportunity to provide programs and services that enhance readiness and quality of life of Soldiers, families, retirees, and civilians assigned to the Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall community. My goals are to deliver programs through a comprehensive selection of innovative/trending sports and fitness programs that enrich the lives of the JBM-HH community through information, education, and recreation. I value the JBM-HH community and respond to their needs by providing well-organized and up-to-date facilities, sports and fitness programs and professional customer service that provide opportunities to enhance individual readiness, physical fitness, and overall wellness.

What is your favorite thing about working at JBM-HH?

My favorite thing is working for our Soldiers by providing opportunities for improved quality of life through traditional and trending sports and fitness programs.

From Philip Kitzko, Division Chief of Business Operations and Recreation for DFMWR

Mr. Pulignani is a passionate and dedicated professional. Richard's focus is on improving the physical and mental health and wellness of our Soldiers and their military counterparts. Richard continuously teaches, coaches, and mentors our Soldiers in not only the physical fitness aspects of their jobs, but partners with them and the units in developing events, intermural programs and activities which enhance comradery, fellowship and fun! Richard has been in military civilian service for more than 25 years and there is no one more committed to his craft and to our Soldiers than him! Richard is the standard which all others are measured against. I am thankful that he is a part of our CRD team, and I greatly appreciate his continuous drive toward excellence as he serves our Soldiers and the JBM-HH community.



Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. James Mingus paid a visit to Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall on July 29 and posed with the Soldiers and employees from the Directorate of Public Works and Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation who worked on the renovation of the Fort Myer Fitness Center. (Photo by Jason Goselin, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

Myer Fitness Center gets state-of-the-art upgrade

By Denise Caskey
JBM-HH Public Affairs

After being closed for nearly two months, the Fort Myer Fitness Center on the Myer campus of Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall reopened July 23 with a new look and new state-of-the-art equipment.

Planning for the project began in February when JBM-HH Commander Col. Tasha Lowery, JBM-HH Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Fisher and Phillip Kitzko, project lead and Division Chief of Business Operations and Recreation for the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation met with Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. James Mingus to gain insight into what he envisioned for the space.

Mingus said the renovations do a better job of addressing the functional fitness of Soldiers on the joint base and the overall physical aspect of their holistic health and fitness.

“The principal reason why we needed this is our Soldiers need their own place,” Mingus said. “When you look at the number of soldiers that live on this post, they didn’t have an adequate facility.”

Functional fitness accounts for Soldier’s real-life movements and activities, using specific patterns and exercises to support what might be encountered daily through the Soldier’s environment.

“I was tasked with comprehending Gen. Mingus’ vision and intent, formulate the project requirements and design, formulate and bring to fruition Gen. Mingus’ vision for the project which focuses

on the functional fitness, strength and conditioning of our Soldiers,” Kitzko said.

Phase one of the project started with the design and installation of a state-of-the-art floor which provides joint and skeletal protection while Soldiers are working out with heavy weights and a contemporary heavy turf for strength and conditioning evolutions, Kitzko said.

He said equipment decisions focused on giving joint base Soldiers the “finest strength and conditioning equipment known to man.”

The new functional fitness equipment includes rack systems, 1,000-pound barbells, dumbbells, kettlebells, cable machines, combo racks, JBM-HH logoed impact suppression platforms, Olympic plates, battle ropes, flip tires and all the hammer strength machines to support cardiovascular health.

While renovations were being done, the racquetball courts were temporarily repurposed to give Soldiers space they needed to continue to work out and meet their physical training requirements.

Phase one renovations were extensive and cost nearly \$750,000. The 11,000 square foot space was transformed with the installation of the new floor, which was engineered and built over the existing basketball court, and new equipment. The bleachers were also removed, and the front entry was redesigned.

“With the conclusion of phase one of the project our Soldier and Civilian community have the premiere fitness center in the Army Enterprise which industry will not be able to match.” Kitzko said.

There is more to be done, however, as renovations for the 9,000 square foot upper deck as well as additional equipment within the living quarters, to augment the high-end workouts Soldiers get at the gym, is still in the planning and development stages and will bring in even more equipment and space to work out.



Soldiers from Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall take advantage of the new equipment July 29 at the Fort Myer Fitness Center. The equipment was part of a \$750,000 renovation to address the functional fitness of Soldiers on the joint base. (Photo by Jason Goselin, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

Equipment decisions focused on giving joint base Soldiers the “finest strength and conditioning equipment known to man.”

“It’s a journey,” Mingus said. “Now we have to inculcate the culture. They have to embrace what it means to be functional instead of the days of being able to run two miles really fast with a lot of pushups and sit-ups. We also have to be strong. We have to be quick and agile. We have to have all the attributes of functional fitness, to be able to survive on the modern battlefield. That culture has to permeate the entire force.”

There are no fees to use the Fort Myer Fitness Center, and it is open to all authorized military personnel, retirees and DoD civilians 24 hours a day, seven days a week with attendants on site from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. To use the fitness center outside of normal business hours, inquire at the main desk during normal business hours and fitness center personnel will program the user’s CAC card which will allow them to swipe in using the Qscan readers located at the main entrance.

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The reception area of the new Transition Assistance Program location inside the Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall dining facility, America's Kitchen, is a large welcoming space with plenty of seating. (Photo by Denise Caskey, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

TAP sets up shop in new location

By Denise Caskey
JBM-HH Public Affairs

The Transition Assistance Program at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall is opening Sept. 3 in a new location inside the JBM-HH dining facility, America's Kitchen.

Transitioning from military service to life as a civilian can be a stressful process, and the TAP staff is ready to help walk retiring service members through all the steps required to make that transition.

Until the TAP staff gets settled in their new space, they are offering virtual services to meet the needs of service members and their spouses.

Participation in TAP is congressionally mandated and JBM-HH TAP manager Juan Carlos Rodriguez said TAP currently serves between 800 and 1,000 service members every year.

With the move, TAP will have more space to offer more programs to more military families preparing to transition to civilian life.

"Where we had space for 25 people in a class before, now we have a classroom where we can accommodate a maximum of 50 people," Rodriguez said. "It gives us more flexibility so people will not have to wait for a particular class because now we have more space."

Being located within the dining facility also gives TAP more visibility and exposure. Rodriguez said it will be easier for people to drop by if they have questions or are looking for information.

An open house is planned for November to give people an opportunity to meet the TAP staff and see the new facilities, and Rodriguez said he's also planning on bringing in employer discussion panels and creating other different types of engagement opportunities for transitioning service members.



The new Transition Assistance Program location inside the Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall dining facility, America's Kitchen, offer a classroom large enough to hold up to 50 people. The larger space will give TAP the ability to accommodate more transitioning service members and their spouses. (Photo by Denise Caskey, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

TAP is an experience exploring the cultural shift many military families experience when transitioning from military life to civilian life, Rodriguez said. Whether they're career service members or have only been in for a short time, they are going from a military culture where everything was provided for them to one where they must figure things out for themselves and adjust and try to find their place in the civilian community.

He believes the sooner the mindset starts shifting, the easier the transition becomes.

"One of our mottos is 'Go early and go often,'" Rodriguez said. "We ask you to start as soon as possible because there is a lot of not only information and workshops, but there is a lot of training you will have to go through and there are a lot of resources out there. For you to experience those resources, you need time."

For more information about the TAP Program, please visit: <https://home.army.mil/jbmhh/my-fort/all-services/TAP>



The smaller of two classrooms in the new Transition Assistance Program offices inside the Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall warrior restaurant, America's Kitchen, offers additional space to accommodate up to 24 people for classes and training. This, in addition to the larger 50-person space, means TAP can offer more programs to more military families preparing to transition to civilian life. (Photo by Denise Caskey, JBM-HH Public Affairs)



Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall remembers 40 Army Air Corps service members who lost their lives in 1943 in an airplane crash at Bakers Creek, near Mackay, Queensland, Australia, during a ceremony on the anniversary of the crash June 14 at the memorial marker near Selfridge Gate on the Myer campus of JBM-HH. JBM-HH Commander, Col. Tasha Lowery, hosted the annual event and was joined by Lt. Gen. Bruce “Orville” Wright (USAF Retired) and Honorable Kevin Rudd from the Embassy of Australia in Washington, D.C.

Bakers Creek Memorial Observance 2024



Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall Commander Col. Tasha Lowery is joined by Honorable Kevin Rudd from the Embassy of Australia in Washington, D.C., and JBM-HH Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Fisher for a wreath laying June 14 at the Bakers Creek Memorial site on JBM-HH. Also, in attendance was Lt. Gen. Bruce “Orville” Wright (USAF Retired).

*Photos by Susan LeRoy
JBM-HH Public Affairs*



Honorable Kevin Rudd from the Embassy of Australia in Washington, D.C. honors the 40 American Army Air Corps service members who died when the B-17 Flying Fortress they were traveling in crashed while they were flying back to their duty station in New Guinea. The service members had been visiting Mackay, Australia for rest and recreation. “We honor their memory today, Lest We Forget...”, Rudd said.



Col. Michael Baier (USA Ret.) prepares to place flowers at the foot of the Bakers Creek memorial marker, one for each of the 40 service members who died in a 1943 crash, during a ceremony held June 14 at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall. The servicemen were part of the Army Air Corp who had traveled to Bakers Creek aboard a B-17 Flying Fortress for some rest and recreation before returning to their duty station in New Guinea.



Australian Army Major Mark Montague, Vice-President of the Washington Sub-Branch of Australia’s Returned and Services League recites an ode of remembrance during the Bakers Creek Memorial Observance on June 14 at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall. “They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old: Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.”



A Soldier provides support to a fellow service member, highlighting the importance of connection and peer support within the Army community. (Courtesy photo)

Strength in unity:

Embracing connection for suicide prevention

By Rachel Rachfal

Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

As Suicide Prevention Month approaches in September, the Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness, or DPRR, highlights the theme: “We Are Stronger Together. Connect to Protect.” This theme emphasizes the importance of strong communities and healthy relationships in mitigating suicide risk, urging every member of the Army to foster connections and support one another.

The Power of Connection

Strong relationships and community support are crucial in reducing suicide risk.

Col. Kevin Goke, Ready and Resilient Integration and Training division chief, emphasizes that suicide prevention requires a comprehensive, community-based approach. Relationships offer psychological and emotional benefits, providing a sense of belonging and reducing feelings of isolation.

“We tackle this in training mechanisms and a bunch of different things that we do,” Goke said. “The

Army suicide prevention training is building these skills ahead of time. We want to stay ahead of it.”

“It’s crucial to normalize help-seeking behaviors and maximize protective factors within teams. Strong peer-support networks can significantly reduce the stigma around help seeking and support our Soldiers,” said Renee Johnson, the Army’s Suicide Prevention Program manager.

This approach encourages open discussions about life’s challenges and reduces the stigma around seeking help. The importance of connection cannot be overstated. When individuals feel connected to their community, they are more likely to reach out for help in times of need. The Army community, with its unique structure and values, provides a robust framework for fostering these vital connections.

Living Army values to reconnect

Adhering to Army Values—loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage—helps Soldiers recapture a sense of purpose and resilience. These values foster an environment of support and understanding, encouraging Soldiers to look out for one another.

“This is really about getting everybody in the population comfortable with reaching out and engaging service members in distress,” Goke said.

Practical steps to foster connections

Building and maintaining strong relationships within the Army community can be achieved through:

- **Reaching out:** Be proactive in connecting with fellow Soldiers, especially newcomers. Goke notes that Soldiers who die by suicide often “have been in the unit less than six months.”
- **Offering support:** Encourage open communication and provide support to those facing challenges. Creating a safe space for discussions about emotional well-being can make a significant difference.
- **Participating in activities:** Engage in team-building activities and community events, sporting and recreational events, and Unit Ministry Team activities. These activities are designed to bring people together, offering

opportunities to build new friendships and strengthen existing ones.

Stories of resilience and hope

These approaches are not just theoretical; real-life stories from Soldiers who have overcome significant challenges through the support of their community serve as powerful examples of the importance of connection and communication.

First Sgt. Larry Floresberrier, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Security Force Assistance Brigade, said, “I had a buddy of mine in my squad who passed away from an IED attack. During that event, we were injured, resulting in multiple burn injuries. We were all sent home from this one event. When we were healing in the burn ward of the San Antonio Medical Center, it took us about three months to recover. Every day without fail, the medical personnel would ensure that we were seen by a counselor. Initially, we lied about how we were really feeling because we were strangers to these people. But we talked among our squad. Me and my other surviving squad members all struggled with nightmares and depression but initially refused help. It wasn’t until fellow squad members broke down and started talking to counselors that I realized the importance of opening up. Finally confiding in someone helped me cope.”

Floresberrier’s reflection illustrates the crucial role of open communication and trust in overcoming adversity. He explains the most important lesson he learned is that talking about what you’re going through is okay.

“Sharing your feelings can significantly improve your well-being. You don’t have to internalize it; reaching out is a strength, not a weakness. The more you do, the better you’ll feel,” he said.

The Army’s teaching kitchens are hands-on learning spaces where Soldiers and their Families receive practical guidance on nutrition, cooking skills and healthy eating habits.

Sgt. Maj. Kelvin Windham, Army Materiel Command Headquarters G-4 senior enlisted advisor, provided insight into how gathering for meals can help Soldiers connect and improve relations.

“Building cohesive teams often starts over a meal,

breaking barriers and fostering conversation. Our teaching kitchens for Soldiers and spouses highlight the challenges young families face, such as budgeting for groceries, which directly impacts readiness. Many Soldiers come from food deserts and lack the experience of sitting down together as a family for meals,” Windham said.

Everyday activities, like cooking together or sharing a meal, are instrumental in building the strong bonds that contribute to overall readiness and resilience.

“As advocates for Soldiers and their Families, it’s our duty to be their voice and support their needs, ensuring they are prepared both at home and in the field,” Windham said.

Soldiers can also participate in community programs to help build their support systems and strengthen their resilience.

Staff Sgt. Cody Mackall, Department of Army Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers Representative said Morale, Welfare and Recreation, and BOSS programs saved his life and empowered him to work in the field.

“The camaraderie, engaging activities, and people who genuinely cared reignited my desire to live.”

A friend Mackall met while participating in BOSS activities would go on to consistently check-in with him. The regular contact pulled him out of a dark place.

“Finding the right person to be your 2:00 a.m. call can be the hardest part, but it’s crucial for Soldiers to have that lifeline. Sharing our stories can help others see they are not alone and that there is always hope,” he said.

Joseph Byrne, US Army Europe and Africa Ready and Resilient chief, believes that when you are met with adversity, it’s always good to have Family in your corner.

“While battle buddy connections are crucial, families and spouses are integral to building healthy communities. Every step of the way, these connections have been vital, and we must never take them for granted,” he said.

Byrne thought his dreams of becoming a sergeant major were shattered when he was diagnosed with

kidney failure in 1998. Now, as the R2 branch chief, Byrne has more insight and lived experience in staying resilient during tough times.

“Facing the end of my Army career while having a family to support was devastating. However, my wife was my rock, providing comfort and strength through prayer and support. This experience taught me the importance of connections with people who stand by you no matter what,” Byrne said.

These stories remind us of the resilience that can be built through strong relationships. By fostering a culture of openness and support, we can create an environment where everyone feels empowered to seek help and offer it in return.

Resources and Support

DPRR offers numerous resources for suicide prevention and emotional support within the Army.

- **Non-medical counseling services:** Support resources include Military One Source and the 24/7 free and confidential 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.
- **Upcoming events:** Participate in upcoming events and initiatives for Suicide Prevention Month. These events provide opportunities to connect with others, learn new skills and access valuable resources.
- **Firearm safety:** Safe storage practices can be a critical factor in preventing suicide. Learn about reducing access to lethal means. By making a conscious effort to connect with those around us, we can build a stronger, more supportive community.

DPRR equips the Army community with the knowledge and tools to foster meaningful connections, strengthening collective resilience against the risk of suicide. Let’s work together to make a difference—because together, we are stronger. Learn more about the Suicide Prevention Program, R2I&T and SPM 2024.



Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall Commander Col. Tasha Lowery offers opening remarks Aug. 14 for the first JBM-HH Education Town Hall held at Brucker Hall. The town hall was an opportunity for military parents to meet officials from Northern Virginia school districts and voice their concerns about a variety of issues. (Photo by Denise Caskey, JBM-HH Public Affairs)

JBM-HH holds first education town hall

By Denise Caskey and Susan LeRoy
JBM-HH Public Affairs

Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall brought together officials from Northern Virginia school districts, installation school liaisons and military parents for its first education town hall Aug. 14 at Brucker Hall.

The town hall, which was also streamed live on the JBM-HH Facebook page, introduced officials from Arlington Public Schools, Fairfax County Schools and Alexandria City Public Schools and

the school liaison officers from JBM-HH and Fort Belvoir to parents who came to hear about programs schools have for military children and to voice concerns about a variety of issues.

“It is a tremendous honor and privilege to speak with the families from Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall as we prepare to open the new school year,” said Brian Stockton, Chief of Staff for Arlington Public Schools.

“Engaging with these military families before the start of school strengthens our community and allows us to ensure that we are providing the necessary support and resources their children need to thrive,” he said. “Their unique experiences enrich our schools, and we are deeply committed to serving those who serve our country.”

SLOs Allison Montalvo from JBM-HH and Ayesha Mahaffey from Fort Belvoir introduced themselves and talked a little bit about what they do

to help children coming into the area get settled into school.

“We are the connection between the base communities and the school communities. We exist to help people as they transition in and out of bases and connect you to the resources you need for registration,” Montalvo said. “When you’re outgoing, there’s school liaisons all over the world, so we connect to those so you can get the information you need.”

Maintaining open communication is a key component of the school liaison’s job, said Marie Bailey, a SLO from Fort Belvoir.

“As a school liaison officer, it is very important that we connect and thoroughly communicate with military families and the community to ensure smooth outcomes during the entire process,” Bailey said.

Superintendent for APS, Dr. Francisco Duran, said a large percentage of the students who attend APS schools are from military families and a very important part of the work of educators at the schools, aside from teaching the children, is creating an atmosphere where military families feel like they’re welcome and part of the community.

“We know that as students come into our school system throughout the year there’s a lot of stress and concerns and questions,” Duran said. “Something we take great pride in at Arlington Public Schools is that once we know a military family is moving into our school system, we have a lot of wraparound support services that we put in place at each of our schools to ensure that we meet all their needs, whether it’s academic, social or emotional.”

Dr. Melanie Kay-Wyatt, superintendent of ACPS, announced the opening of Alexandria’s new high school and talked about opportunities students at Alexandria schools have to explore career options through academy programs where students learn skills in fields such as visual, performing and applied arts, STEM or business and government.

“Our students are going to be ready to come back and impact the (Washington, D. C., Maryland, Virginia) area with their skills,” Kay-Wyatt said. “They will be ready for the workforce.”

Where to find help

If you’re getting ready to PCS with school age children, your first contact should be your installation’s school liaison officer. They will help connect you to the school liaison officer at your new duty station.

Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall

Allison Montalvo

allison.r.montalvo.naf@army.mil

Fort Belvoir

Ayesha Mahaffey

ayasha.d.mahaffey.naf@army.mil

Pharnice “Marie” Bailey

pharnice.m.bailey.naf@army.mil

Schools in Northern Virginia are eager to help military families transitioning into the area.

Arlington Public Schools

<https://www.apsva.us/military-families/>

Alexandria City Public Schools

<https://www.acps.k12.va.us/>

Fairfax County Public Schools

<https://www.fcps.edu/services/family-academy/military-families>

Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent, Dr. Michelle Reid, said FCPS has a strong commitment to the more than 14,000 military connected youth in its schools and has shifted to online registration to better serve families who frequently transfer in and out the area.

Following introductions, the floor was opened for questions and comments. Many parents voiced concerns such as a lack of communication and frustrations with the registration process. Throughout the question and comment session, school officials expressed their gratitude that

parents were able to make them aware of issues and problems they were having and vowed to find where the disconnect was and find ways to correct it.

Parents were also able to speak to school officials and liaisons after the town hall and get additional assurance that their concerns would be addressed.

“Open forums like JBM-HH’s Education Town Hall are so valuable to understand what is

going on within our community and highlight the unique challenges of PCSing with school-age children,” Montalvo said. “Part of the responsibilities of school liaisons is always looking for feedback on how to better support our families. I am extremely grateful for the families who spoke up and helped me to identify new avenues to better assist them, and for the district officials who were present to listen to their concerns.”

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