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Military's Culinary Olympians train at Panzer

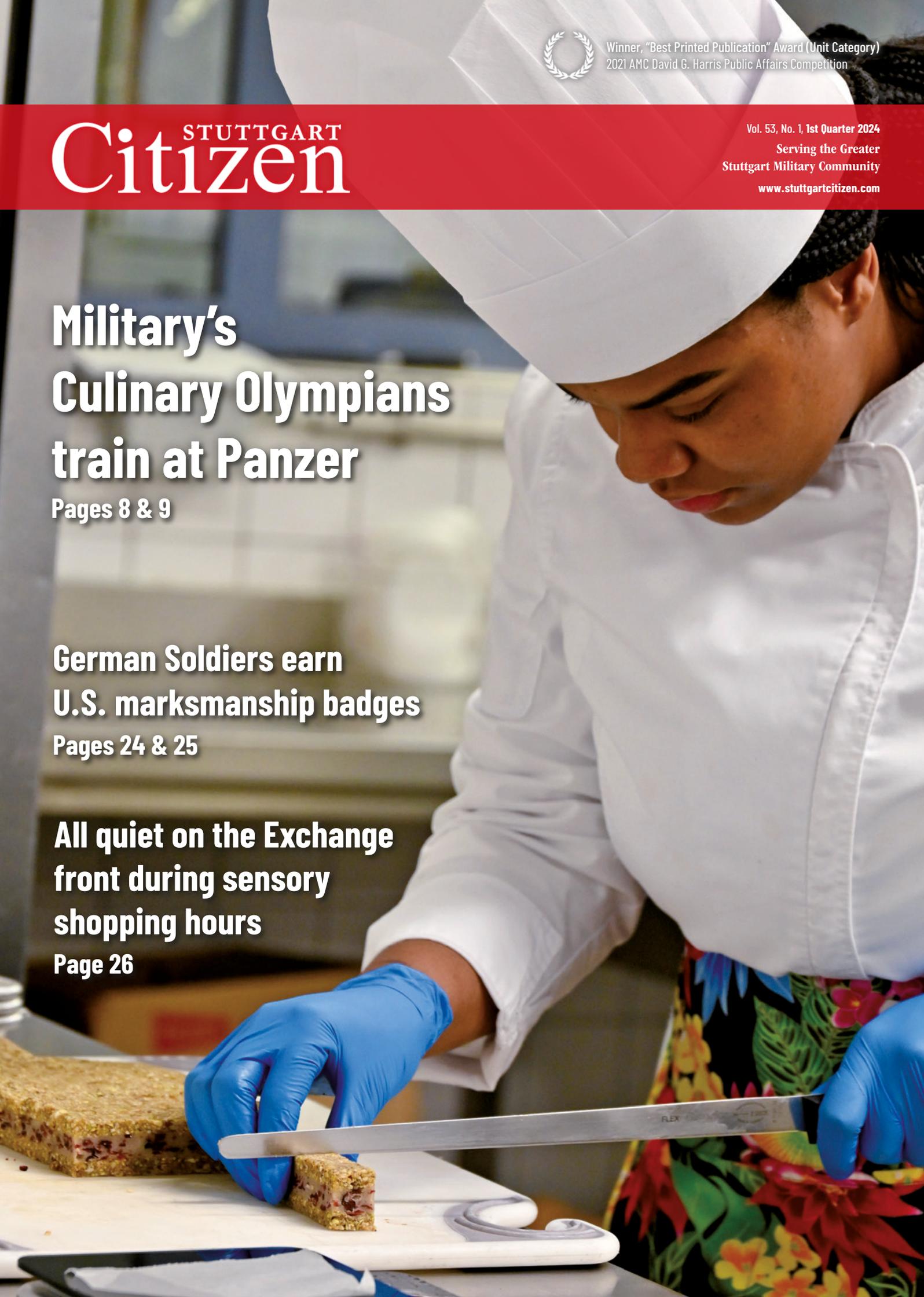
Pages 8 & 9

German Soldiers earn U.S. marksmanship badges

Pages 24 & 25

All quiet on the Exchange front during sensory shopping hours

Page 26





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To our USAG Stuttgart family:

Welcome to 2024! We hope you had a wonderful holiday season, are making good on your resolutions, and have had a promising start to your new year.

This edition of the Citizen showcases a range of stories mirroring the resilience and diversity of our community, and the continuous efforts of our garrison and mission partner team members in making USAG Stuttgart an even better place to live and work.

In these pages, we highlight upcoming events and fascinating stories from our workforce; recount the garrison's first-ever Pickleball tournament and its path to reality; and offer a glimpse into the world of culinary excellence with the U.S. Army Culinary Arts Team, in town for an international competition.

We explore some of our host nation's rich customs with insight into the vibrant German tradition of Fasching and share the story of the German soldiers who recently earned American marksmanship badges at the Panzer range — yet another example of the deep-rooted camaraderie and respect between our forces.

We also spotlight a worldwide first at our local Exchange: An inclusive 'sensory-friendly' shopping experience meant to provide a quieter, calmer environment for those who need it.

In many of the stories in this issue, you will notice a common thread: The theme of community. These narratives not only showcase the diversity and bonds of USAG Stuttgart but also serve as a reminder of the vital role each of us plays in building and sustaining our community. As you read through this issue, we hope it inspires you to reflect on your own contributions, as well as the importance of building connections and being there for each other. We are stronger together, and every individual's involvement enriches our collective experience.

As the seasons change, our magazine continues its mission to inform, engage, and connect our community. **We hope you enjoy it!**

Your Citizen Team



USAG Stuttgart Commander Col. Kirk Alexander, flanked by Command Sgt. Maj. Denice Malave and Housing Chief Madeleine Bates, welcomed the Lee family to their new home on Robinson Barracks with a ceremonial ribbon cutting, Dec. 1, 2023. They became the first residents of their Army Family Housing building following completion of a renovation and modernization project. The brand new apartments within it are larger than before, with 16 units being turned into 12, and feature new flooring, home ventilation, and open-concept kitchens and living rooms.

Photo by Balmina Sehra, USAG Stuttgart Public Affairs

Cover image:

Staff Sgt. Symone Abreu carefully portions a dessert during a training session at the Originals Dining Facility on Panzer Kaserne Jan. 24 as the U.S. Army Culinary Arts Team prepares for the 26th Culinary Olympics in Stuttgart, Feb. 2-7.

Photo by Bardia Khajenoori, USAG Stuttgart Public Affairs

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At the Patch Library: Community and Giving Back

By Nick Steddum

Stuttgart High School Career Practicum Student

As the fireworks quiet down and the champagne bottles are emptied, the community continues on into the New Year, where there is a chance not only for reflection, but also for consideration of how the coming year could be even better than the last. What better way to make it a great year – not only for yourself, but for those around you – than serving the community? We all have something to contribute, sometimes in ways that we may not realize. This selection of inspiring books and films gives examples of just how important, and rewarding, it is to give back to your community.

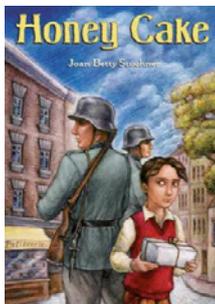
The Hunting Party By Lucy Foley

Ten years ago, a group of thirty something Oxford students started a tradition to celebrate a New Years vacation together. This year their vacation brings them to an idyllic and isolated estate in the Scottish highlands. They arrive on December thirtieth, not long before a historic blizzard seals their estate off from the outside world, it is then when a decade of jealous resentment boils over on New Year's eve, and on New Year's Day, one of them is dead, and another of them did it.



Honey Cake By Joan Stuchner

Honey Cake tells the story of David and his family, Jewish Danes who find themselves under Nazi Occupation in Denmark, until September 1943, when their neighbors help smuggle them to Sweden to escape persecution. The book also includes a recipe for honey cake, a traditional Jewish New Year treat.



Channel Kindness : Stories of Kindness and Community By Born This Way Foundation / Introduced by Lady Gaga

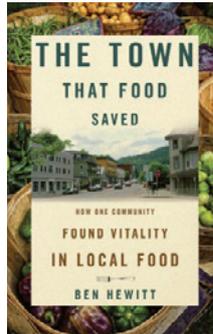
Channel Kindness is a collection of fifty-one short, simple, yet striking stories from young people all over the world, describing their experiences of how strong kindness, empathy, connection, and community can make a difference to a kid. Collected by interviews from the Born This Way Foundation reporters and introduced by Lady Gaga, who says kindness is the driving force behind everything she does and says.



The Town That Food Saved : How One Community Found Vitality in Local Food

By Ben Hewitt

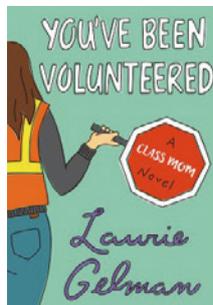
A touching story of how the small farming town of Harwick, Vermont came together to overcome the financial downturn threatening their small businesses and privately owned farms by creating a self-sustaining food system, the likes of which found nowhere else in America, featuring the extraordinary determination of an otherwise unassuming community.



You've Been Volunteered : A Class Mom Novel

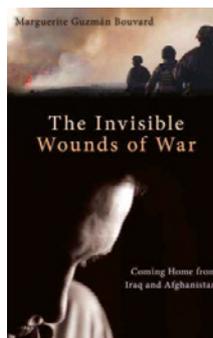
By Laurie Gelman

Follow the story of Jen Dixon, a witty and charming class Mom who frequently volunteers at her third grader son's school and navigates working with both the micromanaging PTA president and other parents. As she parents Max, her husband buries himself in work, her older daughters navigate adulthood, and her aging parents cruise into elderhood, Jen is forced to give out more time than any one mom can handle.



The Invisible Wounds of War : Coming Home From Iraq and Afghanistan By Marguerite Guzman Bouvard

Bouvard takes the reader through the experience of returning veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through personal accounts and interviews with veterans. The book highlights the struggle returning veterans and their families face and the incredible importance of strong social support and community amongst former and current service members.



Blue Skies Tomorrow By Sarah Sundin

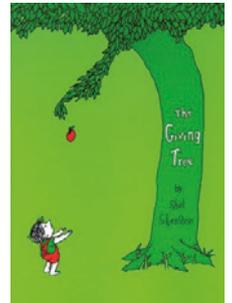
Helen Carlisle is a young war widow and mother who handles her grief through arduous volunteer work. Lt. Raymond Novak is a B-17 pilot who works stateside training pilots for the war in Europe.



Through their mutual dedication for their work towards the war effort, they find themselves in romance, propelling them both into peril as Lt. Novak must leave to pilot combat missions at the zenith of the European air war, and Helen lands a job at a dangerous munitions yard on top of the graver menace she faces at home. A daring romance story – will their love survive until blue skies return?

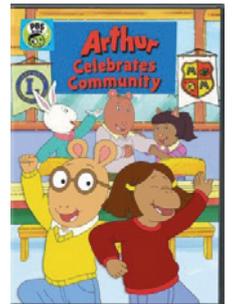
The Giving Tree By Shel Silverstein

A classic children's book following the lives of a boy and an apple tree, and the relationship between them. As they grow old together, the tree's undying love and generosity without a thought of return teaches the boy an important lesson on selflessness.



Arthur Celebrates Community (DVD)

Join Arthur and friends as they learn about the people, places, and things that make a community special, and learn what it takes to keep a community strong! See Francine's activism drive Lakewood Elementary to help protect the environment, and how Lakewood Elementary students share their school with their Mighty Mountain rivals after Arthur and his classmates attend Mr. Ratburn's wedding! These fun-filled episodes are filled with tales of honesty, open-mindedness, compromise, and compassion.

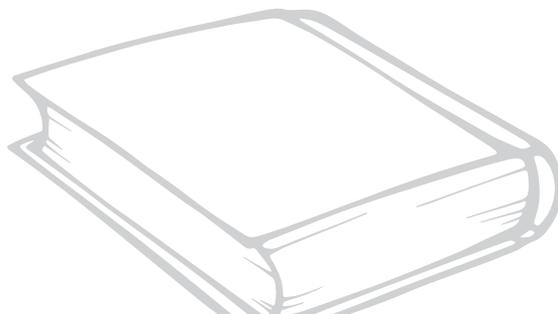


Pay It Forward (DVD)

A social studies teacher gives his junior high school students an assignment to think of an idea that will change the world for the better. When one young student's plan for "paying forward" favors blossoms into a profound national phenomenon, it affects not only the life of his struggling single mother, but sets in motion an unprecedented wave of human kindness.



Summaries and covers courtesy of Goodreads and/or publishers



Chaplain's Corner: All Things New

Photo by Oikeo Projects/Shutterstock.com



By Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Don Williamson
Deputy Garrison Chaplain, USAG Stuttgart

"All these new things are from God who brought us back to himself through what He did. And God has given us the privilege of urging everyone to come into his favor and be reconciled to him." (2 Corinthians 5:18)

We all love new things, don't we? Over the holidays I'm sure most of us got something new. Maybe it was a new set of dishes or cookware for the kitchen. Maybe there's a new Sony PlayStation hooked up to a new flat screen TV in the living room. Moms were given new clothes from the kids, Dads got new socks. And those of us who were able to stay awake, watched the ball drop live in Times Square to ring in another New Year. (Actually, for that one I cheated this year, and watched it drop at 0600 Central European Time on January 1st...the perks

of being six hours ahead!). And with the start of the New Year, there is always the promise of something new and exciting to try or look forward to. As our EUCOM Consolidated AAFES General Manager, Carla McDowell, said at January's Community Leaders Information Forum (CLIF), "There's definitely going to be MORE in 2024!"

So, what does it look like for you and your Family to try new things this year?

Being stationed in Germany, we also have the privilege of experiencing new cultures; some are simply a short flight away out of Stuttgart Airport, while others might be a long train ride on the ICE. But many are found right outside the front gate. If you missed last year's Swabian Folk Festival, the Cannstatter Volksfest, then mark your calendars to experience it starting September 27th this year. (And while you're at it, why not mark down the Stuttgart Spring Festival starting April 20th in Bad Cannstatt too?) If it is a little out of your comfort zone, that's okay too. I think former First Lady Michelle Obama put it best when she said, "Just try new things. Don't be afraid. Step out of your comfort zones and soar, all right?"

Still, I wouldn't be a chaplain if I didn't remind us all of the Real Source of all new things.

Consider the verse found at the top of this article from the Apostle Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians: "All these new things are from God who brought us back to himself through what He did. And God has given us the privilege of urging everyone to come into his favor and be reconciled to him." (2 Corinthians 5:18)

What if that is the new thing God has for you this year? Amidst all our new gifts, new experiences, and new adventures this year, what would it look like if you decided to start anew with God? Just like trying new things or experiencing new cultures, it sometimes requires us to step into the unknown. It's that unique moment when faith becomes a risked action. It may feel uncomfortable and scary at first because it has been a long time since you considered having a relationship with God.

We think, "I'm putting everything on the line, because, after all, this is my life, my pain, my reputation."

But friend, I can assure you, never is the proof of new life more evident than when we cede control because of our trust in God's character, love, power, and forgiveness. Then the whole incident moves out of our sphere and into God's.

Something new...something more...in 2024? I hope that starts this year for you with the God who makes all things new.



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Corina Cruceanu is a plans and operations specialist at Logistics Readiness Center Stuttgart. The retired Air Force master sergeant started working for the 405th Army Field Support Brigade's LRC Stuttgart last April.

Courtesy Photo



LRC Stuttgart employee who grew up in communist Romania now living the 'American dream'

Cruceanu served more than 21 years in the U.S. Air Force, retiring from active duty in 2021. Courtesy Photo

By Cameron Porter

405th Army Field Support Brigade

Corina Cruceanu was 11 years old when her parents left her and her sister and brother in Romania and moved to the United States. For her first nine years, Cruceanu grew up in a communist society, but in the mid '90s her parents established official residency in the U.S. and Cruceanu and her siblings were able to join them in Virginia.

"We left Romania with one piece of luggage each, in search of the American dream," said Cruceanu, a plans and operations specialist at Logistics Readiness Center Stuttgart.

Now, her parents are retired and living in Florida after running a successful construction business for 30 years, her brother owns his own construction business, and her sister has a criminal justice degree and works in the security arena.

Cruceanu, herself, is a retired Air Force master sergeant with 21 years of active-duty service, and since last April, she's also an Army civilian employee with the 405th Army Field Support Brigade's LRC Stuttgart.

"Definitely no country in the world affords you these kinds of opportunities - opportunities only the U.S. can give you,"

Corina Cruceanu.

"When I look back, I try to imagine what would have happened to us if we would have stayed in Romania," she said. "We definitely would not have enjoyed all the opportunities the U.S. has afforded us over the years."

For example, Cruceanu was stationed in Norway at the U.S. embassy there for three years, and when she retired from the Air Force in 2021 at Aviano Air Base, Italy, she was the flight chief for a Logistics Readiness Squadron.

"Definitely no country in the world affords you these kinds of opportunities - opportunities only the U.S. can give you," said Cruceanu who has an associate's degree in logistics from the Community College of the Air Force and is currently working on her bachelor's degree in contracting and acquisition from Strayer University.

"Every day I'm thankful my family and I have experienced what it's like to live the American dream," she said.

And when it comes to working at LRC Stuttgart, Cruceanu said she's equally thankful.

"At LRC Stuttgart, we have a small team of Department of the Army civilian employees who are all amazing," Cruceanu said. "Most of them are prior military so we all speak the same language. For me, it was an easy transition into the government civilian world because of all my experience and the lingo we use."

LRC Stuttgart also has a robust local national workforce who make up the core of the team and are absolutely invaluable to the mission, said Cruceanu.

"Our local national workforce is comprised of people from around the world. I love all the diversity they bring to LRC Stuttgart," she said.

Cruceanu said she also loves the workload. At LRC Stuttgart, Cruceanu manages all the day-to-day operations, working directly with the division chiefs and the director establishing unit policies while providing guidance and direction for logistical plans, programs, resourcing and objectives.

"I can say LRC Stuttgart is at the State Department level of operations," she said. "It's similar to what I learned as a member of the Air Force and what I learned when I worked for the State Department at a U.S. embassy."

In addition, Cruceanu is in the process of assuming more responsibility at work. She's in training now, learning all there is to know about the additional programs she'll be taking over as well as her responsibilities representing LRC Stuttgart in the USAG Stuttgart Emergency Operations Center.

For more information on LRC Stuttgart and the 405th Army Field Support Brigade, visit www.afsbeurope.army.mil or facebook.com/405thAFSB.



Corina Cruceanu grew up in Romania in the '80s under a communist dictatorship. She is pictured here (standing at the far right) with her kindergarten class. Cruceanu said the school uniforms were only provided to them for the official school photo as a form of propaganda, and the same is true for the books they are holding. "The books were given to us only for the picture. After, they took them away," she said. "And the dolls in the back - we were not allowed to touch them. Few girls had dolls back then." Courtesy Photo

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U.S. Military's Culinary Olympians Train for Victory at Originals DFAC

Interview and photos by **Bardia Khajenoori**
USAG Stuttgart Public Affairs

With the 26th IKA/Culinary Olympics taking place in Stuttgart from Feb. 2-7, the 'Originals' Dining Facility on Panzer Kaserne has become the base camp for the U.S. Army Culinary Arts Team (USACAT), which will compete in two categories at the event.

The last edition of the *Internationale Kochkunst Ausstellung* (International Exhibition of Culinary Art, or IKA) was held in 2020, also in Stuttgart, involving around 1,800 participants from 67 nations and attracting more than 100,000 attendees. The USACAT team earned a silver medal in their live cooking event among military national teams.

USACAT comprises members from across the armed forces, including a captain, manager, and culinary chefs.

The following is a condensed interview with Sgt. Marlene Otero and Chief Warrant Officer 4 Karlatta Brown (team manager) about the team, the event, and more.



Sgt. Marlene Otero



Chief Warrant Officer 4
Karlatta Brown

How are members of USACAT chosen?

BROWN: It is very, very hard to pick people because the competition and talent in the military is enormous. We choose candidates based on their performance at the annual Joint Culinary Training Exercise (JCTE), where we can observe military chefs from all branches of service. Then we interview them, and they're selected based on factors like skill, experience, location, availability, and personal characteristics. I chose this team because I know everyone can bring something to the table.

What are the personal qualities you look for in a USACAT member?

BROWN: Aside from dependability, flexibility, quick learning, and talent, I'm looking for someone who can both step in and lead when they need to, but also doesn't have an issue with learning and following.

What are your own professional backgrounds that led you here?

BROWN: I've been in foodservice for the Army for 22 years, and in my role as team manager, I select the team, work with them on training and developing menus, and handle most of the logistics: moving personnel and equipment/rations, coordinating travel, and things like that.

OTERO: I joined the Army two and a half years ago with no real culinary experience other than cooking at home. It kind of just happened that I became a culinary specialist because when I joined, they said [Military Occupational Specialty] 92G, Culinary Specialist, was available, and it caught my eye, so I said I'll go for it. I've gotten all my culinary training in uniform and have grown such a passion for it.

How does the team prepare for competitions and develop menus for them?

BROWN: We meet to train together, usually monthly, to keep skills sharp and build chemistry so the team members can learn from each other and get used to working together. Coming up with our menu is a collective effort, usually based around themes we brainstorm together. No matter what the competition is, we always have to make sure we're prepared.

OTERO: It changes depending on the rules of each competition and what the judges want to see. Sometimes there are specific things we have to include, and with international competitions especially, one of the things we have to consider with recipe planning is the ingredients we can get at that location and whether they're in season.

How would you describe the importance of the Culinary Olympics?

BROWN: This competition is the most important, and earning a medal here is probably the highest recognition a military chef could get. This is the one they really prepare for – the one that exposes you to other international teams at the Olympic level.

OTERO: Everyone's motivated and excited to be here, and it would be amazing and mean a lot to come back with gold medals. It's a lot of hard work, but so rewarding, and we've come so far over the course of a year. Some of the teams competing have cooked together for two or three years.

In which Culinary Olympics categories is the USACAT competing this year? How are they judged?

BROWN: The category with live cooking is Community Catering (Feb. 3), where they'll be preparing a five course meal for 120 people; they have access to the kitchen from 5 a.m. and will serve the public from 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. Judging is based on things like taste, appearance, and technique. The other category is a display of cold food, more than 20 dishes, that is more about displaying technical skill and creativity. It actually takes longer than the live cooking category, and it's the first time in eight years that we've competed in both categories.

Why go back to competing in both this year?

BROWN: I think it's more of a challenge, and the chefs love doing it. This is their passion, and I



The USACAT team consists of: Chief Warrant Officer 4 Karlatta Brown (team manager), Chief Warrant Officer 2 Christine Stanley (team captain), Staff Sgt. Symone Abreu, Sgt. Nicolas Adame, Sgt. Marlene Otero, and Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Shurden, from the Army; Petty Officer 3rd Class Larry Burns, from the Navy; Sgt. Jonathan Sanchezbermeo and Gunnery Sgt. Michael Watts, from the Marine Corps; and Commissaryman Chief Petty Officer Danielle Hughes and Commissaryman Petty Officer First Class John Toman, from the Coast Guard. Courtesy Photo



Commissaryman Chief Petty Officer Danielle Hughes and Gunnery Sgt. Michael Watts prepare competition dishes during a training session at the Originals Dining Facility on Panzer Kaserne Jan. 24.



want to make opportunities available to them so they can knock it out of the park like I know they can.

OTERO: The cold table competition shows off so many techniques, and it's much different from live cooking. You have to create a beautiful display on a big table with centerpieces and six different categories that holds up for a long time, so I'm very excited for that.

How does the Culinary Olympics compare to other competitions you've taken part in?

OTERO: So far, the most servings I've done with the culinary team is just 50 portions. Now, we're bumping it up to 120, and it has to be more refined, with certain ingredients and recipes. It's definitely been a challenge, but we're all here for it. We love new challenges, and one big thing the military teaches you is how to learn and adapt.

Two members of this year's team were also here at the last event, four years ago. Have they shared anything about what to expect?

OTERO: Oh, definitely. They've shown us pictures of how it's going to be and talked about physical and mental preparation, especially keeping focus and concentrating when people are looking at you through the glass walls of the kitchen. They've also mentioned certain factors to keep in mind with creating recipes, the weather, and working under pressure.

How does focusing on culinary arts and participating in competitions like these benefit the military?

BROWN: Food plays a huge role in readiness and also as a morale booster. Everything the team members learn not only benefits them, but their units too, and the services as a whole. They go back to their respective positions serving and working alongside their fellow Service Members, improving the quality and passing on what they learned.

OTERO: The biggest thing for me is taking care of our Soldiers. So when I come back home, I love being able to teach and pass on information. Sometimes I see people having trouble learning techniques or understanding how to cook, and one thing that USACAT teaches you is that we're there to help our teams and be big supporters. I know everyone goes back and helps with mentoring and coaching whoever needs it.

The team has been training long hours on a daily basis since you arrived in Stuttgart. What are you working on?

OTERO: We've mainly been working on our competition menu, always striving to do better. Whether it's the plating, the flavor, the size, or adding or removing ingredients, we practice and practice so everything can come out perfect. Even though we've only been practicing for five days [in Stuttgart], we've made major changes since the first run through and I think we've come a long way.

What do members of USACAT tend to do after leaving the military?

BROWN: Most of them come back and help the team as advisors. A lot of them continue teaching in the civilian sector or start their own restaurants, and while they're with us they often get special professional certifications that help them whether or not they're in the military. This is pretty much a lifestyle for these chefs.

What advice do you have for aspiring chefs?

OTERO: I make sure my Soldiers are aware of all the opportunities they have for professional development – that there are special programs you can apply to and certifications you can get to grow and motivate yourself in this field. I like to tell them to step outside their comfort zone and be willing to take on challenges.

USACAT will be competing in the Community Catering lunch table at the 26th Culinary Olympics, held at the Stuttgart Messe (convention center) adjacent to the airport, on Feb. 3. Information and tickets for this and other events during the competition are available at <https://www.olympiade-der-koeche.com/en/>. (No government endorsement implied)



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Garrison's second pickleball tournament reflects growing community interest



By Bardia Khajenoori
Photos by Kieran Murphy
USAG Stuttgart Public Affairs

Participants of the Jan. 20 pickleball tournament at the Kelley Fitness Center pose for a group photo.

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U.S. Army Garrison Stuttgart held its second tournament of America's fastest growing sport Jan. 20 as a pickleball competition took place at the Kelley Fitness Center, crowning champions in singles, doubles, and mixed doubles categories.

The roster of registered players, totaling 44, was nearly twice that of the first tournament last June, according to Jason Bird, the DoD civilian employee and pickleball enthusiast who played a lead role in organizing the event with the support of fitness center manager Roland Meader.

"I was really pleased with the turnout," Bird said. "We had people show up to play in a tournament who had never played the game before."

The tournament featured a "phenomenal day of pickleball," said John Hamilton, Community Recreation Division Chief with the garrison's Directorate of Family & MWR, whose division oversees Sports and Fitness programs. "After the success of the first pickleball tournament, a second was only a natural progression."

First played in 1965 and named after the Cocker Spaniel dog of its inventor, pickleball can be played indoors or outdoors and is roughly a hybrid of tennis, badminton, and ping pong in terms of rules, playing surface, and equipment. The Sports & Fitness Industry Association described recent growth as "meteoric" and "unprecedented" as it deemed pickleball America's fastest growing sport for the third consecutive year in August 2023, citing a 159% increase in player numbers from 2019 to 2022.

One key factor observers often attribute to the sport's recent growth is the COVID-19 pandemic, during which many people sought out simple and accessible outdoor activities to stay active. Bird himself played racquetball for 16 years before becoming active in pickleball, after pandemic restrictions shut down his usual courts. But while the circumstances may have led to more exposure, it's fundamental qualities of the game that seem to get players engaged.

"I think people enjoy the ease of learning it and the ability to play with all ages and skill levels.

It's a sport that's easy to pick up but hard to master... that's what I love about

PICKLEBALL



it," Bird said. "It also provides a great sense of community. I've got probably 30 friends from pickleball around here, getting together almost on a weekly basis with a variety of people, and that's definitely a huge aspect of the game."

The increased popularity of the game at USAG Stuttgart has led the Sports and Fitness team to have pickleball lines painted onto existing indoor courts, with plans for outdoor options to come, and to make equipment available at on-post fitness centers.

"With so many activities, fitness programs, sports, and groups competing for the same space, we really try to spread ourselves as wide as possible to support everybody how we can," Hamilton said, recommending that customers with ideas for new offerings still engage with staff to see what's possible. "It may not happen right away, but at the very least, it builds a foundation. We're always happy to grow physical activity opportunities for our community members."

In the meantime, Bird has been working with the Child & Youth Services (CYS) Sports team to offer beginner's clinics for children and parents in mid-February, something he hopes will provide a non-intimidating environment for new players of all

ages to get firsthand experience. Aside from that, he recommends watching "Pickleball 101" videos online, joining the local "Pickleball Nation - Stuttgart" Facebook page, and simply asking to join someone if you see them playing.

"More often than not, people will say, 'sure, come on, we'll teach you how to play and get you going,'" he said.

.....
Kieran Murphy, Stuttgart High School Career Practicum student, contributed to this story and provided on-location coverage of the tournament.



JAN. 20 TOURNAMENT CHAMPIONS

Singles:

1. Brian Pearson
2. Jason Bird
3. Jason Allen

Doubles (Men):

1. Jason Allen and Alistair Howard
2. Jason Bird and Garrett Hunter
3. Brian Pearson and Damien Watkins

Doubles (Women):

1. Dawn Allen and Shannon Soto
2. Josie Tate and Athene Ghandi
3. Jennie Eversole and Kim Toler

Mixed Doubles:

1. Jason and Dawn Allen
2. Damien and Deborah Watkins
3. Shannon Soto and Jason Bird

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Garrison Construction for 2024

By USAG Stuttgart Public Affairs

When most people hear the word "construction," they get nervous, bracing for delays and inconvenience. While no one enjoys the disruption that projects can sometimes bring, they represent progress, modernization, and improvements to our daily lives. So, here's a quick update on what's happening in 2024.

This includes groundbreaking for the new Panzer commissary and Robinson school (both slated to begin around the summer), upgrades to 1950s-era sewer lines, and expanded facilities such as the Patch Child Development Center (CDC) and Kelley Fitness Center. Also, we're updating those old 1950s sewer lines to modern standards.

Check the dates below so you know what's happening when. These projects are all about improving our community's quality of life.

Stay tuned!



PATCH BARRACKS

Floridastrasse Sewer Project

- **Expected Start:** Currently Ongoing
- **Expected Completion:** March 2024
- **Why:** To upgrade 1950s era sewer lines.

Patch Main Base Sewer Project

- **Expected Start:** Currently Ongoing
- **Expected Completion:** April 2024
- **Why:** To upgrade 1950s era sewer lines

Patch Gym HVAC Repairs

- **Expected Start:** Currently Ongoing
- **Expected Completion:** May 2024
- **Why:** Improve facility ventilation system

Community Club to CDC conversion

- **Expected Start:** Currently Ongoing
- **Expected Completion:** May 2024
- **Why:** Increased space for Patch's Child Development Center



Graphics by Jytiana Contributor Studio, mStudio/vector/Shutterstock.com

PANZER KASERNE

Panzer Auto Skills

- **Expected Start:** Spring of 2024
- **Expected Completion:** Winter 2025
- **Why:** A new 12,000 square foot center with automatic car wash, 12 service bays with ten hydraulic lifts, storage, and a welding shop.

Patch on Panzer School conversion into Youth and School Ages Center

- **Design:** 2023
- **Expected Completion:** 2028
- **Why:** Additional space for youth and child services.

New Commissary

- **Tentative Start:** Summer 2024
- **Expected Completion:** Winter 2026
- **Why:** To provide the community with an upgraded and modern commissary.

KELLEY BARRACKS

Kelley Gym Expansion

- **Expected Start:** Spring 2024
- **Expected Completion:** Summer 2025
- **Why:** To increase available space in the gym.

ROBINSON BARRACKS

Valley Building Demolition/RBES Construction

- **Expected Start:** Demolition Currently ongoing, School Construction Summer 2024
- **Expected Completion:** Demolition finished Spring 2024 Construction Spring 2027
- **Why:** Creation of a new 21st Century School at Robinson Barracks.

RB Sewer Project

- **Expected Start:** Award of contract for follow-on work pending
- **Expected Completion:** To be determined pending contractor schedule
- **Why:** To upgrade 1950s-era sewer lines.

RED CROSS BABY EXPO

coming soon to Panzer Firehouse



Many people won fun raffle prizes last year.



Expecting parents visiting the Baby Expo.

By Nick Steddum

Stuttgart High School Career Practicum Student

The American Red Cross Stuttgart Station is set to host its annual Baby Expo March 9 at the Panzer Firehouse, near the Panzer Housing Area, from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. The event is tailored for prospective, expecting, and new parents, offering them an opportunity to learn about the ins-and-outs of the early parenthood experience – particularly in an overseas environment.

“It’s kind of a trade show, a one-stop shop,” said Erin Owsley, a program specialist with the Red Cross. “We have people from the garrison and off-base, which gives people a good insight to what they can expect when giving birth here in Germany.”

The expo will feature a diverse array of presentations and resources from both military and local national organizations. This includes insights from Böblingen Hospital’s Obstetrics team about hospital deliveries and functions of the neonatology clinic, as well as presentations on other topics and practical demonstrations such as infant CPR. Red Cross volunteers will lead these sessions, focusing on key skills like maintaining composure in stressful situations.

In addition to topics like medical and emergency preparedness, the expo will cover other aspects of family life. This includes services like translation assistance, insurance consultants, and even the Vet Clinic, who will “show how people can introduce their babies to their furry friends,” Owsley said.

Food and drinks will be provided throughout the event, and a raffle featuring various prizes will help offer attendees the chance to go home with something more tangible than knowledge.

“Last year, everyone walked away with something; nobody left empty-handed,” said Whitney Benedictus of the Red Cross.

Overall, “it’s a really easy way to get all the information you need and also meet other families who are expecting,” she added.

The expo is open, free of charge, to the entire military community and does not require pre-registration. For more information, visit the American Red Cross Stuttgart Station’s Facebook page or contact them at stuttgart@redcross.org.

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A year in review – 2023

By Bardia Khajenoori
USAG Stuttgart Public Affairs

The year 2023 was a busy one at USAG Stuttgart. Among the community's numerous activities and achievements over the course of the year were the following:

JANUARY

→ U.S. European Command (EUCOM) organized a reenactment of the March on Washington Jan. 11 as part of an observance commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday. It included a service at the Patch Chapel with video clips of his famous speeches and has become an annual event.



FEBRUARY

→ USAG Stuttgart teamed up with local hunting clubs to host the inaugural German-American Jägerfest on the Panzer local training area Feb. 4. Around 200 hunters attended festivities that were opened by a traditional horn team and held on historic grounds once owned by the Duke of Württemberg.

→ Then-Garrison Commander Col. Matt Ziglar joined Zuffenhausen District Mayor Saliou Gueye Feb. 18 for the 'storming of the town hall,' a symbolic event marking the peak of Carnival (Fasching) season. (Learn more about Fasching on pg. 16)

→ The furry friends of Robinson Barracks gained a new opportunity to enjoy the garrison's most picturesque scenery with the opening of a new dog park on RB in mid-February.



MARCH

→ Students from a local German realschule got a taste of Marine Corps boot camp on a visit to U.S. Marine Forces Europe and Africa (MARFOREUR/AF) March 2. Marines instructed the students on proper warm-ups, how to "build a bridge," and even tested them on a modified version of their combat fitness test.

→ Garrison Command Sgt. Maj. Denice Malave assumed responsibility as the garrison's senior enlisted leader at a March 4 ceremony at the Panzer Firehouse.

→ Vietnam War veterans, many of them members of the community workforce, were honored for their service at an AAFES/Exchange-sponsored pinning ceremony March 29.



APRIL

→ After a total of seven rounds and more than 1,300 votes cast over a week and a half, EUCOM edged out MARFOREUR/AF to win the first USAG Stuttgart Social Media 'Bracket Challenge' competition April 4.

→ The Capital City Visitation Program held only its second tour since 2019 on April 11. The free daylong program, featuring guided visits to political and historic sites in downtown Stuttgart, is organized by the garrison exclusively for DoD personnel. It was put on hold due to the pandemic but made a full comeback with quarterly tours in 2023.

→ The USAG Stuttgart Fire Department celebrated its first major graduation event in years, welcoming 11 recruits to the ranks April 17 following their success in an intensive four-week-long training course.





MAY

- Hundreds of military community members and local residents showed up to a 'grand re-opening' open house event at the Panzer Firehouse May 1. The event included equipment displays, historical information, and a community orchestra.
- Paper slips in the mailbox indicating the arrival of a package became a thing of the past from May 15 as

Community Mail Rooms (CMRs) transitioned to instant digital notifications.

- U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) celebrated a special Africa Day May 25, marking 60 years since the establishment of the Organization of African Unity - the precursor of today's African Union.



JUNE

- Col. Kirk Alexander took command of USAG Stuttgart in a June 21 ceremony at Washington Square.



JULY

- The garrison hosted its first open-post July 4 celebration in over twenty years, drawing an estimated 20,000 visitors to Panzer Kaserne to enjoy food, games, live music, and an impressive fireworks display.
- The first of a series of home-based business (HBB) markets took place at Patch Barracks July 15, offering a unique new venue for registered HBB owners to gain sales and exposure of their goods and services ranging from handmade jewelry to baked goods, photography, and more.



AUGUST

- The Originals Dining Facility crowned Spc. Jaylen King as its 'top chef' after several rounds of a monthslong elimination-style competition featuring various cooking challenges.



SEPTEMBER

- U.S. Army Health Clinic Stuttgart, along with military treatment facilities across Europe, officially launched MHS GENESIS, the Defense Department's new single electronic health record, on Sept. 23.

OCTOBER

- Starbucks marked ten years serving Stuttgart's on-post community with a party Oct. 10, while Baskin-Robbins held its grand opening at the Panzer Mall the next day. Both are Exchange concessionaires.
- Ten German Bundeswehr soldiers earned American marksmanship badges at a qualification event held Oct. 18 by the garrison's Headquarters and Headquarters Company. Personnel from both sides called it a 'special moment' and an opportunity to deepen the German - American friendship (full story on p. 24-25).
- The first-ever USAG Stuttgart Firefighter Combat Challenge brought together more than 85 garrison and off-post firefighters from across Germany Oct. 28. Firefighters in full kit climbed stairs, welded axes, breached doors, and dragged 175 lb. mannequins to safety while cheering each other on.



NOVEMBER

- Patch Barracks welcomed the opening of 29 new parking spaces near the Commissary Nov. 17.
- Also on Nov. 17, a group of Army Civilian and Local National professionals graduated from a three-week Civilian Education System (CES) Intermediate-level leadership course. The course was held at USAG Stuttgart for the first time in recent history (full story on p. 19).
- The Stuttgart Exchange main store became the first in the AAFES family worldwide to host a sensory-friendly shopping hour Nov. 18. (full story on p. 26)
- A renovated Husky Field reopened Nov. 21, showcasing a 'phenomenal' new running surface and stadium-style lighting.



DECEMBER

- The garrison's tree lighting ceremony Dec. 1 saw the return of Frosty Fest after a four year hiatus and a celebration of the academic and sporting achievements of Stuttgart High School students.
- Also on Dec. 1, Robinson Barracks opened a new consolidated postal facility, conveniently bringing together services previously found in two different buildings under a single roof.



Everything You Need to Know about **Carnival** in Germany

MilitaryinGermany.com

Celebrated in February, Fasching – also known as Karneval or Fastnacht – is a traditional German celebration. It is carnival season, which has been celebrated for centuries by people worldwide who have German heritage. It's utterly bonkers and terrific fun – get involved!

Fasching can be documented back to pre-Roman times. These times were difficult for the average person, so the carnival season was a chance to be free, enjoy life and have some fun in a world where fun was non-existent for many.

The masks and costumes of today date back to medieval times when they were not in place as fun decorations, but were worn as ways to avoid punishment and persecution, as carnival goers would mock the strict rulers of the day. Had they not used masks to disguise themselves, they would have been caught and death would have been an inevitability.

Fasching is celebrated in all German-speaking countries. Its timing in the year is poignant, as it is just before the fasting season of Lent, which is when many people will forsake food as a sacrifice for religious reasons. Fasching allows a person to have a huge celebration, indulge, enjoy and embrace all that is good before things are out of bounds during Lent.

Germany holds large and vibrant carnivals to celebrate the Fasching season, with nearly every city having its own celebration. The city of Cologne (Köln) holds one of the biggest carnival celebrations in the country.

February events (with their 2024 dates) include:



Photos by Balmina Sehra



Altweiber Fastnacht (Feb. 8)

The 'Woman's Carnival' which happens on the Thursday before Ash Wednesday, also known as Altweiber Fastnacht. This is a day when women can express their freedom and have a lot of fun. Tradition encourages ladies to cut men's ties and place kisses on those they fancy. It is a flirty, fun event that many people look forward to every year!

Rosenmontag (Feb. 12)

Rosenmontag, or Rose Monday, is what comes next. This is a major highlight for many dancers, marching bands and float parades: streets are filled with entertainment for all.

These days, masks are more extravagant and more modern, and often include caricatures of the faces of politicians and other public figures. You will also be able to find fancy balls and other events that involve dance performances along with a dance floor to try your own luck during intermissions.

Fastnachtdienstag (Feb. 13)

The celebrations come to an end on Ash Wednesday, but prior to this is the much anticipated Shrove Tuesday, or Fastnachtdienstag. This is another great opportunity to attend one of the costume balls that are held all over Germany. It's also the day most German school children either have the day off or attend school in a costume (as Americans often do on Halloween).

Costumes

Fasching is very much a time where everyone, and especially children, like to dress up in fancy dress to take part in the fun. You will notice all the German

department stores around you will start promoting their fancy dress costumes ready for the parties and parades of fasching.

Narrenrufe

Narrenrufe is the collective name of the various Carnival greetings that people call out to each other in the street during carnival season. Each city/region/village tends to have its own so its good to learn your local Narrenruf in order to join the fun and be careful of using the wrong one as people can get very patriotic around that time of year and you will soon become a traitor if you're shouting Helau in Cologne.

- Kaiserslautern says 'Kalau!'
- Wiesbaden and nearby Mainz say 'Helau!' (perhaps one of the most famous ones along with Cologne's Alaaf!)
- Stuttgart has a different set of traditions involving witches and other scary costumes that were once supposed to scare winter away in order for spring to arrive. 'Fasnet' is celebrated around the same time as Fasching and what one could compare to a Narrenruf there is 'Narri Narro'

LARGE/NOTABLE EVENTS NEAR STUTTGART:

- Schömburg: Feb. 8
- Weil der Stadt: Feb. 11
- Rottweil: Feb. 12-13
- Heidelberg: Feb. 13
- Stuttgart: Feb. 13
- Basel: Feb. 19-21

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Tax Season is Here — Advice and Filing Options for Stuttgart Community Members

By **Bardia Khajenoori**
USAG Stuttgart Public Affairs

Although Army Legal Assistance Centers discontinued routine tax preparation services in 2022, Stuttgart community members still have access to free preparation and filing methods, as well as paid commercial options. Regardless of the method, individuals remain responsible for filing a complete and accurate return.

Per Army Regulation 27-3, surviving dependent Family Members of military members who died on active duty (Gold Star Families) are still eligible for routine tax preparation services through their local Legal Assistance office.

The 2024 tax filing season began Jan. 29, and for most taxpayers the deadline is April 15, 2024. U.S. citizens living abroad are granted an automatic two-month extension, with further extensions possible on request.

Filing options available to Stuttgart military community members include:

MilTax for Service Members and Families

- MilTax is a free service for Service Members provided by the DoD through Military OneSource. It's built to account for deployments, combat and training pay, housing and rentals, multistate filings, living OCONUS and more. MilTax also provides free one-on-one help from tax professionals with special training in military-specific tax situations in case of any questions. Visit: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/miltax-software/>

IRS Free File

The IRS Free File Program is a public-private partnership between the IRS and many tax preparation and filing software industry companies who provide their online tax preparation and filing for free. It provides two ways for taxpayers to prepare and file their federal income tax online for free:

- **Guided Tax Preparation** provides free online tax preparation and filing at an IRS partner site. Our partners deliver this service at no cost to qualifying taxpayers. Taxpayers whose Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) is \$79,000 or less qualify for a free federal return.
- **Free File Fillable Forms** are electronic federal tax forms, equivalent to a paper 1040 form. You should know how to prepare your own tax return using form instructions and IRS publications if needed.

It provides a free option to taxpayers whose AGI is greater than \$79,000.

Some IRS Free File Program partner companies offer free state tax preparation, while others may charge a fee. Be sure to read each company's information carefully.

Other free and reduced price virtual options exist for both Service Members and Civilians. Ensure you read all relevant information about fees and included services.

Please note: the U.S. Army does not endorse any specific commercial tax preparation service.

On-Post Paid Services (H&R Block)

In-person commercial services are offered by H&R Block at the Panzer Mall. Hours of operation (subject to change) and contact information is available on the Exchange website.

Necessary Documents

When using any tax preparation software or paid service, you will need to have certain documents available. For service members using software, it is likely you will need your prior year return to set up an account. Once you created an account, follow the prompts to input data from your current year tax documents. Finally, use your prior year return to check your current return. Remember to include all bank and interest bearing accounts, student loan interest, childcare expenses and taxable information.

- Social Security Card/SSNs (or ITIN) for all persons claimed on the tax return
- Form W-2: Shows the amount of taxes withheld from your paycheck for the year and is used to file your federal and state taxes
- Form 1098: Real estate tax documents including mortgage interest statements
- Form 1099: Alimony, child support or related payment agreements, interest and dividends, earnings from self-employment
- Any other documents indicating earned income, such as scholarships
- Any documented income from rental properties
- Records of moving expenses related to a new military assignment, retirement, separation etc.
- Receipts/documentation for deductibles
- Child and dependent care information

Building tomorrow's leaders today: The Army's investment in civilian education

By Joshua Rojas

Army Support Activity-Black Sea
Special to the Citizen

For three weeks last fall, U.S. Army Garrison Stuttgart played host to the Civilian Education System (CES) Intermediate Course, attended by a group of Army Civilian Professionals (ACPs) and Local National (LNs) employees. This program, a key component of the Army's Lines of Effort to maintain a skilled and ready workforce, illustrates the Army's commitment to nurturing its leaders.

The CES, a progressive and sequential leader development program, stands as a testament to the Army's dedication to multi-skilled, agile leadership.

The Army Management Staff College (AMSC) describes CES as "the premier leader development experience, igniting the leadership potential of every Army Civilian."

The USAG Stuttgart command team brought the Intermediate Course to the garrison for the first time thanks to their effort and their dedication to developing ACPs.

The class witnessed a diverse group of mid-level ACPs and LNs ranging between grades GS-10 to GS-12 (and equivalent). They engaged in a curriculum designed to foster adaptability, innovation, self-awareness, and effective management.

Robert Gwinner, USAG Stuttgart deputy to the garrison commander, emphasized the program's contribution to recruitment and retention.

"Good people want to work for organizations that are always trying to improve and that offer them opportunities to do the same," he said. "Positioning ourselves as an organization that supports its employees' professional growth helps attract the type of people we're looking for. USAG Stuttgart has an incredibly important mission and we're always looking to sustain excellence."

Instructors Jean Ritter and Nash Carleton tailored the course content to the evolving needs of ACPs. Ritter focused on empowerment through shared experiences and networking, while Carleton emphasized the importance of applying students' experiences to the course's doctrinal knowledge.

Balmina Sehra, a public affairs specialist, reflected on her experience as a student.

"CES helped me realize that the path to leadership does not look the same for everyone. It helped me find the confidence within myself to know that I can pursue a leadership role at some

point in the future. I did not feel like that prior to taking the class, which is why these three weeks were so important and eye-opening to me," she said.

Dr. David Quisenberry, Director of the Department of Organizational Leadership at AMSC, outlined the adaptive nature of CES over the years.

"We offer a synchronous virtual course for those who cannot come to Fort Leavenworth for personal or professional constraints. We conduct Mobile Education Team Courses at Army installations around the world. This year we will conduct courses in 24 locations," Quisenberry said.

Today's Army demands trained and ready units with proficient leaders, which highlights the importance of ACPs, and their role in the Army's workforce.

"Army Civilian Professionals are part of the competitive advantage the Army possesses that neither technology nor advanced weaponry and platforms can replace. Developing leaders is a complex and complicated undertaking because it is primarily a human endeavor — requiring constant involvement," Quisenberry said.

Tommy Mize, Director of Installation Management Command-Europe, reaffirmed this commitment during a special guest visit to the CES Intermediate course where he delivered remarks and answered students' questions.

"You should never be told, 'No — you cannot go to a school in the CES,'" he asserted. "Everybody in IMCOM-Europe has the opportunity to go to school and attend the CES courses. You need to do that, as it's an important component of professional development."

As the CES Intermediate Course concluded, the participants left with more than just enhanced skills; they carried with them a renewed sense of purpose and responsibility.

"The Army, through initiatives like CES, is not just investing in individuals; it is fortifying its future, ensuring that its leaders are equipped to face the challenges of tomorrow with confidence and competence. In the words of these leaders and educators, the message is clear: In the U.S. Army, people matter, and their development is paramount to the Army's success," said Mize.

.....
IMCOM-Europe will be hosting the CES Intermediate Course at USAG Wiesbaden from Jul. 8-26, 2024, and the CES Advanced Course from Jul. 22 - Aug. 16, 2024, at USAG Stuttgart. For a full course calendar on upcoming CES classes, visit the AMSC website.



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From the Historian: A Continuing Mission

By William Butler

Command Historian, U.S. European Command

Just over 35 years ago, on Dec. 7, 1988, Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev announced a unilateral reduction of 500,000 Warsaw Pact troops that would be implemented over the next two years. At a NATO Summit five months later, American President George H. W. Bush suggested an initiative to withdraw 275,000 troops from Central Europe. These proposals were soon overcome by the fall of the Berlin Wall on Nov. 9, 1989, and the “Velvet Revolution” which followed in Central Europe. In late January, 1990, U.S. Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney announced the first of a series of annual base closures in Europe and planning for the drawdown of U.S. forces soon after. Although delayed because of the need to support Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in Southwest Asia from August 1990 through March 1991, major drawdowns began in earnest, and their effects were immediately felt across the Greater Stuttgart Military Community (GSMC), which had served as a vital Cold War military hub.

Across the European theater, a series of troop reductions and closures of military infrastructure took place over the ensuing years. From a late Cold War high of 350,000 Service Members on the continent in 1988, troop levels dropped below 120,000 by 1995. Those reductions would continue during the following two decades as the U.S. military shifted its focus onto operations in the Middle East. In the Stuttgart garrison footprint, installation closures began as soon as the troops returned from their deployments in the summer of 1991. Over the next few years, all of the posts in the Ludwigsburg area closed and were returned to German government control. The same applied to other sites in surrounding communities such as Esslingen, Nellingen, and Bad Cannstatt. Some units were shifted to other garrisons in Germany, but most either cased their colors or returned to the



VII Corps returns triumphant

story and photo by Scott Wisdom
Stuttgart Citizen

VII Corps Commander Lt. Gen. Frederick Franks and 220 staff members and supporting troops arrived in Stuttgart to a rousing welcome May 12.

The ceremony at the Stuttgart International Airport celebrated the corps' triumphant victory and marked the safe return of just over half of VII Corps' deployed troops.

Franks' returning speech was filled with praise for all VII Corps' soldiers, their families and the Germans. He attributed his stunning victory to the courage, skill, team-work and willingness to face the fight by all three groups.

Among those welcoming Franks were U.S. European Commander Gen. John Galvin, U.S. Ambassador to Germany Vernon Walters and Stuttgart Lord Mayor Manfred Rommel.

"You smashed a tyrant," Walters announced. He thanked the troops for "giving us a confidence in ourselves. Very few people will trifle with us as that foe trifled."

In acknowledging the Germans' support of soldiers, families and the operation Walters said, "Not one of my requests for help was ever turned down."

"The only words that we can say to you are the words that are the most important to any soldier anywhere — mission accomplished, job well done," Galvin announced to the troops.

After the tarmac reception, Franks and his troops reunited with their families at the Kelley Barracks gymnasium.

While families clung tightly together, Galvin stepped outside to touch on several pertinent topics of the day with the local press.

"The Gulf has changed attitudes and views on women," Galvin told reporters. He believes there will be increased recognition for women's part in the effort. "I expect we will see a greater role for women (in the military)," he said.

Galvin praised VII Corps' accomplishments in the Gulf as representative of the new concept in forward



Gen. Frederick Franks, VII Corps commander, uncases the corps' colors upon his return May 12. Franks returned to Stuttgart after more than half his troops redeployed.

deployed forces. "The emphasis will be on a smaller, highly trained, mobile, multi-national force. We must now be able to be NATO deployed, provide intermediary support, and act as a contingency force as those troops in Turkey are doing now," he added.

"Where there are now four divisions, there will be two. And a new corps will be formed," Galvin said about the future of U.S. forces in Germany. He added, the new Corps will include elements of both VII and V Corps; however, he was not sure whether it would be called VII or V Corps.

Approximately 44 percent of VII Corps remain in the Gulf region supporting the Desert Storm or Operation Provide Comfort to Galvin, there is no exact time when all forces will be out of Southwest Asia.

Franks, now saddled with commanding between Germany and the Gulf, reassured soldiers and their families that, "we know and where you are. Soon you will also be home."

"The humanitarian aid we are issuing who we are and what we stand for," Franks

This May 1991 edition of the Stuttgart Citizen featured troops returning from deployment. Many U.S. military installations in the Stuttgart area, including those in Ludwigsburg and Esslingen, closed soon after.

Photo is public domain

continental United States. After the VII Corps inactivated at Kelley Barracks, the GSMC headquarters moved there from its longtime home at Robinson Barracks and was redesignated as the 6th Area Support Group. Despite the drawdowns, a few newcomers arrived to carry on their missions, such as the Marine Forces Europe (MARFOREUR) headquarters, which took up residence at Panzer Kaserne in 1993. The U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) staff remained at Patch Barracks and would continue to oversee theater-wide operations and activities in this new post-Cold War era.

Even though NATO also underwent rapid reduction, emerging crises demanded significant responses both inside and outside of Europe. This was especially true in the troubled Balkans region, where both USEUCOM and its subordinate commands undertook a series of humanitarian, peacekeeping, and no-fly zone operations throughout the 1990s. In the midst of these efforts, USEUCOM and others reached out to the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe through new partnership programs. Continuing engagement and humanitarian operations in Africa were also a hallmark of this novel "expeditionary era." Throughout this period, the military personnel and organizations in the Stuttgart garrison community supported these enduring missions.

The beginning of the 21st century brought new challenges. In the wake of the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, USEUCOM and its components provided robust support to U.S. Central Command for its subsequent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Servicemembers from the Stuttgart area routinely deployed to these efforts. Important work was also done with European partners to thwart terrorist and violent extremist activities across the region. Because of its long-term involvement in Africa, USEUCOM was instrumental in the standup of U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM), which formally activated at

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Crowds gathered at the gates of Patch Barracks to show solidarity after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Photo is public domain

Kelley Barracks in 2008. Over the last two decades, both commands have worked in concert from their offices in the Stuttgart garrison to oversee critical missions on the European and African continents and across the globe. Throughout this period, their efforts have been supported by local garrison command, which moved to Panzer Kaserne and was renamed the U.S. Army Garrison Stuttgart. Together, all of these organizations continue to work with Germany and other European partners to carry on a shared mission. Each has remained steadfast in their combined support of a long cherished transatlantic alliance.



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USAG Stuttgart Family and MWR: Your Go-To Guide for Blossoming into Spring

By Kay Moncada

USAG Stuttgart Family and MWR

As the days grow longer and the temperatures start to rise in Germany, we are thrilled to bring you a collection of exciting events, activities, and opportunities that promise to enrich your life with a breath of fresh air. From outdoor adventures to cultural experiences, from family-friendly gatherings to moments of relaxation, this is your guide to making the most of this captivating season. Welcome the arrival of spring with Family and MWR, where unforgettable experiences await around every corner.

SPRING BAZAAR APRIL 4-7

Spring is in the air, and with it comes the highly



anticipated return of The Spring Bazaar, a beloved event for the USAG Stuttgart community. The event promises to bring together all the fantastic treasures that have become synonymous with this annual tradition. Hosted by "Harriet R. Tubman" in collaboration with Family & MWR, the Spring Bazaar will take place on Panzer Kaserne in Bldg. 2917 & 2918, providing a one-stop-shop for European delights and much more.

- ➔ **Apr. 4**, Thursday, 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.
- ➔ **Apr. 5**, Friday, 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.
- ➔ **Apr. 6**, Saturday, 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.
- ➔ **Apr. 7**, Sunday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Panzer Kaserne will transform into a bustling marketplace, offering an array of goods from some of your favorite vendors from across Europe. Food enthusiasts can rejoice as they peruse stalls brimming with delectable European treats. From artisanal cheeses that will transport your taste buds to the rolling hills of France to fine wines that evoke the charm of Italian vineyards, there's something for every palate.

Home decor aficionados will be in their element, with an extensive collection of ceramics, textiles, and other unique pieces from various European countries. Spruce up your living space with beautiful items that capture the essence of European design and craftsmanship.

We also have something for the antique lovers too, here you will find yourself drawn to the Spring Bazaar's enchanting selection of clocks and amazing

handcrafted furniture. Each antique tells a story, and here you'll discover pieces that have stood the test of time and are waiting to become a part of your own story.

The Spring Bazaar is not just a marketplace; it's an opportunity to discover new tastes, sights, and treasures, and a time to come together as you mingle with fellow community members. "The Spring Bazaar was the first ever [garrison] event I attended; what an amazing setup in a big tent, and to meet with all the persons from small to tall was just amazing," said Joerg Kroeter, general manager of the Stuttgart Marriott Hotel Sindelfingen, a Spring Bazaar sponsor.

Join us at Panzer Kaserne for this unforgettable event. Don't miss out on this fantastic opportunity to explore the best of Europe right in the heart of USAG Stuttgart. Remember that only card payments are accepted, and no cash transactions are permitted during this shopping experience. See you at the Spring Bazaar!

CONVENIENT STORAGE SOLUTIONS

FMWR is thrilled to announce the availability of 35 brand-new large garage-style storage units for rent at the Stuttgart Army Airfield. Measuring 19 feet in depth and 9 feet in width, these spacious garage-style units offer ample space to store your valuable possessions and vehicles securely. Each unit is equipped with a convenient garage door opening, making access a breeze. The rental rate for these large units is just \$100 per month, with a minimum 3-month payment requirement.

If you're looking for options beyond large units, the Stuttgart Golf Course in Kornwestheim also offers a range of units for rent. Here's the breakdown:

- ➔ Large Units: \$100 per month
- ➔ Medium Units (half a garage): \$75 per month
- ➔ Small Units (1/3 of a garage): \$50 per month

To reserve your storage unit or for more information, visit stuttgart.armymwr.com or call the Stuttgart Golf Course at 0714-187-9150 about either location. It's time to upgrade your storage game and ensure the safety of your belongings. Your space awaits!

LEPRECHAUN LAUF MARCH 2, 5:30 P.M.

Step into a world of luminous adventure at the leprechaun-themed fun run, where walkers and runners alike are invited to light up the evening. Taking place on Patch Barracks and starting at the Patch Fitness Center, this unique event encourages



participants to don their most vibrant glow in the dark attire, transforming the streets into a radiant spectacle. As you stride through the glowing course, be prepared for a touch of whimsy, for who knows, you might just encounter an actual leprechaun, ready to sprinkle some mischievous magic along your path. "Runners likely won't find a pot of gold on the course, but they will get a shiny, glittery finisher medal at the end," said Fitness Coordinator Anne-Marie Harcrow. The 5k fun run is scheduled to occur on Patch Barracks, with the race starting at 5:30 p.m. Don't forget to swing by for bib pick-up and same-day registration from 4-5 p.m. on the event day. Pre-registration for just \$20 ends Feb. 28, or join us on the day of the event for \$25. Register via WebTrac or at any USAG Stuttgart Fitness Center. For questions or more information, call (0)9641-70-596-7136. Don't miss out on the mischievous magic!

Save the date for our upcoming event, the Rock the 80's Pump & 5K, on May 18.

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special event unforgettable with Galaxy Bowling – where inviting spaces, attentive staff, and delicious ShaWINGz flavors come together for a memorable experience. Call 07031-15-2575 to book your next event today!

ST. PATTY'S DAY PAINT BALL MARCH 16, 8 A.M.-4 P.M.

Prepare for an adrenaline-fueled St. Paddy's Day experience that you won't want to miss! Get ready to dive into the action at the Paintball Stadion just north of Heilbronn. This thrilling event is open to participants aged 16 and older, with those aged 16 to 17 requiring parental supervision.

Kick off your day by gathering at the lobby of Bldg. 2915 on Panzer Kaserne, where you'll meet before embarking on a round-trip journey via van. The package includes all the essentials: a paintball marker, a protective mask, 500 rounds of paint, and four hours of adrenaline-pumping gameplay.

Since paintball can get messy, be sure to bring along some old clothes and an extra change for post-battle cleanup. If you require additional gear like coveralls or gloves, you can rent them from the paintball vendor. You'll also be able to make on-site purchases using either Euro cash or credit cards. The deadline to secure your spot for this exciting event is March 6, 2024, with no refunds available after that date. Get ready to celebrate the luck of the Irish in a truly adventurous way and create experiences on the paintball battlefield that will last a lifetime! For more information, call Outdoor Recreation at (0)9641-70-596-4291.



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FINANCIAL READINESS PROGRAM

Discover the invaluable support offered by Army Community Service (ACS) for many of your personal finance needs. Whether you're striving to build a budget or save for retirement, ACS provides a wealth of resources through classes, unit trainings, and individual appointments with a fiduciary Accredited Financial Counselor. Professional financial guidance encompasses information and resources for investing, estate planning, financial planning, consumer protection resources, debt and credit management, and more. ACS is your partner in financial success and is at your service, providing continuous assistance to establish your financial stability and equipping you with the knowledge needed to make wise financial choices. "No matter what you're hoping to accomplish financially this year, you have FREE and reliable resources at your ACS. You can meet with a financial counselor and ask any financial questions you might have. You just have to take the first step and call to make an appointment." said ACS Financial Counselor Ruthy Srun. For all ACS needs, call (0)9641-70-596-3362

SPRING FEST HOSTED BY CYS APRIL 29, 10 A.M.-2 P.M.

April not only ushers in the arrival of spring but also serves as a dedicated time to celebrate the unsung heroes of our nation's military families — the military children. This April, as we pay tribute to these brave, fearless, and resilient young individuals who have unwaveringly endured deployments, relocations, and the unique challenges of military



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life, we are excited to offer an extraordinary event. Child and Youth Services (CYS) invites you to join the remarkable Spring Fest that promises to be brimming with vibrancy and fun. It's an occasion that will bring smiles to the faces of these young



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heroes and their families, a day to celebrate their strength, courage, and spirit.

Spring Fest offers a range of activities suitable for children of all ages to indulge in. Whether it's moon bounces or pony rides, there's an exciting adventure waiting for every attendee. SKIES will make appearances, conducting demonstrations and providing entertainment throughout the day. For those who believe in the power of stories, Resilience through Reading is excited to announce a special guest reader who will be in attendance to read 'The Koala Who Could.' This book promises to encourage and support a love for reading with captivating tales that inspire strength and courage.

Spring Fest is the perfect opportunity for families to come together, create cherished memories, and celebrate the remarkable children who stand strong alongside their military parents. Festivities will take place on Panzer Kaserne in Bldg. 2917 and on the playground and field area.

Spring Fest is part of Month of the Military



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Child. ACS will be observing Child Abuse Prevention Month in April with engaging activities for all.

MWR TRIPS AND TOURS

Experience the magic of springtime in Europe as nature awakens with vibrant blossoms and sunny days. Discover your passport to springtime adventures with MWR Trips and Tours.

Trips planned between February and April include visits to Milan, Paris, and Luxembourg; castles in Nuremberg, Cochem, and Erkenbrechtsweiler; an alpine coaster in the Black forest; and the Heidelberg Castle Knights' Feast..

Don't miss your opportunity to discover these exciting destinations, and even more. Registration is available in person, over the phone at (0)9641-70-596-2104, or via Webtrac. Even if the registration deadline has passed, there could still be openings! Don't hesitate to contact the MWR Tours staff to inquire about availability. For some trips, ASAP provides a 50% discount as part of the Stuttgart Warrior Pride Challenge. Contact MWR Tours or ASAP for more details.

In a vibrant garrison like ours, the possibilities for entertainment, personal development, and community engagement are abundant. Don't forget to keep your calendars updated and make the most of these incredible events and activities. For complete information about all the upcoming USAG Stuttgart Family and MWR programs and events, visit stuttgart.armymwr.com.

- ➔ 1 Spring Bazaar
- ➔ 2 Leprechaun Lauf fun run
- ➔ 3 ShaWingz
- ➔ 4 St. Patty's Day Paint Ball
- ➔ 5 Spring Fest
- ➔ 6 Spring Fest, Photos 1-7 by USAG Stuttgart Family and MWR7
- ➔ 7 MWR Trip to Nuremberg, Photo by Ram Lanka/ Unsplashd

Swapping skills and patches at the Panzer shooting range



The HHC hosts Soldiers from the Bundeswehr.

Story & photos by **Balmina Sehra**
USAG Stuttgart Public Affairs

Ten soldiers from the German military, the Bundeswehr, earned U.S. Army Marksmanship Qualification Badges at Panzer Kaserne in Böblingen Oct. 18, while strengthening German-American friendship.

After a three-year hiatus caused by the pandemic, the USAG Stuttgart Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC) was finally able to host German soldiers at the Panzer shooting range again, allowing them to earn the American marksmanship badges.

Capt. Andrew Horn, who assumed command of the HHC in early 2023, expressed satisfaction in hosting the Bundeswehr personnel and enabling their increased understanding of American weaponry.

“When we have these events, it keeps communication between us open, and therefore the friendship keeps going,” said Horn.

Following a round of practice shots, the invited German soldiers got the green light to demonstrate their shooting skills. Three Bundeswehr soldiers scored a perfect 40, earning the highly coveted ‘expert’ badge and the admiration of their colleagues.

Events like these provide opportunities for soldiers on both sides to bond, swap stories, and learn about each other’s cultures and military life. They sometimes include the chance to exchange keepsakes such as badges worn on their arms to symbolize their regiment or corps.

Sergeant Erik one of the Bundeswehr soldiers who scored a perfect 40, was eager to swap some of his patches for American ones. “It’s always fun to exchange badges. I love hearing the story behind them. I have some that have already caught my eye, and I hope to exchange them for some of mine,” he said.

Hauptfeldwebel (Sgt. 1st Class) Michel, who previously shot with American soldiers, always welcomes participation in these types of events.

“Days like these are always special as it’s like being together with brothers, and it increases the teamwork amongst ourselves,” Michel said.

These events are not only for bonding, but also serve practical purposes.

“It’s helpful in case there is a real-world scenario, and we’d have to consider

each other’s capabilities,” explained Horn. “We are familiar with it since we’ve already seen and practiced with each other’s equipment before.”

After a long and exhausting day, everyone gathered for a typical American barbecue, closing out with hamburgers and new patches from their counterparts.

Per Bundeswehr policy, German soldiers are identified only by rank and first name.



Above: A round of practice shots.

Below: German and American Soldiers test their skills.





Staff Sgt. Marcus Walthers gives instructions.



German Bundeswehr Soldiers testing their shots.



A Bundeswehr Soldier receives feedback on how to improve his shots.



Bundeswehr Soldiers receiving instructions on using their weaponry.

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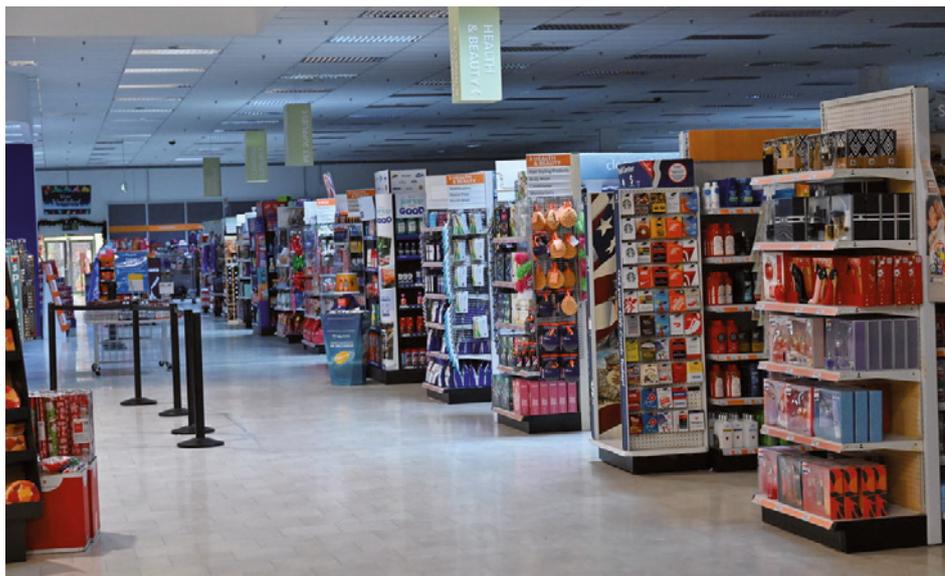
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All quiet on the Exchange front



A peaceful time at the Exchange.



Fidget Spinners and Bubblesquares were on hand for customers.

Story & photos by Balmina Sehra
USAG Stuttgart Public Affairs

Dimmed lights, no music, and a calm, refreshing atmosphere enveloped Stuttgart's Army Air Force Exchange Service main store (PX) during their inaugural sensory shopping day on Nov. 18, a worldwide first for the "we go where you go" organization.

The one hour of hustle-free shopping, a contrast to the store's usual holiday buzz, was a commitment the store workers aimed to fulfill for their most vulnerable customers. At the entrance, children and adults could choose from fidget spinners and bubblesquares to keep in their pockets and play with while walking around the store.

"As we continue to evolve as retailers, we recognize that we have to be more inclusive to our community members," said Carla McDowell, Exchange general manager, about the pilot program.

The Stuttgart Exchange plans to host sensory shopping every second Saturday of the month from 7:55 to 8:55 a.m. Part of the shopping experience includes the opportunity to see and touch items before purchasing them.

"Customers want to see how items function in reality when they shop in person. They like to see TVs in their full glory. However, it is impossible to give both sets of customers the same experience simultaneously. This is a great solution for people who want to experience shopping in a less crowded

and overwhelming space," said Robert Boylan, the PX store manager.

To ensure a more peaceful and relaxed shopping experience, all TVs and the beeps at the checkout counters are turned off, and the lights are dimmed.

AAFES Exchange employees are excited about this new program and are encouraging community members to participate, as it will help them provide the best service for all customers.

"The community members drive this program, so we need people to come and give us their honest feedback so we can continue improving our service," McDowell said.

"I'm super excited about this event today. We want to make it an exclusive shopping environment and give people who would otherwise be hesitant to come out, and benefit from the service the Exchange can provide for them," said Boylan.

McDowell is looking forward to having more customers make use of sensory shopping hours.

"The Exchange is here for the community. We serve a community that protects our freedom. It's not just the service members on the frontlines, but also their families who are here deployed with them. And we want them to have the best service we can provide," she said.

If you would like to experience a calmer shopping environment then stop by the Panzer Exchange during their Sensory Shopping hour, on the following dates: Feb. 10, March 9, April 13



The Exchange team is here to serve the community.

STUTTGART Citizen

Official website:
home.army.mil/stuttgart

Official community news:
www.StuttgartCitizen.com

Online AFN radio: OR 102.3 FM
AFNeurope.net/Stations/Stuttgart

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In Remembrance: Johann Wendler



With a heavy heart, we recently had to say goodbye to one of our dearest friends and colleagues, Fire Inspector Johann Wendler, who died unexpectedly on Jan. 7th. Johann was a member of the U.S. Army Fire Department for 36 years, 29 of which were served in Stuttgart.

His counsel was routinely sought as a reliable advisor due to his experience and foresight. We have lost a friend, colleague, and professional we will not forget. USAG Stuttgart and his fire department colleagues truly appreciate his contributions and service to our community.

The Big Question: How do you contribute to building a strong and supportive community here in Stuttgart?

“I am a sponsor of the Stuttgart High School (SHS) Ambassador Program where students from SHS help new students come into Stuttgart with a smoother transition. I also sponsor the high school’s National Technical Honors Society and am an active USO liaison.”

Dawn Macfarland, teacher

“I run the Texasstrasse Book Club, so I manage book readings and discussions every month. The club started as a way to connect members of the community during COVID and it has been a tight-knit group ever since.”

Heather Demers-Keller, teacher

“I officiate and keep the books for volleyball at the CYS, SHS and and the CYS and High School basketball. I also help out the High School Softball team wherever they need me.”

Rachel Makle, counselor

“I am part of a running club on Patch where we get together, help each other stay fit, I find local trails around Patch area.”

Emily Turner, Communications

“I used to volunteer at Patch community center and need to get back into volunteering stuff.”

Brenda Varley



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