



WELCOME BACK TEAM JACKSON



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SECARMY: Just Pick Up during the holiday season

BY DAN DRISCOLL

Secretary of the Army

Fifteen years ago, Ranger School's Winter Mountain Phase nearly broke me. I slipped and fell, couldn't get up, and the cold crushed me. I was done in that moment. But my Ranger Buddies picked me up and helped me start moving again. That was an inflection point for me: I realized no one can go through life alone, we all break eventually, and we need each other.

At some point, all of us need a battle buddy to share the load. In that moment, you need someone to pick you up with grace and compassion. But, last year, we lost 260 Soldiers to suicide. Soldiers aren't getting the help they need. Signing those letters of condolence—and knowing we could have helped—is heart-breaking. I wish we never had to write another one.

The holidays can be a high-risk period for self-harm. We know it's a problem, it happens every year, so we'll address it head-on—like 11th Airborne in Alaska who haven't lost a Soldier to suicide in 14 months. They systematically prioritize Soldier checks to offer help, make sure they are ok, and address risk factor root causes. We will do this across the Army.

This isn't performative – it's real for me. The Army is literally my family: my grandfather and father were Soldiers, my nephew is serving now, and I hope my children serve in the future. My Army buddies are my family too: I still lean on my platoon sergeant and driver from my 2009 Iraq deployment



988



Army Suicide
Prevention
Program



U.S. Army photo

Secretary of the Army Dan Driscoll has called on the Army to share the load with each other over the holiday season. He wrote officers and noncommissioned officers will check on every Soldier daily from now until Jan. 15

and convinced them to work for me in this office. When I make decisions, I do it fully knowing that my friends and our sons and daughters will bear the consequences. This is personal for me, I know it is for you too, so let's change it together.

Effective now through January 15, an officer or noncommissioned officer will deliberately check in on every Soldier daily to see if they need help. Just pick up your phone or car keys—call, text, or visit your buddy—and pick them up too. Just pick up so we can provide help.

For those who need help: when your phone rings during daily check-up, just pick up, and ask for help. Seeking help

is not weakness—it takes courage, faith, and trust that your family, friends, and community will accept you and help you. We want to pick you up, share your load, and get you moving forward again. There is light beyond the darkness that surrounds you. Just keep fighting through this moment, pick up your phone, and let us help you.

So, just pick up your phone, scan these QR codes, and learn about the resources available.

If you or someone you know needs help now, dial 988 and press 1 for the Military Crisis Line.

Every life is sacred, we're all in this together, and just picking up can save Soldiers' lives.

ON THE COVER

Two Fort Jackson team members share a moment during the Welcome Back Community Information Exchange held Nov. 17 at the 1917 Club on post. The exchange was one of two held to welcome employees. See Page 6-7



Photo by NATHAN CLINEBELLE

THE FORT JACKSON LEADER

Fort Jackson, South Carolina 29207

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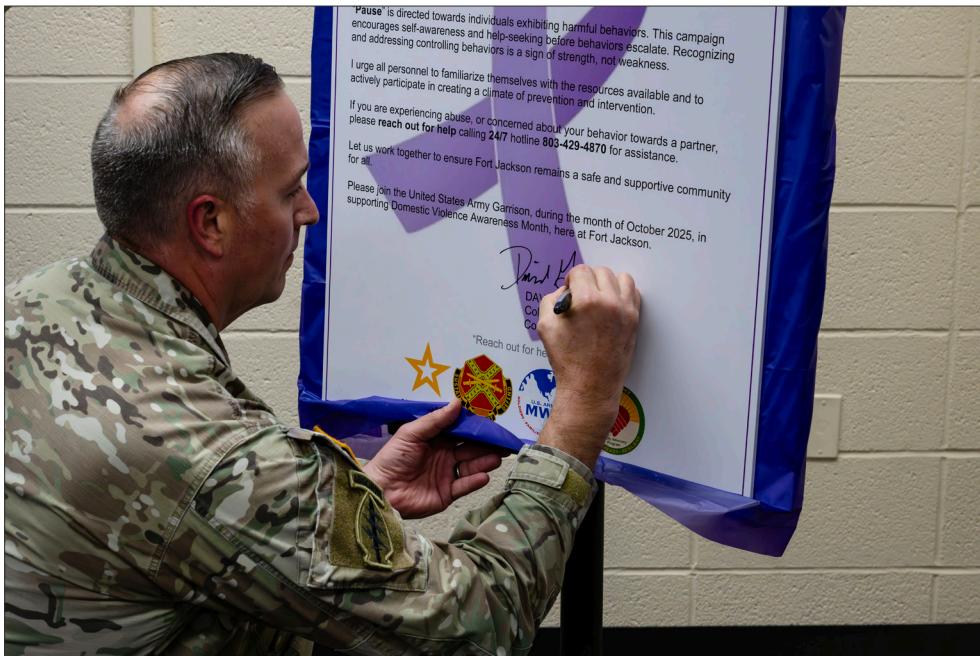


Photo by ROBERT TIMMONS

Col. David Gaugush, garrison commander, signs the 2025 Domestic Violence Awareness Month Proclamation.



Photo by ROBERT TIMMONS

Post Command Sgt. Maj. William Shoaf places a ribbon on Rick Riley, Installation Security Officer, during the October awards ceremony. Riley received the Order of the Marechaussee from the Military Police Regimental Association during the ceremony.

While you were away

A government shutdown didn't stop Fort Jackson's mission of training American Soldiers. In fact, there were multiple other events held during that time. Fort Jackson's housing area was full of costumed children as they trick-or-treated, Oct. 31. Other events included an award ceremony and a signing of the 2025 Domestic Violence Awareness Month proclamation.



Courtesy photo

Fort Jackson's on-post community got all dressed up for trick-or-treating.



Courtesy photo

Fort Jackson Police Officers patrol on-post housing during trick-or-treating on post Oct. 31.

Community Updates

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Death Notice

This notice serves as a death notice advisory for all those in possession of the property of Sgt. Dillon J. Hansen, as well as those whom the deceased is indebted, or those indebted to the deceased. Please contact 1st Lt. Emma R. Hampel, Summary Courts Martial Officer, with questions or concerns at (631)-358-1898 or via email at emma.r.hampel.mil@army.mil.

Gate 4 Closure

Gate 4 (Boyden Arbor Road) will be closed December 5-12 due to a construction project. Drivers should prepare now, plan alternate routes, and be prepared for heavier traffic and longer access times at other gates. For more information, call Physical Security at (803) 751-2005.

Safety Training

The Installation Safety Office presents various safety training classes. To register for the Army Traffic Safety Training or Local Hazards training classes, go to the website <https://airs.safety.army.mil/default.aspx>. To register for the Unit Safety Officer training, contact your safety specialist.

■ Local Hazards Course: Every Monday at 10 a.m. (except holidays)

■ Unit Safety Officer Course: send your designated Safety Officer an email to register

■ Heat Illness Prevention Training: Every Monday at 1 p.m. (except holidays) at Strom Thurmond Bldg., Room 207.

* Safety officials encourage those wishing to attend in case of no shows.

Holiday Closures and Hours

The Directorate of Human Resources will be closed on the following holidays and training holidays:

Thanksgiving Day Nov. 27
Thanksgiving Training Holiday Nov. 28



Christmas Eve
Christmas
New Year's Day

Dec. 24
Dec. 25
Jan. 1

The Gate 2 Express will be open from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Thanksgiving. The Exchange will be closed for Thanksgiving, but opens at 8 a.m. Nov. 28.

Cosmic Bowling Saturdays

5-8 p.m., Century Lanes Bowling Center. Come out and bowl for \$10 per person for shoes and two hours of bowling every Saturday. College and professional football games are shown every weekend as well. For more information, call (803) 751-6138.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

TODAY

Storytime Thursdays

11 a.m. to noon. Thomas Lee Hall (Post) Library. Join us at the library every Thursday at 11 a.m. for Storytime. Ideal for children ages zero-to-six, children can come to the library for stories, crafts, and an activity. For more information, call (803) 751-5589.

DEC. 3

Biltmore Trip & Virtual Tour

6 a.m., Join Outdoor Recreation on a trip to visit the beautiful and historic Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina while all decorated for the Holiday Season. You will be treated to an audio guided tour of the Biltmore Mansion along with the opportunity to visit the rest of the estate which includes a winery, shopping, and restaurants. If you have always wanted to go now is your chance. For more information, call (803) 751-3979.

tion, call (803) 751-3484.

Community Lunch

Noon to 1 p.m., Main Post Chapel Fellowship Hall. The Fort Jackson community invited to attend a lunch with food, fellowship, fun and a brief inspirational message. The lunch is held the first Wednesday of the month. For more information, call (803) 751-3979.

DEC. 4

Training Stand-Up Day

Fort Jackson is holding a Training Stand-Up Day at the Post Theater to provide on-post personnel an opportunity to take six mandatory training classes at one time. There are two sessions: a morning session from 8-11:30 a.m. and 1-4:15 p.m.

See **EVENTS:** Page 10

THE FORT JACKSON LEADER

SEND ALL
SUBMISSIONS TO
usarmy.jackson.93-sig-bde.mbx.atzj-pao@army.mil

Deadline for events to be included in the Community Updates is one week before publication. Include the time, date and place the event will occur, as well as other necessary information.

If you submit an article on an event that already has taken place, please send it as soon as possible. Tuesday is the last day we will be able to accept an article for publication the following

Thursday. Include the date and place of the event, as well as a description of what took place. Please include quotations, if possible.

With any photo you submit, include IDs — rank, unit, and first and last names. All submissions will be edited and published using Associated Press Style.

Questions? Call (803) 751-3615.



Photo by AIR FORCE STAFF SGT. MADELYN KEECH

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth finishes the installation of a Department of War plaque at the River Entrance in front of the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., Nov. 13, 2025.

Department of War name set in bronze

By C. TODD LOPEZ
Pentagon News

At the Pentagon Nov. 13, facilities personnel took down outdated bronze plaques at two of the building's entrances and replaced them with recently minted plaques bearing the new name of the federal agency that leads America's fighting force: "Department of War."

One of those new plaques was put up at the River Entrance, which faces the Potomac River and serves as the Pentagon's grand entrance. It's where Secretary of War Pete Hegseth greets counterparts from partner and allied nations, as well as other dignitaries and distinguished visitors.

The Mall Entrance, which faces north toward the National Mall in Washington, also got a new sign. Outside that

entrance are the Pentagon's helicopter landing pads.

"We wanted to replace (the old signs) because we want everybody who comes through this door to know that we are deadly serious about the name change of this organization," Hegseth said.

In early September, President Donald J. Trump signed an executive order changing the name of the Defense Department back to the War Department — a name the department held for more than 150 years, from 1789 to 1947.

Construction on the Pentagon began in 1941 and was completed in 1943. When the building opened that year, it housed the Department of War. In fact, the dedication stone on the Pentagon — located outside the Mall Entrance — has "War Department" engraved at the top, along with the names of Franklin D.

Roosevelt, who was president at the time, and Henry L. Stimson, who served as Secretary of War from 1940 to 1945.

Now, the Pentagon again houses the War Department.

"We love everything that the Department of Defense represented," Hegseth said. "But this is a new era of the Department of War that is focused on winning wars ... and making sure that we know exactly what the mission is and that the troops are sent there to succeed and win."

The name "Department of War," Hegseth said, harkens back to America's founding.

"(We are) reestablishing (the department) back to Henry Knox and George Washington and the founding of our nation — to fight and win our nation's wars

See **BRONZE**, Page 9

Eligible paratroopers receive jump in pay

By LT. COL. ANDREW YANG
Army Directorate of Military Personnel Management

As of October 1, 2025, Soldiers who qualify for hazardous duty incentive pay (HDIP) for parachute duty are now receiving \$200 a month for static line jumps, a \$50 increase from the former rate. Qualified jumpmaster Soldiers are also eligible for a new monthly jumpmaster special duty assignment pay of \$150.

"These pay increases demonstrate the Army's continued appreciation for airborne service and acknowledge the distinctive challenges faced by our paratroopers," stated Col. Frank Pena, Chief of Total Army Readiness Division, U.S. Army G-1. "We've worked closely with airborne units and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service to ensure accurate updates for those who qualify for the incentive pay."

Soldiers eligible for HDIP include qualified parachutists, those in training to become parachutists, those assigned to positions requiring parachute jumps, and those ordered to perform parachute jumps from aircraft in flight. Jumpmaster Soldiers performing jumpmaster duties in authorized positions additionally qualify for SDAP. Eligibility for both incentives is contingent upon Soldiers meeting and maintaining the minimum performance standards detailed in DODI 1340.09.

The Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth, announced the pay increase in May during the 82nd Airborne Division's All-American Week event at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He commended paratroopers for the commitment and

See **PAY**, Page 9



Above: Col. David Gaugush, garrison commander, speaks to employees to the Welcome Back Community Information Exchange held Nov. 18. It was one of two exchanges held to welcome back employees who were furloughed during the recent government shutdown.

Right: Col. Chesley Thigpen, Army Training Center and Fort Jackson deputy commander, also spoke at the events. He said Fort Jackson could not complete its mission without the dedicated civilian employees, some of which worked during the shutdown. Fort Jackson continued on training American Soldiers during the shutdown.



A civilian employee serves himself some breakfast during the Welcome Back Community Information Exchange, Nov. 17.



Members of Team Jackson speak to representatives of the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation during the exchange.



Sabine Alsup, with the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation speaks with a colleague over breakfast, Nov. 17.



A civilian employee serves himself some breakfast during the Welcome Back Community Information Exchange, Nov. 17.



Members of Team Jackson speak to representatives of the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation during the exchange.



Chaplain (Col.) Stan Smith, command chaplain, says a few motivational words during a Community Information Exchange held Nov. 18.

Welcome back Team Jackson

By ROBERT TIMMONS
Fort Jackson Public Affairs

Fort Jackson gave a hearty welcome back to its furloughed employees with community information exchanges, Nov. 17-18.

"I just want to say thank you, and welcome back," said Col. David Gaugush, garrison commander, to the Team Jackson at the Nov. 17 event. "It's good seeing everyone here today, and I know everyone's just itching to get back to work."

"We just came out of the longest government shutdown, and unfortunately, that's something you and your Families had to endure, and whether you were furloughed - no one asked to be furloughed and no one asks to go home

under those circumstances," he said.

The exchanges were aimed at welcoming back fellow employees and helping reduce stress caused by the shutdown.

"... So it was super important that we came together today and didn't just act like the last seven weeks didn't happen," he added. "... We're all here to support you and today is an opportunity for us to be proactive in telling you what we know so you'll be well informed as possible."

It was also an opportunity for employees to come back together as a team and socialize.

For James Tucker, Equal Employment Opportunity specialist, who had been furloughed it was a "great event and learning opportunity."

Excepted employees still came to work during the shutdown to help Fort Jackson's mission of training American Soldiers continue.

"We can't do this without you," said Col. Chesley Thigpen, Army Training Center and Fort Jackson deputy commanding officer. "We have seen extraordinary professionals continue to work, continue to make it happen, but knowing, 'that if I had my teammates here it would be so much better.'"

She added "if anyone didn't get paid or has a problem, please let us know and we'll get it fixed."



Members of the Fort Jackson community listen intently as Gaugush welcomes them back to work at a Community Information Exchange held Nov. 17.

Thigpen welcomed employees back on behalf of Maj. Gen. Daryl O. Hood, post commander, and Post Command Sgt. Maj. William Shoaf.

"I encourage you to ask a question," Gaugush said, "but if you're shy, or if you are not sure you want to ask a question publicly then we're going to make ourselves available here afterwards."

Unit commanders, directors and representatives of various on-post agencies stayed after the formal portion of the even to talk to those who didn't want to ask questions in public.

Maria Clark, from the Resource Management Office, shared useful information about pay and use or lose leave, while attendees were able to ask questions to leadership. She informed the audience of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service's Nov. 17 email detailing how employees would start receiving back pay.

Clark said the process for back pay went quickly because "the main priority was to ensure everyone got paid." Some timecards may not be correct, but "get with your supervisor, and with us, and we'll ensure that it gets fixed."

She added "if anyone didn't get paid or has a problem, please let us know and we'll get it fixed."

DOW helps resolve service member PCS claims

Permanent Change of Station
Task Force Public Affairs

The Permanent Change of Station Joint Task Force collaborated with U.S. Transportation Command and its subordinate organizations to help service members and War Department civilians recover and resolve household goods claims that became stalled following the termination of a contract with HomeSafe Alliance earlier this year.

This initiative started after PCSing personnel encountered difficulties communicating with the company, and many service members experienced disruptions in post-shipment claim visibility and response timelines.

TRANSCOM's Directorate of Acquisition immediately engaged HomeSafe to ensure it was still processing household goods shipment claims.

However, by early September, the company reported losing full access to all claims information and records and visibility of HomeSafe Connect, the company's information technology software.

The task force stepped up and developed a one-page guide explaining how to file claims directly on the company's website, based on their guidance.

"Our team worked to bridge the gap between service members, civilians and HomeSafe Alliance by facilitating communication and providing status updates with support from our (acquisition) team," said Air Force Master Sgt. Abby Reams, task force personal property subject matter expert.

During this time, TRANSCOM retained the capability to track claims submissions; HomeSafe, however, did not, creating gaps in claims tracking.

Through analytics, the Defense Personal Property Management Office identified approximately 180 claims that had been incorrectly filed and were unknown to HomeSafe.

By Oct. 9, HomeSafe Connect had shut down completely. This left phone and email as the only ways for the task force to ad-



Photo by AIR FORCE STAFF SGT. STEPHANIE HENRY

A mover loads boxes into the truck for transport to the next duty station during a permanent change of station at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, July 18, 2025. The Department of Defense established the Permanent Change of Station Joint Task Force to improve the moving experience for military members and their families.

dress claims.

To reconcile these, the Directorate of Acquisition shared the management office's findings with HomeSafe, and the company provided its own list of 90 additional claims that the management office team didn't identify due to internal system issues and differing dates.

Combining both lists — nearly 270 per-

OUR TEAM WORKED TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN SERVICE MEMBERS, CIVILIANS AND HOMESAFE ALLIANCE BY FACILITATING COMMUNICATION...

**- Air Force Master Sgt. Abby Reams
Task force personal property subject matter expert**

sonnel and 10 times as many claimed items — the task force worked with the directorate to create a tracker and centralize inquiries, thereby improving coordination and communication.

"When we reached out, many service members and (War Department) civilians told us they thought they'd been forgotten or that their

claims didn't matter," Reams said. "They praised our team for ensuring their claims were valid, submitted and resolved. Our team remains committed to helping everyone who reaches out to the call center, making the moving process a little easier as they transition to their next assignment or new home."

The PCS JTF remains committed to ensuring every claim is addressed and resolved.

It continues daily reviews of outstanding claims and ensures coordination continues among the government, HomeSafe and affected service members, DOW civilians and their families.



Photo by AIR FORCE STAFF SGT. MADELYN KEECH

A War Department plaque was installed at the River Entrance in front of the Pentagon, Nov. 13, 2025.

Pay

Continued from Page 5

sacrifice, stating, "Here's to our paratroopers, our jumpmasters, who do the difficult things in difficult places that most Americans can never imagine."

Parachute duty involves significant physical demands and inherent risks, including potential injuries during jumps, exposure to challenging weather conditions, and the physical toll of rigorous training exercises. The increase aligns parachute duty incentive pay with other hazardous duty roles, such as military free-fall operations.

"This was long overdue, and I'm glad we were able to get this across the line," said Lt. Gen. Brian Eifler, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army, G-1. "Parachutists' incentive pay hadn't been adjusted since 1998."

"The increase reinforces the value of this hazardous duty, and the vital contributions paratroopers make to Army readiness."

Bronze

Continued from Page 5

"if called upon," he said. "And of course, the whole goal is to deter wars in the first place ... to establish peace."

The new name also reflects a new ethos for the department, Hegseth said, after he personally fastened the last screw on the new River Entrance plaque.

"We are rebuilding it; we are reestablishing deterrence — it's based on America first, peace through strength and common sense," he said. "And now everybody that enters this building, whether it's generals or civilians or foreign leaders, is going to see: this is not just on paper. This is not just a title. This is exactly who we are."

The new bronze plaques are each roughly 30 by 20 inches and weigh about 60 pounds.

The old plaques, which say "Department of Defense," had been on the building for more than 70 years, Hegseth said.

SALUTING THIS CYCLE'S HONOREES

3rd Battalion, 60th Infantry Regiment

DRILL SERGEANT OF THE CYCLE
Staff Sgt. Trevon Nottage

ALPHA COMPANY SOLDIER LEADER OF THE CYCLE
Pvt. James Dillosi

SOLDIER OF THE CYCLE
Pfc. Kayla Allen

BRAVO COMPANY SOLDIER LEADER OF THE CYCLE
Pvt. Andrew Hoggard

SOLDIER OF THE CYCLE
Pvt. Ashley Pennington

CHARLIE COMPANY SOLDIER LEADER OF THE CYCLE
Pfc. Gavin Meilke

SOLDIER OF THE CYCLE
Pvt. Maxwell Pastrick

DELTA COMPANY SOLDIER LEADER OF THE CYCLE
Pfc. Daehan Chang

SOLDIER OF THE CYCLE
Pfc. Lauren Harges

ECHO COMPANY SOLDIER LEADER OF THE CYCLE
Pfc. Noah Brackman

SOLDIER OF THE CYCLE
Pfc. Kammile Torrance

Download the My Army Post App

Stay in the know at your Garrison

- Installation Services
- Gate Hours
- Community Events
- Maintenance Requests
- Weather
- Resources
- **AND MORE**








The app interface shows a star logo with a location pin, the text "My Army Post Your personalized military community guide.", and a "Select Your Community" button. The background of the app screen is yellow.

WE ARE THE ARMY'S HOME | HOME.ARMY.MIL | ARMYMWR.COM

Events

Continued from Page 4

For more information, call (803) 751-4886.

DEC. 5

Fort Jackson Annual Tree Lighting.

Fort Jackson will be holding its annual tree lighting event at Patriot Park.

DEC. 6

Fires on the Shore

5-8 p.m., Weston Lake. Enjoy the beach with family and friends while making s'mores and listening to live music with the 282nd Rock Band. There will be free s'mores, Irish hot chocolate, concessions and rentals. For more information, call (803) 751-5253.

DEC. 10

282d Army Band Holiday Concert

5-7 p.m., Shandon Baptist Church. Come out and enjoy the 282d Army Band's Holiday Concert.

DEC. 13

2025 Jingle Bell Fitness 5K Run.

This will be a three-mile run/walk featuring 15 festive fitness stations along the route. Come kick off the holiday season with us. For more information, or to register, call (803) 751-3700.

Southern Stomp

3-6 p.m., MWR Central. Come join in the evening with Miss Savannah and the boot scootin' squad for a night of fun, live interaction and southern sass. What is Southern Stomp? The persona known as "Miss Savannah Belle" takes the lead on hosting this unique experience. For more information, call (803) 751-6299.

DEC. 18

Chanukah Menorah Lighting

4-5 p.m., Century Chapel. Join Fort Jackson's Jewish congregation for a Menorah Lighting Ceremony. Light refreshments will be served. For more information, call (908) 691-9017.

DEC. 24

Christmas Eve Service

5 p.m., Main Post Chapel. Join the Fort Jackson Religious Support Office for a community Christmas Eve Service. For more information, call (803) 751-6327.



Photo by ROBERT TIMMONS

Open for Business

In case you missed it, Col. David Gaugush, garrison commander, and Garrison Command Sgt. Maj. Brie Kotula assist in cutting the ribbon to officially open Panera Bread at the Mini-Mall, Oct. 23.

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

FAITH GROUP	DAY	TIME	PLACE
CATHOLIC MASS	SUNDAY	9:30-10:30 A.M.	MAIN POST CHAPEL
CATHOLIC MASS	MONDAY-FRIDAY	NOON	MAIN POST CHAPEL
GOSPEL SERVICE	SUNDAY	10:30 A.M.	KINGS MOUNTAIN CHAPEL
GENERAL PROTESTANT	SUNDAY	11 A.M. TO NOON	MAIN POST CHAPEL
REVIVE SERVICE	SUNDAY	5 P.M.	MAIN POST CHAPEL
JEWISH SHABBOS SERVICE	FRIDAY	6-7 P.M.	CENTURY DIVISION CHAPEL
INITIAL ENTRY TRAINING	DAY	TIME	PLACE
CATHOLIC MASS	SUNDAY	8-9 A.M.	SOLOMON CENTER
PROTESTANT CONSOLIDATED SERVICE	SUNDAY	9:30-10:30 A.M.	SOLOMON CENTER
CHURCH OF CHRIST	SUNDAY	9-10 A.M.	CENTURY DIVISION CHAPEL
HISPANIC PROTESTANT SERVICE	SUNDAY	11 A.M. to NOON	SOLOMON CENTER (1st and 3rd Sundays)
GOSPEL SERVICE	SUNDAY	11 A.M. to NOON	SOLOMON CENTER (2nd and 4th Sundays)
ANGLICAN	SUNDAY	9:30-10 A.M.	LIGHTNING CHAPEL
ISLAMIC SERVICE	SUNDAY	8-9 A.M.	LIGHTNING CHAPEL
JEWISH SERVICE	SUNDAY	10:30-11:30 A.M.	120TH AG BN (for trainees in 120th only)
THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS	SUNDAY	10:30 A.M. to NOON	CENTURY DIVISION CHAPEL

Pierce Terrace welcomes Whitaker as principal

By DR. LORRAINE EMORY
Pierce Terrace Elementary School

Pierce Terrace Elementary School recently announced that Dr. Sandra Whitaker officially joined the school community as principal on Oct. 6.

Whitaker came to the school from the Department of Defense Education Activity overseas, with extensive leadership experience, a passion for student achievement, and a deep commitment to supporting military-connected families.

Due to delays caused by the recent government shutdown, PTES was unable to make this announcement earlier.

Now that operations have resumed, the school is thrilled to formally welcome Dr. Whitaker and looks forward to the positive impact her leadership will have.

Her career reflects a dedication to fostering academic excellence, encouraging collaboration, and building strong partnerships among staff, students, and families.

The PTES community continued to push forward with a vibrant and purposeful fall season full of events that strengthened school spirit and connected families.

Through the PBIS Color War Challenge, students and classes competed in friendly team-building activities. This initiative not only encouraged positive behavior through the PBIS program but also promoted teamwork, responsibility, and school pride—reinforcing PTES's commitment to cultivating a supportive and encouraging learning environment.

Community partnerships remained a cornerstone of the school in October.

The Fort Jackson Hearing Clinic visited PTES to conduct hearing screenings for every student, ensuring early identification of concerns and reinforcing the school's commitment to student health and readiness. PTES remains grateful for the clinic's ongoing collaboration and support of educational and community health initiatives, which directly benefit the well-being of military-connected children.

On Oct. 22, the school joined DODEA schools worldwide in celebrating Unity Day—a national anti-bullying initiative symbolized by wearing orange.

Students and staff stood together to promote kindness, acceptance, and inclusion. Unity Day offered an opportunity to reinforce the message

that PTES is a safe, nurturing community where every child belongs.

Shortly after, the school observed Red Ribbon Week, the nation's oldest drug-prevention campaign. PTES was honored by the presence of Deputy Chief Joseph Pocague, who helped kick off the week by presenting students, along with McGruff the Crime Dog, with red ribbons and emphasizing the importance of making positive, healthy choices. His participation strengthened the connection between PTES and its Fort Jackson partners, highlighting the shared responsibility of keeping children safe and informed.

The month concluded with one of the most beloved PTES traditions, the Storybook Character Parade. Students and staff paraded through the hallways dressed as characters from their favorite books, celebrating literacy joyfully and imaginatively.

Dr. Whitaker, having just arrived from England, appeared as Mary Poppins, delighting students and embodying the magic of stories. The team brought Eric Carle's works to life, holding up books and dressing as his iconic characters.

This annual event reminds students that reading opens doors to creativity, discovery, and lifelong learning.

November began with a warm and welcoming event—Pastries with Parents on November 4. Parents were invited to enjoy breakfast with their children in the PTES cafeteria, where Vicki West and Dee Turner once again prepared an exceptional spread. Events like this strengthen relationships between home and school, helping families feel connected and engaged in their children's daily experiences.

Finally, PTES partnered with Moncrief Public Health to host an on-site flu vaccination clinic. For military families balancing busy schedules, this service made meeting DODEA annual flu documentation requirement significantly easier. The clinic underscored the school's commitment to supporting students' health and ensuring that families have accessible options for preventive care.

As PTES moves forward under the leadership of Dr. Whitaker, the school remains committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and thriving environment for all students. Through community partnerships, family engagement, and meaningful school traditions, Pierce Terrace Elementary continues to cultivate a strong and connected school community—one that reflects the values and resilience of its military families.



Photos by LORRAINE EMORY
Top: Dr. Sandra Whitaker proudly stands beneath the Pierce Terrace Elementary School emblem on her first day as principal, Oct. 6. Above: Students pose for a photograph during Unity Day.

VICTORY... STA HE



Thomas Redmon, with the Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security, listens intently during the Welcome Back Community Information Exchange held Nov. 17. The installation held the event to reconnect with furloughed employees.

Photo by NATHAN CLINEBELLE