

Soldier Systems Center

SPOTLIGHT

Issue 24

May 2026



A Brief Word



Team,

The last year has been a year full of uncertainty and change for nearly everyone across the installation. With change and uncertainty comes opportunity for growth. Over the fall and winter, the USAG Natick team has worked diligently to seize these opportunities by identifying and building teams that will support the dedicated NSSC workforce and enable the mission partners mission success. As we transition into spring I look forward to watching these efforts grow across the installation. Below are a few key things I would like to highlight.

Security Guards, the Guard Force has worked extremely understaffed over the past year and have done so with a smile on their faces. Please thank them for all that they do for all of us every day (even on those bad weather days when base is closed or max telework is encouraged). On the upside the one of the things the Garrison team has been working hard on is getting exceptions to hire more guards. I am happy to announce that over the next month or so you will be seeing some new faces among the guard force. Please welcome them to the NSSC family.

MWR, is primed and ready to support. I would like to encourage everyone to reach out and welcome the new MWR Director Dr Peter Craig and the new MWR Financial Manager Juan Ortega. These gentlemen paired with our existing MWR crew have started laying out events to bring the NSSC family together more frequently. The first was the Lord Community Center Grand Re-Opening and St Patrick's Day Celebrations. This event was a wonderful kick off to our growing MWR supported events. Look for announcements of more events to come over the summer and fall. As we grow the MWR events we want to ensure we are placing our teams efforts on events that interest the community. I encourage you to go speak with the MWR team and to make suggestions on events that you would like to see here at Natick.

Lastly, the as the Nation Celebrates 250 years since our founding the Army is Celebrating 251 years of service to the Nation. Here at NSSC we will be hosting a community engagement event to celebrate the Army Birthday on June 13th. As we celebrate the Army and our Nation I would like to reiterate my gratitude for all you do to make the Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen, Guardians, and Coast Guardsmen safer and more lethal.

Respectfully,

LTC Gregory Kozlowski
Commander
U.S. Army Garrison Natick



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Editor's Note: The Soldier Systems Center Spotlight is transitioning to a quarterly publication. You may have seen some of content in this issue previously published on our other online platforms.

*To submit content to the Spotlight please email the Garrison Public Affairs Team at:
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MWR Resources



Lord Community Center Reopening

On Tuesday 17 March, the entire Natick Community reopened the Lord Community Center after an extensive renovation to the conference space and recreation center. Nearly 100 people watched as BG Hackler and LTC Kozlowski cut the red ribbon welcoming back a vital recreation venue to the Natick Community.



Being St. Patrick's Day, guests were able to enjoy offerings from the South Pointe Bar, as well as snacks and ceremonial cake. They also got to play various games, like shuffleboard, air hockey, and foosball. Five teams competed in a trivia contest, testing their shared knowledge of current events, pop culture, and historic facts.

The Lord Community Center offers a meeting space on the top floor that has a 200-person capacity with a holding kitchen for catering support. The basement recreation center also features a movie seating area, ping pong, pool table, in addition to several full-size video games and an assortment of table and board games.



The South Pointe Bar shares space with the Recreation Center and is open mid-week Tuesdays through Thursdays from 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM. The Recreation Center will be accessible weekdays from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM (6:00 PM Tuesday through Thursday when the bar is open) for individuals seeking an outlet or a place to bring their lunch.

The entire facility brings back a key community gathering place for official and unofficial functions, as well as a recreation and relaxation destination for the entire Natick community.



MWR Snack Bar Operating Changes

On 30 March 2026, the MWR Snack Bar changed its hours to close at 1:00 PM, instead of 2:00 PM. The menu is being reviewed, but the same great sandwiches and salads will be available. We are looking into adding more weekly specials. The Cellar (the back booth seating area) is now available daily for individual use or group meetings (by reservation). Customers can purchase food from MWR Snack Bar or bring their own. Please reserve the Cellar at least 24 hours in advance of meeting at usarmy.natick.id-t2.mbx.mwr-room-reservations@army.mil

Fitness Class Changes

Beginning 1 April 2026, the fitness class schedule changed. The “30 Minutes to Win It” program remains available in the basement weekdays.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
11:40 a.m.		11:40 a.m.		11:40 a.m.
12:20 p.m.	12:20 p.m.	12:20 p.m.		

We will be incorporating some additional classes at different times of the day in the future to meet the needs and desires of the community.

FMWR is also implementing a Fitness Class Punch Card to allow for more flexible access with no monthly fees. The punch card will have 16 classes for \$60, less than \$4.00 per class. The punch cards can be purchased from Darin St. George, Fitness Program Specialist, in Bldg. 14, call 508-206-4098, or email: darin.p.stgeorge.naf@army.mil.



NSSC Welcomes Dr. Peter Craig

By Alfred Tripolone III, U.S. Army Garrison Natick Public Affairs

Natick Soldier Systems Center is pleased to welcome Dr. Peter Craig as the new director of Family, Morale, Welfare and Recreation. Bringing more than 26 years of experience as a Department of Defense civilian, Craig joins the team with a deep background in hospitality and a career spanning multiple garrisons, regional staffs and Headquarters, Installation Management Command MWR.

Craig's path to Army service began in the private sector, where he worked on an Army lodging project in the late 1990s. What started as a contractor role quickly evolved into a long-term commitment.

"My name is Peter Craig. I have a hospitality background and have worked as a DoD civilian for over 26 years across various MWR programs and commands around the world."

"An Army lodging program manager expressed interest in me joining her team to lend more commercial hotel experience to their program."

That blend of commercial hospitality experience and decades of Army service has shaped his approach to MWR programs. Throughout his career, Craig has built a reputation for leveraging relationships and experience at every level to drive results and improve programs.

"I have been able to successfully leverage my



experience, exposure and relationships at all levels to help me drive MWR programs at Natick."

Craig's first impressions of the garrison have been overwhelmingly positive, particularly when it comes to the people and culture already in place.

"So far, I am genuinely pleased to see the camaraderie and pure gratitude the garrison staff has for each other."

He recognizes the strength of existing relationships and sees opportunity in building on that foundation.

"I realize I am walking into several well-established relationships, and I hope I can integrate effectively to help MWR progress positively."

As he steps into the role, Craig is clear about his priorities and long-term outlook.

"Like every assignment, I always intend to leave the garrison and MWR programs better than when I found them."

That commitment includes a willingness to challenge the status quo and keep programs aligned with evolving customer expectations.

"Across MWR, we sometimes get stagnant in what we offer, forgetting that the world outside the gate is changing, and we need to stay current."



“Equally, we need to listen to our customers to make sure we are offering what they want, moving away from what the ‘we think we know what they want’ mentality that tends to cripple MWR program effectiveness.”

Craig describes his leadership style as situational, adaptable to both the mission and the people involved, particularly in a smaller, collaborative environment like Natick.

“I see myself as a situational leader, where different situations as well as different team members require different approaches.”

“There is no single style that will work for everyone.” That approach translates into a participative leadership style built on communication, trust and shared responsibility.

“Being a small team, we must actively communicate and collaborate as we rely more on each other’s participation and success in supporting MWR programs and garrison expectations.”

At the core of his leadership philosophy are four guiding principles.

“I try to keep it simple: honesty, transparency, authentic and adaptable.”

Craig also emphasizes the importance of feedback, flexibility and continuous improvement, encouraging openness to new ideas and approaches.

“I attempt to keep an open mind to negative feedback and criticism for programs being offered, always keeping in mind that there are other ways to accomplish the goal.”

“The ‘that’s the way we have always done it’ approach should never be the only approach.”

Outside of work, Craig brings the same sense of

balance and perspective to his personal life. An active participant in sports, he enjoys skiing, golf and running, currently preparing for his fourth half-marathon, while also valuing time to relax and recharge.

Looking ahead, Craig is focused on strengthening the connection between FMWR and the Natick community while ensuring programs remain relevant and impactful.

“FMWR exists to provide services, programs and activities that directly support readiness across all authorized users.”

“We will be curious what our customers desire that they cannot readily access off-post, as we try not to duplicate services with the community.”

His vision is grounded in responsiveness, adaptability and a commitment to delivering meaningful programs that meet the needs of the community.

“I hope FMWR continues to provide the programs and services our customers desire, and they continue to seek us out as an alternative source of recreation and support.”

As Craig settles into his new role, his experience, adaptability and people-first mindset position him well to build on the strong foundation already in place at Natick.



From global experience to local impact: Juan Ortega brings strategic vision to Natick MWR

By Vanessa L. Josey, U.S. Army Garrison Natick Public Affairs

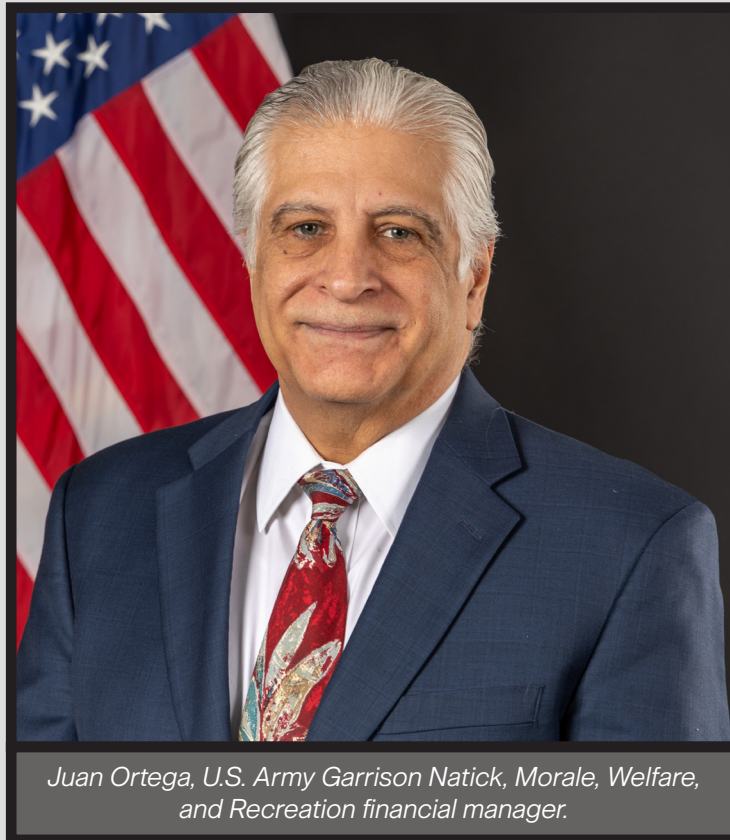
With decades of experience spanning federal service, private industry and global operations, Juan C. Ortega brings a steady hand and forward-looking approach to his role as Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) financial manager at U.S. Army Garrison Natick.

Ortega, who recently joined Natick MWR, arrives with more than 40 years of professional experience, including 17 years in prior MWR service. His career began in 1983 as an accountant in Rota, Spain, where he steadily rose through the ranks, taking on roles that included slot machine manager, club manager and eventually deputy MWR director overseas.

“I’ve worked my way up,” Ortega said. “From accounting to operations and leadership, I’ve seen how all the pieces fit together.”

His diverse background reflects the unique financial structure of MWR programs, which are designed to be self-sustaining while providing affordable services to service members and their families. Ortega emphasized that balance as central to his mission.

“The idea is not to make a profit,” he said. “It’s to provide services at cost while maintaining sustainability.”



Juan Ortega, U.S. Army Garrison Natick, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation financial manager.

Following his initial MWR career, Ortega transitioned into federal service, becoming a chief financial officer for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration under the Department of Commerce. He later spent 15 years in the private sector, owning and operating multiple restaurants, including an award-winning Spanish tapas establishment in California.

After additional leadership roles with the Small Business Administration and the Department of Transportation in Washington, D.C., Ortega retired - briefly.

“I got bored,” he said. “After a few months, I realized I still wanted to contribute.”

That decision ultimately led him to Natick, where he now supports the financial backbone of MWR programs that enhance quality of life across the installation.

Ortega said his focus is on stability, strategic planning and collaboration.

“I’m a numbers guy, but I’m also forward-looking,” he said. “My goal is to bring consistency and help ensure we’re planning ahead to support programs that matter to the community.”

Cont. on page 10.



SARC brings deployment experience and strengthened commitment to SHARP program

Story by Alfred Tripolone III, U.S. Army Garrison - Natick

Back from deployment and refocused on the mission, Natick Soldier Systems Center's Sexual Assault Response Coordinator is returning with renewed energy, expanded experience and a clear message for the community: prevention starts with people.

Elaine Andrew is back at NSSC following a deployment to Saudi Arabia, where she continued supporting service members while helping strengthen Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention programs in a complex, multinational environment.

"Being back at Natick Soldier Systems Center overall feels great," Andrew said.

Andrew has served as both a victim advocate and SARC in uniform and as a Department of Defense civilian. In her role, she acts as a 24/7 point of contact for individuals affected by sexual harassment or assault, ensuring they receive coordinated care and access to medical, legal and counseling resources.

"I serve as the 24/7 point of contact for victims ... coordinating immediate and long-term care," she said. "My office provides a safe space for clients to ask questions, discuss concerns, or simply talk if needed."

At its core, Andrew said, the SHARP program is



about restoring control to individuals navigating difficult situations.

"I do not make decisions for them; rather, I sit with them and listen for as long as it takes," she said. "I assure them that they are in the driver's seat ... The program is centered around the client, helping them regain control of their life and empowering them to take back their power."

During her deployment, Andrew managed SHARP efforts across multiple units throughout Saudi Arabia, coordinating with military commands, investigators, medical professionals and legal teams. She also trained leaders to deliver SHARP education across the force.

"I traveled to various locations to speak with soldiers and educate them about the program," she said. "I trained over 40 leaders through the Train the Trainer program."

Her work also included collaboration with Air Force counterparts, expanding awareness of SHARP and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response programs across services.

"Working with the Air Force ... was an exciting adventure," Andrew said.

Those experiences, she said, strengthened her perspective and commitment to prevention.

Cont. on page 10



Ortega. from page 8 .

While he does not directly oversee programming, Ortega plays a critical role in enabling it; working behind the scenes to ensure resources are aligned with mission needs.

“My job is to secure the resources so the operators and programmers can deliver what’s needed,” he said.

Since arriving at Natick, Ortega said he has been struck by the welcoming environment.

“Very friendly people,” he said. “Face-to-face, everyone has been great.”

Originally from Spain, Ortega grew up in a military-connected family, spending his childhood on installations across Europe. Today, he and his wife, Anna, are settling into Massachusetts to be closer to family, including one of their five children who lives in the Boston area.

Outside of work, Ortega enjoys home improvement projects, often building decks, patios and custom features himself. He also has a passion for cooking, rooted in formal culinary training.

As he continues to integrate into the Natick community, Ortega said he is eager to learn more about the installation and its mission.

“I’m looking forward to the challenges ahead,” he said. “There’s a lot happening here - from research to community programs - and I want to be part of supporting that.”

Above all, Ortega said he values collaboration and open communication.

“I’m a glass-half-full kind of person,” he said. “I’m an open-door individual - come in, have a conversation. That’s how we move forward together.”

SARC. from page 8 .

“Enough is enough, let’s get proactive,” Andrew said. “It’s much easier to speak up and stop harassment and assault before they happen than it is to try and put someone’s life back together afterward.”

Back at NSSC, Andrew is focused on reconnecting with the workforce, strengthening awareness and ensuring the community understands both the support available and their role in prevention.

“My priorities ... are to get out and reconnect with the people of Natick, letting them know I am back and that I am here for them,” she said. She also emphasized the importance of building a unified environment grounded in accountability and trust.

“I want to create an environment that fosters unity,” Andrew said. “It is important to me that everyone knows their leadership maintains a strong stance on zero tolerance for sexual harassment and sexual assault within our workforce.”

Her approach is rooted in transparency and the Army values she brings to every interaction. “My goal is simply to help people and provide the service I am trained to offer, with sincerity and integrity,” she said.

Ultimately, Andrew wants the NSSC community to know that support is always within reach.

“We care, and you are not alone,” she said.



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- MHS Genesis Login

NSSC Hosts State of the Installation

Story by Lynn Valcourt Blanchet, U.S. Army Garrison Natick, Executive Officer

On Tuesday, March 17, 2026, Natick Soldier Systems Center (NSSC) hosted its inaugural State of the Installation Update, delivered by Lt. Col. Gregory Kozlowski, U.S. Army Garrison Natick's Commander. Held in the newly reopened upper level of the Lord Community Center, the event brought together more than 120 Soldiers, civilians, and community members to reflect on NSSC's accomplishments, address current challenges, and outline future goals.

In preparation for the event, the NSSC community was invited to participate in a survey to share their thoughts on what topics they wanted covered in the update. The feedback revealed strong interest in several key areas, including updates on the main gate and security, progress on DPW projects, the impact of budget cuts on services, and current and future MWR offerings. These topics were thoughtfully incorporated into the briefing, ensuring the presentation addressed the community's most pressing concerns.

During his address, Kozlowski provided detailed insights into each of these areas, highlighting NSSC's commitment to transparency and responsiveness. He also fielded more than a dozen questions submitted digitally by attendees, fostering an engaging and interactive dialogue. For those unable to attend, the full State of the Installation briefing, along with the questions and answers, will be made available via SharePoint.

"The State of the Installation Update was an important opportunity to bring our community together, share where we are, and discuss where we are headed," said Kozlowski. "Transparency, communication, and engagement remain essential as we continue working to support our workforce, our Soldiers, and their families across Natick."

Following the update, attendees moved to the lower level of the LCC for a special celebration marking the reopening of the South Pointe Bar. Formerly known as the North End Bar, the newly rebranded South Pointe Bar was unveiled with a ribbon and cake-cutting ceremony led by Brig. Gen. Chris Hackler,



Senior Commander of Natick Soldier Systems Center. The festivities continued with a lively St. Patrick's Day celebration featuring snack foods, a trivia contest, and plenty of camaraderie.

"The strong turnout and enthusiastic participation demonstrated how much our community values opportunities to come together, stay informed, and celebrate shared milestones," said Lynn Valcourt Blanchet, Garrison Executive Officer. "This event reflected the strength of the NSSC community and the value of keeping our workforce informed and connected. We look forward to building on that momentum through future updates and community events."

The event was a perfect blend of information and celebration, bringing the NSSC community together to reflect on achievements and look forward to the year ahead. The reopening of the South Pointe Bar added a touch of excitement, providing a new space for relaxation and connection among Team Natick members.

With over 120 in attendance, the success of this inaugural event sets the stage for future updates and gatherings that strengthen the NSSC community and its mission.

Stay tuned for more updates and events as NSSC continues to innovate and foster community ties.



5 Things to Know

About the SHARP Program



The Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program published the first stand-alone Army SHARP regulation, AR 600-52, in 2025. The regulation professionalizes the SHARP workforce with implementation of full-time, installation-based program staff, expert support for Commanders, enhanced victim support, expanded reporting options for Army Civilians and enhanced primary prevention information. Additionally, the new centralized SHARP program management office ensures better oversight of SHARP professionals, strengthening victim advocacy. These changes are key for reducing barriers for support and improving the Army's culture of respect.

1

An installation-based SHARP program.

SHARP program personnel are aligned to local installation-level SHARP program offices for supervision instead of under a unit's chain of command. This creates an independent, dedicated and consistent structure for oversight and policy application, while strengthening accountability. Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and Victim Advocates remain embedded with brigades to maintain on-the-ground support.

2

The role of Commanders.

Commanders maintain a critical role in executing the SHARP program and preventing sexual assault and sexual harassment in their units. Commanders are responsible for creating healthy unit climates with engaged leaders who encourage prevention, bystander interventions and victim support. The Commander's role is strengthened with the assistance of a full-time, professional primary prevention workforce at their installation.

3

Expanded full-time staff.

The Army has transitioned to a fully dedicated SHARP workforce by eliminating most collateral-duty SARC and VA positions. With limited exceptions for remote and deployed locations lacking established sexual assault resources, full-time SHARP professionals are now assigned across installations to ensure consistent, specialized and continuous support for victims.

4

"No Wrong Door" approach.

Everyone seeking help will be met with understanding and with immediate assistance that best fits their needs. Regardless of which office they go to, they will be provided a warm handoff to the appropriate agency. This approach creates a supportive environment where victims are never told "You are at the wrong office" or are left to navigate the system alone.

5

Expanded reporting options and advocacy services.

Army Civilians have expanded options to report assault to their local SARC or VA using the Restricted Reporting option. This allows them to obtain victim support and advocacy services from the military without notification to law enforcement or their immediate chain of command.



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#SAAPM2026



NSSC Hosts Second Take Your Child To Work Day

Story by Lynn Valcourt Blanchet, U.S. Army Garrison Natick, Executive Officer

The U.S. Army Garrison Natick Soldier Systems Center (NSSC), in partnership with organizations across the installation, welcomed families for its second Take Your Child to Work Day (TYCTWD) on April 24, 2026. The event offered a full day of hands-on activities designed to give children a closer look at the mission and people behind the work at Natick.

Employees from across NSSC opened their workplaces to their children, highlighting the importance of family connection while inspiring curiosity about science, service, and public-sector careers. The event gave participants a first-hand understanding of their parents' roles and showcased the diverse capabilities that support Soldiers around the world.

"It was a great opportunity to share what we do here at Natick with our families," said Lt. Col. Gregory Kozlowski, U.S. Army Garrison Natick Commander. "Seeing the excitement and curiosity from the kids made it especially meaningful and

reinforces the importance of connecting our mission to the next generation."

Throughout the day, children explored STEM-focused tours, interactive demonstrations, and activity stations led by the DEVCOM Soldier Center and other installation partners. Popular stops included equipment displays, hands-on learning labs, and a bouncy house that kept younger attendees energized. The Natick Police Department also participated, with Officer Amanda MacNeil providing safety kits and demonstrating police equipment and protective gear.

The day concluded with a family movie in Hunter Auditorium, giving participants a chance to unwind together after a full schedule of activities. Building on the success of its inaugural year, NSSC's Take Your Child to Work Day continues to grow in both participation and scope. Organizers say planning is already underway to expand offerings for next year, ensuring the event remains a meaningful tradition for the Natick community.







Sexual Assault Response Coordinator brings deployment experience and strengthened commitment to SHARP program

Story by Elaine Andrew, U.S. Army Garrison - Natick Sexual Assault Response Coordinator

The Natick Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Office concluded a monthlong series of activities in April to recognize Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month.

The installation officially kicked off the observance March 31 with the signing of the SAAPM proclamation, establishing a framework for the events that followed throughout April.

Activities included a SAAPM Relay, which was open to all installation personnel and featured five teams. Participants completed a course around the installation that included physical and skill-based challenges, such as cornhole, jump rope, kettlebell carries, basketball and sit-ups.

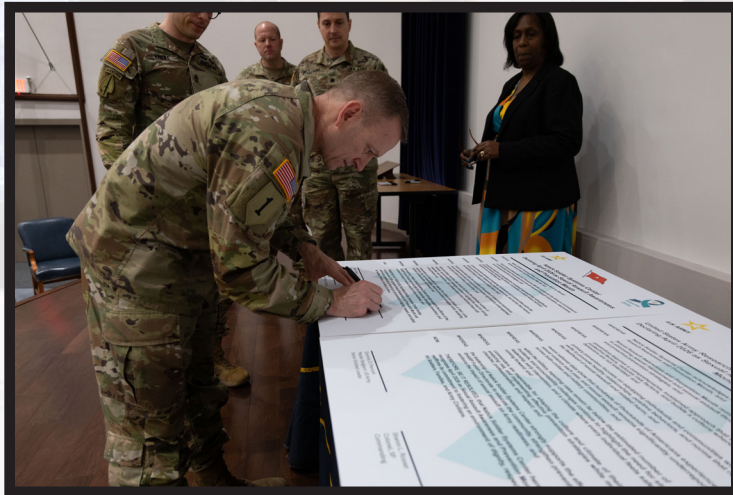
The community also participated in “Chalk the Walk,” an event where personnel used sidewalk chalk to write words of affirmation and draw inspirational images to support victims and survivors of sexual harassment and assault.

Mid-month, the SHARP Office hosted a screening of the documentary “Anita: Speaking Truth to Power.” The film examines the story of Anita Hill, who accused Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas of unwanted sexual advances during the 1991 Senate confirmation hearings, highlighting ongoing national discussions regarding sexual harassment, race and power.

Additionally, the office organized a Clothesline Project. Participants wrote messages of support and inspiration on pairs of jeans, which were then displayed publicly across the installation to raise awareness.

The month of programming concluded with Denim Day. Natick personnel gathered for a group photo wearing denim to show solidarity with survivors, followed by a final celebration to mark the end of the 2026 SAAPM campaign.





NSSC and UMass Amherst Partner to Plant 33 Trees for Environmental Resilience

Story by Richard Valcourt, U.S. Army Garrison Natick, Environmental Division Chief

The Natick Soldier Systems Center (NSSC) completed the planting of 33 new trees across the installation's ballfield and Lot C meadow area this month, following coordinated planting efforts held April 9 and April 14.

The project is part of an ongoing collaboration with the University of Massachusetts Amherst through an Intergovernmental Service Agreement (IGSA). Under the agreement, UMass provides professional arborist services to guide species selection, planting practices, and long-term care, ensuring the work aligns with research-based best practices in urban forestry.

Strategic Environmental Impact
Directorate of Public Works (DPW) staff worked alongside UMass faculty and graduate students to install a diverse mix of native and regionally adapted species. These plantings are intended to strengthen the ecological resilience of the NSSC landscape while providing immediate benefits such as shade, improved aesthetics, and wildlife habitat.

Urban trees provide critical environmental services, including carbon sequestration, pollution removal, and stormwater management. As the canopy matures, the trees will also serve as natural noise buffers, improving the quality of life for the installation and neighboring communities.

Research indicates that robust urban tree canopies support cleaner air and healthier populations of native birds and pollinators, such as butterflies and bees.





Strategic Engine Driving Readiness, Resilience, and Mission Excellence

Story by Keith Jackson, U.S. Army Garrison Natick, Deputy to the Garrison Commander

United States Army Garrison Natick's Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security (DPTMS) continues to demonstrate its vital role in driving readiness, resilience, and mission excellence across the installation.

Through a combination of strategic planning, operational precision, and an unwavering commitment to safety, the directorate ensures that Natick's mission partners can remain focused on advancing the Army's future capabilities. As the backbone of installation-wide planning and coordination, the Plans and Operations team provide consistent, high-quality support to daily mission requirements, long-range initiatives, and major training events. Their ability to integrate efforts across community partners, emergency services, and higher headquarters keeps Natick aligned with Army priorities while strengthening preparedness for emerging challenges. From managing complex training schedules to delivering real-time operational updates, the team's proactive communication and attention to detail have significantly enhanced mission efficiency and reinforced the operational posture.

The Antiterrorism program continues to stand out for its vigilance and innovation, led by an Antiterrorism Officer who has expanded awareness initiatives, deepened partnerships with local law enforcement, and implemented robust protective measures that safeguard personnel, families, and infrastructure. His efforts go beyond compliance, fostering a culture of vigilance through targeted training, thorough threat assessments, and continuous refinement of security protocols. This commitment ensures that Natick remains a secure environment where mission partners can operate with confidence. Similarly, the Emergency Manager has demonstrated exceptional leadership in building a resilient installation capable of responding to any

hazard. Through comprehensive planning, training, exercises, and community outreach, he has elevated Natick's preparedness to new heights. Recent full-scale exercises, tabletop drills, and interagency coordination events have strengthened response capabilities and improved communication across the installation, ensuring that Natick is not only prepared for emergencies but positioned to recover quickly and effectively.

What truly distinguishes USAG Natick's DPTMS is the professionalism and dedication of its personnel. Their collaborative spirit, technical expertise, and commitment to excellence are evident in every plan developed, every exercise executed, and every security measure implemented. Together, they uphold a deep sense of responsibility to the Soldiers, civilians, and families who call Natick home, ensuring the installation remains safe, prepared, and mission-focused.



Strengthening the Workforce: *The Role of the USAG Natick Directorate of Human Resources*

Story by Keith Jackson, U.S. Army Garrison Natick, Deputy to the Garrison Commander

The United States Army Garrison (USAG) Natick is home to a unique mission set, supporting some of the Army's most innovative focused programs. Behind the Department of the Army Civilian workforce stands a dedicated team ensuring the installation has the civilian talent it needs to succeed our Directorate of Human Resources.

The Civilian Human Resources team at USAG Natick plays a central role in shaping the workforce that supports the installation's operational missions' requirements. Their work spans the full lifecycle of civilian employment, such as Strategic recruitment and hiring to attract highly skilled professionals, Personnel management and advisory services for employees and supervisors, Workforce development and training coordination to strengthen skills and career growth, Policy implementation and compliance aligned with Army and federal guidelines, Employee engagement and retention initiatives that foster a positive workplace culture. Through these functions, the directorate ensures that USAG Natick remains a competitive employer capable of supporting its mission partners with excellence.

USAG Natick's HR team works closely with hiring managers to identify talent needs, develop recruitment strategies, and navigate the federal hiring process. Their efforts help bring in professionals across fields such as engineering, financial management, Information Technology, security, program management, and administrative support. By maintaining strong partnerships with Army Civilian Career Programs and leveraging modern recruitment tools, the team ensures that Natick continues to attract top-tier talent.

Once employees join the Natick workforce, the Directorate of Human Resources remains a consistent source of support. The team provides

guidance on performance management, benefits, career development, and workplace policies. They also assist supervisors in navigating complex personnel actions, ensuring decisions are fair, transparent, and compliant with federal regulations. This commitment to service strengthens the installation's culture of professionalism and accountability.

A key priority for the Civilian HR team is helping employees grow. The directorate coordinates access to Army training programs, leadership development opportunities, and career-broadening assignments. These initiatives empower employees to expand their skills, pursue advancement, and contribute more effectively to the mission. By promoting continuous learning, the directorate helps build a resilient, adaptable workforce prepared to meet evolving Army needs.

The success of USAG Natick's mission depends on the people who carry it out every day. The Directorate of Human Resources plays a vital role in ensuring that the installation has the right talent, the right support, and the right systems in place to sustain mission readiness. Their work may often happen behind the scenes, but its impact is felt across every organization on the installation. Through professionalism, expertise, and commitment to service, the Civilian HR team continues to strengthen the workforce that strengthens the Army.



Command Sgt. Maj. Jeremy Bunkley Reflects on Leadership, Resilience and the Mission at Natick

By Vanessa L. Josey, U.S. Army Garrison Natick Public Affairs

For Command Sgt. Maj. Jeremy Bunkley, serving as the U.S. Army Garrison Natick command sergeant major is both a privilege and a responsibility rooted in people, purpose and service.

Now more than five months into the role, Bunkley said each day has given him a deeper appreciation for the installation, its workforce and the far-reaching mission carried out across Natick Soldier Systems Center.

“I feel lucky every day,” Bunkley said. “I never thought I would be selected for a garrison command sergeant major position, but I am honored and truly love this job.”

His early time at Natick has been shaped by significant moments, including a government shutdown, organizational transformation and a renewed focus on communication across the installation. Through it all, Bunkley said one constant has stood out: the professionalism, resilience and commitment of the \the installation workforce.

A family grounded in service

Behind Bunkley’s leadership is a strong family foundation. He and his wife of 12 years have two sons, ages 5 and 9, who he said have adjusted well to life in Natick.

“The schools have been very welcoming, and the community has been great to my family,” he said.

His wife is pursuing a long-held goal of entering the nursing field and hopes to begin the nursing program at MassBay Community College this fall.

“We have moved a lot in support of the Army’s mission,” Bunkley said. “Now we’re here for a few years, and my wife has the opportunity to pursue something she’s always wanted.”



Command Sgt. Maj. Jeremy Bunkley, U.S. Army Garrison Natick, Command Sergeant Major

He said military families often make quiet sacrifices that make service possible.

“As we go into the Month of the Military Child, it really makes you think about how much your family supports your military career,” he said. “They move every place that you move. They change friends, locations and scenery. I’m blessed to have a supportive family that allows me to do what I do in the Army.”

A strong first impression

From the moment he arrived, Bunkley said he was struck by the professionalism of the U.S. Army Garrison Natick team and the care taken to welcome him into the organization.

“The onboarding process was exceptional,” he said. “When you’re welcomed properly into an



organization, it sets the tone. They absolutely set the tone here.”

That experience quickly shaped his view of the workforce.

“My first impression was a team of absolute professionals,” Bunkley said. “I’m thankful to be part of it.”

What excites him most about the position, he said, is simple: the people.

“The people are what drive this job for me every day,” he said. “Sometimes the work people do here goes unnoticed, but there is a lot of hard work happening across this installation to keep things running. The people make this job worth it.”

Leading through uncertainty

Bunkley stepped into the role during a dynamic period that included a lengthy government shutdown affecting much of the civilian workforce.

While he said shutdowns are not unfamiliar to him after nearly 22 years in the Army, this one underscored the importance of the civilian employees who make up the vast majority of the installation’s workforce.

“It was an uncertain time,” he said. “But what stood out to me was the resilience of our civilian workforce.”

Even though some employees were furloughed, essential personnel continued supporting the installation and sustaining critical services.

“The true heroes of that time were our civilians,” Bunkley said. “Our civilian workforce had to endure that uncertainty. To see them come back after more than 40 days and pick up where they left off says a lot about who they are.”

The experience reinforced one lesson above all others.

“Resilience is a virtue,” he said. “Our employees

handled it extremely well.”

Bunkley said maintaining morale and readiness begins with ensuring employees understand the value of their work.

“The people are what drive the mission,” he said. “Without our people, the mission does not happen. They have to know they are appreciated. They have to know the job they do matters.”

Leadership rooted in presence

Bunkley describes his leadership style as engaged leadership - one built on accessibility, advocacy and visibility across the workforce.

“You have to get out from behind a desk,” he said. “It is very easy as senior leaders to get wrapped up in emails, meetings and all the things we have to do. But you also have to take care of your people. Your people need to know you are an advocate for them and that you are approachable.”

He said leadership begins with presence and with setting the tone for the organization.

“People expect their leaders to bring presence,” Bunkley said. “Whether that is a calming presence, a presence of direction or sometimes a presence of correction, I think that matters to the workforce.”

He hopes that his approach, grounded in care for mission and people, carries throughout the organization.

“If I have care and love for the mission that we do, I hope that trickles down,” he said. “I hope that one conversation, one interaction, can change somebody’s outlook for the day.”

A mission of national importance

Among Bunkley’s biggest surprises since arriving at Natick has been the scope and significance of the installation’s mission.

“I had no idea how critical this installation is, not just to the Army, but to the entire Department of War,” he said.



Bunkley Cont.

From combat feeding and nutrition to soldier protective equipment, human performance research and support to multiple military branches, Bunkley said the depth of work happening across Natick has been eye-opening.

“Every day I learn something new,” he said. “There are so many things happening here that are crucial to supporting and protecting the warfighter.” He said the installation should not remain overlooked.

“It should not be a hidden gem,” Bunkley said. “It should be a gem that everybody can see.”

Communication matters

That belief, he said, makes communication a strategic responsibility.

“Communication at any level is important,” Bunkley said. “People deserve to know what is going on.”

Whether it involves installation services, morale, welfare and recreation programming, traffic changes or major updates, he said timely and effective communication is essential to supporting both the workforce and the broader community.

“We are stewards of this installation, and we owe that to the tenant organizations that are here, so they are informed,” he said.

He added that responsibility extends beyond the installation gates.

“We owe transparency to the taxpayer,” Bunkley said. “The people who support us deserve to understand what happens here and why it matters.”

Quality of life and readiness

Bunkley said his initiatives align with the garrison commander’s priorities, with a strong emphasis on quality of life for soldiers, families and the civilian workforce.

“The commander tasked me to focus on our people-facing activities. Our people are a top priority to him” he said. “So I need to step back and take a look at how can we make it better? Are we doing the right things to support our population?”

That includes a close connection to health and wellness efforts, Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs, and the many support services that shape daily life on the installation.

“Services matter,” Bunkley said. “From a large installation to a small one like we are, those services matter to the people of this installation. When they feel cared for and supported, they come to work more focused. If our Soldiers, civilians and families feel more supported it helps build a stronger community around the installation.”

In a garrison environment, he said, readiness looks different than it does in an operational unit, but it is no less important.

“Readiness for us is being experts in the services we are required to provide,” he said. “That is our job here as a garrison - to provide those services to the tenant organizations on this installation. That is readiness.”

Commitment across the workforce

When asked what stands out most about the workforce at Natick, Bunkley answered quickly: commitment.

“Commitment is key, and they show it every day,” he said. “If we are not committed in our jobs, then somebody does not get the service they need on this installation.”

He credited employees across the garrison and installation for bringing that commitment to work day after day.



“It is great to see people show up and support the mission in the way they do,” he said.

Partnership through change

As the garrison continues to move through organizational transformation, Bunkley said adaptability and partnership will remain essential.

“The Army is modernizing,” he said. “We have to be adaptable as an organization. Change is necessary.”

He said those changes are designed to keep the installation aligned with broader Army objectives and ensure continued support to tenant organizations and the warfighter.

Partnership, he added, is the key to navigating that change well.

“We are all going through the same thing,” Bunkley said. “If we do it together, we come out stronger on the other end.”

He emphasized the importance of collaboration between the garrison and tenant organizations across the installation.

“We cannot support the installation without them supporting us,” he said. “It is a mutual relationship.”

Service with gratitude

Bunkley said his reason for continuing to serve is clear.

“I love the Army,” he said. “The Army has given me a better life and so much to be thankful for.”

He said the Army shaped him into the leader and person he is today and continues to fuel his desire to serve others.

“The Army has made me a better person, a better leader, a better spouse,” he said. “I love what it has done for me, and I love what the Army and serving in it means to our country.”

That same gratitude shapes how he approaches leadership.

“At the end of the day, I hope people see a leader who cares about them and the mission,” Bunkley said.

‘Blessed to do it every day’

As he looks ahead, Bunkley said his goals remain centered on teamwork, professionalism and support.

“My objective is to support our team as they support the command and those across the installation every day,” he said. “I want them to know I am here for that. I am part of the team.”

For him, the role ultimately comes back to one word: blessed.

“I feel truly blessed every day,” Bunkley said.

“Blessed to be part of a team who truly cares about the mission, blessed to support an installation that is so important to the Army and the nation and honored to still be serving the Army in such a critical position.. It’s a privilege for me to be the U.S. Army Garrison Natick Command Sergeant Major and I’m excited to see the heights we will reach during my time here.”



Kozlowski Reflects on the Seasons of NSSC and Its Future

By Alfred Tripolone III, U.S. Army Garrison Natick Public Affairs

Nearly nine months into his command at U.S. Army Garrison Natick, Lt. Col. Gregory Kozlowski says the installation continues to surprise him, not for its size, but for its outsized impact.

“What stands out the most is just the absolute amazing things that go on across the base,” Kozlowski said. “From what the garrison handles, which is unlike anything I’ve experienced in the Army, to what the mission partners do with the research, I find it all fascinating and how it comes together.”

When Kozlowski first arrived at Natick Soldier Systems Center, his initial impression was blunt.

“My initial impression was, ‘Damn, it’s small,’” he said. “But it really has evolved. It’s about 78 acres of extremely dedicated and beneficial work going on.”

That contrast, a relatively small footprint paired with a far-reaching mission, has become one of the defining themes of his time in command. Located in a suburban setting, Natick lacks the scale and visibility of many traditional Army installations, yet its contributions extend across the entire joint force.

“For 19 years, I didn’t really know Natick existed,” Kozlowski said. “Even when I started looking into it before coming here, I didn’t understand the depth of the mission, everything from the uniform I’m wearing to the body armor that has saved my life in combat was developed here.”

That realization has reinforced what Kozlowski now sees as the installation’s central role: enabling readiness and survivability for service members around the world.

“Every Soldier, Sailor, Marine, Airman, Guardian and Coast Guardsman is more survivable and more capable because of the work done here,” he said.

“When you really look at the impact, it’s astounding.”

As garrison commander, Kozlowski’s focus is not on the research itself, but on the infrastructure and support systems that make that work possible.

“The garrison is that foundational enabling support,” he said. “Everything we do ensures that the mission partners can do what they do. Without that, none of it happens.”

That sense of responsibility has shaped his leadership philosophy, which he describes through what he calls the “five Cs”: competent, calm, confident, compassionate and cool, or more simply, relatable.

“A leader has to understand what their people do, maintain a steady presence, and communicate effectively,” Kozlowski said. “And if people don’t find you approachable, it limits your ability to influence as a leader.”

At Natick, where the workforce is overwhelmingly civilian, that approach has been especially important. Kozlowski has led through a period marked by uncertainty, including hiring constraints and workforce restructuring, placing an emphasis on transparency and adaptability.

“I ask for transparency, and I give it as much as I can,” he said. “What we know to be true today is what we act on, and sometimes that changes. That’s not to jerk people around. It’s because the environment changes.”

He emphasized that maintaining momentum, even when conditions shift, is key to sustaining progress.

“Forward motion is still forward motion,” he said. “Most of the time, it’s small adjustments, not a complete reset.”





increased sense of community across the installation,” he said. “We want to see higher morale and more participation in what we offer.”

Efforts are underway to expand Morale, Welfare and Recreation programming and strengthen ties with surrounding communities in Natick, Framingham and the broader MetroWest region.

“We’ve heard the desire for more community engagement, both internal and external,” Kozlowski said. “We’re acting on that.”

For Kozlowski, the assignment represents a departure from previous roles, which included time in infantry and special operations units. Yet he said the underlying motivation remains the same.

“I’ve always wanted to serve in some capacity,” he said. “Everyone deserves a safe country to live in, and this is one way I can contribute to that.”

Since taking command, Kozlowski said his top priority has been ensuring the garrison workforce is structured for long-term success. Staffing reductions and hiring limitations have required a deliberate and persistent approach to rebuilding capacity.

“The biggest priority has been determining what right looks like for the long term and then messaging that to higher headquarters,” he said. “We need to get back to a sustainable workforce.”

That effort has already yielded results. Kozlowski pointed to successful exception-to-policy approvals, allowing critical hiring actions despite broader restrictions, as a reflection of the team’s effectiveness.

“The quality and speed with which the team produces these justifications has really set the standard,” he said. “We’ve gotten approvals where others haven’t because the work is strong.”

Looking ahead, Kozlowski said his priorities remain focused on both people and community.

“Success is a sustainable workforce and an

What has kept him engaged over nearly two decades of service, he added, is both the mission and the people.

“It’s interesting, it’s fun, and there are great people to interact with,” Kozlowski said. “Seeing the value of what we do, that’s what keeps me going.”

Outside of work, Kozlowski and his family have begun to embrace the rhythms of New England life, from fall apple picking to winter skiing, with plans to explore more as the seasons change.

“We’ve really enjoyed all of it,” he said. “Each season brings something different.”

As he reflects on his first nine months in command, Kozlowski said one thing has become clear: while Natick may be easy to miss from the outside, its impact is felt far beyond its footprint.

“It’s easy to take for granted,” he said. “But when you step back and look at it, Natick touches everything.”



NSSC hosts first gala in more than two decades

By Lynn Valcourt Blanchet, U.S. Army Garrison Natick, Executive Officer

The Natick Soldier Systems Center (NSSC) community gathered March 14 at the Broadmoor Ballroom in Natick, Massachusetts, for the inaugural NSSC Champagne and Chandeliers Gala—the first event of its kind in more than 20 years—bringing together approximately 100 attendees for an evening of camaraderie, connection, and celebration.

Hosted by Brig. Gen. Hackler, the formal event marked a return to a long-standing tradition aimed at strengthening esprit de corps across the installation.

The evening began with a welcome, followed by the national anthem and invocation, setting the tone for a night of reflection and celebration. Attendees then heard senior commander's remarks and participated in a ceremonial toast before enjoying dinner.

Live music during the reception and dinner was provided by the 215th Army Band, Massachusetts Army National Guard. The elegant setting—enhanced by floral centerpieces donated by Petal Pushers Floral Studio—created an inviting atmosphere for Soldiers, civilians, and guests to engage outside of the workplace and foster stronger professional and personal connections.



“This event was about bringing our community together in a way we haven’t done in a long time,” said Sgt. Maj. Jesse Krone, a member of the planning committee and master of ceremonies. “Seeing the turnout and the energy in the room reinforced how important opportunities like this are for building cohesion across NSSC.”

Following dinner and a ceremonial cake cutting, the event transitioned into a social gathering as a DJ provided music throughout the evening, keeping attendees engaged on the dance floor until 10 p.m.

U.S. Army Capt. Audrey Gonzalez, chair of the planning committee, emphasized the intent behind the event.

“We wanted to create an opportunity for people to step away from the day-to-day mission and connect,” Gonzalez said. “The response exceeded our expectations, and it was rewarding to see so many people enjoying the evening.”

Attendees echoed those sentiments, highlighting





both the atmosphere and the impact of the event.

“It was truly an amazing night—everything from the venue to the music to the people made it special,” said Lauren Pelser, a PM-FSS employee. “I’m looking forward to getting involved with the committee and supporting fundraising efforts throughout the year to help grow the gala and make it even more accessible in the future.”

The gala’s success reflects the collective effort of the planning committee and leadership, as well as the enthusiasm of the NSSC workforce.

“This gala was more than just an event—it was about reestablishing a tradition and strengthening our sense of community,” Gonzalez added.

Based on the success of this year’s event, organizers are already planning to make the NSSC Gala an annual tradition, continuing to build on its momentum in the years ahead.



Celebrating Our Smallest Heroes: *Month of the Military Child*

Story by Lynn Valcourt Blanchet, U.S. Army Garrison Natick

April is the Month of the Military Child, a time to recognize the strength, resilience, and sacrifices of military-connected children. While service members wear the uniform, their children serve in their own way by navigating frequent moves, new schools, long separations, and the uncertainty that comes with military life.

At Natick Soldier Systems Center, we recognize that behind every mission is a family, and behind every family are children who show remarkable adaptability, courage, and strength.

Military children often develop resilience beyond their years. They learn to make new friends quickly, adjust to new environments, and support their families through both expected transitions and unexpected challenges. Their ability to persevere reflects the same values we see across our Army: strength, service, and commitment.

“As a parent of two young military children, I see firsthand the incredible resilience and strength that military families embody. Our children are the unsung heroes, adapting to change and overcoming challenges with courage and grace,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Jeremy Bunkley, U.S. Army Garrison Natick command sergeant major.

In recognition of Month of the Military Child, NSSC will host a Purple Up Day on Friday, April 24 in conjunction with Take Your Child to Work Day. The workforce is encouraged to wear purple as a visible show of support for military children, and families are invited to participate in an appreciation activity featuring messages of encouragement and support.

This year’s theme, “MilParents Rock!”, highlights the important role parents and caregivers play in building strong, resilient military families.

“Behind every military child are parents who lead with love, determination, and sacrifice. This year’s theme, ‘MilParents Rock,’ is a powerful reminder of the vital role parents play in shaping the lives of their children while balancing the demands of military service,” Bunkley added. “Together, it is the parents who create the foundation of support, strength, and inspiration that allows their children and families to thrive, no matter where the mission takes them.”

Throughout April, NSSC encourages the workforce to take time to recognize and support military children and their parents who contribute to the strength of our Army community.



8 WAYS TO MANAGE PTSD SYMPTOMS



GET TREATMENT

PTSD Treatment works! Compare options with the PTSD Treatment Decision Aid:
www.ptsd.va.gov/decisionaid/



PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

Reduce stress and improve well-being with Mindfulness Coach:
www.ptsd.va.gov/mobile/mindfulcoach_app.asp



LIMIT ALCOHOL USE

Get support and cut back on drinking. Try VetChange:
www.ptsd.va.gov/mobile/VetChange_app.asp



IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP

Get better quality sleep and tools to get your sleep back on track with Insomnia Coach:
www.ptsd.va.gov/mobile/insomnia_coach.asp



BUILD COPING SKILLS

Learn about and manage symptoms that often occur after trauma with PTSD Coach:
www.ptsd.va.gov/mobile/ptsdcoach_app.asp



PLAN SOMETHING ENJOYABLE

Find and schedule activities that can help improve your mood with PTSD Coach Online tools:
www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/ptsdcoachonline



CONTROL ANGER

Manage your temper and get support with the AIMS online program:
www.veterantraining.va.gov/aims



HEAR FROM VETERANS

Watch and read real stories of life with PTSD from Veterans who have been there:
www.ptsd.va.gov/aboutface/



VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

National Center for
PTSD
POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

June is National PTSD Awareness Month

Please join us on June 2, 2026, from 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. in Hunter Auditorium to observe PTSD Awareness Month. The Worcester and Framingham VA Vet Centers will provide a presentation on PTSD and discuss the resources available in our local area. This a time to shed light on a condition that affects many service members, veterans, and their families.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a real and treatable mental health condition that can develop after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. It is not a sign of weakness, but a natural response to extreme stress.

What is PTSD?

PTSD is a mental health condition that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a distressing, frightening, or life-threatening event. These events can include combat exposure, serious accidents, physical or sexual assault, or other traumatic experiences.

While it is normal to have upsetting memories or feel on edge after such events, for some people, these feelings don't go away on their own.

Recognizing the Signs

The symptoms of PTSD can have a significant impact on daily life and are generally grouped into four types:

Symptom Category	Description
Re-experiencing	Unwanted and intrusive memories, flashbacks, and nightmares that make you feel like you are reliving the traumatic event.
Avoidance	Actively avoiding people, places, thoughts, or situations that remind you of the trauma.

Negative Changes in Mood and Thinking	Persistent negative thoughts about oneself or the world, feelings of guilt, shame, or blame, and a loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed.
Changes in Physical and Emotional Reactions	Feeling constantly on edge, being easily startled, having angry outbursts, and difficulty sleeping or concentrating.

It's important to note that children may show signs of PTSD differently, such as re-enacting the traumatic event through play.

The Impact on Military Personnel

Due to the nature of their service, military personnel are at a higher risk of developing PTSD.

The constant exposure to high-stress situations and traumatic events can take a toll on mental health. It's a condition that has affected veterans from all conflicts, and women veterans are even more likely to experience PTSD than their male counterparts.

Finding Support

The good news is that PTSD is treatable, and help is available.

Here are some resources available:

- VA Vet Centers:** These centers offer confidential counseling for veterans, service members, and their families. Services include individual, group, and family counseling for PTSD, military sexual trauma (MST), and help with transitioning back to civilian life. They also provide telehealth services and can connect you with other VA and community resources.
- Project New Hope, Inc.:** Based in Worcester, this organization provides no-cost wellness retreats for veterans and their families that



focus on healing from PTSD, MST, moral injury, and grief. They also offer food pantries and emergency financial assistance.

National Resources

In addition to local support, there are national resources available 24/7:

- **Veterans Crisis Line:** For immediate help, you can call or text 988 and press 1. This service is confidential and available 24/7.
- **National Center for PTSD:** A VA resource that provides extensive information and resources on PTSD for veterans and their families.

Treatment Options

Effective treatments for PTSD are available and can help you regain control of your life.

- **Psychotherapy (Talk Therapy):** Forms of therapy such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), and Prolonged Exposure (PE) have been shown to be very effective.
- **Medication:** Antidepressants can also be prescribed to help manage PTSD symptoms.

If you or someone you know is struggling with the symptoms of PTSD, please reach out for help. You are not alone, and recovery is possible. This PTSD Awareness Month, let's break the stigma and support those who have sacrificed so much for our country.

HOW CAN PTSD TREATMENT HELP YOU?

PTSD symptoms can have a big impact on overall health and well-being.
PTSD treatment can turn your life around by helping you:



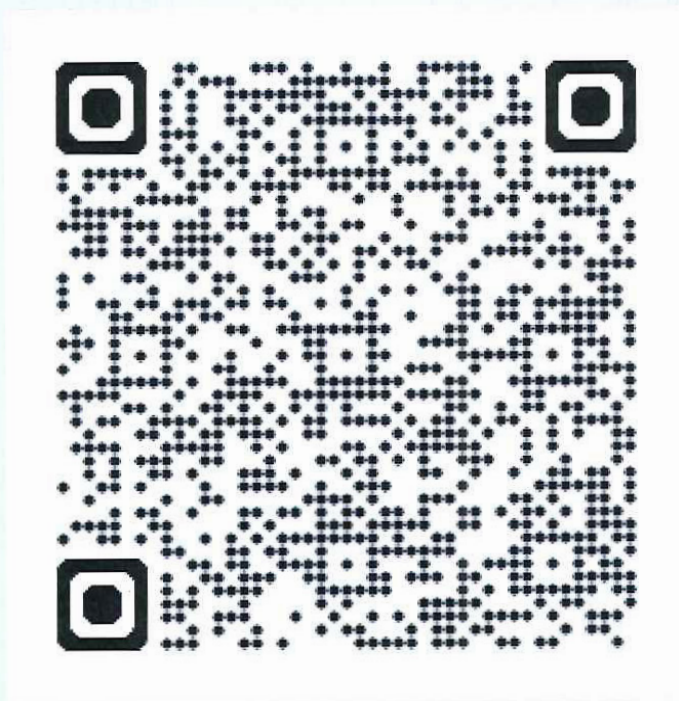
If you have PTSD symptoms and are ready to get treatment, visit the National Center for PTSD website to learn more about PTSD and PTSD treatment: www.ptsd.va.gov
Hear more Veteran stories at AboutFace: www.ptsd.va.gov/aboutface



FINANCIAL COACHING- NATICK



SCAN HERE TO BOOK YOUR APPOINTMENT



Town of Natick History

Story by David Accetta, DEVCOM Soldier Center

Did you know---the area of Natick where NSSC is located was originally known as Felchville?
The Felchville neighborhood was named after the Felch brothers who established a shoe factory in Natick. (Natick was a large shoe manufacturing hub in Massachusetts in the 1800's.) Most of the shoemaking in town was in Felchville.

According to the History of Middlesex County, the proprietors were Oliver Amandus Felch, John Francis Felch and Harry Felch, who established the factory in 1858 in northern Felchville. Production was wax and split brogans (a type of ankle boot used by the Army and by farmers and workmen) and 'plow shoes'. The factory produced 300,000 pairs annually.

Most of the shoes produced in Natick were heavy work shoes, including the "brogan," which was first designed by Asa Felch in 1827. The owners superintended (supervised) all departments, and the bookkeeper was John Elmer Felch, son of John Francis Felch.

Mr. O. A. Felch, owner of this firm, went annually or more often into the South or Southwestern States to sell the goods made by this company. There were 100 people on the payroll and annual wages paid were \$75,000 annually, which is almost \$3 million today. All employees were paid in cash each Saturday night.

The Felch family also owned a tavern, still standing on the northeast corner of Bacon and North Main streets in the section of Natick historically known as Felchville. Now it is known as the Isaac Felch house, 165 North Main Street. Natick developed as three distinct villages, each with its own stage route from Boston to Hartford.

The original village in South Natick, to the north Felchville and in the center Natick. In each village and along each coach route a tavern was built. Felchville Tavern to the north, the Morse tavern in the center and the Eliakim Morrill Tavern in the south. These taverns were used as meeting places and inns. The Peletiah Morse tavern on Eliot Street is the last remaining tavern from this era.



Spring Safety

Story by the Installation Safety Office

It's time for some spring cleaning. A thorough approach to cleaning and disinfecting your home is one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of diseases and illnesses. Consistent, diligent cleaning habits help eliminate the majority of germs— including harmful viruses and bacteria— from the surfaces you touch every day. At the same time, it's important to remember that many household cleaning chemicals carry significant risks to both your health and the environment.

According to Poison Statistics National, in 2024 an alarming 77.2% of the 2.1 million poison exposures reported to the 55 U.S. Poison Control Centers were unintentional. Household cleaning products were the second leading cause of these accidental poisonings, with a significant number involving children six years old and younger. This trend suggests that many young children were able to access cleaning agents without an adult's knowledge or supervision. Data for 2025 is expected to surpass these figures, although the official report has not yet been released.

We often become so comfortable in our own homes that we overlook essential safety precautions—especially during routine tasks like cleaning. To help protect your family, it's important to follow key safety practices whenever you clean and whenever you use or store household cleaning products.

1. Go Mild - Only use cleaning products as directed. Read and follow the directions for safe

and effective use. Some products (including bleach) need to be heavily diluted.

2. Read the Label – Each cleaning and disinfecting product should have a label describing proper use and safety precautions to follow during use. Take time to read the label and follow the instructions. Don't transfer products to other containers. Keep cleaners and disinfectants in their original containers with the label and all-important instructions visible.

3. Keep the Area Ventilated – When using cleaning and disinfecting products, it is crucial to open windows or doors and run a fan to enhance indoor airflow. This practice helps prevent the accumulation of indoor pollutants, including volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from cleaning products, as well as dust, dander, and mold. By ensuring proper ventilation, you create a healthier and fresher indoor environment.

4. Consider a Mask – If you have allergies or breathing issues, wear a mask to prevent allergic reactions and irritation.

5. Glove Up – The benefits of wearing cleaning gloves are numerous. Firstly, they shield your hands from harmful chemicals that can cause severe skin damage. Secondly, they prevent dirt and grime from getting under your nails while scrubbing surfaces. Lastly, they act as a protective barrier between your skin and the germs lurking on surfaces.





May is OPSEC Awareness Month: *Protecting Our Mission and Our People*

Operations Security (OPSEC) is something we all play a part in—every service member, civilian, and contractor. As we observe OPSEC Awareness Month, it's a great time to refresh ourselves on the basics, look for vulnerabilities, and reinforce the habits that keep our missions and our teammates safe.

The Threat Environment:

Our adversaries are always watching for opportunities. They scan Publicly Available Information (PAI), unclassified communication, and social media to gather bits of data that may seem harmless on their own. When put together, those pieces can reveal sensitive details about our operations, capabilities, and vulnerabilities. Staying sharp helps prevent them from gaining the upper hand.

Key Focus Areas This Month:

- **Social Media Discipline:** Think twice before posting. Avoid sharing anything about deployments, emerging technologies, schedules, or daily activities. Turn off geo tagging and remember that even casual photos in workspaces or deployed locations may show more than intended.
- **Protecting CUI:** Make sure Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) is always

marked, handled, stored, and destroyed properly. Never share CUI over unencrypted emails or unauthorized apps.

- **Applying the OPSEC Process:** Keep the five-step OPSEC process in your daily routine:
- **Identify Critical Information:** Know what needs protection.
- **Analyze Threats:** Understand who may be trying to gather your information.
- **Analyze Vulnerabilities:** Look for ways an adversary could access it.
- **Assess Risk:** Consider what could happen if it's compromised.
- **Apply Countermeasures:** Take steps to reduce or eliminate the risk.

Action Required:

Throughout the month, take a moment to check your workspaces—both digital and physical. Secure documents, use encryption, verify who's requesting information, and stay alert for phishing and other social engineering attempts. OPSEC isn't just a checkbox on our training list. It's an everyday mindset and a key part of our readiness and national security.

Thanks for doing your part. Stay vigilant, and let's keep the mission secure.



NSSC Online

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