



# ARMY RESILIENCE COMMUNITYLINK

THE ARMY RESILIENCE DIRECTORATE NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2020



Army resilience training focuses on teaching six core competencies—self-awareness, self-regulation, optimism, mental agility, strengths of character, and connection. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Candace Mundt)

## Cope with Adversity and Thrive Day-to-Day with These Core Resilience Skills Taught by MRTs

By Antonieta Rico, Army Resilience Directorate

The Army launched the Master Resilience Trainer (MRT) program around 2009 in recognition of the psychological toll years of fighting the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were taking on Soldiers and their Families. However, the training is intended to not only help Soldiers cope with the trauma of war, but also to boost their everyday wellbeing.

Meg Helf, a Master Resilience Trainer-Performance Expert (MRT-PE) contractor working out of the Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, R2 Performance Center said she thinks of resilience in four ways: overcoming childhood experiences that can't be changed but had a lasting impact; steering through every day adversities; getting through and growing from traumatic events in our lives that "take our legs out from under us;" and reaching outward to find purpose or meaning in our lives.

MRT training focuses on teaching six core skills—or competencies—that experts believe are the foundation of resilience: Self-awareness, self-regulation, optimism, mental agility, strengths of character, and connection.

"These (competencies) have the ability to make one's life richer, their connections to others deeper, and to really just broaden the scope of their world, finding more meaning and purpose."

The MRT skills are based on the work of renowned psychologist Dr. Martin E.P. Seligman, the Director of the Penn Positive Psychology Center. Seligman, considered the founder of positive psychology, [helped the Army develop the MRT program](#).

At the core of the MRT program is the idea that even if people are not naturally resilient, they can learn the skills to become so, Helf said. Below, she shares some insight into the skills and how Soldiers can apply them daily.

### Self-Awareness

Self-Awareness is about identifying both the heat-of-the-moment thoughts and the deep-seated beliefs and values people have that drives their thinking patterns, Helf said.

*Develop the skill:* Every day think about one productive and one

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## DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Team,

Our Army and our Soldiers are held in high esteem by the American people because they know that to be a Soldier means to be a committed professional. They know Soldiers' competence and service to the nation is driven by a core value system enshrined in tenets such as Loyalty, Respect, and Integrity. As team members of the Army Resilience Directorate, the work you do contributes daily to strengthening and maintaining the high standards and behavior the American public expects of the Army profession.

On Dec. 9, senior Army leaders gathered for the virtual Army Profession Forum to discuss ways to continue to strengthen the Army profession. The annual event is sponsored by the Chief of Staff of the Army and co-hosted by the Center for the Army Profession and Leadership (CAPL) and the Army Resilience Directorate. [CAPL has identified five characteristics](#) that define the Army profession:

- Trust
- Honorable service
- Military expertise
- Stewardship
- Esprit de corps

ARD's core programs directly build these characteristics in our Army Total Force. The Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program is a key steward of the Army profession. SHARP empowers commanders to create a professional unit climate based on mutual dignity and respect among Soldiers, which is the foundation for building one of the core characteristics of the Army profession: trust. Sexual harassment and sexual assault break that trust, and when that trust is broken the SHARP program acts in its stewardship role by holding leaders and Soldiers accountable for maintaining the values and standards demanded of our profession.

Likewise, substance abuse erodes the professionalism, competence, and character of our Army. The Alcohol and Substance

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## Senior Leaders Announce Results of Fort Hood Independent Review

By Devon Suits, Army News Service

WASHINGTON—The results of a command climate and culture review at Fort Hood, Texas, will lead to an Army-wide cultural change to create a safe environment free of sexual harassment and assault, senior leaders announced Tuesday.

The [Fort Hood Independent Review Committee](#) identified nine findings and 70 recommendations after an extensive three-month [evaluation](#), which included over 31,000 Fort Hood community members surveyed, more than 2,500 Army personnel interviewed, and several meetings with local district attorneys and civic and law enforcement leaders.

"The findings of the committee identified major flaws with the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program from implementation, reporting and adjudication," said Secretary of the Army Ryan D. McCarthy during a media event.

The report also identified "fundamental issues with the Fort Hood Criminal Investigation Command field office activities that lead to unaddressed problems on [the installation]; and a command climate at Fort Hood that was permissive of sexual harassment and sexual assault," he added.

Along with the findings, the review committee recommended changes to the Army's SHARP program structure, Army missing Soldier protocols, and Fort Hood crime prevention and response activities, McCarthy said.

"The tragic death of [Spc.] Vanessa Guillen and a rash of other challenges at Fort Hood forced us to take a critical look at our systems, our policies and ourselves," he said. "Without leadership, systems don't matter."

### People First Task Force

Upon accepting the committee's findings, the Army stood up the People First Task Force to address the list of reported recommendations, he said. The new task force will develop a plan of action to address the identified issues and reevaluate current Army policy and programs. Changes to Army policy could come as early as March.

"This is not about metrics, but about possessing the ability to have the human decency to show compassion for our teammates and to look out for the best interest of our Soldiers," he said.

McCarthy directed the relief or suspension of 14 Fort Hood leaders down to the squad level based on the review's findings, he said.

The Army has also directed new investigations into the



Secretary of the Army Ryan D. McCarthy, Army Chief of Staff Gen. James C. McConville, and Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael A. Grinston provided an update on the Fort Hood independent review at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., Dec. 8, 2020. (Screenshot image)

command climate and SHARP program of the 1st Cavalry Division and Army Criminal Investigation Command's, or CID, resourcing policies and procedures.

Further, leaders signed a new missing person directive to clarify the expectations and responsibilities of unit commanders and Army law enforcement authorities during the first 48 hours after a Soldier fails to report for duty.

An additional duty status code—absent-known, or AUN—is now established and will prompt unit and law enforcement actions to quickly help locate the missing individual.

"This is an initial step to addressing and fixing these issues. Even though we are part of one of the most respected institutions in the world, living up to the American people's trust is something we have to do every day," McCarthy said.

"I believe in this institution, its officers, noncommissioned officers, Soldiers, civilians, and their Families—with every fiber of my being—because of the extraordinary things they do on a daily basis," he added. "I'm confident in our leaders' ability to overcome this challenge and to continue to win our nation's wars while caring for our people."

### Fort Hood Independent Review Committee

In July, McCarthy chartered the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee to conduct a full review.

To read the full article, visit: <https://go.usa.gov/xArhT>



## Bastogne Spouses Receive Resilience Training

By Mia Robinson, Army Resilience Directorate

Being a military spouse is not for the faint of heart. Life can pivot quickly for a Soldier and their Family. Deployments, promotions, and PCS orders can mean a new city, new country, new job and responsibilities, new installation, new friends, new school, and new experiences which in turn could mean new stress. Getting settled can be tricky and if you're not being mindful, it's easy to get lost in the shuffle and lose sight of things that should matter most like staying connected to your partner or children.

While Soldiers prepare for their new duty assignment, spouses by default are typically relegated to managing affairs on the home front, most times without the assistance of their Soldier due to short-and long-term absences.

Kelsey Otten, Master Resilience Trainer—Performance Expert at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, understands how Soldiers struggle to find balance between career and Family while attempting to maintain mental, physical, and emotional resilience. Deployments are hard on everybody. She figured the same benefits Soldiers received from resilience training could apply to their spouses, thus the Bastogne R2 Boot Camp for Spouses was born.

Otten directed her focus on spouses of Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, attending the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) by advertising the boot camp throughout the brigade and sending a survey to spouses to learn what worked best with their schedule and what relevant skills they were interested in learning. The five-week boot camp offered resources in mental health, positive psychology skills, and physical fitness.

Throughout the boot camp, spouses focused on goal setting—what can be accomplished or what goals can be worked on during the deployment; stress management skills—controlling the controllables and focusing on their breathing; effective communication strategies—how they can communicate in a productive way; and how



Casey Fallin, an Army spouse, participates in the group workout while using stress management skills learned in class. (Courtesy photo)

negative thoughts can impact the way information is perceived—how to have more productive thoughts and not jumping to conclusions or allowing negative thoughts to pile up and dictate how the day goes.

Over the course of the boot camp, 12 spouses physically attended, however, the Facebook page garnered 150 followers/virtual attendees. Spouses would meet once a week for about 1.5 hours; 45 minutes were given to instruction and discussion followed by a brief break and topped off with a 30-minute group circuit workout. Skills taught in the boot camp were practiced during class to ensure the spouses knew how to appropriately utilize the strategies taught, and work sheets were provided to track their progress.

Otten said feedback from spouses who participated and completed the boot camp was encouraging.

Former Army brat, analyst, Family Readiness Group leader, and current 1st Brigade Army spouse Casey Fallin attended the boot camp with the hopes of learning how to improve her time management skills. The boot camp helped her become more cognizant of her current communication style and

how to effectively give and receive feedback and ask "good" questions. What she ultimately learned was how to improve her communication skills with her spouse, set realistic expectations, better manage her expectations, understand situations from other's perspective, exercise more patience, and direct her focus and energy on more positive things, she said.

A natural introvert personality type, Fallin was a little more reserved and hesitant to participate at first, but the trainers were able to communicate with her on a peer level making it easy to connect with them. Fallin quickly felt a sense of community and comradery among the attendees and trainers, she said, and wants to continue to work on the skills she's learned and is open to completing another boot camp in the future.

Fallin's advice for those interested in joining the next training wave, "You get out of it what you put in. Take the risk; it was new for everyone. You also have to keep an open mind."

For more information or to get a spouse boot camp started at your local installation, contact your nearest [R2 Performance Center](#).

## PROTECTIVE FACTOR: SUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP

Teams thrive best with support from leaders who:

- Uphold Army Values and set the expectation for Soldier behavior.
- Take the time to get to know their Soldiers and unit to recognize warning signs.
- Actively seek ways to develop unit cohesion.
- Create an environment where seeking help is encouraged.

For training and resources on effective Army leadership,  
visit [www.armyresilience.army.mil](http://www.armyresilience.army.mil)





## Brave Rifles Conduct Competition-Based Training to Build Trust

By Maj. Marion Jo Nederhoed, 3CR Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas— Brave Rifles from 3rd Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment, conducted "Thunder Games," a competition-based fitness training to build trust in their squads at Fort Hood Stadium Oct. 5-7. The training included eight different team-building stations where troops worked through physically stressful situations. Participating Troops broke their squads down into two groups. Soldiers from Lightning Troop, Mad Dog Troop, and Havoc Troop, along with coaches from Fort Hood's Ready and Resilient (R2) program, were assigned to each station and observed them as they passed through each event on Oct. 7. The training closed with small group discussions on lessons learned and a tug of war Competition. Event organizer, 1st Lt. Courtney Smith, squadron assistant S3, said the events are all designed to build cohesive teams.

"The events are designed to see how teams work

together when put under stress, and it also requires endurance," Smith said. "They have to figure out how to navigate through using everyone's strengths. The event is intended to break the teams down, so they have to work together, and the teams have to finish together."

Thunder Games is just one of many events that took place over the past couple of weeks as part of Rifles Action Week and Operation Phantom Action. For the past couple of weeks, the Brave Rifles have been rebuilding trust in the ranks. Troopers have been taking time to engage and getting to know each other. The training also requires leaders to take action and hold others accountable. Rifles Action week is all about building foundations from the ground up with involvement from all levels of leadership.

"At an event like this, it would be different if we just sent the Soldiers out here," said 1st Lt. Brian Feeney. "It's a two-way street...we have squadron



Troopers from Mad Dog Troop took first place in the tug-of-war competition at Fort Hood Stadium during 3rd Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment Thunder Games on Oct. 7. (U.S. Army photo by Maj. Marion Jo Nederhoed)

To read the full article, visit <https://go.usa.gov/xACtc>.

## Understanding the Brain's Response to Trauma Can Lessen Victim-Blaming, Self-Blame

By Antonieta Rico, Army Resilience Directorate

"Why didn't she fight back?"

"Why didn't he yell for help?"

"Why did she stay friends with him?"

In the aftermath of a sexual assault, survivors might often hear people ask those questions, or they may even ask those questions of themselves: "Why did I go out on a date with him?" "Why did I let my guard down?" "Why didn't I do something?"

Despite concerted efforts to raise awareness and better support survivors of sexual assault, certain beliefs about how victims of sexual assault should respond during and after an assault persist, both in the military and society at large.

In general, people don't understand how the brain responds to threat or trauma, said Dr. Chris Wilson, a licensed psychologist and the director of [Being Trauma Informed](#), an organization dedicated to making the science of trauma accessible.

"They have a misperception that in any traumatic



If you're a survivor of sexual assault, the DoD Safe Helpline can offer support to help you heal. Call 877-995-5247. (U.S. Army photo by Bianka Lathan)

scenario people are either going to fight or flee," Wilson said. "Unfortunately, the reality is that very often victims will experience shutting down, which means they will dissociate, or will become immobile."

A person's reaction to a threat or traumatic event involves complex factors, including subcortical (unconscious) processes of the brain. Besides fight or flee, shutting down is also a common defensive

brain response to threat. But, because people expect a "fight or flight" response, when a person does neither people question whether an assault occurred. Survivors themselves may not understand their own responses, leading to self-blame.

"I think it's very important for folks to understand that during the course of a sexual assault many victims are not making active conscious decisions," Wilson said. "Shutting down isn't a choice they make; the reaction is based on the brain's ability to make sense of what is happening in the moment...like when you have a car accident and your hand automatically reaches for the handle above the door, or you flinch."

Shut down reactions can mean either having a dissociative reaction or an immobility reaction. Becoming immobile or dissociating during an attack may seem counterintuitive to the average person, but they are brain circuitry-driven reactions to what the brain perceives as extreme threat.

To read the full article, visit <https://go.usa.gov/xACez>.

## Secretary of the Army Announces People as Top Priority, Releases Action Plan

By Devon Suits, Army News Service

WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Army Ryan D. McCarthy announced Oct. 13 that "people" will now be the Army's top priority, as the force works to give junior leaders more time to build cohesive teams.

"As we took a closer look at ourselves over these past couple of months, we understand that the last 19 years of combat operations and global deterrence has come at a cost," McCarthy said during the opening ceremony of this year's Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition.

"Just as we did with readiness, we must invest in people," followed by readiness and modernization, he added. "The time is now."

Army leadership will continue to put "people first" as they work to balance operational tempo requirements and make policy changes, said Army Chief of Staff Gen. James C. McConville.

Senior leaders released an [action plan](#) Tuesday that prioritizes people and teams, saying that people are the Army's greatest strength.

One critical change is the new Regionally Aligned Readiness and Modernization Model, or ReARMM, slated to be released in the next few months, leaders said. It aims to help leaders balance op tempo requirements with dedicated periods for mission, training and modernization.

More details on ReARMM were discussed during a

[contemporary military forum](#) Oct. 15 from 2-2:45 p.m. Eastern Time at the annual meeting.

Army leaders are also working to determine the level of total Army readiness necessary to meet operational requirements, the plan read. They will then use this information to pursue options and hopefully reduce the Army's current cycle of heel-to-toe deployment rotations.

"We are taking a look at rotational deployments and working with the [combatant commanders] to see how we can accomplish the mission in innovative ways," McConville said.

To read the full article, visit <https://go.usa.gov/xACeS>.



## Embedded Performance Expert Shares Keys to Success

By Kelsey Otten, Army Resilience Directorate

Performance Experts have been working at the Army Resilience Directorate's R2 Performance Centers since the early days of the program, so Embedded Performance Experts may find the idea of being on-site with a unit as a unique situation for both themselves and the Soldiers. As they embrace this new assignment, they may see that the job hasn't changed much, only their desk location.

For Performance Experts who are accustomed to serving as the point of contact for multiple units, being an EPE is a switch that allows for the opportunity to narrow their focus, time, and energy to a single battalion. PEs looking to be successful as an EPE should consider using the 3 Cs: Creativity, Commitment, Consistency.

### Creativity

No two battalions in the Army are the same, let alone two squads. Creativity starts with the intake and observations of the unit. Often, the unit may not know what they want, which is okay—that's an EPE's job. What they may know is the problem, issue, or area they want to see improved. The EPE will then create training that addresses the issues. Regardless of the situation, intent, or performance, EPEs should avoid teaching the same lesson plan twice and find ways to relate their knowledge and experience in a way that resonates with Soldiers.

### Commitment

The EPE should be committed to the job, to providing better than anticipated training, and to always striving to over-deliver. What this means is



Embedded Performance Experts Kelsey Otten and Mitch Weaver address the key leadership of 1-506 Infantry Regiment before their departure for JRTC. (Photo courtesy of Rebecca Farmer)

to find new approaches or adjustments to cognitive skills continually. The last thing an EPE should be is complacent. Remain committed to the battalion's overall performance, whether the focus is on the leadership, staff, or Soldiers. Be it walking through a raging river while supporting a platoon live fire exercise or delivering virtual training in less than 24-hours-notice due to COVID-19.

### Consistency

Showing up consistently is key to being better and helping others get better. The EPE should go to the training meetings, the Soldier Risk Reduction Counsels, and show face around the Companies. Anyone who works with the military knows you always have to be ready for things to change and

adapt on the fly. But when you create a consistent, confident presence within the unit, it is easier to adjust and add value to the training event. This constant presence demonstrates to the battalions what to expect from you when they ask for training, and you will know what to expect from them.

At the end of the day, you are responsible for the talent that has been entrusted to you. Through a consistent, confident presence and demonstrated commitment to the unit, EPEs will learn how to own that responsibility and build a solid relationship with the company they serve.

(Editor's note: Kelsey Otten spent six months embedded with the 1-506 Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division).

## Pilot Program Brings Mindfulness, Yoga to Basic Combat Training

By Josie Carlson, Army Resilience Directorate



Dr. Treva Anderson gives trainees with 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment a briefing on mindfulness training Oct. 28. (U.S. Army photo by Josie Carlson)

Trainees at two different Basic Combat Training battalions are getting some new skills added to their kits this cycle – mindfulness and yoga. From October to December, trainees at select platoons within 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, and 2nd Battalion, 60th Infantry Regiment will be part of the Mindfulness and Yoga Pilot.

The Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, in partnership with U.S. Army Center for Initial Military Training and Army Training Center, Fort Jackson, South Carolina, will conduct the 10-week pilot to determine the effects of the two on the mental and physical readiness of trainees during BCT.

"There is growing scientific evidence that mindfulness and yoga have positive effects on an individual's holistic health and fitness," said Maj. Kimberly Jordan, Action Officer for CIMT's Holistic Health and

Directorate, "Mindfulness and yoga studies have reported greater attention, greater goal-directed energy, and less perceived stress. Yoga is demonstrated to improve cognitive, physical, affective, social, and leadership outcomes."

During the pilot, CIMT-contracted registered yoga teachers will conduct 30 minutes of yoga, replacing the preparatory and recovery drills before and after physical training.

1st Lt. Courtney Youngborg, 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, is currently conducting yoga with her platoon every morning in place of the preparatory and recovery drills.

"I did speak to a trainee who was in 15 years ago, had a break in service, and he's just now coming back," she said. "He said he actually prefers the yoga over the prep drill they did years ago."

To read the full article, visit <https://go.usa.gov/xACtx>.

# AROUND THE FORCE

- ▶ SHARP
- ▶ Suicide Prevention Program (SP2)
- ▶ Ready and Resilient
- ▶ ASAP



## 25th ID & U.S. Army Hawaii SHARP Program

SCHOFIELD BARRACKS, Hawaii—In November, the 25th ID & U.S. Army Hawaii SHARP Program hosted a five-day Supporting Warriors Action Team, or SWAT, course. The course is facilitated at the SHARP Resource Center on Schofield Barracks with multiple subject matter experts conducting learning activities. Six Soldiers and two DA Civilians voluntarily participated in two capstone activities, Escape Room and Re-Ball, that provided the chance to practice the soft skills they had learned throughout the week. Matt Holcomb and Chelsea Blakely from the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare & Recreation's Outdoor Recreation led the Re-Ball activity that allowed course attendees to engage their peers and employ positive interpersonal communication skills; tools that are needed in any formation at any echelon. Individuals who earn the SWAT certificate demonstrate their leadership and commitment to the growth and advancement of the field.



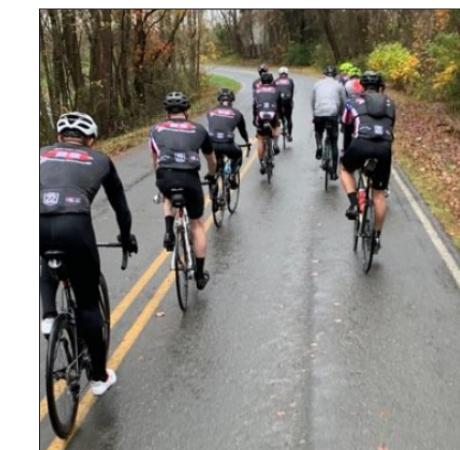
**SHARP Academy SARC/VA Career Course Ceremony Awardees**  
FORT LEAVENWORTH, Kan.—On Nov. 13, the Army's SHARP Academy graduated 32 students from the SARC/VA Career Course. Col. Christopher Engen, SHARP Academy director, and Bradley Pippen, director of operations, the Research and Analysis Center, and graduation speaker, personally recognized each Class 20-001 recipient. The awardees recognized for exceptional performance were Sgt. 1st Class Latoya Mebane, Fort Bragg, N.C., who received both the Academic Excellence and the Spirit Award, and Sgt. 1st Class Latoya Sewell, Fort Gordon, Ga., who also received the Spirit Award. Pictured left to right: Gregg Buehler, Bradley Pippen, Sgt. 1st Class Latoya Sewell, Sgt. 1st Class Latoya Mebane, and Col. Christopher Engen. (Courtesy photo)



**Virtual Resilience Training at Schofield**  
HAWAII—Schofield Barracks R2 Performance Center personnel assisted unit Master Resilience Trainers from the Schofield Barracks Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, in conducting a large-scale, five-hour enhanced resilience training for more than 350 Soldiers on Nov. 4. Fifty Soldiers attended in-person and the remaining 300 Soldiers were divided into three separate virtual classrooms. In the virtual classrooms, MRTs (when available) led discussion sessions in smaller "breakout" groups that were widely dispersed at different locations across the installation. R2 skills trained included: Activating event, Thoughts, and Consequences; Avoid Thinking Traps; Active Constructive Responding; and MRT Core Competencies. (Courtesy photo)



**Holiday Campaign Kicks Off at Fort Hood**  
FORT HOOD, Texas—Lt. Gen. Pat White, III Corps and Fort Hood commanding general, ties a red ribbon to the front of his car Oct. 30, at Fort Hood, Texas, in honor of the Army Substance Abuse Program's "Tie One On for Safety" campaign. Started by Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the annual campaign began in 1986 to put an end to alcohol-related vehicle fatalities. (Photo by Brandy Cruz, Fort Hood Public Affairs)



**Mindfulness-Based Attention Training Pilot Rolled Out**  
FORT JACKSON, S.C.—Performance Experts from Fort Jackson, S.C., and from Fort Gordon and Fort Stewart, Ga., conducted over 60 hours of Mindfulness-Based Attention Training July 23 to Nov. 14, in support of the TRADOC Commanding General's research initiative on Mindfulness and Yoga in Basic Combat Training. The MBAT training was delivered to trainees from 3-34 Infantry Battalion, and 2-60 Infantry Battalion. Platoons were separated in half so that each PE taught in groups of 40. (Courtesy photo)

**430-mile Ride for Veteran Suicide Awareness**  
FORT BRAGG, N.C.—Chief Warrant Officer Richard, a geospatial engineering technician, 64th Geospatial Planning Cell, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, and 25 other riders joined this year's 430-mile trek across North Carolina to raise awareness of Veteran suicide. "Ricky," who overcame his own struggle with severe anxiety, depression, and PTSD, is working to raise awareness of Veteran suicide and remember Special Operations Soldiers who died by suicide. (Courtesy photo)



## Prevention Community of Practice Grows to More Than 5,000 Members

From DoD SAPRO

Across the Department of Defense, those working to prevent sexual assault are increasingly joining Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Connect, the only DoD-wide virtual sexual assault prevention community of practice. SAPR Connect now has more than 5,000 members from the Services, National Guard, Coast Guard, and many DoD offices with equities in violence prevention. Since the DoD Prevention Plan of Action was released in April 2019, membership has climbed nearly 30%.

"We are excited to see this membership surge for several reasons," said Dr. Suzanne Holroyd, senior prevention program manager of the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. "This growing SAPR Connect membership tells us that the DoD community increasingly sees the value of connecting with others working this critical topic. This is important because effective prevention efforts will expand more quickly across DoD if we have a strong, unified prevention community all

using and sharing research-based solutions."

One reason SAPR Connect was established in 2014 by DoD SAPRO was to foster this sharing of resources and ideas. Research-based resources are being developed across DoD as well as by civilian organizations, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. SAPR Connect features several CDC products, such as "STOP SV: A Technical Package to Prevent Sexual Violence," which offers easy-to-understand research-based strategies to address prevention challenges. Also, since the sharing of program updates and tools can strengthen a community, SAPR Connect has a growing collection of newsletters prepared by the Services and SAPRO, all with insights designed to improve prevention efforts. SAPR Connect members can also post or respond to a question in the Prevention Chat Forum or upload a resource or product to share. SAPR Connect members must-have Common Access Card access, keeping

this an internal DoD community.

SAPR Connect members can also access a wide range of educational resources to build their knowledge and effective prevention skills. "For our efforts to have the desired impact, we need to ensure our prevention personnel have the required knowledge and skills," said Dr. Katie Ports, Senior Research Psychologist, DoD SAPRO. "To that end, we regularly host webinars with internal and external prevention experts who help participants understand and apply what they learned to support and implement prevention activities within our DoD community." The webinars are recorded and posted on SAPR Connect for later access by members.

Individuals within the DoD community (with a CAC) can join SAPR Connect by visiting [www.sapr.mil](http://www.sapr.mil) and following the instructions on the Prevention tab.

## New Tool Aims to Enable Commanders to Track, Prevent High-Risk Behaviors

By Joseph Lacdan, Army News Service

WASHINGTON—Active-duty command teams now have a new tool to help give them more visibility on Soldiers who exhibit high-risk behaviors, as part of the Army's effort in placing greater emphasis on its people.

The Commander's Risk Reduction Toolkit, or CRRT, is a web-based system that helps command teams from the company through the corps level assess unit readiness with reports on suicide, drug and alcohol use, and criminal history. It also supplements the command teams' ability to develop a consolidated overview of risk history and unit trends while allowing them to develop strategies to strengthen units, said Randy Lane, chief of Army Resilience Directorate's Assessments Division.

The Army has already fielded CRRT to active-duty units, with plans to distribute the system to the National Guard and Army Reserve before the new year.

The Common Access Card-enabled system collects data from 27 sources across the Army while displaying up to 40 risk factors at a time. CRRT provides information on demographics, deployments, and health, and it also contains charts showing unit trends such as administrative separations and other risk events.

To build the new CRRT, the Army upgraded the former Commander's Risk Reduction Dashboard and consolidated it within the new Army Vantage system to create a single system commanders can access faster and more easily.

Lane said this capability, which has been in



Clockwise from top, Mike Biggerstaff, Commander's Risk Reduction Toolkit functional lead; Miranda Coleman, product lead for the Army Vantage system; and Randy Lane, chief of Army Resilience Directorate's assessments division, speak about the capabilities of the CRRT during the Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition Oct. 14. (Screenshot image)

development for six years, also provides company and battalion command teams with individual Soldier data that can help identify strong performers who may be able to increase readiness and curb risk behaviors in the unit.

"It's not intended to (evaluate) Soldiers," Lane said during an Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition discussion on Oct. 14. "(CRRT) is only there to allow the leaders to see a more comprehensive picture of their Soldier and help them make informed judgements on their ability to lead inside the formation, and possibly reduce risk across their formation."

One of the system's primary goals is to prevent high-risk behaviors such as alcohol abuse and

violent criminal acts. Lane said the preponderance of the data will help provide a more comprehensive picture and warning before the behaviors manifest.

"As we move forward, we will start to see those risk factors that are supported by the data elements," he said. "The question is centered on (when) that will start to emerge as potentially of greater importance or have the ability to inform leaders to take a more proactive strategy to intervene and prevent undesirable or high-risk behaviors."

Lane said access to Soldier-level risk data and limited protected health information under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act will be limited to company and battalion command teams.

"The system was never intended to turn the company commanders, first sergeants and sergeants major into subject-matter experts," Lane said. "It was only designed to alert those leaders that there may be a problem and try to bring together many of the different behaviors and risk factors so they could see the potential interaction of those factors."

Lane added that the CRRT is developing a test system for training purposes while teaching installation risk reduction program coordinators to become the primary trainers of the system.

He emphasized that the Army designed the system to assess and prevent high-risk behaviors, not for promotion evaluation purposes.

To read the full article, visit <https://go.usa.gov/xActC>.



## Fall Webinars Continue to Provide Opportunities to Learn, Engage, and Grow

By David Gercken, Army Resilience Directorate

In a fall season filled with more stay-at-home orders, on-going telework scenarios, and cancelled conferences and training opportunities, the Army Resilience Directorate Outreach Webinar series continues to provide a forum for professional development, engagement with subject matter experts and Army leaders, and opportunities to participate and obtain continuing education credits.

Kicking off a second year of webinars in October, Col. Christopher Engen, the Director of the U.S. Army SHARP Academy, gave a status report on the Army's efforts in support of the Prevention Plan of Action. To understand Army senior leaders' thoughts on efforts to support the PPoA, he urged participants to read the Prevention of Sexual Harassment/Sexual Assault Annex to the Army People Strategy published last year. "What we did in that document is take many of the key concepts that are articulated in the PPoA, but put that in an Army context and put that in our Army terms, recognizing our Army structure," Engen said. In addition to the PPoA discussion Engen also updated audience members on SHARP education and training, and several programs and initiatives under development at the SHARP Academy.

In November, participants interacted with guest Emily May, co-founder and executive director of Hollaback! who provided training and insights on how to identify online hazing and bullying and how to offer help and support to those targeted by online abuse. She presented the 5 Ds—Distract, Delegate, Document, Delay, and Direct—a proven methodology for bystander intervention. May's high-energy presentation included polls, direct questions, participant engagement, and practical exercises that enhanced the learning experience.

The webinar schedule for 2021 promises another slate of engaging experts such as bestselling author David Burkus, and important, timely topics including connectedness, SHARP, moral injury, and more. You won't want to miss a month!

Join ARD on Jan. 21, 2021 as Casey Olson, chief of ARD's Training Division, discusses the latest training opportunities and developments at the R2 Performance Centers, and gives a preview of initiatives currently under development. The webinars will be held at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Eastern. Join by clicking: <https://connect.apan.org/rtvby76iofp/>

# THIS IS OUR ARMY.

## COVID Adds to Holiday Triggers for Soldiers Struggling With Substance Abuse

By Maria D. James, Army Resilience Directorate

This year, several factors have contributed to life stressors for many. Events such as the global pandemic, the political and civic unrest across the country, and even natural disasters such as fires and hurricanes can trigger negative feelings and impact the five dimensions of personal readiness. Add to all of this the stress often felt during the holidays, and feelings like sadness and depression may appear, leading some to unhealthy coping mechanisms, like alcohol or non-clinical drugs.

"Many people are searching for some normalcy, stability, and outlet in the midst of searching for a light at the end of this tunnel we've been in the past 10 months," said Staff Sgt. Virginia M. White, Army National Guard drug testing coordinator NCOIC. "It's very unfortunate that alcohol abuse and substance use is an outlet that some have chosen to employ and are unable to connect to the healthier outlets available to them such as spirituality, exercise, hobbies and Family."

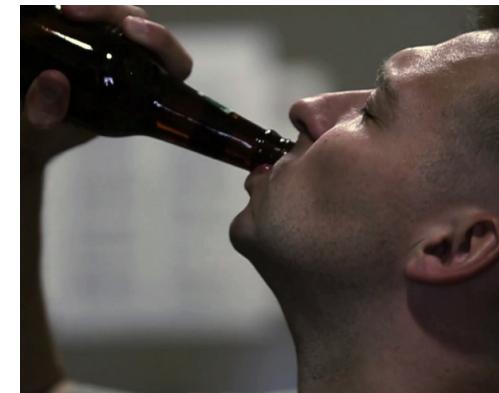
To ensure those healthier outlets are available, the Army Substance Abuse Program has adapted to the challenges caused by recent events to continue providing the support needed by Soldiers, Army Leaders, DA Civilians, and their Families.

One challenge presented by the pandemic includes conducting regular drug testing.

"The pandemic has seemed to cause problems in all areas, and drug testing was certainly not immune to it," said Master Sgt. Cesar J. Garcia, ARD Deterrence/Drug Testing Program Noncommissioned Officer. "Last year about 1.6 million specimens were received. This year, it was only about 1.3 million. So, about a 300,000-specimen difference."

The Army National Guard has experienced similar challenges with testing. "The pandemic has caused a significant decrease in our drug testing abilities due to cancelled or delayed drills and unavailability of our Soldiers while they meet the needs of their Federal and State missions," said White, who oversees all drug testing coordinators, programs and metrics in the 54 states, territories and the District of Columbia. For ARNG, in fiscal year 2020, 23% less specimens were tested compared to fiscal year 2019. For alcohol-use, White shared "the prevention team has reported an increase in alcohol-related incidents and alcohol misuse as well."

Another challenge has been conducting training for personnel required to attend Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Training due to a positive



Stress affects everyone and sometimes the weight of everything we have to deal with can be too much. There are good coping habits and there are bad ones. (DoD photo)

drug test result or if they self-referred.

Both Garcia and White see being creative and proactive as keys to meeting challenges posed by the pandemic while still helping those in need.

"With social distancing policies in place creating more of a challenge for our Soldiers, we have to be creative in how we are able to ensure these Soldiers have adequate access to these resources," White said.

She encourages leaders, and the personnel offering resources, to understand that substance abuse is usually not an isolated issue, to meet the Soldier where they are, and understand how they got there.

Garcia advises Soldiers, DA Civilians, and their Family members who are struggling to seek help immediately.

"Talk to a close friend or Family member. This could make getting help easier if someone is there for support. Go to [www.armyresilience.army.mil](http://www.armyresilience.army.mil) and get educated on the effects of drugs and alcohol abuse and where to go to do a self-referral. Help is available and you don't have to be alone in getting the help you need," Garcia said.

**"I believe it is important for leaders and Soldiers at all levels to be proactive as the holidays approach."**

Staff Sgt. Virginia M. White,  
ARNG drug testing coordinator



## Learning Resilience Skills **STRENGTHEN** Continued from page 1

R2 Performance Centers provide customized performance training that enables Soldiers to sustain personal readiness, enhance resilience, optimize human performance, and build unit cohesion. Training is available at 32 R2 Performance Centers Army-wide, to active duty, Reserve and National Guard Soldiers, as well as Family members and Department of the Army Civilians.



unproductive interaction you had with someone. Reflect on those interactions by writing in a journal what you were thinking and paying attention to in the moment. Then identify what emotions and reactions helpful, productive, for whatever my goal was? If it was productive, what led me there? If it was unproductive, what thought led to that?" Helf said.

### **Self-regulation:**

Self-regulation refers to managing emotions and behaviors. Helf said that when people are having strong emotional reactions, their ability to think clearly is hijacked, causing them to misinterpret situations and look for threats. Highly emotional states, like anger or anxiety, cloud accurate thinking.

*Develop the skill:* Start off with deep diaphragmatic breathing to clear your mind, then take a moment to properly label the emotion you are feeling. For example, if you get defensive when receiving feedback, just saying "I'm feeling defensive right now," helps the emotion actually subside, Helf said. She recommends that when people are experiencing anger, to hone in on labeling the emotion more specifically—frustration, irritation, embarrassment—as labeling the type of anger gives people more control in the moment.

### **Optimism:**

Helf said that optimism is often misinterpreted and needs to be clearly defined.

"It's an understanding and belief that things can change for the better, having hope for the future, and this

being wed to reality," Helf said. She said it is not about "putting our head in the sand and pretending that all is well and that bad things aren't there."

*Develop the skill:* Helf said realistically identifying points of struggle and then identifying where you have control can help develop an optimistic thinking style.

The positive emotions aspect of optimism focuses on how cultivating positive emotions, like gratitude, joy, and love, can increase people's situational awareness and thinking.

### **Mental Agility:**

Mental agility—the ability to think flexibly, accurately, and thoroughly, Helf said. The brain often develops thinking shortcuts that can be helpful in organizing the world around us but can get in the way of an accurate assessment of a situation, ourselves, or other people, she said.

*Develop the skill:* Notice if you're falling into thinking patterns, Helf said. "Do I tend to blame myself; do I tend to blame others and other circumstances, do I think that this is something that is not controllable, it's going to last forever, affect every part of my life," she said. Noticing those thinking patterns in the moment can help people change them. Whatever thinking pattern you are falling into, Helf said to question the thinking pattern, and look for more information as to what else could be contributing to the situation.

### **Strengths of Character:**

Character refers to the qualities or traits people

possess, strengths of character refers to identifying those qualities people possess that are their "signature" character strengths—"essential, effortless, and energizing," Helf said. "These are the traits that we have that are absolutely essential to who we are, that if we imagine ourselves not being able to use one of those strengths it would be draining."

*Develop the skill:* One good question to ask yourself to identify your character strengths is: "What aspects of your personality, of your character, do you feel are essential to you, which strengths flow out effortlessly no one needs to give you external motivation, and which strengths do you feel energized by while you are using?" Helf said. People can also take the [VIA survey](#) identify their character strengths. Once people identify their signature character strengths, they can be more intentional and deliberate in leveraging those strengths in their work and life, and cultivating those strengths in others, Helf said.

### **Connection:**

How many confidants do you have to share your struggles, challenges, and joys with? If you can't name any, you may be struggling with connection. Deep meaningful connection means being able to be your authentic self, including showing vulnerability, so people can know the real you, understand you and connect with you, Helf said.

*Develop the skill:* Opening up leads to people being able to ask for help when they need it. Leaders can model authenticity to increase connections with their Soldiers, Helf said. They can ask for feedback and ask for help, which helps build those authentic connections.

"'Know your people' is Leadership 101, so if I know who my people are, I'm more likely to see any changes in those behaviors that might be a cue to me that something is going on for them and I can reach out to them and see what help I can offer them," she said.

MRT is based on the Army's belief that Soldiers who learn these six core skills can optimize their physical and work performance, creating thriving and cohesive units that contribute to the collective readiness of the Total Army. But MRT is also about how these skills help Soldiers thrive in their personal lives, improving their and their Families' quality of life. To request resilience training in these six competencies for yourself or your Family, contact [your installation's R2 Performance Center](#).

## ARD Programs Strengthen Army Profession

Abuse Prevention (ASAP) program ensures the professionalism of our force by helping to identify, treat, and rehabilitate Soldiers who may be abusing alcohol or other substances.

At ARD, resilience is also embraced as a key characteristic of the Army Profession, and the Ready and Resilient program serves to strengthen the Army profession through its focus on optimizing the resilience and performance of our force, building

competent and engaged leaders and Soldiers.

The Suicide Prevention Program also promotes engaged leadership equipped with the ability to identify warning signs and take proactive action to save the life of Soldiers at risk for death by suicide. This type of caring and proactive leadership builds the trust that is core to the profession.

It is only through the professionalism of our Force that the Army can fulfill its mission to fight and win

### **DIRECTOR'S COLUMN** Continued from page 2

our nation's wars. And every day, ARD programs form a system of support for the Total Army—Soldiers (Active, National Guard and Reserve), Army Civilians and Family members—providing them the quality services that reinforce dignity and respect, ensuring our Army is a values-based organization of trusted professionals capable of meeting operational demands globally.

**Army Strong!**

James A. Helis, Ph.D.



## This Is My Squad: Forging Leadership Skills Through the Squad Leader Development Course

By Piers Kowalski, Laura Kirschner, Ian Gutierrez, and Susannah Knust, Ph.D., Army Resilience Directorate

"This Is My Squad," an initiative of Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael A. Grinston, aims to build more cohesive units across the Army and empower noncommissioned officers with the leadership skills to anticipate issues and address them early on. The Army Resilience Directorate's contribution to TIMS is the Squad Leader Development Course, which aims to advance this initiative by giving squad leaders the opportunity to critically reflect on their leadership style and learn to employ evidence-based leadership skills. Leaders who understand their leadership philosophy, know their Soldiers, and live the Army Values can forge cohesive Army units that are strong and resilient in the face of any challenge.

SLDC facilitators will guide squad leaders to craft their personal leadership philosophy focusing on the areas of commitment, trust, and developing others. A personal leadership philosophy can increase leader consistency and effectiveness. It provides a plan for value-based action, which can be particularly helpful in challenging moments or at tough decision points. A personal leadership philosophy, particularly when shared with others, can improve relationships. It allows others to understand a leader's values, priorities, approach to decision-making, and expectations.

During this two-day course, squad leaders discuss doctrine from Army Doctrine Publication 6-22 and research from the field of human performance, organizational psychology, and positive psychology to highlight the impact and importance of squad-level leadership behaviors. During the course, Soldiers discuss effective leader



behaviors in different components of leadership to include character, motivation, trust, and developing others.

The intent of the course is to motivate students to identify, adopt, and internalize leadership behaviors outlined in doctrine and supported by research. R2 Performance Experts delivered SLDC as a pilot from Dec. 1-2 to 24 squad leaders that make up Grinston's TIMS Leadership Panel. On Dec. 3, the TLP will provide feedback to R2's Curriculum Development Team on the course content and design so organizers can make improvements before making the course available to all squad leaders.

ARD requested that the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research conduct a longitudinal evaluation of SLDC to determine the effectiveness of the training in improving squad leader knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors that foster unit trust and exemplify ethical leadership. In partnership with R2 Performance Experts at Fort Riley, Kansas, it is anticipated that SLDC will be delivered to squad leaders with the 1st Infantry Division in March 2021. Half of the participating squad leaders will be randomized to receive SLDC training as part of the evaluation. The other half will be assigned to a wait-list control group to receive training following the completion of the evaluation. Soldiers receiving SLDC will complete surveys before training, following training, and at follow-ups scheduled over two months after the training. Surveys are designed to assess Soldier's pre-training knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors and offer Soldiers the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the training.

## New Technology Gives Insights Into the Brain, Helping Experts to Better Understand Suicide

By James Fatz, Ph.D., Diplomate in Advanced Clinical Mental Health Counseling Practice, Suicide Prevention Program Manager and CR2C Coordinator, 416th TEC

Over the course of many years, the Department of Defense, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and various other organizations have attempted to gain insight into predictive risk factors for suicidality. Despite the best efforts and research, when adjusted for various demographic details, military suicide rate trends remain similar or higher than the general population. Military professionals in this field may find themselves lacking highly reliable predictors and struggle with confusion over identifying Soldiers at risk. Newly developed tools such as the Commanders Risk Reduction Toolkit offer valuable visibility into large amounts of Soldier-specific aggregated data and overall Formation wellness. However, the dilemma still remains that not all Soldiers with high-risk profiles are suicidal, and some Soldiers with minimal risks, may still die by suicide.

Often, in the aftermath of a suicide event, attempts at trying to sort out "what was missed" can lead to frustration, guilt, and a sense of helplessness. To some degree, a death by suicide and the resulting impact upon others is processed in the context of trying to apply logic to the event. Self-lethality or self-injurious behavior often defies mainstream understanding. For some

at-risk individuals, alternative thoughts to choose to live, decisions, and other options may not even be available for consideration.

Recent research and the use of the relatively new functional magnetic resonance imaging technology is providing potential insight into what may be occurring in the brains of some individuals who die by suicide. Because fMRI scans measure brain activity blood flow, examination of these neurobiological changes may bolster current military suicide prevention efforts by providing observable neurocognitive markers for major depression and suicidal thoughts.

It has been found that for some people, what may be perceived as "typical stressors" can be processed as "threats." In these individuals, the misinterpreted threat perception activates the sympathetic nervous system – the fight or flight system. When that occurs, higher levels of the brain, specifically the cortex, are less functional with the ability to process language, apply memory, use logic, and understand sequential outcomes being highly impaired. The instinctive, primitive part of the brain, specifically the amygdala, takes control and the person shifts into survival mode.

That survival shift can result in aggression, impulsivity, and may produce adverse outcomes. Suicide may instinctively be seen as an option to escape a neurologically perceived threat—a final "flight." The brain may even reward that decision through serotonin or endorphin release, the chemicals in the brain which produce pleasure. Logic or objective thought processing plays no role.

Understanding that higher level thinking in some individuals with suicidal ideation may be impaired by brain changes can help us better identify those at risk. What they say they want, how they say they'll behave, what they promise – may have very little to do with what they are actually able to do.

When appropriately recognized, neuropsychological interventions for these Soldiers can have a positive outcome. Our ability at understanding and recognizing these unique types of issues and factors can be key to keeping Soldiers safe.

**(Editor's Note: The opinions or statements contained herein are the private views of the author and are not to be construed as the official views of, or endorsed by, the Army Resilience Directorate)**

## BE ON TIME. BE HONEST.

Take proactive steps to protect your health and well-being by completing the Deployment Health Assessments:



Taken within 120 days of deployment



Taken 30 days before or after deployment



Taken 90-180 days after deployment

To learn more about the Deployment Health Assessment Program, visit

[www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/R2/Deployment-Health-Assessment-Program.html](http://www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/R2/Deployment-Health-Assessment-Program.html) or contact your unit leader.





# ARMY RESILIENCE

THE ARMY RESILIENCE DIRECTORATE NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2020

## HAIL AND FAREWELL

We invite the Army Resilience Directorate community to join us in welcoming new members to ARD headquarters. Congratulations to current members on taking new positions, and a fond farewell to outgoing members departing the Directorate.

### Hail

- Sgt. Maj. Sharita Onuga, ARD Senior Enlisted Advisor
- Sgt. 1st Class Michael Barrin, OPS NCO, R2I&T Division
- Dr. Tai Moton-McIntyre, Operational Planner

### Farewell

- Lt. Col. Rob James, Assessments Division, Analytics Branch Chief
- Lt. Col. Wanda McLean, Operations Branch Chief, Operations Division
- Lt. Col. Norjim (Chris) Estrellado, Assessments Division, Information Systems Branch Chief
- Sgt. 1st Class Randeep Espinoza, SHARP Division, SHARP SME



## ARD WEBSITE LAUNCH

The new Army Resilience Directorate website is now live. The site is your one-stop resource to access:

- Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP)
- Suicide Prevention Program (SP2)
- Ready and Resilient (R2)
- Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP)

Find the resources needed to build ready, resilient, and cohesive teams founded on the Army Values.

[WWW.ARMYRESILIENCE.ARMY.MIL](http://WWW.ARMYRESILIENCE.ARMY.MIL)



## TOP FACEBOOK POST



Reach: 12.1K

## SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE

### Follow @ArmyResilience

Please coordinate with your Public Affairs Office to share or retweet @ArmyResilience content on Command or Installation Facebook and Twitter platforms. Contact Chet Curtis for questions regarding ARD social media at [chester.r.curtis2.civ@mail.mil](mailto:chester.r.curtis2.civ@mail.mil).

## TOP TWEET

U.S. Army Resilience Directorate @ArmyResilience · Nov 20  
The DoD Safe Helpline provides live, one-on-one confidential support, services and information 24/7— providing survivors with the help they need anytime, anywhere.

### Need to Talk?

If you've been sexually assaulted, anonymous help is available.

[safehelpline.org](http://safehelpline.org)  
877-995-5247



Impressions: 30.1K

## Army Resilience Directorate

ARDCOMMUNITYLINK

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The ARD Community Link newsletter is an authorized bi-monthly publication produced by the Army Resilience Directorate for the Army community. The contents of the ARD Community Link are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Army. The editorial content of the ARD Community Link is the responsibility of the Communications, Outreach & Leadership Engagement branch at ARD. For questions, or to subscribe or submit articles and photographs to ARD Community Link, please contact the editor at [antonietta.rico ctr@mail.mil](mailto:antonietta.rico ctr@mail.mil). This publication is available for download at: <https://www.dvidshub.net/publication/1102/r2-community-link-newsletter>.

## Connect with ARD!

Contact ARD Communications & Outreach at [usarmy.pentagon.hqda-dcs-g-1.list.dape-ars-sp@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.pentagon.hqda-dcs-g-1.list.dape-ars-sp@mail.mil)

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