Korean war veterans honored at unveiling of new memorial

Story and photos by Robert W. Mitchell | Public Affairs

A group of residents and staff from the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Washington, D.C., attended the dedication ceremony for a new memorial honoring military veterans of the Korean War.

The "Wall of Remembrance" ceremony, held on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. by the Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation July 27, recognized the service and sacrifice of veterans on the day the official Korean War Armistice agreement was signed in 1953 marking the end of the Korean conflict.

Guest speakers included second gentleman Mr. Douglas Emhoff and other representatives from the U.S. and South Korean governments. AFRH-W residents, many of whom participated in Korea, were honored to be recognized during the dedication of the new exhibit.

South Korean Defense Minister visits vets at AFRH-W

Story and photos by Robert W. Mitchell | Public Affairs

In a high profile display of gratitude, appreciation and respect for the U.S. military’s role in the Korean War, South Korean Minister of Defense Lee Jong-sup stopped by the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH) in Washington, D.C., to thank Korean War veterans there for their service and sacrifice in a conflict that ended nearly seventy years ago.

AFRH leadership, CEO Stephen T. Rippe (retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen.) and D.C. Campus Administrator Susan E. Bryhan, welcomed the defense minister and extended their appreciation to him for visiting AFRH during his trip to the nation’s capital.

During the visit, the defense minister toured the campus, greeted residents in the hallways and common areas, and stopped for photos and handshakes. From behind an official podium, he delivered a message of appreciation and honor to the residents, and presented AFRH with air purifiers and a minister’s coin.

Following the presentation, residents and staff applauded the honorable gesture and gathered together for a group photo with the South Korean leader.

The defense minister had attended the Korean War Veterans Memorial Wall of Remembrance Dedication ceremony held in D.C. earlier in the day before traveling to AFRH to visit with Korean War veterans. The July 29 visit coincided with the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement on this date back in 1953 officially ending the Korean War.

It may surprise some service members and their spouses that not all who served or retired are eligible to live at the AFRH. In fact, admission is limited to service members that spent over half of their time in service as an enlisted member, warrant officer, or limited-duty officer (Navy and Marine Corps). In other words, if you spent more than half of your military career as a commissioned officer, you are not eligible to become a resident of the AFRH.

In addition to this main requirement, service members must meet one of five additional eligibility criteria.

What about spouses? Eligible service members and their spouses can apply to live at the AFRH as a couple if the spouse is eligible according to separate spouse criteria. Although veterans do not have a minimum monthly charge, spouses are subject to paying a minimum based on care. Spouses are also required to share an apartment with their veteran sponsor while both are independent.

It may also be surprising that applicants for residency must be able to live independently upon admission and be approved by medical and admission review boards. However, following initial admission, as residents age and need more assistance, the AFRH has four additional levels of care to accommodate them. The benefit of living at an AFRH is that it is reasonably priced based on your annual gross income. The monthly fee for residents varies by individual. However, it provides the same services for all residents including a room, three meals a day, 24-hour security, activities, access to all on-site amenities, transportation to medical facilities, and more.

The Armed Forces Retirement Home is the nation’s premier life community for veterans of the U.S. armed forces and their spouses. Its mission is to fulfill America's commitment to its military veterans by providing an excellent community with exceptional residential care and extensive support services. The Home is one of America’s most enduring veterans’ retirement homes with campuses in Washington, District of Columbia and Gulfport, Mississippi. For more information, visit www.afrh.gov.
Herman J. Washington was born on June 29, 1937, as was his twin brother, Paul. His parents, along with his three younger sisters (which included another set of twins), lived in Cumberland, MD, where his father worked for the B&O Railroad for 50 years while his mother tended to the family.

Herman graduated from the last segregated high school in Cumberland in 1955 and was awarded a scholarship to Howard University. While there, he played clarinet and alto saxophone in the marching band and ran cross-country. Due to circumstances beyond his control, he could not attend college during his sophomore year. His brother had joined the U.S. Air Force, so in 1956, he did too.

Herman had an easy time in basic training at Lackland AFB, TX, not only because of the cross-country team but also because he rode a bike on the boardwalk in Atlantic City where he worked his last summer before the military. He had a 13-inch neck and a 28-inch waist!

He trained as a weather observer at Chanute AFB in Illinois. His first duty assignment was to Dover AFB, Delaware, where he was reminded that weather observation was a 24-hour-a-day job.

Herman's next assignment was to Ramstein AFB, GE, which he loved. He traveled when he could and visited Germany, Paris, Amsterdam, and Spain.

Being a musician, he attended numerous concerts and met tenor saxophonist 'extraordinaire' Stan Getz in Amsterdam. He also was able to see Count Basie in concert!

From 1961-1964 he was assigned to Selfridge AFB, MI, where he met his wife, Rosemary. They were married on November 3, 1962.

In 1965 Herman spent a year in Korea on an Army aviation command. U.S. Air Force weathermen were used to support the flights of airplanes and helicopters. The weathermen wore Army uniforms with Air Force ranks. He enjoyed this assignment.

In 1966-68, Herman was stationed at Lockbourne AFB, Ohio. He then attended Chief Observer School at Chanute AFB for one year, which was a permanent change of station. From March of '69 to October of '70 Herman was stationed at Duluth Air Force Station, MN, where he worked at the National Weather Service Office. He was then sent to weather forecaster school back at Chanute AFB for one year.

As a result of that school, Herman was assigned as a weather forecaster at Kirtland AFB, New Mexico. While there he gave 'over-the-counter briefings' to pilots who were not allowed to take off until they had a weather briefing! Two of those pilots were astronauts - Edward Mitchell and Michael Collins, who had been to the moon.

In January 1973, he attended the Military Airlift Command NCO Academy at Norton AFB, San Bernardino, CA, where each student had to give a speech. He had trouble coming up with a topic, so he started a hobby in photography. He not only took photos but developed them too, both black and white and color! This made for an easy speech.

In 1973 he was given a three-year assignment to Ramey AFB, Puerto Rico. He and his family, which now included two daughters, Joyce and Cathleen, were excited about this move. But, before his car even arrived in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Air Force decided to close the base. At least he was able to experience tropical weather forecasting and the family toured the island before it closed.

He was then sent to weather forecaster school back at Chanute AFB from 1970-71. While at Williams AFB, he met Lieutenant Pete Peterson, who later became a U.S. Air Force Thunderbird pilot. As a Captain, Peterson was one of the four Thunderbirds killed in a crash in Nevada in 1982.

Herman loved retirement and traveling with Rosemary around the country. They lived in and traveled through 35 states and crossed the U.S. twice. They also enjoyed the ocean and spent their vacation time on 15 cruises. After 59 years of marriage, Rosemary passed away as a result of illness.

Herman moved into AFRH-W in 2017. His wife was an excellent cook, so we don't have to tell you how he feels about the food here! Health problems have slowed him down, but he is very pleased with the care from our Wellness Center. He still manages to win at bingo regularly, attends the special programs in the community center, and enjoys watching movies.
AFRH-G Hall of Honors donation

Photos by Becki L. Zschiedrich / Public Affairs

Gulfport resident Sharon Price submitted her father’s WWII Japanese Phrase Book for the memorabilia committee to consider for display in the Hall of Honors. These books were issued to combat squads in order to help them communicate with prisoners. They continued to be useful to the troops in Japan, and included commonplace phrases and words, as well as military commands and tactical questions. The AFRH-G Memorabilia Committee accepted this donation and it is currently on display in one of the glass cases in the Hall of Honors. Thank you to Sharon Price for this incredible donation and to Faye Jefferson for taking over the memorabilia committee. All memorabilia submissions will have to go through the committee and be approved to be displayed in the Hall of Honors.
From the AFRH-W administrator

It has been a busy summer with lots of activities ranging from music, sports events to gardening. As I write today, we are fortunate to have zero active COVID cases on campus, so we were able to relax masking for vaccinated residents and staff. It is nice to see faces again! Many of our events this quarter included music. Voices of Vets, Songs for Seniors, Navy Country Currents, and the 257th Army Brigadier Brass Band entertained us all with their voices and instruments. It was a busy quarter with VIP visitors. First, was the Republic of Korea Minister of Defense who enjoyed spending time with our residents and generously presented us with an evidence bag full of licorice. Some of us were honored to attend the Korean War Memorial Wall of Remembrance dedication ceremony. Major General Sherrie L. McCandless, Commanding General, District of Columbia National Guard returned for a visit for her band’s concert. He served breakfast and enjoyed spending time with our veterans. As is our tradition, we honored service birthdays for the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Air Force. We held our birthday cake cutting ceremony and our newer tradition of a steak birthday meal. We all enjoyed several picnics to celebrate national holidays including Independence Day and Labor Day. Taking advantage of our improved backyard, we had hot dogs and a pickle ball tournament using our new sport court, thanks to The Old Soldiers Home Foundation’s generous gifts. A number of community members were welcomed on campus for the annual Friends of the Soldiers Home 4th of July event that includes one of the best views of the DC firework displays and great food trucks. And we had several softball games to enjoy among many other programs that our recreation staff hosted.

Food grown by residents became salsa and pickles and enjoyed by many. Other food events included an Italian lunch and a mashed potato bar and of course, it would not be summer without some ice cream socials, one hosted by The Enlisted Association (TREA). We are always fortunate to be remembered by so many generous community members. Synchrony Financial returned with a busload of staff from all over the world to host activities and distribute many gifts. DAR dropped off over 25 wheelchairs, fully assembled, which residents eager for a new ride quickly picked up.

We honored our latest Employee of the Quarter, Margaret Adcox, one of our hard working nurses, selected from among other outstanding staff members. We appreciate you all.

On a sad note, we said an unexpected good-bye to one of our dedicated Security Officers, Shamatto Clarke, an Army veteran. We will all miss spending time with him as he diligently served our residents.

As we close out summer and welcome the cooler weather of fall, stay safe and enjoy rooting for your favorite football team!

Susan Bryhan

Armed Forces Retirement Home announces Deputy Chief Operating Officer Selection

Armed Forces Retirement Home Chief Operating Officer John S. RisCassi has announced the selection of Captain Daniel M. Coviello, Jr., U.S. Public Health Service (retired), for appointment to the Senior Executive Service.

Mr. Coviello will be assigned as deputy chief operating officer, with responsibilities to include serving as the agency’s second-in-command and chief of staff, management of procurement, contracting, operations and services, and external reporting.

Mr. Coviello retired from the commissioned corps of the U.S. Public Health Service as group director for multiple regions overseeing innovation, financial management, and contractor oversight. Prior assignments included division deputy director at the Health Resources Services Administration, center director at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, deputy branch chief at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and chief of staff in the Office of Security and Strategic Information.

Mr. Coviello also served in the U.S. Air Force where he developed plans for deployed hospitals supporting Operation Enduring Freedom as well as managed the service’s family practice residency program. Prior to his government service, he was a healthcare administrator for multiple clinics and surgical centers. He holds a master of science in healthcare administration from St. Joseph’s University and a bachelor of science in health sciences and humanities from Drexel University.

Enlisted Association leaders visit AFRH-W

By Travis Smith | Strategic Advisor

Photos by Robert Mitchell | Public Affairs

Leaders from The Enlisted Association (formerly The Retired Enlisted Association or “TREA”) visited AFRH-W on August 24th. Incoming Board President Deb Oelschig (USN Ret) and Executive Director Debbie Osborne met with AFRH CEO Major General Rippe to learn more about AFRH, toured the Washington campus, and served ice cream sundaes to residents. Organized in Colorado in 1963 where it is still headquartered, it was recognized by the VA as a veterans service organization in 1986. It is the oldest veterans service organization in the country, and its work is supported by Congress in 1982.

Today its members provide emergency financial assistance, scholarships, connect veterans with services and benefits, and provide opportunities for veterans. The Association’s leaders worked to learn more about AFRH, toured the Washington campus, and served ice cream sundaes to residents. Organized in Colorado in 1963 where it is still headquartered, it was recognized by the VA as a veterans service organization in 1986. It is the oldest veterans service organization in the country, and its work is supported by Congress in 1982.

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TREA

The Retired Enlisted Association

By Steven Briefs | Recreation Supervisor

To be in the right place and the right time is always a good thing. On Wednesday, August 24th, members from the Retired Enlisted Association came to host an Ice Cream Sundae social for our residents. We enjoyed vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, and butter pecan flavors. Toppings such as walnuts, cherries, M&M’s, cookie pieces along with caramel, chocolate and butterscotch syrup were available to decorate the ice cream creations. The TREA members wanted to say “thank you” to our residents for their service to our country and offer literature about their organization. There were lots of smiles and conversation enjoyed by everyone, and we encouraged them to return as often as they can.

Notes from the AFRH-W resident advisory committee chairman

This is my final article for the Communicator as my AFRH-W RAC Chairman term comes to an end. I would like to thank all of our RAC representatives and committee members for their support and their efforts to help our fellow residents. I also would like to thank our AFRH-W staff for their support, especially for the many times they have helped me and the residents to resolve our concerns.

I would like to welcome our new RAC chairman and RAC representatives and wish them the best. They will be faced with many major changes over the next two years. The Sheridan renovation and the 80-acre development will soon be upon us and will require communication between the RAC, the staff and agency. I encourage as many residents as possible to get involved in your Resident Advisory Committee.

Finally, I would like to put the rumor to rest that I lost my hair from being the RAC Chairman... It was from calling Bingo on Saturday afternoon. Tough crowd!

Fred Layman

Thank you Fred Layman!
Notes from the AFRH-G resident advisory committee chairman

Thank you Mr. Jones for all of your determination and dedication to get the job done as RAC Chair for the last four years. Your service to the AFRH-G was very much appreciated. The RAC election was held on September 15, 2022, and the new RAC Chair will be Art Jones. Stay tuned for an article from Mr. Smith in the December 31, 2022 edition of the Communicator.

Thank you Art Jones!

AFRH-G RAC Chair Art Jones at the Hawaiian Luau in the dining hall on August 31, 2022.

AFRH-G resident turns 100!

Story & photos by Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs

Gulfport resident Howard Bowman was born on June 20, 1922, in Dry Prong, Louisiana. He entered the U.S. Navy in New Orleans in 1940. Mr. Bowman is a WWII and Korean War veteran. After serving in the Navy for 20 years he retired as an E-8 Aviation Electronics Technician Senior Chief Petty Officer (ATCS). AFRH-G celebrated Mr. Bowman’s 100th birthday in the Community Center with a cake and ice cream social. Happy, Happy Birthday Mr. Bowman!

AFRH-G residents give monetary donation for school supplies

Story & photos by Susan Bergman, MT-BC | Board Certified Music Therapist, Recreation Therapy Services

On June 30, 2022, Regional Manager Angela Hage, with Service to the Armed Forces – Red Cross, arrived with an amazing donation. As pictured, the new percussion equipment for the “Drum It Up! Drumming!” group just makes you smile!! From a cheerful gathering drum to enticing lollipop drums, the donation also included eight additional mallets, 16 sets of wood claves, a Djembe (African Drum), and a stand for placement at just the right height. These new additions will provide hours of fun, joy and excitement for our healthcare-veteran residents and allow us to expand into the future.

You may ask, “Why drumming…What are the health benefits?” Research has shown that drumming strengthens the immune system, increases natural killer (NK) cell activity, reduces burnout, releases stress, and provides an opportunity for self-expression beyond words. It is immediate, inclusive, ignites creativity and is easily accessible in bringing people together for inspiration and hope, too. You may ask, “If I drum, will I feel uplifted or relaxed?” Drumming has been proven to induce alpha waves in the brain and to also release the feel good brain chemicals called endorphins. This results in having an improved mood, a sense of well-being, and feelings of happiness by the end of a group drumming session. Through a study on those who drummed and those who didn’t, drumming was found to lower blood pressure, reduce anxiety and depression, and improve social resilience over a six to ten-week time span. Be on the lookout for upcoming pictures of our “Drum It Up! Drumming!” session with the healthcare residents. In the meantime, “Stay Calm and Drum On!”

To learn about Service to the Armed Forces - Red Cross to: https://www.redcross.org/local/la-metairie/about-us/our-work/service-to-the-armed-forces.html

American Red Cross donates for “Drum It Up! Drumming!”

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AFRH-G Employee of the 3rd Quarter FY22

Photo by Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs

A new addition to our Nurse Educator Donna Iler for exceptional service to The Armed Forces Retirement Home during April, May, and June 2022. Donna created such a festive atmosphere and did an amazing job organizing, coordinating, and leading the annual Nursing Skills Fair on 5/2/22 – 5/6/22. She took an interdisciplinary approach to providing instructors and support for this year’s event, including outside community resources to include topics such as suicide prevention, gun looks, dental, and low vision support. Donna collected items throughout the year, ensuring each healthcare staff member received a sombrero and blanket. She also created beautiful gift baskets and wreaths, which were raffled. Donna had piratas hanging from the ceiling and each time one was broken, a new candy-filled pirata was hung. After the skills fair, Donna donated the decorations, extra sombreros, table runners, tablecloths, peppermints, maracas, flags, and baskets to recreation services to be utilized for the Cinco de Mayo Fiesta Luncheon. Decorations also adorned the Allegiance hallway, Valor dining hall, and the Loyalty dining hall.

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AFRH-G resident turns 100!

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Gulfport resident Howard Bowman was born on June 20, 1922, in Dry Prong, Louisiana. He entered the U.S. Navy in New Orleans in 1940. Mr. Bowman is a WWII and Korean War veteran. After serving in the Navy for 20 years he retired as an E-8 Aviation Electronics Technician Senior Chief Petty Officer (ATCS). AFRH-G celebrated Mr. Bowman’s 100th birthday in the Community Center with a cake and ice cream social. Happy, Happy Birthday Mr. Bowman!

Pet therapy

Story & photo by Carol Davis | Recreation Assistant

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AFRH-W resident highlight – Gerald “Ivan” Saucier
By PK Knor | Resident

Gerald ‘Ivan’ Saucier was born on April 6, 1941, in Topsham, ME. His father and grandfather were farmers and lumbermen. His father built their home, but after one year, by a tragic accident, it burnt to the ground and life became extremely tough. His father constantly tried to improve their living situation with better jobs by moving the family to Lewiston, ME, and Hartford, CT, where they lived for 10 years. Ivan attended public school but was not too keen on reading and studying. In his spare time, he played basketball and soccer. He played for his mother a table lamp that looked like a water pump, a standing ashtray, and a magazine rack. He played basketball with a local parks department league, and they eventually went 12-0. When he turned 17, Ivan left school, raised his hand, and joined the U.S. Navy on April 29, 1958.

After basic training at NGT Great Lakes, he was assigned to the USNS Inrepid CWA-11, ported in Norfolk, VA. Upon reporting on board, he was assigned to become a machinist mate striker in the engine room. But after a couple of days, he was reassigned to the ship’s galley as a mess cook in the bake shop. (There is a requirement that all non-designated junior enlisted work in the mess for three months after reporting.) After this requirement was completed, he started performing his machinist mate duties. In the meantime, the ship was underway off of the Atlantic Coast qualifying pilots on how to take off and land on the aircraft carrier.

In January 1959, as an E-2, he was assigned to the USS Boxer LPH-4. But after Christmas leave, he returned to Norfolk to find that the USS Boxer had left port (not his fault) So he was sent to NOB, Norfolk for ‘scullery duty’ until the USS Boxer returned, which was in April 1959. He was then assigned to the #4 boiler room, but still being the junior man he was again sent to the mess hall and placed on the serving line. (He could hardly wait until he made 3rd class (E-4) to work in his military occupational specialty, which he did in June 1960.) The USS Boxer was transferred to the pre-commissioning crew of the USS Luce DLG-7, where he was in charge of the boiler room. After refresher training in Cuba, the ship was transferred with the 6th fleet in the Mediterranean. Following this assignment, Ivan was promoted to Chief Petty Officer, (E-7) in October 1973. He is also acknowledged as a “plank owner” from the Luce and received honors when he left the ship for the last time in October 1974.

Ivan was sent back to Philadelphia to SSC in 1975, where they wrote exams and lesson plans for the instructors at the schools. With the advent of gas turbine technology the boiler rating became extinct and the school shut down. But, because there were still ships operated by boilers, instructors were still needed. In 1976 Ivan was transferred to SSC Naval Training Center, Great Lakes, to be an exam writer for boiler techs, machinist mates, engineers, and damage control men.

On 16 May 1979, Ivan retired after 22 years in the U.S. Navy as a Senior Chief (E-8). After he had submitted his retirement paperwork he took and passed the test for master chief! Just in case civilian life wasn’t what he had hoped for or if he was called back to active duty, he would rejoin the Navy at that rank.

He moved his family to Western, Rhode Island, and was immediately hired at Pfizer Chemical. Ivan also chose to attend Thames Valley Technical College of Mechanical Engineering, which helped him to obtain an assistant engineering position at Pfizer. After 14 years he took a buy-out offered by Pfizer and completely retired.

The family then moved to Florida. He joined a 55+ softball league, which allowed for one 50-year-old (which he was), so he was made the designated runner! After several years, a divorce, and rebuilding his home from hurricanes, he decided to move to AFRH-W in 2012. Since his daughters and six grandchildren live in Florida, he has frequent contact with them.

Ivan made this cedar chest for his grandson’s wedding. His daughters Lisa and Lori.

1950 census class
By Leslie Toomey | Librarian

Starting in April of 2022, the 1950 Census became available for the public to search. AFRH residents learned about the 1950 Census and earlier census records. You can search census records for free at the following websites: https://1950census.archives.gov/ and https://www.familysearch.org/en/. Also, many public libraries, including the D.C. Public Library system, offer free access to ancestry.com and other genealogy websites.

Internet basics class
By Leslie Toomey | Librarian

The Sheridan Computer lab is up and running again with regular computer classes. During the August class, residents learned common internet terminology and then practiced finding and searching websites. Resident volunteers, Ed Barrett and Mike Krumlauf, helped residents get one-on-one assistance.

Celebrating the U.S. Coast Guard’s 232nd Birthday at AFRH-W

Story and photos by Robert W. Mitchell | AFRH Public Affairs

Residents and staff at the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH) in Washington, D.C., came together recently to celebrate the 232nd birthday of the United States Coast Guard. Guest speaker Master Chief Petty Officer Joshua Ewing extended his appreciation to the residents and staff at AFRH for being invited to the ceremony to speak on behalf of his organization.

“This is an honor for me to be here and to stand in front of all of you,” he said. “There is nothing more honorable than to be here, to come back and speak to folks that may not know where the Coast Guard is going.”

Recognizing this year’s theme of “Honor Our Past, Shaping Our Future,” Ewing said the U.S. Coast Guard has successfully upheld its mission to save lives, ensure safety and inspect vessels. And going forward, he said it will keep protecting natural resources, lead in global maritime governance (enforcing the rule of law), and foster great partnerships, both domestically and internationally, to “strengthen the fabric of our homeland security.”

Ewing said the U.S. Coast Guard is set announce the start of construction of a new national exhibit that will encourage visitors to actively engage in learning about the history of this branch of the military.

“Later this month, the U.S. Coast Guard will conduct a keel laying ceremony in New London, Connecticut, marking the future site of the official United States Coast Guard Museum,” he said. “It will be an interactive time capsule that will make our story, our history and our legacy even more accessible for generations to come.”

Following the key node address, Coast Guard veterans Don Stout (92) and Lt. Cmdr. James Toomey (36) cut the ceremonial birthday cake.

Master of Ceremony and AFRH Ombudsman Sam Gitchell, U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. (ret.), presented AFRH administrator coins to both Ewing and Toomey for their participation in the ceremony.

The United States Coast Guard started on August 4, 1790. It serves as both a federal law enforcement agency and a branch of the military under the Department of Homeland Security.

By PK Knor | Resident

He had met his wife, Donna, in Hartford, CT. She moved to Norfolk, VA, where she set up housekeeping and worked as a part-time hairdresser while he attended schools (damage control, firefighting, etc.) and during sea duties.

On December 9, 1963, he was assigned to the USS Massey DD-778, homeported out of Newport, RI, as an operator/mechanic, a second class boiler man (E-5), and finally working in the boiler room. The ship traveled from Newport, RI, to the Mediterranean and back again several times. On the last cruise, his daughter, Lisa, was born in Rhode Island.

In February 1965, accompanied by his family, Ivan was sent to welding school in San Diego, CA. Then, in July 1965, as a high-pressure welder and first class (E-6), he was put in charge of the ship’s evaporators and was the boiler room technician on the USS Forrestal CVA-59 in Norfolk, VA. (The three evaporators could make 350,000 gallons of fresh water in 24 hours.)

The Navy sent him to Instructor Training School in December 1967, in Norfolk, VA, in preparation for his next assignment as an instructor at the Naval Technical Training Center, Ft. McHenry in Baltimore, MD. There he taught the operation and repair of boilers to reservists. (During this time his youngest daughter Lori was born.)

In 1970, Ivan was transferred to the pre-commissioning crew of the USS Luce DLG-7, where he was in charge of the boiler room. After refresher training in Cuba, the ship was transferred with the 6th fleet in the Mediterranean. Following this assignment, Ivan was promoted to Chief Petty Officer, (E-7) in October 1973. He is also acknowledged as a “plank owner” from the Luce and received honors when he left the ship for the last time in October 1974.

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Celebrating the U.S. Coast Guard’s 232nd Birthday at AFRH-W

Story and photos by Robert W. Mitchell | AFRH Public Affairs

Residents and staff at the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH) in Washington, D.C., came together recently to celebrate the 232nd birthday of the United States Coast Guard. Guest speaker Master Chief Petty Officer Joshua Ewing extended his appreciation to the residents and staff at AFRH for being invited to the ceremony to speak on behalf of his organization.

“This is an honor for me to be here and to stand in front of all of you,” he said. “There is nothing more honorable than to be here, to come back and speak to folks that may not know where the Coast Guard is going.”

Recognizing this year’s theme of “Honor Our Past, Shaping Our Future,” Ewing said the U.S. Coast Guard has successfully upheld its mission to save lives, ensure safety and inspect vessels. And going forward, he said it will keep protecting natural resources, lead in global maritime governance (enforcing the rule of law), and foster great partnerships, both domestically and internationally, to “strengthen the fabric of our homeland security.”

Ewing said the U.S. Coast Guard is set announce the start of construction of a new national exhibit that will encourage visitors to actively engage in learning about the history of this branch of the military.

“Later this month, the U.S. Coast Guard will conduct a keel laying ceremony in New London, Connecticut, marking the future site of the official United States Coast Guard Museum,” he said. “It will be an interactive time capsule that will make our story, our history and our legacy even more accessible for generations to come.”

Following the key note address, Coast Guard veterans Don Stout (92) and Lt. Cmdr. James Toomey (36) cut the ceremonial birthday cake.

Master of Ceremony and AFRH Ombudsman Sam Gitchell, U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. (ret.), presented AFRH administrator coins to both Ewing and Toomey for their participation in the ceremony.

The United States Coast Guard started on August 4, 1790. It serves as both a federal law enforcement agency and a branch of the military under the Department of Homeland Security.
AFRH-G resident cuts the cake at Keesler’s 81st anniversary

Story & photos by Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs

AFRH-G resident Larry McNab, who is a U.S. Air Force Retired Master Sgt., cut the cake at Keesler’s 81st Birthday Celebration inside the Levitow Training Support Facility at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi on August 25, 2022. Larry trained at Keesler in 1966, so cutting the cake with the youngest U.S. Air Force Airman Basic Sebastian Ramirez, 335th Training Squadron student had a very special meaning.

U.S. Air Force Col. Jason Allen, 81st Training Wing vice commander, and Keesler’s Historian Tyrone D. Scott delivered remarks. The young Airmen had quite a few questions for Larry as he spoke about his career in the U.S. Air Force. It was such an honor for him to represent the Armed Forces Retirement Home at this special event, especially since it was the 81st Training Wing’s 81st Birthday.

Keesler hasn’t forgotten its roots in the local community, and they have been a longtime supporter of AFRH-G. In 2005 when Hurricane Katrina hit, Keesler’s Briefly adapted their mission from training to humanitarian and disaster assistance. They were immediately dispatched to AFRH-G to assist the residents and help with cleaning up the aftermath. Keesler has also supported the AFRH-G the last few years helping out with COVID testing for all residents and employees.

In 81 years, Keesler has evolved into the leading joint training installation and is the single largest employer in South Mississippi. Keesler is the second largest Air Force technical training base graduating more than 28,000 Airmen in over 160 career fields every year.

Happy 81st Birthday Keesler and Thank You for always being there for AFRH-G and our residents.

AFRH-G residents recognized at ship christening

Photos by Joe Lavry | Resident

On June 11 residents of the AFRH-G attended a ship christening and were recognized during the ceremony of the Richard M. McCool Jr. (LPD 29) at Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Mississippi.

LPD 29 is named in honor of U.S. Navy Capt. Richard M. McCool Jr., a World War II Medal of Honor recipient for his actions during the Battle of Okinawa. On June 11, 1945, McCool aided in the rescue of survivors off a sinking destroyer. When his own ship was later hit by a Japanese kamikaze, McCool suffered severe burns and shrapnel wounds, but continued to lead his crew in firefighting and rescue efforts until help arrived.

The USS McCool will be an important piece in the Marine Corps’ and Navy’s ongoing efforts to increase integration and continue to protect vital maritime and national security interests.

Keesler Air Force Base 81st LRS flight volunteers at AFRH-G

Story & photos by Rosie Lake | Volunteer Coordinator

AFRH-G would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of The 81st LRS LGRV/LGRDDO flight from Keesler AFB for partnering with The Armed Forces Retirement Home-Gulfport on June 15, 2022.

We appreciate their community service efforts that provided cleaning services for personal mobility devices, wheelchairs and rollators owned by our Nation’s veterans. I would also like to thank Mr. Darren Jones, for allowing me to partner with him on this opportunity and many thanks to our recreation department, upper levels of care staff, custodial staff and everyone who played a role in making this another successful event for the residents of AFRH-G.

We look forward to partnering with the 81st LRS flight in the near future. These opportunities are a very positive way for our military service members to connect with our Nation’s Hero’s and watching their interactions was truly inspiring. Thanks again! Everyone’s efforts are greatly appreciated.

USCG ball caps donated to AFRH-G

Story & photos by Rosie Lake | Volunteer Coordinator

On June 14 we called on our resident USCG veterans to look through and take some unit ball caps that were donated by Ms. Lois Bouton’s family. The opportunity was truly a pleasure to watch. One of the residents, Mr. Al McNab, picked up a hat and you could visibly see the memories flooding in. He recalled that the USCGC Blackthorn was the very first vessel he served on. He stated, “The Blackthorn was sunk in Tampa Bay in 1980. It had a collision with a huge merchant ship, where the anchor from the ship caught onto the Blackthorn, which capsized the ship and resulted in many people losing their lives. It was a sad ending for a good old ship.” Mr. McNab was grateful for the ball caps and took several caps that signified ships that he served on. Another resident, Mr. Earl Portrey, stated, “I inspected many of the ships named on these ball caps.” It was a pleasure seeing the residents smile and listen to them reminisce about the vessels they served on. One can’t help but feel honored every time they share a piece of history!

The U.S. Coast Guard celebrated their 232nd Birthday on August 4. Happy Birthday U.S. Coast Guard!

AFRH-G clothing store

Story & photos by Rosie Lake | Volunteer Coordinator

Our clothing store associate, AFRH-G resident volunteer Mr. Robert Brodeur, opened the clothing store an additional day in August. The store received a generous donation of women’s clothing and Mr. Brodeur has been working tirelessly in displaying the additional clothing items for our resident’s shopping pleasure! Residents of AFRH-G can shop at this store for free clothing every Wednesday. Thanks Mr. Bob for always maintaining a clean and orderly clothing store and thanks to everyone who has donated clothing, dropped in to shop or just say hello. We appreciate you!
Introducing “Mend-It-Mondays” at AFRH-W!

By Jenna K. Kriegel | Art Specialist

The resident sewing room on the sixth floor of Scott Tower is one of many hidden gems at the AFRH Washington campus. Boasting 13 sewing machines, in addition to countless yards of fabric and creative baubles, this facility is finding new life and greeting new visitors regularly. This summer, AFRH-W premiered its new “Mend-It-Monday” program. Residents are free to drop in or set an appointment with the Art Specialist in the sewing room for one-on-one guidance with basic garment repair and alterations. Designed to promote prolonged independence, the program provides the opportunity for residents to learn a skill and save a few bucks. Some more experienced resident seamstresses have even thrown in their expertise with creative problem solving. So far, nine pairs of pants and four shirts have been repaired by residents, with more on the schedule for the next “Mend-It-Monday.”

Salty sea stories & beer

Story & photo by Leslie Toomey | Librarian

To celebrate the U.S. Coast Guard’s birthday week, LCDR James Toomey visited AFRH-W to share sea stories with residents. AFRH-W volunteer Sheldor Shorthouse, generously opened up the Defender’s Inn, so residents could enjoy drinks while they shared their salty sea stories.

Chess challenge

By Carol Mitchell, ADC | Recreation Therapist

Photos by LTC Nursing

"Oh, it’s been four — long years but I, Carol Mitchell from Recreation Therapy, can finally say I beat resident Jim Hopkins in a game of chess! Jim has provided me with invaluable knowledge on the benefits of playing chess. Some of the benefits include developing perspective, improving and testing memory, aiding in focusing, improving cognitive skills, exercising logic, and making decisions both visually and analytically.

Throughout the years, chess has taught me how to win and lose — generally losing at least against Jim! It has also given me the ability to come back a better and wiser player. Chess is one of the oldest games in the world dating back over 1,500 years. It brings people around the world together from different cultures, ages, and backgrounds. Professional chess players can win up to $1,000,000 and more!"

Glenna’s Book Club resumes

By Leslie Toomey | Librarian

Glenna Orr, long-time community volunteer, has resumed her weekly book club for AFRH-W residents. Glenna provides books for residents to borrow and generously supplies refreshments for each meeting. Fall book titles include the following: Red Notice by Bill Browder; The Book Woman’s Daughter by Kim Richardson; The Path between the Seas by David McCullough; The President and the Freedom Fighter by Brian Kilmeade and Hobbs Egly by J.D. Vance. Glenna’s Book Club meets in the AFRH-W Game Room near the Library on Wednesdays at 1:30 p.m. New members are welcome to join at any time.

Travel stories

Story & photo by Leslie Toomey | Librarian

After more than two years of Covid restrictions, many AFRH-W residents appreciated traveling this summer to near and faraway places. For the Travel Stories program, residents enjoyed international snacks while sharing their travel stories and photos from Scotland, Massachusetts, nearby museums, etc. The travel group will be meeting again in January and welcomes travel stories from recent and long-ago adventures.

Patriotic sing-along

Story & photo by Leslie Toomey | Librarian

To prepare for the 4th of July, AFRH-W residents gathered in their red, white, and blue to sing patriotic songs together. It was lovely to hear the voices of our veterans singing “America the Beautiful,” “My country ’Tis of Thee,” and other familiar tunes.

Lincoln Cottage tour

Story & photos by Leslie Toomey | Librarian

In recognition of the 100th anniversary of the Lincoln Memorial dedication, AFRH-W residents enjoyed Abraham Lincoln trivia, followed by a group tour of President Lincoln’s Cottage. During his presidency and the Civil War, Lincoln and his family visited the cottage regularly; Lincoln even developed the Emancipation Proclamation there. AFRH-W is fortunate to have the Lincoln Cottage on its grounds, and residents can visit for free by calling (202) 829-0436 to arrange a tour.

National Potato Day

Story & photos by Amanda Jensema, CTRS | Recreation Therapy

National Potato Day on Friday, August 19th, AFRH-W celebrated with a Mashed Potato Bar and games. Residents had a choice between a base of plain or red skin mashed potatoes, which they were then able to dress up to their liking. Choice of toppings included sour cream, chives, chili, butter, cheese sauce, and bacon. Potato games were enjoyed by all who attended. The big hit was “Bowling for Spuds.” Knocking down pins with a sweet potato was no easy feat as the potato rolled in all directions. Next up was “Test Your Taste Spuds.” Residents were given a plate with four different flavored potato chips and they had to figure out which one was the final game became a team effort… “Potato Tower.” Residents worked together to build a tower out of potatoes. We also had two special guests show up and spend the afternoon mingling. You can’t have a Potato Party without Mr. & Mrs. Potato Head! Overall everyone had a great time socializing with friends, and making new friends.

Chess for all

Story & photos by Jenna Kriegel | Art Specialist

Creativity knows no limit! That’s the mentality during art programs at the AFRH Washington campus. Researchers have frequently observed a correlation between art-making and improved cognitive function, memory, and dexterity. With that in mind, AFRH-W healthcare residents can now participate in arts and creative programs designed specifically for them. Assisted Living residents can come and go at their leisure to socialize and color at “Art Outside the Lines,” while Long-term care and Memory Support residents get their own custom guided craft tutorials at “Art Time With Jenna.” Seasonal workshops, such as “Creepy Crafts” and “Deck the Halls” offer residents from all levels of care the chance to decorate for holidays. Thanks to generous community donations, residents can experiment with led magnifying lenses, adjustable desks, portable drawing boards, large format coloring sheets, and specialty pencil/brush grips to find the right combination of creative accommodations their needs. There is truly something for everybody and every body in the art studios at AFRH-W!
AFRH-G art demo classes

Story & photo by Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs

Every Wednesday morning at 0800 our Art Specialist Milton Williams holds an art demo class in the art room at AFRH-G. Milton teaches the participants the painting and explains mixing different colors and using different paint brushes, and palette knives. It’s amazing how everything just falls into place working with brushes. If you are interested in art, you do not want to miss this. Check out the recreation calendar on our website for more art classes and demo paintings. It’s amazing the talent that comes out of our art room.

AFRH-G resident artist
John Brazitis – sunset painting

By Milton Williams | Art Specialist

Many of John Brazitis’ paintings are black, white and grey tones. This sunset painting is one of his latest. The blending of the colors from the cool blues, to the warmer oranges, and reds are just at the right proportion. He prefers black and whites, but he does an excellent job with color as well. This painting is in the art display room and it should warm your heart when viewing. Thanks, John for venturing into color landscapes.

Doug Carroll, Photographer
By Milton Williams | Art Specialist

Doug will be showing a series of photographs that he has taken through the years, most of which, have been enhanced to create an impression or highlight a specific detail in his subjects. Doug has won many awards in his 60 plus years of capturing nature through the lens of many different cameras. For the past four years he has offered Christmas photos for both staff and residents. Nice to have such a professional photographer offering his services at our Home. Please go by and take the adventure of viewing over a dozen photographs in the Volunteer/Package Room #1021.

AFRH-G residents paint pelicans

By Milton Williams | Art Specialist

Pelicans are a common sight up and down the Mississippi Gulf Coast as well as many of its tributaries. These giant cruisers soar the air currents at great heights and often venture miles inland. The resident artists at the Armed Forces Retirement Home-Gulfport always enjoy painting pelicans, especially after volunteer artist, Hayden Hall, showed them his technique in a painting class many years ago. He was going to hold another class, but alas, the 2020 pandemic caused it to be cancelled. They decided to paint this unique view of a pelican and they all did a great job. We look forward to seeing you soon Hayden.

Chit chat

Story & photo by Kimberly Clothier | Recreation

If you walked down the second floor hallway by Allegiance and heard lots of laughing, it was these ladies enjoying Sunday afternoon tea and cookies...telling stories from the past...hilarious conversations. Big thank you to Claire who provided some new special order teas. We meet a few times a month just to enjoy the chit/chat and some great tea and treats.

AFRH-G residents tour downtown Gulfport

By Carol Davis | Recreation Assistant

Photos by Gina Prater and Katie Turner | Chandeleur Brewing Co.

August 26 was a great day to be a tourist in the city where the residents live. AFRH-G residents loaded the bus for a short ride to downtown Gulfport, Mississippi. They met in the parking area, in an old train depot, then walked across the street to get a lesson on how beer is made. Chandeleur Brewing Company’s General Manager Gina Prater, and Brewmaster Kate Turner delivered the tour and explained the process. From the initial grain to milling to fermentation to canning could take anywhere from 10 days to two months to brew beer! WOW!

After they learned how beer is made, they entered Chandeleur’s Tap Room for a sampling of several different types of craft beer. From there the group from AFRH-G held a scavenger hunt downtown to have lunch at one of the many choices in the area. If you’ve never been to downtown Gulfport, Mississippi I suggest you take a visit. We have many towns with their own unique personalities. Go explore!

AFRH-G-Gulfport

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An adventure down-under, Koala Bear

By Milton Williams | Art Specialist

Australia has some of the most interesting creatures and this painting of a Koala Bear by Sandy Joner is at the top of the list. Sandy has been painting for about six months, and although she has only begun to scratch the surface of her new found talent, her art is leaving off the canvases. Just as the subject is a unique creature so is the technique she used in producing it. Let’s begin with a broad brush, a palette knife, sponge and top it off with toothpicks for that extra fine detail. Folks, this is an impressive painting and the number of hairs on this Koala Bear, all painted with a toothpick, would be innumerable. This painting is currently showing in our art display room on the first floor at AFRH-Gulfport. Be sure to look for this Australian masterpiece. Sandy has also created art work of monkeys and raccoons which are hanging in the hallway right outside the art room.

Beat the heat with chair exercises

Story & photo by Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs

Since the heat index was over 100 degrees in South Mississippi during July and August, it’s very important to monitor your health and not get overheated or dehydrated. Sometimes exercising outside in extreme conditions is not healthy. AFRH-G holds exercise classes in the exercise room every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 0900. Our Exercise Instructor Carol Davis can help you pave the way in your fitness routine. It’s not only fun, but it’s also air conditioned. So, don’t stay on the couch or the recliner to beat the heat, go to the exercise room our state-of-the-art gym, which features all Nautilus equipment plus NuStep cross trainer, speed bag, heavy bag, exercise bikes, rowing machine, free weights and treadmill.

The hardest thing about exercise is to start doing it. Once you start exercising regularly, the hardest thing is to stop it. Just remember progress takes place outside of your comfort zone. AFRH-G has so much to offer, so get out and enjoy all of our amenities.

A Matter of Balance

By Carol Davis | Recreation Assistant

Some AFRH-G residents completed the Matter of Balance (MOB) program on 23 June. This is an evidence-based program that is designed to reduce the fear of falling and improve activity levels in older adults. This was eight, two hour classes taught by trained leaders. Resident Jack Hornsley, and Recreation Assistant Carol Davis led the classes once a week. Participants learned to view falls as controllable, set goals for increasing activity, make changes to avoid falling, reduce the fear of falling and improve activity levels in older adults. This was a national recognized program developed at Boston University. Falls are the leading cause of injuries in older adults. Many people who fall, even if they’re not injured, become afraid of falling. This fear may cause a person to reduce everyday activities. When this happens, they become weaker and their chances of falling increases.

There are many conditions that may cause a fall, but weak muscles is a very important one that can be controlled. The MOB program teaches exercises to help improve strength and balance. If you are interested in attending our next class, be on the lookout for another start date in the fall of this year. Thanks to the AFRH-G residents who completed the course with us in June!

Going on a rock hunt

Story & photo by Jen Biernacki | Recreation Therapist

The residents of Valor Hall and Allegiance Hall painted rocks during the “Summer Camp” week for the purpose of creating a scavenger rock hunt around the campus at AFRH-G. The residents painted unique color schemes and patterns on the rocks to mark each with a personal identifier. The rocks were carefully hidden in popular locations around the campus. With a clue sheet in hand and determination, anyone may have a challenge and fun time hunting down all twelve rocks. Happy Hunting!

Hawk on AFRH-G light pole

Photo by Pauline Larson | Resident

You can always catch AFRH-G resident Pauline Larson out and about with her camera. Here is a photo she captured of a Hawk on top the light pole, in front of the building with the flag waving in the background. Thank you Pauline for sharing your talent with us.
**Bladensburg Waterfront Park boat ride**
By Carol Mitchell, ADC | Recreation Therapist
Photos by Carol Mitchell and Evelyn Chandler | CNA

It started out as a beautiful day for a pontoon ride! The healthcare residents of AFRH-W headed out for a scenic ride along the Anacostia River, one of the most historic waterways in America. The tour is a 45-minute interpretive riverboat tour and Captain Robert did an excellent informative narration. We enjoyed viewing egrets, ducks, turtles, and a plethora of foliage. Upon our return to the dock and unloading, we sat under a pavilion to Chow down on delicious bag lunches provided by our food services department. Unfortunately, as we were finishing up our lunch a rainstorm decided to descend upon us! We quickly boarded the bus and headed home, but not before we stopped off at McDonald’s where Recreation Therapist Carol Mitchell, and Certified Nursing Assistant Evelyn Chandler picked up a sweet treat of soft serve ice cream. It was still a beautiful and enjoyable day for all!

**RT Silent Auction Italian luncheon**
Story & photos by Carol Mitchell, ADC | Recreation Therapist

Jentarra and his special appointed guest resident Carilee McCue were excited to finally reap Bill’s winnings from the RT Silent Auction. Bill bid on a homemade Italian luncheon, compliments of the recreation therapy and recreation staff. The meal included spaghetti and meatballs, garlic bread, salad, fresh fruit, cucumber sandwiches, sparkling water, charcuterie board, and to top it off, gelato!

**Fabulous flowers**
By Carol Mitchell, ADC | Recreation Therapist
Photo by AFRH-W Security Services

Special thanks to Marcia Guzauskas and the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, National Officers Club for the gorgeous flowers they donated to the residents of Long Term Care and the Home’s Independent Living resident gardeners. Beautiful yellow, orange, pink, and more are bringing smiles to many faces.

**It was kind of a big DILL!**
By Carol Mitchell, ADC | Recreation Therapist
Photos by Carol Mitchell, ADC & Maria McGuinness | Recreation Team Lead

Homemade freezer pickles, ksher dell pickles, sweet gherkins pickles, bread & butter pickles, okra pickles, Kool-Aid pickles, and bozo koolickles all made for a tasty pickle-delicious event.

Freezer pickles are a homemade dish cooked up by the residents of Scott 2. They planted the cucumbers in April (to become yummy pickles) and with lots of “green thumb” care, by June there were plenty of cucumbers ready for picking and mixing.

The recipe selected by the residents provided a sweet, tangy, and crunchy side dish. Recipe ingredients included:

- Thinly sliced cucumbers, bell peppers, onions, kosher salt, pepper, granulated sugar (lots!), apple cider vinegar, mustard seed, celery seed, and Mrs. Dash’s.
- Freezer pickles can be added to just about anything you’d like… burgers, hot dogs, chicken salad, egg salad, and more. The only thing I might not like it with is on top of ice cream, but who knows some people might like it that way!

On August 26th residents were able to stroll by various tables to enjoy pickle tasting, pickle history and trivia, pickle pins, the resident homemade pickle table, and a southern treat of Kool-Aid pickles and bozo koolickles originating from the birthplace of Missouri.

All in all the residents had a Pickle of a Day and look forward to future Scott 2 vegetable garden dishes to try!

**Voices of Vets, Inc.**
By Carol Mitchell, ADC | Recreation Therapist
Photos by Carol Mitchell, ADC & Steven Briefs, CTRS | Recreation Supervisor

On August 15, 2022 Voices of Vets (VoV) treated the residents of AFRH-W to a wonderful performance. Voices of Vets is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that provides exceptional performances with live music of all genres. The engaging performance for our Vets included classic music from the 1940’s through the 1970’s. Kassie Sandacz is not only the creator of VoV, she is the Chief Operating Officer. Kassie is a hard working entrepreneur and currently her day job is with a biotech firm, where she leads the learning and development program. Kassie’s goal is to visit every veteran home in the United States to show appreciation for the great sacrifices our military veterans made for our country. VoV wants the veterans to know that they are not forgotten. During the program, each veteran is provided with small gifts to include flags and flowers. The entertainers interact and make a connection with every veteran in attendance. COVID has been challenging to provide live entertainment, but Kassie has persevered and provided themed performances by CD to AFRH-W.

After three years, Kassie, who had previously been coming to the Home annually, was able to come back. The residents truly appreciated the uplifting music by the awesome and talented entertainers. VoV entertainers for this event included Davie of Phenicie (bass), Todd Simon (piano), Lauren Waller (singer/cello), Don Welcott (guitar), and of course the kind-hearted and spectacular Kassie Sandacz. The program included songs to bring back fond memories like Five Foot Two, Eyes of Blue, Route 66, Sittin’ on the Dock of The Bay, Chattanooga Choo Choo, Let Me Call You Sweetheart, The Star Spangled Banner, America The Beautiful, Sweet Caroline, and many more tunes to get your toes tapping. AFRH-W residents look forward to another future performance!
Tie dying during summer camp

Story & Photos by Jen Biernacki / Recreation Therapist

During the AFRH-G summer camp event, residents made and created their own tie dye t-shirts. The residents started by using rubber bands to tie up their t-shirts in many shapes and forms. With paint everywhere, the dying began. Residents chose the colors they wanted, and soon the white t-shirts were a thing of the past. After a day of soaking in a plastic bag, the t-shirts were rinsed and hung to dry. After hanging to dry a couple of days, the shirts were washed then worn, and that’s when the compliments started… a unique and fun creation for all that participated.

Dulcimers & more music time with banjo, too!

By Susan Bergman, MT-BC / Recreation Therapy Services

Photos by Lee Corban / Recreation Supervisor

On September 1, 2022, healthcare residents gathered in the Valor Piano Lounge for the monthly Dulcimers & More Music Time. In addition to the Appalachian dulcimer that is played on the lap, a banjo was added as multiple residents requested “Oh Susannah”… and for Susan to play a banjo on her knee. Beginning with the Appalachian dulcimer, also known as Mountain dulcimer, various familiar folk tunes were played along with the historical backgrounds of each song’s origin. As a part of the zither family (an instrument with strings stretched across a box from end to end), the Appalachian dulcimer rests on the lap, has 3-4 strings with a fretted fingerboard, and is played by strumming the strings with the right hand while the left hands picks out the chords or melodies. The word dulcimer means “sweet song,” early versions of the instrument were known throughout the Middle East along with cultures stretching from Greece to Mongolia and was called a Santur. The instrument was depicted in a Danish fresco dating back to 1560 and gained roots in America in the early eighteenth century through Scottish and Irish settlers.

The banjo has been known to North America and the Caribbean since the seventeenth century when enslaved people from West and Central Africa brought the instrument with them. Early African influenced banjos were built with a wooden stick neck and a gourd as the body. The earliest picture (1785-1795) shows a four-stringed banjo with the fourth string shorter than the others. In the 1820’s, Scottish and Irish settlers.

Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water…Nooo!...Shark Week!!

By Susan Bergman, MT-BC / Recreation Therapy Services

Photos by Selena Brewer | LPH & Nicholas Trueman | Resident Services

Did you know that Shark Awareness Day falls on July 14th each year and that several species of sharks are threatened with extinction as a result of human action? Sharks are key to helping maintain the balance and are an important piece in the ecosystem of marine life. Premiered on July 17, 1988, Shark Week on the Discovery Channel is a week-long block of TV programs featuring the ocean’s apex predators. Have no fear, the annual shark week usually held in July or August returns to Discovery on July 24, 2022.

On Wednesday, July 13, 2022 in the Valor and Loyalty Dining Halls, healthcare residents enjoyed a socially-distanced summer filled cook-in. Everyone raved stating, “They make the best hamburgers here…yummy shrimp…cooohh…wahhh…banana pudding, too!” Residents also got a surprise shark visit with recalling the phrase, “Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water…nooos!” Last July was the Delta variant of COVID and now we face the 5th variant of the Omicron strain. In perfect timing, the 2nd booster or 4th shot of the vaccine arrived at AFRH-Gulfport and was delivered into arms by nursing staff. Loyalty residents were all smiles as the shark AKAsusan Bergman was a great distraction during shot giving! Residents even joked, “I need my shark record now!” (instead of shot record) and “I’m glad I got the shot…It was much better than a shark bite.” The shark circled the building rounding up those interested in getting their booster shots, too. No shark bait here…boost up and stay safe everyone!

AFRH-Gulfport

Week of summer camp at AFRH-G

Story & Photos by Jen Biernacki / Recreation Therapist

 Residents spent the week of June 13-17 in camp… “Summer Camp” a way to start the summer off with fun, laughter, socializing, games and new experiences but inside as the heat in south Mississippi was moving up fast.

The weekly events involved axe throwing, s’mores, target shooting, crafts, rowing, rock painting, fishing, tie dye shirts, nature and ice cream. The games, of course, were modified to a way unlike any other… leaving residents to wonder what to expect each day.

At the week’s end, awards were presented to the winners: Rita Ball axe throwing, Robert Rolak and Marty Pendleton target shooting, George Wallace rowing and Mr. Virgil Vielka fishing. A week of fun to remember.

17 years later

By Becki L. Zschiedrich / Public Affairs

August 29 is a day that we really would rather forget. However, it’s been 17 years since Hurricane Katrina devastated the Mississippi Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005. These are just a few photos of the destruction at AFRH-G. It took five years to clean up, implode the old building, and build a new state-of-the-art facility for our veterans. The new AFRH-Gulfport reopened in October of 2010.

17 years later

Story & Photos by Jen Biernacki / Recreation Therapist

On September 1, 2022, healthcare residents gathered in the Valor Piano Lounge for the monthly Dulcimers & More Music Time. In addition to the Appalachian dulcimer that is played on the lap, a banjo was added as multiple residents requested “Oh Susannah”… and for Susan to play a banjo on her knee. Beginning with the Appalachian dulcimer, also known as Mountain dulcimer, various familiar folk tunes were played along with the historical backgrounds of each songs origins. As a part of the zither family (an instrument with strings stretched across a box from end to end), the Appalachian dulcimer rests on the lap, has 3-4 strings with a fretted fingerboard, and is played by strumming the strings with the right hand while the left hands picks out the chords or melodies. The word dulcimer means “sweet song,” early versions of the instrument were known throughout the Middle East along with cultures stretching from Greece to Mongolia and was called a Santur. The instrument was depicted in a Danish fresco dating back to 1560 and gained roots in America in the early eighteenth century through Scottish and Irish settlers.

The banjo has been known to North America and the Caribbean since the seventeenth century when enslaved people from West and Central Africa brought the instrument with them. Early African influenced banjos were built with a wooden stick neck and a gourd as the body. The earliest picture (1785-1795) shows a four-stringed banjo with the fourth string shorter than the others. In the 1820’s, Scottish and Irish settlers.

Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water…Nooo!...Shark Week!!

By Susan Bergman, MT-BC / Recreation Therapy Services

Photos by Selena Brewer | LPH & Nicholas Trueman | Resident Services

Did you know that Shark Awareness Day falls on July 14th each year and that several species of sharks are threatened with extinction as a result of human action? Sharks are key to helping maintain the balance and are an important piece in the ecosystem of marine life. Premiered on July 17, 1988, Shark Week on the Discovery Channel is a week-long block of TV programs featuring the ocean’s apex predators. Have no fear, the annual shark week usually held in July or August returns to Discovery on July 24, 2022.

On Wednesday, July 13, 2022 in the Valor and Loyalty Dining Halls, healthcare residents enjoyed a socially-distanced summer filled cook-in. Everyone raved stating, “They make the best hamburgers here…yummy shrimp…cooohh…wahhh…banana pudding, too!” Residents also got a surprise shark visit with recalling the phrase, “Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water…nooos!” Last July was the Delta variant of COVID and now we face the 5th variant of the Omicron strain. In perfect timing, the 2nd booster or 4th shot of the vaccine arrived at AFRH-Gulfport and was delivered into arms by nursing staff. Loyalty residents were all smiles as the shark AKAsusan Bergman was a great distraction during shot giving! Residents even joked, “I need my shark record now!” (instead of shot record) and “I’m glad I got the shot…It was much better than a shark bite.” The shark circled the building rounding up those interested in getting their booster shots, too. No shark bait here…boost up and stay safe everyone!
Hawaiian Luau Luncheon at AFRH-G

Story & photos by Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs

Aloha! AFRH-G held a Hawaiian Luau Luncheon on August 31 in the main dining hall and in the upper levels of care. Lots of residents and employees wore colorful Hawaiian-style clothing. The dining hall served Hawaiian curried soup, Aloha mac salad, Honolulu coleslaw, coconut shrimp with sweet chili sauce, pineapple pepper chicken, island fried rice, Hawaiian shrimp salad, and so much more. The desserts served were coconut cake, raspberry cheesecake, French silk pie, million dollar delight, chocolate cake, and cheesecake with fresh strawberries. Everything was absolutely AMAZING! Mahalo to the dining hall and recreation for such a festive and delicious luncheon.

AFRH-G Ice Cream Social

Story & photos by Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs

What is there to do when it’s hot, humid, muggy, and raining in South Mississippi? Well, at AFRH-G we had an awesome Ice Cream Social with a variety of flavors, including sugar free, plus a plethora of all kinds of toppings. The residents stayed cool and dry in the Community Center while enjoying a cold treat and a lot of awesome company. Thank you to our Recreation Team for always making the socials fun.

AFRH-Washington

WOW! What a game!

Story & photos by Carol Mitchell, ADC | Recreation Therapy

On September 1, 2022, the Washington Nationals took on the Oakland Athletics and what a game it was! Washington took the lead in the first inning but by the eighth inning, the game was tied 3-3. The game then took a turn, and sadly the Nats went down 5-3 in the 10th inning. Nats player Ruiz singled to the right and Hernandez scored making it 5-4. Then in the bottom of the 10th, Joey Meneses hit a game winning three-run homer to cap his first four-hit game as the Washington Nationals rallied to beat the Oakland Athletics 7-5! Sadly, the Nats season is not going so well this year, but for this game the residents had a fantastic time and enjoyed great weather, an exciting game, and fun fan support for our Home team, the Washington Nationals. Of course the beer, wine and hot dogs during the game topped it all off. Special thanks to the Fenwick Foundation for donating the tickets for the veterans of AFRH-W.