

»»» QUARTERLY ISSUE «««

THE COMMUNICATOR

ARMED FORCES RETIREMENT HOME



A PREMIER RETIREMENT COMMUNITY FOR OUR NATION'S VETERANS

AGENCY NEWS



ADDRESSING AGENCY BUDGETS

Recent budget cuts proposed by the current federal administration have raised concerns, but we want to reassure residents and staff of the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH) that our commitment to serving our nation's veterans remains steadfast.

Our priority has always been and will continue to be providing the best possible care for those who have served our country. Changes in federal funding can create uncertainty. However, our mission of honoring and caring for our residents will not be compromised. We are working diligently to ensure that the cuts minimally affect the quality of life and services provided to the veterans who call AFRH home.

Our dedicated staff and leadership are actively exploring ways to navigate these new challenges. We are in close communication with the Department of Veterans Affairs and other key stakeholders to make sure the necessary resources remain available to our agency. We will continue to uphold the highest standards of care, and we remain unwavering in our dedication to those who have given so much for our country.

DC CAMPUS

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>>> DANCING THROUGH THE AGES

John Baker continues with his dancing feet! Over the winter, Mr. Baker joined his lovely dancing partner, Yvonne John, to participate in the 2024 National Veterans Creative Arts Competition through the Department of Veterans Affairs. They submitted both a rumba and a foxtrot routine for consideration.... and placed 3rd in the Latin Ballroom category! At 95 years young, Mr. Baker reminds us that the key to staying young is being active and doing what you love.



Mr. Baker and Ms. John, Congratulations on the award!

>>> MEDITATION IN TECHNICOLOR



A new method of paint by numbers has become popular in recent years. Known as “diamond painting”, the art involves placing hundreds, sometimes thousands, of colored gems to create a larger image. John Smith has been creating these pieces for months now and graciously donating them to his fellow residents and the campus. His most recent piece, featuring the silhouettes of American soldiers, resounded strongly with him.

The image reminds him of a small moment during his service in the Vietnam War, and he recalled how brilliant the sunrises were on that side of the world. When he’s not creating new paintings or making the staff laugh, Mr. Smith is active in his artist booth and serves on the Chaplain Fund.

>>> U.S. SPACE FORCE SPOUSES VISIT



Spouses of the Senior Enlisted leaders of the U.S. Space Force visited in March as part of their annual conference. We welcomed their visit with a historical tour and stained glass activity. We’re thankful to have the support of everyone who visited and hope we will be included during their conference next year!

GP CAMPUS

HAPPY 100TH, MR. RICHARD! <<<



Born before the creation of Honey Maid graham crackers, Corona beer, or the transmission of television pictures, Robert Richards turned 100 years old on March 7, 2025! He proudly served in the U.S. Army during both World War II and the Korean War.

When asked what has contributed to his long life, he stated "I ate a lot of candy if that has anything to do with it. You're not supposed to eat a lot of sugar, but I did."

GENEROUS BENEFACTORS <<<

Introducing our brand-new six-seater golf cart, the "Evolution Ranger!"

A heartfelt thank you to the generous anonymous resident donor for this wonderful contribution, providing residents with a valuable new resource. This cart will assist residents with limited mobility to safely access the various parts of the campus.

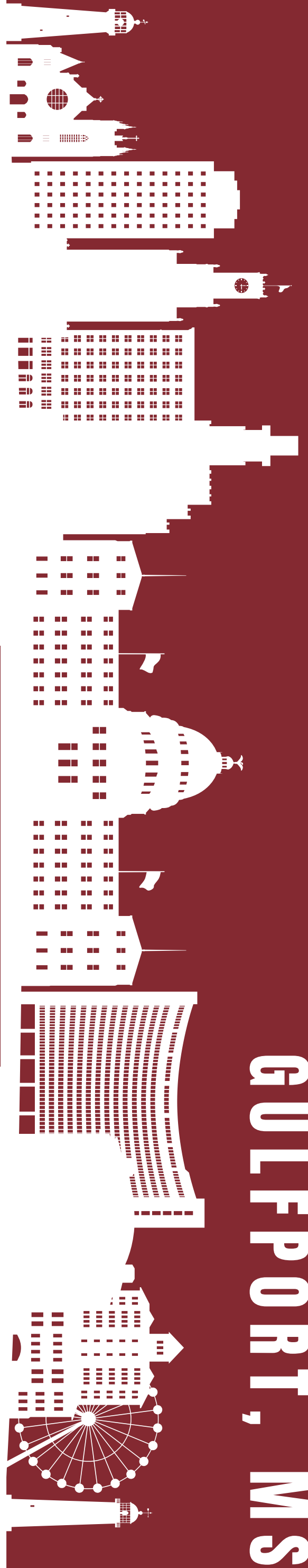
Special appreciation also goes to Jay for his efforts in acquiring and delivering the cart to campus and Fr. Uko for blessing the golf cart.



LAISSEZ LES BONS TEMPS ROULER <<<



With Lent coming to a close, we look back fondly to one of the biggest holidays of the year... If you've been to the Gulf Coast, then you know that Mardi Gras is a BIG deal involving extensive parades, over-the-top floats, extravagant costumes, and incredible food. AFRH-G is no exception and they got the fun started early with a Friday parade! Staff and residents showed out with their best Mardi Gras attire, handing out beads to fellow residents along the halls. Joyce Maddox and Todd Wendler took home this year's honors as the King and Queen.



OUR LEGACY

NEIL FERGUSON

>>> PERSONAL LIFE

Neil “Fergy” Ferguson was born in a rural community in California. When he graduated high school, the Korean War had begun, so he decided to enlist in the Navy, stating “You always have three meals a day and a bed to sleep in every night.” In his early days in the Navy, Fergy performed clerical tasks aboard a heavy cruiser, which alternated 10 days in Japan taking on supplies and 30 days off the Korean coast firing 8” shells. In fact, his ship the USS ST PAUL (CA73) is recorded as having fired the last official round before the cease-fire in July of 1953.

While in Japan, he met and married his wife. They have four children, two of whom are twins born on July 4th. At first, they were tagged “Twin A” and Twin B,” but someone put the names “Yankee” and “Doodle” on their basinetts which began lifelong nicknames for them.

>>> MILITARY

When he returned stateside with his family, Fergy was stationed at Norfolk, Virginia, where he changed his classification to electronics technician in communications. He went to Great Lakes Naval Training Center for schooling and, after graduation, became an instructor of basic electronics due to a backlog of students in the registrar.

After graduating from the school, Fergy was sent off the coast of Vietnam for a mission which involved surveying the ocean’s depths.



He remembers waiting for transportation to this ship and being assigned to barracks in Saigon. There was no hot water and the wrong kind of electricity for his electric razor. He was miserable showering and shaving with a blade razor in cold water. When Fergy finally reached his ship, they had just finished distilling sea-water and this was added into the fresh water tank, so unfortunately all water was hot... Talk about extremes.

After his tour surveying the coastal waters of Vietnam, he was transferred to Great Lakes Service Schools Command where he led the electronics school’s examination department. This duty was one of Fergy’s favorites prior to his military retirement in 1972 as an E-7.

>>> RETIREMENT

Following his time in the military, Fergy went on to teach electronics at a community college, maintain industrial electronic equipment at a magazine printing plant, and design electronic circuit boards using microcomputer chips. He became quite involved with microcomputers from the early IBM and Apple models, especially the Apple Macintosh, and is still involved with microcomputers to this day.

Fergy came to AFRH-W in 2007. In his time at AFRH, he has enjoyed biking and helping others. He has helped many residents (and staff!) sort out computer issues, maintained the Channel 4 station, and keeps our spirits up with his fantastically colorful attire.



OUR LEGACY

LAURA KENNEDY

By Dan Ellis



>>> PERSONAL LIFE

Laura Kennedy was born in 1961 in Portland, Oregon and was raised with nine brothers. The Kennedy family moved from Texas to Washington State where Laura graduated from North Kitsap High School.

Laura has three children: a daughter that is a nurse in New York, another daughter that is a correction's officer in Virginia, and a son that provides auto body repairs in Florida. She has five grandchildren that range in age from seven to twenty years old.

>>> MILITARY EXPERIENCE

Her military career began by chance in 1980. Having been left in the rain by her brothers, she decided to walk home in a huff. Along the way, she passed a window that read, "Join the Navy and see the World." Thirty-six hours later, Laura was on a plane headed to Orlando, FL for Boot Camp with guaranteed schooling in Cryptology.

Her first duty station was in sunny Puerto Rico, where she gained the rank of Third Class Seaman. Laura stated, "I loved my Navy life, which allowed me to travel the world. My most enjoyable duties were in Okinawa, Diego Garcia, Spain, Italy, Germany and of course, Australia!"

She retired in 2001 as a Navy Senior Chief (E-8) with 21 years' experience as a Cryptologist.



>>> PROFESSIONAL CAREER & RETIREMENT

Following her Navy retirement, Laura was employed as a sales manager in New York City, a project manager for a multi-million-dollar construction company, and, as an entrepreneur of her own company, she became a business Consultant with clients located in both the U.S. and the U.K.

As a member of the American Legion, Laura served as 1st Vice Commander of Massapequa Post #1066.

In New York City and Pensacola Florida, she established Transitional Housing programs that provided temporary housing, life skills training, and counseling to both homeless civilians and Veterans. As the founder and program coordinator, she organized fundraisers, emergency counseling, rehab entries, and job placement to help keep the program thriving. "To date, we have served 627 homeless individuals (including 307 children)," remarked Laura.

Her current volunteer duties at AFRH-Gulfport include: Thrift Store Assistant, Visitor Guide, New Resident Sponsor, and now as RAC Chairperson.

THANKS FOR READING

DO YOU HAVE A STORY YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE?
AN IDEA FOR A STORY YOU'D LIKE TO READ?



Send your suggestions! Are you part of a special community group? Did you move to a campus for a specific reason? Are you a staff member working on a project that will create positive change for your campus? We're waiting to hear from you.

Email: Public.affairs@afrh.gov

Phone: (202) 541-7551

Or see the public affairs specialist at your campus!