



AFRH-WASHINGTON

Message from the Chief Operating Officer

Update on pandemic restrictions and welcoming a new category of residents



During the last week in February, I met with the RAC in DC, and held town halls at Gulfport to update residents on the status of re-opening our campuses and on welcoming retired National Guard and Reserve members as a new category of residents.

As I explained at the town halls, we are making progress towards re-opening. The very good news is that 97% of our current residents on both campuses are fully vaccinated and we continue to conduct both targeted and random testing to catch positive cases and keep Covid-19 out of the campuses. Although all of us must continue to social distance and wear masks, the dining halls are now re-opened and group indoor recreation activities are back.

We are still working towards commencing a phased approach to ease the current campus restrictions, and have provided DoD leadership with a proposal to do so. They are carefully considering all factors, including the prevalence of the virus in our geographic areas and its impact on the campuses before moving ahead. I explained in the town hall meetings that all of leadership wants to support vaccinated residents being again able to "come and go" and to return more normalcy to their daily lives; however, all also want to be sure that we're thoroughly assessing all risks and implementing appropriate measures and controls to monitor resident health and prevent any re-introduction of the virus to AFRH. There are still concerns about the effectiveness of the vaccines protecting against the U.K., South African, and Brazilian variants of COVID-19. There are also concerns that vaccinated individuals can still carry and transmit the virus, and that approximately 5% of those vaccinated may not be immune. We believe we are addressing those concerns with tight monitoring and testing, but also know that there are still unknowns and our planning has to be flexible enough to not only further loosen restrictions with time, but to also re-impose some should we find that our "herd" has not really reached immunity.

Once approved, as I explained in the town halls, we may initially allow 15 vaccinated residents to leave campus each day for a pilot period. Upon returning, residents will have to spend four (4) days with reduced contact with others and then test negative on the fifth day. We want to get both campuses back to a "new normal" where independent living and independent living-plus residents may come and go as they please, without further restrictions.

The plan to allow residents to come and go, as described above, will be based on local positivity rates (number of positive tests divided by the total tested). For residents to come and go, the local positive rates will have to be below a minimum, currently pending approval, and set at 8%.

We are also currently working on a plan that would allow visitors to go to pre-determined areas on campus and visit only with vaccinated residents.

Although this is not the news you were hoping for please know we continue to advocate on your behalf.

In other news, the annual National Defense Authorization Act became at the end of December and included a couple of provisions requested by AFRH.

One section expands eligibility for those with 20 or more years of service to now include members of the National Guard and Reserves. As recent conflicts have relied increasingly on these components as part of the "total force", AFRH leadership is proud that these members will now also be able to call AFRH home, and we look forward to welcoming them as we seek to get occupancy rates up again following months of closure due to the pandemic.

The section also ensures parity with existing residents and active duty members by requiring that fee determinations be at least as much as would be due an active duty resident with the same grade and length of service. The section allows for collection of a fee on entry for those who have not paid the monthly withholding due to their non-regular service.

One other change in eligibility is that it strikes the age 60 requirement for those qualifying based on 20 or more years of service. While we don't think that 38-year-olds will start lining up to apply, we do hope to see interest from those in their 50's. The age 60 requirement will still effectively apply to Guard and Reserve applicants because of the current limitation on retirement pay until that age, but upcoming changes to a blended retirement system may lower that limitation.

The other section eliminates the requirement for the DoD Inspector General (DoDIG) to review and report on all aspects of the Home's operations every three years. The DoDIG will still be able to inspect AFRH on discreet subjects, whether initiated by the DoDIG or requested by the Secretary of Defense, CEO, COO, or hotline complaints, just as it does for other agencies.

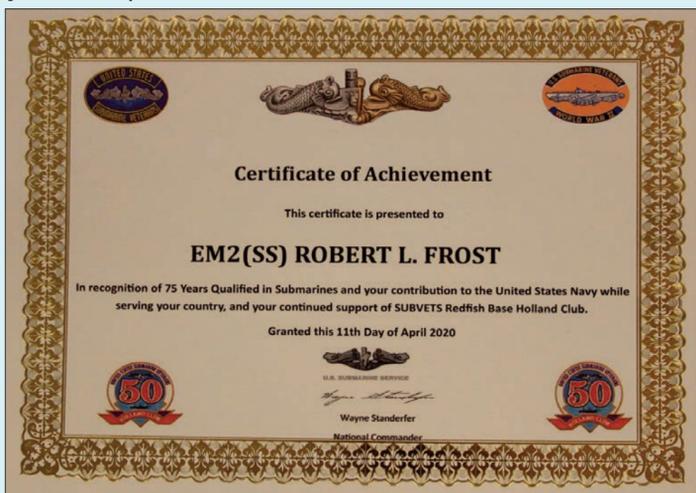
Jim Branham



AFRH-GULFPORT

Gulfport residents honored for 75 years of submarine service

By Phil Saul | AFRH-G Resident



Congratulations to Obil "Obie" Webb and Robert Frost for 75 years of Submarine Service.

Both recently received their certificates through the mail from the United States Submarine Veterans, Inc. Redfish Base, Slidell, Louisiana – Base Commander.

Robert Frost joined the Navy in 1943, serving in Submarine Repair Unit 137 Fremantle, West Australia. He was transferred to USS ROCK (SS-274) as EM2(SS) and discharged in 1946. Robert later joined the Army Corps of Engineers and retired in 1965.

Obie Webb and his wife Wanda Webb have been AFRH-Gulfport residents since 2003. They met after Wanda got out of the Navy prior to Obie's reporting to USS CORPORAL (SS-346) in Key West, Florida. Obie qualified on board the USS KINGFISH (SS-234) in 1944 as RM3(SS) and served with Herman John Prager MOMM2(SS), Redfish Base member. Obil served on board USS BANG (SS-385), USS CORPORAL (SS-346) - where he made RMC(SS), USS BATFISH (SS-310), and USS BLACKFIN (SS-322), where he made WO1 in 1959.

Congratulations Obie and Robert on this recognition for 75 years of submarine qualification, and for your contribution to the United States Navy while serving your country, and your continued support of SUBVETS Redfish Base Holland Club!



Congratulations to Gulfport resident Robert Frost.



Obie and Wanda Webb pictured here on the Boardwalk at AFRH-G in 2019. Congratulations Obie Webb.

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AFRH COMMUNICATOR

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The AFRH Communicator is an authorized publication of the Armed Forces Retirement Home. Residents and employees are encouraged to submit photos, art, news items, and features. Materials will be edited by the *AFRH Communicator* staff for journalistic style and length. The articles included in this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of the management, staff, or residents of the AFRH.

Serving America's Veterans

AFRH is not just a place to live but a place to live more. Our model retirement communities are designed for residents to maintain an independent lifestyle in an environment designed for safety, comfort and personal enrichment.

Eligibility: Military veterans from each service branch can live at AFRH. The following persons who served as members of the Armed Forces, at least one-half of whose service was not active commissioned service other than as a warrant officer or limited-duty officer, are eligible to become residents of the Retirement Home:

-Active-Duty Career Retired: Veterans who retired with 20 or more years of active-duty service in a regular component of the Armed Forces.

-Eligible for Retired Pay: Veterans, who served in a regular or reserve component of the Armed Forces, who are now eligible to receive retired pay and benefits:

- Retired Guard/Reserves with over 20 years of creditable service (combined inactive and active-duty).
- Veterans who qualified for an early retirement such as TERA (Temporary Early Retirement Authority).
- Veterans who were given a medical or disability retirement with pay and full benefits.

-Service-Connected Disability: Veterans with a service-connected disability rating of 50 percent or greater from the Dept. of Veterans Affairs.

-War Theater: Veterans who served in a war theater or received hostile fire pay and now suffer from injuries, disease, or disability.

-WWII Female Veteran: Veterans who served in a women's component before June 12, 1948 who are determined to be eligible due to compelling personal circumstances.

-Beneficiary Spouse: The spouse of a retired veteran may apply to live with the Retiree if he/she is enrolled as a beneficiary in DEERS (Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System) and was married to his/her sponsor prior to the veteran's retirement from the Armed Forces.

To receive an informational brochure please contact the AFRH Marketing Office at 1-800-422-9988, or write to:
AFRH, PAO/Marketing, #584 ~ 3700 N. Capitol St. NW, ~ Washington, DC 20011-8400

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AFRH-G resident highlight - Mildred Smith Sobierajski

By Lori Kerns | Librarian

Mildred Smith Sobierajski was born in 1921 in the state of West Virginia. Both her parents were farmers but her father was also a Baptist minister and her mother a school teacher. Mildred was the fifth of eight children born to the couple. Growing up in a rural area, she and her siblings attended school in a one-room schoolhouse. Her teachers through the years were usually family members like her brother or cousin.

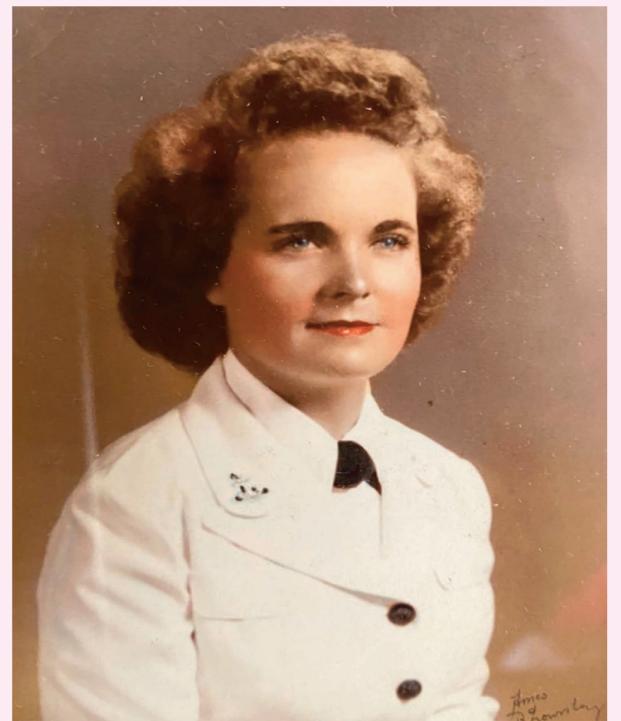
Once Mildred graduated, she stayed home for about a year to help her mother earn money to pay for her father's medical expenses. After that, she was hired to work for Western Electric until WWII broke out.

Mildred made the decision to follow three of her siblings' footsteps and join the war effort, with another sibling to follow. In 1943, she volunteered for the Navy and became a member of the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service). Most of her time was spent working the switchboard until she finished her duty in 1945. After the war, she went back to work for Western Electric.

In her spare time, Mildred bowled on one of Western Electric's bowling teams. This is how she met Felix, a teammate and fellow veteran who had also served in WWII. He had been in the Army and was part of the outfit that was in the second wave of the invasion of Normandy. The couple fell in love and married on February 12, 1949.

The Sobierajskis lived in the Baltimore, Maryland area and worked for Western Electric for over 40 years until they retired. Felix and Mildred enjoyed their retirement by traveling. They would spend their winter months in Florida then decided to spend them in Hawaii. Eventually they bought a house on the island of Oahu and enjoyed paradise for five years before moving to Florida. Sadly, Felix passed away in 1997. The couple had enjoyed 48 years of marriage.

Mildred made the decision to move to AFRH-G in 2011. She had volunteered for several years working in the Lord's Cabin. Now she enjoys her time listening to books on her Talking Books machine. Mildred has a monumental milestone coming up. She will be turning 100 years "young" this October!



Volunteering can be fun

By Dan Ellis | AFRH-G Resident



Thanks to volunteers, life at AFRH-G is made much easier as we pass each day in retirement. Even with the onset of Covid-19, many volunteers stepped up to push food carts to each of the residents in quarantine, providing them with nourishment three times a day.

UPS and Amazon Prime deliveries multiplied over the past year as packages flowed in. Each item has to be posted to the intake book and a memo slip is filled out to correspond with each inventory line item. These memo slips are then posted to each resident's door clip in announcing the package arrival. Everyday, including Saturdays and Sundays, a volunteer hosts the "FedEx" room in dispatching those packages called for.

Volunteers also man various stations and duty calls in the administration offices, while other volunteers provide services to those in the upper levels of care. Others work the library and perform operations in

the movie theater. What a great tribute to those who give their time to keep resident computers functioning!

We have another group of volunteers of a differing sort. They perform FUN antics and parade in the halls. They call themselves the Yankee Doodles!

Even during the trying times of this past year, the Doodles continued to display their patriotism by honoring such holidays as July 4, Memorial Day and Veterans Day. Having fun while parading, they dressed out in costumes and smiles and marched the halls waving flags. Known as the "Krewe of Doodles," for Mardi Gras the Doodles wore festive attire while celebrating Fat Tuesday, both for themselves and for all resident comrades while strutting to the tune of "When The Saints Come Marching In."

The O'Doodles will again be in green as they were last year, in celebration of St. Patrick's Day. They invite anyone to walk or ride the halls with them – Just say Yes!

Volunteering allows us to connect with our community and make it a better place.

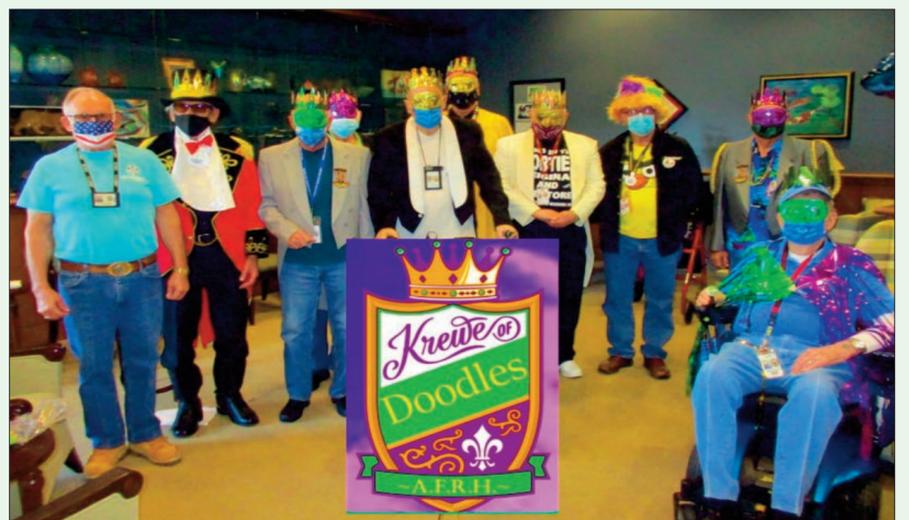
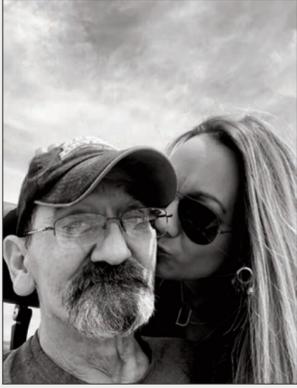


Photo taken on St. Patrick's day last year before the pandemic.

Beyond these gates

By Deanna Johannsen | Administrative Specialist



This October will mark my three years with AFRH – Gulfport. One year of that has been during the COVID pandemic. As a staff member here, I hear a lot of different opinions of residents. Some grateful for the restrictions put in place to protect them during this pandemic and some just downright angry about the restrictions. I can empathize with them on all levels, because as a worker here I have also changed and have become more cautious. Anything I do outside of these gates, I always have the residents in the back of my mind. Kind of like when you become a mother for the first time, you notice yourself taking extra caution with things, being safer, more aware, and just not as reckless with your life. I found myself always taking that extra step to protect myself outside of these gates, because I never wanted to bring the virus inside these gates.

This year has been trying on ALL OF US and perhaps on some more than others, but I can say without a doubt that we have some pretty AMAZING people that work here and actually care about our residents. I say this, because I had a situation similar to some that have taken place within these gates. I lost several family members in a short time (not COVID related), but it hurt because there wasn't really closure. One of them was my father. At the age of 63 he was in an assisted living facility due to a very bad car accident several years ago. His facility has been on total lockdown this entire time. My father became depressed and stopped eating and just decided it was his time. He no longer wanted to live the way he was and I understand why, but it doesn't make it hurt any less. His nurse notified me that he was going to be put on hospice to make him comfortable and I knew then it was the end of his story. I figured that every facility outside of these gates was like we were and because it was his end of life they would make accommodations for me to somehow see him, if even through a window. However, I was

WRONG. I can't speak for all facilities outside of these gates, but the director of his facility did not care.

My father's nurse was an amazing woman and she always kept us in touch through video chatting on her phone, sending pictures and phone calls. I can't speak highly enough of that woman. However, she did not have a say in the situation, it was higher than her. She kept telling me that she knew my dad was waiting for something and she thought it was me. So, I made a video of myself speaking to him and sent it to her for him to watch. In the meantime I was fighting tooth and nail to just be able to see him for a second if even through a window, but I got nowhere. Our chief of healthcare even called the director for me to explain that I was vaccinated and I get tested all of the time and was willing to write a letter on my behalf. The director did not even have the decency to return her call or mine. In those moments I realized what OUTSTANDING and COMPASSIONATE people we have here, because when we have had residents at the end of their lives, they went above and beyond to make sure a family member was at their side if the family wanted that. My father died alone, with no one at his side and that hurt me so bad. So when I tell you that things beyond these gates aren't any better I am speaking from experience.

Sometimes we think the grass is greener on the other side, but I promise you that isn't always the case. If anything, keep in mind that you have an administrator that picks up his phone, listens to family members and returns calls. Know that your chief of healthcare has compassion for people in general. She does not know me anymore than she knows you all, and yet she felt empathy for me and my situation and was willing to TRY to help me when she truly did not have to. Those things speak volumes to me and should to you as well. All of the staff as a team have made it possible for our residents to now have drive-thru visits. At first when we started that I thought to myself, 15 minutes seems like such a little amount of time to get to see your loved one. I can tell you now that I would do anything and drive the 18 hours to Pennsylvania just for a simple 15 minutes to be able to see my dad for one last time. So, please just remember that each day our feet hit that floor we are blessed and Lord knows Beyond these Gates things are not any better.

Wow! A Beatle Bug surprise!

Story & Photos by Susan Bergman, MT-BC | Recreation Services

Wow! On Friday, February 12, 2021, IL resident, Ed Summers surprised AL resident, John Shanklin with Beatle Bug gifts to remember! When visiting several weeks prior in the NEX exchange, John Shanklin shared an old photo while he was stationed in Germany in 1974 with Ed Summers of his cherished red Volkswagen Beatle car. Mr. Shanklin stated, "I loved that car so much that I brought it back to the United States with me." As the gifts were unveiled, Mr. Shanklin said, "You don't know how much I appreciate this...I'm gonna cry." Ed Summers worked his magic through his talented artwork to paint the photograph on canvas to be hung in the resident's room, framed the original photograph in a special frame, and had the photo transferred to a blanket so that he could be wrapped in the cherished memory. Mr. Shanklin was initially speechless and eventually said, "I didn't know what you would do with the photo when I gave it to you that day...I knew I would be happy...You just don't know how happy I am. It's good to make someone feel good on the inside." Ed Summers did just that!

John Shanklin continued to reminisce about his service in the Army, about being in the first group to go over to Vietnam, and how afterwards, he came home to Millport, Alabama to help care for his father, who was a farmer. He said, "I couldn't sit around too long so I went to work" which led to a 24-year career in making paper in Columbus, Mississippi about 20 miles from Millport. Wow! Thank you Ed Summers for the amazing Beatle Bug Surprise of a lifetime!



A birthday celebration "101" years in the making!

By Susan Bergman, MT-BC | Recreation Therapy Services
Photos by Susan Bergman | MT-BC & Lisa Jimenez | CNA



Born in 1920, Lois Hogan, a longtime resident of AFRH since January 4, 1993, celebrated her "101" Birthday on Friday, February 5. Through the years, she always crossed off the "e" on Loise and made sure everyone knew her as "Lois." The kick-off began on the afternoon before, February 4, with the decorating of the Loyalty dining room along with her wheelchair and a parking garage visit with her daughter, Jeannie, from Oxford, Mississippi. After opening a box of decorations from her daughter, Ms. Lois was tickled to receive a pink animatronic horse to add in the celebration and said, "Oh, my...I just love this new toy pony" and "Yes, Jeannie is wonderful" when learning that she had sent the gift. The pink pony became a regular

visitor to all the festivities and gained smiles and giggles when a pink puppy dog was added to the back for a ride-along as the pony stopped to neigh and wiggle before moving again across the table.

Decked in a birthday candy lei around her neck and a golden crown on her head, her Friday, February 5, "101" Birthday began with a Skype visit from her two granddaughters – Lizzie & Kimberly. You could hear, "Happy Birthday Grandmother Hogan" along with singing, kisses being blown, and "I love you!" After a quick cat nap, her four children – Reed, Beth, Jeannie & Kimberly – from across the country joined on another group Skype call to wish her a Happy "101" Birthday and recall the family gathering they had at AFRH-Gulfport a year ago. She continued to cherish the amazing anthology of photographs, family heritage, and memories Reed had published into her life story for last year's event. Of course, many more gifts surrounded her including her favorites such as juicy fruit gum, chocolate, pajamas, lipstick, and more. As the celebration continued for lunch, Stephanie Livermore from dining brought up the "101" strawberry filled birthday cake. Susan led the socially distanced singing with guitar, face coverings & visor, Lisa caught some pictures, and Ms. Lois sang, "Happy Birthday to me!" While the cake was being cut, more pictures, waves, songs, and congratulations could be heard throughout. Other Loyalty residents danced along, tapped their feet, and hummed stating, "Don't stop...we just love the music, party, and Wow! 101!" Thank you to everyone for joining in for this special celebration whether present or virtually to make the day super special for this birthday celebration "101" years in the making!



Snow day in D.C.

Photos by Marine Robbins | Volunteer Coordinator



From the AFRH-W administrator



As I write this, we are about to get the best of what winter can give us – snow, sleet, freezing rain and lots of cold air. This month, there is no doubt we are in February with all that winter weather can give us. I have heard the sound of salt trucks and snow plows more mornings than I'd like to remember. We were able to complete most second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, only a few residents remain unvaccinated and the majority of both staff and contractors are vaccinated, with a few more willing to get it. Let's hope we can provide herd immunity for those who do not choose to be vaccinated. Our testing program has also changed as we have been doing the normal laboratory PCR tests but also doing rapid tests at the same time so that we can compare results. So far, the results correlate fairly well. Our leadership

is working closely with Pentagon leaders to work on the plans to begin to get back to more normal operations here on the campus. Thanks as always go to the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center staff for their great support of vaccines and testing.

February is Black History Month. We normally do a combined program with the Lincoln Cottage and allow community members to attend. We are still not able to host in that manner, but that did not deter our resident volunteer committee who still produced a wonderful program, this time via video. I always enjoy the talents shared by the residents for this meaningful event.

Due to our lessened positive test results and high vaccination rates, we were able to open up most activities in-house. It is so nice to see residents once again eating in the dining room and playing Bingo, even if they are seated at separate tables. The birthday dinner was a delicious meal, as always, with prime rib and crab stuffed fish filets and all of the other traditional sides. Our resident services team had fun events the week leading up to and including the Super Bowl. Many of the residents were lucky to win the various events based on the game results. One of the more decadent events was the roving chocolate covered fruit cart that the recreation services team served. What can be better than a chocolate covered strawberry?

Donations from various groups in the community continue to show up even though our gates are closed. This month a Girl Scout Troop remembered us with many cases of cookies that also had Valentine cards attached. They were a welcome reminder of

normalcy and a welcome gift.

I am very pleased to welcome our new Ombudsman, Christopher Kepner, who recently retired as the Senior Enlisted Leader for the National Guard. He was very familiar with both Homes and quickly got to work getting to know the residents. Welcome Chris! I know you will serve the veterans well.

We also held our quarterly Employee Appreciation event, once again observing social distancing. The nominees included Annemarie Wilson, Sgt Kevin Johnson, Saidat Sogbesan, and Veronica Hardy. Social Worker NaKeisha Williams rose as the top vote and was selected as our Employee of the Quarter. Congratulations to all of our top achievers! We also selected a new Director of Nursing, Roberta Ross, who had been our Clinical Nurse Supervisor on Assisted Living. She is an Army veteran who is a great part of the Home and well respected by all. Congratulations, Roberta, on your promotion!

My best advice at this time is look at the beautiful snow from inside and enjoy the deer as they frolic. Stay warm!

Susan Bryhan



AFRH-W Administrator Susan Bryhan (right) presents Social Worker NaKeisha Williams (left) the Employee of the Quarter award. Congratulations NaKeisha!

Meet the new AFRH-W Ombudsman



Command Sergeant Major (Ret.) Christopher Kepner's is the new AFRH-W ombudsman, where he will serve as the senior advocate for unresolved resident issues and provide liaison services between residents, employees and the public. His final active-duty assignment was as the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chief, National Guard Bureau. In this role, he served as the chief's principal military advisor on all enlisted matters affecting training, utilization, health of the force, and enlisted professional development.

Christopher Kepner was born in York, Pennsylvania. He enlisted in the United States Army in October of 1980 and attended basic and advanced individual training at Fort Benning, Georgia. Following his graduation from AIT, CSM (R) Kepner served seven years on active duty with the 82nd Airborne and 10th Mountain Divisions before joining the Pennsylvania Army National Guard.

CSM (R) Kepner's assignments include serving in enlisted infantry positions while assigned to B Company 1-504 Parachute Infantry Regiment. Other key assignments include; Detachment Sergeant, 104 Long Range Surveillance; First Sergeant, B Company 1-111 IN; Operations Sergeant Major, 1-111 IN (deployed Kosovo); Command Sergeant Major, 2-112 IN Stryker (deployed Iraq); Command Sergeant Major 28th Combat Aviation Brigade; Command Sergeant Major, 28th Infantry Division; and Command Sergeant Major, Army National Guard.

His military training includes Combat Leaders Course, 18th Airborne Corps Recondo School, Pathfinder School, Ranger School, Basic and Advanced Airborne schools, Jungle Warfare School, and Long Range Surveillance Leader Course. Additionally, he has completed all levels of Non-Commissioned Officer Education to include the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, Nominative Leaders Course, and the Keystone course. He holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from American Intercontinental University, and a Master of Science in Leadership from Duquesne University.

CSM (R) Kepner's awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Ranger Tab, Master Parachutist Badge, Pathfinder Badge, Combat Infantry Badge, Expert Infantry Badge, Honduran and Spanish Parachutist Badges.

Christopher Kepner is married to the former Mary Wise. They have four children, and 10 grandchildren. Their permanent home is in central Pennsylvania, where they raise Tunis Sheep, rabbits, chickens, and all manner of otherwise unwanted or wayward animals.

Connecting families virtually

Story & Photo by Amanda Jensema, CTRS | Recreation Therapist

COVID-19 has put a hold on many events and holidays, but none is probably felt more than Thanksgiving, a holiday that is all about family and being thankful. Recreation Therapist for the residents on assisted living, Amanda Jensema, reached out to residents' families and asked them to send video greetings for sharing with their loved ones the week of Thanksgiving. The information was also provided to other family members and friends so we could share as many greetings from the residents loved ones as possible. Over FIFTY videos were submitted, but instead of being shown the week of Thanksgiving, COVID had other plans and sharing the videos was delayed. The videos were finally shared with residents the first week in February. The videos were a well-kept secret, as the residents were not aware that this was done. So, when the videos were shown they were truly surprised. You could sense the emotion as they watched and listened to their families and friends. It was heartwarming to witness, and the residents were grateful to have a little bit of family for the holidays, even if they were belated holiday wishes.

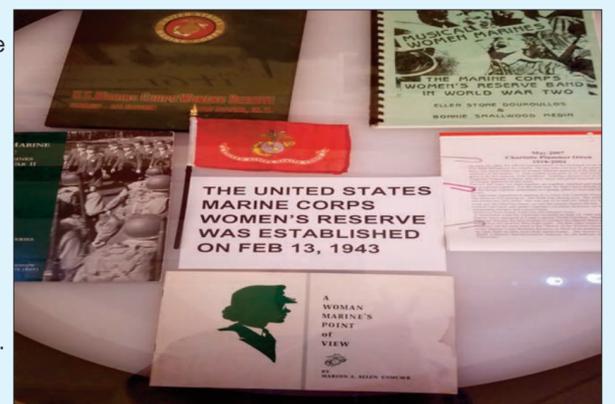


Pictured is Sandra Intorre watching one of the videos she received.

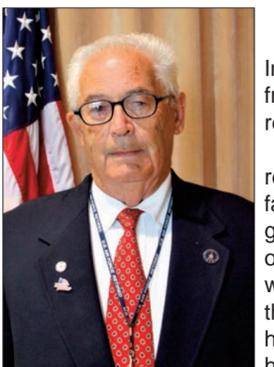
Marine Corps Women's Reserve display

By Christine Baldwin | AFRH-W Librarian

A recent addition to the Hall of Honors is a special display on the beginning of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve. On July 30, 1942, Congress authorized this branch, but it wasn't until February 13, 1943 that it was implemented. The jobs included radio operator, photographer, parachute rigger, motor transport driver, aerial gunnery instructor; to name a few. At the end of the war, there were 820 officers and 17,640 enlisted women.



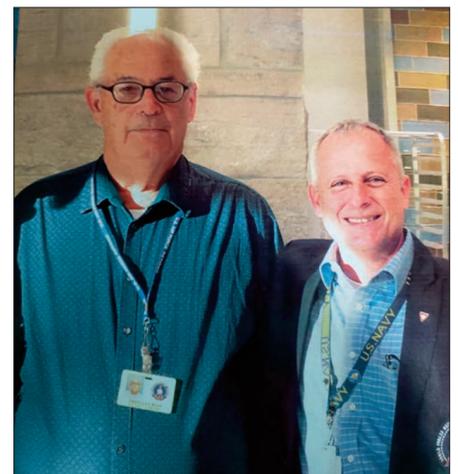
Notes from the AFRH-W resident advisory committee chairman



I don't want to dwell on the past year, we can all agree it has taken a toll on all of our residents. Instead, we need to look to the future and hopefully we all will be able to visit our families, have a meal with friends and do some much needed shopping without the two week required quarantine. This, of course, still requires wearing our masks and social distancing.

We recently learned that we will be losing one of the Home's best assets, Ron Kartz. Our chief of resident services will be leaving us in March. He and his wife Jenny are moving to Michigan to take up farming. He and Jenny will be missed by all. I have had the pleasure of spending many summer hours cutting grass at the golf course with Jenny and working closely with Mr. Kartz as he solved the many problems that occur at a nine-hole golf course, (all this was accomplished on his off duty hours). Many of us believe that without him we would not have an operational golf course and I, for one, agree. Ask our residents how much they respect Mr. Kartz and seek him out when they have a problem that needs his attention and you will see how much he is respected by all. I wish Ron and Jenny nothing but the best and thank them both for all they have done.

Fred Layman



Fred Layman (left) wishes Chief of Resident Services Ron Kartz (right) best of luck in his new endeavors.

The military life of AFRH-G resident Mike Gilkerson

By Dan Ellis | AFRH-G Resident



Mike was born in May 1945 in a local area near Portsmouth, Ohio to Art and Marion Gilkerson. When he was thirteen years old, he received a Sears moped for Christmas but had to eagerly wait until he was 14 to get a driver's license. He used the moped to drive to local farms where for a \$1.00 an hour, he picked potatoes and bailed and stacked hay.

Later, because his dad was a diesel truck mechanic, Mike was employed in the paint shop prepping vehicles for painting. At that time, prepping was performed by rubbing sand paper by hand, so over a period of time, he wore off his finger tips and couldn't get an ID until his skin grew out again.

Mike attended Garfield Elementary, McKinley Junior High, and Portsmouth High School, where he graduated in May 1963. The following day, he enlisted in the United States Air Force before his 18th birthday and departed for basic training with five other local guys.

After completing basic training, he was trained as a communications equipment repairman and took further instructions at Sheppard AFB, Texas as a communications center operator of teletype machines. After tech school he served at Karamursel AS, Turkey where he was upgraded to sergeant, and at DaNang AB, VietNam, he became a staff sergeant. Then while at Shu Lin Kou AS, Taiwan he was upgraded to tech sergeant.

In 1976, Mike returned from overseas to retrain at Keesler AFB, Biloxi, Mississippi into the technical control career field. He retired from Scott AFB, Illinois in July 1983. During his military career, Mike had married in 1966 to his wife Linda and they had a daughter, Dawn and a son, Michael II.

Retirement brought new ventures. While preparing to retire in 1983, Mike learned of a government contract at the Defense Communications Agency with the Allocation & Engineering Division at Scott AFB, where he ultimately was in charge of managing the contract. Because the job was not re-bid, Mike created his own company and bid on the new three-year contract, won it in addition to a subsequent three-year contract as well.

Following this, he and his son started Specialized Car Care, Inc., a detail shop, which operated in Mascoutah, Illinois for ten years. While in his retirement, Mike created an internet website for the 6924th Security Squadron of Danang South Vietnam through which he accumulated more than a thousand comrades. This led to his publishing two book volumes which described their personal Danang experiences with photographs.

Following his open heart surgery, Mike and his wife moved to Pace, Florida in May 2013 to be near their daughter and son, and later purchased seven acres of land in Cantonment, Florida. After his wife passed away in 2018, the house and land became too much to contend with so he sold it and decided to give AFRH-G a residential trial period.

Since Mike arrived, many residents have come to know him as the "walker." He uses a FitBit wrist watch to collect data that syncs with an app on his smart phone to accumulate his mileage from each step and motion in concert with satellite GPS.

Mike keeps a journal and here are just a few things he said: "I was at AFRH about three weeks when we were restricted to the facility due to the Covid 19 virus. I decided to use walking as my exercise means for cardiac and lung rehab which would take up several hours a day in the outdoors. Since I started walking here I have accumulated over 4,000 miles walking around the facility. I think I know almost every squirrel on the property but they still don't trust me."

"On November 12, 2020, I decided to complete the marathon distance of 26.2 miles. I started out at 5:30 am and finished the walk at 5:30 pm. I completed it in five-mile increments, taking food and drink and resting my feet. It took five walking sessions on that Thursday to complete the 26.2 miles and it was well worth the effort. At my age I have no need to keep track of my "time" for the walk. I just needed to make the finish. The satisfaction of completing this goal was all I wanted."

"It would be nice to see more residents outside walking. There is one particular resident that walks daily with his walker, taking very short steps and very slowly. But, he is out there every day working his way around the facility while stopping to rest on a bench every so often. That man has my total respect and admiration and displays his mental toughness every walking session. When I grow up I want to be just like him!"

"The health benefits of walking daily are valuable to me and participating in the AFRH Century Club and logging my miles walked is a bonus. I like having "goals" to work towards and this program gives me just that, in addition to being rewarded for attaining each stage. How great is that? So watch for the back of my shirts that say 'Follow Me On the Path to Fitness' and let's find new friends looking to do the same thing."



“Reunited...”

Story & Photos by Lori Kerns | Librarian

“And it feels so good!” Isn’t that how the Peaches and Herb song goes? Thanks to AFRH-G Recreation Assistant, Carol Davis, Bettylu Dennis and Sally Blythe FINALLY reunited to share a wonderful lunch together in the dining hall. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the friends had not seen each other for a while. Recently, Bettylu mentioned to Carol how much she was missing her dear friend, Sally. So Carol decided to plan a day for the two friends to meet up and enjoy their lunches together. They met on a Friday, which was also shrimp day in the dining hall. It was so great to see the friends take the time to catch up and enjoy each other’s company!

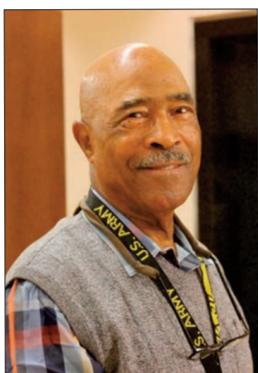


Important National Days in March

By Carol Davis | Recreation Assistant

- March 1—National Minnesota Day
- March 3—National Anthem Day
- March 8—International Women’s Day
- March 8—National Oregon Day
- March 13—National K9 Veteran’s Day
- March 15—American Legion Birthday
- March 17—St. Patrick’s Day
- March 19—National Certified Nurses Day
- March 25—National Medal of Honor Day
- March 29—National Nevada Day

Notes from the AFRH-G resident advisory committee chairman



I began this month’s article thinking this would be the last month of our closed campus due to COVID-19. I asked myself what were we doing last year at this time? Reflections of February past reveal a month of merriment in which we celebrated holidays, the Budweiser Clydesdales visit, Lois Hogan’s 100 Birthday, and other joyful events. This year there were no Clydesdales. We did celebrate Hogan’s 101 Birthday, Valentine’s Day, Black History Month and of course Mardi Gras; Laissez les bons temps rouler! We also had a successful 100% testing for the coronavirus. The closer we came to the end of the month, the higher anticipations rose. “FREEDOM” - the ability to come and go as one chooses, is the goal.

The time is now, the goal is at hand. Are we ready? A lot has been said about how and where we will exercise this untethered journey into an environment filled with all the dangers of COVID we have avoided the past eleven months. During that time, the responsibility to keep us safe had fallen to others and they rose to the task. Now, however, as we leave the bubble that surrounds AFRH-G that responsibility falls to us, the residents.

Even though we have been vaccinated we must continue to practice social distancing, hand washing and sanitizing, and wearing face masks while we are outside the campus just as we do now. All of us know what is at stake. Can we rise to the occasion? The responsibility is ours.

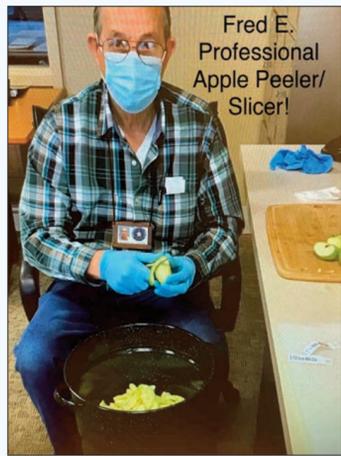
Arthur “Art” W. Jones



AFRH-Washington

Tasty homemade apple pie

Story & Photos by Carol Mitchell | Recreation Therapy



Fred E. Professional Apple Peeler/Slicer!

Who remembers the jingle "baseball, hot dogs, apple pie, and Chevrolet"? Apple pie is one of the top five favorite American desserts and considered a "go to" for American comfort food. An apple pie is a pie in which the main ingredient/filling includes the sweet smells of apples, cinnamon, sugar, and more. Apple pies originated in England and are often served hot topped with whipped cream or ice cream. It is usually double-crust, with pastry both above and below the filling.

The English, the Dutch, and the Swedes brought to apple pie to the colonies during the 17th and 18th centuries. The apple pie had to wait for the planting of European varieties, brought across the Atlantic, to become fruit-bearing apple trees, to be selected for their cooking qualities as there were no native apples except crabapples, which are very small and sour in taste.

Apple pies can be made with a variety of different types of apples. The more popular cooking apples include Braeburn, Gala, Granny Smith, and McIntosh. The filling generally includes sugar, butter, cinnamon, lemon juice, and nutmeg.

Although eaten in Europe since long before the European colonization of the Americas, apple pie as used in the phrase "as American as apple pie" describes something as being "typically American." In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, apple pie became a symbol of American prosperity and national pride.

After taking a healthcare resident dessert poll in what dessert we could bake from scratch, hot homemade apple pie with whipped cream won hands-down!

The latest Cooking with Carol program provided this delicious homemade dessert. While baking, the smell of apple pies wafted throughout the healthcare units. Immediately after taking the pies out of the oven, they were placed on the RT roving apple pie cart. The cart strolled the healthcare residents' rooms at lunchtime providing residents with a special homemade slice of good old American apple pie.

The ingredients we used for our pies included Granny Smith apples, cinnamon, sugar (lots of sugar), flour, butter, salt, nutmeg, lemon, eggs, and water. Helping Recreation Therapy get started with the recipe was resident volunteer Fred Ebner. Fred graciously peeled and sliced all the apples, which was no small task since we tripled the recipe. His only request was a slice of the pie for him and his lovely Sophie.

Many compliments were given and requests received for more delectable desserts to be made in the future.



Cupid's visit

Story and Photo by Christine Baldwin | Librarian
Photos by Annemarie Wilson | Recreation Therapy Supervisor



Cupid came to visit and wish the residents of AFRH-W a 2021 of L.O.V.E. Cupid came sporting her arrow of love and flew around with her golden wings. She also came around serving fresh fruit salad and chocolate covered strawberries,

pineapples, and bananas. Everyone was so happy to see her and ready for all the love Cupid can bring. Mr. Schivy asked, "Who will I fall in love with?" and Cupid responded, "The next woman who walks in the room!" In came Annemarie Wilson, Supervisor of Recreation Therapy, with a bowl of fruit! He was in love! Happy Valentine's Day AFRH!



Valentine's Day pre-sweet treat

By Carol Mitchell | Recreation Therapy
Photos by Carol Mitchell and Marla McGuinness | Recreation Services

Residents of AFRH-Washington got a pre-sweet treat for Valentine's Day on Thursday, February 11 from the roving chocolate-covered fruit cart and stand. The roving heart cart was specially designed by RT Supervisor Annemarie Wilson.

AFRH-W Recreation Therapy, Recreation, and the Volunteer Coordinator cut, sliced, and dipped the fruit for residents to enjoy at lunchtime. A variety of fruits were dipped in chocolate by our very own "master dipper" Marine Robbins and her "dippers-in-training." The chocolate dipped fruit included delicious fresh strawberries, pineapple, and bananas. For those not having a sweet tooth, fresh fruit without the decadent chocolate coating was also served.



RT pre Super Bowl fun week

By Carol Mitchell | Recreation Therapy
Photos by Carol Mitchell & Marla McGuinness | Recreation Services

Super Bowl LV (55) will go down in history as a football game to remember. Due to the Coronavirus 19 pandemic, fans across the nation were limited in attending and gathering for the event. The fans still found a way to enjoy an event that had its first Super Bowl beginnings back on January 15, 1967 with the Kansas City Chiefs and the Green Bay Packers. Fast forward to February 7, 2021 and Super Bowl 55... the Kansas City Chiefs again make it to the big game playing the fierce Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Some of the pre Super Bowl week-long events provided for AFRH-W Residents and staff included:

- * Monday - Distribution of the Super Bowl Bucket "Fun Pic" packets and past Super Bowl video highlights
- * Tuesday - Recreation staff member Marla McGuinness hosted the lunchtime Super Bowl Trivia.
- * Wednesday - "Test Your Quarterback Passing Skills" with miniature footballs for all to keep.
- * Thursday - Super Bowl Football Bloopers videos.
- * Friday - all residents and staff were invited to show their spirit by wearing their favorite sports jersey.

Finally, yet importantly, on Super Bowl Sunday residents enjoyed picking up their Football Foodie pack consisting of hot dogs, chips, water, soda, and beer to munch on as they watched the game. Residents were able to view the game in the Scott Community center with two BIG drop down screens and socially distanced tables, The Defender's Inn, which also had some limited seating for the game, and the healthcare residents enjoyed watching the game on their units in the leisure lobby area, the unit living room areas, and their individual rooms.

Monday morning on February 8 the winners for the "fun pics" were drawn with cash prizes awarded.

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| Tampa Bay Buccaneers 31 vs Kansas City Chiefs 9 | |
| Coin Toss | - PK Knor |
| 1st Touchdown | - Steve Du Bos |
| 1st Field Goal | - Charlie Jones |
| 1st Sack | - Bill Wood |
| Lead At Half | - Lee Smith |
| 1st Fumble | - Chuck Felder |
| Champions/Final Score | - Lenny King (35-12) |

Overall, it was a great event with lots of fun-filled participation even from a distance!



AFRH-Gulfport

Their angels are always present

Story & Photos by Milton Williams | Art Specialist

Gulfport resident Doris Hopper was asked to do a painting with these two children and their angel. The resident who requested this was very pleased to receive such a nice painting and beautiful reminder of caring, tenderness and faithfulness. Thanks for sharing your talents with us. We look forward to your next art adventure and inspiration using your paints, palettes and brushes.



REMINDER

Spring forward on March 14, 2021

SPRING FORWARD



Daylight Savings Time begins March 14th

It's Showtime! AFRH-G Broadway matinee series

By Sean Campbell | Lead Recreational Specialist

The discontinuation of trips and outings due to COVID 19 has been a tough pill to swallow for many of our residents, but for those who enjoy a good stage show, recreation services has introduced a Broadway Matinee Series on SRTV Channel 4. Many events and activities have taken a more "virtual" route since the start of the pandemic. Senior TV Channel 4 has become the home for various military ceremonies and celebrations, as well as comedy and virtual travel videos. And now it is Showtime!

Recreation services will be using streaming technology to broadcast a variety of productions to AFRH-G residents. Recent and upcoming features include: Hamilton, Phantom of the Opera, Oklahoma, Driving Miss Daisy, Cirque du Soleil and more! The recreation staff will provide canned sodas and pre-packaged popcorn for residents to enjoy the feature in the comforts of their own room, because recreation services is determined that "The Show Must Go On!"



A very merry-go-round

Story & Photos by Milton Williams | Art Specialist

JB Atchison has made the ultimate mini merry-go-round model (complete with lights, movement and music). The stand was formerly a neckless and jewelry hanger and JB envisioned this nostalgic work of folk art which he decorated, painted and attached all the parts. He enlisted the help of Tom Keith (scroll saw master) who cut out the wooden "flying horses" and Ed Summers (research and procurement agent) for the specialized battery motor and lights.

You can see this amazing show in our Art Display Room and be sure to press the button.

The lights are on and the music is sweet so come and enjoy the adventure.



January mystery game

By Dennis Crabtree | Recreation Specialist

Photos by Lee Corban and Sean Campbell | Recreation



On January 27, 2021 recreation held its Mystery Game. The Mystery Game was not given out until 0930. The Mystery Game was Stack the Dice. Residents were given instructions on how to play. Each resident was given two solo cups and they had to put them over their hands. Then, they had to pick up the dice with the cups and stack the dice within two minutes. All residents were six-feet away during the game.

There could only be four winners for this Mystery Game. But wait there was a rule change for the four winners and all residents who played were all winners. They all picked their prizes. They picked one candy and one donated gift card. The highest stack was seven dice by Frank Baker.



February Mystery Game

Story & Photo by Dennis Crabtree | Recreation Specialist

On February 1, 2021 recreation held its Mystery Game. The Mystery Game was not given out until 0930. The Mystery Game was Catch Those Ping Pong Balls. Residents were given instructions on how to play. Each resident was given seven ping pong balls and they had to roll them across the table into the solo cups. Each solo cup was worth a different point. All residents were six-feet away during the game.

There could only be four winners for this Mystery Game. But wait there was a rule change for the four winners and all residents who played were all winners. They all picked two snacks. The highest point was 18 by Dr. Earl Gassery.



Mystery Game

By Dennis Crabtree | Recreation Specialist

Photos by Lee Corban | Recreation Services Supervisor

On February 8, 2021 recreation held another Mystery Game. The Mystery Game was Single Player Dominoes. Residents were given instructions on how to play. This was a double elimination game. Just like regular dominoes the single player had to match the dominoes with the same number within two minutes. Whoever had the most dominoes matched up advanced in the bracket. All residents who played were winners. They all picked their prizes. They picked two snacks or one snack and a donated gift card. The highest match up was 26 by Sharon Price.



Game day in Gulfport

Story & Photos by Sean Campbell | Lead Recreational Specialist

AFRH-G recreation services and dining services made sure to celebrate the "Big Game" on Super Bowl Sunday. Despite COVID restrictions preventing a large group game watching activity, AFRH-G provided game watching food and snacks for residents to enjoy in their rooms. Special menu additions of "football foods" like pizza and wings by dining services spiced up the game watching experience. Recreation services served boxes of fresh popcorn and cold beer plus wine as well.

Many residents watched the game anxiously to see if they were winners in the Super Bowl squares game. 100 residents signed up for a square for a chance to win cash prizes based on the score of the game after each quarter. Residents Diana Dopp, Faye Jefferson, and Larry McAnally were this year's big winners!

UPER BOWL

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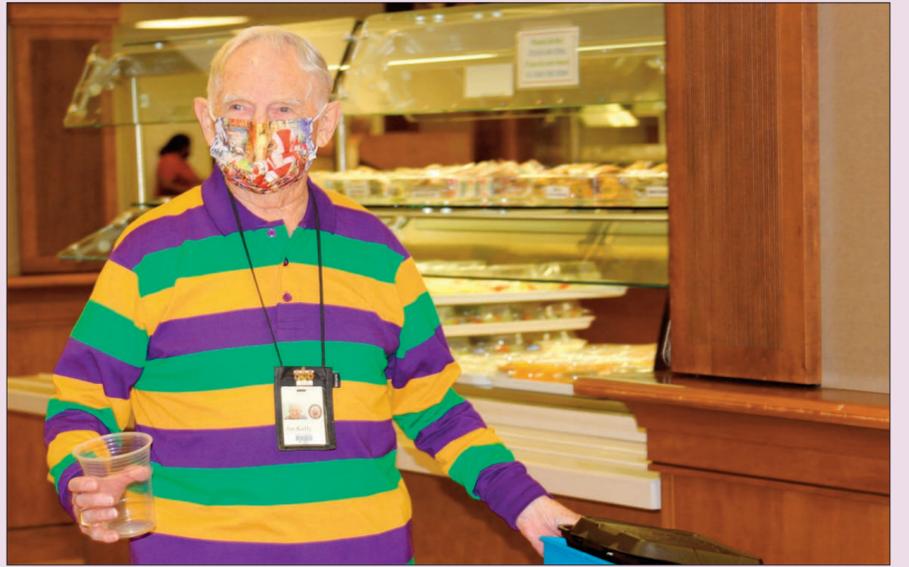


GULFPORT

Let the good times roll!

Photos by Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs

Mardi Gras Day and the February Birthday Luncheon were celebrated on February 16. Even though Mardi Gras was cancelled this year, we hope 2022 will bring a much more festive time. The dining hall also cooked up a special lunch to celebrate all the residents born in February. Happy Birthday and Happy Mardi Gras. Let the good times roll!



WASHINGTON

Year of the Ox

By Annemarie Wilson | Recreation Therapy Supervisor
Photos by Carol Mitchell | Recreation Therapist

AFRH-Washington residents celebrated the "Year of the Ox" for Chinese New Year by making home-made spring rolls. A small number of residents signed up to assist including Christine Engle, James Diamond, Bill Jenterra, Paul Armbruster, James Hunnicut, Warren Pospisil and John 'Cowboy' Hess. Recreation Therapy Supervisor Annemarie Wilson made the filling for the spring rolls and on the morning of February 16, about 200 spring rolls were made for all to enjoy. The filling consisted of ground chicken, spring onions, garlic, ginger, cabbage, carrots, bean sprouts and seasoning. A vegetarian version was made on site but I think all can agree, the meat filled ones tasted better. Thanks to dining services for frying up the spring rolls in record time!

