Memorial Day in D.C.

AFRH-W residents gathered at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, May 29th to honor and remember fallen comrades with a wreath-laying ceremony at the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery. Organized and conducted by the staff from President Lincoln's Cottage, the ceremony featured a joint service color guard, remarks from invited guests, and the laying of a wreath by AFRH-W residents at the tomb of Major General John A. Logan, whose 1868 order formally established what is today known as Memorial Day. Our thanks to President Lincoln's Cottage staff for a wonderful ceremony!

AFRH-GULFPORT

Memorial Day Weekend in Gulfport

Memorial Day is a solemn occasion each year when those who gave the ultimate sacrifice are remembered and celebrated. It is because of these sacrifices that we as Americans are able to enjoy a weekend with our friends and family. Friday, May 26th, the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Gulfport kicked off the weekend with a moving ceremony that paid tribute to those who gave their lives for our freedom. Mr. Darrel Smith (USN Retired), Director of Operations for the Naval Oceanographic Office at Stennis, served as the honored guest speaker for the ceremony. The former commander spoke highly of the sacrifices made by both those who had gone before us as well as paid tribute to the great achievements and service that the veterans at AFRH have contributed to our nation's security. A ceremonial wreath was placed to honor the fallen.

On Monday, May 29th, the residents of AFRH-W enjoyed a wonderful concert conducted by the Watsonville Community Band from California. They have been performing for 70 years at facilities big and small around our country.

Before they played at our Home they were at the Air Force Memorial on May 28th as part of the National Memorial Day Concert series. There are 35 members in this band, all hailing from Watsonville. Some of the songs they played were, The Fairest of the Fair by John Philip Sousa, Light Cavalry Overture by Henry Fillmore, The Homefront by James Christensen, and Rushmore by Alfred Reed. The two that got the most applause were a medley of our military service songs and then ending the performance with America the Beautiful. We thanked them for taking time away from their homes to be with us at our Home on this Memorial Day.
Christopher Kelly - Public Affairs Officer
Necilia Jones - Washington Public Affairs
Becki Zschiedrich - Gulfport Public Affairs

The AFRH Communicator is an authorized publication of the Armed Forces Retirement Home. Residents and employees are encouraged to submit, edit, news items, and features. Material 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.

AFRH-G Veteran Highlight – Bobby Harris
By Lori Kems, AFRH-G Librarian

Bobby Harris is a fourth generation Harris to be born in Royston, Georgia (home of Ty Cobb). His father, who was the first in the family to be in the military, was a WWW Army veteran. When Bobby was born, his father was 22 years old. This was the time he had to turn 18.

Bobby enjoyed his life in the Marines. During his career he had many choice assignments working in infantry and in personnel. One assignment stands out strong in his memory. During the early 1960’s, Bobby was a corporal and was given the assignment to take a lance corporal with him to the armory to retrieve two pistols and then head to the motor pool for a vehicle.

After putting his time in with the Marines, Bobby went back to Greenville to begin working as a city firefighter and for the Army National Guard. By this time, he had become the father of two sons and two daughters. To support his children, he began thinking about rejoining the military. He went to the Marine Corps and they said that he would have to reenlist as a private first class. He tried the Army, but was told that he was too old. Finally he went to the Navy and told them that they were happy to take Marines and that he would enter as a petty officer second class.

Throughout Bobby’s Navy career, he had various assignments such as recruiting, classification, career counseling, administration, and instructive duty. He was fortunate enough not to have to leave his children for sea duty. Throughout his 16-year career, he was only given one sea duty; to Brown Water Navy where he was assigned to run an administration office. In 1986, he retired as a sailor who never went out to sea, and decided to take advantage of the GI Bill.

He went to Nazarene Bible College where he majored in biblical studies and Christian education. While in college, he could not find a good part time job so he began selling various items at flea markets. Eventually he made his way to Tacos, New Mexico and opened a successful thrift shop.

While living in Taos, Bobby had to become a caretaker for his oldest son who eventually passed away from cancer. Sadly, his oldest daughter had also passed. Because of the experience caring for his sons, he knew he did not want to be a burden on his children once he began to age. So he consulted his doctor who suggested to him to put an application in to AFRH-G and moved to the Home 32 months later.

Bobby is definitely a proud father and brother. His only sibling, Roger, served in Vietnam and received the Purple Heart. Two of his grandchildren have had very successful military careers. His youngest son, Shannon, served as a diver in the Navy for 24 years. Molly, his youngest daughter, began her Army career in high school at age 17. She retired after 33 years from the U.S. Army Reserve as a full colonel. He is also a proud grandfather to “many grandkids” and great grandfather to “many more great grandkids.”

Bobby enjoys living at AFRH-G where he takes advantage of the Home’s many amenities. He spends time working out in the gym and swimming. He also enjoys attending many of the area festivals and events, in addition to visiting the local churches and casinos. After living in the mountains for over 26 years, he has adapted and loves the coast life. These days he and his wife spend time with their great grandkids.

AFRH-G Gulfport waiting time for residency is 27-29 months from the date of application approval.

AFRH-W Veteran Highlight – William “Willie” Shives
By Christine Baldwin, AFRH-W Librarian

William “Willie” Shives was born on a small farm in south central Pennsylvania. He was the youngest of nine children. He had a twin sister, who succumbed to pneumonia, only 11 days after birth. Willie attended a rural school, which consolidated all 12 grades into one building. He graduated with honors and was a class valedictorian. Willie was always very active and loved anything to do with sports. Attending a small school with a limited sports talent pool allowed him to letter in two sports, despite his diminutive size. It would be later, while stationed at Bremerhaven, Germany, that he would truly find his sport where physical stature didn’t matter – bowling. He hasn’t stopped bowling since. Significant achievements include two 300 games, one bowled in 2001 and the other in 2008. He also holds the house record for the AFRH-W with a 288 game and a 768 series, bowled in 1995.

Willie enlisted in the U.S. Air Force before he graduated from high school and left for Lackland AFB. Texas for basic training two days after graduation. The initial aptitude tests showed him to be well-adapted for survival instructor at Strait AFB, Nevada. But his physical stature was a problem. He was given this field due to the large and heavy back packs to be carried, so he was not chosen for this assignment. After successfully taking a language aptitude test, Willie was called into the personnel office and asked what language he wanted to study. He promptly chose German to be studied at a small USAAF detachment at Syracuse University, New York. A few days later, he was notified that he was chosen to study Russian at the Army Language School at Monterey, California. Willie’s class had two distinctions at school: he was the first all Air Force class, and the final class to take the Russian six-month course, prior to changing to a nine-month curriculum.

After completion of the basic language school in 1958, Willie’s first assignment was to the 6913th Radio Squadron Mobile, a USAF Security Service unit at Bremerhaven, Germany. His duties included interpreting, recording, analyzing and reporting Russian voice communications. While there, he chose to attend the Russian Intermediate Language School and reenlisted to become eligible for it. Upon completion of his three-year tour, Willie attended the Russian course at Syracuse University. He then was stationed at Goodfellow AFB, Texas for Technical School and to Eielson AFB, Alaska where the 6985th Security Squadron was activated in 1962, using the RC-135 aircraft. Next, Willie went from Alaska to Rhein-Main AB, Germany. Willie’s assignment at Rhein-Main was to the 6916th Security Squadron, which utilized RC-130s. After Rhein-Main, he was back to study Russian in the Advanced Course in 1967.

A short TDY to Ft. Meade, Maryland for technical training at the National Security Administration, was followed by an assignment to the 6868th Security Squadron at Wakkaniya, Japan and from there back to Germany for duty at the 6915th SHF at Hol in 1969. While at Hol, some improprieties on Willie’s part resulted in the loss of his security clearance. He ultimately went into the personnel field, and from there came to AFRH-W. He served with Darmstadt and Sembach, Germany, along with an assignment to Minot AFB, North Dakota. Willie retired in 1977.

Willie’s current residency at the Home began in July 2015, after a 15 year hiatus. It was previously a Home Resident from July 1986 – October 2001. He worked at the Home, first as a night watchman and then in the ID and Transportation section of Security. We are glad to have him back!
Message from the Chief Operating Officer

Memorial Day is a time of reflection and gratitude to all those who gave their lives for the freedoms we enjoy. Each of us is touched, in some way, by their sacrifice. Perhaps he or she was a family member, a friend or acquaintance, or someone we may not have known personally, but learned of over the years – who lost their life in defense of our Nation. We cannot thank them enough, and I would like to take this opportunity to extend our sincerest appreciation to our staff and residents who helped coordinate and participate in ceremonies over the past weekend.

As May turns to June, I am cheered to see the depth of progress being made on many of the part which continue to ensure that Homes are not only solvent – but thriving! One high visible sign of progress made by dedicated volunteers is the re-opening of the golf course at AFRH-Washington. Our volunteer golf members – be they residents or, in an opportunity for the community, are keeping the course this golf season. It’s a reflection of the pride we have in the Home to make this happen. Here at the Agency level, my staff and I are also focusing on working with our new DoD oversight which was delegated to the Deputy Chief Management Officer. Together, we are seeking ways to ensure a healthy, sustainable budget and looking at cost efficiencies that minimize impact on you, our residents. Cost efficiencies will be essential to maintaining our services during FY 2018 with our anticipated budget constraints and reduced revenue streams. We are hopeful AFRH will receive continued support to replace the lines and forfor reduction and support our operations. My thanks to everyone – residents, staff, volunteers and friends of AFRH – for being good stewards of the Home, and look forward to providing you with updates as our plans evolve.

Dr. Timothy Kangas
AFRH CDO Dr. Timothy Kangas speaks with Rep. Tim Walz, Ranking Member, House Veterans Affairs Committee.

Military Leadership Students Seize Armed Forces Volunteer Impact Day at AFRH-W

By Robert W. Mitchell, Volunteer/Activities Coordinator

A massive force of more than 150 military volunteers from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard descended on to the campus of the Armed Forces Retirement Home on May 18 to enhance the beauty of the historic land with an onslaught of grounds keeping activities. The work essentially transformed the look and feel of the main campus on and around the golf course, the gardens and the two fishing ponds.

Three separate teams of 50 motivated volunteers tackled with multiple projects over a four-hour period, cleared the green fields of tall grass, debris, tree branches and countless brown and orange leaves. Key tasks among the volunteer force included moving fields of grass on the golf course, filling lanes of soil for new flowers and vegetables at the gardens, raking leaves and debris, and dredging algae growth from the surface of the ponds.

Following the outdoor volunteer, the interacted with residents in the dining facility and outside at a cookout held by the dining staff. AFRH-W Chief of Resident Services Ron Kartz thanked the large group of volunteers at the golf clubhouse and expressed gratitude on behalf of the Home for their invaluable contribution. All of the Home for their invaluable contribution. Measuring the impact of the volunteer service in monetary terms, he said their work was “significant.”

The volunteers were all students of the National Capital Region Joint Non-Commissioned Officer/Petty Office Professional Development Course held at the National Defense University at Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C. The course is designed to prepare students for leadership challenges during joint missions.

The volunteers were highly motivated and enthusiastic about giving back to the veteran community, said U.S. Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Denise Demontagnac, an NCR JNCOPO PO course instructor. “We totally love coming out, giving up our time and giving back to those who have paved the way for us,” she said. “And we love listening to the motivational stories and being inspired by the knowledge that they give us. We look forward to coming back in November.” This effort marked the fifth volunteer visit by the school to AFRH-W, Demontagnac said.

National President of the American Legion Auxiliary visits AFRH-G

By Becki Zscheidrich, Public Affairs

The National President of the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA), Mary E. Davis, recently visited the AFRH in Gulfport, MS. Resident Doris Jones proudly showed her home to Davis and other members of the ALA, who toured the facility. Mary E. Davis of Lacey, Washington, was elected national president of the American Legion Auxiliary during the organization’s 96th National Convention in Cincinnati, held Aug. 26-Sept. 1. Davis will serve the world’s largest women’s patriotic service organization as national president for a one-year term.

As a member of the ALA for 40 years, Davis has chosen to highlight ALA Member Pride for her term as national president. Davis said, “Each and every day as we work our programs, serve our veterans, help our military families, or make a difference in the life of a child, we swell with pride because of the difference we make. I call that ALA Member Pride. Pride in our accomplishments, pride in making a difference in another’s life, and pride in belonging to an organization that embodies the mission work of the American Legion Auxiliary.”

“Deploying” wins first place

By Milton Williams, Art Specialist

Wolf Kiessling’s art piece “Deploying” has received first place in the 2017 National Veterans Creative Arts Competition in the Transfer Engraving/Pyrography Kit Category. This is a technique using a heated metal tip to draw on wood. Wolf has won several awards using his gifted talent and I think “Deploying” is one of his best. A picture is worth a thousand words and this one says a lot. Both in thought and emotion, reminding us of the sacrifice our military and their families make for America’s safety and security.

Congratulations! Wolf for winning the Gold Medal Award and thank you for inspiring and reminding us to value every member of our military as First Place.

Reaching out to military veterans at AFRH-W

By Robert W. Mitchell, Volunteer/Activities Coordinator

Performing for military veterans is a great way to touch the lives and lift the spirits of residents at the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH-W), according to Miss District of Columbia 2016 Cierra Jackson, a self-described “military brat” and daughter of a retired U.S. Army 1st Sgt.

“I think being a military child, I already understand that there are a lot difficulties that our veterans face and sometimes certain things can be harder than others.” Jackson said. “So, it is always great to provide some sort of musical therapy to our residents and hearing their stories about being in the military so long ago. It was really great. I remember being there last year as a contestant and performing, and now coming back as Miss District of Columbia and performing. It is always a great feeling to know that you are giving back.”

Jackson said, “Our veterans are so thankful and they’re so kind and I love hearing their stories.”

As the reigning Miss D.C., Jackson is passionate about community service, but said more needs to be done to connect young people coming to different schools, providing different opportunities for the students to come out and serve. If there is an ROTC program, they can come out and serve, if there is an art program and they want to have an art day with the kids or if you want to collaborate with the Miss District of Columbia Organization and reach out to the schools, Miss District of Columbia would also be open to attending and coming with you,” she said. “So, there are many different avenues, but I really think it’s about being creative. I think a lot of people know that we appreciate our veterans, but sometimes they may not realize that our veterans would like to see their appreciation more on a daily basis. I think being able to express that to them and also [finding] ways that our veterans, our schools, our communities can connect with one another would be a great start in bringing young citizens and citizens of all ages to come out and support Veterans.”

Jackson is set to debut a new song during a performance at the 2017 Miss DC Pageant at Howard University in Washington, D.C. June 18.
Dear AFRH-W residents, employees, and friends:

Spring is a wonderful time of year to be in our nation’s capital not to mention the Armed Forces Retirement Home. Cool spring temperatures allowed us to take advantage of numerous outdoor activities on our beautiful 272-acre campus.

Outdoors, the staff encouraged residents to venture out to enjoy the beauty of spring. Many ways we have been enjoying our historic home in May. This month, one of our three public outdoor events kicked off with the softball golf tournament in the park. Residents, volunteers, and some of our neighbors came together to share the fun. Food trucks and a beer trailer were parked near the golf clubhouse and driving range. A big top tent and live music were enjoyed by all despite a few raindrops. There were even costume play Star Wars characters on hand for kids of all ages. Noticeably, Dartmouth Director stood at attention during the presentation of colors by the Marine Corps Color Guard.

Our first softball game of the season was held May 10th after volunteers cut the outfield grass and the landscape provided finishing touches to the all dirt infield to make the field safe. We had a lot of banter during the first game which was well attended by residents, volunteers, and a handful of sporty staff. It was an excellent way to share in friendship and safe community at the Home.

A team of U.S. Navy volunteers from the Chief Petty Officers (CPO) Association (Pentagon Chapter) spent half a day here at the Armed Forces Retirement Home, Washington, D.C. setting up the community center with Recreation Services indoors, and sprucing the campus grounds with Volunteer Services outdoors.

Inside, the CPO volunteers arrived early to set up a large banner for the Mexican Fiesta celebration high on a wall in the community center. They also assisted with furniture placement and assembling the serving tables for food and drinks. Outside, the volunteers took turns mixing and staining the wooden barriers and walking surfaces at the pond, collecting and removing debris from the surrounding areas.

In all, 25 volunteers contributed five hours each of community service to AFRH-W, interacting with residents and ensuring that our veterans continue to enjoy a neat, clean and safe community at the Home.

On May 13, 2017 the AFRH-W Golf Course opened for the season, with the help of volunteer residents, associate members and AFRH-W staff members. The first weekend’s membership drive brought in $19,000 dollars for the Resident Fund.

On May 18, 2017 AFRH-W hosted Armed Forces Volunteer Impact Day, with the help of 170 volunteer service members from around the Washington D.C. area. Once briefed by Chief of Resident Services Ron Kartz, the volunteers were broken into details to do maintenance on the golf course, fish pond, and garden areas. After all of the work was completed, the volunteers joined the residents for an outdoor cookout. I would like to say thank you to all of the 170 volunteer service members for a well done job!

-June 4, 1944 - During World War II in Europe, Rommel was bombed by the U.S. 5th Army, led by General Mark Clark. Rome had been declared an open city by German Field Marshal Albert Kesselring amid Allied concerns the Germans might stage a Stalingrad-style defense that would devastate the historic “Eternal” city.

-June 5, 1968 - Robert F. Kennedy was shot and mortally wounded while leaving the Hotel Ambassador in Los Angeles. The shooting occurred as a celebration of Kennedy’s victory in the California presidential primary. He died at 1:14 a.m., June 6, at age 42, leaving behind his wife Ethel and eleven children, the last born four months after his death. President John F. Kennedy had named his brother and campaign manager, Robert Francis Kennedy, to the post of U.S. Attorney General in 1961. Robert served as the president’s closest confidant. After the assassination of JFK, Robert remained as Attorney General until 1964, when he resigned to make a successful run for the U.S. Senate from New York. Allied with the plight of the poor and disadvantaged in America, he spoke out against racial discrimination, economic injustice and the Vietnam War. In March of 1968, he had announced his candidacy for the presidency, and with the winning in California, appeared headed for the nomination.

-June 6, 1944 - D-Day, the largest amphibious landing in history, began in the early morning hours as Allied forces landed in Normandy on the northern coast of France. Operation Overlord took months of planning and involved 1,527,000 soldiers in 47 Allied divisions along with 4,400 ships and landing craft. Of the 6,000,000 Germans had about 60 divisions spread across France and the Low Countries. American forces landed on two western beaches, Utah and Omaha, while British and Canadian troops landed farther east on Gold, Juno and Sword beaches. By the end of the day, 150,000 Allied soldiers and their accompanying vehicles had landed with 15,000 killed and wounded.

-June 13, 1876 Birthday - American General Winfield Scott (1825-1866) was born in Petersburg, Virginia. Nicknamed “Old Fuss and Feathers” because of his formality, he served in three wars; the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the American Civil War. He was also nominated for the presidency by the Whig party in 1852 but was defeated by Franklin Pierce.

-June 14, 1775 - The first U.S. military service, the Continental Army consisting of six companies of riflemen, was established by the Second Continental Congress. The next day, George Washington was appointed by a unanimous vote to command the army.

-June 14, 1777 - John Adams introduced a resolution before Congress mandating a United States flag, stating, “...that the flag of the thirteen United States shall be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white on a blue field, representing a new constellation.” This anniversary is celebrated each year in the U.S. as Flag Day.

-June 20, 1925 Birthday - American military hero and actor Audie Murphy (1928-1971) was born in Kingston, Texas. He was the most decorated American soldier of World War II, awarded 37 medals and decorations, including the Medal of Honor for single-handedly turning back a German infantry company by climbing on a burning U.S. tank destroyer and firing its .30-cal machine gun, killing 95 Germans. He later became an actor in western and war movies and made 45 films including; The Red Badge of Courage (1951), Destiny (1954), To Hell and Back (1955), based on his autobiography. He died May 28, 1971, in a plane crash near Roanoke, Virginia.

-June 25, 1876 - General George A. Custer, leading 250 men, attacked an encampment of Sioux Indians near Little Bighorn River in Montana. Custer and his men were then attacked by 2000-4000 Indian braves. Only one scout and a single horse survived ‘Custer’s Last Stand’ on Little Bighorn Battlefield. News of the humiliating defeat infuriated Americans and led to all-out war. Within a year, the Sioux Indians were a broken and defeated nation.

-June 25, 1950 - The Korean War began as North Korean troops, led by Russian-built tanks, crossed the 38th parallel and launched a full scale invasion of South Korea. Five days later, U.S. ground forces entered the conflict, which lasted until July 27, 1953, when an armistice was signed at Panmunjom, formally dividing the country at the 38th parallel into North and South Korea.

Sheldon Shortshouse
From the AFRH-G Administrator

Greetings,

What an exciting time to live and work at the crown jewel of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. I continue to be impressed by the outstanding care and concern the residents and staff have for each other. I have experienced the ‘family culture’ at every other location but nothing of this magnitude. Seeing firsthand how the residents and staff are engaged with each other is truly a blessing.

Coming up on June 14th we have two wonderful reasons to celebrate. This day we commemorate ‘Old Glory’ during our Flag Day Ceremony. It was President Truman who signed the Act of Congress on August 3, 1949 that designated June 14th as National Flag Day. I was unable to attend our first Flag Day celebration last year so I am greatly looking forward to the ceremony this year.

On the evening of June 14th we will celebrate the United States Army’s 242nd birthday. This will be exciting because it is the first of all branches birthday. The RAC requested we conduct this ceremony during the evening hours so current military men and women can help us celebrate this special occasion. Come early to get a good seat and I’ll see you there.

God bless you and God bless America!

Jeff Eads

Notes from the AFRH-G, Chairman, Resident Advisory Committee

Volunteering is generally considered an altruistic (altruism or selflessness is the principle or practice of concern for the welfare of others) activity where an individual or group provides services “to benefit another person, group or organization”. Volunteering is often intended to promote goodness or improve human quality of life. Volunteering may have positive benefits for the volunteer as well as for the person or community served. Many volunteer serve on an as-needed basis, such as in response to a particular need of an individual or group. Your RAC members often hear a discouraging word, thought or idea from a resident (or even a visitor/guest) about the level of service you receive from them. Most times it is due to the RAC member doing the right thing or deed, although by no means the most popular action or deed. In my humble opinion, the members of the AFRH-G RAC strive to ensure, as far as possible, equal rights, opportunities and treatment for all members of the AFRH. (AFRH Agency Directive 8-12B issued January 14, 2013)

Although it shouldn’t be necessary, perhaps it is the time to repeat part of the direct quote for all members of the AFRH. While this phrase can be open to interpretation, again in the evening hours so current military men and women can help us celebrate this special occasion. Come early to get a good seat and I’ll see you there.

God bless you and God bless America!

Jeff Eads

Gulfport resident wins gold in the National Veterans Golden Age Games

By Becki Zschiedrich, Public Affairs

Doris Denton was selected to carry the torch at the Parade of Athletes, which was held at the Beau Rivage Resort and Casino on opening night. Veterans from each branch of the military proudly represented their residential state during the parade. This event attracted veterans from almost every state in the country, and even places outside of the United States.

Doris said, “I’ve always been competitive, and I enjoy participating in sports. It doesn’t matter what the game is, I just like to play.” She served in the Marines from 1961-1981. She rose to the rank of sergeant major, and completed a tour in Vietnam. She grew up in Florida, but now calls the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Gulfport, Mississippi home.

Congratulations to Marine Corps veteran Doris Denton for placing first in shuffleboard and horseshoes in the 31st National Veterans Golden Age Games that took place May 7 - 11 in Biloxi, Mississippi. She also competed in bocce ball and table tennis. Over 800 athletes flocked to the coast to compete in a variety of sports.

Doris was also selected to carry the torch at the Parade of Athletes, which was held at the Beau Rivage Resort and Casino on opening night. Veterans from each branch of the military proudly represented their residential state during the parade. This event attracted veterans from almost every state in the country, and even places outside of the United States.

I commend him for taking the time to consider not only the RAC’s recommendation, comments made at a Town Hall, comments received from residents and staff as he traversed the halls or met with residents and staff in his office, as well as through personal observations and coming to a decision he felt was fair and equitable for all staff as he traversed the halls or met with residents and staff in his office, as well as through personal observations and coming to a decision he felt was fair and equitable for all patients.

To this end, discontinuing the Contract Employee of the Quarter Award was not a decision that came about lightly. It is not a mandated Standing Sub-Committee of the RAC. Participation ebbed significantly and not enough nominations were received to ensure all contracted employees were treated equally. When it became controversial in the eyes of some and began to be a negative rather than positive activity, it was time to end the program. Do our contracted employees deserve recognition? Absolutely! However, it should come from their employer. Residents have an opportunity to provide their thoughts regarding outstanding performance of the contractors by utilizing comment boxes provided by GCE and CMI as well as writing a note to Susie Bauman of Ability Works in Harrison County.

Should you be interested in knowing how to contact the employer for any other concerns or topics you would like me to discuss, or to answer questions in this column that may be of importance to you. If I am not around please call the volunteer line at the Biloxi VA Director Anthony Dawson.

By Jen Biernacki, Recreation Therapy Assistant

Boss’s Bingo

By Jen Biernacki, Recreation Therapy Assistant

On Thursday May 4th, the residents of Healthcare were surprised with a special caller for their weekly bingo game. The AFRH-G Administrator Jeff Eads called the bingo numbers during the hour long bingo activity spreading cheers and fun for all. A microphone assisted Mr. Eads in volume as residents and volunteers were spread far across the room.

“Was that a lot of fun,” stated Ms. Kitty Gill. “I wish I would have won though,” she added. Mr. Eads has revealed his very special talent. Thank you Mr. Eads for spending your afternoon with us. We appreciate you!

By Becki Zschiedrich, Public Affairs

Phil Ford was a good sport while being carried down the stairway when he participated in the Safety Fair.

Greetings,

What an exciting time to live and work at the crown jewel of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. I continue to be impressed by the outstanding care and concern the residents and staff have for each other. I have experienced the ‘family culture’ at every other location but nothing of this magnitude. Seeing firsthand how the residents and staff are engaged with each other is truly a blessing.

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God bless you and God bless America!

Jeff Eads

Phil Ford was a good sport while being carried down the stairway when he participated in the Safety Fair.
AFRH-W Activities

Take me out to the ballgame!
By Amanda Jensema, CTRS

Residents of AFRH were treated to a Washington Nationals game against the Arizona Diamondbacks on Thursday, May 4th. The weather was on the cool side with a constant breeze. We all bundled up well and ate some hot dogs and popcorn to keep us warm! It was a great game and the residents were right there cheering them on! The Nationals were the first to score in the second inning with one run, followed by two more runs in the 3rd to make the score 3-0. The Diamondbacks did not score until the 7th inning with one run. We then answered that with a run in the 8th, and Arizona responded with one more run in the 9th. The final score was 4-2, a Nationals win! What also made this a special trip was that we ran into our neighbors from the Washington, DC VA Medical Center, who were sitting in the section next to us! It is always nice when we are at an event together. Everyone had a wonderful time at the game and look forward to their next opportunity to cheer on their home team, the Washington Nationals! On behalf of the residents we would like to thank the Fenwick Foundation for donating the tickets.

AFRH-W Mother’s Day and Ladies Tea Social
By Constance Maziel, Lead Recreation Specialist

A springtime Mother’s Day and Ladies Tea Social created a jovial event for all the lady residents at AFRH-Washington on May 15th. Glittering bracelets, necklaces, and Mother’s Day pins welcomed each participant as they entered the room. Bright purple, pink, and green decorations covered the tables and walls, while beautiful red roses set the tone on each table. Everyone who attended had the opportunity to win door prizes as they also engaged in Women’s History Trivia and Facts. Classic tea time treats were served including an assortment of fine teas, finger sandwiches, fruit, and cheese/crackers. However, the highlight and most favorite seemed to be the decadent cake pops. The residents enjoyed socializing and sharing stories, while classic women’s hits played on the record player. Special thanks to all the volunteers and participants for making the Mother’s Day and Ladies Tea Social truly delightful!

Spring into Summer Ice Cream Social AFRH-W
By Constance Maziel, Lead Recreation Specialist

The 89-degree sunshine weather created the perfect day for the Spring into Summer Ice Cream Social on Friday May 19th. Residents from each population gathered together in the Scott Community Center with their stomachs and hearts ready for chocolate, vanilla, strawberry swirl, and even butter pecan ice cream. The ice cream social would not be complete if it wasn’t for the extra toppings of walnuts, strawberries, chocolate and caramel syrup, whipped cream and of course sprinkles! The room was filled with spring and pink décor throughout. Everyone socialized amongst each other and some residents moved on the dance floor to boogie to classic hits played by the DJ, Billy White. The social concluded with all bellies and pure bliss on all the participants’ faces. A special thanks to all the volunteers for making the Spring into Summer Ice Cream Social a real treat!

First Recreation Therapy swim of the season
By Amanda Jensema, CTRS

With the weather you would not believe it was swim season. It was cold and overcast, and we were all thankful for the indoor heated pool. Residents Margaret Spicer, Victor Mosesso, and David Kaetzel, and recreation therapy staff Carol Mitchell and I had a great swim in the therapeutic pool located next to the gym. We walked, swim laps, played water volleyball and basketball, tossed a beach ball, and did water weights and aerobics.

Everyone enjoyed the warm water. We traveled down memory lane speaking about our memories of going to the pool as kids, and what you had to do to be able to join the Navy. Mosesso stated they had to jump off a high dive and they pulled you out of the pool with a hook! When we were done with our hour long swim we had chips to snack on, soda or water to drink while we dripped dry. RT swim is a once a month program that all residents are invited to attend. We always have a great time. See you next month!

Reading Buddies ends another year
By Christine Baldwin, Librarian

AFRH-W has completed another year of the Reading Buddies program with the children from the Creative Minds International Charter School. The students are from Kindergarten – 6th grade and the readings took place during their lunch time. The resident guided the youth with his/her reading or just read to the child while she ate. Residents participating during one or both semesters were Earl Tourgee, Joe Nesnow, Norma Rambow, Frank Lawrence, David Kaetzel, P.K. Knor, Frank George, Roberta Spanjer and Esker McConnell. Also Chris Kelly, our Public Affairs Officer, was able to help during the fall term. Special thanks to Glenna Orr, our outside volunteer, who added so much with her Reading Specialist training and warm and caring heart. Glenna first began to volunteer at AFRH in 1998, when she was asked by America’s Promise The Alliance for Youth to collaborate with a middle school in Washington, D.C. and help to put in place an Intergenerational Program uniting the middle school students and AFRH residents. And finally a big thank you to our Creative Minds International Charter School staff including Aura Matias, who organized the children and their times, and Willis Palleschi, Physical Education teacher, who loved reading with the children.

Korean cyclists travel cross-country to thank AFRH-Washington Korean War veterans
By Christopher Kelly, Public Affairs Officer

Two recent college graduates – T.H. Lim and Lee Yeon-hee, culminated a months-long cross-country bicycle ride when they arrived at AFRH-W on May 11 to honor our residents who are veterans of the Korean War.

They carried with them messages of thanks to the veterans on behalf of the citizens of South Korea.

For Lim, the project was personal. His grandfather escaped from North Korea in 1955, and fought as a special forces member under American command and alongside American soldiers until 1953. As a refugee from the North, Lim’s grandfather faced suspicions and received no recognition from the South Korean government for his efforts. Lim decided he needed to do something to honor not only his grandfather, but all who fought to preserve his country’s freedom.

Lim and Yeon were greeted at AFRH by a gathering of Korean War veterans who listened intently to the story of their journey. “Carrying old fashioned paper letters with nothing more than the power of our legs, was a fun, respectful and much more meaningful way to express our thanks to the veterans of the Korean War,” he told those gathered. A number of residents brought scrap books and other mementos to share with the young riders.

AFRH Ombudsman Robb Webb presented the two with the AFRH-W official challenge coin as a token of the Home’s respect and gratitude for their efforts.
National Nurses Week and Safety Day

In partnership with National Nurses Week and OSHA's National Safety Stand Down, the AFRH-G hosted a Safety Day to display safety devices for the purpose of raising awareness among residents and employees regarding fall hazards and fall prevention, response capabilities and tools of the trade. Some of the tools on display were the Jaws of Life, ambulance stretcher, evacuation chair, ladders and safety devices.

Safety Officer Frank Bermudez provided key safety training on the Paraslide and Evac Chair to the nursing staff. CMI staff offered ladder safety. AMR-Ambulance were on hand to answer any questions and the Gulfport Fire Department attended and presented the Jaws of Life.

Nursing staff also participated in the Safety Fair. Nurses provided education and posters on fall prevention, and to keep “fall a season, not a safety reason.” Amanda Herold, RN, Infection Control Nurse provided education on hand hygiene using “Glo-Germ.” Brandon Kinchen, RN/Nursing Supervisor/Wellness Center provided education on oxygen safety and management and Diane Snyder, RN/Nurse Educator played “Health Care Jeopardy” with the residents and staff.

National Nurses Day is celebrated annually on May 6 to raise awareness of the important role nurses play in society. Thank you to all of our nurses for providing person-centered-care to our residents.

Boy Scout bowling and lunch bunch fun!

By Susan Bergman, MT-BC, Recreation Therapy Services

On Saturday, April 29, 2017, Boy Scout Troop 201 took resident veterans from Valor, Loyalty and Allegiance Hall for a morning of bowling in the bocce center as a spring game event. After bowling, they escorted residents to the main dining hall, visited, and ate with them for “Lunch Bunch.”

To conclude the day, they returned the tables and podium from the AARP Driving Course to the community center, followed by a meeting with Independent Living resident, Edward Farrell, about his experiences caretaking his mother with Alzheimer’s Disease. Afterwards, the scouts engaged in various sensory and perception exercises to achieve their Disabilities Awareness Merit Badge. We look forward to a future visit with this amazing troop.

Sweet sounds of country music

By Jen Bierzacki, Recreation Therapy Assistant

On Thursday May 11, the residents of Valor, Loyalty and Allegiance Hall enjoyed a guest musician, Brooke Shambley. Brooke played guitar and sang popular country songs that touched everyone’s heart strings through the lyrics. Brooke is the wife of a Navy Officer and has an eight-year-old son. She has been writing her own songs, singing and playing her guitar since the age of thirteen. We send a special thank you to her for sharing her talents and spending the morning here at AFRH-G.

AFRH-G residents speak to students at local school

Courtesy of Connie Favret, St. James School Librarian

Our speakers schedule has been wildly successful this year thanks to AFRH-G residents, who have done nine different presentations for the students at St. James on varying subjects, including: “Life on a Submarine,” “Hawaii and Her Volcanos,” “Appalachian Trail,” and “The Mighty Monk Seals.”

Our library at St. James recently hosted an exciting presentation by Mr. Clifford Smith, a veteran from the Armed Forces Retirement Home, and his daughter, Michelle Smith. Michelle recently returned from the Hawaiian Islands where she worked as a team member of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Plan. Together, Michelle and her father amazed Ms. Ruspoli’s and Mrs. Holder’s second-grade classes with facts about Laysan Island, Midway Island, Pearl and Hermes Reefs and French Frigate Shoals. Michelle spent four months roughing it while assessing the population of the monk seals, removing debris from their haul-out sites and disentangling seals from marine debris. Monk seals grow to a length of seven feet and can weigh up to 450 lbs. They like to haul themselves out during the day on sandy beaches, corals and volcanic rock. Monk seals are named for the folds of skin on their head that look like a monk’s hood and because they spend a great deal of time alone or in small groups. Part of Michelle’s job was to restrain the seals while they were being banded, which proved to be quite a challenge. The Hawaiian Monk Seal is considered one of the rarest marine mammals in the world and without the conservation efforts of young people like Michelle to study the seals and protect their habitat; we would no doubt experience a loss of this extraordinary species of God’s creation. It was three cheers and a multitude of thanks for a wonderful presentation.

Resident attends Gulfport Police Department Memorial Ceremony

Resident Tony Langdon was invited by the Gulfport, MS Police Chief Leonard Papania to attend the Gulfport Police Department Memorial Ceremony on May 19th. As it does every year, the city blocked the street in front of the Gulfport Police Department as officials and residents remembered eight fallen police officers. The memorial ceremony on the police department’s front steps is in conjunction with National Police Week and is one of several taking place on the Mississippi Coast in May.

Resident Tony Langdon (far right) takes a group photo with the Gulfport PD.
A beautiful day for fishing and kite fishing

By Susan Bergman, MT-BC, Recreation Services
Photos by Resident Jack Horsley

It was a beautiful day on Friday, April 21 for residents from Allegiance, Valor, and Loyalty Hall to grab their fishing poles and enjoy Fort Maurepas Park and Pier in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. Once the fish started biting the bait shrimp, catfish, croakers, speckled trout, and spotted croakers were the main catches. With lunch approaching, residents headed for the picnic shelter to enjoy a delicious box lunch from dining service and a perfect view of the blue sky and sparkling water. After lunch, residents took their turns kite fishing where several volunteers lined up to watch and provide sound effects responding with ’ooooo’s… awwee’s… nooo… yeaahh’ as the kite dipped and rose with the wind. Thank you to our resident volunteers – Jack Horsley, Edward Farrell, Rick John Walk, Doris Jones, and Smitty Smith along with community volunteers – Pauline Larson and Leann Wise. We can’t thank our military volunteers enough including the Navy CB-133, USS Portland from Pascagoula, and the Coast Guard. Can’t wait to go fishing and kite fishing again!

Recreation Therapy Mexican Fiesta

By Carol Mitchell and Amanda JENSEMA, Recreation Therapy
Photos by Necilia Jones, Public Affairs

Hola Amigos! On Wednesday, May 3rd the Recreation Therapy department hosted what has become an annual event… The RT Mexican Fiesta! This year’s event was just as memorable as in previous years. Residents were served traditional Mexican foods to include: burritos, Mexican layered bean dip, chips and salsa, fresh fruit and cinnamon tortilla chips. Resident Services Administrative Assistant Carolyn Haug, and Recreation Team Lead Constance Maziel had the huge responsibility of making the fresh table side guacamole and one of our regular volunteers, Betty, and a military volunteer took on the task of making home-made quesadillas. Our resident bartenders Sheldon and P.K. did a tremendous job at the bar making strawberry margaritas, both with and without alcohol, as well as serving Mexican beers, sodas and water. A handful of brave residents even had a shot of tequila!

Throughout the event we had a three piece roving Mariachi Band giving each table specialized attention. Military volunteers did a phenomenal job serving residents at their tables and providing for their food and beverage needs, along with mixing and mingling with the residents. There were over 90 residents in attendance from all levels of AFRH-W care, and they all left with smiles on their faces. Days following the event, residents were still expressing how much fun they had and they are already looking forward to the next Fiesta! Until then… Adios!

Ray and Jo Colvard (pictured above) have been married for 70 years! They enjoyed an afternoon together at the Mexican Fiesta. Both reside at the AFRH-W.