American Armed Forces honored at 2017 Veterans Day Ceremony

Story and Photos by Robert W. Mitchell, AFRH-W Volunteer/Activities Coordinator

Distinguished military veterans both past and present were honored for their bravery, sacrifice and overall contributions to the nation during the 2017 Veterans Day wreath-laying Ceremony held at the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Washington, D.C. The event drew about 40 people including residents, family members, the Nam Knights veterans group and representatives from the Office of the Mayor of the District of Columbia.

A four-member detail from the United States Navy Ceremonial Guard marched in to present the national colors at the start of the ceremony, triggering impassioned salutes from many in the attendance. AFRH-W resident Sheldon Shorthouse led attendees in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance while residents Frank Lawrence (USAF) and Charles Felder (USA, USAF, USMC) spoke about their own military experiences and how veterans are moved to forfeit their own comfort for the safety and security of others.

AFRH-W Protestant Chaplain John Goodloe led the invocation and Public Affairs Officer Christopher Kelly was the Master of Ceremonies for the event. Following remarks from Ely Ross, director of the Mayor’s Office of Veterans Affairs, Ross joined Felder and Lawrence in laying a wreath at the base of the campus flag pole. Each veteran then rendered an honorable salute.

Despite having a full schedule of countless invites to attend ceremonies throughout the nation’s capital, District of Columbia Mayor Muriel E. Bowser stopped by to meet and greet veterans and attendees at the ceremony. She thanked veterans for their service and sacrifice and took photos with several residents who were delighted at her presence.

AFRH-Gulfport

AFRH-G celebrates residents with a Veterans Day Open House and Ceremony

Story and Photos by Becki Zschiedrich, Public Affairs

Hundreds of people gathered on a single mission at the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Gulfport on November 10th for the annual Veterans Day Open House and Ceremony, where we honored those who have served our country and those who are still serving. People from all walks of life turned out to pay tribute. South Mississippi retired astronaut Fred Haise, Jr. of Apollo 13, who is also a veteran and a Biloxi native, took center stage as keynote speaker.

The Armed Forces Retirement Home in Gulfport pulled out all the stops for the celebration. Helicopters from the Harrison County Sheriff’s Department, U.S. Coast Guard and Ochsner Hospital’s Air Ambulance made dramatic entrances. The campus was filled with military and first responder displays. The Patriot Guard Motorcycles came rumbling through the front gate with American Flags behind their motorcycles. Gulfport High School’s band played pre-ceremony patriotic music and Anniston Elementary first grade students sang their hearts out with patriotic hymns. Paintings, arts, and crafts made by our many talented resident artists were available for purchase and the community was treated to tours throughout the day given by resident volunteer tour guides.

Members from all branches of the nation’s military came out for this special ceremony and they all agree on one thing; there’s a great price to pay for the freedoms that we enjoy today. Patriot Guard Rider Curtis Erickson said: “It’s great to be part of the ceremony here at the Armed Forces Retirement Home as there are so many people here who have served our country for so many years. They have a lot of interesting stories to tell. They’re such great people. It’s really an honor to be with them here.”

The AFRH celebrates Veterans Day each year to honor and to ensure veterans know that we deeply appreciate the sacrifices they have made in their lives to keep our country free. A very special thank you goes out to all who participated in making this such an extraordinary event.
Christopher Kelly - Public Affairs Officer

Training System. While at this school position, I did some research and found that I had served candidates. I was selected to co-author the leadership and ethics portion of the first Warrant Army Band, the 1st Armored Division Band, the 14th Army Band, and the 2nd Infantry Division wings. My follow-on band assignments included Command of the 95th Division Band, the 98th Washington, D.C. Upon graduation, I was appointed as a warrant officer, bandmaster and was sent home. Wild Bill had just lost his third wife so he decided to try life at the Naval Home. He did not take him very long to get homesick. He moved out and went back to Florida to take back his FRA position. In 2005, he decided to give what was now AFRH-G another try. He was living in the home for less than a year when Hurricane Katrina struck. Instead of relocating to AFRH-W with the most of the other residents, he went back to Florida. He stayed until he received a letter stating that he would be welcomed back to AFRH-G when it reopened but would have to live at AFR-W until that time came. He was flown back with the other residents for the reopening of their home and has been since in Gulfport.

Wild Bill is the proud father of four children. He has 12 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. In 1964 he moved to Florida. He has been an “old, happy, rascal” ever since.

Upon retirement, Wild Bill decided to use his GI Bill to earn a degree in law enforcement. Using his degree, he began security and police work. He eventually became Chief of Police in Loganville, Georgia. He only served one year before he decided to step down from that position. In 1985, he decided to retire completely and move to Florida. He has been an “old, happy, rascal” ever since.

I was born in a small town in the northeast corner of the Texas panhandle. In high school, I played the French horn and developed a love for band music. After high school I joined the U.S. Army in 1957. My first duty assignment was as a French horn player in the Signal School Band at Ft. Gordon, Georgia. While in the Signal School Band, I met the operator named Catherine Murphy. The night I met her I told my friends that I had met the girl I was going to marry. Fifteen months later we were engaged. My father, who served in a war theater during a time of war declared by Congress or were eligible for hostile fire special pay were discharged or released from service in the Armed Forces under honorable conditions; and are determined under rules prescribed by the Chief Operating Officer to be incapacitated of earning a livelihood because of a service-connected disability incurred in the line of duty in the Armed Forces.

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Meet our Chief Executive Officer

The AFRH would like to introduce our new Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Major General (Ret.) Stephen T. Rippe. If you were able to attend the town hall meeting you heard about his history in the military and his post-military career. He will be focusing on strategic planning, new revenue streams to support AFRH in the future, and the morale and welfare of residents and staff.

General Rippe brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to his position, including four years as President and CEO of The Army Distaff Foundation (ADF) and the Knollwood Continuing Care Retirement Community in Washington, D.C. ADF and Knollwood support retired officers and their families in a setting similar to AFRH.

He also has served as a Trustee on the Norwich University Governing Board since 2008. Additionally, he serves as a Special Adviser to the David Lynch Foundation’s Center for Excellence in Military Health. Following his position as President and CEO at ADF/Knollwood, he served as the Executive Vice President, the de facto CEO, of TrueTandem, a high technology services company.

Previously, General Rippe served as the Vice President, Middle East Operations, for L-3 Communications, in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Prior to assuming his role with L-3 Communications, General Rippe served as the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the Protestant Episcopal Cathedral Foundation in Washington, D.C. The Foundation is the governing body and operating executive and board roles with several for-profit and non-profit organizations.

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Message from the Acting Chief Operating Officer

From November 1st to November 3rd, I visited the AFRH-Gulfport facility, met with numerous staff, the RAC Chair and Vice Chair to address any questions or concerns that they had regarding the current state of the AFRH. Phase 3 (the final phase) of the DoD Office of Inspector General (OIG) triennial assessment began on November 14th, with interviews of the Agency staff (human resources, facilities, safety, security, information technology, resident services, estates, and the AFRH IG hotline). The DoD-OIG will begin interviewing the staff at the D.C. facility that are responsible for the aforementioned program areas from November 27th – 30th, 2017. AFRH leadership is currently awaiting the final reports for the DoD IG assessment of medical (Phase 1), finance and procurement (Phase 2). The DoD-OIG anticipates releasing the Phase 1 & 2 reports in December 2017.

The Secretary of Defense announced on November 13th, 2017, the appointment of Major General (Ret.) Stephen T. Rippe, U.S. Army, as the Chief Executive Officer of the Armed Forces Retirement Home. General Rippe is uniquely qualified to serve as the Home’s CEO, having served in a similar capacity for the non-profit Army Distaff Foundation, which operates the Knollwood “Life Plan Community” in Washington, D.C., as well as in executive and board roles with several for-profit and non-profit organizations.

In 1991, Congress incorporated the U.S. Naval Home and U.S. Soldiers and Airmen’s Home into an independent establishment of the Executive Branch of the Federal government named the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH). In 2002, the names of the two homes were officially changed to the Armed Forces Retirement Home – Gulfport and the Armed Forces Retirement Home – Washington. The legislation also installed a Chief Operating Officer (CEO) as the head of the AFRH who is subject to the direction of the Secretary of Defense, who delegated the oversight authority to the Deputy Chief Management Officer (DCMO).

The DCMO appointed General Rippe as AFRH’s CEO. He will serve as the single oversight authority within DoD, and has the responsibility for the strategic planning (including land development and leasing) for the AFRH. The CEO is a DoD employee and reports to the DCMO. The AFRH staff report to the AFRH CEO, who in turn reports to the CEO.

Please see his complete biography above!

Respectfully,

Maurice Swinton

Maurice Swinton speaks with DC Mayor Muriel Bowser at the Veterans Day ceremony.

AFRH-G retired Marine chosen as keynote speaker at Marine Ball

Gulfport resident and U.S. Marine Corps retired 1st Sgt. Harry O. Blake, Jr. delivered remarks during the 242nd Marine Corps Birthday Ball at the Golden Nugget Casino on November 10, 2017, in Biloxi, Mississippi. More than 300 service members and guests attended the Kreoler Marine Detachment hosted event. Mr. Blake was asked by 1st Sgt. Earl E. DeLack II to be the keynote speaker at this prestigious event.

Harry Blake (left) and 1st Sgt. Earl E. DeLack II (right) at the Marine Ball on November 10, 2017.

Left to right: Lafarsha Nance, AFRH-W Resident Harvey Stackpole, Petty Officer 3rd Class Adan Castro, Petty Officer 3rd Class Joshua Nielsen.

Government named the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH). In 2002, the names of the two homes were officially changed to the Armed Forces Retirement Home – Gulfport and the Armed Forces Retirement Home – Washington. The legislation also installed a Chief Operating Officer (CEO) as the head of the AFRH who is subject to the direction of the Secretary of Defense, who delegated the oversight authority to the Deputy Chief Management Officer (DCMO).

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Maurice Swinton speaks with DC Mayor Muriel Bowser at the Veterans Day ceremony.

Residents platelet donor reaches milestone

By Christine Baldwin, Librarian

At the end of October, resident Harvey Stackpole reached an amazing milestone: his 100th platelet donation! He started giving blood donations in 1971, after joining the U.S. Army. When he retired, Harvey learned about the Armed Services Blood Program (Apheresis Platelet Program). He became a platelet donor, so that he could help wounded warriors in need. When he arrives in his ASBP apparel, Harvey sits in his favorite collection chair (he was the first donor to use that chair when it was received).

On his 100th donation, the Pentagon Blood Donor Center staff celebrated with a group photo and a Certificate of Appreciation. Before leaving, Harvey made sure to schedule his next platelet donation. To learn more about this life saving donation, go to:


More than 300 service members and guests enjoyed Mr. Blake at the keynote speaker. U.S. Air Force photo by Kimberly Groue.
242nd Marine Corps Birthday Celebration

By Constance Mazziol, Lead Recreation Specialist

On November 10th, 2016 celebrated 242 years of the U.S. Marine Corps Birthday in the Scott Hall of Honors. The ombudsmen, Mr. Robb Webb was the Master of Ceremonies for the event, and provided a delightful sense of humor and engaged everyone present! The celebration was brought to attention by the Pledge of Allegiance followed by the National Anthem which incorporated a personal message to every Marine present. The ceremony proceeded with the Guest of Honor Sergeant Major Ronald Green, who seemed to be some of the Marine residents’ favorite guest! Sergeant Major Green assumed his current post as Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps on February 20, 2015. A native Mississipi, he attended recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, South Carolina, in November 1983. He has been meritoriously promoted to the ranks of private first class, lance corporal, corporal, sergeant and staff sergeant. Throughout his career, Sergeant Major Green has been assigned numerous duties to include: field artillery cannonner; field artillery nuclear projectile man; tower operator; drill instructor, senior drill instructor and drill master; battery section chief and battery gunnery sergeant and Assistant Marine Officer Instructor at Southern University and A&M College just to name a few. Sergeant Major Green holds a B.S. in Cybersecurity and a M.S. in Cybersecurity Policy from the University of Maryland College. He was delighted and honored to be a part of the celebration and to share his past and present experiences with all AFRH residents. The celebration progressed with the traditional U.S. Marine Corps cake cutting, honoring Marine veteran recipient Hollie Wilson, Chief Colvard was only a toddler. He would not enter the challenges of serving in the military. The ceremony was concluded with admiration to all Marines present by the USO. Mayor Bowser visited and took photographs with residents and guests. If you are going to celebrate this holiday, be safe.

This Month in History

-December 1, 1955 - The birth of the modern American civil rights movement occurred as Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to give up her seat to a white man and move to the back section of a municipal bus. Her arrest resulted in a year-long boycott of the city bus system by African Americans and led to legal actions ending racial segregation on municipal buses throughout the South.

-December 2, 1859 - Abolitionist John Brown was executed for treason at Charles Town, West Virginia, following his raid on the U.S. Arsenal at Harpers Ferry.

-December 5, 1933 - The 18th Amendment (Prohibition Amendment) to the U.S. Constitution was repealed. For nearly 14 years, since January 19, 1920, it had outlawed the manufacture, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages in the U.S.

-December 5, 1859 - George Armstrong Custer was born in New Rumley, Harrison County, Ohio. He graduated from West Point at the bottom of his class in 1861, then became a dashing cavalry officer in the Civil War and fought at Bull Run. He was appointed brigadier general and served gallantly at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He was mortally wounded at the Battle of the Wilderness, Virginia, during the Civil War of the Chancellorsville, Virginia campaign. After the war, he took part in the Western expedition against the Sioux Indians. In June of 1867, Custer and over 200 of his soldiers from the U.S. 7th Cavalry were killed by Sioux warriors at Little Bighorn in Montana.

-December 6, 1865 - The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified abolishing slavery, stating, “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, shall exist as a punishment for crime wherein the party shall have been duly convicted. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, shall exist as a punishment for crime wherein the party shall have been duly convicted.” All states within the United States, or any place subject to the jurisdiction of the United States.

-December 7, 1941 - The U.S. Naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, was attacked by nearly 200 Japanese aircraft in a raid that left over one hour and left nearly 3,000 Americans dead.

-December 10, 1898 - The Treaty of Paris was signed between American and Spanish representatives following Spain’s defeat in the Spanish-American War. Under the treaty, the U.S. gained the Philippines, the islands of Guam and Puerto Rico, and an agreement by Spain to withdraw from Cuba. The treaty passed by a single vote in the U.S. Senate on February 6, 1899, and was signed by President William McKinley four days later.

-December 13, 1862 - During the American Civil War, the Battle of Fredericksburg occurred in Virginia as the Union Army of the Potomac under General Burnside suffered a costly defeat, losing 12,653 soldiers. The battle is considered a turning point in the Civil War, as it marked the end of the Union’s efforts to capture Richmond. The battle also marked the beginning of the Union’s efforts to capture Richmond.

-December 14, 1799 - George Washington died at Mount Vernon. He was 67 years old.

-December 14, 1896 - World War II General James Doolittle (1896-1993) was born in Alameda, California. On April 18, 1942, he led a squadron of B-25 bombers launched from the aircraft carrier Hornet to conduct the first American air raid of the war against mainland Japan.

Greetings from the RAC Chairman!

This month at AFRH we observed what used to be known as Armistice Day. 11 November 1918 (the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month) marked the ending of hostilities in France, thus ending the war to end all wars. But in 1934 President Dwight D. Eisenhower officially changed the name to Veterans Day! A wreath laying ceremony was conducted at the main flag pole by AFRH-W residents Frank Lawrence U.S. Air Force and Chuck Fielder, Army, Forces, and Marines, they both reflected on what Veterans Day means to them. The ceremony proceeded with the presentation of the USC Navy by Mayor Bowser and special guest Ashley Congrains. The ceremony was concluded with admiration to all Marines and veterans across the globe. Happy Birthday Marines and Semper Fidelis!

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

Shaun Servais

Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Ronald Green and Shaun Servais at the Marine Corps Birthday celebration.
From the AFRH-G Administrator

Greetings!

We had an exceptional Veterans Day and Open House celebration on November 10. I would like to thank the recreation and resident services team and everyone else who helped to make this such an unforgettable day. I told my staff that I have a new hero in our keynote speaker and former astronaut Fred Haise. To know him is a Mississippian, a Marine, served in the USAF and U.S. Navy, and was the lunar module pilot on Apollo 13 as well as the Space Shuttle program so impressive. Serving in three branches of our military is astonishing and to add astronaut to his resume makes him one of a kind.

We also had a wonderful Thanksgiving feast at the AFRH-G and had over 100 family and friends join the residents for this special meal. I am thankful for all the residents and employees at AFRH-G and I am thankful to work for America’s heroes. I hope everyone enjoyed their Thanksgiving holiday.

Our new Chief Executive Officer (CEO), US Army Major General (Ret.) Stephen Rippe, was introduced to the AFRH-G along with Travis Smith from DCMO. I believe General Rippe’s experience with strategic planning will help us as we go forward dealing with the trust fund solvency problem. As long as we face as a continuing care retirement community. The Department of Defense Inspector General’s office will be in Gulfport December 11-15, 2017 and their inspection team will review the following areas:

1. Security
2. Human Resources
3. Information Technology
4. Facilities
5. Admissions and Eligibility
6. Resident Services
7. Estate Matters

Speaking of inspections and surveys, we submitted our action plan to The Joint Commission this month and our plan was accepted! Congratulations to each member of the AFRH Gulfport team. This is another example of the great work each of you do to make this home great.

Until next month, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

God bless you and God bless America.

Jeff Eads

Happy 242nd Birthday U.S. Marine Corps

By Becki Zschiedrich,
Public Affairs

In conjunction with the Veterans Day ceremony AFRH-G presented a cake on November 10th in honor of the U.S. Marines 242nd birthday. Former Apollo 13 astronaut Fred Haise, helped cut the cake with the AFRH-G oldest Marine Jeanette Easter and youngest Marine Les Crawshaw.

“Semper Fi, Semper Fi” Crawshaw said. “Yes, that’s what it means to all of us, and I think there are a lot of Marines that will reflect that also.”

Congratulations Mr. Eads!

Dr. Lee Royce, President of MS College, Jeff Eads and Melodie Fortenberry, Chair for Health Services Administration Degree Program at MS College. Photo by Tracey Harrison, Director of Public Relations Mississippi College.

Congratulations to Gulfport Administrator Jeff Eads for receiving the 2017 Distinguished Alumni award for the Master of Health Services Administration Program at Mississippi College in Clinton, Mississippi. This award was presented to Mr. Eads for his outstanding achievement in health administration as an administrator serving senior adults in long term care and continuing care retirement communities for more than 20 years. We all wish you continued success.

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

On November 1, 2017 RAC Vice Chairman Roy Cook, Ombudsmen Master Chief Wise and I met with the Deputy Chief Management Officer (DCMO) staff and the acting Chief Operating Officer (COO) Maurice Swinton to discuss issues of importance to residents. The opportunity to have an open and candid discussion led to a refreshing and clearer indication of how DCMO and AFRH, together, plan to move forward. The three primary components driving decisions regarding AFRH are 1.) Solvency, 2.) Self-sustainability and 3.) Long-term viability.

The impression that AFRH is intended to be around for a long, long time was absolutely evident. In what form will it be – that is one of the most fundamental issues currently under study. It is obvious that the revenue stream that has lasted for well over 150 years does not need to be tweaked, it needs to be modified and perhaps just outright changed. Modifications will take legislative action to change. Title 24 was playing to hear that those places that are deemed comparable to the AFRH were done in the context of expenditures and income. In plain language it was found that the expenses of the AFRH are very much in line with the expenses of like continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs). The revenue side of the comparison to like facilities found that the AFRH is absolutely unique in how it is funded to ensure the long-term solvency via a model of self-sustainability.

Will fees rise? Yes, but with an assurance that no current resident will ever be forced to leave AFRH because of their inability to pay. That has always been part of AFRH’s core mission and will not change. With an assurance that instituting a fee structure that takes into consideration today’s residents (average age 83) with the incoming residents (average age in the sixties) and future residents (average age in the forties) will not be an easy task. Will it still be based on a percentage of income with a cap, or the cap removed and everyone pay a percentage of income? At this time it appears that fees will be a percentage of income with a cap for the five levels of care (Independent Living, Independent Living Plus, Assisted Living, Long Term Care, and Memory Support). Will lines and forfeiture of assets decline. The 50 deduction “go away” once the way forward to shore up the trust fund is found? Possibly, there may not be a need for this income stream. Creating a different revenue model entails considering all stakeholders: current residents and tenants, past and present, and the non-tenants who pay the .50 deduction “go away” once the way forward to shore up the trust fund is found? Possibly, there may not be a need for this income stream. Creating a different revenue model entails considering all stakeholders: current residents and tenants, past and present, and the non-tenants who pay the .50 deduction “go away” once the way forward to shore up the trust fund is found? Possibly, there may not be a need for this income stream.

What would change in the AFRH’s mission and daily operation if it became a 501(c) 3? There is serious consideration being given to the request that the AFRH become a congressionally chartered non-profit. Volumes (literally) can be written what being a 501(c) 3 would entail and the future.

The following questions raised in last month’s column, but not discussed during the November 1st meeting, due to a lack of time, would also fall under the infamous “to be determined” category. Will all current residents be grandfathered? At what price will the grandfathering occur? Will the AFRH only accept those that can pay their full share of the cost for residency except for a small percentage (perhaps 10-15%) receiving some type of subsidy from the trust fund? Will those veterans eligible for entry be required to divest their assets (aka Medicare/Medicaid) in order to qualify for admission? We will continue to have twenty-one meals a week or will it be only nineteen (two on weekends), fourteen (two a day) or seven (one a day) with an option to purchase additional meals? Will those places that are deemed comparable to the AFRH really be comparable in ALL aspects or do they have application fees, buy-in fees, a la carte pricing (separate charges for rent, food, medical, etc), allow only officers, admit the surviving spouses of retired enlisted members of all U.S. military branches, allow only one being a retired enlisted U.S. military member, allow mothers of active duty and retired enlisted U.S. airmen and once again, the list could go on and on. Why TBD? Very simply – the AFRH is basically getting recreated due to solvency issues and while the mission may remain the same, the means to support the mission will be undergoing significant changes. The Mission: To fulfill our nation’s commitment to its veterans by providing a premiere retirement community with exceptional care and extensive support services, remains and will remain.

At the conclusion of the meeting one item is an absolute certainty; more changes will be coming to the Armed Forces Retirement Home. Although it now seems that the road forward may not be as bumpy, and the potholes presenting themselves not as deep as first feared; major changes will be occurring and the way (road) forward may instead be extremely bumpy and potholes deeper than they appear. A commitment of transparency remains from the COO and DCMO.

It does appear that those making decisions regarding the future of the AFRH are keeping foremost in their minds that they are dealing with real live flesh and bone veterans with an average age of 83 who consider themselves permanently at Home. At the same time they are also trying to position and prepare the AFRH for the residents of the future. The DCMO is moving slowly, cautiously and methodically as it works with AFRH leadership paving the way forward to ensure a solvent, self-sustainable and long-term viable retirement home for the younger generation of veterans.

As always, I am open to any suggestions of topics you would like to discuss, or to answer questions in this column that may be of importance to you. If it is on your mind it must be important to you, and answers are it is also of importance, or at least informative, to other residents to know the answer.

Till next month I wish you all the best,

Phil Ford

P.S. - Yes, there was a RAC meeting held on November 14th. The article needed to be submitted earlier this month due to the holiday. Thus, I am not including highlights here as I usually do. I will be happy to send those minutes to you. Please send request to Racchair@gmail.com

Phil Ford with former astronaut Fred Haise at the Veterans Day ceremony.
Exercise to help you relax:

Relaxed breathing: This form of relaxation focuses on deep, relaxed breathing as a way to relieve tension and stress. Before you begin, find a comfortable position. Lie on a bed or couch or sit on a chair. Then do the following:

1. Inhale. With your mouth closed and your shoulders relaxed, inhale slowly and deeply through your nose to the count of six. Allow the air to fill your diaphragm—the muscle between your abdomen and chest—pushing your abdomen out.
2. Pause for a second.
3. Exhale. Slowly release air through your mouth as you count to six.
4. Pause for a second.
5. Repeat. Complete this breathing cycle several times.

Being aware of exercises to help you relax, will lead to happiness and vitality as you age.

Army to begin providing medical care to Chem/Bio research volunteers

ARMY MEDICAL COMMAND, Falls Church, Va. – The U.S. Army is notifying veterans that they may be eligible to receive medical care if they participated in U.S. Army chemical or biological substance testing from 1942 to 1975 and have an injury or disease that they believe was proximately caused by their participation. Recently a class action lawsuit filed by the Vietnam Veterans of America required the U.S. Army to provide medical care to veterans who volunteered to contribute to the advancement of the U.S. biological and chemical programs.

To be eligible for medical care, veterans who may fall within this identified class must have:

• A Department of Defense Form 214 or War Department discharge/separation form(s) or the functional equivalent.
• A diagnosed medical condition they believe to be a direct result of their participation in a U.S. Army chemical or biological substance testing program.

Medical care, to include medications, will be provided at the closest military medical treatment facility that has the capability and capacity. Medical care will be provided on a space available basis for a specific period of time as described in the authorization letter, and is supplemental to the comprehensive medical care a plaintiff is entitled to receive through the VA based on their status as a veteran.

Eligible veterans are encouraged to go to http://armymedicine.mil/Pages/cbtp.aspx or call 1-800-984-8523 if they have any questions or need assistance.

WGTS broadcasts live from AFRH-W

We were so glad to have WGTS broadcasting live on Veterans Day from AFRH-W’s Hall of Honors.

2017 AFRH-W Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) is in full swing now!

By Laura Fogarty, Safety and Occupational Health Officer

This year’s campaign season “Show Some Love” began on Oct 2, 2017 and will run through Jan 12, 2018. The Washington Campus held their kick-off event on October 27th. Residents and employees came together to learn about this year’s CFC program and its changes.

We were fortunate to have as our guest speaker Curtis Rumbaugh, a local Federal Coordinating Committee Member. In addition, Alan Hay, CFCNCA Associate Director; Iris Roseboro, Loaned Executive; Maurice Swinton, COO and Shaun Servais, Administrator provided their support during this event. Lastly, representatives from the Fisher House Foundation and the Local Community Georgia Avenue Family Support Collaborative spoke on behalf of their organization.

Lorton Legion Luncheon is a favorite trip for AFRH-W! The Legion invites residents out for a delicious lunch three times a year. This event, thanks to the Legion and Post#162, has been going on strong for 25+ years! Special thanks to the AFRH nursing staff, recreation, and volunteer services for their continued heartfelt support!
AFRH-G Fall Carnival and Games kick-off  

Photos by Becki L. Zschiedrich, Public Affairs  

On Monday, October 30th the Recreation Department put on a festive and very entertaining Fall Carnival in the Community Center. This was a celebration for the start of the Fall Games, which were held from October 23 through November 7. Thank you to our amazing resident, community and Coast Guard volunteers.

AFRH-G 1st Annual Alzheimer’s Walk  
By Shamika Brinkley, RN, BSN, Clinical Nurse Supervisor  
Photos by Becki L. Zschiedrich, Public Affairs  

In honor of November being National Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness Month, the Armed Forces Retirement Home hosted its inaugural Alzheimer’s Awareness Walk on Monday, November 6, 2017. Alzheimer’s is a disease that hits close to home and is near and dear to the heart of residents and staff at the Home, as we have several residents affected by this disease. According to the Alzheimer’s Association, there are nearly 5.4 million people diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. Coming to this realization, it was placed on the heart of two Alzheimer’s Association members, Betty Deloach-Turner and Sirlena McMorris, to partner with many other staff members to coordinate an Alzheimer’s Walk at the Gulfport Home to help bring awareness about the disease to our residents and staff. Several staff members, volunteers and residents came out to participate in the walk, including residents from our upper levels of care and memory support unit. Overall, the walk was a great success and everyone is looking forward to continuing it in future years to come.

A-Plantin’ for A-Bloomin’ with Beach Garden Society  
By Susan Bergman, MT-BC, Recreation Therapy Services  

On Wednesday, November 15, 2017, members of the Beach Garden Society brought Holly Fern and Amaryllis bulbs for a morning of gardening. The group quickly went to work weeding, trimming, planting, and visiting with residents. Starting up on the Loyalty Hall patio gardens, a volunteer kneeled next to Mary Nelson, watched as the resident lit-up, and listened as she reminisced about her military experience and how she met her husband. After beautifying the Loyalty patio area, the group then moved down to the Valor Hall patio and were joined again by the Beach Garden group initially planted six years ago on the Valor patio in November of 2011 and upon return, noticed their Amaryllis bulbs still growing and now spread amongst the Loyalty patio, too. The new red Amaryllis bulbs were planted again this November in order to be ready for blooming in time for Easter. Thank you for a-plantin’ so that we will be a bloomin’ soon.

Profiles in Courage  
By Connie Favret, Librarian St. James School  

The Veterans Day Program on Tuesday afternoon, November 7, was one of the best events ever enjoyed in our library at Saint James Catholic Elementary School. Our guests of honor included Mr. William “Milkshake” Allen and Mr. Clifford Smith, who represented our neighbors at the Armed Forces Retirement Home. These gentlemen shared their memories of military service with 29 third grade students and their teachers, Ms. Stacie Barrient and Ms. Carmen Peters. This event is our way to thank veterans for their devotion to duty and for safeguarding our essential American freedoms, in times of war and peace.

Mr. William Allen, signed up for the Navy’s lighter-than-air duty aboard blimps in 1942. Blimps were used to detect German submarines along coastlines, approaching harbors and when escorting ships. Blimps were capable of finding subs in water up to 300 feet deep with highly sophisticated and top secret equipment. Blimps escorted over 89,000 ships and only lost one tanker, the Persephone, to enemy attack. Mr. Allen also explained the origin of his nickname, “Milkshake” to our audience. Mr. Allen was assigned to escort a famous movie actress, back then known as a “hot patootie”, who adored him with this colorful nickname.

Mr. Clifford “Smitty” Smith served in the Navy for 20 years aboard four different submarines. Mr. Smith needed his father’s signature to enlist for military duty as he was still in high school at that time, at age 17. He said he would do it all over again if he could. Mr. Smith is a prolific artist and great contributor to our library. Be sure to see the many works of art created by Mr. Smith which are on exhibit and available for purchase. All proceeds from this sale directly benefit our library and you can purchase the set of military books for young readers purchased with the income from last year’s Veterans Day program. Our program concluded with some light refreshments and 1940s music and with the presentation of a specially commissioned cloisonné St. James pin to each of our veterans. We all agreed to do this again next year.

Armed Forces Retirement Home Gulfport residents, Roy Cook and Tony Langdon received an achievement plaque from The Peoples Bank Senior Vice President Ann Guice for their effort to raise money to help a good cause, the American Heart Association. There was competition from the five military services to be number one in contributions. The U.S. Army won in contributions.

Employee picnic  

On Saturday November 4, 2017 several employees and their family members met at Hiller Park in Biloxi for fellowship, food, fun and games. Thank you to Darren Jones for coordinating this event.
Fabulous fun-filled fall

By Susan Bergman, MT-BC, Recreation Therapy Services

A picture collage speaks more than words and shows highlighted events from the month of October falling into the month of November 2017 for residents on Valor, Allegiance, and Loyalty Halls. The fabulous fun-filled fall events began with the October 20th trip to Red Lobster with James Brogan and Ramon Cooey digging into crab claws, lobster, fish, and more. The Fall Game Poker Walk on Halloween brought smiles with Jackie Haslam and Minion escort along with Kitty Gill picking a winning card to place. On November 1, residents were treated again to the Piatigorsky Foundation with a live classical concert with a phenomenal Tenor and Pianist. On November 3, residents went on a shopping and lunch outing to Keesler Air Force Base followed by visit to Lighthouse Park in Biloxi. Tom and daughter, Susan Torguson visited with pet volunteer, Mickey Mouse on November 7 leading up to the Veteran’s Day Open House and Marine's Birthday Ceremony at the front entrance. On Thursday, November 16, Father Uko led the Thanksgiving Service in the morning while Ruth Surratt and residents enjoyed a piano social in the afternoon. The month will conclude with the annual USM History visit to decorate holiday stockings, Drum It Up! Drumming group, and Lynn Meadows WINGS Performing Arts for the AFRH Tree Lighting Ceremony on November 30. All this and more – hope you had a fabulous fun-filled fall, too!

Seafood fest

By Carol Mitchell, Recreation Therapy
Photos by Carolyn Haug and Jack Beck

Residents enjoyed a Seafood Fest complete with demonstrations on oyster shucking by Master Shucker Bill Striegel, crab picking by Amanda Jensema and lobster cracking by Carol Mitchell. A tremendous thank you to Mr. Snow, Greg and Liz in Food Services for an appetizing event! Residents sampled lobster homemade oyster stew, oysters on the half shell, crab and shrimp spring rolls. The afternoon event was topped off with seafood trivia and history, plus great tunes by resident DJ Billy White.