

56th FW changes its mission

By SENIORAIRMAN GRACE LEE
56TH FIGHTER WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Luke Air Force Base’s 56th Fighter Wing conducted a Change of Mission ceremony May 21, formally including the F-35 Lightning II as part of the wing’s new mission statement.

The ceremony included the military tradition of unveiling 56th FW commander, Brig. Gen. Scott Pleus’ name on the flagship F-35, signifying the mission change.

Thereafter, Pleus began his remarks to the hangarful of Airmen and community leaders by looking back at Luke’s history.

“If you go back to Feb-

ruary of 1941, the City of Phoenix authorized the War Department, as it was called back then, the ability to build a training base out in the west side of Phoenix,” Pleus said. “The state of Arizona saw the ability to bring the military into the Arizona community, just like they do today. Their unbelievably generous opportunity resulted in leasing this land to the United States Air Force for one dollar a year and that still holds true today.”

Luke AFB currently has 23 F-35s and by 2024, Luke is scheduled to have six fighter squadrons and 144 F-35s. In the next few years, 10 other countries are planning to conduct F-35 training at Luke, including Norway, Italy, Turkey,



Photo by Airman Pedro Mota, 56th FW Public Affairs

Brig. Gen. Scott Pleus, 56th Fighter Wing commander, and Charles Lilly, lithograph artist, unveil the new Fighter wing lithograph May 21, 2015, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The presentation took place during the 56th Fighter Wing change of mission ceremony.

Netherlands, Denmark, Canada, Israel, Japan and South Korea. Australia has already arrived and is flying with the 61st Fighter Squadron.

“Today we take another step forward for the U.S. Air Force and our partner nations by formally updating our mission statement. Beginning today the mission of Luke Air Force Base is simple - train the world’s greatest F-35 and F-16 fighter pilots.”

Pleus then welcomed Lorraine Martin, Executive Vice President and General Manager of the F-35 Lightning II program with Lockheed Martin, to the stage.

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From the Desk of Fighter Country Partnership

Fighter Country Foundation comes up with a first

You have heard us make mention of our FAAR projects – Facility Advancement And Relief Projects - and more specifically, our Fire Station and Honor Guard Training Facility projects. We have spoken about these “conceptual” projects because of the confidence we have working with our beloved military installation Luke AFB and our track record of successful “legal” approvals with our initiatives.

Now our “conceptual” plans will be moving to reality with the recent correspondence we have received from the Department of the Air Force and Department of Defense. Both “offer of gift” requests have been approved, and this is unprecedented territory for

Fighter Country Foundation and Luke AFB.

This is not to say that the military hasn’t created and accomplished strategic partnerships with the community in the past, present and future. These FAAR projects are direct gifts to the military with no cost to the Department of Defense, and there isn’t another organization attempting projects of this scale in the country.

Fighter Country Foundation is at a point where they have never been in the past, and here is the proof...If an organization or individual wanted to give us a million-dollar gift, we could accept it, but it would take time to spend in support of the men, women, families and mission of Luke AFB. Today, if Fighter



Ron Sites
President and Executive Director
Fighter Country Partnership

Country Foundation was to receive a million-dollar gift, we could spend it tomorrow...legally approved by the Air Force and Department of Defense. Now that is an accomplishment, and it hasn’t

been easy. These projects are more than three years in the making.

Over the next few months, Fighter Country Foundation will be finalizing our FAAR committee and “enlisting our force” to start a

capital campaign. The campaign will support our current and future initiatives and starts with the Fire Station and Honor Guard Training Facility. Here is the most important thing to understand: This will be an initiative that never goes away. After we are done with the Fire Station and Honor Guard Training Facility, we will move on to other identified areas of need on base. The Child Development Center, The Fitness Center, The Church at Luke, the Parks at Luke, etc etc etc...FAAR will be ever-reaching and never end.

Luke will always be upgrading and building new facilities that are “mission critical” and are directly linked to the success of “train-

ing the world’s greatest F-35 and F-16 fighter pilots” and rightfully so. Fighter Country Foundation will proudly assume the responsibility of doing what we can to fill the gaps and supporting facilities at Luke that aren’t deemed “mission critical.” We cannot express how humbling and rewarding it is to work toward accomplishing this mission every day.

FCP and FCF wouldn’t be where they are today without the incredible support we get from our community, so on behalf of our Board of Directors and Blue Blazers, please feel very proud and honored to see what FCP and FCF have and will continue to do for Luke AFB.

Good stuff.

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F-35 pilot training starts in Luke classroom

By SENIORAIRMAN
JAMES HENSLEY
56TH FIGHTER WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

May 4 marked another historic day at Luke Air Force Base when the first pilot training class began for the F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter. Two F-16 Fighting Falcon instructor pilots and two A-10 Warthog instructor pilots applied and were selected for the first student F-35 training class at Luke.

“Luke’s Academic Training Center focuses on the academic and simulator training and the 61st Fighter Squadron will train on the flying piece,” said Lt. Col. Matt Hayden, 56th Training Squadron director of operations. “It’s a build-up approach training where we start with academics, move to hands-on training with the simulators and finally to the aircraft. The F-35 is built in a way to introduce students to the basic overall aircraft handling of its systems and what makes up the F-35.”

The students learn various systems throughout the aircraft and how they work together - hydraulics, electrical, the engine and flight controls are systems every pilot must understand



Photo courtesy Luke Air Force Base

Travis Byrom, Lockheed Martin instructor pilot, briefs students in the first F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter training class before the start of class May 5 at Luke Air Force Base. Upon completion of training the students will assume the role of instructor to teach future classes of F-35 students.

prior to taking flight.

“Initially the training will be focused on understanding the airplane: how to take off, land, fly formation, and how to interact with all the sensors on the aircraft,” Hayden said. “As the training progresses we look at a tactical approach as far as how to employ the airplane - air-to-air, air-to-ground, what the capabilities and limitations of the aircraft are and how to communicate.”

There are many resources instructors use to teach students.

“The tools in the ATC are set

up to help immerse the students in the aircraft environment in an academic way,” Hayden said. “The student stations in each of the classrooms have large monitors and a stick and throttle. In addition to that, the instructor at the front of the classroom has a couple of projectors which enable him to bring up a console or any of the students’ consoles to talk about what the student sees on the displays.”

The displays are a panoramic touch screen and can be customized to every scenario.

“The displays can also be manipulated using the stick and throttle which gives students a way to familiarize themselves with the glass display and build comfort with the ‘switch-ology’ of the aircraft,” Hayden said. “We want to get the students familiarized with all of these things long before they get into the aircraft or even the simulator. It helps them understand how that interface works between the pilot and the airplane.”

The training in total from academics to simulators to

flightline takes approximately three months. This first class is training to become flight ready with the F-35 but to also become instructors upon completion of the course.

“The pilots going through the training right now are going to be staying here at Luke to be instructors,” Hayden said. “When they graduate they may very well turn around in a matter of days to instructing students in what they just learned, which is why we chose previous fighter pilot instructors to be in the first class to have that tactical experience.”

The students have many challenges ahead of them to become F-35 pilots as well as knowledgeable enough to lead and instruct future classes.

“It’s exciting to be the first class at Luke,” said Maj. Eric Puel, 944th Operations Group Detachment 2 student. “A couple of us have been part of this program since 2008, and we’re looking forward to hitting the ground running. It was extremely competitive to apply to become an F-35 pilot let alone to be accepted. My father was a fighter pilot, he flew F-4 Phantoms, so I always wanted to fly the best fighters and the F-35 is the best.”

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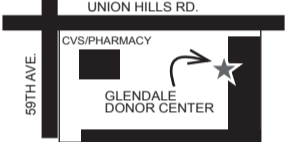


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Hall of Honor salutes Freedom Plaza's veterans

By MARLA LEVINE
SPECIAL TO
FCP VISIONS

Freedom Plaza's Hall of Honor Grand Opening Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony unveiled a wing of the retirement community, which features a permanent exhibit of military photos, flags and memorabilia contributed by resident veterans.

Evon Lunde, concierge of Freedom Plaza, conceived the idea to create a resident veterans photo display, which expanded into a Hall of Honor devoted to the recognition of more than 85 veterans residing at the Peoria lifecare community.

"The new Freedom Plaza Hall of Honor is our reminder of the many lives, your lives, which have given everything to fight, to defend, to protect, and to honor the freedom which we so cherish today," announced Lunde at the Hall of Honor Grand Opening Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony.

"The photos, flags, and memorabilia represent



Freedom Plaza Retirement Community's Hall of Honor salutes its many resident veterans, including Ret. Major U.S. Air Force, Jack Schlueter, left; Ret. Lt. Col. U.S. Air Force, Donald Sellon; and World War II 100th Infantry Division U.S. Army, Harold Coleman.



Ret. Lt. Col. U.S. Air Force, Donald Sellon, a resident of Freedom Plaza, points to his 1943 Army Air Corps military photo displayed in the retirement community's new Hall of Honor. Adorned in his 50-year-old military uniform, Sellon served 22 years in the U.S. Air Force before retiring May 1, 1965.



Photos by Marla Levine

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office Honor Guard presented the colors at Freedom Plaza's Hall of Honor Grand Opening. The Peoria lifecare community dedicated a wing filled with photos as a salute to 85 resident veterans, including Women's Army Corps SHAEF Supreme Headquarters, Miriam Woolever, fourth from left; U.S. Air Force veterans, Doug Cornell, Jack Schlueter, and Chet Schultz; World War II 100th Infantry Division U.S. Army, Harold Coleman; U.S. Navy Reserve, Mel Hofer; and U.S. Air Force, Donald Sellon.

years from your lives, which were given so selflessly, so that others might live in a land where tyranny doesn't control, but in a land of the free and the home of the brave," said Lunde.

"We, at Freedom Plaza, share our heartfelt gratitude for every sacrifice you have made to allow so many to feel the peace and safety of living in a free United States of America. By dedicating this Hall of

Honor to you, our veterans, we thank you for your service," said Lunde in her opening remarks prior to conducting the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office Honor Guard presented the colors and saluted the resident veterans as they entered the Hall of Honor.

Many of the veterans came decked in military uniforms, medals and dog tags, and were proud to

point out their photos as residents viewed the Hall of Honor portrait gallery.

"I retired May 1, 1965, and luckily still fit in this 50-year-old uniform," said Ret. Lt. Col. U.S. Air Force, Donald Sellon. "I'm pictured in 1943, within a month or two of joining the Army Air Corps. During pilot training the instructor talked through a funnel into the headset, there was no talking back."

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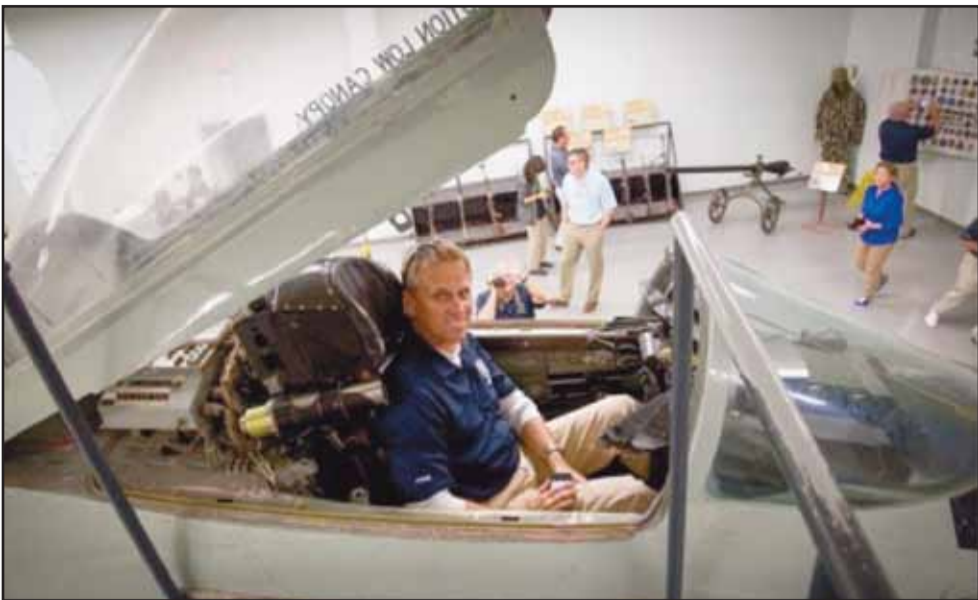
Honorary Commander feature: Darrell Wilson

Fighter Country Partnership proudly features Darrell Wilson, founder and managing principal of HilgartWilson, and former Honorary Commander assigned to the 62nd Fighter Squadron, “Spikes,” Luke Air Force Base.

As founder and principal of HilgartWilson, he shares responsibilities with co-founder Ron Hilgart for the operations and overall growth and success of the firm. As a project principal, he also remains actively involved in many projects, including overseeing design concepts, quality control measures, scheduling and staffing needs of the projects as well as assuring overall client satisfaction.

The firm’s work includes extensive land development and public works engineering, surveying, land use planning and construction management throughout Arizona.

Wilson is also a pilot (ATP with various jet type ratings), which drew him to Luke’s activities. In addition to his “real” job, he has been flying Lear jets part-time for a local company



Darrell Wilson sits in a MIG-29 Fighter aircraft cockpit while touring Nellis AFB during the 2014 Annual Blue Blazer Squadron Charge.

for more than 20 years, as well as regularly enjoying his aircraft, including sport aerobatics.

Wilson has a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering from Arizona State University. He is on the board of directors of Pinal Partnership, has served on the City of Phoenix Development Advisory Board, the board of Home Builders Association of Central Arizona, and Honorary Commander at Luke Air Force Base, 62nd Fighter Squadron.

When asked what it was like being an Honorary Commander at Luke, Wilson explained.

“The Honorary Commander experience has been described many times in many ways. But for me, it’s as though I was given unique access to witness the purpose (mission) of Luke AFB. Being inside the gates let me understand the ‘why’ of Luke. Access to the people of Luke illustrated the ‘how,’ and that’s been the most remarkable part – the people.”

He explained that the opportunity to be among the men and women at Luke has been the most rewarding of all.

“To get to know not only the men and women serving all of us through their service at Luke, but their families, their friends and their lives – that’s been the absolute best – an honor. It’s shown me, and as I’ve told many, we live and work among heroes every day in the Valley and we don’t even know it.

“These folks and their



Darrell Wilson

families cross our paths every day and we never recognize them for what and who they are. Most significantly, they don’t seek recognition, let alone expect it. I see these folks embrace the basic values that I think we, as Americans, have always held dear, but are so often overlooked today. I see respect. These are the folks who I wish to celebrate –not the entertainers, not the athletes – but these folks and their families who serve on our behalf.”

“I’ve had the privilege of having close and wonderful interfaces with high-ranking members of the fighter pilot community because I was assigned to

a fighter squadron as an Honorary Commander. However, it’s every bit as much the maintainers, the medical staff, security, life support, ordinance, range control, officers, airmen, etc., who make the mission successful. They embody common values and the willingness to sacrifice everything. It’s an ongoing honor to have access to these men, women and their families and to know those who serve at the ‘Tip of the Spear.’”

The Blue Blazer Squadron (BBS) is an Alumni Association of the Honorary Commanders Committee of Fighter Country Partnership (FCP), that provides support for the men and women of Luke Air Force Base through FCP, and is a prominent volunteer force representing FCP in the community. The highest priority for the BBS is to support the men, women and families of those serving in the military at Luke Air Force Base through FCP. The BBS is the next mission for Honorary

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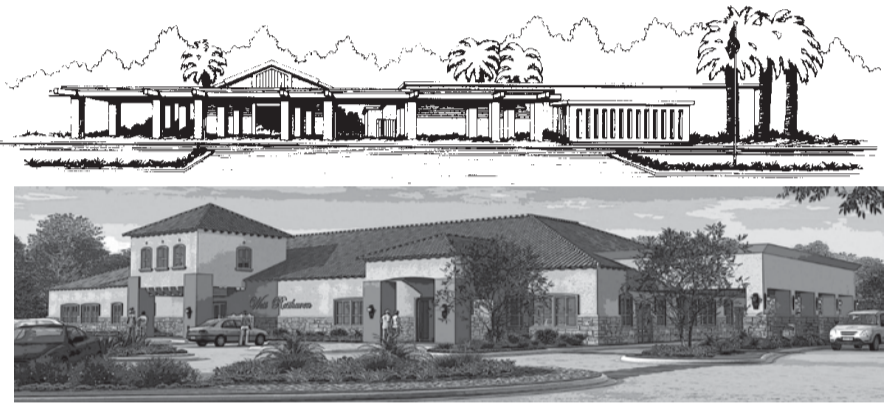
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COMMANDER: Wilson learned significance of Luke to Arizona and the region, From 8

Commander alumni who want to support Luke AFB through FCP. The BBS is called upon to provide their personal and professional resources and talents.

As business and community leaders, Blue Blazers are often asked to help Luke Airmen in many different ways. Wilson shared his views as a business owner about what he looks for when hiring people.

“The military folks are highly marketable,” he said. “They have self-direction, a sense of responsibility and can apply those qualities on a personal and professional level,” he said.

Wilson actively participates as an Honorary Commander alumni member (now Blue Blazer Squadron) within the Fighter Country Partnership organization in support of Luke AFB. These activities include the building of a Cinderella’s and Prince Charming Closet, Airmen mentoring sessions, attending and supporting Air Force Balls, Annual Awards Banquets, Changes of Commands, Airshows, tours of the Barry M. Gold-



Darrell Wilson and the Blue Blazers travel to Nellis AFB, Nev., and tour the Red Flag facility during the 2014 Blue Blazer Squadron “Charge.”

water Range, multiple B-Course graduations (the graduation of the newest F-16 fighter pilots), roll calls and multiple social events. In fact, one of the many ways he gives back to the Airmen is by allowing his lovely home in Flagstaff to be used for retreats or R&R (Rest and Relaxation) for Luke Airmen.

He explained that some of the most significant things he learned about the base and the U.S. Air Force since being an Honorary Commander are the following:

- Clarity of why Luke

is here

- Luke’s importance to the US and the world
- The significance of Luke to our state and region
- That these men and women are willing to commit everything, while expecting little
- That structure and purpose matter
- That honor and tradition still matter

When asked about his most memorable time as an Honorary Commander, Darrell said he had trouble citing just one.

“One of the most moving and unforgettable ex-

periences of my life was the memorial for Major Troy Gilbert on Dec. 6, 2006.”

Background: Major Troy Gilbert, 34, was assigned to the 309th Fighter Squadron at Luke and died November 27, 2006 when his F-16C fighter crashed 20 miles northwest of Baghdad while deployed to the 332nd Expeditionary Wing, Balad Air Force Base, Iraq serving during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Major Gilbert was killed in action while on a mission protecting others. He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor.

Wilson also remembers having a casual lunch conversation with one of his squadron commanders, as he described why he served.

“My commander shared his deep feelings about what it means to be a fighter pilot and the misperceptions that some people have. It wasn’t about him. It was about serving his country and serving it well. I learned then that these are different and very special people and what service really means. I want to give special thanks to all my Squadron Commanders: Skip, Buster, Batman, Pablo, Hack,

Vandal, Shady and Jeb. I love these guys and their families. Presently, my time with Jeb and the 61st Fighter Squadron has been sort of like a foster home. It’s awesome!”

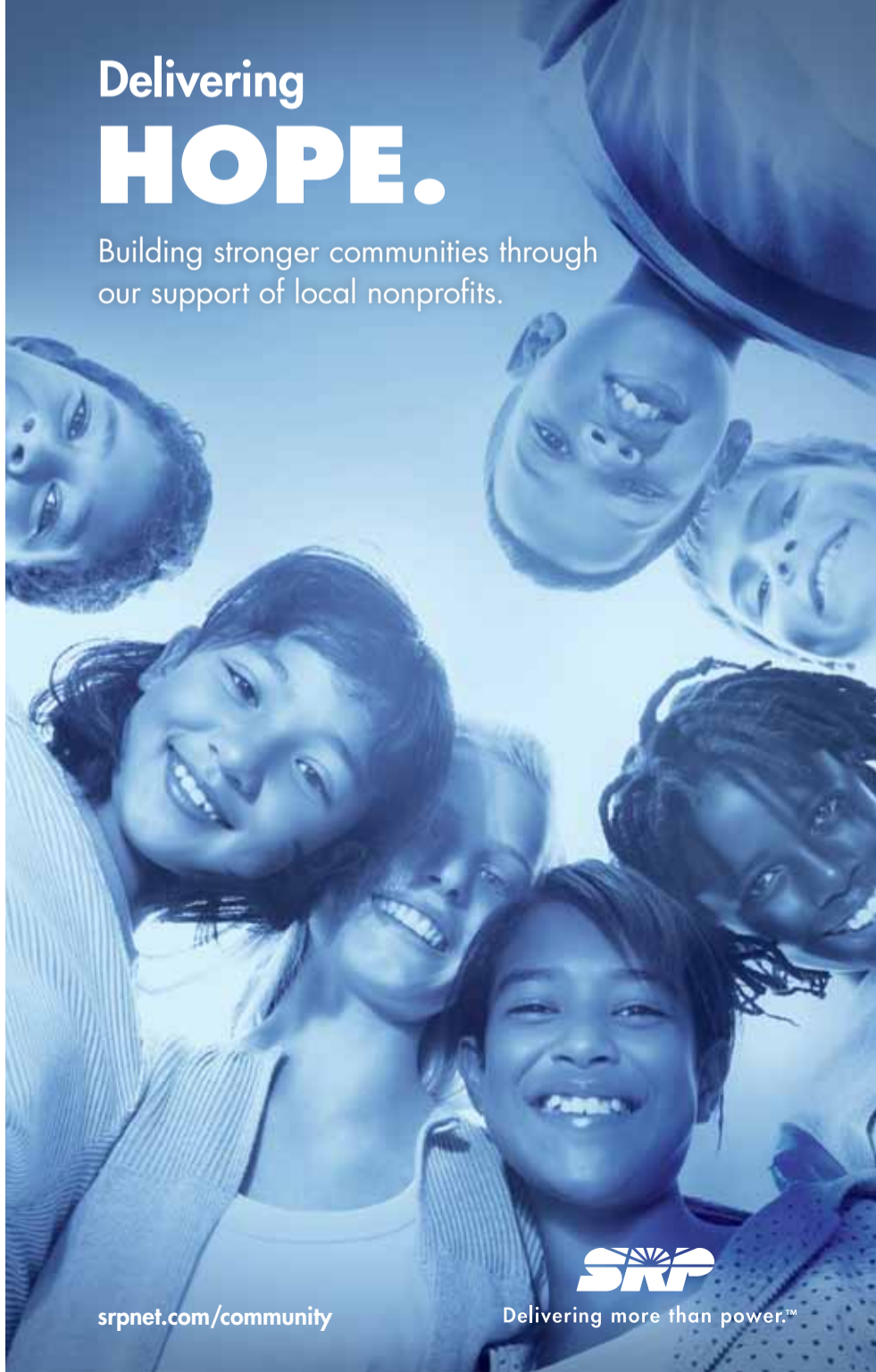
Wilson had the privilege of being selected to attend a week-long National Security Forum, Air War College at Maxwell AFB, Ala., sponsored by the Secretary of the Air Force. The purpose of the NSF is to expose influential citizens to senior U.S. and international officers and civilian equivalents in order to engage each other’s ideas and perspectives on Air Force, national and international security issues.


Ron Sites, President and Executive Director of Fighter Country Partnership, said of Wilson:

“Darrell’s passion for flying, as well as our military, has made him one of our most perfect fits within FCP and the BBS organization. He truly enjoys engaging with Luke’s pilots, and those efforts ultimately get our pilots more educated and involved with FCP.”

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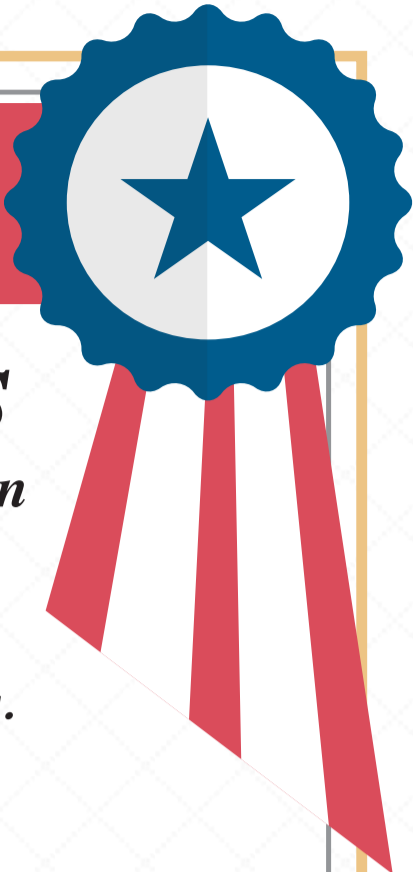
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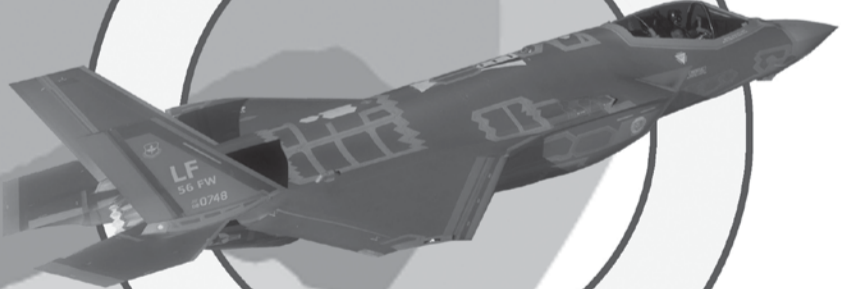
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Veteran with cancer receives family vacation from American Legion

By MARGE CHRISTIANSON
AMERICAN LEGION POST 62
SPECIAL TO FCP VISIONS

When Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman’s love story in “Casablanca” was released in early 1943, Galen Christianson was 17 years old. He perhaps did not so much see the romance between Rick and Ilsa, but instead saw the menace of the German army as it marched into France. Instead, he felt the patriotism of the French as they tried to out-sing the German’s National Anthem.

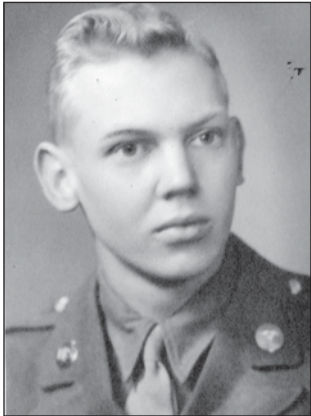
Watching the film, one can envision the reasons he used when he begged his mother to let him sign on to service early. That was the kind of man he was. She would not, however, give permission to her under-aged son. But Galen Christianson turned 18 that April and by June he was in Abilene, Texas going through basic training. Nothing, however, could prepare him for



Galen Christianson visits Normandy, where he served with other soldiers in 1944.

what he would face over the next two years. Private Christianson was among the first wave of infantry to land 71 years ago at Omaha Beach June 6, 1944. Trained as a medic, he was armed only with medical supplies and plasma. Lying in the water 100 yards away from a German machine gun nest, he watched his

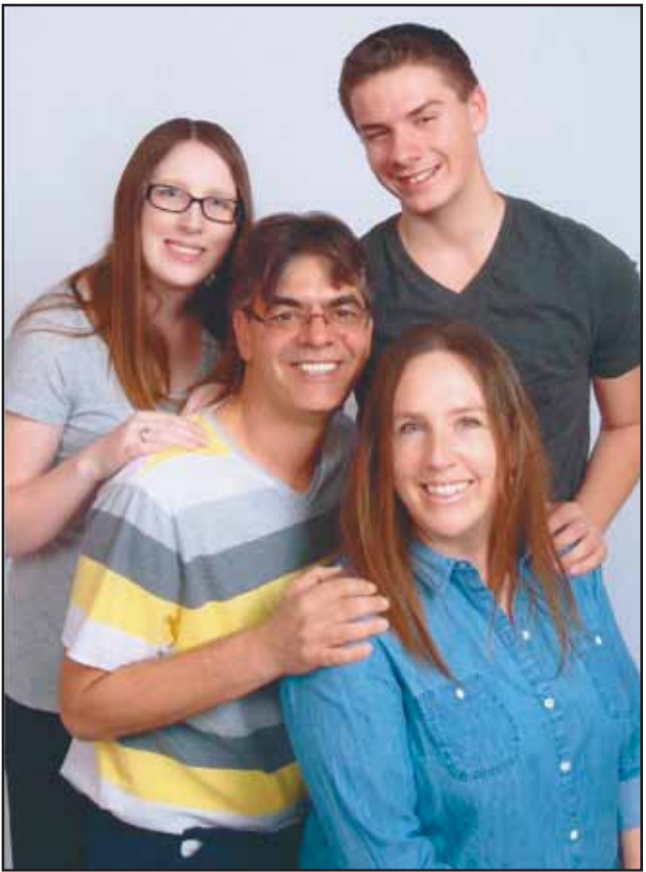
fellow soldiers get mowed down. Some reports say that one in three men from the 116th regiment of the 29th Division was killed that day. His supplies were exhausted well before the injuries were. Galen Christianson is an American hero. He went on to fight his way through France and into Germany. Just as the Ger-



Galen Christianson as a young soldier in basic training

mans had when invading Paris, he marched - in Allied victory - through the arch de’ triomphe. He went on to live a long life. Originally from Minnesota, he spent 30 years in Sun City. He had many thank him for his service. He told his stories to his children and their children.

But what of those that did not? And what of those that will not? Today, 47-year-old Specialist Steven Aberle, exposed to radiation while serving in Iraq, is battling stage-four cancer. He will leave behind his two children and wife. Despite the war tragedy



Steven Aberle and his wife and children will travel to San Diego for their first family vacation.

his family now faces, his son, Alex, plans to enlist in the Army Rangers. This is just one example of today’s American heroes. These are the men and women who continue to face our nation’s enemies with bravery and commitment. These are the families who face the loss

of their loved ones not just during their service, but after their service as well. They suffer without fanfare and in quiet agony. Dwight Eisenhower called D-Day “a great and noble undertaking” and it

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'Swiss Army Knife of the Air' tours at Mesa CAF Museum

A World War II aircraft thought to have the most extensive combat history in the 160-plus warbird fleet of the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) is ready to tell her story after 70 years of silence.

Old Number 30, a humble C-47 Skytrain flown by the 60th Troop Carrier Group in Northern Africa, Sicily and Yugoslavia from 1943 to 1945, is the latest acquisition of the Arizona unit of the CAF located in Mesa.

Swiss Army Knife of the Air

General Dwight D. Eisenhower called the C-47 one of the "most important tools" used by the Allies to win WWII—the largest and most destructive war of all time.

Eisenhower's "tool" literally was the Swiss Army Knife of the Air, dropping paratroopers, spies, ammunition and weapons, towing gliders stuffed with infantry and artillery; making short field takeoffs from grass strips of 1,500 feet, according to one account

describing a planeload of refugees scooped up to escape attacking Nazis.

In the seven decades it took for the stories about these often secret and always dangerous missions to surface, Old Number 30 was like many C-47s after the war that were sold as surplus and used by airlines and oil companies or as executive transportation.

The combat service of this specific aircraft was only just discovered during the past year.

Among the documents detailing its lengthy combat record, a copy of General Order Number 233 dated Nov. 12, 1944 was found, awarding the Distinguished Unit Badge, now known as the Presidential Unit Citation, to the 60th Troop Carrier Group for "...displaying unfailing courage and superior flying ability, group pilots skillfully landed on and took off in hours of darkness, often by instruments, from small hastily-improvised landing strips hidden in deep valleys and under constant threat of



CAF Airbase Arizona, Douglas C-47 Skytrain, Old Number 30

enemy ground action.

Making more than 600 such hazardous landings, planes of the 60th Troop Carrier Group unloaded quantities of critically needed supplies too bulky for parachuting, including jeeps and mules, evacuating on the return trip many Allied airmen, wounded partisans and civilian refugees.

From March 28 to Sept. 15, 1944, this group, flying more than 15,000 hours and completing nearly 3,000 missions, delivered

more than 7,000 tons of weapons, ammunition, clothing, food and medicine, dropped millions of news and propaganda leaflets, and evacuated thousands of military and civilian personnel..."

This aircraft is one of seven warbirds flown at CAF Airbase Arizona's Mesa facility providing living history experiences in the air for the purpose of educating the public and honoring the service of U.S. and Allied veterans.

A CAF volunteer crew guides visitors through a flight briefing and the flight itself to tell her heroic story. A \$250 per person fee is required to offset operation and maintenance of the vintage aircraft.

Flights travel over Arizona terrain that resembles part of the routes taken over Northern Africa and Sicily 70 years ago.

The briefing and flight take about one hour. Reservations for flights should be made in advance via

e-mail to rides@azcaf.org, or by calling 602-448-2350.

A minimum of six passengers are needed to schedule a flight. The CAF Ride Coordinator will make every effort to combine individuals and smaller groups to make a flight.

The C-47 built by Douglas Aircraft in 1943 that became Old Number 30 was acquired by the Commemorative Air Force in Arizona in 2014. She was in nearly continuous operation after WWII with multiple private and corporate owners, including that of the Hoover Corporation. Hoover installed the historic executive interior found in the aircraft today.

CAF Arizona members volunteer thousands of hours to operate and maintain Old Number 30 for the benefit of the public. You, too, can board this trip back in time with Old Number 30 at the CAF Airbase Arizona & Museum, 2017 N. Greenfield Road, Mesa, AZ 85215, www.azcaf.org.

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Battle of Midway Remembrance Day held in Arizona; heroes honored posthumously

A proclamation was issued by the Office of the Governor, designating June 5, 2015 as "Battle of Midway Remembrance Day" in Arizona. The declaration recognizes the significance of the World War II battle in the Pacific as a turning point in the historic conflict with Japan and identifies the contributions made by Arizonans to the successful outcome of one of the most crucial naval battles of the war.

In particular, the gallantry of Navy Ensign John C. Butler, Jr., of Liberty (Buckeye), Ariz. is acknowledged. Butler, a dive bomber pilot assigned to Bombing Squadron 3 aboard the U.S.S. Yorktown, was killed in action while attacking the Japanese fleet on the afternoon

of June 4, 1942.

He was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross, the Navy's highest honor. In addition, the Navy subsequently commissioned a destroyer escort bearing his name as a tribute to his accomplishments.

The Battle of Midway has been designated by the Chief of Naval Operations as one of the two most important dates in the history of the United States Navy, the other being the establishment of the Navy Oct. 13, 1775. June 4, 1942, barely six months following the crippling surprise attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, a supposedly superior force of Japanese naval units attacked the U.S. naval base at Midway Atoll, 1,300 miles northwest of



Retired Navy Rear Admiral Hugh Dennis Wisely spoke of the importance of naval aviation.

Hawaii.

The attack was a bid to capture the base and annihilate the remaining American naval units in the Pacific, thus paving the way for an invasion of the Hawaiian Islands.

American forces ambushed the Japanese fleet June 4, resulting in the

sinking of four of Japan's front-line aircraft carriers, which played a major role in Japan's success thus far in Pacific expansion -- including the Pearl Harbor attack.

The Battle of Midway is considered by historians to be the turning point in the Pacific War with Japan, signaling the end to Japanese expansion and the beginning of a relentless drive to defeat the Japanese, which concluded with the unconditional surrender of Japan's forces in Tokyo Bay Sept. 2, 1945.

A special two-hour ceremony to commemorate the battle was held on the third floor of the State Capitol Museum, at 1700 W. Washington St. in Phoenix. Attendees heard presentations about the events

leading up to and occurring during and after the historic naval engagement.


Making special appearances were Jack Holder (93), a Pearl Harbor survivor and participant in the Midway battle; and retired Navy Rear Admiral Hugh Dennis Wisely, decorated Naval Aviator, former member of the Navy's Blue Angels aerial acrobatics team and Captain of the aircraft carrier, U.S.S. John F. Kennedy, who spoke to the importance of naval aviation and its future as a necessary ingredient in the nation's defense. The commemoration also honored the memory of Ensign Butler.

Events such as these continue to educate the public about the significance of World War II and


Arizona's role in bringing the conflict to a successful end, 70 years ago. In 2013, the state unveiled Arizona's World War II Memorial, at Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza, which includes one 14-inch gun from the U.S.S. Arizona (sunk at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941) and one 16-inch gun from the U.S.S. Missouri (upon whose decks the Japanese signed the instrument of surrender in September 1945, bringing World War II to a close).

Because 2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, this year's annual commemoration of the turning point in the Pacific War offered significant overtones at a time of national observance.


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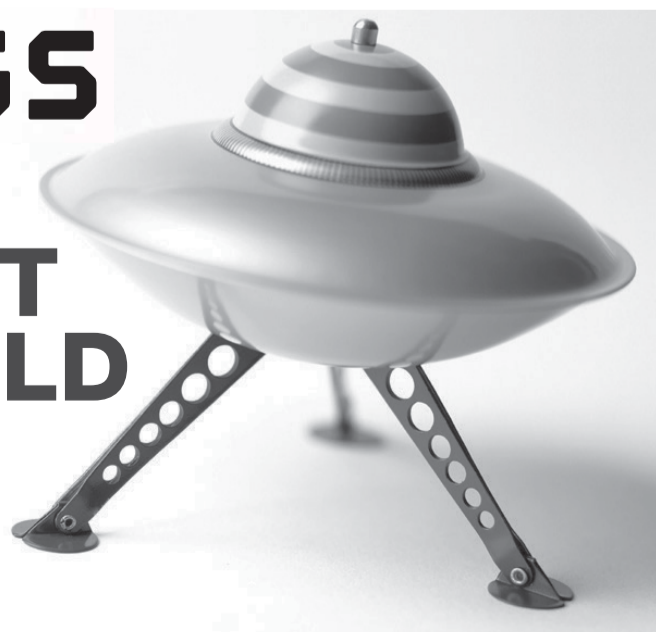
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that Lockheed Martin and our entire team are proud to stand beside you in every step of your journey,” Martin said. “We have every expectation that Team Luke will set the standard for F-35 training, as you have done with the F-16, the most successful fourth-generation pilots the world has ever known.”

Martin closed by thanking the surrounding community, Air Force partners

and allies, and thanked them for their service.

The change in the mission statement is historical for Luke because the base has been an F-16 Fighting Falcon-only installation for 19 years. The 56th FW last changed its mission 25 years ago.

The 56th Fighter Wing is one of the most highly decorated aviation units in history and has a legacy tracing back to 1941. Since

then, the 56th has moved a number of times and has undergone a few name changes before arriving at Luke Air Force Base April 1, 1994, flying F-16s and F-15E Strike Eagles. A year later, the F-15E training mission moved to Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina. Since then, the wing’s core mission has been to train the world’s greatest F-16 pilots. It wasn’t until

March 10, 2014 when the wing received its first F-35A aircraft that changes began to appear.

Some of the recent changes include the opening of the F-35 Academic Training Center Oct. 9, 2014. Jan. 23, Pleus flew his last sortie in an F-16, representing a step toward the future for Airmen at Luke. Additionally, the wing successfully com-

pleted a first-ever, large-scale training deployment of 10 F-35s to Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, showcasing the aircraft’s abilities. Recently, a Royal Australian Air Force pilot flew the base’s first partner F-35 sortie May 14 at Luke.

Pleus wrapped up his comments by talking about the relationship between the base and the local com-

munity.

“The state of Arizona, and particularly the West Valley, has always welcomed us with open arms and we deeply appreciate all the efforts you had to bring the F-35 to Luke,” Pleus said. “We would not be where we are today if we didn’t have the support of some great people that have put us to where we are.”

Credit Union West joins fight against cancer

Credit Union West employees formed a team to participate in the local American Cancer Society Relay For Life at Valley Vista High School May 2-3. The American Cancer Society Relay For Life is a life-changing event that gives everyone in communities across the globe a chance to celebrate the lives of people who have battled cancer, remember loved ones lost, and fight back against the disease.

“We’re delighted so many of our employees have chosen to participate in Relay For Life of Surprise,” said the credit union’s VP, Chief Information Officer, Scott Grundy. “Our staff has always been dedicated to support causes that affect our communities and this is no different. No one is left untouched by cancer.”

The community event involves teams of people camping out, sharing their stories of battling cancer and remembering those lost to the disease. They take turns walking, jogging, or running around the school’s track as

they celebrate, remember and hope.

The credit union staff arranged fundraisers in their branches, internally as well as community events, prior to the event and raised over \$10,000 before the Relay for Life of Surprise event.

About Credit Union West

Credit Union West was founded in 1951 and is an award-winning financial cooperative. Well positioned for the future, Credit Union West has earned the highest 5-Star rating from Bauer Financial Inc., the nation’s leading credit union and bank rating and research firm, who has been analyzing and rating financial institutions since 1983.

Today, it serves over 53,000 members with more than \$550 million in assets. Membership is open to anyone who lives, works or worships in Maricopa or Yavapai County and family members of current members. Federally insured by the NCUA. www.cuwest.org.

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Donate blood, enter to win 2015 VW Golf

The weeks surrounding the Independence Day holiday have traditionally been the most difficult time of the summer to meet patient blood needs. To help solve this problem, Luke Air Force Base has scheduled several blood drives to make it convenient to save lives.

For a blood donation appointment, visit www.BloodHero.com (enter the designated sponsor code) or 1-877-UBS-HERO (827-4376).

Give blood this summer at Luke Air Force Base and be automatically entered to win a 2015 VW Golf – the Motor Trend Car of the Year.

Valley Volkswagen dealers have donated the car and partnered with United Blood Services in the 6th annual campaign to help inspire more people to give blood this summer. Ten finalists will be drawn to participate in the grand prize drawing, who will be unveiled throughout the summer on AZ-TV, proud media partner for the “Summer Drive to Save Lives” campaign.

During the three-month summer campaign, donors



will help people like Mia, a Valley 12-year-old who depends upon blood donors to provide lifesaving transfusions every month at Cardon Children’s Medical Center – a need that is expected to continue the rest of her life.

She was born with Diamond Blackfan Anemia, a rare disorder that prevents her body from producing red blood cells.

“Mia is alive today because of people who donate blood,” said her mom, Kristi. “Our family is beyond thankful to everyone who takes the time out of their busy day to simply donate blood.”

Mia has already received 124 lifesaving blood transfusions.

Luke Air Force Base Blood Drives – Sponsor

Code: LAFB (Base Access Credentials Required)

- June 23, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.: 607 ACS, 14793 W. Corsair St., Bloodmobile
- June 24, 9 a.m. – to 1pm: Medical Group, 7219 N. Litchfield Road, Assembly Room

- June 25, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.: CE, 13970 Lightning St., Bloodmobile by Building 343

- June 25, 1 to 5 p.m.: CMS, 6608 N. Tovrea, Bloodmobile by Bldg 917

- June 26, 12 to 4 p.m.: MRA 372, 7429 N. Homer, Bloodmobile by Library

- July 12, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.: Community Blood Drive, 13960 Eagle St., Bloodmobile by Commissary

Navy Operational Support Center - Sponsor Code: Reserves (Base Access Credentials Required)

- June 28, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.: 14160 W. Marauder St.

Goodyear Donor Center: 14270 W. Indian School Road

- Hours: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday; 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday

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LEGION: Poppy Fund pays the bill, From 13

is a day to be remembered. But also to be remembered are today’s American heroes. Please remember them in your prayers, your thoughts, your hearts and in your gratitude..... before it’s too late.

Recognizing that the Aberle family had never taken a family vacation, the John J Morris American Legion family has set aside \$3,000 to send the Aberle family to San Diego. This gift was made possible by donations to the Auxiliary’s 2015 Poppy Fund. Thank you.

Note about this story: Marge Christianson and her husband, Jim, joined the John J Morris American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of the American Legion in honor of their fathers. It is through the American Legion Post in Peoria that they came to know Peoria resident Steven Aberle and his family. For more information about how the American Legion supports veterans or about the Aberle family, the Auxiliary may be contacted through ALAunit62AZ@gmail.com



Photo by Bette Sharpe/Glendale Daily Planet

Change of command

Retiring Glendale Fire Chief Mark Burdick checks out the replica of the F-35A jet fighter he received from Chief Master Sgt. Chris Horsman, 56th CES fire chief, left, and Tony Rabonza, 56th CES deputy fire chief. The Glendale change of command ceremony mirrors the USAF change of command protocol. The message on the plaque reads.

Fire Chief Mark Burdick

The firefighters at Luke Air Force Base wish to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation for your tremendous support, dedication, and commitment to our partnership. Your friendship and contributions to Luke Fire Emergency Services have left an indelible mark on the base and our entire community. Good Luck and God Speed!



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