

JULY/AUGUST 2019

SOUND OF FREEDOM

NEWS FOR THE LUKE COMMUNITY

DRIVING FORCE

SANDERSON FORD'S DAVE KIMMERLE
GIVES BACK TO AIR FORCE



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JULY/AUGUST 2019

SOUND OF FREEDOM
NEWS FOR THE LUKE COMMUNITY

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Photo by Pablo Robles



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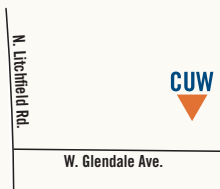
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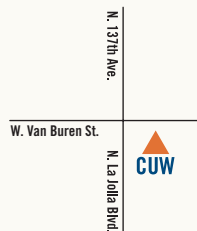
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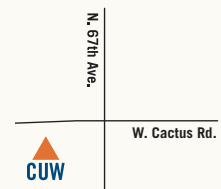
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Park University's Luke AFB campus center opened in 1976. (Photo courtesy Park University)



Rio Salado has a National Test Center at Luke AFB. (Photo courtesy Rio Salado College)



Higher Education

Four colleges and universities call Luke home

BY ALISON STANTON

Luke Air Force Base does more than train the world's greatest fighter pilots and combat-ready airmen—including 75% of the world's F-35 pilots. It is also home to four colleges and universities that offer classes to military and nonmilitary students.

To get to know these colleges a bit more, including their specialties and history, Sound of Freedom put together a round-up of the quartet of schools:

Park University

Park University's Luke AFB campus center opened in 1976. As Park University-Luke AFB Regional Director Janet Ostrander notes it has 120 students.

"Park University offers bachelor's degree programs on Luke Air Force Base," Ostrander says.

The most popular majors are management and information computer science.

"We also take pride in our flexible course delivery options that allow our students to complete their education when it is most convenient for them. These flexible options



Wayland Baptist University offers associate's, bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees. (Photo courtesy Wayland Baptist University)

for students to complete their coursework include: in-person classes held on Luke Air Force Base, online courses that can be completed in the comfort of their home, or video conference courses that allow our Luke Air Force Base students to interact with students at other Park University campus centers."

On-site courses are held in the evenings on Luke Air Force Base. While the majority of students are active duty, veterans and military family members, anyone can attend classes at the school.

For more information call 623-935-4424 or visit park.edu.

Rio Salado College

Maricopa Community Colleges' Rio Salado College is the only community college and public institution of higher learning on Luke AFB, says Rick Conchos, Rio Salado College student services director, Rio Salado

College - Luke AFB.

Rio Salado has been serving the Luke AFB community for 40 years, with the first office opening on base in 1979.

Rio Salado provides undergraduate courses and programs like associate degrees and certificates to the Luke AFB community. This includes courses that are needed by airmen to complete their general education requirements for their Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) degrees.

Rio Salado also provides admissions, registration, testing, and advisement services to students in support of their educational goals, Conchos says.

Additionally, the college operates a National Test Center on base. As a fully funded NTC, Rio Salado provides the staff, computers, technical support, and internet connec-



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HIGHER EDUCATION

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tion necessary for offering internet-based CLEP and DSST exams at no cost to eligible service members, DoD civilian employees and spouses.

Classes are open to any students, 16 years of age or older, who meet the class prerequisites regardless of military affiliation.

For more information, call 623-856-3239 or visit riosalado.edu.

Wayland Baptist University

Wayland Baptist University opened its campus based at Luke Air Force Base in 1991. On Luke Air Force Base, WBU offers a wide variety of quality academic programs, including associate's, bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees.

As Tess Robaina, admissions specialist and coordinator of alumni relations notes, one of the advantages of attending WBU is there are no out-of-pocket costs for active duty airmen to take courses there, as long as they are enrolled in at least one face-to-face course.

The most popular degree at Wayland is the Bachelor of Applied Science degree, Robaina says. With this degree, students can major in a variety of topics such as management, justice administration, human services, business administration, early childhood development, education, banking and finance, and other options.

The classes at Wayland are not solely for active duty service members, veterans and family members of service members, Robaina says.

Webster University students organize U.S. flags they will place at the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona. (Photo courtesy Webster University)



"Wayland's classes are open to civilians as well as military personnel, veterans and families. Wayland offers face-to-face courses, online courses, evening courses, and hybrid courses to meet the needs and busy schedules of our student body."

For information, call 623-935-6274 or visit wbu.edu/phoenix.

Webster University

The Luke AFB campus opened in 2000, and there are about 100 students who attend classes.

Programs that are offered at Webster University include master's of arts degrees in business and organizational management; human resources management; information technology management; and in management and leadership. A Master of Business Administration is also available.

"A host of additional courses through the Walker School of Business and Technology are available online," says Capt. Benjamin M. Brink, USN (Ret.), director of military campus operations and program innovation and adjunct associate professor at the Walker School of Business & Technology, Webster University.

The Luke campus is also streaming live classes through its WebNet+ system, allowing students to take classes from other Webster University campuses in real-time.

Classes are open to civilians with a base pass, available through the Luke campus. Students at the Luke AFB campus are highly engaged in the community and often work on projects with the Arizona Special Olympics and St. Mary's Food Bank, along with taking part in the Wreaths Across America and Memorial Day Flag placement at the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona. ■

For more information, call 623-536-6880 or visit webster.edu/luke.

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Learning the Ropes

Area universities and colleges ready to help veterans

BY BRIDGETTE REDMAN
SOUND OF FREEDOM STAFF WRITER

When it comes to attending college, veterans and reservists have specific needs that are fundamentally different from other students. It's why many colleges and universities have veterans services offices, often with benefit officers on staff.

In the Valley, there are several service centers that veterans can go to when making their college plans. These centers help with everything from admissions, financial aid, personal counseling and college planning. They'll let you know what to do if you get deployed during a semester or put you in touch with resources such as tutoring or housing aids.

Here's a look at some of the resources you can find at Phoenix-area colleges and universities:

Arizona State University

The veterans center at Arizona State University is named after Pat Tillman, a professional football player who gave up a rich NFL contract to enlist and who was subsequently killed by friendly fire. There are five locations on ASU's campuses and all are designed to support veterans from when they first start through special graduate recognition with the Veterans Honor Stole Ceremony.

"Our mission is to empower and engage our ASU military and veteran community with their academic success here at ASU and beyond," says Capt. Steve Borden, the center's director.

Marine Corp veteran Chris Cadeau is now a journalism student at ASU and is enjoying his time there.

"My experience as a student veteran at ASU has been out-of-control amazing," says Cadeau, who served for eight years.

"It starts from the beginning. You've heard

of some of us veterans having tougher times. I was in one of my tougher times. I made a phone call to the Pat Tillman Veteran Center and they just took me under their wing. I was able to find my dreams and now I'm attaining them."

Where can you find it: The downtown Phoenix location is in the University Center Building, Room 130

Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday

Phone: 602-496-0152

Email: militaryonline@asu.edu

Website: veterans.asu.edu

Services:

- Academics and Advising
- Student success centers that include tutoring and a writing center
- Student veteran success classes
- Veterans Scholar Program
- Credit by exam
- Veterans Upward Bound program that prepares veterans for college by providing online instruction, academic tutoring, assistance with financial aid and scholarship applications, and referrals to Veterans Administration as needed.
- Connections to community resources

University of Phoenix

The University of Phoenix has a dedicated Office of Military and Veteran Affairs for military-affiliated students and families designed to help them succeed academically and professionally. It provides resources and support to help active military, veterans and their families achieve their life, career, and educational goals.

Many of the center's employees are veterans themselves and all of them understand the military culture and vocabulary. They guide students throughout their educational journey, from navigating the application process and helping answer questions about financial aid benefits to career building seminars and resume reviews.

"At University of Phoenix, our goal is to support our military veteran students to help them achieve their educational goals and pursue meaningful employment," says Barbara Snyder, University of Phoenix, campus director, Phoenix Campus.



"By offering resources to help navigate the unique challenges our military-affiliated students face, we can have a direct impact on the lives of our veterans and help them enhance their careers."

Where can you find it: 4035 S. Riverpoint Parkway, Phoenix

Phone: 844.YES.UOPX

Website:

<https://www.phoenix.edu/students/veterans-resource-centers.html>

Services:

- Career readiness workshops
- Corporate mentoring program through America Corporate Partners (ACP)
- Military skill conversion tools for civilian jobs
- Free mental health counseling
- Veteran Resource Center, an exclusive space for veterans and military affiliated families that includes a quiet study area
- Prior Learning Assessment option that allows students to have prior experience evaluated for academic credit
- Veteran networking events and activities
- Veterans crisis line

Estrella Mountain Community College:

Estrella Mountain Community College's Veterans Service Center serves military members, veterans, and dependent students, helping them to take advantage of the numerous educational opportunities available by connecting them to their Veteran's Administration Education benefits as well as providing them support for their academic, professional and personal success.

"We help guide them through everything from the programs they need to take, how to use their education benefits and anything



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ROPES FROM PAGE 8

in between,” says Jim Sammons, a veterans services specialist at the center. “We look at the student in a wholistic view. If they are struggling in other areas, we have campus and outside veteran resources that can help them whether it is tutoring or disability resources or just needing someone to talk to.”

Where you can find it: Komatke Hall B, 3000 N. Dysart Road, Avondale

Phone: 623-935-8937

Hours: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday; 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. summer hours.

Email: veterans@estrellamountain.edu

Website:

estrellamountain.edu/students/veterans-services

Services:

- Class registration assistance
- Scholarship opportunities
- Degree option exploration
- VA education benefits connection
- Military Tuition Assistance
- MyCAA Program for Military Spouse Career Advancement
- Tuition deferment
- Counseling

Northern Arizona University

According to the Military Times 2016 rankings, Northern Arizona University ranks as the top school for military veterans in Arizona and among the top third of colleges and universities nationally.

The Veteran and Military Services department dedicates itself to the success of military-connected students and families at the university from transition to military service to integrating into the classroom to

entering professional careers.

“We take great pride in serving our military-connected students here at the university,” says Pete Yanka, director of veteran and military services. “Each and every day we get a chance to serve our students, helping them transition into the university setting. Our military-connected students bring a unique perspective and insight that helps make the NAU community a better place.”

NAU’s history of military and veteran support goes back to the mid-1940s when it was still Arizona State Teaching College. It secured the opportunity to serve as a training site that granted bachelor’s degrees to future Naval officers through a program called the V-12 Navy College Training Program. This was part of the World War II war effort and produced officers for the military services.

While most of its veterans services are on its Flagstaff campus, there are also some services on the Phoenix campus.

Phone: 928-523-8387

Services:

- Academic support
- Career development
- Success coaching
- Financial services
- Housing
- Legal aid
- Veterans Affairs
- Family issues counseling
- Mental health services
- Physical health services
- Social connectedness activities

Glendale Community College

Glendale Community College is ranked 8th among 2-year colleges for being vet-friendly.

Services are provided to military-related personnel through the Veteran Services Center, which is designed to be a one-stop service for veterans. The Center works to help students transition from military life to the academic environment and then into a civilian career.

With advisers staffing the center who are also veterans, services include helping military-related students plan their academics, find and use their benefits and connect with resources both on campus and in the community.

Where can you find it? The Veteran Services Center building northwest of the Student Union and west of the Counseling and Career Services Center.

Phone: 623-845-3362

Email: gccva@gccaz.edu

Website: gccaz.edu/veterans

Hours: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday. Summer hours are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Wednesday, and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday

Services:

- Degree planning
- Aid in registering for classes
- Financial aid
- Networking
- Benefits counselors
- Veterans Support Coalition
- Womens Veterans Support Group

Grand Canyon University

Grand Canyon University recognizes that military-related students face pressures that other students do not, including deployments and the need for irregular schedules, things which can interfere with academic success. It’s why they offer their students flexible online and evening programs in addition to traditional campus classes.

Among the services they offer is a Veterans Affairs Office with dedicated advisors and military benefits liaisons to help students get the most out of their military benefits.

One special program they have is a partnership with Air University that lets them offer an Associate-to-Baccalaureate Cooperative that helps airmen earn their bachelor’s degree.

Services and benefits for military-related students:

- Dedicated military team to assist students
- Reduced academic residency—they’ll accept credits from the military or another university to complete their degree
- Credit for military training and non-traditional learning
- Student veterans association
- Tuition assistance program
- Textbook exchange
- Veterans Center
- Special scholarships for military spouses and children

Where you can find it? The Veterans Resource Center on the GCU campus

Phone: 602-639-8055

Website:

gcu.edu/future-students/military-university.php

Hours: 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. regularly; 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. summer ■



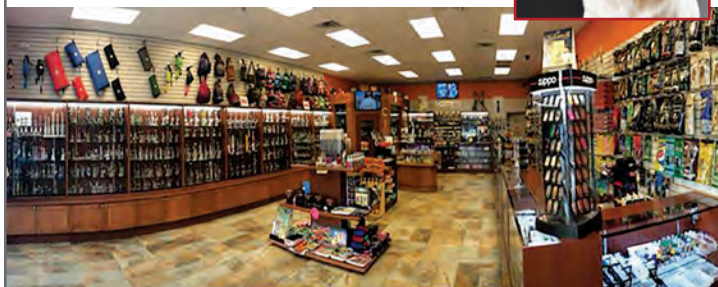
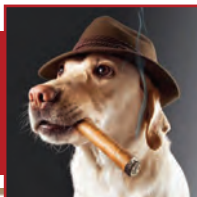


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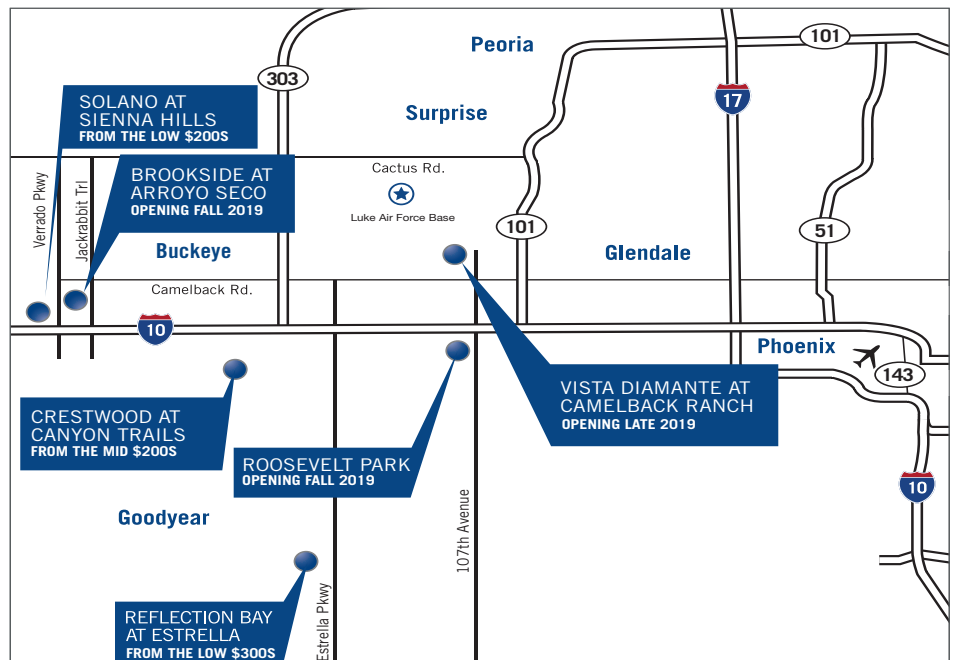
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A LOCAL HERO GETS A

Home

Deserving former soldier given the gift of a lifetime

BY KATIE SAWYER
Sound of Freedom Staff Writer

“I love the military, and I love my country,” Benjamin Decker says.

His home reflected that, and as he and his wife Sharon Decker sat in the front room, the patriotic colors of red, white and blue were visible in every corner of the house.

It had been a long journey to this home for the Deckers and their four children, who were gifted the five-bedroom, two-story home by Building Homes for Heroes four years ago to the day on June 12, 2015.

Benjamin, a 6-foot, broad-shouldered

former soldier could be an intimidating sight, but his warm smile showed a different side of Benjamin Decker.

“For us, our whole lives revolve around patriotism. Almost every room of the house has a flag in it. Everything revolves around honor and country,” says Benjamin, his deep voice filling the room.

The veteran spent 13 years in active duty from 1998 to 2010, eventually being deployed to Iraq for 16 months during the 2007 surge of troops deployed to Iraq ordered by then-President George W. Bush.

Benjamin was hit with multiple IEDs,

including one incident that killed his comrade Cpl. Brandon Craig in the Stryker next to him. Benjamin returned to the United States critically injured.

When Building Homes for Heroes was suggested to the Deckers by a fellow veteran family that had received their home through the program, they applied without thinking they really had a chance. That's when Sharon got the call.

"I nearly dropped to the floor, not believing the words that were coming out of his mouth," says Sharon. "We were in total disbelief. We honestly thought, 'What are the chances?'"

Building Homes for Heroes (BHH) is a nonprofit organization that gifts deserving veterans with refurbished, sometimes even brand-new homes. Their largest sponsor, Chase Bank, has given \$40 million worth of foreclosed homes to BHH. BHH then flips the home and renovates it for the family in need. Sometimes veterans need modifications for wheelchairs or other assistance devices, and BHH steps in to build them a new home with the specifications they need. They widen doorways for wheelchairs, lower countertops and install lightstrips for veterans who are visually impaired.

BHH has even gone as far as creating a wish list, so that each family can get help with basics like towels, sheets, beds and couches.

The home is theirs as long as they want it, and BHH signs over the deed the day the family moves in. Though they are responsible for utilities and upkeep, the main bills are out of the way. For the Deckers, this meant everything.

When Benjamin arrived in Hawaii to continue his career and receive medical care, he was unaware of the extent of his injuries.

He understood shortly after his arrival that something was amiss. For one, the newly built base had few medical services for wounded combat veterans like himself. For another, Benjamin was experiencing unusual symptoms.

"My mind was slipping at the time and I was starting to have issues remembering things. You can't really be in the military if you don't remember to make it in time for formation," Benjamin says.

Then came the diagnosis. Benjamin was partially deaf and had a traumatic brain injury, which can cause memory loss and mi-

If you have a guy who got a severe brain injury, nobody knows that walking past them. They don't realize that he may have been blown up seven times into a wall or he may have been within a foot of an IED and blown 20 feet in the air. But if you see somebody with no leg or no arm — wow, that guy's an American hero."

graines, and affect speech. This, in addition to PTSD and chronic back pain, made him feel like an outsider among his comrades, as most at the base had never seen active duty.

"They'd make fun of me if I did have to go see a psychiatrist," Benjamin says. "In the military, guys want to be hardcore and they want to be tough. If they think you're mentally broken, they don't really see it as an injury. They see it as you're being weak."

For a man that had dedicated his life and career to the military, to be treated as less-than by his fellow soldiers upon his return was the lowest blow.

"It was a slap in the face, and I didn't know how to handle it."

Benjamin says veterans with invisible injuries are dealt a different set of cards than those with physical injuries, who are often glorified over their fellow, invisibly disabled comrades.

"If you have a guy who got a severe brain injury, nobody knows that walking past them. They don't realize that he may have been blown up seven times into a wall or he may have been within a foot of an IED and blown 20 feet in the air. But if you see somebody with no leg or no arm — wow, that guy's an American hero."

This treatment can be a powerful factor for those returning from war, contributing to the depression and PTSD that soldiers often struggle with for the rest of their lives.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reported that 20 veterans died by suicide a day in 2014, making up for 18% of suicides that year alone.

"A lot of times depression goes along with traumatic brain injury or PTSD, because you went from being a warrior and a fighter to being less-than and you can't show it when you hang out with (the) guys," Benjamin says.

The New Hampshire native knew he wanted to be in the military from the time he was a little boy. He grew up watching G.I. Joe on TV, while watching his father, uncles and extended family join the military.

"It's all about serving and about being there for our fellow brothers and the comradery," he says proudly.

He had originally attempted to enlist in 1992, but after having a little too much fun roughhousing with his buddies in basic, he left with a neck injury. It was all for the best though, as he met and married his wife Sharon shortly after. A wedding and a couple kids later, he re-enlisted in 1998.

He started first in New York, then headed to Korea around the time of 9/11. He was stationed twice in Hawaii, and once in Fort Lewis, Washington before being deployed to Iraq. After being honorably discharged by the military in Hawaii, he was flown home to New Hampshire. Though the family had a happy surprise when their youngest daughter by a decade, Leilani, arrived, the family was now in dire straits.

They lost their house and two cars before packing everything they owned into a motorcycle trailer and driving across the country to Casa Grande, an affordable and more low-key environment. The six of them squishing into a small apartment, Benjamin promised his kids he would save enough for them to return to Hawaii.

Meanwhile, the family had been pushing to raise the degree of disability Benjamin was given by the VA originally. The VA gives a rating based on the degree of injury and supports the veteran accordingly. At 70% disability, Benjamin still needed to work to support his family, however his injuries inhibited his ability to do certain jobs.

"With my brain injury, I'm not allowed to work — (so) you'd think it'd automatically be 100%, but I started off in low numbers," Benjamin says.

With the help of a new VA in Tucson,

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Benjamin was given the proper diagnosis at 100% disability and was able to stop working. They returned to Hawaii, where they had family, the children's schools and support. That's when they got that fateful call.

As they were in Hawaii, the family couldn't see the house before it was built. In any case, the kids were thrilled to pick their own paint colors for their rooms. Their parents were equally thrilled about their master bathroom, which had been specially designed with a jacuzzi tub to help with Benjamin's back pain.

When they arrived at their home for the first time in the mid-summer heat, a giant banner with the words "welcome home" was flying high above their garage. News crews were ready and waiting, and their newly refurbished kitchen was filled with T-shirts, hats and a cake.

As they walked into their home for the very first time, what felt like hundreds of cameras clicked and flashed and, as Benjamin says, "even though you should let the woman" go first, Benjamin went in with the encouragement of their sponsor. Their first reaction was disbelief at how large the home was. To say they were overwhelmed would be an understatement.

"We have a picture of the kids — Dylan and Leilani in our loft up there — just lying on the rug making rug angels because (of) the reality of actually having a roof over our heads in a home that was ours and not the military's. When everyone left — in the complete quiet. Realizing this is our driveway. That's our garage. This is our living room. I have a kitchen that I can walk through," said Sharon, still seemingly surprised at their good fortune.

The family could finally draw a collective breath. The realization that this was their home wouldn't settle for months. In the days following the ceremony, they slowly gained furniture and beds, but the surreal feeling didn't dissipate.

Since their oldest son Dylan has gotten married and flown the coop, they have converted one of the bedrooms into a "man cave" for Benjamin, complete with blackout curtains to help with his persistent migraines. This is also where he keeps his war memorabilia, including his helmet showing a bullet hole just inches from where his skull would have been.

For Benjamin, BHH stands apart from other nonprofits that do this work for vet-

erans, as they stepped in to help his family where others might not.

"There's probably about 10 organizations out there, big ones like this, that do it. With the other organizations, it's the same thing, what looks better in the news? An ordinary looking guy like me or a guy in a wheelchair with no legs, no arms?" Benjamin says. "Building Homes for Heroes doesn't really care. They just want (to help) the injured soldier."

According to a spokeswoman, BHH has gifted 19 homes in Arizona since 2012, and hopes to reach their goal of 200 homes gifted by 2020. There are 5,000 to 6,000 veterans on the list to receive a home.

The company works to lower costs by partnering with local companies like AGE Landscaping and Handyman Connection to help with the workload. AGE Landscaping has landscaped two to three homes, and Handyman Connection has offered their services for eight out of the 19 homes in Arizona.

Since receiving their home, the Deckers have made it a point to attend as many home christenings as possible, travelling around the country acting as a sponsor for those veterans receiving a home.

"We're forever grateful, and that's why we keep doing whatever we can do for the organization," Sharon says. "There's no way we can ever pay that back."

By now, they know the drill.

"If there's a kid in the family, you know you're getting a swing set in the back," Benjamin says, as Sharon laughs. "They always try to do either a water feature in the back or a fireplace, because they think it's calming for the soldiers."

"We got a fire pit and a fountain — so we got both," he adds with a sly smile.

Benjamin and his family often go out of their way to make sure that families receiving a home from BHH feel accepted and supported by the veteran community.

"It's one of the ways we try to give back and support," Benjamin says. "We really consider BHH our family, definitely."

The family also gives back to the community in other ways. Both Sharon and their eldest daughter Destiny teach at a public school, and Benjamin volunteers as a crossing guard — known as "Daddy Decker" by the kids. He is also the school mascot.

For Benjamin, it comes down to memorializing the loss of his friends and comrades in Iraq. The ones who didn't come home —

62 lost in his battalion, to be exact.

"I feel guilty a lot of times, because I know a lot of soldiers out there still struggling. I know a lot of soldiers that didn't come home," Benjamin says. "I look at this house and the size of it and I think 'what did we do to deserve it? Really, did we deserve it?' But I'm thankful."

The best part of the experience for the Deckers has been the friendships that have lasted long after the home was built.

"They truly don't leave you. I mean, they don't just give you the home," Sharon says. "They invest in you...it's just a tremendous feeling knowing that there is support."

Sharon and Benjamin Decker had met while dating other people in the early '90s. When those relationships ended, they bumped into each other again at Sharon's fast-food job. She offered him a drink.

"It's funny," Benjamin says. "There's so many things in my life that I can't remember anymore, but I still remember the exact moment when I first saw her."

Sharon was equally smitten, and the rest, as they say, is history.

"He's just been my rock since day one...A lot of people said, 'they're not going to work,'" Sharon says. Benjamin chimed in "and we've outlasted all of them!" Sharon laughed, continuing, "We've been thrown a lot of punches, but we've gotten through every one of them and there's no other person that I would rather be with."

Four children and 24 years later, they're starting a new chapter. This last month, the Deckers hosted their first barbecue in honor of their second-oldest son Devin graduating high school and leaving for basic training June 23. Most of the kids knew the military life of moves, hardships and travel, all except Leilani, their youngest, only 8 years old.

"She's known nothing but being spoiled. She's been on TV, she's been in the paper, she's been to Diamondbacks games...I hope she doesn't grow up to think that's normal," Benjamin says with a laugh. "I hope she appreciates what soldiers have sacrificed for her." ■

Building Homes for Heroes is announcing its next Arizona home build at the Diamondbacks game on July 5. buildinghomesforheroes.org, 516-684-9220.

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Sanderson Ford CEO
David Kimmerle excuses
his employees from work
on Memorial Day, typically
a top day for selling
vehicles. He just asks
them to thank a veteran
or first responder
during the day.
(Photo by Pablo Robles)



COUNTRY FIRST

Sanderson Ford CEO David Kimmerle takes the military to heart

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO-KARASINSKI
Sound of Freedom Executive Editor

Sanderson Ford CEO David Kimmerle reaches out to shake hands, but it's about more than niceties.

In his hand is a weighty red, white and blue challenge coin, emblazoned with "Duty. Sacrifice. Honor. God. Family. Country," that he nonchalantly gives to veterans, the military and first responders.

"We don't ask for anything in return," he says. "We just walk off. They'll call us later and say they really appreciate it."

Kimmerle knows the plight of veterans. He, too, served.

A U.S. Air Force veteran, Kimmerle is on the board of Fighter Country Partnership/Foundation, which raises funds to enhance the lives of airmen and the families at Luke Air Force Base, which houses all branches of the military. The capital campaign is dubbed Luke Forward and is a \$5.82 million pledge to raise the morale of servicemen and women.

"The government pays for mission critical (needs), but there are certain qualities of life that they wouldn't have. The Flight Line Kitchen wasn't air conditioned until just recently," says Kimmerle, who was stationed at Luke Air Force Base with the 302nd Rescue Squadron.

"The Security Forces Facilities meet every day and when they changed, it was under a canopy. For the first time in 60 years, they change the guard in an air-conditioned room."

The Security Forces Facilities have guard mount rooms, where each incoming shift gets its daily orders and updates from the shift commander before going on duty. The rooms have a meeting area, lockers, restroom facilities and are enclosed. Luke's Security forces

formerly had a shade cover without walls, until Luke Forward's \$410,000 campaign promise.

Kimmerle says he appreciates the help of donors and volunteers. In general, he says, the nation doesn't show enough appreciation for the military.

"It's the smallest military we've ever had in the history of our country," he says. "Consequently, there aren't as many people who are touched by the military. This is an opportunity to help them."

"Because of the things we do, these people aren't forgotten. Some of them come back from these wars with PTSD, the suicide rate is high, and we have all these people who are paying it forward."

Sanderson Ford is saluting Arizona veterans for the fifth year by giving veterans \$500 gift certificates for paying it forward. The public nominates veterans and the winners are profiled on ABC 15.

The Glendale dealership also has designated parking spots for veterans near its entryway. His employees are excused from work on Memorial Day, one of the top days for selling vehicles. Kimmerle only asks them to take the time to say "thank you" to someone during the day.

"It's tough to make a transition to civilian life after you've been shot at for four years," he says. "In some cases, they do two or three different tours and are still here serving. They retire and then they're serving those who are serving us."

Kimmerle's experiences

The 302nd Rescue Squadron was known for its amphibious planes, the HU16, which had two reciprocating engines. He speaks to

soldiers now and few are familiar with the aircraft.

"They don't even remember the kind of aircraft we flew then because they're so old," Kimmerle says.

"It has been a long time, once I think about it. We had to qualify in ocean landings. Most of the training we did was at Roosevelt Lake. We did stuff with the Civil Air Patrol. It wasn't long after that they went to helicopters. They all retired to the boneyard."

Kimmerle calls his time at Luke "a great experience," just out of Glendale High School.

"It was during the Vietnam era. To be in a rescue squadron and to be right here, and to be working with Luke to this day is really special to me," he says.

Folks like Kimmerle are doing their best to enhance the lives of the military. The Military Assistance Mission helps make payments on veterans' homes. He finds it appalling that veterans should have such problems.

"It's shameful that we have this happening to those who are putting their lives on the line for us," says Kimmerle, who was in Washington, D.C., during 9/11.

He believes, through Fighter Country Partnership, the public can learn what the armed forces are about. He's been accused of exploiting the military. The thought of it makes Kimmerle angry.

"I'm a veteran," he says. "This is a way of life." ■

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Movin' On

ROADMASTER EXTENDS EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT TO MILITARY FAMILIES



BY ANDREA ESTRADA
Sound of Freedom Staff Writer

At Folds of Honor, investing in the education and the tomorrows of veterans and their families is not only considered a duty, but more so an honor. So, when longtime military supporter Roadmaster Group — a high-security transportation company based in Glendale — joined the nonprofit in its efforts, a dynamic partnership emerged.

In early May, Roadmaster Group unveiled a multiyear sponsorship agreement with Folds of Honor to provide several scholarships to the immediate dependents of fallen or disabled servicemen and -women.

The scholarships, valued at \$5,000, cover private educational tuition and tutoring for children in grades K-12 and also assist with

the costs of postsecondary education.

Because Roadmaster Group is a component of national security, John Wilbur, Roadmaster Group's CEO, calls the partnership with Folds of Honor a no-brainer.

"Our largest customer, by far, is the U.S. Department of Defense. We are moving those kinds of sensitive commodities for the military. Our trucks and our drivers are on military facilities every single day," Wilbur explains. "So, when I became familiar with the Folds of Honor organization, I was like, 'That's just the perfect fit for us.'"

Roadmaster Group's support, which is not a



one-time gift, but a four-year pledge, will help Folds of Honor expand its outreach — ultimately benefiting more military families, says Folds of Honor Vice President Ben Leslie.

"Having new partners like John and Roadmaster come in — not only commit to a large donation, but commit to four-year, large donation — helps us help new people, budget



and prepare,” Leslie says. “We know that probably three or four kids can go through college and see their academic career start and finish because of Roadmaster.”

Scholarship assistance is given to the widows and children of service members who have paid the ultimate sacrifice, including traumatic brain injury, loss of limbs, severe PTSD and death.

Kevin Cummings, chairman of Folds of Honor Arizona’s board, noted the nonprofit’s first concern — local scholars.

“One of the things I like most about our organization: the money that’s raised in Arizona stays in Arizona. Not until we meet the demand in Arizona can any of the money raised here go elsewhere,” Cummings says.

Not only does Folds of Honor have a patriotic mission, but Wilbur added it has an efficient way of executing that mission.

“A high percentage of the donations that go to this organization get directly into these scholarships. When someone is contributing, like us, we know that’s not being lost in abusive administrative charges or anything — (but) actually getting to the recipients of these scholarships,” Wilbur says.

The life-changing support Wilbur is extending speaks to his leadership, Leslie says.

“Roadmaster Group and John are making a positive community. To help military families right in your backyard — there’s not a lot to stand up like he and his company does; his employees; customers; and truck drivers,” Leslie says.

“We couldn’t do what we do at Folds of Honor without the patriotic generosity of Roadmaster.” ■

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Honoring *the* Military



Coyotes offering free tickets to service members

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO-KARASINSKI
Sound of Freedom Executive Editor

The Arizona Coyotes are offering free tickets to its home preseason games on Tuesday, September 17, and Saturday, September 21, to all service members, first responders and kids ages 14 and younger.

Those eligible and interested in requesting tickets for these games should visit arizonacoyotes.com/preseason.

The Coyotes will begin their seven-game preseason schedule on Sunday, September 15, against the Vegas Golden Knights at T-Mobile Arena. Arizona will then face the Los Angeles Kings in a split-squad matchup on September 17 at Gila River Arena and Staples Center. The Coyotes will return home to host the Anaheim Ducks on September 21.

"As we are deeply committed to positively impacting our community and exposing more and more people to our great game, we are proud to provide free admission to both of our home preseason games to all first responders, service members and all kids under the age of 15," says Coyotes President and CEO Ahron Cohen.

"We see this as a fantastic opportunity to say thank you to those you keep us safe, as well as to invite the next generation of Our Pack out to Gila River Arena."

The Coyotes will conclude their preseason with a three-game road trip to play the Edmonton Oilers (Tuesday, September 24), Vancouver Canucks (Thursday, September 26) and the Ducks (Saturday, September 28).

In addition, the Coyotes Weekender Package will get fans into all weekend home games in 2019-20 and will offer savings off gate prices. Call 480-563-PUCK or visit arizonacoyotes.com for more information. ■



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Congressional Recognition

Rep. Lesko honors Military and Veteran Success Center

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO-KARASINSKI
Sound of Freedom Executive Editor

Outreach Director Ken Fuellbier from the office of Rep. Debbie Lesko (AZ-08) presented Kelly Morgan of Arizona Department of Veterans Services with Arizona's District 8 Congressional Recognition.

Morgan works at the Veteran Success Center at Luke Air Force Base, where he assists members of the military and veterans with filing for benefits, job connections, and pension claims.

"Veteran Kelly Morgan is passionate about serving the Veteran community here in Arizona and being a resource for them and their families," Lesko says. "He has a reputation of being one of the best. Thank you, Kelly, for working tirelessly every day to assist the veterans in our community." ■



Ken Fuellbier presents recognition to Kelly Morgan at Luke Air Force Base.
(Photo courtesy Rep. Debbie Lesko)

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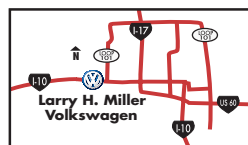
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Senior Airman Jaden Cady, 56th Security Forces Squadron law enforcement controller, uses a mirror to inspect underneath a truck that is passing through the South Gate search pit at Luke Air Force Base. While performing inspections, Defenders search for unauthorized items such as weapons, explosives or illegal substances. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman Brooke Moeder)



Staff Sgt. Zackery Hons, 56th Security Forces Squadron military working dog handler and his MWD inspect a truck at the Luke Air Force Base South Gate search pit. Hons and his MWD, Wax, perform a 360-degree inspection of vehicles prior to entering the base. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman Brooke Moeder)

Defending the Base

Security Forces guard Luke through search pit

BY AIRMAN BROOKE MOEDER
56th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Rain or shine, the 56th Security Forces Squadron Defenders stand guard 24/7 protecting the men, women and assets of Luke Air Force Base. This includes checking larger vehicles at the base's South Gate search pit.

Two Defenders and a military working dog handler with their canine work the pit together. They protect the population and the resources on Luke by performing a full, 360-degree inspection of vehicles prior to allowing them base access.

"The search pit and the gate are the first lines of defense for Luke," says Tech. Sgt. Jose Martinez, 56th SFS flight sergeant. "The Defenders check every vehicle that goes through the pit to make sure it's not bringing anything harmful or illegal onto the installation."

On average, Defenders inspect more than 530 vehicles in the pit area each week.

Depending on the size of the vehicle, inspection times vary up to 15 minutes. A FIDO explosives detector is used on commonly touched items and can detect trace levels of explosive materials.

Drivers pull into the inspection pit and open all the doors and compartments of their vehicles. For their own safety, the drivers wait in a secure holding area while their vehicle is searched.

While performing inspections, the Defenders search for unauthorized items such as weapons, explosives or illegal substances. With the numerous amounts of vehicles and people that come through the pit, they have to be ready for anything.

"We had an individual that was acting suspicious," says Senior Airman Jaden Cady, 56th SFS law enforcement controller. "We searched the individual's car, pulled his nap-

kins out of the center console and found a pipe, several razor blades and baggies of drugs in his backpack. You want to be systematic and thorough with the searches."

The Defenders have a vital role in maintaining mission readiness, by preventing incidents such as these from escalating and possibly further endangering base members.

If the offender is a civilian, the local police department will detain them. If the offender of a random search is a military member, the first sergeant or the individual's commander will investigate and act as they deem necessary.

Commercial drivers or civilians who need to make regular trips onto base are vetted through the visitor center annually.

For the most part, Cady says, inspections go smoothly. The Defenders of the 56 FW SFS continue to stand watch and ensure the safety of everything inside the gates of the base. ■

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U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO

On behalf of the **Mayor and Council, City management and staff**, we want to say **"THANK YOU"** for your service and dedication to our country.



City of Peoria



Marines assigned to the 6th Engineer Support Battalion, Bulk Fuel Company Charlie, Site Support Phoenix, carry a fallen Marine in a flag-draped transfer case during a dignified transfer May 17 at the Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. Dignified transfers are when fallen service members are transported from an aircraft to an awaiting transport vehicle. The fallen Marine, Lance Cpl. Justin A. Hinds, was an Avondale native. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman Brooke Moeder)

Dignified

TASK

Marines with unique mission call Luke AFB home

BY AIRMAN BROOKE MOEDER
56th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Atan, quiet building sits on a street near the northwestern edge of Luke Air Force Base. Lost in the background of F-35s and F-16s, it can be easily overlooked, however, this particular structure houses a group with a very unique mission.

Home to the Marine Corps' 6th Engineer Support Battalion, Bulk Fuel Company Charlie, who's headquartered in New Orleans, this unit is made up of a mix of 22 active-duty, active-reserve and Marine Corps



The father of a fallen Marine hugs Lance Cpl. Kyle Pierce, Alpha Company administrative specialist, Headquarters and support Battalion, Marine Corps Installations East, during a dignified transfer at the Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport May 17. Pierce was the best friend of the Justin A. Hinds, an Avondale native. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman Brooke Moeder)

Reserve and have operations that remain independent from the on-going Luke operations.

The facility previously resided in downtown Phoenix but relocated to Luke in Jan-

uary 2010 due to anti-terrorism and force protection requirements.

"We don't have any operational or administrative commitments to Luke," says U.S. Marines 1st Sgt. Eddie Williams, 6th Engi-



Marines assigned to the 6th Engineer Support Battalion, Bulk Fuel Company Charlie, Site Support Phoenix, perform a dignified transfer for a fallen Marine May 17 at the Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. The company participates in color guard, Marine Corps funeral honors and dignified transfers. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman Brooke Moeder)

neer Support Battalion Bulk Fuel Company Charlie Site Support Phoenix inspector instructor. "We just have a building, basically. All of our operations are conducted outside of the base."

The 6 ESBs primary responsibility is to train reservists in the bulk fuel community and provide fuel for ground transportation in the Marine forces, Williams says.

More than 350 reservists come to Luke one weekend a month to perform annual Military Occupational Specialty training.

The reservists conduct annual rifle and pistol range qualification for three to five days in an area close to Flagstaff. They also practice land navigation, battle skills testing and bulk fuel training to enhance the battalion's marksmanship proficiency and meet annual training requirements.

The battalion participates in color guard, funeral honors and dignified transfers and, according to Williams, they have events throughout the year when the community asks for Marine Corps support.

The most recent dignified transfer performed by Marines from 6 ESB was May 17 at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport for an Avondale native, Lance Cpl. Justin A. Hinds, an administrative specialist with Alpha Company, Headquarters and Support Battalion, Marine Corps Installations East.

With such a small number of Marines stationed at Luke, there is a bond between these military members that reflects a family.

"If one of our comrades has fallen, we do everything to make sure the family can have closure," says Master Sgt. Ralph Wright, Site Support Phoenix operations chief. "It's just what we do. It doesn't matter if we knew the Marine personally. It's a title we earn. We know what everyone went through to deserve it." ■

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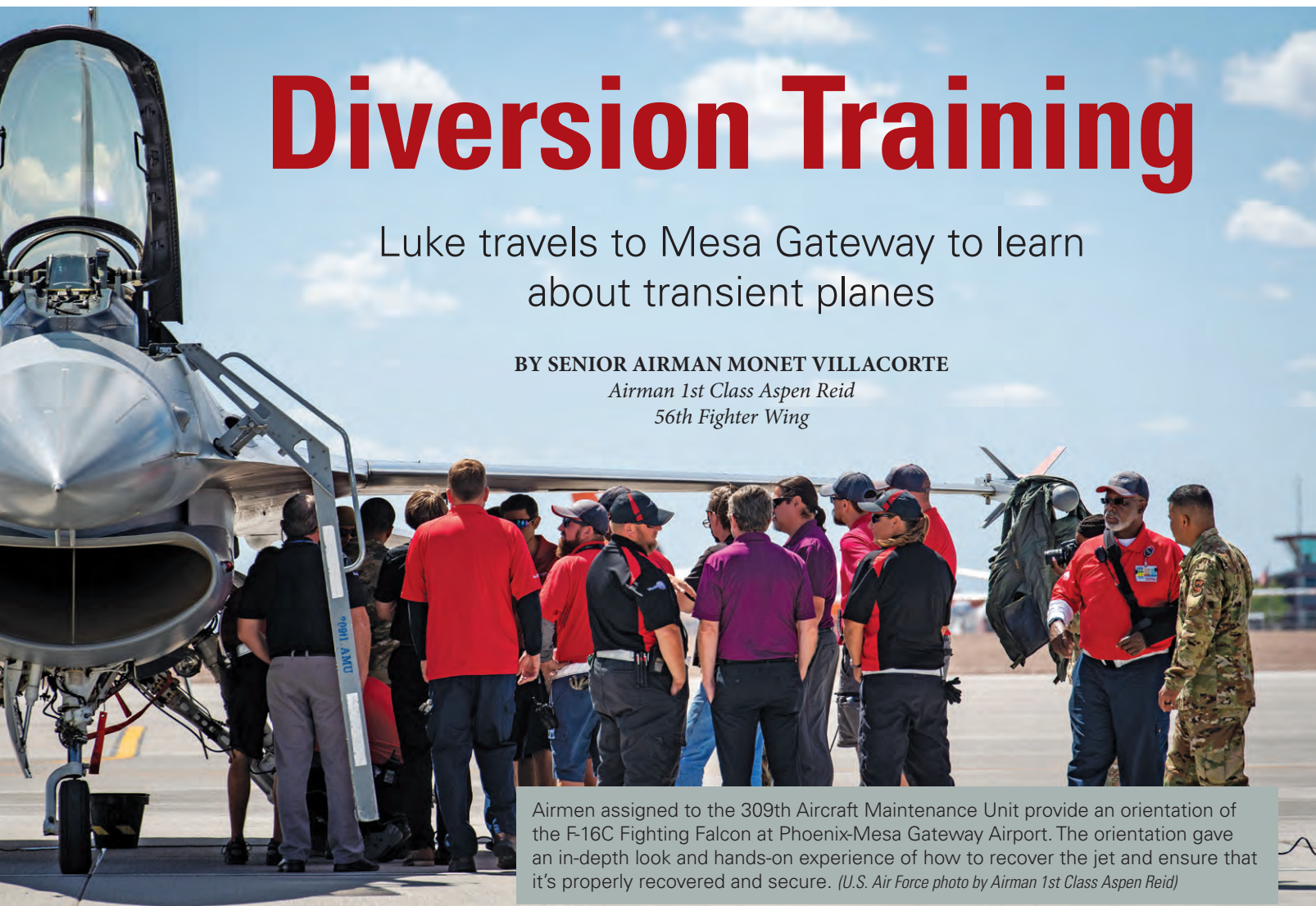
Diversion Training

Luke travels to Mesa Gateway to learn about transient planes

BY SENIOR AIRMAN MONET VILLACORTE

Airman 1st Class Aspen Reid

56th Fighter Wing



Airmen assigned to the 309th Aircraft Maintenance Unit provide an orientation of the F-16C Fighting Falcon at Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport. The orientation gave an in-depth look and hands-on experience of how to recover the jet and ensure that it's properly recovered and secure. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Aspen Reid)

Members from the 309th and 61st Aircraft Maintenance Units partnered with the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport to conduct transient aircraft training on May 21 for Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport employees.

The training is essential to ensure airport employees know how to safely recover Luke aircraft that may divert there in the event of an emergency or inclement weather.

"Mesa (Gateway Airport) reached out to us and were looking for training on how to recover these jets," says 2nd Lt. Phillip Resnick, 56th Operations Support Squadron Airfield Operations officer. "This is one of the primary divert (locations) that we use. If there's bad weather or an emergency, they will come here if they aren't able to make it back to Luke."



Airmen assigned to the 309th Aircraft Maintenance Unit brief employees of the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport, May 21, 2019, in Mesa, Ariz. The training included instructions on how to recover an F-16C Fighting Falcon and an F-35A Lightning II in the event an aircraft must land there. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Aspen Reid)

Not only did the 17 airport employees attend a class with instruction taught by approximately 15 maintainers from the 309th and 61st AMUs, they also received hands-on training with an F-16 Fighting Falcon and

two F-35 Lightning II from Luke.

Employees were taught how to chock, pin and conduct safety checks to secure the air-

SEE **TRAINING** PAGE 36

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LUKE TRAINING

TRAINING FROM PAGE 34



Staff Sgt. Allen Ehmes, 309th Aircraft Maintenance Unit F-16C Fighting Falcon dedicated crew chief, shows employees of the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport inside the cockpit of an F-16 in Mesa. The airport serves as an alternate landing location in the event of an emergency or other incident. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Aspen Reid)

craft and shelter it until Luke maintainers reach the airport.

"I'm excited that everyone (got) a first-hand perspective on the training from the actual military personnel that work on these aircraft," says Amy Seifried, line shift supervisor, Gateway Aviation Services at Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport, "We (learned) the correct way and the safest way to handle them."

Ensuring that the pilots and personnel on the ground felt safe and confident in their abilities to land and recover the aircraft was another goal of this training.

"We are trying to help them become more prepared to safely receive our jets without any issues," Resnick says. "We're also looking around to see if we can bring anything to make it safer for everyone and make sure that our pilots feel comfortable landing here."

Because of this training, airmen were able to engage with the local community while imparting knowledge to Mesa's airport employees.

"We've forged really good relationships with them," said Resnick. "This is a really good opportunity to build community partnerships and for our Airmen to show all the great work they do." ■

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An Armed Forces Golf Championship participant prepares her tee for the drive at Falcon Dunes Golf Course near Luke Air Force Base. Six men and three women will move on the world championship in China later this year. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Aspen Reid)

FORE!

Luke hosts Armed Forces Golf Tournament

BY AIRMAN 1ST CLASS ASPEN REID
56th Fighter Wing

The 2019 Armed Force Golf Tournament and Championship was held May 8 to May 19, at Falcon Dunes Golf Course near Luke Air Force Base.

The tournament is held every four years at a Department of Defense base in the United States. This year marks the 11th time an Air Force base hosted and 80 players competed in this year's competition.

The players play four rounds in the qualifying week of the tournament, with the top 34 moving on to the championship where they play another four rounds. From the 34, teams of nine players, six males and three

females, are named champions. Champions are rewarded with team medals, and personal medals. The top six males and three females move on to compete in the world championship, scheduled to be held in China this year.

The tournament is friendly competition between all the DoD services, building connections between the services and helping to boost morale, while contributing to recruitment, retention and readiness of troops.

"I'm very impressed with the comradery and sportsmanship that the players have exhibited while playing here at Luke," says Col. Robert Sylvester, 56th Mission Support Group commander. "This tournament is an opportunity for them to encourage and motivate not only their service but their sister services as well."

The champions that will move on to play in the world championship round in China are as follows:

Men's:

1st place: Air Force Capt. Kyle Westmoreland
2nd place: Air Force Capt. Andrew Fecteau
3rd place: Air Force Capt. Brandon Johnson
4th place: Air Force Airman 1st Class Jacoby Chappa
5th place: Air Force Staff Sgt. Dalton Dishman
6th place: Army Spc. Chris Erwin

Women's:

1st place: Army 2d Lt. Melanie De Leon
2nd place: Air Force Lt. Col. Linda Jeffery
3rd place: Navy Lt. Laurel Gill ■

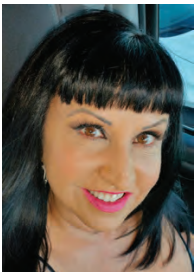


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Joint Effort

West Valley fire departments train at Luke

Firefighters from the West Valley came together at Luke Air Force Base to take part in a joint training exercise. The event tested the ability of different fire departments to work together successfully when responding to emergencies.

(Photos by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Zoie Cox)



Fire departments from across the West Valley work together during a joint training exercise at Luke Air Force Base. The multi-company standard training mimicked an emergency in which firefighters had to not only subdue the fire, but rescue mannequins with simulated injuries.



Firefighters from the West Valley prepare to lay hose for a joint training exercise at Luke Air Force Base.



Firefighters huddle around a mannequin while simulating CPR during a joint training exercise at Luke Air Force Base.



A firefighter watches team members during a joint training exercise at Luke Air Force Base.

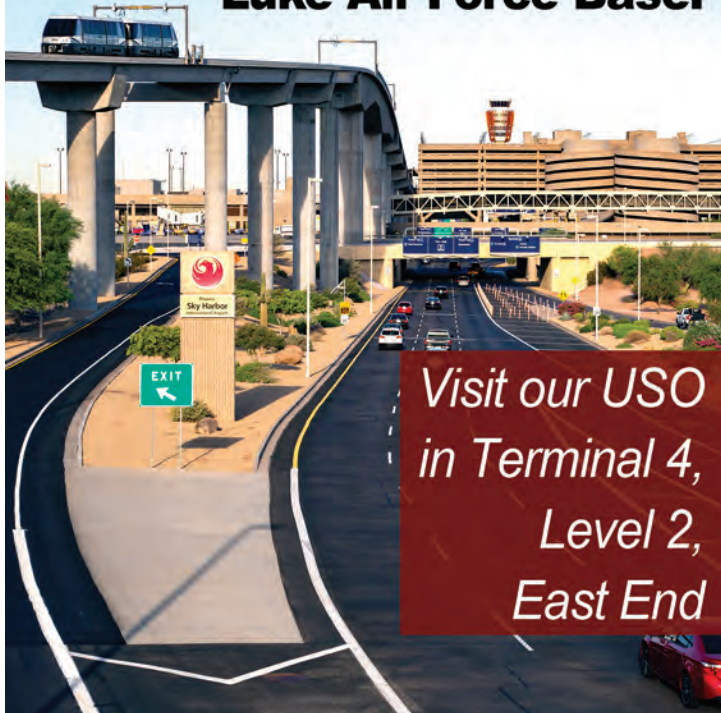


A line of firefighters prepares to enter a room during a joint training exercise at Luke Air Force Base. The Luke AFB Fire Department responds to emergencies in the local community while local fire departments respond to emergency calls on base.



An Arizona Fire Medical Authority firefighter rolls a hose during a joint training exercise at Luke Air Force Base.

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Capt. Kaleigh Moses, 56th Medical Operations Squadron nurse practitioner, smiles at her brother Capt. Kyle Moses, 310th Fighter Squadron instructor pilot, after a flight in an F-16D Fighting Falcon at Luke Air Force Base. Kaleigh flew alongside her sibling during a flight to help her understand how the contributions she makes as a nurse practitioner directly affects the pilots who teach and train the world's greatest fighter pilots. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Jensen Stidham)

Soaring Siblings

BROTHER AND SISTER FLY TOGETHER IN F-16 FORMATION

BY STAFF SGT. JENSEN STIDHAM
56th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Two sibling Air Force officers had what is likely to be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity by recently flying together in an F-16 Fighting Falcon formation.

Capt. Kaleigh Moses, 56th Medical Operations Squadron nurse practitioner, saw the pinnacle of her medical treatment in action as she flew in the backseat of the F-16 during a familiarization flight, while her older brother Capt. Kyle Moses, 310th Fighter Squadron instructor pilot, flew alongside.

Familiarization flights are used to enhance an airman's understanding of a particular aircraft and the military member's role and contribution to the Air Force mission.

"Working on the other side of the base, we don't get to see a lot of what happens on the flightline side of base," Kaleigh says. "It's nice

to see what you're doing every day for the Air Force trickle down into the mission. I support the mission by supporting the people who support the mission."

Kaleigh also explained seeing familiar faces while she visited work centers on the flightline motivated her because she doesn't often get to see where her patients work and how they contribute to the mission like her.

Although this was Kaleigh's first time flying in an F-16, her brother has flown combat sorties around the world, often times going long periods of time without seeing family. In late 2018, Kyle ended up stationed at Luke, where his younger sister had already been serving within the 56th Medical Group.

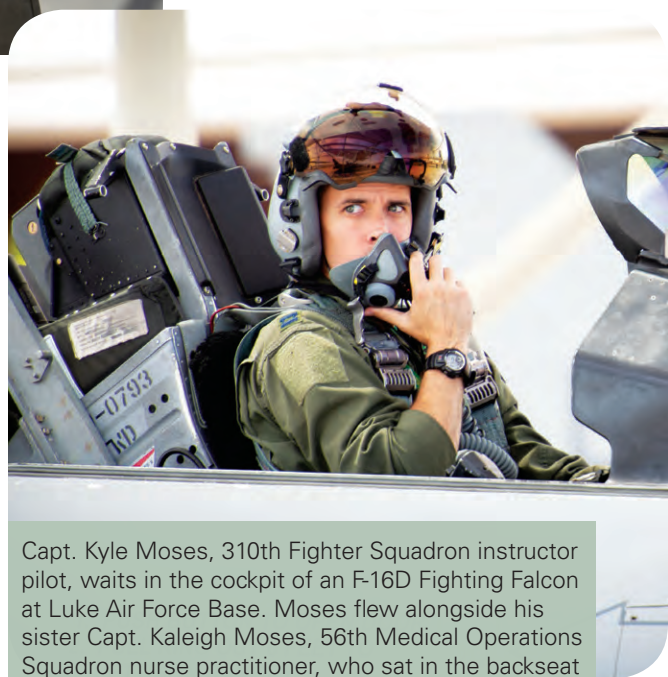
"I was stationed overseas and deployed over the past four years," Kyle says. "We

haven't gotten to see each other a whole lot so being stationed at the same base is really great. Ever since I found out I was being stationed here, I knew I wanted to see her in a familiarization flight, so now that it has actually happened it's really cool."

After their distinctive flights the two hugged, high-fived, and talked about the enjoyment of participating in the unique sortie.

"It was such a good time," Kaleigh says. "Definitely something I won't forget."

Fulfilling its purpose, the sibling sortie not only gave the nurse practitioner the ride of a lifetime but also served to strengthen her esprit de corp. It bettered her understanding of the direct impact she has in training the world's greatest fighter pilots and combat ready airmen. ■



Capt. Kyle Moses, 310th Fighter Squadron instructor pilot, waits in the cockpit of an F-16D Fighting Falcon at Luke Air Force Base. Moses flew alongside his sister Capt. Kaleigh Moses, 56th Medical Operations Squadron nurse practitioner, who sat in the backseat of his wingman's jet during a familiarization flight. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Jensen Stidham)



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FIGHTER COUNTRY PARTNERSHIP

Honorary Commanders Golf Classic

PHOTOS BY NICOLE NERI

Military members, citizens and veterans came together for the Fighter Country Partnership Honorary Commanders Golf Classic at The Wigwam in Litchfield Park on May 17. The golf tournament is the primary funding mechanism for Fighter Country Partnership and its support for Luke Air Force Base. FCP was founded in 1997 and is the leading community support and advocacy group for the aid, operation and preservation of Luke Air Force Base.



Anthony Alejandro warms up on the driving range.



Golfers practice on the driving range.



Ian Yonushonism, right, and John Knebel talk and joke before the fundraising tourney.



Kyle Leavitt, AZ Firearms gunsmith, loads a vintage Howitzer with black powder before the Fighter Country Partnership Honorary Commanders Golf Classic.



Jason Puchak jokes with a group before the Fighter Country Partnership Honorary Commanders Golf Classic.



Maj. Bobby Cheek of the Air Force practices putting.



Kirk McClure of the 310th Air Force fighter squadron loads up his golf cart.



Golfers stand for the national anthem to kick off the event.



A vintage Howitzer is fired to signal the start of the Fighter Country Partnership Honorary Commanders Golf Classic.



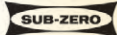
John Orsak, center, chats with fellow golfers.



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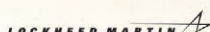
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