

Flying K



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Naval Air Station Kingsville, Texas

www.cnic.navy.mil/kingsville

March 11, 2011

Free income tax preparation available

Trained volunteers are available to prepare your income tax returns for free at the VITA tax office located at the Fleet and Family Support Center. The office is open Monday through Thursday, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Friday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

To date, VITA volunteers have helped 22 people get \$56,894 in refunds and saved them \$4,139 in tax preparation fees.

To schedule an appointment, call 516-6635/6638 or 438-6994.

Assault response line available 24/7

The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. To report a sexual assault, call the 24/7 response line at (361) 533-0454 or contact Pat Kapitan at (361) 961-1670 or (361) 947-3140.

Inside ...

Top Sailors of the Quarter, Civilians of the Quarter and Civilians of the Year announced.

Turn to pages 2 and 3, for more information.



Breaking ground for energy savings --

NAS Kingsville personnel joined Chevron Energy Solutions (CES) employees at an official ground-breaking ceremony for the air station's new, \$3.1 million Solar Array plant March 8. The plant will be constructed by Chevron Energy Solutions on 3.3 acres at South Field. Taking part in the ground-breaking were, from left: Ken Welch, CES; Jack Kopatz, NASK Public Works; Steve Phalon, NASK deputy public works officer; Cmdr. Scott Wilmot, NASK executive officer; Mark Vilchuck, CES director of engineering; Dick Messbarger, Kingsville EDC; and Sarah Greff, CES project manager. Right is the artist's rendition of what the Solar Array plant will look like once it's completed in September. (Photo by Jon Gagné, NAS Kingsville Public Affairs).



NAS Kingsville Quarterly Energy Report - 1st Qtr FY-11 MWhr Used



Lace up your shoes March 18 for MWR's annual Sports Day

NAS Kingsville's Morale, Welfare and Recreation is gearing up for a sports day to be held Friday, March 18. It's an opportunity for all personnel to get together and have some fun while competing against one another for the coveted title, "Champion."

Prior to Friday, several team events will be held.

Tuesday, March 15, a 5-on-5 basketball tournament will be held. Wednesday, March 16, there will be an indoor volleyball tournament. Championship games for the basketball and volleyball games will be held on Friday, during sports day.

Thursday, March 17, at 5 p.m., a St. Patrick's Day 5K run is scheduled.

Friday's sports-day events kick off at 10 a.m. with a 3-on-3 soccer tournament and racquetball tournament. Other events include: a horseshoes tournament, tennis tournament, dodge ball tournament, a home-run derby, a pie eating contest, bean bag toss, and a tug of war. The day culminates with the "Dust Bowl," an annual flag football game between Training Squads 21 and 22. The "Dust Bowl" is slated to begin at 3 p.m.

A KidZone, complete with a bounce house and other activities, will be set up for younger family members to enjoy.

The day's events will also include live music and free food. Beverages including soda and beer will be for sale.

Tournaments and activities are open to all base personnel. Sign up for events with your command or at the fitness center.

see *Sports* on page 4

From the Bridge



Capt. Mark McLaughlin
Commanding Officer



Greetings Team Kingsville,

There are two issues I'd like to discuss in this week's article. The first is the annual Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society fund drive. The theme this year is, "It Takes All Hands."

The Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society is a worldwide nonprofit charitable organization designed to provide financial, educational, and other assistance to members of the Naval Service of the United States, eligible family members and survivors, when in need. This is not to be confused with Combined Federal Campaign. NMCRS gives 100 percent of the collected donations back to the active-duty and retired Sailors and Marines, their family members and

eligible survivors of active-duty members.

So let's hit this a bit closer to home. In 2010, NMCRS collected a very generous \$12,185 from NAS Kingsville personnel. On the receiving end, eligible patrons from NAS Kingsville received assistance that totaled nearly \$29,000. This was direct financial assistance to our own shipmates in need, it was not taxed by a governing organization and only a very small portion was actually granted to the member, most was paid back through normal means. But the bottom line, when our members of NAS Kingsville needed assistance, it was there!

This year's campaign began Tuesday, March 1, and will run through April 16. NAS Kingsville has four very energetic Lead NMCRS Representatives: Chief Perez, CS1 Clow, MR1 Moran, and ET1 Mandrigal. Our goal is to make 100 percent contact with all personnel assigned to the base and rely on each of you to look inside to provide a contribution, a contribution that this year's campaign is asking to be \$10 per month. Would you help a shipmate for \$10 per month? Better yet, wouldn't you like to know that if you needed assistance,

a shipmate contributed \$10 per month for the cause? Please give to the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society. More information is available at the website www.nmcrs.org.

The second item I'd like to discuss is our online survey soliciting inputs about what types of improvements would you like to see on board the Naval Air Station. This same survey that led to NASK getting the Subway sandwich shop added to a space in our Navy Exchange a little over a year ago. Here is your chance again to tell me what you want. I can't promise we can do any of your suggestions within these tight fiscal controls; however, it provides me documentation when I seek funding for services based on what the customer, you, would like at your installation. To access our online survey, navigate to the following link: <https://g2.cnic.navy.mil/tscnrse/NASKINGSVILLETX/Lists/Quality%20of%20Service%20Survey/NewForm.aspx>, and the rest is pretty self explanatory. CAC card required to take the survey. I look forward to what you have to say.

Until next time~Skipper Mac

Performance, leadership key for NAS Kingsville Sailors of the Quarter

By Jon Gagné

NAS Kingsville Public Affairs

NAS Kingsville recently announced the Sailors of the Quarter for the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2011. The Sailors selected were chosen based on sustained superior performance, leadership, community involvement and professionalism.

Senior Sailor of the Quarter is CS1 (SW) Erasmo Guerrero, leading petty officer for the Bachelor Housing Department and Navy Gateway Inns & Suites. Guerrero, from Findlay, Ohio, is a veteran of 15 years, and has been on board NAS Kingsville since November, 2008. He is the president of the First Class Petty Officers' Association and a key player in the command's Community Outreach Program.

"CS1 Guerrero was nominated for Sailor of the Quarter for his keen leadership style, among other qualities," said Bachelor Housing Office Leading Chief CSC(AW/SW) Pearline Myers. "He continuously shows concern for junior personnel by leading them in the right direction. With his hard-charging and nose-to-the-grindstone attitude, he has set himself apart from his peers."

Guerrero has also taken on the difficult assignments, serving as master of ceremonies at a number of NAS Kingsville command events, including the 2009 and 2010 Navy Birthday Balls, the POW/MIA Remembrance, and several enlisted retirements and cultural awareness events.

Junior Sailor of the Quarter is ABH2(AW/SW) Carlos Machado of the Air Operations Department / NALF Orange Grove. Machado is a native of Dallas and reported to NAS Kingsville in July 2009.

"Petty Officer Machado was nominated



NAS Kingsville's Sailors of the Quarter were recognized recently by the Kingsville Navy League. Senior Sailor of the Quarter is CS1(SW) Erasmo Guerrero (left). Junior Sailor of the Quarter is ABH2(AW/SW) Carlos Machado. Below, Bud Malcik, president of the Kingsville Navy League, congratulates Guerrero on his achievements, during a luncheon held on behalf of NAS Kingsville's top Sailors.



because of his dedication and limitless drive to every task he is assigned," said Leading Chief and NALF Grove OIC Rudy Oliva. "He was instrumental in the revamping of NALF Orange Grove's HAZMAT program,

taking an ailing program and rebuilding it from the ground up. This allowed maintenance personnel to effectively perform essential maintenance in order to provide for 100 percent availability to the training air wings that use the airfield."

Machado's leadership skills were also key to his selection. "Machado's leadership and superior management led to a 100 percent RAR during the most recent force revision," Oliva added. "Completing more than 450 maintenance checks quarterly, Petty Officer Machado instills a high performance attitude throughout the NALF Orange Grove team."

Bluejacket of the Quarter is ET3 Richard Nava of the Air Operations Department's Ground Electronics Division. A native of Port Isabel, Texas, Nava reported to NAS Kingsville in February 2010.

One of four radar technicians in his division, Nava has proven himself in his work center, according to Leading Chief ETCS (SW) Kirk Hurst. "Petty Officer Nava has performed over 150 maintenance checks and five corrective actions on more than 20 pieces of equipment worth well over \$20 million," Hurst said. "His personal contributions to our mission resulted in 50,000 incident-free flight operations at both NAS Kingsville and NALF Orange Grove."

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Flying K

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Capt. Mark McLaughlin
Commanding Officer

Cmdr. Scott Wilmot
Executive Officer

Jon Gagné
Public Affairs Officer
Managing Editor

Fifi Kieschnick
Public Affairs Specialist / Editor

IC1(SW/AW) Jesse Booth
Staff Photographer/Writer

AC3 Kiana Kahlbaum
Staff Photographer/Writer



This paper is published for people like EN2(SW) Robert Sanchez, who works in MWR's Maintenance Department and is a member of NAS Kingsville's Auxiliary Security Force. Sanchez has been serving in the U.S. Navy for 10 years and is a native of San Diego, Calif.

Kingsville's 2010 top civilians announced

by IC1(SW/AW) Jesse Booth
NAS Kingsville Public Affairs

NAS Kingsville's top Civilian Employees for 2010

Naval Air Station Kingsville's top civilian employees for 2010 were recently announced.

Congratulations to Patrick Paddock for earning Senior Civilian of the Year, and Fifi Kieschnick for earning Junior Civilian of the Year.

Paddock, air operations specialist, was selected as Senior Civilian of the Year for 2010. According to Lt. Cmdr. Dave Anderson, Air Operations department head, Paddock has played a key role in a number of command programs with high visibility, since he made the transition from active duty to civilian employee in January 2010. Paddock also served as acting Air Operations department head for six months, while Anderson temporarily stepped up as the air station's executive officer.

"Pat's team approach and emphasis to educating and protecting the command's mission is noticed throughout the base and Navy Region Southeast," Anderson stated. "During his six months as the air operations department head, he supervised and managed a combined team of 123 military, contractors, and civilian personnel."

Anderson added that Paddock rewrote the command's Air Operations Manual, created and rewrote the Personal Qualification Standards for the Wildlife Detection and Dispersal Team, and assisted in updating the Emergency Action Plan. He also created a new closed-field operations letter of agreement and rewrote the command's aircraft pre-mishap plan.

"Paddock's contributions to the command are endless," Anderson said. "He played a key role in the command being selected as the 2010 Installation Excellence Award winner from Navy Region Southeast, and he's taken the lead in paving a force ahead for the command and the Navy in promoting safe airfield operations."

Paddock articulates the potential impacts of wind farms on airfield navigational aids and through his efforts Navy Region Southeast funded \$500,000 in wind farm electromagnetic interference (EMI) studies. These studies have helped the base maintain a safe working environment adhering to the command's mission. Paddock has also prepared poignant and concise briefs on the topic for local, state, and federal government entities.

"Pat is truly a linchpin in this command," Anderson continued. "He brings a combination of continuity and expertise to the team that is invaluable and his drive to make a difference has put NAS Kingsville on the map nationwide."

Paddock, a native of Bloomington, Ind., previously served as the Ground Electronics Maintenance Officer here while on active duty, and later became the air operations officer until his retirement in late 2009, follow-



Patrick Paddock, Senior Civilian for 2010

ing 30 years of honorable service.

"Pat is very knowledgeable in his field of expertise, and a friendly 'go-to guy' Sailors and fellow personnel can look up to," said Connie Cashen, air operations administrative officer. "I have known him for almost six years now, and in each of the positions he has held, he has made an unforgettable and lasting impact."

Fifi Kieschnick, public affairs specialist, was recognized for her support of the command's mission and image. She plays a significant role every day in the public affairs office serving as editor of the command newspaper and community relations officer.

Kieschnick was previously the public affairs officer at Naval Station (NAVSTA) Ingleside. When Ingleside was placed on the Base Relocation and Closure (BRAC) list, she was tasked with guiding the installation through the process.

Shortly after arriving here, Kieschnick found herself heavily involved in planning the "Wings Over South Texas" air show, her first air show from a planning perspective. She had assisted with air shows in the past – both here and at NAS Corpus Christi – but this time, her input had a direct result in the success (or failure) of the show. As you might expect from a seasoned, public affairs professional, she rose to the task.

During a two-month period leading up to the air show, Kieschnick took the lead in publicizing the event, conducting more than 100 media evolutions, including news releases, radio and television station interviews, lining up performer interviews and guests appearances, and assisting the command's School Liaison Officer, Jeanie Alexander, with the pre-show Pep Rally at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. That event

see 2010 CoY on page 5

Rackley, Dunivan named Civilians of the Quarter

Two Naval Air Station Kingsville civilians were recently recognized for their outstanding dedication.

Daniel Rackley of Morale, Welfare and Recreation, was selected as Senior Civilian of the Quarter, and Doug Dunivan, of the Emergency Management Office, was selected as Civilian of the Quarter, both for their exceptional work ethics and commitment to the NAS Kingsville Team.

Rackley is the recreation and hospitality director aboard the air station, which covers the Bowling Center, it's snack bar, the K-Bar, Line Shack snack bar, the K-Rock Coffee shop and the food operations at NALF Orange Grove.

According to his supervisor, David Haigh, MWR director, Rackley has demonstrated leadership, professional competence, keen perception and resourcefulness in the efficient and orderly administration of the food and hospitality programs and facilities aboard NAS Kingsville and the outlying landing field at Orange Grove.

"Daniel's personal drive, technical knowledge and sincere desire to excel are attributes that attest to his excellent job performance handling a difficult business operation -- food and beverage -- particularly in a small installation with limited patronage and outdated facilities," Haigh said.

"Daniel always keeps management informed of all actions which directly impact the department and ultimately the command," Haigh added. "He understands the

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Grove. In addition," Hurst added, "Nava has displayed superior technical skills and determination learning to successfully operate and repair 15 extremely complex Radar systems without any formal training."

Hurst adds that Nava, although a junior



Senior Civilian of the Quarter Daniel Rackley

principles, methods and procedures of applying his knowledge of food and hospitality operations to decrease costs and increase sales and self-sufficiency"

Rackley retired from the U.S. Navy in 2000. He has been a part of MWR since October 1997.

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petty officer, leads by example.

"ET3 Nava's exemplary professionalism, military conduct and unmatched initiative clearly set him apart from his peers," Hurst said.



NAS Kingsville's Sailors of the Quarter were recognized recently by the Kingsville Navy League. Pictured here, Bud Malcik, president of the Kingsville Navy League, congratulates Bluejacket of the Quarter ET3 Richard Nava on his achievement.

Women's history observed

March is National Women's History Month. The theme for this year's observance is "Our History is Our Strength."

Although women's history is intertwined with the history shared with men, several factors -- social, religious, economic, and biological -- have worked to create a unique sphere of women's history.

The stories of women's achievements are integral to the fabric of our history. Learning about women's tenacity, courage and creativity throughout the centuries is a tremendous source of strength.

Women's History Month originated in 1978, when the Sonoma County, Calif., commission on the status of women initiated a Women's History Week to coincide with International Woman's Day.

Today, more than 53,000 active-duty women and more than 10,000 female Reservists are serving in the Navy. They make up 16.3 percent of the force, and make indispensable contributions to the Navy's mission and operations.

Thirty-one active and Reserve female flag officers and more than 50 female Command Master Chiefs are leading from the front. Additionally, nearly 50,000 women serve in a wide range of specialties as Navy civilians.

Some noteworthy military women include: Cmdr. Darlene Iskra became the first woman to command a U.S. Navy ship -- USS Opportune (ARS 41) -- in 1990. The first and only woman to receive The Medal of Honor was Dr. Mary E. Walker, a contract surgeon during the Civil War.

For more information on Women's History Month go to: <http://www.nwhp.org/whm/index.php>.

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Rosters for basketball and volleyball tournaments must be turned in by Friday, March 11.

Look for more information to come, including event times. For more information, call Kristin at 516-6494 or the fitness center at 516-6171.

NAS Kingsville

Religious Services Offered

For more information, call 516-6331.

Sunday at McFall Memorial Chapel

10:30 a.m. - Family Bible Services with Children's Church
12:30 p.m. - Catholic Mass

Tuesday

11:30 a.m. - God Break Lunch, Bible Study, in Bldg. 2741

Wednesday

7 p.m. - Officer Christian Fellowship Hunter's Grove Community Center

Thursday at McFall Memorial Chapel

4:30 p.m. - Catholic Choir Practice
5:30 p.m. - Prayer Meeting

Navy's 'Military Saves' promotes financial awareness, stability

Story and photos by Jon Gagné
NAS Kingsville Public Affairs

The Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) sponsored its annual Military Saves financial awareness day March 2, offering Sailors and Marines advice about planning their financial futures.

The event included five individual briefs including thrift savings, consumer credit, the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, financial planning and insurance. Those in attendance also received information about online scams that pose a threat to financial stability, and programs that encourage military personnel to strive for building wealth instead of debt.

"I've been working for Navy Mutual for five years now and I do a lot of these briefs," said retired Master Chief Petty Officer Bruce Baker. "I enjoy talking with military personnel about their financial futures and showing what is available to assist them with their planning."

Baker has worked with Navy Mutual as a retained 1099 employee since he retired for the second time in 2006.

Alan Bligh, the executive director of the Corpus Christi Better Business Bureau where he has worked for 32 years, talked to military personnel about avoiding bad deals and online scams.

"Today's headlines leads to tomorrow's scams," Bligh said. "Scams can be found everywhere ... from the Web, to your phone, and even door to door."

It's important, Bligh says, to pay attention to what is going on around you -- and how you're sharing your information.

"Don't give out personal information over the phone or post online unless you're absolutely certain that it won't be compromised," he added.

"Military Saves Week," is an important part of the Department of Defense personal financial readiness campaign in which commands are encouraged to provide training and financial resource information to Sailors and their family members.

According to NAVADMIN 011/11, commands should strive to create a culture encouraging savings and financial readiness to better position Sailors in an ever-changing economy. The campaign is designed to alter money handling behaviors through education on achieving long-term financial fitness.

This year's theme was "Building Wealth, Not Debt."

"During our Military Saves week at NAS Kingsville we try to focus on Sailors and their families," said FFSC's Ramon Panbanigan. "We stress personal savings, debt reduction and good financial habits. Our guest speakers are great and they do a fantastic job of relating to those who attend."

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In the Break



Stellar performance -- Fran Lanzone, analyst for Training Air Wing Two, recently received an On-the-Spot Cash Award for exceptional devotion to duty. Pictured above, Lanzone receives the award from Capt. D. Mark Brooks, commodore, TW2. Lanzone's citation reads, in part: while quietly enduring the agonizing pain of an abscessed tooth, Fran completed a total review of syllabus progress and Estimated Completion Date validation of over 100 Navy and Marine Student Naval Aviators in just a few hours. On that same day, instead of going home after emergency dental surgery, she returned to work and completed a final review of Task Group Tactical's "Snout" (training tool) in order to send it to the squadrons on time. During this same week, she selflessly gave countless hours of her already busy week to assist TGTAC staff in auditing the errored accounting of Marine SNAs and was critical in identifying the key data points to correct the error. Lanzone consistently gives time to assist and direct others, but these actions were time critical and she set other important tasks, and her own discomfort, aside to continue to loyally support the functions of TGTAC.

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Dunivan is dispatcher working emergency management at the Fire Department. He is a retired Air Force master sergeant who checked on board in April 2009.

According to his supervisor Monette Walker, emergency management officer, Dunivan is trusted, reliable and respected, and "will go above and beyond the call of duty for the base emergency services."

"Doug's prior military background with Emergency Action Planning and command and Control can be seen with the way he handles emergency calls," Walker said.

"Doug's ability to understand and visualize the fire or security services while they are responding helps him to think ahead of the problem and forecast other information that may be needed."



Civilian of the Quarter Douglas Dunivan



America Reads --

Vickie Jacobson, librarian, reads the Cat in the Hat to youngsters ages 6 to 12 from NAS Kingsville's Youth Activities Center on March 2, which is Dr. Seuss' birthday. The America Reads program is held annually in his honor on his birthday. YAC staff provided the children with milk and crackers to round out the event. (Photo by Fifi Kieschnick)

Morale, Welfare & Recreation



A 'WIN-Win' situation -- Pictured are members of team "WIN" who won the annual NASK Spring Soccer Tournament held Saturday, Feb. 26. Team WIN, comprised of members from Training Squadrons 21 and 22, completed the tournament undefeated to earn the title.



Staying Navy --

Lt. Sean Duncan congratulates AC1 (AW/SW) Martin Adrian on his reenlistment Feb. 25. Adrian, a native of Johnson City, Texas, added four years to his current eight years of U.S. Navy service. He will depart NAS Kingsville in April to serve at NAS Lemoore.



Super Bowl champions -- The "Worms" (pictured above) took top honors in the "Super Bowl Showdown" flag football tournament held on base on Saturday, Feb. 12.

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brought more than 6,000 students from all over South Texas to the college to help jump start the air show week festivities.



Kieschnick

"Fifi has a vast public affairs background and she's one of those people that can take an assignment and just run with it," said Jon Gagne, NAS Kingsville public affairs officer. "You know that she is going to do the job right – and she consistently exceeds expectations. That's exactly the type of person you want when you're dealing with the media and the public on a daily basis. NAS Kingsville was fortunate to add her to our public affairs team with the closing of NS Ingleside, and she continues to look for ways to improve what the PAO staff does for the base."

Kieschnick's efforts are felt not just throughout the command but also the local community. She has supported the command's Community Outreach program by coordinating 23 tours and special visits, and sending out 174 command news releases to newspapers and media outlets throughout the nation. She also plays a leadership role in Corpus Christi, serving on steering committees for Leadership Corpus Christi.

Kieschnick strives to do the best job she can every day, as she says, "I hope I have made a difference with my contributions to 'Team Kingsville.'"

She has extended her efforts in taking this action, along with the public affairs team, by assisting the command with photo support for various ceremonies and special events this past year.

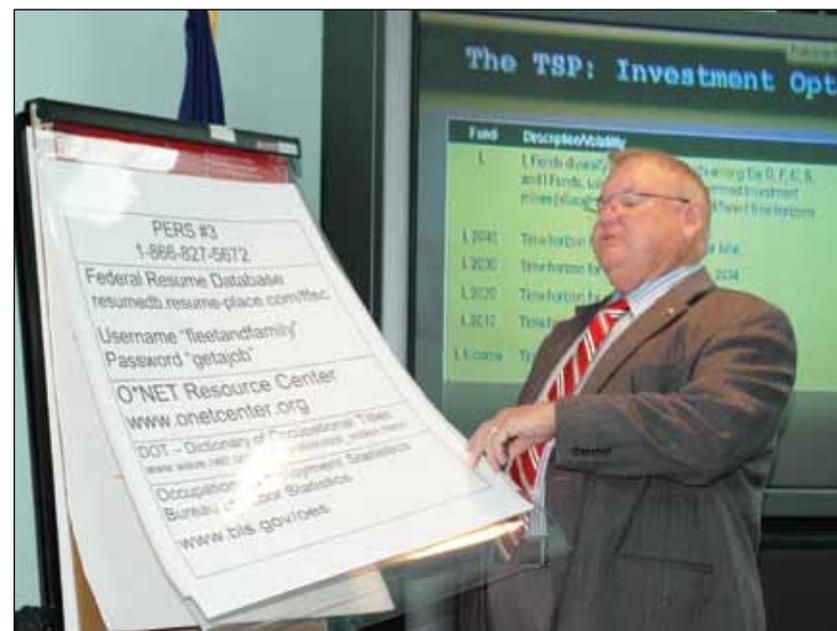
Her professional skills and positive attitude make her an asset to the command and the community.

Bowling Leagues

In the Doghouse League Standings as of March 1				Wednesday Nite Mixed Standings as of March 2			
Place	Team	Won	Lost	Place	Team	Won	Lost
1	The Other Guys	58.5	41.5	1	Big K Rollers	51.5	40.5
2	Lane Breakers	58	42	2	Slow Rollin	49.5	42.5
3	Alley Cats	57	43	3	Petes Angels	49	43
4	Tumbalos	49	51	4	Rat'lers	49	43
5	The Players	47	53	5	Bad Ass	47.5	44.5
6	Minds in the Gutter	46.5	53.5	6	Laugh Out Loud	42	50
7	DNA	44.5	55.5	7	Pin Bangers	40.5	47.5
8	The "HR's"	39.5	60.5	8	DUH's	39	53

High Score Game-Men: JD Monroe, 241.
High Score Series-Men: JD Monroe, 662; John Zapalac, 634.

High Score Game-Women: Lee Peters, 215; Doris Wallis, 212; Delia Monroe, 209.
High Score Series-Women: Dina Kangas, 543; Lee Peters, 535; Shirlie Duffy, 531.



Cents sense learned at FFSC's Military Saves event -- Pictured above, Army Reserve Specialist Ann Marine Loera and CS1 Holly Clow check out Thrift Savings web links and information sites on their cell phones. Top right, Retired Master Chief Bruce Baker conducts a discussion about the Navy's Thrift Savings Program. Bottom right, Navy Federal Credit Union's Jennifer Valenzuela greets customers by the table of free information and giveaways that encourage sound financial planning. (Photos by Jon Gagné)

Saves from page 4

The instructors ask questions and encourage audience participation, which gets everyone involved."

The Military Saves campaign is a combined effort between the DoD and the Consumer Federation of America.



Navy's newest aviators -- The Navy and Marine Corps' newest Naval Aviators pose for a group photo with Training Air Wing Two and NAS Kingsville following the winging ceremony at the Captain's Club Feb. 18. Those receiving their wings from VT-21 were: Lt. j.g. Joseph Ash; 1st Lt. Daniel Baik; Lt. j.g. Daniel Behrens; 1st Lt. Sean Callison; 1st Lt. Ryan Chase; Lt. j.g. Nathan Davey;

1st Lt. Stephen Davis; Lt. j.g. Edwin Jackson; 1st Lt. Kyle Oser; Lt. j.g. Evan Werner; and Lt. j.g. Brandon Wigton. Receiving their wings from VT-22 were: Lt. j.g. Jon Bauman; Capt. Luke Borgan; 1st Lt. Dewayne Papandrea; Lt. j.g. Christopher Short; Lt. j.g. John Thomas; and Lt. j.g. Carolyn Work. (Photo by Richard Stewart, CNATRA Public Affairs)

Wounded Warriors enjoy the hunt at NASK's Escondido Ranch

By CMDCM (SW/AW/FMF) Charlie Ratliff
Photos by Pamala Ratliff

NAS Kingsville opened its gates to Escondido Ranch Feb. 25-27, to six Wounded Warriors from Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, for a special hunt sponsored by the Kingsville Navy League.

Nine volunteers assisted the ranch staff to make the event a huge success.

The hunt was a great way for NAS Kingsville – and the Escondido Ranch staff – to show appreciation to these brave Americans and the sacrifices they have made for this country.

Volunteers who participated included Lt. Col. (Ret) David George, ETC (Ret.) Dennis Keeton, Jim Zumwalt, Master Sgt. (Ret) Mark Keeton, Master Sgt. (Ret) Darrell Cochran, Tech. Sgt. (Ret.) John Adams, Jay Moody, and, of course, our chefs, Pam Ratliff and Marion Zumwalt.

The six U.S. Army soldiers who travelled from BAMC were Sgt. J.D. Williams, Sgt. 1st Class Robert Montez, Sgt. Samuel Perales, Sgt. Aaron Kumamoto, Spec. Keelan Southerland, and Spec. Chris Ebner.

Everyone arrived at the Ranch on Friday, Feb. 25. Following a traditional South Texas dinner of brisket, beans and all the trimmings, ranch manager ETC Eric Smith and volunteer Dennis Keeton sat down with the hunters to talk hunting strategy. Before sunrise the next morning Smith, Keeton and other volunteers drove the hunters to their

"This was by far the best hunt I've ever been on [in Texas]. I had a blast and I know all of us really appreciated everything."

-- Sgt. Aaron Kumamoto, USA



Trophy shot -- Wounded Warriors wasted little time harvesting deer during their two-day hunt at Escondido Ranch. From left are: Sgt. J.D. Williams; Spec. Chris Ebner; Sgt. 1st Class Robert Montez; Sgt. Samuel Perales; Spec. Keelan Southerland; and Sgt. Aaron Kumamoto.

hunting blinds and dropped them off.

By 7 a.m., the ranch staff was already receiving calls from the hunters for pick-up. Keeton responded, and by 10 a.m., all hunters were back at the lodge with their trophies – as all six hunters had harvested a deer.

At 10 a.m., the volunteers served the hunters a breakfast of eggs, biscuits, gravy, and chicken-fried venison backstrap.

Following breakfast, the hunters, with help of our volunteers, field-dressed the deer. Then, some hunters went to the shooting range to practice. (Although after the success rate of their morning hunt, I'm not sure why.) Others spent time on the archery

range the staff had set-up outside the lodge. During mid-afternoon most of the hunters took a nap to prepare for the evening hunt.

That night, the volunteers took the hunters back to their blinds to hunt feral hogs and predator animals.

Although the evening hunt wasn't nearly as successful as the early-morning hunt, the Warriors enjoyed themselves.

Then, everyone feasted a dinner of speckled trout, redfish, flounder, and red snapper.

After dinner, as the evening before, hunting strategies for the next day's hunt were discussed. However, the hunters were still pretty excited about the successful hunt that morning, so much of the discussion centered on hunting stories from that evolution.

"The weekend and all the time we spent getting ready and enjoying the soldiers was a truly inspiring experience for me," said volunteer Lt. Col. (Ret.) David George.

"When I first heard NAS Kingsville was holding the hunt I thought that it was my duty to help -- because I could. I never imagined what [a great] experience it would be. I thank the Ranch staff for the opportunity to participate, and look forward to doing it again."

George pretty much summed it up for all the volunteers. We were happy to offer the hunt and enjoyed spending time with the soldiers.

Sunday morning the staff and volunteers

"The food was great, and the accommodations were wonderful," said Sgt. Robert Montez. "The early morning hunts were most enjoyable, and I look forward to visiting the Ranch again in the future."

-- Sgt. 1st Class Robert Montez, USA

"I think all of us were impressed with the Ranch and staff from the moment we first arrived," said Spec. Miles Southerland-Keelan. "The lodge was awesome and the rooms were very nice – with plenty of space to store our equipment. Over the last two years I've been on 10-12 hunts in Texas, and I'd say this one was the absolute best. I thank the entire Ranch staff – and NAS Kingsville for allowing us this great opportunity."

-- Spec. Keelan Southerland, USA

took the hunters out one final time, followed by breakfast of venison sausage and egg taquitos.

Wrapping up the weekend, good-byes were exchanged and the Warriors headed back to San Antonio.

As my wife Pam and I drove home that afternoon, I couldn't help but think about how inspiring the weekend had been. Yes, we were exhausted from getting up early and staying up late preparing meals and guiding the hunters, but we were also impressed by the patriotism demonstrated by the soldiers. Each and every one of them was proud of their service and they were all determined to succeed in their future endeavors despite the wounds they had suffered in combat.

And let me assure you – after meeting and talking with these young men – I can guarantee you they will be successful in whatever they choose to do in life.

To our new friends from BAMC in San Antonio – "Hooah Warriors! See ya on your next trip to the Ranch!"



Check in -- Volunteers and Wounded Warriors pose for a group photo at the Escondido Ranch Lodge shortly after check in. Top row, from left, are: Master Sgt. (Ret.) Darrell Cochran; Lt. Col. (Ret.) David George; NASK Command Master chief Charlie Ratliff; ETC Eric Smith; ETC (Ret.) Dennis Keeton; NC1 Matthew Snyder; Jim Zumwalt, Celanese Corp. of Bishop; and Mark Keeton, Brooke Army Medical Center. Bottom row: Sgt. Aaron Kumamoto; Spec. Keelan Southerland; Sgt. 1st Class Robert Montez; Sgt. Samuel Perales, Spec. Chris Ebner; and Sgt. J.D. Williams.



Prize winners -- Sgt. J.D. Williams, left, and Spec. Chris Ebner pose for a photo with their trophies.