

THUNDERBOLT

www.macdillthunderbolt.com

A very merry Christmas

Wounded warrior home for the holidays

- page 4



Photo by Senior Airman Angela Ruiz

The lone survivor of an improvised explosive device attack on his Humvee while deployed to Afghanistan, Staff Sgt. Steve Light, right, gets a welcome-home bear hug during a ceremony in his honor Dec. 16 at MacDill Air Force Base. Sergeant Light's experience, and his determination to continue serving his country, provided a lesson in dedication for all in attendance.

COMMENTARY



Remember others

by Brig. Gen. John N.T. Shanahan
55th Wing commander

OFFUTT AIR FORCE BASE, Neb. (AFNS) — As we begin the holiday season, all of us need to take a break and find time to recharge our mental and physical batteries. And, I want to emphasize the importance of taking care of each other, now more than ever.

The concept of watching out for our brothers- and sisters-in-arms is not new. In fact, while serving down-range, it becomes a natural extension of the combat environment. For reasons that are not always easy to understand, however, that helpful Wingman attitude too often melts away when our deployers return to home station, or when our people leave the base at the end of the day. Our Wingman responsibilities don't stop when we return from a deployment or leave the office.

Our coworkers, from the youngest Airmen to the most senior leaders, sometimes need our help to make good decisions. Whether that decision happens to be skipping that last round of drinks, pointing out and stopping risky behavior, or simply saying "no" when somebody asks you to join in an action that you know could result in injury or damage, we all have a responsibility to intervene to keep our fellow Airmen safe.

With the holiday season in full swing, most of us will join our family and friends for a party, dinner or just to hang out and relax. Often these gatherings include a drink or two and the chance to laugh and share stories.

While you are enjoying yourselves, have a game plan. If you drive, don't drink. And if you drink, don't drive. As important as it is to have a plan, it's even more important to stick to it. If you see someone who has had too much to drink, or is acting carelessly and endangering himself or herself or others, do everything you can to stop the activity before someone gets hurt. The last thing anyone wants to see is a promising career cut short or even worse someone injured or killed because of a preventable, reckless and tragic act.

I want everyone to enjoy the holiday season. It really is possible to be safe and responsible while enjoying the festivities. If one of your friends is about to make a poor decision, do the right thing and be a good Wingman: step in and make a difference. I want to see all of you back in the New Year safe, rested and ready to continue our critical mission.

Thanks for all you do.

Our deployed warriors

by Chief Master Sgt. Thomas Westermeyer
96th Air Base Wing command chief

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. (AFNS) — There are people whose sole focus is on the holidays: planning, travelling, wrapping gifts, decorating and spending quality time with family and friends. They are the lucky ones.

For many servicemembers, their focus is on making the most out of the time they have before saying goodbye to friends and loved ones as well as making final preparations for their departure.

During this hectic time of year, it's easy to forget about deployed Airmen and those they leave behind. As we enjoy this holiday season, let's remember that our family extends beyond those in our homes. The term "Air Force family" is not just words, it's a sentiment that embraces all of us and challenges us to take care of one another.

When trimming the tree or sharing a laugh at an office holiday party, remember we are a nation at war. While enjoying all the excitement the season brings, don't forget about the men and women who are separated from those most important to them. Continue to support them and their loved ones.

People in many homes across our great nation will be saying goodbye to their loved ones as warriors pack their mobility bags, admirably responding to their nation's call. Many of these families will be alone for the first time, others have experienced this many times before and it never gets easier while their loved ones are gone. Deployed warriors will miss many milestones including holidays, birthdays, anniversaries and a child's firsts. Make the effort to let them know they are not forgotten. Send packages, letters or e-mails reminding them they're remembered.

Think of the warriors who are deployed. While they are serving our country, they need to focus on the mission at hand. If they lose focus, lives could be at stake. It's important to help ease the additional strain a warrior's absence will create. If the warrior is worried about home, his or her focus will not be on the job at hand: staying safe while deployed and coming home.

Be a good wingman. Take the time to call a deployed warrior's loved ones and include them in holiday celebrations. Continue to communicate with those who are deployed. Use base programs to help alleviate additional stresses or find a support system.

Our warriors are worth taking that extra moment to remember.

MacDill Thunderbolt

Publisher: Denise Palmer
Editor: Nick Stubbs

The MacDill Thunderbolt is published by Sunbelt Newspapers, Inc., a private firm in no way connected with the U.S. Air Force. This commercial enterprise newspaper is an authorized publication for distribution to members of the U.S. military services on MacDill. Contents of the MacDill Thunderbolt are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by the U.S. government, the Department of Defense, the Department of

the Air Force or the 6th Air Mobility Wing.

The appearance of advertising in this publication, including inserts or supplements, does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Defense, the Department of the Air Force, 6th Air Mobility Wing or Sunbelt Newspapers, Inc., of the products or service advertised.

Everything advertised in this publication shall be made available for purchase, use, or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation or any other non-merit factor of the purchaser, user, or patron.

Display advertising or classified advertising information may be obtained by calling 259-7455.

News items for the MacDill Thunderbolt can be submitted to the 6th Air Mobility Wing Public Affairs office, Bldg. 299, at 8208 Hangar Loop Drive, Suite 14, MacDill AFB, FL 33621, or call the MacDill Thunderbolt staff at 828-4586. Email: thunderbolt@MacDill.af.mil.

Deadline for article submissions is noon, Thursdays to appear in the next week's publication. Articles received after deadline may be considered for future use. All submissions are considered for publication based on news value and timeliness.

Every article and photograph is edited for accuracy, clarity, brevity, conformance with the "Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual" and Air Force Instruction 35-101.



Your T-bolt Today

NEWS/FEATURES: page 4

A hero returns



NEWS/FEATURES: page 5

Beating the spending blues



NEWS/FEATURES: page 6

Year in Review - part I



NEWS/FEATURES: page 8

Holiday Notes



HOOLIDAY HOURS: page 11

Holiday Hours



COMMUNITY: page 16

Events, movies, more



Rolling Thunder brings holiday cheer



Photo by Staff Sgt. Joseph L. Swafford Jr.

Ex-POW's and Rolling Thunder teamed up to donate more than 300 toys and \$5,000 in cash to military families for Christmas. The event was sponsored on base by the Airman & Family Readiness Center.

by Dora Mays

Community Readiness Consultant

Since the fun and festivities ended last year, the members of Chapters six and eleven of Florida Rolling Thunder have been shopping and collecting toys in anticipation of the day when they will bring the joy of Christmas to several unsuspecting military families on MacDill Air Force Base. That long awaited day arrived Dec. 18 when a Christmas party complete

with Santa and Mrs. Clause, the elves, and toys galore convened on the MacDill AFB Chapel.

This was the 16th year Chapter One of the American Ex POWs in Florida sponsored a Christmas party in honor of the children of military members. "This is just one of the many ways they demonstrate their support for their comrades who are making the honorable sacrifice of life to defend this country and the freedom it stands for," said Fran Harrison, Chap-

See **POW, Page 12**



ACTION LINE

The Action Line provides a two-way communication between the 6th Air Mobility Wing commander and the MacDill community. A 24-hour recording service is provided so personnel may submit questions, concerns or comments. Call the Action Line at 828-INFO (4636)



6th AMW gets best Christmas present ever

Battle-wounded Airman returns home, to duty

by Nick Stubbs

Thunderbolt editor

For most every servicemember, the thing they desire most is also their biggest fear – that moment when their mettle is tested and they discover whether they have what it takes - whether honor, service to country and bravery are in their character or if they are just talking points.

And so it was that Staff Sgt. Steve Light received his test in Afghanistan March 29, 2009.

On that day, the proud Airman from the 6th Air Mobility Wing's Communications Squadron was manning the gun atop a Humvee on convoy when it crossed paths with a powerful improvised explosive device. When his senses returned, he smelled the burning, his ears were screaming, he saw smoke, he saw his blood. The other three members of his team smelled nothing, heard nothing, saw nothing. They were gone as quickly as the blast.

Sergeant Light remembered them in a ceremony at MacDill Air Force Base Dec. 16 at the Officers Club, as did a roomful of fellow Airmen there to welcome him back after a long and challenging rehabilitation to his injured right leg. They heard his tale of survival, and of his plans to continue an Air Force career, and they saw how happy he is to be home with his wife Kara for the holidays – how happy he is to return to duty.

Sergeant Light's story is one of courage, his positive attitude throughout the ordeal an inspiration. It also is a tale of fate, and reminds us how every step and decision, intersecting paths and unexplained events combine to shape what happens to us.

Sergeant Light wasn't supposed to deploy. When he developed a hernia while training for the deployment, it looked like he wouldn't go after all. But he recovered.

He wasn't supposed to be on the convoy that



Courtesy photo

Then

Staff Sgt. Steve Light, resting in a hospital bed shortly after his injuries sustained in an explosion March 29 in Afghanistan.



Photo by Senior Airman Angela Ruiz

Now

Staff Sgt. Steve Light, seated and flanked by his wife Kara, gets a welcome-home handshake during a ceremony Dec. 16 at the Officers Club. Sergeant Light was wounded March 29, 2009, when his Humvee was hit by an IED. He was the only passenger in the vehicle to survive.



Preventing 'After the Holidays Blues' is a matter of self control

by Heidi Hunt

509th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

WHITEMAN AIR FORCE BASE, Mo. (AFNS) — Walking through a shopping mall, it's difficult not to notice holiday decorations, crowded stores and retailers claiming to offer the best deals of the season.

Before pulling out their wallets, Airmen are encouraged to keep a few things in mind to help prevent the "after-the-holidays bill blues."

The Airman and Family Readiness Center staff offers the following 10 tips on how to spend smarter for the holiday season:

10. Be proactive. Plan ahead starting in January. Start a holiday saving fund 11 months in advance. Factor in gifts, decorations, food and entertainment. Also take advantage of after holiday sales.

9. Make a holiday spending budget and stick to it. Shoppers should figure out how much they can afford to spend; not how much they want

to spend. Really discipline yourself, and if you think you're going to overspend, do not bring credit cards. If tempted to overspend, put credit cards in a plastic bag of water and freeze them. Use a list and cash to pay for gifts. According to the Airman and Family Readiness Center, studies show that people spend 25 to 35 percent more when using a credit card.

8. Not every purchase has to be brand new. Scan the Internet, second hand stores, newspapers, outlets, flea markets and auctions for gently used items.

7. Couples communication. If purchasing gifts together for a third party, discuss a list and budget collectively.

6. Create a shopping list and include prices. Write down each person and indicate gift ideas. Once complete, shop around for the best price.

5. Don't become overwhelmed with gift buying. If unable to stay within a budget, consider



See **BILLS**, Page 7

U.S. Air Force graphic



Year in review: First half of 2009 marked by new mission focus, family

January / February / March / April / May / June

Part I of II

by Nick Stubbs

Thunderbolt editor

The year 2009 marked a fresh start for a newly focused 6th Air Mobility Wing, saw an already active and growing air base grow even more, solidifying its importance as a vital nerve center and support base for two wars.

From the start of the year, 6th AMW servicemembers were introduced the objectives and vision for the wing – and it was a “back to basics” focus with five main points:

- Win Today’s Fight as part of the Joint/Coalition Force
- Develop and Care for our Airmen and Families
- Enhance Nuclear Mission Support
- Optimize Mobility Partnerships
- Prepare Mobility Forces for the Future

The message was steeled with new mission statements, including “America’s Best Wing! Precise, Responsive, Trusted ... Always!”

The new vision statement defined what 6 AMW wanted to be as a team, and set a very high standard for excellence:

“Generate and Execute Air Refueling, Airlift, and Contingency Response Capability, While Providing Base Support for Joint, Coalition, Interagency Partners, including USCENTCOM & USSOCOM”

It’s course for the year charted, it was then a matter of executing the mission, while balancing the many jobs, events and responsibilities of the wing and base as a member of the Tampa Bay community.

In February, one of our own, Staff Sgt. Aisha Smith, showed the world the depth of talent within the 6th Air Mobility Wing, by being named the best female vocalist in a worldwide Air Force talent search held Jan. 11 through 19 at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. The event sought not only the top talent from the world over, it also was an audition for the Tops in Blue roster, the performing group representing the top musical and dance talent in the force.

While Sergeant Smith was a standout pick by the Air Force, 85 members of the 6th Operations Support Squadron were picked for the essential task of testing the prototype physical fitness uniform for all servicemembers. Fit, size and appearance, as well as functionality, were all criteria wing members evaluated to held fine tune the PT wear.

“The 6th Operation Support Squadron involvement has been critical to the test process. Aside from coordinating logistical requirements and soliciting test participants, based on AFUO criteria, the 6 OSS has committed to giving the new PT uniform a thorough review. The AFUO’s mission would be near impossible without dedicated volunteers like those in the 6 OSS.”

By the time March rolled around, more wing



Photo by Staff Sgt. Ronnie Hill

Dana Jonas, 6th 48th Air Force Uniform Office, checks the measurements of the PT uniform worn by Chief Master Sgt. Derrick Crowley, 6th Air Mobility Wing Command Chief Feb. 24.



Photo by Senior Airman David Minor

MacDill firefighters work to put out a brush fire March 4.



The 6th AMW's Staff Sgt. Aisha Smith won first place in the Female Vocalist category during the Air Force Worldwide Talent Search Jan. 11 through 19.

See **YEAR**, Page 10

BILLS

From Page 5

shortening the list. Discuss drawing names and purchase one gift instead of many.

4. Keep receipts. Keep receipts in a separate envelope. Customer receipts are used for proof of purchase, customer return/exchange and in case an item goes on sale. Find out what the store's policy is before purchase.

3. Craft a gift. Home-made gift ideas are typically less expensive. Hand make a gifts card which permit the receiver to free babysitting, dog-walking and/or a car wash. Make a batch of cookies for friends and/or family.

2. Think practical. Consider giving gifts people use most. Additionally, instead of giving children cash-in-hand start a

savings bond.

1. Keep in mind the reason for the season.

If someone gives a gift, it does not constitute a gift in return, said R.D. Smith, a 509th Force Support Squadron community readiness consultant. Gift-giving should be about the holiday and not stress because someone can't afford to buy everyone they know a gift.

Mr. Smith also reminded patrons to protect their identity at all times by using secure payment methods and by using credit cards responsibly.

"Typically when people carry balances on credit cards, they pay twice as much for the item in time through interest rates," Mr. Smith said. "If pos-

sible, pay the credit card off the next month to avoid paying exorbitant rates."

The true meaning of the holidays; however, has little to do with money, according to one Airman and Family Readiness Center member.

"Make your holidays a time for living, laughing, and loving," said Deborah Kermick, a 509th FSS community readiness technician. "Intangibles like these are what money can't buy and they make for an enduring, fulfilling and flourishing life."

For more information or assistance regarding holiday spending and shopping ideas, Airmen should contact their local Airman and Family Readiness Center.



NEWS/FEATURES



Holiday Notes from Home airs Christmas day

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. (AFNS) — Several stars join the Air Force bands in this year's Holiday Notes from Home concert on the American Forces Network and the Gospel Music Channel this holiday season.

The hour-long special will air on the Gospel Music Channel Dec. 23 at 10 p.m and will feature Amy Grant, Brian McKnight, Take 6, the Band of the Air Force Reserve and Air Force Strings.

The American Forces Network is scheduled to broadcast the show Dec. 24 on Prime Pacific and Dec. 25 on Prime Freedom and Prime Atlantic. Check the AFN schedule at <http://myafn.dodmedia.osd.mil/ScheduleChart.aspx> for exact show times.

"Holiday Notes from Home is just one way for us to say thanks to all our military men and women and their families for their patriotism," said Lt. Gen. Charles E. Stenner Jr., the Air Force Reserve Command commander.

Lorianne Crook and Charlie Chase host this year's program, pre-recorded Oct. 26 at the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville, Tenn.

"It's an honor to bring Christmas music to all the men and women who are serving us overseas," said Ms. Grant, who performed several songs with Take 6 with accompaniment by 60 Air Force musicians from the Band of the Air Force Reserve from Robins Air Force Base and the Air Force Strings ensemble from Washington D.C.

Holiday Notes from Home began 13 years ago as a radio show.



Photo by Ken Hackman

Tech Sgt. Alyson Jones' lifetime dream to sing on the Grand Ole Opry's stage came true as she sang holiday favorites during this year's Holiday Notes from Home holiday concert in Nashville, Tenn. The annual concert was taped Oct. 26, 2009, and will broadcast on Gospel Music Channel and American Forces Network. Amy Grant, Brian McKnight and Take 6 along with the Band of the Air Force Reserve and Air Force Strings participated in the show, paying tribute to military men and women.



YEAR

From Page 6

standouts were in the spotlight. The 6th Operations Group's Air Traffic Control Tower and Tech Sgt. Michael Rodriguez, 91st Air Refueling Squadron, received the Blue Banner Award March 2 and 3 for their leadership, patriotism and dedication. The award come from Sue Freeman, her husband and volunteer supporters, and is symbolized by a square quilt with the honoree's service seal and name, along with the reason they were selected, stitched onto it. The Blue Banner Award was started to recognize military members on base who are leaders and go above and beyond volunteering.

"These young Airmen are doing something that many people would never do," said Mrs. Freeman. "We need to thank them and support them as much as possible. If that means making these quilts and giving them out, than that is something I will do."

While volunteering for extra duty is admirable, the day-to-day duties of Airmen and wing civilians should never go unrecognized. That goes double for MacDill's first responders.

On March 4, they sprang into action to fight multiple brush fires that had the south end of the base ablaze. Firefighters and police units acted quickly to control the fires and ensure no one was in harm's way. Many Airman joined in as volunteers.

"Brush fires at different locations were going on at the same time," said Col. Kendall Peters, 6th Mission Support Group deputy commander in charge of overseeing the effort. "Two of the fires were in close proximity of one another and were able to be contained immediately."

There were two main factors that led to this operation's success, he said.

Command and control led to the success of the operation, explained Colonel Peters. The fire department along with other team members responded quickly and took action.

March also saw yet another top-notch AirFest event, as thousands of spectators were treated to aerial displays of flying skill, interesting ground displays of aircraft and history, as well as an up-close look at MacDill Air Force Base and those who serve here.

One longtime show attendee summed it up simply.

"I think the show was really great," said Thomas McClean. "It has been 20 years since



Photo by Master Sgt. Michael Gaddis

The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds roar overhead at AirFest 2009, which marked another great



Photo by Senior Airman Nancy Hooks

Retired Air Force Senior Master Sgt Marvin Ramsey carries grandson Ayden Horn on his back as he attempts to throw a basketball during the base wide BBQ for the MatchUp family fun day picnic in June.



Photo by Senior Airman Nancy Hooks

Base in June to familiarize himself with the 6th Air Mobility Wing, its mission, and the installation. Here he is greeted by (left to right) Staff Sgts. Jeremy Guidry and James Colip, and Senior Airmen Jacqueline Mathews and Kevin Anderson.



Photo by Senior Airman David Minor

Spouses of military members dine at the Colonnade during the Spousal Appreciation Luncheon May 8. The Spouse luncheon was part of a week that celebrated the contribution military spouses make.

HOLIDAY HOURS



6th FSS	Sun, 27 Dec	Mon, 28 Dec	Tue, 29 Dec	Wed, 30 Dec	Thu, 31 Dec	Fri, 1 Jan	Sat, 2 Jan
Surf's Edge Boomers Bar & Grill	CLOSED	1100-1400	1100-1400	1100-2100	1100-0100	CLOSED	CLOSED
Child Development Centers	CLOSED	0630-1800	0630-1800	0630-1800	0630-1800	CLOSED	
Family Child Care	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	
Human Resources/Training		0730-1630	0730-1630	0730-1630	CLOSED	CLOSED	
Fitness Center	0800-2000	0430-2330	0430-2330	0430-2330	0430-1500	1200-2000	0800-2000
Golf Course	0630-1730	0630-1730	0630-1730	0630-1730	0630-1300	CLOSED	0630-1730
Golf Course Snack Bar	0630-1400	0630-1400	0630-1400	0630-1400	0630-1300	CLOSED	0630-1400
Bowling Center	CLOSED	1100-1700	1100-1700	1100-1700	1100-1400	CLOSED	CLOSED
Information, Tickets & Travel (Travel)	CLOSED	0900 - 1700	0900-1700	0900-1700	0900-1300	CLOSED	CLOSED
Tickets Only	CLOSED	0900 - 1700	0900-1700	0900-1700	0900-1300	CLOSED	1000-1500
Library	CLOSED	1000-1600	1000-1600	1000-1600	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Bavshore Club	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Buffet	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Brunch	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Swamp	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Dinner	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
SeaScapes	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Diner's Reef Dining Facility							
Brunch	Brunch 0730-1300	Breakfast 0545-0830	Breakfast 0545-0830	Breakfast 0545-0830	Brunch 0730-1300	Brunch 0730-1300	Brunch 0730-1300
Supper	Supper 1600-1800	Lunch 1030-1300	Lunch 1030-1300	Lunch 1030-1300	Supper 1600-1800	Supper 1600-1800	Supper 1600-1800
Midnight Meal	Midnight 2200-2300	Dinner 1700-1900	Dinner 1700-1900	Dinner 1700-1900	Midnight 2200-2300	Midnight 2200-2300	Midnight 2200-2300
		Midnight 2200-2300	Midnight 2200-2300	Midnight 2200-2300			
Veterinary Clinic	CLOSED	0800 -1600	0800 -1600	0800 -1600	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Outdoor Recreation							
Marina	0700-1730	0700-1730	CLOSED	0700-1730	0700-1500	CLOSED	0700-1730
Building 60	1000-1800	1000-1800	1000-1800	1000-1800	1000-1500	CLOSED	1000-1800
Skeet Range	0800-1400	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	0800-1400
Pool	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Youth Center	CLOSED	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	CLOSED	CLOSED
Preteen	CLOSED	1200-1800	1200-1800	1200-1800	1200-1800	CLOSED	CLOSED
Teen	CLOSED	1200-1900	1200-1900	1200-1900	1200-1900	CLOSED	CLOSED
School Age	CLOSED	0630-1800	0630-1800	0630-1800	0630-1800	CLOSED	CLOSED
Arts & Crafts Center							
Framing & Engraving Shops	CLOSED	0900-1800	0900-1800	0900-1800	0900-1500	CLOSED	CLOSED
Auto Shop	CLOSED	1000-1900	1000-1900	1000-1900	1000-1500	CLOSED	0900-1900
Wood Shop	CLOSED	0900-1800	0900-1800	0900-1800	0900-1500	CLOSED	CLOSED
Manpower		0730 - 1630	0730 - 1630	0730 - 1630	CLOSED	CLOSED	
Military Personnel		0730 - 1530	0730 - 1530	0730 - 1530	CLOSED	CLOSED	
Base Education Office	CLOSED	0800-1600	0800-1600	0800-1600	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Airman & Family Readiness	CLOSED	0730-1630	0730-1630	0730-1630	0730-1630	CLOSED	CLOSED
ALS	CLOSED	0730 - 1630	0730-1630	0730-1630	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
First Term Airman	CLOSED	0730 - 1630	0730-1630	0730-1630	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Civilian Personnel Flight		0730 - 1630	0730 - 1630	0730 - 1630	CLOSED	CLOSED	

POW

From Page 3

ter Six of the Florida Rolling Thunder.

No one understands the significance of that sacrifice more than the American Ex POWs. Last year John and Fran Harrison of Chapter Six of the Florida Rolling Thunder provided an extra pair of hands to the Ex POWs in their party efforts and this year led the way for the event. The efforts of Chapters six and eleven of Florida Rolling Thunder on behalf of the American Ex POWs contributed to 41 families, and 103 children receiving more than 300 gifts of toys and stuffed animals. Two bicycles and a miniature Christmas tree were also raffled off, while snacks, music, excitement, and laughter filled Annex 2 at the Base Chapel.

A photographer took complimentary family photos with the "Big Guy in the Red Suit." At the end of the event, the Spirit of Christmas lingered in the air. The event was hosted by the Airman & Family Readiness Center as a Year of the Air Force Family Event open to all mission partners.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Joseph L. Swafford Jr.

Christian Williams, 1, Son of Staff Sgt. Christina Williams, 6 Security Forces Squadron, picks out his toy during the event.



Grace Arlington, 7, daughter of Staff Sgt. Grace Arlington, 927th Air Refueling Wing, picks out a stuffed animal from Santa's stash of goodies during the event.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Joseph L. Swafford Jr.

YEAR

From Page 10

I've been watching the air show and the aerial performance is still amazing."

Headliners at the event were the Thunderbirds, the precision flying team of the Air Force.

While the work and sacrifice of service-members is central to mission success, the support Airmen receive from spouses and children are vital to an effective force, which is why in April we celebrated the Month of the Military Child.

It was an opportunity to applaud military families and their children for the daily sacrifices they make and challenges they overcome. That month the 6th Forces Support Squadron's Airman and Family Services Flight center hosted a variety of activities. They included a parade, spring bowling and Easter egg hunt involving both parent and child participation in the community.

"This month highlights the children and the work they do here at the youth center," said Cynthia Washington, 6 FSS youth center acting assistant director. "The honor guard members were here and showed them how to fold the U.S. flag

which they appreciated."

A variety of other events marked the month, including a luau dinner, an early release day from school and a special reading program called "One Page at a Time."

The following month was for military spouses, as military husbands and wives were recognized the month of May for all they do.

It was the 16th year MacDill honored spouses for what some have termed "the toughest job in the military." A number of events were held, including a family day event at Ballast Point, a health forum at the Fitness Center, a complimentary lunch at the Colonnade in Tampa, a dinner cruise and makeovers for wives at the Base Exchange.

May also marked recognition of those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

The 6th Security

Forces Squadron paid tribute to their fallen comrades at a memorial service held at the base chapel May 15.

At the ceremony nine security forces Airmen were honored and remembered for their service and contributions to the Air Force.

Lt. Col. Brent French, 6th Security Forces Squadron commander, spoke on behalf of the fallen Airmen at the chapel.

"While this service is about remembering the deceased, it is also about taking time to consider how we can best honor their sacrifice," said Colonel French. "By being here and engaging with this ceremony, we can allow it to be a transformational moment, renewing our personal commitment to the ideals for which they gave their lives."

The memorial was held during National Police Week and National Peace Officers

'Memorial day,' May 15. Both were inspired 46 years ago by the proclamation signed by then President John F. Kennedy Jr.

May also reminded everyone that there is more than one enemy, as the H1n1 flu outbreak was recognized as a serious threat. Airmen were issued warnings and advice on travel and symptoms, as well as how to limit exposure. The flu would not become a problem at MacDill, which began receiving vaccine by the Fall.

May wasn't all serious business, though, and a Pet Fest dubbed "Woofs and Whiskers" held at the veterinary clinic featured more than 30 pets and their owners participating in events like a fetching contest, peanut butter eating contest, costume and talent show won by a counting canine.

June was down to business for Airmen, as they readied for

the Until Compliance Inspections to come in August. The preparation efforts were spearheaded by Airmen like Master Sgt. Fitzroy Howe and Tech Sgt. Kristi Coolsey, with the 6th Security Forces Squadron. Security Forces would be inspected in 23 functional areas, each with dozens of subsections to be evaluated. In the case of the 6th Communications Squadron, preparation was managed with a 5,000-question checklist designed to cover anything UCI inspectors might ask.

The inspections would put the Airmen of the 6 AMW to the test, but June also was a month to recognize that our children face an important test in today's society – the decision of how

See **YEAR, Page 14**



Photo by Airman First Class Linzi Joseph

This pooch was part of Pet Fest held at MacDill in May.



Photo by Senior Airman David Minor

Drug Education For Youth Program (DEFY) campers build a boat using only cardboard, duct tape, and paint during the DEFY Boat regatta June 10.

YEAR

From Page 13

to respond to the threat of alcohol and drugs.

In June 14 volunteers from the Drug Education for Youth program came to MacDill to educate and help kids resist peer pressure to do the “wrong thing.”

Some 30 children 9 to 12 participated. Each day the children worked on team building with their assigned mentors. They were educated by members of various organizations at the base such as Office of Special Investigations and the drug testing facility at MacDill.

The scheduled activities throughout the week included a talent show, movie, flag folding demonstration and a boat regatta, during which the children had to work together and build the best boat and race it at the base

beach.

Many times the children in the program have returned in subsequent years as mentors with the DEFY program. They receive training as mentors and use their experience to help other children.

Each mentor wants the children after graduating to be able to make educated and informed decisions when it relates to alcohol, other drugs and peer pressure.

“I hope the program has a positive impact on all the children,” said Tech Sgt. Cindy Rijos, DEFY director of activities. “We armed them with the tools, now we trust they will go out into the world and use them.”

Part II of 2009 in the next Thunderbolt.



WOUNDED WARRIOR

From Page 4

fateful day - just a month before his tour was to end - but he asked for, and received permission to join it.

He wasn't supposed to be thrown clear of the blast, but the harness designed to keep gunners from being tossed out of Humvees broke.

He perhaps wasn't supposed to survive, bleeding and broken on the side of the road.

The odds were against an experienced nurse riding in the convoy just behind him – but she was.

The unmerciful forces of misfortune were countered by good luck at every turn, and Sergeant Steve Light is still standing, albeit with the help of a cane. If there's anything he's learned, it's that it is not about what life deals you that matters most, but how you deal with life. He was given a second chance, and he isn't wasting it.

His message to fellow Airmen is a simple one: "Stay positive."

"What happened to me I had no control over," he said in a brief interview prior to his reception. "But how you deal with it is something you can control."

Such a close call has been known to change one's attitude, but Sergeant Light said he knew what he was getting into when he joined the Air Force, and his commitment to service, and the sacrifices it demands, remain intact.

"In the grand scheme of things, this is just a bump in the road," he said.

It's a perspective reinforced by the many servicemembers he encountered at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, many of whom suffered devastating injuries.

"We had a talk in the hospital and we decided we can be miserable about life and let it get the best of us, but we decided to stay positive instead," said Kara Light, her husband nodding. "If we let it affect us negatively, it would be like he won, like the bomber got what he wanted."

Instead, from an explosion a new resolve was born, and even more determination and conviction. Sgt. Light passed his test, and he isn't quitting.

"I saw how much good we were doing over there for the people," said Sergeant Light. "Seeing how much it means to them makes it all worth it."

Sergeant Light resumed work as a client services technician this week, easing back into the stream of things working half days.

He was the man of the hour this day, the recipient of hugs, sturdy handshakes and much gratitude. He said he is grateful for the support, but that he is more grateful "for all my brothers and sisters out there serving, especially those who gave everything."

MACDILL COMMUNITY



EVENTS

Friday

Diner's Reef Dining Facility

Christmas Meal – A wide selection of traditional Christmas items will be served to you by your favorite Commanders and first Sergeants. Continental Breakfast served from 5:45-8:30am. Traditional Feast served from 10:30am-6pm. Open to military ID cardholders and military retiree's + 1 guest.

Mon. - Thur. (28-31 Dec)

MacDill Bowling Lanes

Kids Holiday Bowling Special – \$1.00 per game & \$1.50 shoes (Mon-Wed 11am-5pm; Thu 11am-2pm)

Wednesday

Base Library

Movie: Merry Christmas Charlie Brown at 1pm

A Wish For Wings That Work at 2pm

Thursday

Surf's Edge Club

New Year's Celebration – Dinner, music, party favors, champagne toast and continental breakfast!

Call 840-6900 for packages information and tickets.

Happy Holidays from 6FSS! For most up-to-date holiday hours and information, please visit our Web site at www.macdillfss.com



Photo by Staff Sgt. Joseph Swafford Jr.

WOW!

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Protestant services

Sunday - 9 a.m., Traditional Service
10:30 a.m., Religious Education, Noon, Gospel Service
& 9 a.m, service, FamCamp Multipurpose Center

Tuesday -Noon, Promise Keepers

Wednesday - 10:30 a.m., Women of the Chapel

Thursday - 11:30 a.m., Officers' Christian Fellowship

For more information regarding the Chapel or Chapel services, call 828-3621.

Catholic services

Saturday - Mass, 5:30 p.m.

Sunday - Mass, 10:30 a.m.

Monday to Thursday: Mass, 12:10 p.m.

Saturday - Sacrament of Reconciliation, 4:30 p.m., (or by appointment)

Islamic services

Friday - 1:15 p.m.

Jewish services - Call 828-3621

AT THE MOVIES

\$4 for adults / \$2 for children 828-2780

Friday - 7 p.m.

No showing - Merry Christmas

Saturday - 3 p.m.

Amelia (PG)

Saturday - 7 p.m.

The Fourth Kind (PG-13)