

Fort Irwin BOSS overhaul builds morale

Story by Kimberly Hackbarth

Fort Irwin Public Affairs Office

The Army's Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program aims to improve the morale and welfare of single Soldiers by focusing on quality of life, recreation and leisure, and community service.

Cpl. Kelly Kribs, a visual information specialist from Bay City, Mich., and the Fort Irwin BOSS president, and her council have transformed the program over the past six months.

After serving as a BOSS unit representative for more than a year, Kribs took over as the Fort Irwin BOSS president in summer 2022 upon selection by the garrison and installation command sergeants major.

Though Kribs initially had doubts about taking the position, she knew she had what it takes to succeed, she said.

"I'm out in the community, I'm involved in events, [and] I have organizational skills," Kribs said. "You need someone who can brief every week and walk up to random Soldiers at the motor pool or at Shock Wave and say 'Hey, do you guys know what BOSS is, [and are] you interested?'"

Kribs' passion and enthusiasm for the program influenced others to join and step into leadership roles.

Cpl. Dillon Agnew, a medic with 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, joined BOSS as a unit representative after arriving at Fort Irwin last summer, and became the Fort Irwin BOSS

vice president in September 2022.

"When Cpl. Kribs took over ... she showed that you could be passionate about the program. You put all your energy into it, and seeing the change in the program with her and the motivation to get other reps involved [is] when I started talking to her [about council positions]," Agnew said. "I always like helping people, it's one of the reasons I became a medic and BOSS was just another opportunity to help Soldiers out."

The executive council of the program is comprised of Soldiers from most of the units on the installation including Operations Group, 11th ACR, and 916th Support Brigade, providing valuable insight that helps plan around the units' varying work schedules, according to Agnew.

"I stepped into the role of vice president to help out and see what we could do to further the program," Agnew said. "Now we're filling every weekend [and] every opportunity we get with events and BOSS buses even if it's just to the mall, to help those Soldiers out."

Events for Soldiers are important, Kribs said.

"Getting Soldiers off post and meeting new Soldiers from different units every weekend is a really exciting thing," Kribs said. "I think it's really important for Soldiers to be out and engaged rather than just sitting in their barracks room staring at a wall or playing video games."

Providing safe, reliable transportation for Soldiers who are constantly on mission due to the demanding work schedule of the National Training Center at Fort Irwin is something



Courtesy photo

Soldiers with Fort Irwin's Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program pose for a photograph Sept. 22, 2022, at Flow Stone Climbing in Redlands, Calif.

Agnew and his team at BOSS are happy to provide, he said.

"That's why I believe BOSS is so important, because we are always on mission and [in] those little breaks we get, a lot of Soldiers just end up not having the motivation to go out and do anything because it's an hour just to get off

post," Agnew said. "We take people out who just want to get out for the weekend and then they experience these amazing opportunities, and it enriches their experience here at Fort Irwin which increases morale and really upholds those three pillars of the BOSS program that helps the

See **BOSS**, Page 3

Fort Irwin, Barstow Community College MOU encourages education, job opportunities

Story by Kimberly Hackbarth

Fort Irwin Public Affairs Office

Col. Jason Clarke, Fort Irwin garrison commander, and Dr. Eva Bagg, superintendent-president of Barstow Community College, signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) Jan. 13, at garrison headquarters on Fort Irwin, Calif.

"The MOU is to codify our partnership with Barstow Community College in order to build different academic programs that translate into work-related opportunities here at Fort Irwin," Clarke said.

The MOU will help create a streamlined process for two



Photo by Kimberly Hackbarth / Fort Irwin Public Affairs Office

Col. Jason Clarke, Fort Irwin garrison commander, and Dr. Eva Bagg, superintendent-president of Barstow Community College, shake hands after signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) Jan. 13, at garrison headquarters on Fort Irwin, Calif. The MOU will help create a streamlined process for two Barstow Community College programs, child development education program and cosmetology, to onboard child youth assistants and barbers on Fort Irwin.

Barstow Community College programs, child development education program and cos-
metology, to onboard child youth assistants and barbers
See **EDUCATION**, Page 4

New program, offers promotion incentives for Soldiers

by Bailey Senerchia

Fort Knox, Ky.

The U.S. Army is offering promotion incentives to Soldiers who refer individuals to their local recruiting station.

The Soldier Referral Program encourages all Soldiers to support recruiting and gives them an opportunity to share their stories and decision to serve with their community.

The SRP complements the Total Army Involvement in Recruiting program, which enables all Soldiers, regardless of rank, in the active Army, U.S. Army Reserve, and U.S. Army National Guard to meet youth where they are, share their Army story and be rewarded when that person joins the Army.

"We're excited to launch the Soldier Referral Program, allowing us to leverage motivated junior Soldiers throughout the Army to engage high quality recruits. We hope Soldiers everywhere will discuss the benefits and opportunities they're afforded through their service with their friends and family," said Maj. Gen.



Johnny Davis, commanding general of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command.

"The Army needs quality recruits to support our national defense and readiness, and the best way to reach these individuals is through the young professionals throughout our formations. Quality will attract quality," said Davis.

Junior enlisted Soldiers — Private (E-1) through Private 1st Class (E-3) — who participate in this program will be given promotion
See **PROMOTION**, Page 5

Community

11th ACR dining in brings regimental veterans to Fort Irwin

Photos by 11th ACR

The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment hosted a Dining In at the Sandy Basin Community Center, Fort Irwin, Calif., Jan. 20, 2023.

This year, the Regiment was joined by Honorary Colonel of the Regiment, Retired Maj. Gen. Terry L. Tucker and the Honorary Command Sergeant Major of the Regiment, Retired Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston.

The event honored the achievements of the unit's Troopers as they celebrated the upcoming 122nd Regimental Birthday. Traditions like the Dining In bridge the Blackhorse Regiment of today with the Regiment's honored and historic past, acknowledging accomplishments and sacrifices since its inception in 1901.



11th ACR, Fort Irwin Red Cross host blood drive



Photo by Staff Sgt. Elizabeth O. Bryson

Fort Irwin Red Cross and Soldiers with 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment hosted a blood drive Jan. 25 at Fort Irwin.

Amanda Reeves, Fort Irwin Red Cross volunteer leadership partner, said the event is important.

"We have not had a Red Cross blood drive here on Fort Irwin in over five years," she said. "This partnership with 11th ACR will save lives across California."

WHO WE ARE

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Commanding General

Command Sgt. Maj. Brian D. Haydt
Post CSM

Col. Jason A. Clarke
Garrison Commander

Command Sgt. Maj. Justin Larson
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Ops Group Soldiers recognized in ceremony



Story and photos by Annette Pritt

OPS GRP PAO

Operations Group gathered Jan. 23, 2023, to honor the recipients of the Fiscal Year 2023 Operations Group and Noncommissioned Officer of the First Quarter Board.

Spc. Aaron D. Walker, Vulture Team, was awarded the Soldier of the Quarter. The award for NCO of the Quarter went to Sgt. Alexis M. Garcia, Vulture Team.

During the awards and recognition ceremony, Operations Group Command Sergeant Major, Joshua R. Bitle, presented each awardee with the Army Commendation Medal and an Operation Group Plaque congratulating them on this outstanding achievement.

From BOSS, Page 1

single Soldiers.”

Agnew, a Huntington Beach, Calif. native, said he uses his experience growing up in Southern California to provide an insight into events.

“We’re pulling on the information and knowledge of the people who grew up here to get those unique experiences in and we’re also constantly hunting across the internet for events coming up within our radius,” Agnew said.

Finding events isn’t hard, according to Kribs.

“A lot of Soldiers have the mindset that we are in the middle of nowhere, but in my opinion, we are in the middle of everywhere,” Kribs said. “There are so many things and experiences for us to have out here and as long as people give me the ideas and they tell me what they want to do, I can almost always make it happen.”

The BOSS team also takes recommendations for events on their Discord page, which has grown since Kribs took over as BOSS president, she said.

Through Discord, Soldiers can also find out about events and sign up for volunteer opportunities.

Both Kribs and Agnew said they were



Courtesy photo

Soldiers with Fort Irwin’s Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program pose for a photograph October 27, 2022, at a haunted house event on Fort Irwin, Calif. The event raised more than \$1,000 for the BOSS program.

proud of the haunted house that the BOSS team built and ran in October.

The event helped raise money for the program and brought together Soldiers who earned volunteer hours for their work.

“When you get to go out and do these projects and you get to help the community, it gives you a sense of purpose and drive and it’s really good for things like mental health,” Agnew said. “Not only that, you get the camaraderie of working with those likeminded people that want to help the community and drive a better

Fort Irwin for everybody.”

Kribs said her goal for the program is to continue to grow it.

“I want every Soldier to know about [the BOSS program] and I want every Soldier to be informed,” she said.

Kribs said she also wants to reach out to the single parent population and any unaccompanied Soldier to let them know they can participate in BOSS events, too.

Soldiers interested in BOSS can contact Kribs at 760-380-3586.



Courtesy photo

Soldiers with Fort Irwin’s Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers attend an event Oct. 7, 2022, at Knott’s Berry Farm in Buena Park, Calif.

The Military Spouse Residency Relief Act, and why it should be on your radar

The Military Spouse Residency Relief Act, passed in 2009, and amended the Service members Civil Relief Act (SCRA) and extended protections to military spouses. The purpose of the Act is to help military spouses maintain one location as their domicile or legal residence, a protection afforded to service members through the SCRA. The Act provides protection if the service member and military spouse maintain the same domicile or legal residence and the military spouse accompanies the service member due to military orders.

Protections:

- The Act protects the spouse from losing or acquiring a domicile every time they move due to military orders.
- The Act allows the military spouse to title property, such as an automobile, in their name or jointly with the service member and not be subject to personal property taxes of a new state if they move due to military orders.
- The Act allows military spouses to retain residency in their home state for purposes of voting in federal, state, or local elections.
- The Act prevents the non-domiciliary or non-resident state from subjecting the military spouse's earned income to its taxes and provides that the spouse's domiciliary state or legal residence would have jurisdiction over that earned out of state income.
- The Act intends to reduce the amount of state income tax filings for service members and their families.

By example, a person from Virginia marries someone from Florida. The person from Florida then joins the military and receives orders to be stationed in Colorado. The spouse from Virginia then moves to Colorado to be with the service member and then starts earning an income in Colorado. The military spouse could engage the process to claim Florida as their state of residence or domicile and register to vote there, as permitted by the Military Spouse Residency Relief Act. Each state's process may be different.

The military spouse's earned income would then be subject to the laws of Florida, not Colorado or Virginia. By changing the residency to Florida, there may be a greater tax benefit because there is no individual income tax as compared to Virginia.

Prior to the passage of the Act, whenever a military spouse moved from one state to another, to accompany the service member on military orders, their legal residence or domicile would change for tax purposes. If property, such as an automobile, was titled in the military spouse's name or jointly with the service member, it would be subject to personal property taxes of the new state. The moves would cause the military spouse to file multiple state income tax returns if they earned income, and it would change every few years.

While the Act was intended to help simplify the process, it did not have that effect in practical application. Instead, each state created its own definition of residence and domicile. The

terms were not treated as interchangeable by every state. Also, the Act excluded many families because not all military spouses were domiciled in the same place as their servicemember spouse. This led to many families still having to file tax returns with multiple states, burdening the military spouse, the family, and ultimately not achieving the Act's intended purpose.

2018 Update Affecting Military Spouse Residency Relief Act

At the end of 2018, the Act was updated to allow military spouses to now claim and file state tax returns in the home state of the service member regardless of when or where they were married. The military spouse can now exercise voting rights for state and local matters in the same state of residence as the service member regardless of when or where they were married, even if they are absent from that state due to military orders.

The Act does not allow a family to arbitrarily choose the state that gives them the best tax break. The service member must have a connection with the state, which most commonly would be their state of residence or domicile. If the service member and spouse establish and maintain connections with a new state, that state could now become their state of legal residence or domicile.

Each state has its own interpretation of the Act and its associated benefits. Service members and their spouses should consult with an attorney and a tax professional to determine state specific benefits.

From EDUCATION, Page 1

on Fort Irwin.

"I'm really hoping this pipeline creates that opportunity, so we can bring more child youth program assistants on board to then open up more slots for our kids in childcare," Clarke said.

According to Clarke, the MOU provides an important opportunity for both the Fort Irwin and Barstow communities.

"People who live in Barstow may not understand opportunities here at Fort Irwin and there are people in the [Fort Irwin] community who may not understand how to get better education opportunities and what that really translates into the real world," Clarke said. "This is an opportunity for our communities to unite together and build that opportunity to show real world application at the college level and the community level."

Dr. Crystal Nasio, the executive dean of strategic partnerships and workforce development at Barstow Community College, said the strengthening of the partnership between Fort Irwin and Barstow Community College indicates Fort Irwin's accessibility for employment to the Barstow community.

"It signals to the community that we want to provide the education and training needed and you can get that at Barstow Community College and because of this MOU, there is a streamlined way to get employment," Nasio said.

According to Nasio, beginning with classes

in February, cosmetology students will have the opportunity to participate in supervised mobile salon days at Fort Irwin and cut Soldiers' hair when Soldiers are in their regeneration period, a recovery period after rotations.

Also beginning in February, alumni and students with 24 semester units of education either in child development or early childhood teaching, will be able to apply for jobs at Fort Irwin's Child Youth Services, Nasio said.

Students who are active in the course for child development can participate in the course and be paid, Nasio said.

"They'll be working through our system and registering for a class ... so they'll get credit with us, and they'll get paid," she said. "So, you're taking a class, and you're getting paid for it."

Those interested in working for Child Youth Services still have to meet specific requirements, including passing a background check and Live Scan, which runs an applicant's fingerprints through the Department of Justice.

"If they don't pass any of that, they're not going to get hired," Nasio explained.

Nasio said the intent is to extend Barstow Community College's offerings so students can get employment at Fort Irwin.

"The first two [opportunities] are child development and cosmetology, but I think it's going to be the first of many for us," Nasio said.

For more information on the programs, email cte@barstow.edu.



Photo by Kimberly Hackbarth / Fort Irwin Public Affairs Office

Col. Jason Clarke, Fort Irwin garrison commander, and Dr. Eva Bagg, superintendent-president of Barstow Community College, sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) Jan. 13, at garrison headquarters on Fort Irwin, Calif. "The MOU is to codify our partnership with Barstow Community College in order to build different academic programs that translate into work-related opportunities here at Fort Irwin," Clarke said. The MOU will help create a streamlined process for two Barstow Community College programs, child development education program and cosmetology, to onboard child youth assistants and barbers on Fort Irwin.



Photo by Kimberly Hackbarth / Fort Irwin Public Affairs Office

Col. Jason Clarke, Fort Irwin garrison commander, addresses leaders and staff from Barstow Community College, Jan. 13, at garrison headquarters on Fort Irwin, Calif. Clarke and Dr. Eva Bagg, superintendent-president of Barstow Community College, signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to help create a streamlined process for two Barstow Community College programs, child development education program and cosmetology, to onboard child youth assistants and barbers on Fort Irwin.

Military lending act provides loan and credit protections to service members

By LTC Matthew V. Rusch

The Military Lending Act (MLA) provides special protections for active duty service members, including limiting the interest rates that may be charged on many types of consumer loans, as well as other protections. The MLA was passed by Congress due to ongoing predatory lending practices against service members. It is important for service members to understand exactly what protections are provided and what to do if a lender refuses to comply.

MLA Purpose

Due to these predatory lending practices against service members of all branches of the military, as well as their dependents, in 2006 Congress recognized the need to pass legislation providing protections to service members specifically with regard to limitations on the cost and terms of extensions of credit. Initially passed in 2006, the MLA was amended in 2015 to include additional types of loans and extensions of credit.

Service member Protections Under the MLA

Under the MLA, service members, their spouses, and dependents cannot be charged

more than a 36% annual interest rate with qualifying loans. The interest rate calculation includes finance charges, credit insurance premiums, add-on credit protection products, and additional fees. A creditor cannot require the service member or dependent to submit to mandatory arbitration and cannot require waiver of certain rights under state or federal law, such as Service members Civil Relief Act protections. Under the MLA, a creditor cannot require creation of a voluntary allotment for payment as a condition of making the loan and cannot impose a prepayment penalty if part or all the loan is paid back early.

The MLA is intended to provide broad protections for Service members. Types of consumer loans or extensions of credit that qualify for MLA protection include, but are not limited to, payday loans, deposit advance loans, tax refund anticipation loans, vehicle title loans, bank overdraft lines of credit, installment loans, certain student loans, and credit cards.

When Does the MLA Not Apply?

The MLA does not apply to all types of loans, and the following types of loans are

excluded: residential mortgages (any credit transaction secured by an interest in a dwelling), including financing to buy or build a home that is secured by the property, mortgage refinances, home equity loans or lines of credit, or reverse mortgages; loans to purchase a motor vehicle when the loan is secured by the motor vehicle being purchased; loans to purchase other personal property when the loan is secured by the property being purchased (may include store credit to purchase appliances or furniture).

MLA Remedies for Violations

The MLA also sets forth specific remedies regarding loans that violate the law. In particular, these can include a criminal misdemeanor for a lender committing knowing violations, a court finding that the loan contract was void from the start, a court finding that a prohibited arbitration clause is not enforceable or declaratory relief (giving a court broad discretionary authority), actual civil damages, punitive damages, attorney fees, court costs, and any other relief provided by law (such as under state laws).

The MLA gives affected Service members their own cause of action to pursue in court, and can also be enforced by other federal agencies, such as the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the Federal Trade Commission, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and others. Over the past several years, government agencies have filed numerous lawsuits against lenders based upon violations of the MLA.

Fort Irwin Legal Assistance Attorneys Can Help!

If you have questions regarding the MLA or believe you may have entered into a loan or other credit transaction that violates the MLA, call the Fort Irwin Legal Assistance Office to schedule an appointment. It is important that you maintain and provide detailed records of the loan. You may need to draft a letter to the lender, which our office will assist with.

For more information, contact the Fort Irwin Legal Assistance Office at 760-380-5321.

From PROMOTION, Page 1

A visit from Robert Downey Jr.



Courtesy photos

Robert Downey, Jr. filmed part of a television show Jan. 27, at Fort Irwin, California, and met with Soldiers and families of the installation.

opportunities.

“For decades our Army recruiting mission has benefited from the selfless efforts of Soldiers at every rank who encouraged others to see the benefits of Army service,” said Brig. Gen. Hope Rampy, director of Military Personnel Management. “Now, we have a way to reward their contributions.”

Privates to privates first class will be eligible for a single rank advancement of one grade if their qualified referral enlists and ships to Basic Combat Training or One Station Unit Training. A Soldier can only be promoted one time in their career from SRP participation.

Specialists and sergeants will be eligible for promotion points by earning the new U.S. Army Recruiting Ribbon. The newly created ribbon is part of the Army’s effort to recognize Soldiers for contributing to the recruiting effort.

Any Soldier, whether officer or enlisted, who has a qualified referral enlist and ship to Basic Combat Training will be eligible for the ribbon.

The ribbon is approved by the Soldier’s battalion commander and is accompanied by a memorandum to serve as supporting documentation.

The ribbon consists of four award levels, each worth 10 promotion points, allowing all Soldiers to pursue higher levels of achievement.

Those that are interested in participating in the program may direct their referral to GoArmy.com/Refer or text RFRL to GOARMY (462769).

For more information go to home.army.mil/irwin

Event Calendar



FEBRUARY 2023



SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
			1	2 	3 	4
5	6	7 • Start of Rotation 23-04	8	9 • BOX FIT	10 	11
12 • Superbowl Sunday 	13	14 • Happy Valentines Day 	15 • Quarterly Spouses Orientation	16	17 	18 • Taste of the Bayou (Barstow)
19	20 • Federal Holiday 	21  • Town Hall • Blood Drive (Sandy Basin)	22 • African American History Month	23	24  • BOX TOUR	25
26	27	28			Karaoke Every Friday Night 2000-2300 hrs. SHOCKWAVE 	COSMIC BOWLING Every Saturday Night 1830-2230 hrs. Desert Winds 

National Training Center and Fort Irwin Highlights

- BOX FIT (Fort Irwin Interval Training) (09FEB)
- SUPERBOWL SUNDAY (12FEB)
- Valentines Day (14FEB)
- Quarterly Spouses Orientation (15FEB)
- Taste of the Bayou (18FEB)
- Federal Holiday (20FEB)
- Townhall (21FEB)

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Fort Irwin toy drive brings Christmas to January

FORT IRWIN, Calif. – The Inland MOPARS brought a bit of extended Christmas joy to Fort Irwin families Jan. 7, 2023, when they partnered with volunteers from Better Opportunity for Single Soldiers and Fort Irwin units and directorates to deliver over 400 bikes and thousands of toys to more than 3,000 children here.

A volunteer dressed as Santa merrily waved at families as Fort Irwin military police guided long lines of vehicles through the donation area.

Families turned in wish lists to volunteers dressed as Santa's helpers, who ran basketballs, skates, dolls and bikes to the grinning children waiting to take them home.



News

Burros, birds and bobcats! Oh my!

Just because an area is called a desert does not mean it is 'deserted.'

The desert is actually teeming with wildlife, but most desert animals are elusive, live below ground and are nocturnal.

Residents and guests of Fort Irwin should remember to keep wildlife wild — which means do not feed or leave water for the local wildlife.

Burros

Burros may look like domesticated animals, but they are not. They are wild and/or feral.

They can deliver a quick or painful kick and can also nip of fingers, often mistaking them for food.

The young burros are also quite precocious when born — in fact, a baby burro can walk and run on its first day.

The National Training Center/Fort Irwin and the Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue work closely together. In 2022, they rounded up 145-plus donkeys (including some that were only two- and three-weeks old) for future adoption.

Birds

For desert birds, breeding season runs from February to September.

Oftentimes, when looking inside a nest, you can find young birds. A few things to remember:

1. Nestling: The babies will be pink and alien looking.

They need help from the parent birds to survive.

2. Fledgling: The babies will have feathers, and are learning to fly. Adult (parent) birds will be nearby, encouraging their young to fly.

It is important to keep pets away from nesting sites during this sensitive time.

Bobcats

Seeing bobcats on the garrison means we have a healthy ecosystem, as they typically prey on rodents and rabbits — not on humans or pets.

However, there are proactive measures everyone should take to make sure we live together peacefully.

1. Never feed wildlife as this can change their behavior.
2. Feed your pets indoors, as this will remove potential food and water sources for local wildlife.
3. If you see a bobcat nearby, make a loud noise — clap your hands, yell, or bang pots and pans together. This should deter the bobcat from coming closer.
4. And remember, pet owners are responsible for the safety of their pets.

Treating the local wildlife with respect and understanding, and following a few simple steps, means we can all enjoy and celebrate the wildlife diversity in our shared desert home.

For questions or assistance, call the 24/7 Wildlife Response line at 619-288-8883.



This is "Autumn" who was born on the first day of Fall. NTC residents named her.

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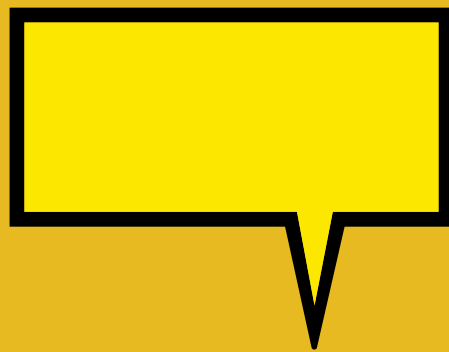
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