

Desert Lightning News

VOL. 15, No. 11

Serving Southern Arizona's military community, including Davis-Monthan Air Force Base

NOVEMBER 2022

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FEATURE



Staff Sgt. Alex Miller

355TH & 563RD RESCUE GROUP RETURN

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Sun never sets on

355TH WING MISSION



U.S. Air Force photos by Senior Airman Kaitlyn Ergish

As the sun sets over the flightline at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, the operational missions of the 355th Wing and its tenant units continue around the clock. Here, A U.S. Air Force Reserve Command A-10 Thunderbolt II, assigned to the 924th Fighter Group, sits on the flightline at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Oct. 11, 2022. The 924th FG is the only active and classic associate fighter group in Air Force Reserve Command's inventory and functionally integrates with the 355th Operations Group and 355th Maintenance Group to conduct A-10 pilot training.



U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Devlin Bishop, 355th Wing Public Affairs Specialist, takes a photo on the flightline at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Oct. 11, 2022. The 355th Wing PA shop provides photo and video documentation for 11 groups belonging to six geographically separated wings, 44 squadrons, nine detachments, 11 flying units and 154 aircraft.



A U.S. Customs and Border Protection helicopter sits on the flightline at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. The Tucson Sector of border patrol covers most of the State of Arizona from the New Mexico State line to the Yuma County line, a total of 262 border miles and is one of the busiest sectors in the country.



A U.S. Customs and Border Protection helicopter sits on the flightline at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. The Tucson Sector has approximately 3,700 agents working in its nine Border Stations.

Desert Lightning News

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Desert Lightning News

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kim@aerotechnews.com



A U.S. Air Force HH-60G Pave Hawk assigned to the 55th Rescue Squadron sits on the flightline at Davis-Monthan. The 55th RQS provides rapid deployable combat search and rescue forces to theater commanders worldwide and continually deploys aircraft and aircrews in response to national disasters, domestic search and rescues and medical evacuation missions.

Military Spouse Employment group adds partners

By
C. TODD LOPEZ

Department Of Defense News

The Defense Department has signed up an additional 70 government organizations, nonprofits and private sector companies to participate in its Military Spouse Employment Partnership program. With the new additions, there are now more than 600 such organizations committed to recruiting, hiring, promoting and retaining military spouses.

Gilbert R. Cisneros Jr., the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, welcomed the new companies into the partnership during an induction ceremony at the three-day MSEP Engage 2022 event in Northern Virginia.

"I want to welcome and congratulate and thank the more than 70 new employer partners who have joined the Military Spouse Employment Partnership here today," Cisneros said. "Today we're celebrating your commitment and induction, and this marks the culmination of a robust vetting process, all of which clearly demonstrated that you, the class of 2023, are truly committed."

Since the MSEP program began in 2011, the program's partnering efforts have helped connect more than 250,000 military spouses to employment opportunities across all industry sectors, Cisneros said.

"You've joined an elite group that opens you to the military spouse community and the diverse skills and talents that they offer," he said. "With these latest inductions we're up to more than 600 total MSEP partners since we started this program back in 2011."

Additionally, more than 40,000 military spouses were reported as hired by MSEP partners since last October, Cisneros said.

"[That's] our largest hiring level ever," Cisneros said. "This is a testament to all of you, our enduring and new MSEP partners, and I can't wait to see those numbers in 2023."

This week during the annual MSEP Engage 2022 event, new and long-time MSEP partners meet for orientation sessions where they discuss how new partners can engage with the military spouse community. During the second day of the event, partners engage in networking and breakout sessions to focus on areas such as recruiting military spouses, understanding the challenges that military spouses face, and making companies more friendly to military spouses.

This year's event also features, for the first time, a third day where MSEP partners will meet with military spouses seeking employment.

Military families, like most civilian families, need both partners working to make ends meet. Because of numerous moves a family must endure in a military career, it's often a challenge for a service member's civilian partner to find



DOD Photo

During an induction ceremony on Oct. 25, the Defense Department added more than 70 new government organizations, nonprofits and private sector companies as partners within its Military Spouse Employment Partnership program. Those new organizations and companies have made a commitment to recruiting, hiring, promoting, and retaining military spouses.

sustained, meaningful employment, said Patricia M. Barron, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for military community and family policy.

"Our unemployment rate kind of hovers around 21%, which is far above the civilian rate, as many of you know."

As a military spouse herself, Barron said with each military move she made, she had to rely on her own creativity and resilience, along with the generosity of those she found work with.

"I do owe my employers so much because of their ability to support me and be flexible with my needs," she said. "Partners, please know you make spouses feel very special. You give them a sense of relief, but more importantly, you give them a sense of self ... I encourage you to go explore, get creative, get to know the military spouses that you hire, because you'll be very, very glad that you did."

Programs like MSEP support the goals of Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III to better support taking care of people across the force.

"Military spouses provide the strong foundation upon which their loved ones in uniform stand — and our communities and our nation rely on their resilience," Austin wrote last month in a memorandum to the force. "We owe them our energetic, unwavering support."

Next week, more than 30 new employer partners will become part of a new initiative called "MSEP Small Business," said Eddy Mentzer, the associate director of military community support programs.



Photo by Army Sgt. Garrett L. Dipuma, Louisiana Army National Guard

Mentzer also said that in January, the department will put the first military spouse fellows into the DOD's new Military Spouse Career Accelerator Program.

"Military spouses will be placed into 12-week fellowships where they will gain valuable skills while being compensated with the goal of full-time employment at the end of their experience," Mentzer said.



Courtesy photo



Warrior of the Month

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jesus Munoz is a one-of-a-kind force multiplier to the 943rd Maintenance Squadron. His outstanding dedication to the Multi-Capable Airman concept enabled the unit to forward deploy three HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters to San Nicolas Island over 100 nautical miles off the California coast in support Exercise DISTANT FURY STALLION. In this effort, he helped develop emerging Agile Combat Employment maintenance and logistics tactics. Munoz was a key Crash Damaged Disabled Aircraft Recovery team member during the recovery of HH-60G 90-26224 from the Chiricahua mountains and enabled

its speedy return to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in only four days. This would have not been possible without working closely with 355th Airman counterparts during the recovery process. Munoz has greatly improved his work center as a master trainer and implemented the new Total force Training Record transition. His dedication to the mission enabled the flightline office to be the first office setup for the new program. Finally, Munoz volunteered to deploy in support of a U.S. Air Forces Central Command contingency tasking which includes four HH-60G Pave Hawk Helicopters. These accomplishments embody the 355th Wing's Mission: Rescue & Attack!

5K run raises breast cancer awareness



In October, groups across the United States gather to raise awareness and research money for breast cancer awareness to combat a disease that claims the lives of approximately 42,000 women and 500 men each year in the U.S. from breast cancer, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

At Davis-Monthan Air Force Base that gathering was their first-ever Breast Cancer Awareness 5k on Oct. 21. Under sunny Arizona skies, runners got showers of pink chalk as they ran, pink being the official color of breast cancer awareness.

“Deaths from breast cancer have declined over time, but breast cancer remains the second leading cause of cancer death among women overall and the leading cause of cancer death among Hispanic women,” the CDC reports.

Many of those deaths are preventable. This year, the CDC is focusing on the message that prevention and early detection can save many of the 264,000 women and about 2,400 in men who are diagnosed with breast in the United States.

For more information, go to the CDC website at www.cdc.gov



A runner gets pink chalk tossed at them during the Breast Cancer Awareness 5k at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Oct. 21, 2022. Roughly 270,000 people are diagnosed with breast cancer each year and when detected at early stages can be treated.

LEFT: Even dogs got into the act at the first ever Breast Cancer Awareness 5k at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Oct. 21, 2022.



Volunteers for the Breast Cancer Awareness 5k hold up a morale sign at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona.



U.S. Air Force photos by Senior Airman William Turnbull

Runners line up and prepare to run at a Breast Cancer Awareness 5k at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. This was the first ever Breast Cancer Awareness 5k held at DM.



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Winter Olympics

By
ARMANDO PEREZ

**Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center
Public Affairs**

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-LACKLAND, Texas (AFNS) — Time is running out for Airmen, Guardians, Reservists and Guardsmen who dream of representing the Department of the Air Force in the next Winter Olympics.

Guardian and Airmen athletes have until Nov. 7 to apply for the DAF World Class Athlete Program, or WCAP, managed by the Air Force Services Center and begin their training with the hopes of competing in Milano Cortina, Italy, in 2026.

Once accepted into the program, athletes train full-time for the chance to represent the DAF and the Nation on the world stage.

Throughout the program's 28-year history, 12 Air Force WCAP members have made the Olympic team with the most recent being U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Kelly Curtis, the first female Airman to make the Winter Olympic team in 24 years.

"This experience has been too good to be true, the support you receive from the Air Force Services Center and WCAP has allowed me to progress in my sport in such a short amount of time," Curtis said. "Being able to compete in the Olympics would not have been possible without the support of WCAP and my family."

Established in 1995, Air Force WCAP continues the legacy of Tuskegee Airman Malvin G. Whitfield. Whitfield, a Korean War tail gunner, became the first active-duty American service member to win Olympic gold in 1952 in Helsinki.



Courtesy photo

U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Kelly Curtis, a member of USA skeleton team enlisted in the Air Force under the service's World Class Athlete Program.

"Within the Air Force and Space Force, there are elite athletes who require dedicated and quality training regiments to improve their chances of making the Olympic team," said Dale Filsell, DAF WCAP program manager. "WCAP allows them the opportunity to dedicate the next three years to achieve their goal of making the Olympics."

Although WCAP athletes train full-time in their given sport, they are also required to complete all annual and ancillary training, professional military education, fitness assessments and other mandatory tasks required of all Airmen.

"Active duty Airmen and Guardians are eligible for WCAP. Applications must go through the athlete's career field manager, commander, and senior rater for release from the career field and endorsement to apply," said U.S. Air Force Maj. Aaron Tissot, AFSVC fitness and sports chief. "Additionally, applicants need an endorsement from their sport's national governing body, which verifies the potential to make Team USA."

Interested Airmen and Guardians can apply or find out more by visiting www.myairforcelife.com or e-mailing AFSVC.WCAP.Workflow@us.af.mil.



U.S. Air Force graphic illustration by Greg Hand

Guardian and Airmen athletes have until Nov. 7 to apply for the Department of the Air Force World Class Athlete Program and begin their training to compete in the Winter Olympics at Milano Cortina, Italy, 2026.

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Tucson area medical providers visit DM

By
355TH WING

Public Affairs

The 355th Medical group hosted civilian medical providers for an

immersion tour of various units at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona. The 355th MDG invited providers to the base in appreciation for all they do for DM Airmen and their families.



Civilian medical providers from the Tucson area take a hangar tour at Davis-Monthan AFB. The 355th Medical Group hosted them for an immersion tour of various units on base.



Photos by Airman 1st Class Paige Weldon

Civilian medical providers pose for a group photo with members of the Desert Lightning Team during an immersion tour at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base.



U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Lateen Keys, 355th Healthcare Operations Squadron patient admin section chief, delivers a mission brief to civilian medical providers from the Tucson area at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona.

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The way we had to break in boots.
The times we gathered up our nerve.

The nicknames that made us laugh.
The smell of chili mac MREs.

The pride we felt with that first oath.
The friendships that came to be.

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it's not applause that's in my sight.

I'm looking around for you, my friend,
to see who's on my left and right.



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Families welcome home 355t



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Alex Miller

Family and friends greet redeploying members assigned to the 355th Wing and the 563rd Rescue Group on the flight line at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base.



U.S. Air Force Airmen walk on the flight line at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Oct. 17, 2022, after deployment.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Paige Weldon

A C-17 Globemaster III, transporting Desert Lightning Team members returning from deployment at an undisclosed location, arrives at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Alex Miller

Their faces say it all — “Daddy’s home!”



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Paige Weldon

A Marine holds his daughter after returning from a deployment at an undisclosed location at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Oct. 17, 2022. The members returned home to their families after a deployment overseas.

It's
hom
355

th Wing, 563rd Rescue Group



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Alex Miller

Oct. 17, 2022. The Airmen, assigned to the 55th Rescue Squadron, were returning from de-

Members of the 355th Wing and 563rd Rescue Group return from a deployment at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base on Oct. 17. The members reunited with

their families after a deployment overseas. There were cheers, hugs, kisses and tears as parents got to see their excited children again.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Alex Miller

A family get their reunion caught on a cellphone as family and friends greet re-deploying members assigned to the 355th Wing and the 563rd Rescue Group on the flight line at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Alex Miller

A little girl holds a welcome sign for her returning father, as he holds twins.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Paige Weldon

It's hugs all around as a U.S. service member is welcomed home from deployment. The homecoming, at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., was for service members from the 355th Wing and the 563rd Rescue Group.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Alex Miller

Hugs were the order of the day, as members of the 355th Wing and 563rd Rescue Group return from a deployment at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Paige Weldon

An Airman hugs his partner after returning from a deployment at an undisclosed location at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base.

Defense Commissary Agency to lower prices again

By
KEVIN L. ROBINSON

Defense Commissary Agency

Service members and their families will soon see a 3-5% decrease in pricing on most grocery items in their commissaries as part of a Defense Department initiative to bolster the economic security and stability of the military community.

DOD's "Taking Care of Service Members and Families" initiative lays out comprehensive actions to support military members struggling with the financial impacts of inflation, supply chain disruptions and the pandemic.

"The department's added investment in our budget allows us to reduce commissary prices at the register about 3-5% on most items — particularly on food staples that struggling military families need most such as bread, eggs, milk and more," Bill Moore, director and CEO of the Defense Commissary Agency, said. "With this boost we can achieve at least 25% in overall savings for eligible patrons who shop their commissaries."

Commissary customers should have seen price changes at most locations by mid-October. Pricing on some products and categories will vary.

Before the additional funding, DeCA was able to provide service members and their families with discounted groceries



Photo by Kevin Robinson, Defense Commissary Agency

Soldiers shop at the Fort Belvoir, Virginia, Commissary during the grand opening of a new store in 2017.

that cost on average 22% less than civilian grocery stores for fiscal year 2022.

"Going forward with the department's initiatives, we want to sustain the increased savings through fiscal year 2023 and exceed the 25% benchmark to the extent our resources allow," Moore said.

"In addition to the savings, we provide healthy food options, clean and safe stores, convenience and premier customer service for our service members and their families,"

Moore said. "Commissaries are there when our military families need them most, even in disasters or pandemics or periods of inflation. We're an insurance policy to ensure food security for our military families."

"Taking Care of Service Members and Families" aligns with DOD's overall campaign for economic security, first announced November 2021 when the department unveiled its "Military Leader's Economic Security Toolkit" on Military OneSource.

The webpage is a central landing spot to help leaders connect service members and their families with resources they need to help boost their economic readiness.

The commissary benefit portion of the economic toolkit is spotlighted on the DeCA website, specifically on its "We're Stronger Together" page that links military members to the following patron savings and nutrition options:

- Timely sales promotions as well as specific items highlighted in the biweekly sales flyer.
- Private label brands and "Your Everyday Savings!" programs that offer better prices on popular, core items
- Healthy options with dietitian-approved recipes, meal plans and quick, ready-to-eat, economical meal options via the deli and 174 dietitian-approved fueling stations

DeCA is also expanding efforts to ensure all eligible patrons know about their benefit, particularly targeting the millions of disabled veterans who became eligible for the benefit in January 2020, U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Michael Saucedo, senior enlisted advisor to the DeCA director, said.

"We are working closely with veterans' groups to reach our disabled veterans and with the active duty military to increase awareness of the benefit to troops earlier in their careers," he said. "And as

See **COMMISSARY**, Page 10

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Secretary of Defense outlines position on reproductive care in DOD memo

Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs

ARLINGTON, Va. (AFNS) — Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III recently announced that the Department of Defense will take appropriate actions to ensure service members and their families can access reproductive health care within its authority and consistent with applicable federal law, in addition to clear guidance for health care providers to operate effectively.

These actions will establish travel and transportation allowances for service members and their families to access reproductive health care, establish additional privacy protections and conduct a comprehensive contraception education campaign.

Austin stated the actions outlined in the memo, Ensuring Access to Reproductive Health Care, should be executed no later than the end of the year to the maximum extent possible.

“Reproductive health care impacts readiness, recruiting, retention and quality of life. Our policies and programs will empower families to make appropriate decisions based on their needs,” said Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall.

Under Secretary of the Air Force Gina Ortiz Jones also stressed the importance of taking care of Airmen, Guardians and their families.

“Secretary Austin’s directive to update DOD reproductive health policies is criti-

cal to protecting Airmen and Guardians’ access to reproductive health care services, as well as their privacy,” Jones said. “This is about taking care of our people and about being mission ready. DAF leaders will continue to communicate with the Force as new policies are implemented to ensure awareness of available reproductive health care services and support.”

In his memo, Austin directed the DOD to accomplish certain actions to give service members and their families the time to make private health care decisions:

Establish travel and transportation allowances for service members and dependents to travel to access non-covered reproductive health care that is not available within the local area of a service member’s permanent duty station, consistent with operational requirements and applicable federal law.

Establish additional privacy protections for reproductive health care information, including standardizing and extending the time service members have to fulfill their obligation to notify commanders of a pregnancy to no later than 20 weeks unless specific requirements to report sooner, such as those necessitated by occupational health hazards, are set forth in policy.

Conduct a comprehensive contraception education campaign to enhance service members’ awareness of the resources available to them and their families,

including emergency contraception. That education campaign will also highlight that the DOD has eliminated TRICARE co-pays for medical contraceptive services, including intrauterine devices.

Austin also directed DOD officials to develop guidance to protect health care providers, who should not be held personally liable for performing their official duties.

The DOD will not change comprehensive access to contraception and family planning services for service members and their families. He directed military medical treatment facilities with the appropriate clinical capacity to expand their services, to include dedicated hours for walk-in contraceptive care for service members, and on a space available basis, for all other eligible beneficiaries. Some MTFs currently offer walk-in contraceptive services, and all MTFs will have walk-in contraceptive services by January 2023.

TRICARE beneficiaries also no longer have to pay cost-shares or co-payments for all TRICARE-covered contraceptives. These include IUDs, hormonal shots and slow-release hormonal rods, which go under the skin. This change went into effect July 28. If you paid for services on or after July 28, you can submit a claim to your TRICARE contractor after Nov. 1 to receive reimbursement.

For additional information on reproductive health care, visit Air Force Medical Services at www.airforcemedicine.af.mil/.

COMMISSARY *(from Page 8)*

we spread the word on this much-needed benefit to all our eligible customers, we are striving to anticipate our patrons’ needs, offer premier customer service and do what it takes to be their grocery provider of choice.”

Commissaries are also pushing out more initiatives to include the following to help boost the benefit for eligible patrons:

Expanding hours of operation and using technology to improve access in more convenient ways than ever before. To date, 56 stores have converted from six- to seven-day operations, seven stores have converted from five- to six-day operations and 43 stores have adjusted hours to better fit the shopping preferences of their communities.

Working with installations on piloting bulk deliveries to barracks or other specified locations with plans to expand.

Expanding online shopping and curbside pickup with online payment now available at all stores.

Piloting home grocery delivery at eight locations, with agency-wide expansion planned soon thereafter’

“The commissary system’s commitment to saving military communities money has not wavered for over 30 years,” Moore said. “We remain steadfast in our efforts to improve the quality of life of our eligible patrons by saving them at least a quarter on every dollar they spend on groceries compared to ‘outside the gate’ grocery stores. That’s \$50 back in your pocket on a \$200 grocery bill.”

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