



the Cannoneer



VOLUME 50 NUMBER 36

Published for the Fort Sill Oklahoma community

SEPTEMBER 13, 2012

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News briefs

Postwide exercise under way

Fort Sill's annual anti-terrorism exercise is Sept. 13-14 on Polo Field. The police and fire departments, as well as many ambulances will respond to the incident. This exercise will test the installation's ability to respond to a terrorist attack and its handling of mass casualties. Reynolds Army Community Hospital, the USPHS Indian Hospital and Duncan Regional Hospital also will participate. The exercise will not affect operations on post. Drivers are reminded to yield to emergency vehicles.

Family of the Year

Nominations for the Fires Center of Excellence and Fort Sill Family of the Year must be digitally submitted by close of business Sept. 25. Individuals, units, agencies and organizations may nominate families. In addition to bulleted information listing the attributes and selfless service of the family, nominators may also include a one-page essay in 1,000 words or less explaining why their nominated family should be family of the year. Nomination forms, instructions and sample nominations can be found at www.sillmwr.com, select the Soldier & Family Programs drop down menu then Army Volunteer Corps. The award ceremony is Nov. 5 at 4 p.m. at the Patriot Club. For more information call 442-4916/4682 or e-mail laura.batule@us.army.mil.

Road work

Mow-Way Road expansion work begins Sept. 17 with crews performing utility-locating near Sheridan Road, primarily west of the intersection. Traffic will be minimally impeded if at all for about two weeks. After that, work will begin to widen Mow-Way Road to four lanes from Sheridan Road to Cubbison Road, just past the 31st Air Defense Artillery headquarters. This will be a yearlong project. Mow-Way Road will remain open as two lanes during the entire expansion project.

A short segment of Burrill Road from Bldg. 3354 (1-17th FA motor pool) to Bldg. 3386 (100th BSB maintenance) will be closed for replacement beginning Sept. 18 at 7:30 a.m. The project will last through April 20, 2014. Barricades will be in place to redirect motorists. See BRIEFS, Page 4A

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History lesson



Avenger crewmember students learn about the M16 half-track from living historians Sept. 10 in back of Patterson Hall. The Fort Sill Air Defense Artillery Artifact Storage Facility recently acquired the World War II air defense weapon system and used it as a teaching point for some of the Army's newest air defenders. For story and photos, see Page 8A.

Comedian delivers serious message

Story, photos
By Ben Sherman

By the time Bernie McGrenahan turned 24 years old, his life was on a downhill slide. He found himself sitting in the Los Angeles county jail in an orange jump suit, serving a six-month sentence for failing to show up for a court appearance for his third DUI.

"I shared a cell with members of the Crips and the Bloods street gangs," McGrenahan said. "It was not a good place for an Irish kid from the Bronx."

That was 24 years ago, and McGrenahan hasn't taken a drink since. Now he's a stand-up comedian and speaks about his battles with substance abuse. He spoke to some 250 Soldiers Sept. 7 at Sheridan Hall as part of the "Comedy is the Cure" tour. The event was sponsored by Army Substance Abuse Prevention to combat suicide, alcoholism and substance abuse in the military. McGrenahan told Soldiers his slide into self-destruction began at an early age.

"I started partying in the eighth grade, I'm not going to lie to you. The first time I drank my mom and dad's booze was when they went out to dinner. My brothers and I would get buzzed, underage and illegal. Eventually dad figured it out because, even though we put water back in the bottle, it was whisky and the color went from brown to yellow," he said.

When McGrenahan got to high school, he and his friends continued to drink.

"My friends and I tried to control it by drinking only on weekends. That worked for about half of a semester. By 12th grade I was drinking four nights a week, and I started to smoke pot," he said.

The drinking and drugs had other effects as well. McGrenahan went on to tell the Soldiers how he had made A's and B's in most of his classes, but when he got to high school and was drinking, everything changed.

"I had a scholarship opportunity to play baseball after I got out of high school. But my coach pulled me aside and said, 'Bernie, the scouts have been watching you all week but you've blown it. They're not coming back. You're



Soldiers listen to comedian Bernie McGrenahan as he tells tales about his struggle with alcohol and drugs. He mentioned his younger brother, Scott, committing suicide because he couldn't face his addictions. But it still took a third DUI and six months in jail before McGrenahan decided to quit drinking and turn his life around. At the ASAP Risk-Reduction training event Sept. 7, he spoke to Fort Sill Soldiers and told them suicide is not the answer and they can get help if they have problems with alcohol and drugs.

making errors at shortstop and you're looking tired. Have you been drinking a lot?' I told him that I hadn't been drinking, but he knew the truth. I blew my scholarship because I was drinking too much," McGrenahan confessed.

After high school he started sneaking into bars with fake IDs to drink with friends. One night he went out, drank too much and tried to drive home while intoxicated. He got stopped and arrested for DUI and underage drinking. A year later he was leaving a friend's house after Sunday afternoon football. He had five or six beers and thought he would be all right to drive home instead of calling a cab or a friend. Instead, he got arrested for DUI again.

"I had a strategy. I decided if I followed my hood ornament home I would be OK," he said. "But, I still got caught."

That arrest cost him \$3,500, and he had to attend court-ordered counseling for his drinking. His

counselor told him that he was a 19-year-old man with a serious drinking problem.

"She said 'Bernie, your drinking affects your finances. It affects your relationships. Women have broken up with you because of your abusive behavior. You drink and drive. You go out with your friends for two beers and you never stop at two. If you don't quit it is going to ruin your life.' I said, 'Can't I just cut back?' She said, 'That's the problem. You promise to quit but you never do.' She was right," he said.

A year later McGrenahan lost his job after his boss fired him for coming to work drunk and hung over from the night before. With two DUIs on his record, he found that no one would hire him. He couldn't pay his rent and then he lost his apartment.

"I needed help so I turned to the one person I felt sure would help me — my mother. I called her up and said, 'Mom can I bor-

row some money? She said, 'hell no!'" he said.

His mother did let him move in for two months. While he was home again he noticed his 19-year-old brother, Scott, was drinking heavily and starting to use cocaine. He tried to talk to his brother to get him to seek help for his problems.

"He knew I had gone to counseling, but he saw it as a sign of weakness and couldn't handle that. I tried to tell him that it didn't mean he was weak, but that he had issues that were bigger than he could handle. I tried to convince him, but he just got mad at me and left," McGrenahan said. "So what did I do to relieve the stress that I was feeling? I went to a bar and had a couple beers."

When McGrenahan got home there were police cars and an ambulance in front of his mother's house.

"My sister Debbie came flying See COMIC, Page 4A

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