

THUNDERBOLT

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Air Force chief visits

Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force James A. Cody shakes the hand of Chief Master Sgt. Brian Kentta, 6th Mission Support Group superintendent, prior to meeting with the MacDill Chiefs Group at MacDill Air Force Base, Feb. 20. Cody met with the group to discuss key strategic issues, priorities and initiatives of the Air Force. The visit was something of a homecoming for Cody, a former command chief of the 6th Air Mobility Wing.

Photo by Airman 1st Class David Tracy

COMMANDER'S CORNER



You earned 'em, wear 'em!

by Col. Rob Rocco

6th Medical Group commander

Earlier this month, the Base hosted an American patriot. Born and raised in the great state of New Jersey, he served his country in World War II, retired from the service in 1969 and went on to a second career as a civil servant. Retired Tech.

Sgt. George Watson is one of the last remaining Tuskegee Airmen.

If you missed meeting Watson, you missed out. Watson spent two days touring MacDill, visiting with units across the base and spoke to a packed house at the base theater—to include senior leaders from the Wing and other commands within Team MacDill. While many of today's leaders sometimes wonder if our message of pride and resiliency is reaching all of our warriors, we need only look to Watson. Even at 92 years old, his message resonated with officers, noncommissioned officers and Airmen alike; his passion for life continues to burn bright.

It was exciting to see a 19-years-old airman



Col. Rob Rocco

beaming with pride when Watson agreed to have a picture taken with her. I enjoyed seeing the framed photo of Watson and one of my Airmen. Taken only minutes before, the photo was printed, framed and displayed in his office before Watson even left the clinic. Both mementos and many others are now cherished bridges between generations of Airmen...one whose sacrifice helped pave the way for the very freedom that today's Airmen continue to work so hard to preserve.

After hearing Watson's stories, I wondered how I might share the lessons he learned as a pioneer in American aviation and relate them to the unit I currently command. Later that day, I got my chance. I was conducting a routine walk-through of my clinic when I noticed a great number of Airmen (my staff and customers) who had elected to take the "wearing of the corps badge on your uniform is optional" Air Force instruction reference literally and forego wearing this basic symbol of functional pride.

How ironic that earlier that day, surrounded by adoring Airmen of all ranks and functional specialties, Watson, wearing many of his badges, shared his story and Airmen were fascinated by his every word. He shared that to become a member of the Tuskegee Airmen, he and his fellow warriors in training suffered humiliation, segregation, discrimination and seclusion, because of the color of their skin. To graduate, they were held to higher, unfair standards. He shared that despite playing against odds clearly stacked against them, this brave team of Ameri-

cans elected to persevere and fight not only racial bigotry, but fight for their country that actually condoned this behavior. Why did they do it? "We wanted those wings," said Watson. "We wanted people to know we were the best flying unit out there!"

Seeing my Airmen teammates from around the base without their corps badges made me wonder how Watson might respond if he found out that the uniform badges and symbols he and his colleagues worked so hard to earn in the 1930s and 1940s, were routinely dismissed by many of us today. I shared this thought with my Airmen that week and challenged them to look to our core values as a reminder that "Excellence in all we do" means appreciating the sacrifice of Airmen generations past and honoring them today, by proudly wearing our uniforms and the badges we have earned. By appreciating the simple pride that a well-turned-out uniform brings to those who we defend—families, neighbors and friends—we not only provide them hope for a better tomorrow, we remind ourselves of the importance of being a professionally turned-out airman.

During my career, I have had the great privilege to meet a number of Americans who served in some of the most decorated and celebrated units in American military history. All had in common, in their civilian attire, badges and ribbons earned while serving. The way I see it, if they think it's important to wear them now—68 years after World War II—then it should be good enough for us to wear in honor of them.



COMMANDER'S ACTION LINE

The Action Line provides 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) or email macdillwingcommander@us.af.mil.

Commander's vision

To view Col. Scott DeThomas' remarks on his vision for MacDill AFB, go to www.macdill.af.mil and then click on "Col. DeThomas' priorities, mission, and expectations video" in the upper left corner.

MacDill Thunderbolt

Publisher: Bill Barker
Editor: Nick Stubbs

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News items for the MacDill Thunderbolt can be submitted to the 6th Air Mobility Wing Public Affairs office, 8208 Hangar Loop Dr., suite 14, MacDill AFB, FL 33621, or call the MacDill Thunderbolt staff at 828-2215. Email: thunder.bolt@us.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.



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Events, Chapel, more...

Settlement of estate

Col. Kirby Watson of the Joint Communications Support Element regrets to announce the death of Lt. Col. Michael Dawson, formerly assigned to the Joint Communications Support Element. Maj. Edward Taylor has been appointed as the summary court officer to handle the disposition of personal property of Dawson. Anyone indebted to or having a claim against the estate of Dawson should contact Taylor at 813-828-0668 or edward.taylor@jcse.mil.

Air Force Assistance Fund campaign continues on MacDill

courtesy of the MacDill AFAF Committee

The Air Force Assistance Fund was established to provide for an annual effort to raise funds for the charitable affiliates that provide support to the Air Force family - basically, it's Air Force members helping Air Force families in need.

The AFAF supports the Air Force Enlisted Village Foundation, the Air Force Villages Foundation, the Air Force Aid Society, and the General and Mrs. Curtis E. LeMay Foundation charitable organizations.

These organizations help Air Force people with aid in an emergency, educational needs, or to have a secure retirement home for widows or widowers of Air Force members in need of financial assistance. This past year alone, more than \$144,000 was given in grants and loans to MacDill's Airmen. These are charities we can see working at a very personal level!

The MacDill campaign runs from Feb. 4 through March 15. Installation project officers are Maj. Justin Sandholm and Capt. Chris Wiley. Contact any of the following group contacts for

See AFAF, Page 14



Col. Scott DeThomas, 6th Air Mobility Wing commander, donates to the Air Force Assistance Fund, while 2nd Lt. Julian Ireland, 6th AMW staff AFAF representative, stands ready to collect the contribution form at MacDill Air Force Base, Feb. 19. The window to donate is from Feb. 4 through March 15.

Florida, MacDill team for ecosystem restoration project

Courtesy of the 6th Civil Engineer Squadron

There is excavation and earth moving happening at the north and south golf courses and the Lewis Lake recreation area. This construction activity is the culmination of nearly four years of planning and preparation - a joint effort between the State of Florida and the U.S. Air Force.

Back in 2008, MacDill Air Force Base and the Southwest Florida Water Management District forged a cooperative agreement which paved the way for what eventually developed into a \$2.6 million ecologic restoration and surface water improvement project.

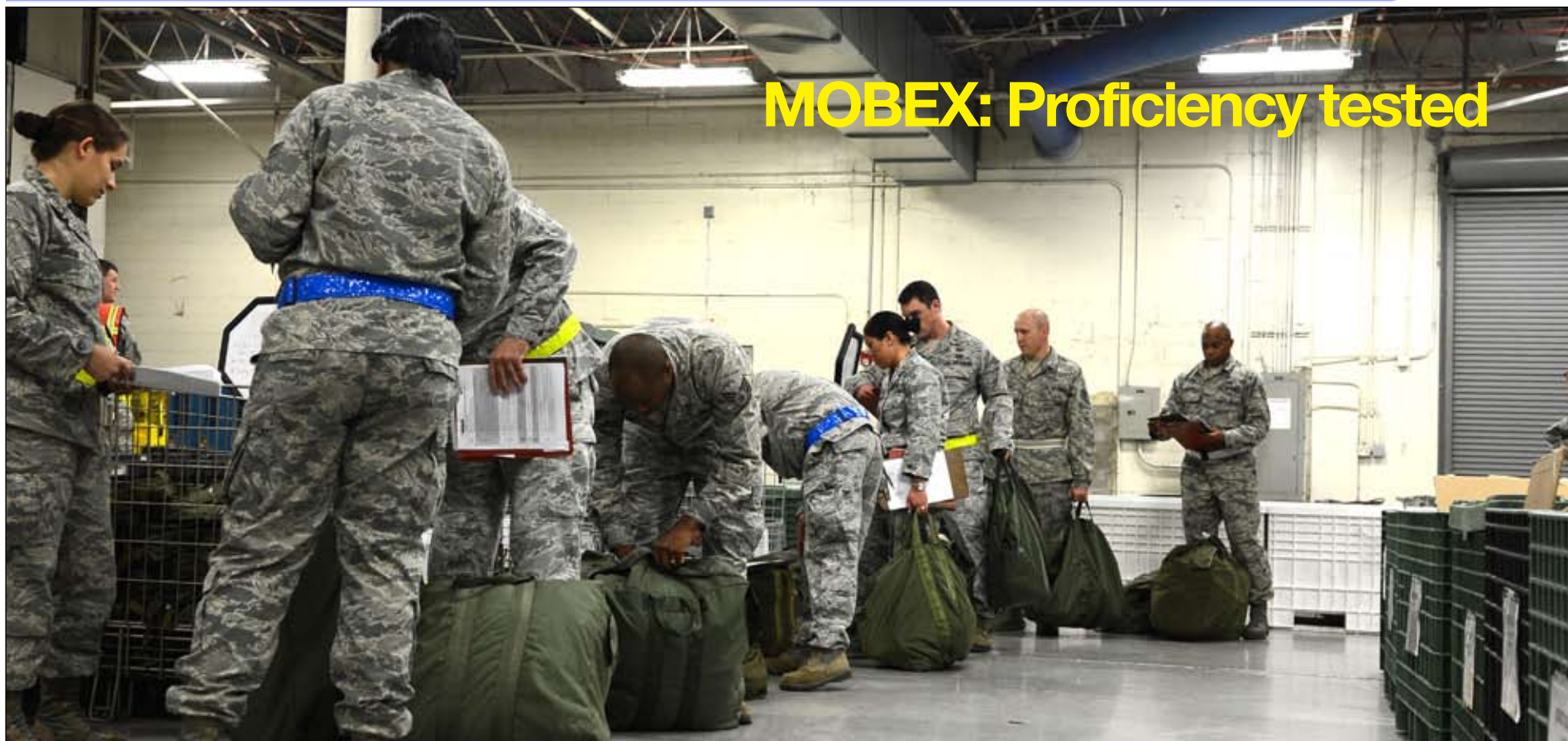
The Surface Water Improvement and Management program is a branch of the SWFWMD dedicated to improving surface water quality while simultaneously restoring and enhancing wetlands and natural habitats. Since its inception in 1989, the SWIM organization has completed more than 87 ecosystem restoration

projects restoring 3,042 acres of coastal habitat throughout the Tampa Bay area. They know that MacDill's unique location with more than seven miles of shoreline at the tip of the Interbay peninsula offers excellent opportunities for improving the health of Tampa Bay through the restoration of its coastal communities.

Restoration of coastal ecosystems improves surface water quality by enhancing, and often expanding, wetlands which naturally control pollutants. It also improves and expands the estuaries, or aquatic nurseries, which are a vital part of any marine ecosystem. The SWFWMD has partnered with MacDill on two previous SWIM projects, completed in 1996 and 1999. However, the phase three SWIM effort is by far the largest. Funding for the phase three SWIM project comes primarily from the SWFWMD, providing approximately \$1.8 million. In addition, grants from the National Oceanic and

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WEEK IN PHOTOS



MOBEX: Proficiency tested

Photo by Senior Airman Melanie Bulow-Kelly

Airmen from the 6th Air Mobility Wing pack mobility bags during a mobility exercise at MacDill Air Force Base, Feb. 12. The exercise tested the 6th Air Mobility Wing's ability to deploy on short notice.



Photos by Airman 1st Class David Tracy

(Above) Airman 1st Class Charles Salter, 6th Medical Support Squadron medical laboratory technician, loads bags into a truck during a mobility exercise at MacDill Air Force Base, Feb. 12. The exercise tested the 6th Air Mobility Wing's ability to deploy on short notice. (Right) Capt. Dan Morris, 6th Logistics Readiness Squadron cargo deployment flight chief, loads a bag into a truck during the exercise.



Whether its a sporty convertible or a work-horse truck you're looking for, the vehicle for you might be sitting right under your nose at the MacDill resale lot.



Photos courtesy of resale lot web site

Vehicle resale lot great place to start your car shopping

by Nick Stubbs

Thunderbolt editor

There's no shortage of car dealerships in the Tampa Bay area, so when it comes time for a new ride, Team MacDill members have lots of options for finding the finest flivver to fit their fancy.

But don't forget the most convenient car lot of all, the one situated in the middle of MacDill Air Force Base – the MacDill resale lot, where fellow team members park their cars, trucks, motorcycles and even boats and utility trailers in hopes of finding a buyer.

The resale lot is located adjacent to the swimming pool complex at Condor Street and Hillsborough Loop. At any given time, as many as two dozen to 40 vehicles are parked on the lot, with enough variety to make it worth a look for anyone in the market, said Andrea Tover, operations assistant at the MacDill Arts and Crafts center and coordinator of the resale lot.

“It's an excellent place to start (your car shopping),” said Tover, who added that the resale lot is a great car-shopping resource for active duty, DoD members, reservists and retirees with access to the base.

The turnover is constant, but as of this week, how about a sleek, 2003 Honda S2000 convertible sports car? Or what about the top-down fun of a 2006 Audi TT?

Need something for towing or hauling a load? There's a 2012 Dodge Ram pickup with a 5.7 Hemi engine.

Need something economical in these times of high gas prices? There's a little Mazda 3 gas-sipper with just 37,000 miles.



Air Force Assistance Fund

The Air Force Assistance Fund campaign will run from Feb. 4 through March 15. The AF AF campaign is an annual, on-the-job fund raising appeal conducted among Air Force personnel for the benefit of Air Force personnel. AF AF campaign contributions provide financial support to four AF AF affiliates. They are the Air Force Village, the Air Force Aid Society, the Air Force Enlisted Village and the General and Mrs. Curtis E. LeMay Foundation. Contact Maj. Justin Sandholm or Capt. Chris Wiley at 827-9137 or 828-7376 for more information.

Scholarship for dependents

The 2013 Fisher House Scholarships for Military Children Program will stop taking applications on Feb. 22. The application can be downloaded from www.militaryscholar.org. Scholarship awards will be based on funds available; however, the anticipated individual awards amount is at least \$1,500. Children of active duty, reserve, guard or retired military personnel may apply. Applications should be returned to the commissary customer service or secretary office no later than Feb. 22. For more information, contact the scholarship managers at 856-616-9311 or militaryscholar@scholarshipmanagers.com.

BRIEFS

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Daddy-daughter dance

The base chapel will host a daughter-father dance from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Surf's Edge Club on Feb. 22. For more information or to register contact the chapel at 828-3621.

Tax assistance

The Retiree Activities Office at MacDill Air Force Base and the Brandon Airman and Family Readiness Center satellite office offer free tax assistance services to active duty members, military retirees and their families. Services are available on a walk-in basis five days a week at the RAO on MacDill and by appointment only at the Brandon A&FRC. Call the RAO at 828-4555 and the Brandon A&FRC at 655-9281 for more information or for an appointment.

Bounce Back Series

The 6 AMW Chapel staff will be hosting a single's retreat March 22-24. It will be at the Christian Retreat Center in Bradenton, Fla. It will begin at 7 p.m. on March 22 and will end around noon on March 24. Call 828-3621 to RSVP for these events. Current chapel activities can also be found at www.macdill.af.mil/macdillchapel.





Lt. Col. Derrick Hodges, 310th Airlift Squadron commander, listens intently as Tuskegee Airman retired Tech. Sgt. George Watson speaks to Team MacDill at the base theater, Feb. 13. Watson is a Tuskegee Airman who was invited to speak here in celebration of Black History Month.



Tuskegee Airman retired Tech. Sgt. George Watson shares almost a century of experiences, adversities and his outlook with Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and civilians in attendance.

Tuskegee Airman inspires hundreds of Team MacDill Airmen

story and photos by Staff Sgt. Angela Ruiz
6th Air Mobility Wing Public Affairs

More than 400 people rose and applauded as the 92-year-old American patriot was escorted in his wheel chair into the base theater, Feb. 13.

The highly decorated Airman, who is a living part of American and military history, started off standing on stage, but after some Airmen noticed he was having difficulties, they took it upon themselves to make the stage more comfortable for him by moving a chair and microphone into position for his convenience.

From his seat, Tuskegee Airman retired Tech. Sgt. George Watson proceeded to share almost a century of experiences, adversities he overcame and his outlook on life with Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and civilians for a Black History Month observance event.

Watson enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1942 and was stationed at Tuskegee, Ala. He became a part of something much greater than himself at the time—the Army Air Corps program to teach African Americans to operate and maintain combat aircraft (something that had never been done before in the U.S.).

Watson spoke for nearly an hour and a half. He started off by saying he didn't want to talk about the negative experiences that he dealt with, but the positive outcome of those experiences.

"I don't dwell on the negatives too much; you learn from that," Wat-

See **TUSKEGEE**, Page 18



Staff Sgt. Allen Kaiser and Staff Sgt. Dante Williams, 6th Maintenance Squadron, listen as Tuskegee Airman retired Tech. Sgt. George Watson shares almost a century of experiences, how he overcame adversities and his outlook on life, Feb. 13.



Photo by Airman 1st Class Shandresha Mitchell

Airman 1st Class Tyler Treadaway, 6th Maintenance Squadron aircraft metals technician, welds a cap to the top of the newly added swing gate of a B-4 maintenance stand at MacDill Air Force Base, Feb. 5. A cap is needed to prevent the corrosion of the swing gate.

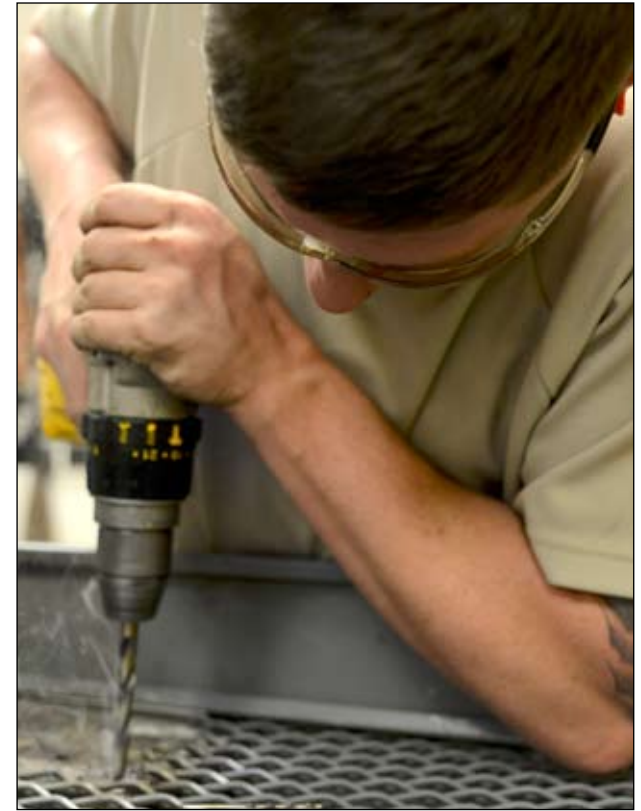


Photo by Airman 1st Class Shandresha Mitchell

Airman 1st Class Tyler Treadaway, 6th Maintenance Squadron aircraft metals technician, drills holes to remount a hydraulic arm to a B-4 maintenance stand at MacDill Air Force Base, Feb. 5.



Photo by Airman 1st Class Shandresha Mitchell

A small metal part is carefully smoothed on a grinding wheel.

Makin' it safer

As part of a mandated safety update, members of the 6th Air Mobility Wing Maintenance Squadron are busy retrofitting B-4 aircraft maintenance stands with swing gates designed to help prevent falls. The gates are fabricated from scratch and depend on the welding and mechanical skills of the maintenance crew members.

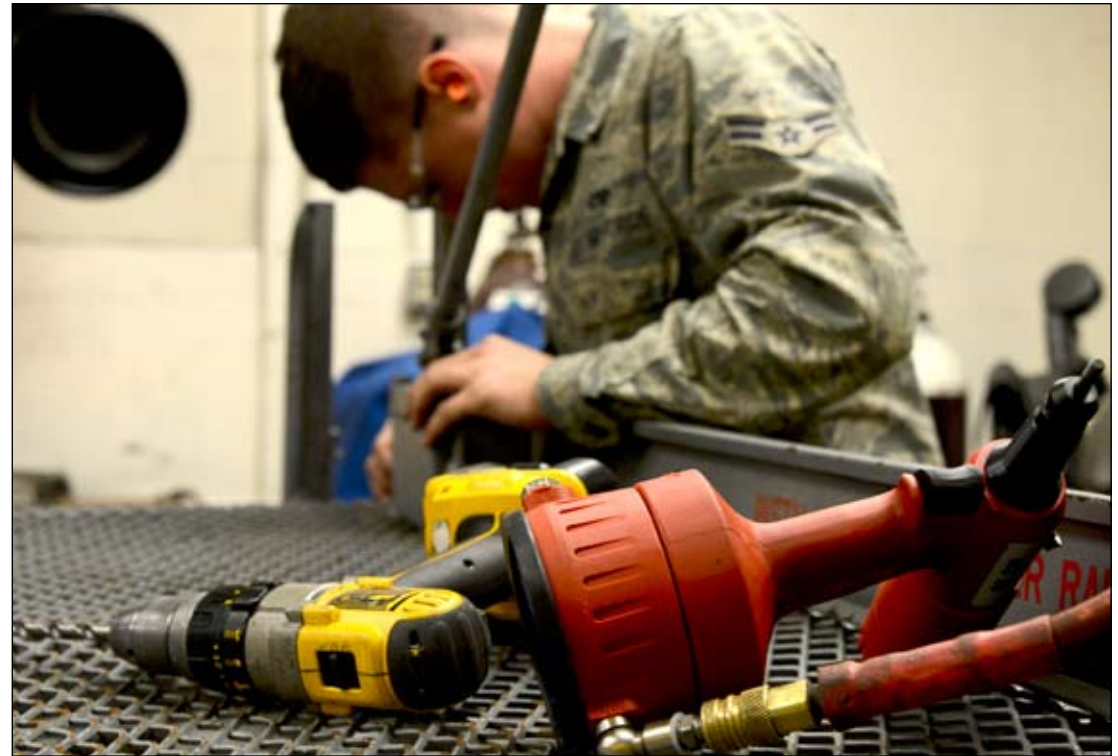


Photo by Airman 1st Class Shandresha Mitchell

A drill and a rivet nut gun lie on a B-4 maintenance stand at MacDill Air Force Base, Feb. 6. These tools were used to remount the hydraulic arm of a B-4 maintenance stand.

Military Saves Week approaching; three-point savings plan

From the MacDill Airman and Family Readiness Center

6th Force Support Squadron

The theme for the 2013 Military Saves Week (Feb. 25 to March 2) is more than just a theme; it's a set of instructions to help save money.

Set a goal, make a plan and save automatically. Knowing what you want to save for, how to achieve it and then making the savings process automatic, will allow you to reach your savings goal.

Set a goal. You can save more by having a goal in mind. Visualizing what you want to save for gives your savings a purpose. You may be tempted to withdraw from your savings if it has no purpose. But once you have a goal in place, you know that taking money out of your savings is taking away from that ultimate goal.

So what are you saving for - an emergency fund, a home, retirement or a car? Encourage people to go viral with their savings goal. Take a picture and post it on Facebook and tag at MilitarySaves.

AFAF

From Page 3

more information about the campaign or donating:

6th Air Mobility Wing Staff: 2nd Lt. Julian Ireland, 828-5377

6th Maintenance Group: Master Sgt. Chad Phillips, 828-4458

6th Medical Group: Capt. Timothy DuParc, 827-9310

6th Mission Support Group: 1st Lt. Michael Dax, 828-4545

Make a plan. Once you have your goal in place, make a plan for how you are going to save. To start, cut down on your spending and reduce high-cost debt. Next, keep track of what you spend and make a budget. Once you know where your money is going each month, you can cut down on unneeded spending and save the difference.

Don't forget to keep your savings safe, secure and growing. Banks, credit unions and even the government offer a variety of financial products that can help you save.

Save automatically. It can be hard to put aside money for savings. But there is an easy way to save money without ever missing it. Once you know how much you can save, make saving automatic. Automatically transfer a portion of your paycheck into a savings account.

For a list of activities during Military Saves Week visit www.macdillfrc.com. For more information, contact the MacDill Airman and Family Readiness Center at 828-0145. Also, you can take the Military Saves Pledge at www.militarysaves.org.

6th Operations Group: Master Sgt. Arturo Zavala, 828-3298

927th Air Refueling Wing: Maj. Benjamin Ward,

Joint Communications Support Element: Senior Master Sgt. Jeffrey Barney, 828-0774

U.S. Central Command: Tech. Sgt. Matthew Wailgorski, 651-9310

U.S. Special Operations Command: Capt. Jon Meliferas, 826-7113

RESALE LOT

From Page 3

The perfect car you're looking for might not be on the resale lot, but it's definitely worth a look if you are in the market for something new, said Tover, adding shoppers have the opportunity to not only find the perfect vehicle, but also potentially help out a fellow Team MacDill member.

Since many of the vehicles on the lot belong to members who are deploying, changing station or needing a bigger car to support a growing family, taking a resale lot car "off their hands" can be a big help to the seller, said Tover.

"They (sellers) often have to do something fast with their vehicles," said Tover, adding that it is just the nature of life in the military.

The immediacy also results in some very good bargains for buyers, and helping sellers in a time crunch take care of an important piece of business quickly.

"They sell fast," said Tover of resale lot vehicles. "If the seller has a reasonable price, they move out quickly."

A stop at the lot is convenient, but shoppers also have the option of checking the resale lot inventory on the resale lot website. The link is on the left side of the page at www.macdillfss.com.

The site shows pictures and details the features of many of the vehicles on the lot, along with information on contacting the vehicle owner. The site also has a downloadable form for those who want to list a car on the lot.

TUSKEGEE

From Page 12

son said. “I learned that I have a lot of patience that I didn’t think I had. I had a lot of negative things done to me, but we (Tuskegee Airmen) overcome those things.”

When Watson entered the service, the checkout lines at the Post Exchange were labeled “Whites only” and “Colored’s.” He endured segregation, prejudices and hatred daily, but was committed to defending his country nevertheless. Watson’s life is a lesson for Airmen on how to be resilient.

“It’s amazing to me, how far we have come as a nation,” said Tech. Sgt. Holly Garcia, 6th Medical Group, Optometry NCO in charge. “To hear someone standing right in front of you recall memories of the ugly prejudices and miss treatment as if it were only yesterday, is crazy to me. I thought it was incredible to hear him tell his story. It truly goes to show if you set your mind and heart, you can achieve your dreams.”

Watson attended the first class of African American pilots to graduate from Tuskegee. Thirteen African Americans were enrolled in the program, but only five graduated.

After dedicating 26 years to the military, serving in WWII (where he

earned a purple heart), traveling to Italy, German, England, Turkey and Iran, Watson retired at McGuire Air Force Base, N.J.

Master Sgt. Laura Stanton, from the Joint Communications Squadron Element, has known Watson for seven years and was instrumental for arranging Watson’s visit to MacDill AFB.

“I met him at McGuire AFB when I used to teach at the first-term Airmen center,” said Stanton, JCSE Equal Opportunity liaison and a Black History Month committee member. “We needed a guest speaker and I thought who better than him?”

“He’s just a great man. He’s a legend; we are honored to have him here,” said Stanton.

Watson shared his stories of how he steered through, overcame, reached out and bounced back from adversities in his life—a message that is very timely considering the challenges service members face in today’s Air Force.

“I’m so proud of today’s Airmen. We thought we were the best. We thought we knew everything, but seeing them, they are the best!” Watson said.

Atmospheric Administration and the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, as well as conservation funds from the Department of Defense were also secured to support the project.

The phase three SWIM project covers most of the southeastern portion of MacDill including the north and south golf courses and the Lewis Lake recreation area. Work on the south golf course primarily focused on restoring 30+ acres of degraded mangrove estuary which was essentially cut off from Tampa Bay years ago with construction of the golf course. The restoration work created a new tidal connection with the bay, removed dense stands of non-native vegetation (e.g. Brazilian pepper), and created more than 10 acres of new estuarine habitat. The project also improved many of the existing ponds on the south course by establishing tidal connections with Tampa Bay to create additional oligohaline (low salinity) habitat and by expanding the littoral (shallow water vegetated) areas of the ponds to increase pollutant uptake. Everyone seems to agree that the work has dramatically changed the appearance of the south course. One golfer playing the south golf course proclaimed "I really enjoy what you have done with the course by opening it up. It really created a spectacular view."

Work on the north golf course concentrated on improving stormwater treatment. A weir will divert stormwater from the large north and south drainage canal through a series of well vegetated freshwater and estuarine ponds on the north golf course. By redirecting stormwater water through the ponds the water flow is slowed down, which increases retention time and provides longer contact with the aquatic plants that naturally adsorb pollutants from the stormwater.

Lewis Lake is a permitted stormwater treatment system. The project increased the size of the lake, expanded the littoral platforms to increase beneficial aquatic vegetation and eradicated acres of nuisance, invasive plant species. The shape of the lake was modified so that water flow through the lake was redirected in a manner which increases retention time and improves pollutant uptake. Additional enhancements

to the Lewis Lake recreational area include the creation of land bridges and fingers to increase fishing opportunities.

The phase three SWIM project indirectly affects about 800 acres around the project area through increased habitat and water quality improvements. The construction footprint affected more than 100 acres, and the project restored 9.6 acres of wetlands, created 21.9 acres of new wetlands, and directly enhanced 15.7 acres of surface water across the north and south golf courses and the Lewis Lake recreational area. Construction of the project began in July 2012 and is expected to be complete by March 2013. In total, the project excavated nearly 120,000 cubic yards of earth and replanted disturbed areas with more than 187,000 new native plants. The project team, which included representatives from the SWFWMD, Bay Palms Golf Course and the base Environmental Flight, was lead by Ms. Nancy Norton with SWFWMD.

Dr. Brandt Henningsen, SWFWMD member, summed the project up as "a wonderful opportunity for two governmental groups to work cooperatively on an important restoration project for the base and Tampa Bay."

For more information about the project or to participate in future environmental restoration volunteer events, contact the MacDill Environmental Flight.

Improvements to Lewis Lake Recreation Area reconfigured the lake to increase stormwater retention time, enhance vegetative communities, and expand recreational opportunities.

Ecosystem restoration work on the south golf course expanded a relic mangrove system through construction of a new tidal connection, creation of additional estuarine habitat, and the removal of acres of harmful, non-native vegetation.

For work on the north golf course which is still under construction, the SWIM project redirected stormwater flow through a series of ponds to slow water movement, increase retention time and improve pollutant uptake by native, wetland vegetation.

MACDILL COMMUNITY



EVENTS

Friday

Airman & Family Readiness Center (MacDill)

PASS – Parent Advocates for Students & Schools from 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. The PASS program is an AMC initiative to provide peer-to-peer support for parents of school aged children.

Boomers Bar & Grill

Friday Bash! 3-7 p.m. Bar snacks and drink specials! Guaranteed \$100 club card drawing, Bar Bingo - \$1,000 jackpot, and DJ!

Saturday

MacDill Lanes

3/6/9 Tournament at 3 p.m. \$20 entry fee.

Seascapes Beach House

Beach on Fire from 3-9 p.m. Sassy Saturdays – Live band, drink specials, complimentary hors d'oeuvres served at 3 p.m.

Tuesday

Seascapes Beach House

Beach on Fire from 4-9 p.m. Texas Hold'em Tournament starts at 6 p.m. No entry fee. Win FSS gift cards.

Wednesday

Arts & Crafts Center

Canvas & "Cocktails" from 4-6 p.m. Cost: \$10 per person or Free for Single Airman. Call 828-4413 to sign up.

Thursday

Base Theater

FREE Movie! "The Pirates, Band of Misfits" at 5:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome and feel free to bring your own food & drink.

For more information, visit www.macdillfss.com.



Photo by Senior Airman Melanie Bulow-Kelly

A warm welcome

Col. Scott DeThomas, 6th Air Mobility Wing commander, and Chief Master Sgt. Robin Brooks, interim 6th AMW command chief, greet Gen. William Fraser III, U.S. Transportation Command commander, Feb. 17 upon arrival to MacDill Air Force Base for Corona South. Corona South is a conference of key Air Force leaders held to discuss key strategic issues, priorities and initiatives of the Air Force.



EXCHANGE
ARMY & AIR FORCE EXCHANGE SERVICE



CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Protestant services

Sunday - 11 a.m. - Contemporary Service
Sunday - 9:30 a.m. - FamCamp Service

Islamic services

Friday - 1:30 p.m. - Muslim Prayer Service

Catholic services

Saturday - 5:30 p.m. - Mass
Sunday - 9:30 a.m. - Mass

Call the chapel at 828-3621 for more information or visit the chapel web site at <http://www.macdill.af.mil/macdillchapel>.





RAO working to handle demand for free tax filing assistance

by retired Col. William Graham
Retired Activities Office director

Volunteer tax service professionals at the Retiree Activities Office are now busy helping retirees, dependents and active duty personnel to prepare income tax filing free of charge.

Appointments for this year's tax season have all been filled at the MacDill Retiree Activities Office. The income tax service program at MacDill AFB is very popular. However, we are trying to accommodate all walk-ins (from 9 a.m. to noon each day). Please keep in mind that active duty personnel in uniform are given the first priority. Also, keep in mind that the MacDill RAO provides tax assistance year-round every Tuesday and Thursday, except on holidays.

Income tax service is also available at the Airman and Family Readiness Center, Brandon location. You may call 655-9281 or 654-2730 to obtain detailed information or to

schedule an appointment.

There will be some changes in our TRICARE program starting Oct. 1. TRICARE for Life will not be affected. Active duty personnel also will not be affected. Some retirees and dependents on TRICARE Prime will be moved to TRICARE Standard. All of these changes are not yet finalized. Also, you can expect an increase in co-pays for prescriptions off-base. We recommend that you use the TRICARE Mail Order Program.

As a reminder, if you are receiving Social Security, Veteran Affairs benefits or other federal benefits by paper check, you will be required by the U.S. Treasury to switch to electronic (direct deposit or prepaid Direct Express debit card) payments by March 1.

I want to share with you some interesting statistics. Did you know that 51 percent of commissary patrons in general are retirees? However, here at MacDill, this percentage is about 70 percent. The percentage of U.S. con-

gress members in 1977 who had military service was 77 percent. Currently, only 19 percent of the members of our 113th Congress have any military service, the lowest since WWII. Sixteen veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan won their races in recent elections and have been sworn in. The bottom line is we need to step up communications with this new Congress to ensure they understand the needs of their veteran constituency.

Do you remember all the military memorabilia that used to be displayed on the walls in the Exchange food court? You can now view some of these at the Armed Forces History Museum in Largo, located at 2050 34th Way North. The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. Their phone number is 727-539-8371.

The 2013 Retiree Appreciation Day will be on Saturday, Nov. 2. More details will be available in the coming months.