



Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Weimer, right, and retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey, AUSA's vice president for NCO and Soldier Programs, discuss Army initiatives to improve care for soldiers and families during a breakfast hosted by the association. (AUSA PHOTO)

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SMA: Caring for people key to readiness

The Army's ability to deliver combat-ready formations depends on ensuring that soldiers and their families are taken care of, Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Weimer said Wednesday at a breakfast hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army.

In a wide-ranging conversation about his top initiatives, Weimer discussed the progress being made on family housing, barracks improvements and dining facilities.

Without safe home environments and cohesive teams where soldiers take care of one another, he said, the Army cannot deliver formations that are ready for combat.

"People have always mattered. You cannot be the warfighter you think

you are if you don't care about your family and your teammates along the way," Weimer said at the event, part of AUSA's Coffee Series. "We're not ready to fight and win tonight, tomorrow or in 2030 if we're not taking care of our people."

The Army has "come a long way" in addressing many of the problems with privatized family housing, Weimer said, citing initiatives such as the Tenant Bill of Rights that holds contractors responsible and accountable when issues arise.

But he acknowledged that "we've got some work to do" with barracks improvements that have lagged on many installations, due, in part, to delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

After seven months on the job and visits to dozens of Army installations with his wife, Kimberly, Weimer said he's seen the work that needs to be done and pointed to delays in funding as another barrier to moving more quickly.

Since the Oct. 1 start of fiscal 2024, the military has operated under a continuing resolution that keeps funding at the previous year's levels and prohibits new program starts.

"We're struggling to get after this without predictable funding," Weimer said. "This is where we need congressional help. It's just a massive infrastructure problem, whether it's sustainment or new [military construction], and without predict-

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AUSA is accepting applications for 44 scholarships

The Association of the U.S. Army is accepting applications for more than \$144,000 in national scholarships in 2024, with 38 scholarships awarded by AUSA and six administered by the association in conjunction with the Army.

Scholarship applications will be accepted online until May 13. Those selected to receive an AUSA national scholarship will be notified in late June.

AUSA national scholarship applicants must be active AUSA Premium members, Association Partner members or their children or grandchildren. Membership is not a prerequisite for the Army scholarships administered by AUSA.

For more information, including eligibility rules and requirements, or to apply, click [here](#).

AUSA's national scholarships include awards for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs, and general studies.

In the STEM category, AUSA will award 10 Delta Dental Oral Health and Wellness Scholarships valued at \$2,000 each; two Joseph P. and Helen T. Cribbins Scholarships valued at \$10,000 each; and six Nicholas D. Chabraja Scholarships valued at \$5,000 each.

The Delta Dental program provides scholarships to Army family



Scholarship applications will be accepted online until May 13. Those selected to receive an AUSA national scholarship will be notified in late June. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

members and transitioning soldiers for the advancement of oral health and wellness. Eligible applicants may pursue programs such as dentistry, nursing, home health care aide or caregiver training.

The Joseph P. and Helen T. Cribbins Scholarships honor the memory and legacy of Joseph and Helen Cribbins, longtime supporters of America's Army and AUSA, while the Nicholas D. Chabraja Scholarships honor the past chairman of AUSA's Board of Directors. Both may be used for completing degrees in STEM areas.

There also is a \$10,000 scholarship, first awarded last year, that is

sponsored by the Medical Technology Enterprise Consortium, a nonprofit biomedical consortium that collaborates with the Army Medical Research and Development Command. The consortium works to promote the development and delivery of medical technologies to improve the health and safety of military personnel, veterans and civilians.

AUSA's general studies scholarships consist of the new MilDef Way Scholarships; the GEN Carl E. Vuono Leadership Scholarship; the SMA Leon Van Autreve Scholarship Program; and completed coursework scholarships.

Two new MilDef Way Scholarships, each for \$5,000, are being offered this year. MilDef is a systems integrator and full-spectrum provider specializing in rugged information technology for the military, government and critical infrastructure sectors. The company provides hardware, software and services in the harshest conditions and most challenging environments.

The GEN Carl E. Vuono Leadership Scholarship was created last year in honor of former Army Chief of Staff Gen. Carl Vuono, who served on AUSA's Board of Directors for 20 years before retiring in 2023. The scholarship is for \$10,000.

In honor of Leon Van Autreve, the fourth sergeant major of the Army who was instrumental in establishing the NCO education system, eight scholarships are available: one for \$25,000, one for \$10,000, one for \$5,000, and five for \$2,000, for a total of \$50,000.

For young professionals with debt from recently completed college courses or professional certifications, eight \$2,500 scholarships are available.

AUSA also administers the following Army scholarships: the SGM Larry Strickland Memorial Fund and Scholarship, the SGM Dawn Kilpatrick Memorial AUSA Scholarship, and ROTC scholarships.

Meet the AUSA headquarters staff

Tenja Young

Member Experience Associate

Tenja Young has been with AUSA for just under a year, assisting members with an array of questions from becoming a member to obtaining legal or financial assistance. She previously owned a bakery in Washington, D.C., and her life still revolves around food: baking, cooking and traveling to discover the stories and connections between people and food.



New paper urges Army to invest in wet-gap crossing capabilities

Faced with technological advancements and a lack of practice, the Army should invest in its wet-gap crossing capabilities to prepare for future conflict, according to the author of a new paper published by the Association of the U.S. Army.

“After two decades of counter-insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States faces emerging threats in Russia and China,” Maj. Aditya “Adi” Iyer writes. “The Army must be prepared for large-scale combat operations against these near-peer threats. [In particular,] the U.S. military must be prepared to conduct wet-gap crossing operations against a well-organized and technologically advanced force.”

In “Bridging Through Time: From River Crossing in World War II to Wet-Gap Crossing Today and in the Future,” Iyer, a student at the School of Advanced Military Studies and a recently graduated Art of War Scholar from the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, recommends investing in the Army’s wet-gap crossing operations to prepare for future conflict.

The Army refers to river crossings as “wet-gap crossings” in current doctrine and defines them as “crossing an inland water obstacle, requiring extensive planning and detailed preparations.”

Current doctrine on wet-gap crossing operations “does not provide a comprehensive solution to wet-gap crossing operations,” publications are very “technically focused” and “lack ... tactical incorporation,” Iyer writes.

The U.S. military has not conducted contested wet-gap crossing operations against near-peer threats since World War II, Iyer writes.

Wet-gap crossings returned to the forefront not long after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, when Russian forces failed several times to cross the Siverskyi Donets River.



An MRAP operated by soldiers with the 2nd Infantry Division ROK-U.S. Combined Division crosses a temporary floating bridge during wet-gap training on the Imjin River in South Korea. (U.S. ARMY/CHIN-U PAK)

During three failed attempts to cross the river, Russian forces underutilized three crossing sites, conducted their operations during daylight and failed to employ combined-arms effects to assist in the crossing. As a result, Ukrainian forces prevented Russian troops from crossing and encircling their forces, Iyer writes.

“The successful Ukrainian defense of this river against one of the greatest global military powers should be concerning to the U.S. Army as it considers the feasibility of accomplishing a wet-gap crossing operation in the current and future operating environment,” Iyer writes.

To prepare for future conflict, the Army must incorporate increased deception, reconnaissance and materiel to keep pace with adversaries. “[Technological] advancements have increased the importance of the use of deception, ground-force reconnaissance, materiel superiority, and [training and education],” Iyer writes. “The U.S. Army must continue modernizing and investing in the materiel capacity to challenge such adversaries.”

Read the paper here.

AUSAExtra

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Support For the Soldier**

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able funding, it makes it extra tough for us.”

Weimer said he also is diving into how soldiers and families manage their money and budget for groceries when there are so many competing challenges. Likewise, he is working to determine what could make installation dining facilities easier and more desirable for soldiers, noting that “our traditional feeding methods within garrison are just not working like they did in the past.”

Food was once managed at the battalion level, and soldiers didn’t have to go far to get a meal, he recalled. With centralized dining facilities, known as Warrior Restaurants, he said, some soldiers can’t or won’t go if it’s too far. He said a “large percentage” of soldiers have no driver’s licenses, so some garrisons are working on providing public transportation.



Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Weimer, right, talks to soldiers Feb. 9 during a troop visit to Camp Casey, South Korea. (U.S. ARMY/PFC. MALAKAI CORLEY)

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Our Members Are the Mission

Pavilion highlights organizations, resources for families

We celebrate Valentine's Day in February, a significant reminder for all of us to focus on our hearts. This month, we want to draw attention to organizations with expertise on matters of the heart who exhibited at the Family Readiness pavilion during the Association of the U.S. Army's 2023 Annual Meeting and Exposition.

At the annual meeting, many organizations showcase benefits, programs and resources for soldiers and families in the pavilion hosted by AUSA's Family Readiness directorate. It was our pleasure last year to have Military Hearts Matter as a first-time exhibitor in the Family Readiness pavilion.

Family Readiness

Launched in 2019, the mission of Military Hearts Matter is to "support the hearts that serve by working together to help educate and provide programs for the military heart community," according to the nonprofit's website. It seeks to spread heart health awareness through various campaigns, programs and scholarships.

"Our Heart of SuperNova program provides medical and wanted items to support military affiliated children with heart issues and has supported 21 little military heart warriors," said Holly Vega, founder of Military Hearts Matter. "We also send heart blessings to those military families in need through the Blessings from the Heart program. Each program is named after military heart stories."

Military Hearts Matter also sponsors two scholarship opportunities: the Kelsey Danner Grant for military veterans with heart-related issues who are starting or opening a business, and the Mailynn Raquel Scholarship for military children with a heart condition.

Another Family Readiness pavilion exhibitor focused on the heart—figuratively—is Military OneSource's



Representatives of Military Hearts Matter exhibit in the Family Readiness pavilion during AUSA's 2023 Annual Meeting and Exposition. (AUSA PHOTO)

Our Relationship portal. This program helps military couples work on relationship challenges through online activities, with the option to work with a trained coach. Participants can complete the program on a phone, computer or tablet on their own schedule.

This resource improves communication, lessens emotional distance and helps couples overcome challenges such as money or parenting issues. Relationship improvement can help decrease depression, anxiety and insomnia problems, and creates a solid foundation for the relationship.



Thea Green, center, AUSA's deputy director of Family Readiness, visits with exhibitors in the Family Readiness pavilion during the 2023 AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition in Washington, D.C. (AUSA PHOTO)

These are just two of the 24 exhibitors that were in the Family Readiness pavilion at AUSA's 2023 Annual Meeting—with huge hearts that support our military families. Some of the exhibitors will be hosted at the first-ever Family Readiness pavilion at the association's Global Force Symposium and Exposition, March 26–28 in Huntsville, Alabama, and LANPAC Symposium and Exposition, May 14–16 in Honolulu. Visit us at the conferences for more information.

Finally, remember that Valentine's Day is not reserved solely for romantic partners—it is a chance to celebrate the love we share with family, friends, pets, communities and even ourselves. One of the best ways to strengthen these bonds and connect with others in your community is through AUSA's chapters.

Chapter members are volunteers who touch the hearts of their communities through various events, and we encourage you to find and contact your local chapter today by visiting www.ausa.org/chapters.

Kaylee Spielman is AUSA's Family Readiness intern.

Chapter leaders support Black History Month conference

In honor of Black History Month, volunteer leaders with the Association of the U.S. Army's Suncoast chapter in Tampa, Florida, supported the 2024 annual conference of the University of South Florida's Institute on Black Life.

The theme of this year's conference, held Feb. 1 and co-hosted with the university's Office of Veteran Success, was "Black Life and the Military."

To better support veterans in the community, Marilyn Westropp, the AUSA chapter president, has been

Suncoast

building a relationship with the Office of Veteran Success

and its director, Wayne Taylor. "I am always looking for opportunities to work with other veteran programs and share AUSA with everyone I speak with, and Wayne also realized the potential of working with AUSA," Westropp said.

In December, Taylor reached out to Westropp requesting a speaker for the conference. She arranged for retired Lt. Gen. Leslie Smith, AUSA national's vice president for Leadership and Education, to serve as a



Marilyn Westropp, president of AUSA's Suncoast chapter, and retired Lt. Gen. Leslie Smith, AUSA vice president for Leadership and Education, attend a conference hosted by the University of South Florida's Institute on Black Life. (AUSA PHOTO)

guest speaker alongside Frank Bell Jr., national historian for the Buffalo Soldiers National 9th & 10th (Horse) Cavalry Association.

The day before the conference, Westropp facilitated a luncheon with Smith that was sponsored by chapter Community Partner Acoustiblok Inc. and its owner, Lahnne Johnson. "We

filled the conference room, and everyone really was inspired by Lt. Gen. Smith," Westropp said.

Erin Ennis, the chapter secretary, helped facilitate a meet-and-greet with Smith later that evening, where chapter members had an opportunity to learn more about the Institute on Black Life from its director, Fenda Akiwumi.

Speaking at the conference about his own military experience, Smith said that regardless of who he worked with, soldiers united as a team to complete the mission.

"I've been [to] many places. Tough places, tough locations, [with] people who look like me, people who didn't look like me, people who had backgrounds like me, people from the north, south, east and west," Smith said. "We all came together to accomplish the mission that the country wanted us to do—to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies. That gets ingrained in who you are and becomes a way of life."

For young Black people considering a military career, Smith noted that the Army provides chances for growth and "the ability to accelerate your life." Bell agreed, saying, "Opportunity. It hits you in the face. You go to basic training, they tear you down and build you back up, but the opportunity is there."

Throughout the daylong conference, speakers and panelists delved into the historical role of the military in Black life, shared insights on professional development successes and opportunities, discussed challenges related to racial injustice, health and mental well-being, and explored issues of upward mobility.

Diversity creates a foundation for resiliency, Smith said. "Some people will tell you that if you make diverse decisions, if you have diverse people in your organization, it makes you weaker," he said. "From my viewpoint, it makes you much stronger."



Retired Lt. Gen. Leslie Smith, AUSA vice president for Leadership and Education, discusses his military experience at a daylong event focused on the historical role of the military in Black life. (UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA/COREY LEPAK)



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