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The museum is the first and only one to tell the complete history of the U.S. Army and its soldiers, from before the country was founded to the present day. (NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

National Army museum reopens June 14

The National Museum of the United States Army, located at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, will reopen on June 14, the Army's 246th birthday.

The 185,000-square-foot museum first opened on Veterans Day 2020 with great fanfare but was forced to close a little more than a month later because of COVID-19 concerns.

The museum has held regular virtual events and field trips during its closure.

"June will be a month of celebration as we recognize Army Heritage Month, the Army's birthday and the reopening of the Army museum," Acting Army Secretary John Whitley said in a statement.

"As the museum tells the history of our American soldiers and honors their accomplishments and sacrific-

es, we will also reflect on their more recent service to our nation, including their contributions to COVID-19 and disaster relief efforts, and the protection they provide us all."

The museum is the first and only one to tell the complete history of the U.S. Army and its soldiers, with narratives that begin with the earliest militias before the country was founded and continue to present day.

Free timed-entry tickets will be required for admission. Details and reservations are available here.

Years in planning, the museum is a joint effort between the Army and the Army Historical Foundation.

The Association of the U.S. Army is the single-largest contributor to the facility, which is owned by the Army but managed by the foundation.

"I am very proud of the essential

role that AUSA has played in building the Army museum," said retired Gen. Carter Ham, AUSA president and CEO. "We should take great pride in the fact that AUSA is, by far, the single-largest donor to the museum, and the fact that so many of our chapters and individual members have also contributed to this worthwhile endeavor."

At the 2020 grand opening, Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville said a highlight of the museum is telling the stories of individual soldiers.

"The Army museum has done an incredible job of bringing to life the inspirational stories of service and sacrifice of American soldiers," he said. "Every soldier has a story, and the Army museum is the home of those stories."



A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM



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Risky health behaviors persist among service members

More than half of active-duty service members are reportedly in “very good or excellent health,” but other conditions, such as alcohol and tobacco use, prove to be more worrisome, according to a newly released 2018 DoD survey.

“The numbers for 2018 do indicate some problem areas that the military should continue to track,” Sarah Meadows, lead author of the report and a senior sociologist at Rand Corp., said in a statement following the report’s publication.

The 2018 Health Related Behaviors Study, supported by the Defense Health Agency and conducted by Rand, relied on more than 17,000 responses from active-duty service members.

Increased alcohol, tobacco use

Findings show substance abuse increased between 2015 and 2018, the report says, with binge drinking up by 14% and heavy drinking up by 32% during that time.

According to the report, more than a third of participants reported binge drinking in the previous month of taking the survey, and almost 10% were categorized as heavy drinkers.

“It is discouraging that rates of heavy alcohol use, binge drinking and [sexually transmitted infections] in the military have gone up since 2015,” Meadows said. “Even more troubling are things like tobacco use



Researchers recommend educating troops on the importance of sleep, improving access to medical appointments and reducing alcohol and tobacco use. (U.S. ARMY/SPC. PETER SEIDLER)

and e-cigarettes that are trending down in the general population, yet on the rise in the military.”

The study found roughly 37.8% of service members reported using some form of tobacco—a rate higher than in the civilian population.

Overall, service members reported to be in good health, but almost 30% said they hadn’t had their annual checkup—a requirement for all service members—in the last year.

Chronic conditions

While the study found most active members had low rates of high blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes,

it also found 40% of participants reported at least one chronic condition.

Among those conditions, bone, joint or muscle injuries—such as back pain and arthritis—took the lead, and soldiers were among two groups who reported the highest rates of pain, the report says.

In a separate survey by Rand, participants from the reserve components across all services reported lower levels of binge drinking, heavy drinking and smoking.

While the findings show they reported better sleeping habits, the study also found “reserve members had higher levels of obesity and lower levels of physical activity” than active members.

Researchers recommend military leaders develop a better understanding of alcohol use among service members and take steps to move the culture away from excessive use.

Additional recommendations include educating troops on the importance of sleep, improving access to annual medical appointments and reducing tobacco use, according to the study.

The full report on the active component is available here.

Meet the AUSA headquarters staff

Rhonell Dawkins

Senior Mailroom Center Specialist

Rhonell Dawkins has been with AUSA for 22 years and currently is the association’s senior mailroom center specialist. During that time, he has had the pleasure of working with some great guys, including Ronnie Gordon, Adrian Dawkins and many more. In his spare time, he likes to help people.



Updated veterans memorial website helps families honor their loved ones



The Veterans Legacy Memorial website is dedicated to the memory of veterans interred in VA national cemeteries across the country. (DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY/CHRIS ERBE)

In time for Memorial Day, the Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration has redesigned its Veterans Legacy Memorial website to give it more usability and allow visitors to upload photos and documents to a veteran's page.

The website, launched in 2019, is a digital platform dedicated to the memory of the nearly 4 million veterans interred in VA national cemeteries across the country.

It gives every veteran his or her own dedicated web page with information such as dates of birth and death, branch, rank, conflicts in which the veteran served and significant military awards.

Headstone photographs and mapped locations are also included for most veterans, with more being added every day, according to a statement from National Cemetery Administration.

With the website upgrade, visitors can submit photos and biographical summaries of their loved one, along with historical documents such as award citations, letters and newspa-

per clippings.

They can also follow their veteran's page and receive email alerts when new content is posted.

"The site has become a place for families, friends, and fellow veterans to remember those who have gone before them," the statement says.

One tribute to a veteran interred at Puerto Rico National Cemetery reads, "Grandpa, thanks for everything. For providing for a family and bringing us so much happiness. For always taking care of us until your last breath. For always having a smile and laughing at your grandchildren. We love you and we thank you so much not only for your years of service to the country but to your family. Love you grandpa."

In the past year, more than 9,000 tributes have been shared on the Veterans Legacy Memorial's pages, according to the National Cemetery Administration.

The VA National Cemetery Administration operates 155 national cemeteries and 34 soldiers' lots and monument sites in 43 states and Puerto Rico, according to its statement.

AUSAExtra

**Voice for the Army –
Support For the Soldier**

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PERK OF THE WEEK



Check out these publication discounts available with your AUSA membership. *Battle Digest* features executive summaries of important historical battles, and AUSA members save 20%. Members save 25% on *Legacy Magazine*, a beautifully styled publication for U.S. service member families and their communities. Discounts for *Army Times* and *Defense News* are also available here.

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Helping soldiers, families through AUSA's volunteer network

By Holly Dailey

Volunteer members seeking to go the extra mile for soldiers and their families make up much of the Association of the U.S. Army.

These volunteers all have passion and an understanding of the importance of supporting the needs and interests of our Army—and they contribute in a variety of ways.

They support Soldier and Family Readiness Groups, host ceremonies, organize golf tournaments and hold holiday events, to name a few.

They also offer opportunities for educational training and for scholarships and grants, and they provide avenues for networking, mentorship and connections to vital resources.

Through each chapter's unique tailoring of their programs and

Family Readiness

events, volunteers strengthen the ties between our military and their local communities. They are flexible to meet your needs—just ask.

Each year in the Family Readiness directorate, we support AUSA's mission by recognizing our Volunteer Family of the Year. Chapters solicit nominees from members or partners in the military community, and nominations are submitted to their Region and onward to us at AUSA's national headquarters.

The family is selected through several award committees and then celebrated at the AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition in October.

Our 2020 Volunteer Family of the Year was Staff Sgt. Casey Raines, his spouse, Brittany, and their six children.

In keeping with how much we value our volunteers, our most recent "Army Matters" podcast, released Monday, featured Maria McConville, spouse of the Army chief of staff; Alexandra Grinston, spouse of the sergeant major of the Army; Teresa Briley from the office of the assis-



Brittany Raines, whose family was AUSA's 2020 Volunteer Family of the Year, recently joined the board of the association's Mid-Missouri chapter. (AUSA PHOTO)

tant deputy Army chief of staff for personnel; and Steve Yearwood from the office of the deputy chief of staff for installations.

Our discussion highlighted the impact of our volunteers and their critical contributions.

Their strength and creativity in continuing to volunteer during these times, in person and virtually, is an example to us all.

We talked about how important it is to recognize them—even a simple "thank you" goes a long way—and the value of being a volunteer yourself.

When you volunteer, you gain knowledge, skills and experience that can help fill gaps on your resume. Did you know there is a system to track your volunteer hours?

The Family Readiness directorate also connects with volunteers through our relationship with Operation Deploy Your Dress, a military spouse-founded, volunteer-run nonprofit organization that offers new and gently used formal wear to service members and spouses.

"ODYD has been very fortunate to have hundreds of volunteers teaming up to bring this program to mili-

tary families all over the world," said Yvonne Coombs, the organization's co-founder. "It's more than a dress, and I believe that wholeheartedly. This is a family."

That family extends to Operation Deploy Your Dress pop-up events at AUSA's national headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, and to other events with our chapters.

We are very grateful for our volunteers and should thank them daily. Volunteers inspire us to help others by providing hope and purpose.

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen firsthand the critical need for our volunteer force and how creative and strong we are together. It is all about people.

Whatever your reasons for volunteering, thank you! Please know you are valued and appreciated.

Thank you to everyone who dedicates their time in and around our Army communities.

As Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville has said repeatedly, people are the Army's top priority.

Holly Dailey is AUSA's Family Readiness Director.

Chapter supports events recognizing future soldiers

Members of the Association of the U.S. Army's North Texas-Audie Murphy chapter recently supported two events honoring future soldiers in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

The events, hosted by Our Community Salutes DFW Inc., recognize graduating high school students who decide to join the military but may not have received recognition for their decision to serve.

Our Community Salutes DFW is a nonprofit organization formed last October by retired Col. Richard Kaniss, AUSA's Fourth Region vice president—connect, and retired Col. J.P. Hogan, the Region's executive vice president. The group is part of Our Community Salutes, a national nonprofit founded in 2009.

AUSA's Fourth Region covers Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

Earlier in May, Our Community Salutes DFW honored future soldiers with ceremonies at the Fort Worth Wilkerson-Greines Activities Center and the Gilley's Dallas complex. They were the first events of their kind in the Dallas metro area.

Kaniss was the master of ceremonies at both events, and he welcomed the enlistees, their parents, family members, friends and guests.

The ceremonies featured a presentation of the colors by the local high school JROTC color guard unit; the singing of the national anthem by Shelly Knapp, who is a member of the North Texas-Audie Murphy chapter; and speakers from each service.

Ken Hartman, a former Army officer who founded the national Our Community Salutes, was the guest speaker at the Dallas event.

A highlight of both evenings was the administering of the oath of enlistment to more than 150 future soldiers by Maj. Gen. Greg Chaney, assistant adjutant general of the Texas



Future soldiers take the oath of enlistment at the Gilley's Dallas complex during the Our Community Salutes event. (OUR COMMUNITY SALUTES PHOTO)

National Guard. Each enlistee was presented a certificate from their recruiting commander, a challenge coin from their branch of service and a lapel pin from the National Medal of Honor Museum.

Nonprofit military service organizations sponsoring the events included the AUSA chapter, the Army Scholarship Foundation, the Elks Club, the Marine Corps League-Big

D Detachment, the Air Force Association's Seidel Chapter, and the Navy League.

Corporate sponsors included 7-Eleven, USAA, Airbus Helicopters, Truist Financial and Resource Personnel Consultants.

"In addition to serving as one of the sponsors for the Our Community Salutes DFW Inc. events, the North Texas-Audie Murphy chapter's executive team actively participated and collaborated with the OCS DFW team in planning and logistics, hosted the VIP Lounges, supported the public relations and social media operations, greeted the recruits, families and friends, and signed up new members," said Patti McCoy, the chapter president.

A video message from retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey, AUSA's vice president for NCO and Soldier Programs, "captured the broad emotional response attendant to the commitment to serve from both the enlistee and family points of view," Hogan said.

Both events attracted several hundred people and included a livestream for enlistees and family members who were unable to attend.



Retired Col. Richard Kaniss, AUSA's Fourth Region vice president—connect, speaks at the Our Community Salutes Fort Worth event. (OUR COMMUNITY SALUTES PHOTO)



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