

Community bids soldiers farewell

By Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

222nd Base Support Battalion
Public Affairs Office

Baumholder said good-bye to the soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team and Division Artillery April 25 in a ceremony on Minnick Field. Typical blue skies prevailed over Baumholder as Maj. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, 1st Armored Division commander, addressed the soldiers assembled on the field and

the hundreds of family members who packed the stands.

"Within the next couple of days, America's tank division will continue its deployment from Germany and the United States to link up in U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility. For the past two years we have been sustaining our readiness and waiting for our nation's call. We have been called to do our duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Thousands of vehicles and tons of equipment have left Baumholder destined for the Persian Gulf. The 13,000 Germany-based soldiers and 3,500 soldiers from Fort Riley, Kan., are now heading for, or have arrived in the Persian Gulf and are preparing for the mission at hand.

"The 2nd Brigade Combat team, the Division Artillery, the 8th Finance are ready, there is no doubt in my mind," said Sanchez.

He told the troops that they had

trained long and hard and that they had already won a battle, the deployment battle.

"As we transition to the desert, I challenge you to sustain your focus, to sustain your discipline, and the involvement of our leadership that has led us to the successes today.

"The challenges that lie ahead are many, some we have never imagined or trained for. Your adaptability... will lead us to suc-

cess. You will have to be very diligent in adhering to our standards and enforcing iron discipline.

He told the soldiers that the length of this mission was undetermined. "But we, both soldiers and families, must be prepared for an extended tour. My orders say 365 days or until the mission is completed," he said.

He then reassured the soldiers that their families would be well taken care of in their absence.

"You can leave with absolute confidence that your families will be properly cared for here in Baumholder. Our families will also be called to sacrifice much through this deployment. The families will make it through this deployment with the support of the rear detachments, our family readiness groups, our base support battalions, our wonderful German partners and organizations that provide community services and the American Red Cross," said Sanchez.

In closing he said, "This will not be an easy mission. But there is no question in my mind that the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, the Division Artillery, the 8th Finance and every single Iron soldier will shine. Old Ironsides has been down this path many times before... the tens of thousand of soldiers that have gone before us will inspire us and not allow us to fail.

"I look forward to seeing you all in Baghdad. God bless you. Praise be the Lord my rock who trains my fingers for battle and my hands for war. Iron soldiers."

Sanchez officially transferred the division's colors from Wiesbaden to his new field headquarters in the U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility on May 2. This is a symbolic event based on centuries of military tradition.



Photos by Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

A color guard made up of soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team and Division Artillery display the colors as soldiers wait for the ceremony to begin.



Capt. Casey Randal, Division Artillery, serves as the narrator for the departure ceremony. Chaplain (Maj.) Daniel Wackerhagen, Division Artillery chaplain, gave the invocation before the ceremony.



Hundreds of family members pack the stands under a clear blue sky and wait for the ceremony to begin.

Teachers honored for all they do

By Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava
222nd Base Support Battalion Public
Affairs Office

Baumholder's German and American educational community came together May 2 for the annual German/American Teachers Appreciation Banquet where teachers are honored by the military, DoDDS leadership and German dignitaries for all the contributions they make throughout the year.

"Several years ago one of our schools had a saying on their faculty sweatshirts that I feel pertains especially to our current situation, 'I touch the future, I teach.'" These were the words Lt. Col. Todd A Buchs, 222nd Base Support Battalion commander, used as he praised the teachers for the contributions they make to the quality of life of military members while they serve overseas.

"Each of us knows the importance that teachers have had in our lives and our children's lives. All too often though we forget that and we sometimes regard teachers as just another profession, as nothing special. Well, you are special and tonight we stop what we are doing to say thank-you," said Buchs.

"Your job is often emotionally and physically exhausting but you do not shirk from the challenge for you have chosen a profession out of your love to children," he said.

He then challenged Baumholder's teachers to maintain that commitment during the months ahead. "We anticipate a stressful year ahead with our soldiers deployed to Iraq. Separation will be difficult for many children. However, our soldiers leave here knowing that their families and especially their children are in good hands thanks to you," he said.

Dr. Archie Bates, Kaiserslautern District superintendent, told the international gath-



Photos by Peggy Schmidt

Kathryn Forystek, Kaiserslautern District assistant superintendent, standing, speaks with Ann Otterstadt, left, teacher at Wetzel Elementary School and Isabella Crowell, teacher at Baumholder American High School who was honored as a retiring teacher.



Lt. Col. Todd A. Buchs, 222nd Base Support Battalion commander, addresses the guests. He noted that teachers are more than just teachers. They are a multitude of professions all rolled into one. They serve as substitute mothers and fathers, counselors and often both judge and jury, explained Bates.

Bates also spoke of justice and how it relates to education.

"During these troubling times I often think of justice and what the meaning of justice is. I'm sure that each of you desire that justice prevails and I'm certain that you want to be treated justly and likewise, justly treat others," he said.

Quoting Charlotte Perkins Gilman, American feminist and writer, Bates said, "As educators I'm sure you will agree that 'The child learns more of the virtues needed in modern life – of fairness, of justice, of comradeship, of collective interest and action – in a common school than can be taught in the most perfect family circle.'"

Highlighting the evening was a special

recognition of five retiring DoDDS teachers. Collectively they have taught for 164 plus years, 129 of those years were dedicated to DoDDS and 74 of those years were spent at Baumholder.

Honored were:

- Gary Himango who has taught for 35 years, 19 of those years in the DoDDS system. He taught one year at Baumholder.

- Janet Mann has been a teacher for 36 years, 31 of those years she taught for DoDDS. Eleven of her teaching years were dedicated to Baumholder.

- Helene Guinther is retiring after teaching for more than 30 years. She said she stopped counting after 30. Nineteen of those years were spent in DoDDS and in Baumholder.

- Isabella Crowell has been a teacher for 33 years and dedicated 30 of those years to DoDDS. She has homesteaded at Baumholder for 21 years.

- Also honored as a retiring teacher, was Richard Sever who has been a teacher for 30 years. Twenty-six of those 30 years he dedicated to DoDDS. He holds the longevity record of the five retiring educators in that he spent 22 of his DoDDS years at Baumholder.

Since this was a joint recognition event involving the German and American communities, local dignitaries and representatives from the numerous German partnership schools were also recognized. Partnership schools include:

Realschule Baumholder, Grund and Hauptschule Baumholder, Gymnasium Birkenfeld, Regional Schule Birkenfeld, Grundschule Freisen, Grundschule Heimbach, Gynsadium Kusel, Grundschule Idar-Oberstein, Hauptschule Idar-Oberstein, Grundschule Algenrodt, Grundschule Berschweiler and Grundschule Ruschberg.

Child, youth

Chinese Goju youth classes are held Mondays and Thursdays from 6-7 p.m. at the Neubrücke Gym. The cost is \$30 each month and includes an official patch, testing, advancements, belts and certificates. Chinese Goju is a combination of hard and soft elements in karate and kung fu. This discipline enhances flexibility, self-esteem, and builds confidence. Learn from Master Instructor, Thomas Felder, who has 30 years of experience in martial arts.

Youth swim classes

If your child is six months and older he or she can be enrolled for swim classes with Baumholder Child and Youth Services. Classes offered include: Parent/Child Water Orientation for six months to 3-year-olds; Preschool Swim Lessons for ages 3-5; and Level I, II, III, IV for ages 6 and up.

Children can participate in synchronized swimming, water polo, stroke improvement and water safety. The cost is \$45 for eight

Post notes

classes. Classes are on Wednesdays and Fridays at the Baumholder indoor swimming pool. The registration fee includes a skill level certificate.

Rudy's

Pool Tournaments

Rudy's pool tournaments are held at 8 p.m. on the first and last Wednesdays of every month. Prizes are awarded.

Pizza to order

Get American-style pizza with thick crust at Rudy's in Baumholder. They make their dough fresh daily and deliver to the surrounding area. Get a made-to-order, piping hot 13-inch pizza for \$8 plus \$1 per topping. You can also dine-in.

Dining hours are Wednesdays and Thursdays from 6-9 p.m. and Fridays and Saturdays from 6-10 p.m.

Rod and Gun Club

Hot, fresh pizza

Baumholder Rod and Gun Club serves and delivers made-to-order pizzas, starting at \$7.95 for a cheese pizza.

Additional toppings are 50 cents each. Call to have your pizza delivered tonight.

Right on cue

Pool tournaments at the Baumholder Rod and Gun Club begin at 7 p.m. every Wednesday. Prizes are awarded to the winners.

Gone country

If you love country and western, you'll feel right at home at Baumholder's Rod and Gun Club. Round up your friends for free country and western dance lessons every Thursday night and stop in for country music on Fridays and Saturdays until 4 a.m.

Rolling Hills Golf

Spring Open

If golfing is your passion, play in the Spring Open with the Rolling Hills Golf Course. This event is set for May 17 with a 9 a.m. tee time. The entry fee of \$25 includes food and prizes. Nonmembers must pay a green fee. To participate, sign up in the pro shop no later than May 14.

Demo Days on the course

Rolling Hills Golf Course offers an opportunity for players to try a variety of different clubs from several brand-types. The next Demo Day is sponsored by Nike on June 26 from noon – 6 p.m. Learn more about this event and others at www.baumholdergolf.com.

Open for lunch

The new Windmill Pub at the Rolling Hills Golf Course is open for lunch and is serving daily lunch

specials from 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Mondays through Fridays.

Unit-level golf pass

For \$400 you'll get one annual golf pass, one set of rental clubs and one driving range token to use within your unit.

Job opportunities

MWR Job Fair

Job seekers, opportunity awaits you at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Job Fair on the second Wednesday of every month at the Rheinlander.

Doors open from 9 – 10 a.m. Visitors learn of MWR positions, have an opportunity to fill out applications and receive interviews on site.

Outdoor Rec

Scuba Diving

Baumholder Outdoor Recreation offers lessons in scuba diving. Call for course dates and times for Introduction to Scuba Diving, Scuba Diving Refresher Course and SSI Open-Water Scuba Diving Course.

Memories keep growing on ribbon tree

By Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

222nd Base Support Battalion
Public Affairs Office.

Neubrücke Elementary School's student body did not tie a yellow ribbon 'round the old oak tree to remember their deployed mothers and fathers, instead, they tied 205 yellow ribbons 'round a new birch tree.

Each student was given a yellow ribbon on which they wrote the name of their deploying parent and then tied it to the branches of a birch tree in the lobby of the school. As their parents deploy, students have brought in pictures of their parents and placed them on the wall around a flag that hangs next to the tree.

"As they come home we'll take the flag down and we'll take the ribbons down and give them back to the students," said Veronica Kulka, a parent who volunteers her spare time at the school. She came up with the ribbon tree idea but credits the entire school for making it happen.

"It's about the school, primarily, supporting the students of the families deploying to Iraq," she said.

"It's a good community thing. And we're so small out here that



Photo by Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

Jennifer Kulka, a 12-year-old 6th grade student at Neubrücke Elementary School checks a ribbon on the "yellow ribbon tree."

we're kind of forgotten so I thought it would be a nice thing to start. With support of the school we've gotten it done," She said.

Support also came from outside the school in that a German nursery in the nearby town of Brücken donated the Birch tree that is being used for the project.

"It's a real moral booster and I think it also gives these kids a wonderful opportunity to identify with their loved ones who have gone to the gulf and are serving," said

Wayne Dozark, Neubrücke Elementary School principal.

"The live tree, I think was important." After the tree was obtained, "It has sort of taken a life of its own" said Dozark.

"As parents ... have come into the school, they've made note of it and they've been very, very complimentary. I know they appreciate the gesture on the part of the school," said Dozark.

All Neubrücke students are also sporting yellow ribbons with a U.S.

flag pin on their cloths or book bags. "I gave all the teachers a ribbon too because there are a lot of teachers with deployed husbands," said Kulka.

The original plan was to construct an artificial tree in the lobby but as Kulka pitched her ideas to her friends the project began to mold into a more environmentally friendly one. "We talked about how we would make a tree and Ute (Morrison) said 'I know the mayor in Brücken and there's a nursery in Brücken, let me get a live one,'" said Kulka. Morrison is also a volunteer at Neubrücke Elementary School.

"I think that's great because that also shows the kids that we're environmentally sound because when we're done with the tree we're going to plant it on the school grounds," she said.

The actual project started about two weeks ago. "It took a little while to make three hundred pins," said Kulka. These are the pins the students and teachers are now wearing. I had a friend of mine, Catarina Adreano, help me do that. We spent several hours making the pins for the students. And the PTA paid for everything, the ribbons, the pins, the flags," said Kulka, who has two

children enrolled at Neubrücke Elementary.

With only some 205 students enrolled, Neubrücke is Baumholder's smallest school and easily one of the smallest student bodies in U.S. Army Europe, but it makes up for that by having a very active community involvement program.

"We're out in the country but we make a special effort to do special things for kids," said Dozark.

"That's typical of this school. We produce. We do a very, very good job and parents tell us that. So, it's a gratifying place to be and it's a gratifying job," he said.

Kulka echoed Dozark's comments by saying, "We're small, we're forgotten and we're 'the best kept secret in DoDDS.'"

She summed up the school's ribbon tree project by saying, "The best thing is that these kids say I did something for my dad or my mom that's deployed and I feel good about it." At the end of the day, students at Neubrücke Elementary School can pass by the yellow ribbon tree standing proudly in the lobby and say, "My dad's gone but look at what we've done to show him that we care."

Bobby's special flag finds its way home

By Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

222nd Base Support Battalion
Public Affairs Office

When Bobby Muraoka's third grade class from Smith Elementary School received an optional assignment to write cards for soldiers at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center who had been wounded while supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom, the response was more than Muraoka had expected.

He wanted to make his card a special card so he asked his third grade teacher, Ramona Emery, if he could finish his assignment the following day because he wanted to attach a special flag to it.

The next day Muraoka dug out a small U.S. flag from his back pack and asked if he could attach it to the card.

His teacher asked him what was so special about the flag and he said, "My Dad gave it to me to remember him by when he is deployed."

His teacher asked if he really wanted to give up his special flag because he was certain not to get it back. Muraoka then said "It's going to a soldier, right?" His teacher said yes and Muraoka replied, "Well

that soldier needs it more than I do."

"That got us all a little teary eyed and a little weepy eyed and he did, he attached it to the card," said Angie McClain, Smith Elementary School counselor.

"Since 9/11 all of the different schools in the area have been making cards that we have been sending to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. These cards are distributed to the soldiers that are coming through, those that have actually been injured, as well as those that just simply come for a doctor appointment from down range," said McClain. "The cards are basically well wishing cards, get well cards and thank-you cards. Some students have even written cards to the staff of the hospital, thanking the doctors and the nurses for all of their hard work," she said.

McClain took all the children's cards to the hospital and together with her husband, Chaplain (Col.) David McClain, chief of pastoral services at LPMC, went to the hospital wards to distribute cards. Muraoka's special card was at the top of the stack.

When they went to the Intensive Care Unit they came upon Staff Sgt. Jackson, who was recovering



Photo by Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

Bobby Muraoka, shows off his coins and returned flag to fellow students in his third grade class at Smith Elementary School.

from severe injuries he had received in combat. Jackson was one of the four soldiers who were wounded but evaded capture when the 501st Maintenance Company was ambushed. PFC Jessica Lynch was also a member of his unit and was amongst those who were captured. She and other prisoners were later rescued in a special operation launched by coalition forces.

McClain handed Jackson the card and explained the significance of the flag to him. "Sergeant Jackson was extremely moved and said he would like to stay in touch with

Bobby," said McClain.

Before he could contact Muraoka, Jackson was medically evacuated to Walter Reed Medical Center.

Dr. Sally Harvey, the psychologist at Landstuhl, had the opportunity of seeing Jackson when she escorted Lynch to Walter Reed Medical Center.

While there, Jackson asked Harvey if she could return the flag to Muraoka. "He wanted to keep the card which had several drawing by Muraoka and the words 'America, My Home Sweet Home'

written in bold, but he felt it was important for Muraoka to have the flag back to remember his dad by until his dad returned home," said McClain.

Harvey came to Smith Elementary School April 28 to fulfill her promise of returning the flag to Muraoka.

His parents, Sgt. Robert and Shanti Muraoka, were also present and watched as Chaplain McClain thanked Muraoka and his fellow students for "making a difference" with all their cards. He then presented Muraoka with coins from Gen. Elder Granger, European Regional Medical Command commander and Col. David Rubenstine, LPMC commander.

Showered with so much attention at once was a little overwhelming for Muraoka. "I was surprised and scared," he said.

Muraoka's flag may have been returned to him but it's not through traveling. He says he's going to send the flag back to Jackson "Because it's something special for a soldier guy who fought for us."

And what will Muraoka's father carry with him when he deploys to Iraq? "Um, we have our own thing. It's a secret," he said.

Family centers open

By Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

222nd Base Support Battalion
Public Affairs Office

The Strassburg Family Assistance Office opened its doors May 2 to help meet the specific needs of Strassburg families. Located in the old mayor's office next to Rudy's, the SFAO will serve the more than 200 families living in Baumholder's satellite community of Strassburg.

A second family assistance office opened in Neubrücke May 9 to meet that community's unique family needs.

"Instead of families having to go to Baumholder for Army Community Services, ACS is now coming to Strassburg and Neubrücke," said Donna Finney, ACS officer.

"These centers are just a place for families to come out and meet new friends or just to talk with somebody," she said. Of course the centers will offer classes and have an ACS staff on hand as well as volunteers who live and work in the community.

"This is just our way to get to

know the neighbors," said Finney, who said that although the Strassburg center will only be open Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., and the Neubrücke center on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 – 11:30 a.m., "If there is a big demand ... we'll expand the hours based on what the families out here need, because we're here to support them."

The response to the new centers has been favorable, according to Finney. At the Strassburg center opening she said, "Many spouses have come forward already and said, 'I have something to contribute.' So they're volunteering. We're making them ACS liaisons, we'll train them and they'll be working on the team right along side of us."

Finney added that in addition to the new centers, she wants everyone to know about the Strassburg Super Stars program. "We've already started a program at Baumholder called the Baumholder Buddies. Here we're calling them the Strassburg Superstars," she



Photo by Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

Sue George is excited about her new duties at the recently opened Strassburg Family Assistance Office. Melissa Schaffner helps man the counter on opening day.

said.

It's a community oriented volunteer program and "We'd like family members to volunteer because everybody has a gift. Everyone has something that they can contribute. And if we contribute to the community, we can work together

and we'll be fine," said Finney.

Finney explained the concept behind the program by saying that "Today you may need my help but next week I might need yours. So that's what we're trying to do, to get the community involved, focused and pulling together and

helping each other. Nobody needs to sit in their house. No one has to say I have to go back to the states because I'm lonely."

Both of the new centers as well as the volunteer program "Will be directed based on what the community needs," said Finney.