

# AFAP aims to improve quality of life

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Virtually every demographic aspect of the Baumholder community was represented during Baumholder's annual Army Family Action Plan Conference Feb. 4 and 5 at the Rheinlander Convention Center. Delegates at the conference, whose goal was to develop issues to help improve the quality of life in Baumholder and the Army in general, covered the entire spectrum of Baumholder's military community. Everyone from soldiers, high school students, family members and civilians had some form of representation.

Four groups of delegates met separately to discuss and develop issues on specific subject matters.

Through this issue identification process, Army constituents give leaders a means to assess problems quickly and react to them immediately. Leaders depend on AFAP as a continuing real-time means of taking care of the Army's most important asset – its people.

The following are highlights of the issues and recommendations that were raised during the two day conference.

\*Provide overseas travel for non-custodial children holding valid military ID cards. This would be a quality of life and morale booster.

●Authorization of a second POV for an overseas assignment. Currently only one vehicle is allowed for an overseas assignment. It was recommended to amend JFPR to include shipment of a second vehicle to a command sponsored overseas assignment.

●AFN radio reception cannot be received by many military communities in the area. This was raised as a force and family protection issue and it was recommended that a radio transmitter be constructed in the Baumholder community to improve the AFN reception in this area.

●Another issue was pay-as-you-go Basic Allowance for Subsistence. It was recommended to use a computerized system that will track which meals are eaten and have these meals subtracted from the BAS as they are used. The unused portion would be received in the paycheck. The other related recommendation was to implement separate rations for all soldiers.

●The next issue was access to chaplains for all denominations. It was recommended that an Army chaplain from all major religions visit USAREUR communities at least monthly. Another recommendation was to provide the availability to contract religious leaders to serve the needs of all denominations.

●The soldier group recommended the use of the local German maneuver training area for soldier qualifications. This would decrease travel and family separation and increase morale. It was recommended to upgrade the priority of use for U.S. service members.

●Government sponsored civilian travel was also raised. It was recommended to authorize one round trip ticket within an overseas tour at government expense for one



Photos by Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

Students in the youth group vote on what they consider to be the most valuable quality of life services available in Baumholder during the annual Army Family Action Plan conference.

civilian family member between the soldier's overseas duty station and the home of record. This was also raised as a morale and retention improving issue.

●Improving internet access for barracks residents was also addressed. It was recommended to have one DSL access line per room, provide a centrally located secure room with multiple DSL lines, or to have DCA maintain a computer lab in a central location exclusively for barracks residents. Currently quarters not yet renovated have only one DSL access line per floor and renovated quarters have one line per two rooms. It was argued that internet services are important for quality of life. The internet is an educational tool, a way to keep in touch with family and friends, a means for career improvement and progression, and a way to maintain personal finance and pay bills.

●In order to improve communication, the youth group recommended the creation of a page in the ASG newspaper for youth, written by youth. Another recommendation was to have youth create public announcements for airing on AFN channels. They also recommended youth representation at LINKS meetings and to initiate a youth maintained web page on the Baumholder web site.

●The youth also want an exchange program to share education and or recreational

activities with youth outside Baumholder. It was recommended to have students who meet certain criteria trade school slots for a day in other Department of Defense Dependent Schools. They also recommended the initiation of a student exchange with host nation schools on a regular short term basis.

●The youth group's final issue was school lunch variety. They want a greater variety of healthy food to be available for the standard meal ticket of \$2.10. Currently food portions are not adequate, too many items are fried and many items are repeated too frequently. They recommend the creation of a variety of alternatives such pasta bars, potato bars, soup or salad bars and a Mexican bar.

●Another issue was the deduction of BAS from a service member's pay while on field duty or temporary field assignment, which presents an undue hardship on the service member's family as BAS often accounts for up to 15 percent of the monthly income. The recommendation was to initiate separate rations concurrent with deduction of BAS, remove the 30 day requirement, or the family separation pay, and make the family separation pay equivalent to BAS.

●It was also recommended that every DODDS school should have at least one qualified guidance counselor. Schools with

300 children enrolled are not authorized full-time qualified counselors. It was pointed out that children from smaller schools require the same emotional and psychological support as students of larger schools.

●The final issue was incentive for career soldiers. This helps to retain qualified and well trained leadership. A recommendation was to roll over use or lose leave into annual payments regardless of the 60 day cap. The other recommendation was to increase tuition assistance from 12 to 24 credit hours.

"These are great issues. They are very supportive of our soldiers and their families and that's what this is all about," said Lt. Col. Todd A. Buchs, 222nd Base Support Battalion commander.

Noting all the work and effort of everyone involved from the organizers, the delegates, facilitators and guidance from senior spouses, Buchs said, "I think this really spells it out for the community.

"We've got so many people that care about the community, care about our families and want to make a difference."

Buchs explained that it was now the job of the BSB to get back to the community with answers or action to be taken on all the issues raised. Some issues will definitely be forwarded for further action while others can be dealt with locally, he explained.

## Post office tests Saturday service

Post office customers may now conduct business on Saturdays at Baumholder and at eight major European locations. The other eight locations where U.S. Army, Europe has begun testing Army Post Office customer service operations on Saturdays include Hanau, Friedberg, Wiesbaden, Vilseck, Wuerzburg, Schweinfurt, Stuttgart, and Vicenza.

This new Saturday customer service will run for six continuous Saturdays to determine customer usage. If the Saturday service is warranted, it will continue on a permanent basis. Other Army Europe locations for Saturday postal customer service may be considered after this initial test phase.

During this test phase, the Saturday customer service will be available for three hours. Baumholder's post office will open its doors from 9 a.m. to noon. The local Army Post Office hours of operations in each location will be determined by the supporting postal company and the base support battalion commander. Customer service hours will be announced in community news outlets.

The Heidelberg and Mannheim communities are currently providing Saturday Army Post Office customer service with outstanding success.



Photos by Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

Customers lined up for service at the Baumholder post office during the noon hour may also conduct their postal transactions on Saturday mornings during a six-week trial period.

## Wetzel CDC receives NAEYC accreditation

Wetzel Child Development Center was recently granted accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. This prestigious recognition has been achieved by approximately 7 percent of early childhood programs nationwide—some 8,121 programs as of Dec. 1, 2002, serving 716,475 children. Wetzel's 30 child and youth program assistants currently provide care for 118 children. "The staff worked hard and are really pleased to have become accredited," said Jackie Cruz, Wetzel CDC director.

NAEYC accreditation is a rigorous, voluntary process by which early childhood programs demonstrate that they meet national standards of excellence. Child care centers, pre-schools, kindergartens, and before and after school programs are eligible to seek NAEYC accreditation. Approximately 19,000 programs are engaged in seeking accreditation.

Programs seeking accreditation undergo an intensive self-study, collecting information from parents, teachers, administrators, and classroom observations. They receive an on-site visit, conducted by early childhood professionals especially trained by NAEYC, to validate their self-study results. All of this information is independently reviewed by a team of national experts who grant or defer accreditation. When awarded, accreditation is valid for three years.

"The heart of NAEYC accreditation focuses on the child's experience," said Barbara Willer, spokesperson for NAEYC. The process carefully considers all aspects of a program including health and safety, staffing, staff quali-



Photos by Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

Above left, Kiara Benejam enjoys a romp in the nursery. Above, Kameron Eagans, Brianna Fields enjoy a play session with Jennifer Brown, child youth program assistant, while Mackenzie Thompkins shows off her play time creation. Below left, John Burnett, Gabriella King, Ryan Middleton and Brianna Fields work on a play time project with Tammy Feterl, lead education technician for the toddler room.



fications, and physical environment. The greatest emphasis is on the children's relationships with the staff and how the program helps each child grow and learn intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally."

According to Cruz, research supports the value of accreditation for children. Children's language and social skills especially benefit from the better quality found in NAEYC-accredited programs. "These are critical areas for children's success in school as well as in life," said Cruz.

NAEYC accreditation began in 1985, with the first program accredited in 1986. NAEYC is the nation's oldest and largest organization of early childhood professionals dedicated to improvement of quality early childhood education. NAEYC established accreditation in response to the growing number of American children spending large amounts of time in group settings away from home, and the uneven—and often inadequate consumer protection afforded by state licensing of child care facilities.

Wetzel Child Development Center is one of four Baumholder CDC that serve children ranging in age from birth to six years old. All four centers are NAEYC accredited. "We offer full day programs for infants, toddlers and preschool, a part-day preschool program and before and after school care for kindergartners. Wetzel CDC will now proudly display the NAEYC torch—the sign of NAEYC accreditation. Parents who look for the torch when choosing child care or early education programs for their children will find programs, which have made a commitment to excellence for young children and families," said Cruz.

## Post notes

### AAFES employment on line

Applications for AAFES employment are now accepted online only. Employment seekers may apply online by going to [www.AAFES.com](http://www.AAFES.com) and clicking on employment. Baumholder's recruitment office is in Building 8402. The Vogelweh office is in Building 2011 and the Ramstein office is in Building bldg. Each of these offices have computers set up to apply for job vacancies in Baumholder. For more information call the Baumholder Human Resources and Recruitment Office at civ (06783) 3086 or mil 485-7334.

### GI Bill not transferable

Many questions have recently surfaced in the community pertaining to the transferability of the Montgomery GI Bill to family members. Much advertisement has appeared in the Kaiserslautern area because the Air Force is conducting a pilot study in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the transferability option on retention of individuals with critical skills.

Whether or not to use or authorize transferability of the Montgomery GI Bill has been left up to the discretion of each service secretary.

"There is a pilot study going on with the Air Force at the direction of the Secretary of the Air Force and there are advertisements on AFN and in the Kaiserslautern/Ramstein area newspaper regarding the program. Unfortunately, it is not open to the Army at this time," said Steve Meyers, 222nd Base Support Battalion education officer.

"The Secretary of the Army has complete discretion on whether or not to participate and may or may not decide to utilize this option as a retention tool in the future. If he does, the benefit could only be bestowed upon soldiers in critical skills MOS's or

positions," said Meyers. Numerous additional stipulations would also have to be met should the Army decide to adopt the program, he explained.

At this time, however, the Army



is not participating in the program.

### Museum adjusts hours

To better accommodate soldiers and their families during their off-duty time, the 1st Armored Division Museum in Baumholder now has new operating hours. The new hours are Wednesdays through Saturdays from 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. and Sundays from 1 to 5 p.m.

### Weather hotline

Weather and road conditions as well as information about school or post closures or delays is readily available by calling the 222nd Base Support Battalion Staff Duty Office at mil 485-6150/8050 or civ (06783) 6-6150/8050. The office is staffed 24-hours a day and has the most current information regarding weather and road conditions.

### JROTC needs coach

Baumholder's Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps is looking for a drill team coach.

The team usually consists of only 6 or 7 students so they participate in individual and color guard com-

petition only.

U.S. ID card holders (except active duty) can be hired as a substitute teacher/coach. Retirees in the local area are eligible for this position and most senior NCOs would be very well qualified.

The season goes from March until May. Practices are dependent upon the coach and there are three scheduled drill meets, plus the European finals, if the team qualifies. Persons interested may call Maj. (Ret.) David Schwab at mil 485-6722.

### Tax center open

The Tax Center is now open and located at Building 8670 to provide free tax return preparation for federal and state returns. Hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Fridays. Except for complicated returns, the center accepts clients on a walk-in basis. Customers must bring their ID card, all W-2 forms, any 1099 and 1098 forms, Social Security cards or ITIN for all persons involved and last year's tax return if available.

The spouse must also be present if filing jointly unless a power of attorney is available. For more information call mil is 485-8644.

### AFRC gears up

With the new year well underway, AFRC's winter activities are jumping into full swing in Bavaria's winter wonderland. Whether vacationers are looking forward to diverse recreation, enlightening tours, or just a relaxing vacation, AFRC has a way for everyone to get outside.

Make reservations or obtain more information by contacting the vacation planning center at mil 440-2575 or visit [www.afrc-europe.com](http://www.afrc-europe.com).

### Credit union closes

All Service Credit Union branch offices will be closed on Feb. 17 in observance of President's Day. All Service Credit Union branch offices will resume normal hours of operation Feb. 18.

### VA briefing set

A Veterans Affairs briefing is scheduled from 10 a.m. – noon March 21 in the Army Career Alumni Program classroom. Appointments are not necessary but there is usually standing room only so persons interested should arrive early. Information ranging from VA benefits to the Montgomery GI Bill and VA house loans will be available. For more information, call mil 485-6330.

### Looks are everything

Don't let the appearance of your car fall to the wayside. Baumholder Customizing Center can help improve the looks of your car with auto waxing, buffing, shampooing, window tinting, stereo installation, spoiler kit installation, and adhesive pin stripping. Call to schedule an appointment with Baumholder Auto Crafts Customizing Center at mil 485-6344.

### Senior pictures

Keepsake Portrait Studio in Baumholder is now accepting appointments for senior portraits. The cost is \$115 and includes the sitting fee, three outfit changes, 36 wallets, four 5x7s, four 8x10s and one 11x14s. When scheduling an appointment, inform the receptionist that it is for a senior session, due to the two to three hour time frame needed. For more information, contact Keepsake Portrait Studio in Building 8895 at mil 485-6687 or civ (06783) 6-6687.

## Protect belongings before deployment

By Capt. Jocelyn Urgese  
Baumholder Claims Office

When soldiers deploy, their vehicle and personal belongings must be stored for the duration of the deployment. Historically, storage of personal items is accomplished in one of two ways. The Army may assume control of these items, placing vehicles in secure areas within company motor pools or parking lots and securing personal property within barracks lockers or supply rooms. Regardless of how soldiers' property is stored during a deployment, property is occasionally damaged by vandals, unusual occurrences, or even stolen. Planning in advance for these types of losses or damages, is the key to protecting personal belongings.

The Personnel Claims Act authorizes the settlement of claims for loss, damage, or destruction of personal property of military personnel or civilian employees incident to their service. In order to be compensated for loss or damage of your personal property, the soldier must be able to substantiate ownership of the property, as well as its value and condition.

Before storing a vehicle, take a few steps to protect it. Remove all property not associated with the auto. While it's probably acceptable to leave jumper cables in the trunk, don't leave a compact disc collection there. In addition, soldiers may want to consider removing any ex-

pensive stereo equipment from the vehicle, provided it is easily detachable.

Under new U.S. Army Claims service guidance, personal claims of up to \$20,000 are now authorized for damage to privately owned vehicles in government storage as a result of a soldier's operational deployment. However, this \$20,000 cap is not without limits; there is still a \$2,000 limit on automobile paint jobs, a \$1,000 limit on automobile parts, and a \$750 limit on radios, cassette players, CD players, and car alarms. Soldiers whose POVs may exceed these specific limits are encouraged to maintain their private automobile insurance for the duration of the deployment.

Finally, prior to storing the vehicle, have a complete inspection done that accurately reflects any preexisting damage to the vehicle.

As in the case of private vehicles, soldiers should create a comprehensive and legible inventory of personal effects, and keep a copy of this inventory in a safe place. At a minimum, make sure that high-value items such as stereo and television equipment and computers are noted on the inventory and that model and serial numbers of these items appear on the inventory as well.

For more, call the Baumholder Claims Office at mil 485-8677/6507 or civ (06783) 6-8677/66507.