April 2021

‘All in to End Child Abuse’ prevention message for April 2021

By Vanessa Flores  
WSMR Public Affairs

April is the month that the Department of Defense recognizes the importance of preventing child abuse and encourages the community to learn more about the topic. It is also a time to put the issue at the forefront, so as the year progresses, we are armed with resources to take action if child abuse is suspected.

This year’s theme and tagline is All In to End Child Abuse, our first duty is to our next generation.

It serves as a reminder that our children are our future.

“While we are all busy with demanding lifestyles, we should always set aside time and put children first. They are the next generation, and if we put them first now, they will return the favor for generations to come, to ultimately end child abuse,” said Cynthia Valenzuela, Family Advocacy Program Manager at White Sands Missile Range.

“Putting children first is not necessarily about the quantity, but the quality of time spent is what is most important. Many busy individuals can make a huge impact in five minutes of kindness versus hours of poor interactions.”

As members of the Army community, we must protect our children. There are plenty of signs that indicate child abuse.

For example, as the weather gets warmer, if you see a child wear long sleeve clothing or clothes that are too warm, it could indicate that someone is trying to cover up bruises. In colder months, the opposite situation may indicate abuse if a child is not wearing warm clothing; they may not have access to proper attire.

“Children may be experiencing neglect if they are excessively hungry or are distracted by food. This may indicate they are not eating a well-balanced diet, are facing food insecurity, and are constantly concerned when their next meal will be,” said Valenzuela.

Another red flag is when you observable changes in a child’s demeanor when a certain individual is near.

If a child avoids an individual, this could be due to physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.

There are several ways the community can help at-risk children or families.

You can start by understanding the limitations of parents and encouraging parents to take time for self-care. Our society can begin by not stigmatizing parents when they take time out for themselves.

Educating the community about Child Abuse Prevention Month at White Sands Missile Range is Cynthia Valenzuela, Family Advocacy Program Manager and Maria Pangborn, ACS Volunteer; they set up an information table at the Commissary on April 13.
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Submissions to the Missile Ranger are accepted anytime for publication in the following issue, space permitting.

All submissions will be edited for style, content and propriety. Submissions must include a point of contact identified by first and last name and a telephone number for that point of contact.

Submissions can be made by e-mail to the following usarmy.wsmr.atec.list.ranger@mail.mil; also in person at the Public Affairs Office, Building 1782; or call (575) 678-2716.

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**EDITORIAL POLICY**

“First ATTEMPT IS FREE, ADDITIONAL ATTEMPTS ARE $3 EACH

SIGN UP AT BELL GYM • (575) 678-3374
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**January 1st - March 31st**

- 5 Rep Kettlebell Deadlift
- 3 ACFT Ball Throws
- 10 T-Push Ups
- 400M Run

**April 1st - June 30th**

100 Yard Event:

- 10 Kettlebell Deadlifts
- 7 T-Burpees
- Standing Power Throw
- Sprint, Lateral & Carry

**July 1st - September 30th**

- Kettlebell Deadlift
- Carry both Kettlebells 100M
- Perform 3 Power Jumps
- Run 100M
- 3 Hand-release push-ups
- Run 100M
- Lateral Run 50M lateral run 50M opposite way
- 6 Leg tuck & twists
- Sprint 100M
- 1 Mile run after completing list 4 times

**October 1st - December 31st**

Make a complete attempt around “The Box” without falling.

*(ALL CHALLENGES WILL BE FOR TIME. AFTER COMPLETION OF WORKOUT YOUR NAME WILL BE ADDED TO A LEADER BOARD INSIDE BELL GYM)*

All competitors will wear a mask and adhere to all CDC guidelines during challenges.
McAfee safely stores vaccines with ultra-low temperature freezer

By Vanessa Flores
WSMR Public Affairs

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, McAfee U.S. Army Health Clinic at White Sands Missile Range launched an aggressive vaccination campaign and obtained an ultra-low freezer to store the vaccinations safely.

In 2020, the announcement went out that the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna’s COVID-19 vaccinations would soon be available with specific temperature storage requirements.

After the announcement, Lt. Col. Aaron Braxton II, McAfee U.S. Army Health Clinic commander, and his team knew that the vaccine’s distribution and storage efforts would prove to be a challenge due to the distance and large size of the installation.

“As a remote location, we faced limitations due to storage options for the Pfizer vaccine since it needs specialized equipment involving the use of an ultra-low temperature freezer,” said Braxton.

“Vaccines stored at a temperature greater than negative 80 degrees Celsius (negative 112 degrees Fahrenheit) must be used within five days.”

Despite the limitations, vaccinating the White Sands Missile Range community with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine began on Jan. 7, 2021.

Initially, the clinic dealt with the vaccine time restrictions through logistical means and working with the White Sands Missile Range G-3 operations team.

The teamwork proved effective with White Sands Missile Range currently in phase two for vaccine distribution, which aligns with the plan phases set out by the Department of Defense. The undertaking also supports the Army’s mission to protect the force and support the national effort to fight against the COVID-19 virus. However, through collaboration with the Aerospace Data Facility-Southwest, commanded by Col. Michael C. Todd, Space Operations Group, the clinic is now equipped with a Stirling Ultracold ultra-low temperature freezer. The Aerospace Data Facility-Southwest is one of the tenant organizations on White Sands Missile Range, located on the far west edge of the range within NASA-Johnson Space Center’s White Sands Test Facility. “Securing the ultra-low temperature freezer will pave the way for McAfee to become a direct-distribution site,” said Sgt. 1st Class Nick Reasons, Detachment Sergeant at McAfee U.S. Army Health Clinic.

“We will now be able to offer long-term plans for distribution well past five days, with the ability to plan for months at a time.”

For more information on obtaining a vaccination at White Sands Missile Range, visit: https://informatics-stage.health.mil/COVAX/. 

PHOTO BY VANESSA FLORES

McAfee U.S. Army Health Clinic at White Sands Missile Range in collaboration with the Aerospace Data Facility-Southwest, is now equipped with an ultra-low temperature freezer to store COVID-19 vaccinations. The McAfee U.S. Army Health Clinic team responsible for obtaining the freezer pictured from left to right, Lt. Col. Aaron Braxton II, Commander, Sgt. 1st Class Nick Reasons, Detachment Sergeant, Staff Sgt. Jeffery Wadford, Clinic Non-Commission Office in Charge and Maj. Kevin M. Jordan, MD, Chief Medical Officer.
U.S. Army Test and Evaluation Command Launches New civilian website

By Haley Britzky

Task & Purpose

Army 1st Sgt. Marcell Perez was in no hurry to get the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine. Initially, Perez was concerned with how quickly the vaccine had come out, and when his chain of command at the 82nd Sustainment Brigade in Fort Bragg, North Carolina told him it wasn’t mandatory, he figured “there’s no rush for me to get it.”

He also had reservations about the efficiency of vaccines in general — a few years ago, Perez caught a nasty flu that put him in the hospital despite getting the flu shot that year.

“That gave me a bad experience with vaccines,” Perez said on Thursday.

He’s since changed his mind, and on Monday he’s scheduled to get his second dose of the COVID vaccine.

While the exact number of service members who have declined to receive the vaccine is unclear, CNN reported last month that the current rejection rate is nearly 50 percent.

But Perez is apparently one of many who have decided to get vaccinated after initially opting out.

Army Lt. Gen. Ronald Place, the director of the Defense Health Agency, said on Thursday that they are seeing “many individuals who were taking a ‘wait and see’ approach now coming in for the vaccine.”

The 18th Airborne Corps recently explored the issue in an episode of their official podcast with three Soldiers who decided to get vaccinated after originally opting out. So what’s changing their minds?

Their reasons for deciding to get vaccinated were similar to three other 18th Airborne Corps Soldiers who spoke to Task & Purpose: learning more statistics and facts about the vaccine, wanting to protect their loved ones, or coming to the conclusion that the Army likely wouldn’t provide a harmful vaccine to its own fighting force.

“Why would they give us something that’s going to take us out of the fight or keep us from protecting ourselves or the country,” Perez said. “That makes no sense.”

One significant factor that came up in almost every conversation was Soldiers seeing their leaders get vaccinated and talking with them about their reasons for getting it.

Staff Sgt. Anthony Johnson with the 82nd Airborne Division said when his commander came back from deployment he “immediately” went to get the vaccine.

“I talked to him about it, I was like ‘Hey sir, you ain’t scared?’ He’s like ‘No man … I want to be vaccinated and not have to worry about this and get back to some normal stuff.’ And that was the main thing in the back of my mind, I want to get back to doing normal things,” Johnson said.

Staff Sgt. Keara Holbrook, one of the Soldiers interviewed on Fort Bragg’s 18th Airborne Corps’ podcast, said she’d been concerned over rumors she heard about the vaccine, but that her chain of command “shut all of those rumors down.” She said her first sergeant even helped her research what was in the vaccine so she had all the information she needed.

“The fact that my 1st Sgt. actually went and got the vaccine, I was like, okay, well I believe you now because you’re not going to get something that’s going to hurt you,” Holbrook said, adding that when she spoke to her Soldiers about it and said she was getting it, they signed up to get vaccinated as well.

“A lot of the Soldiers still feel that it’s too early to go get vaccinated,” she said. “But I do see a lot of them changing their minds when their leadership goes and gets it.”

For one Soldier at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, Spc. Kendell Lewis, the decision to get vaccinated came after he heard more about the devastating personal impact of COVID-19 from health care professionals in his life.

A friend of his back home is an ER nurse, he said, and she told him about her experiences having to tell family members that their loved one had COVID-19 and needed to be put on a ventilator.

She and her mom, who is also a nurse, talked with him about the vaccine and their view on why it’s important for everyone who can to get vaccinated.

It made an impact on him.

“I thought you know, I can’t be selfish … I don’t personally want to be responsible for, whether knowingly or unknowingly, passing the disease on to someone’s sibling, mom, dad, and them having to deal with that experience,” he said. “Any small part I can play in doing away with COVID, I was definitely on board with that.”

Regardless of why someone decides to get vaccinated, Staff Sgt. Johnson said it’s a matter of personal responsibility and personal choice, and for service members specifically, it’s also “part of being ready.”

“I signed up for the Army, to volunteer to protect the country and serve,” Johnson said. “And this is just another fight.”
Leaders with the Survivability, Vulnerability and Assessment Directorate (SVAD) met with intern candidates in March and gave them a tour of the test facilities where they will begin their Army civilian careers.

The candidates came from New Mexico State University’s (NMSU) Physics Department. The head of the Physics Department, Dr. Stefan Zollner, joined the tour to get a look at opportunities for collaboration and ways to better prepare graduates to work at White Sands Test Center.

Fast Burst Reactor Facility Director, Frank Sage, welcomed the group with a few words about SVAD’s mission and their role in it.

“SVAD provides the DOD, National Laboratories and other customers with nuclear and electromagnetic environmental effects, directed energy, and certain natural environments along with the technical services to test and solve problems in these challenging environments,” Sage said. “In carrying out this mission we become part of our Nation’s nuclear deterrent. Emphasis has been placed on nuclear modernization in recent years and most recently reiterated by Deputy Secretary of Defense, Kathleen Hicks. Renewed emphasis requires new talent. That is where each of you come in.”

Sage expanded on research opportunities, “Beyond our principal mission, our test capabilities have the potential to support graduate level research. This could give students the opportunity to explore phenomena that would otherwise be inaccessible in our part of the country. We will keep an eye out for areas where our mission and research at local universities intersect.”

Intern, Ryan Lane, has a background in engineering physics, electrical engineering and mathematics. He has experience working with electrostatic discharge of dielectric materials and is familiar with the hazards and safety as related to high energy explosives. “I was offered the position and it fit in really well with my goals of staying local to study for my GRE exam and getting experience in nuclear physics.”

Lane said he is looking forward to getting to know the people that work at WSMR and help move our country forward to make sure we are safe and secure and preparing ourselves for a strong future when it relates to all the sciences at WSMR.

Intern, Esther Thompson, is working on a degree in Physics at NMSU, with a minor in mathematics. She said she heard about this opportunity from a friend and applied. “I really wanted to work somewhere where I could use my degree and see if I could fit in this career.”

She said she was encouraged to apply at WSMR and is really excited about the opportunity to work in the area of data analysis. She said she is excited to learn and put her skills to use.

“I think it is going to be amazing and I’m interested to see how it progresses.”

The Resource Management Directorate is working to fill several vacancies across White Sands Test Center. Claudia Morales and Roxanna Nasir have been instrumental in bringing on the intern candidates, working closely with CPAC and the Army Career Development Program.

Mariette Mealor and Jessica Sosa have set up Test Center supervisors with the ability to recruit through virtual career fairs at both NMSU and the University of Texas at El Paso.
“While yes, sometimes in extreme cases of child abuse this does happen, but mostly they are here to support families and provide them with resources like childcare assistance or parenting classes.”

Valenzuela also said we need to stop protecting our fellow community members, friends, family members, or Service Members because we are afraid of how it will affect the adult’s life. We need to start protecting children, be the voice that they may not have. Abuse and neglect have lifelong effects and can turn into generational abuse, impacting generations to come.

At White Sands Missile Range, you can support child abuse prevention month, by participating in the pinwheel coloring event. Pinwheels are a symbol to remind us that all children deserve a childhood free of abuse. The Family Advocacy Program and Child and Youth Services (CYS) collaborated to create a free activity for children of all ages. Families can pick up a pinwheel from the CYS or the Army Community Service center, decorate the pinwheel, and return it to the center to be put on display as a reminder of the awareness campaign.

The Family Advocacy Program has additional events all month long, including outreach tables, a color run, and informative Facebook posts.

As a final reminder, all you need is a suspicion of abuse or neglect to report to the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department hotline 855-333-SAFE. Remember, all adults over the age of 18 are mandated reporters and must report.

For more information, the White Sands Missile Range Victim Advocate Hotline is available 24/7 at 575-993-7413.