



Jax Air News

A CHINFO AWARD-WINNING NEWSPAPER

TOUCHING BASE

Thanksgiving Chapel Service

The NAS Jacksonville Chapel invites everyone to an Interfaith Thanksgiving Service Nov. 23 at 6:30 p.m. at the All Saints Chapel. A free turkey buffet will be offered following the service. For more information, call 542-3440.



Fundraisers support CFC

Several commands are participating in fundraisers for the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC):

Nov. 14 – Gas and glass at the gas station.

Nov. 15 – Naval Hospital Jacksonville is sponsoring a golf tournament.

Call HM1 Ivy at 542-3500, Ext. 8706 for more details.



Holiday card contest under way

All commands, squadrons and departments are encouraged to be a part of this year's "Beat the Holidayze with MWR" program by entering a holiday Christmas card. All cards must be designed on sheets of plywood provided by NAS Jacksonville Morale Welfare and Recreation Department (MWR). Contestants are responsible for their own decorating and supplies. Commands are allowed to submit one entry, which will be judged by MWR. The winners will be announced at the Christmas Tree Lighting on Dec. 5.

Plywood is currently available at the NAS Jax Fitness Center for pick-up. All cards must be turned in by Dec. 1 for judging. For more information, call 542-3518.

New hours for Navy College

The Navy College Learning Center has new hours. They are:

Monday – Thursday
8 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Friday, Saturday,
Sunday Closed

For more information, call 542-3676.

1942 Stearman put on display

NAS Jacksonville honors veterans, dedicates bi-plane

By JO2(SCW) Eric Clay
Assistant Editor

NAS Jax officially dedicated a 1940's era Stearman bi-plane Tuesday morning during a ceremony at Patriot's Grove, as a part of the Veteran's Day festivities throughout the city of Jacksonville. NAS Jacksonville Commanding Officer Capt. Mark S. Boensel was the keynote speaker.

During the event, Boensel thanked all who took part in the restoration project. "A lot of hard work and time was spent on this restoration and I thank all for their effort," he said.

The Stearman biplane recently joined the historic aircraft gracing NAS Jacksonville's Heritage Park as one of the first aircraft types ever to land on a NAS Jacksonville runway.



Photo by JO2(SCW) Eric Clay

Key participants in the restoration project of the Stearman biplane cut the ribbon to officially open the display at Patriot's Grove during a Veteran's Day ceremony. From left, Wayne White, who restored the aircraft, Jim Lentini, who assisted in the restoration, NAS Jax Commanding Officer Capt. Mark S. Boensel, BU1(SCW) Shawn Cody, project supervisor for the display construction project, BU2(SCW) Jimmy Wallace, crew leader for the project, Base Historian Ron Williamson and Morale Welfare and Recreation Director John Bushick.

See STEARMAN, Page 12

'Click It or Ticket' campaign begins Monday



Photo by Kaylee LaRocque

MA1(SW) John Edmonds, leading petty officer of Section 1A for the NAS Jax Security Department, watches vehicles as they pass by a checkpoint on Mustin Road, ensuring drivers and passengers are buckled up. The NAS Jacksonville "Click It or Ticket" campaign begins Monday. Drivers better buckle up or they will be stopped and issued a ticket.

By William Curnutte
NAS Jax Security Department Crime Prevention Officer

The holidays are just around the corner and so are the two months traditionally considered periods of high vehicular accidents and fatalities in the United States. Unfortunately, motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death for the military.

In the last four years, the Navy has lost 317 shipmates in private motor vehicle accidents. According to the Naval Safety Center, 31 percent of those who died were not wearing their seat belts. Yet, all Navy personnel are required by instruction to wear seat belts, both on and off base, at all times. In Florida, it is against the law to not buckle up.

To ensure this requirement is enforced, the NAS Jax Security

Department will be participating in the "Click It or Ticket" campaign Nov. 17-30.

What is the "Click It or Ticket" program? It's a high-profile law enforcement activity that gives people more of a reason to buckle up because of the increased threat of getting a traffic ticket.

In Florida, 75 percent of the population buckles up for safety. However, research shows that appeals to "do the right thing and buckle up" don't work for the remaining people who don't use seat belts. What gets people to buckle up is high visibility law enforcement. That means checkpoints and traffic tickets for drivers found not wearing belts.

During this campaign, drivers and passengers coming through the NAS

See CLICK IT, Page 12

Scrubbing for charity

Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department (AIMD) Sailors AM2 Dan Mikolasko (left) and AE1 Charles Currie, dry off a car during last Friday's car wash. AIMD held the event to raise money for the Combined Federal Campaign.

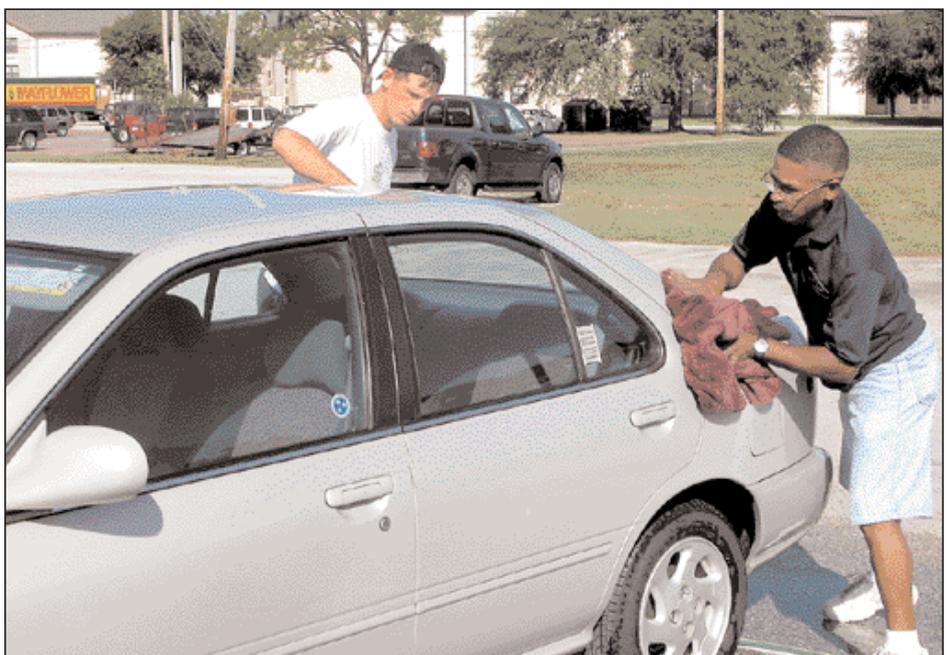


Photo by JO2 Mike England

EO UPDATE

November is American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month

By Vice Adm. Gerald Hoewing
Chief of Naval Personnel

The nation is currently observing American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month this month. The theme for this year's observance is "strengthening the spirit."

There are more than 8,100 American Indians and Alaska natives on active duty in the Navy today, with thousands more wearing the cloth of the nation in the Naval Reserves. They strengthen our spirit everyday through their pride, devotion, honor and wisdom. We are a richer, more combat capable Navy for having these skilled Sailors on our team.

Such has always been the case. Throughout our nation's history,

American Indians and Alaska natives have contributed significantly to our security and to our freedom. From scouting for Gen. George Washington to charging up San Juan hill with Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders; from the trenches of World War I to the beaches of Iwo Jima, these fearless professionals have proven time and time again the extraordinary lengths to which they will go for the defense of both comrades and country. Indeed, during the 20th century alone, five Native Americans earned the Medal of Honor.

It is a tradition that continues today in the person of Navy Cmdr. John Bennett Herrington of the Chickasaw nation, who nearly a year ago became the first native American in space aboard the space shuttle

Endeavor, and in the person of Navy Lt. Sarah Self-Kyler of the Choctaw nation, who served proudly aboard the destroyer USS Mitscher (DDG 57) in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. "It is our many cultures that make our Navy and our country so great," she observed. "We each share our values and our strengths to defend a common freedom."

Commands are strongly encouraged to observe National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month through educational programs, exhibits, publications, and participation in military and community events that recognize the diversity of our American Heritage. Visit www.persnet.navy.mil/pers00h/observances.html for more information.

ON THE HOMEFRONT

Are those 'Average Joe's' really so average?

By Sarah Smiley
Special Contributor

I've recently developed a crush on several men. Maybe you've heard of them: Ted Rowlands, Bernie Grimm, and Chris Pixley.

Sound familiar? If you're a news junky like me, they probably do. Rowlands, Grimm and Pixley are commentators on shows like CNN's Larry King Live and Fox New Channel's On the Record with Greta Van Susteren. These men are hip and seductively smart, and while I have no facts on this, I'd dare to guess none of them were "Mr. Cool" in high school.

So as a girl has been known to develop crushes on men such as these and stars like Doogie Howser and Bill O'Reilly, NBC's new reality television show Average Joe sparked my curiosity.

Average Joe offers a twist to popular dating reality shows. During the preliminary screening for this series, the beautiful bachelorette ranked "looks" far below "personality," and some would say she got what she asked for. The

sixteen bachelors she has to choose from are considered to be average in looks, but exceptional in personality and intelligence.

The idea of a matchmaker show based solely on personality is interesting. The fact that none of the 16 eligible men are considered desirable or attractive got me curious.

Can the bachelorette really see past the surface, I wondered. Will these men have enough spunk to make up for the enormous let-down the bachelorette will face when she realizes her selection of men is far from Trista's pick on The Bachelorette?

And more importantly, would this stunt ever work the other way around? Could a bachelor be given 16 average women to choose from and still be happy?

I knew my husband, Dustin, in grammar school, and I can attest to the fact that he was far from "Mr. Cool." With large front teeth, funny clothes, and a position as the school's "safety patrol officer," he was the kid I avoided and dreaded running into.

I know, I know; it sounds so mean now. But here's the truth: I never could have been attracted to my husband in grammar school or high school because I was not smart enough to see his potential yet. It's a good thing we didn't try to date, when we were teenagers because it would have ended in disaster.

Dustin left grammar school to attend a series of what I like to call "smart schools" or "nerd schools." He was accepted to a prestigious, mostly male high school specializing in technology. Next he went to the United States Naval Academy and graduated with an engineering degree.

Meanwhile, I, his future wife, was floundering back and forth between majors, dating losers (albeit some very handsome losers), and whining, "why can't I just meet a nice, smart guy?"

When I ran into Dustin again after 10 years of not having seen each other, I didn't even recognize him. I thought, Can it really be the same Dustin Smiley who used to yell, "Walk, don't run" at me from his post as Safety Patrol

Officer?

Since getting to know each other again in 1997, Dustin seems like a totally different person than the awkward kid I used to know. But did he really change that much? Could he really have morphed from a geeky boy into a stunning man?

When the truth finally hit me, it was shocking: Maybe he had not changed at all. Could it be that I have changed instead?

We married shortly after meeting again, and I've never looked back about my changed perception of "nerds." David Letterman, Jay Leno, and Donald Rumsfeld — these men might have been geeky or overlooked as kids, but darn they're sexy now!

So, for all you "Average Joes" out there, don't despair. Soon enough all the girls will see your potential and the true appeal within.

At least, the smart girls will.

You may send comments or a respond to Sarah at <http://sarah.smiley.homestead.com>.



Meet A Sailor...

SN(SS) JOTHAM VINCENT

Job title/command:
NAS Jax Quarterdeck

Hometown: Lexington, Ky.

Family Life: Single

Past Duty Stations: USS Rhode Island (SSBN 740)

Career Plans: To strike for the hospital corpsman rating.

Most Interesting Experience: Being on a submarine.

Words of Wisdom: If you're not cheating, you're not trying. Just kidding.



Meet A Civilian...

MAXINE LLOYD

Job title/command:
NAS Jax Security Manager

Hometown: Folkston, Ga.

Family Life: Married to Pender, with two children, Brian, 21 and Ashley, 17.

Past Duty Stations: NSB Kings Bay, Ga. for 15 years.

Career Plans: To retire as a GS-13.

Most Interesting Experience: Going on a day cruise on a Trident submarine.

Words of Wisdom: If you've got time to whine, you've got time to shine!

Two Education fairs slated on base

The Navy College Office is sponsoring two education fairs in November. The first will be held at the Navy Exchange Courtyard tomorrow from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The second will be held in Hangar 1000 on Nov. 18. Representatives will be there to answer questions about all the programs from the following:

- Navy College Office
 - Navy College Learning Center
 - Florida Community College
 - Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
 - Columbia College
 - Southern Illinois University
 - Webster University
 - University of North Florida
 - Jacksonville University
 - National Truck Driver Training
- For more information, call 542-2477.

HEY, MONEYMAN!

Hey, MoneyMan!

I was at Liberty Cove and signed up for a raffle for \$50 cash prize. I didn't win, but a week later I got a call from an investment company representative who set up an appointment with me to talk about saving money.

Is this a good deal or is it one of those scams I keep hearing about?

MoneyMan Sez:

Could be either but you really must check it out before signing on the dotted line! Investing money for the future is a good idea and there is no plan that is exactly right for everyone.

My advice is to always ask a third party who has nothing to gain or lose before investing your hard-



earned money with anyone. As an example, I checked out one of these companies and they offer investments and insurance.

The Sailor I talked with thought she was going to invest \$100 per month in a Roth IRA. In checking the contract, her money was

really going to buy life insurance. She was investing \$100 per month.

Of that \$100, all of it for the first year was for life insurance. For years two through seven, 75 percent of that was going for life insurance. This means that for the first seven years, only \$1,800 of the \$8,400 she paid in would be invested at all!

The other \$6,600 was for insurance premiums. Through SGLI, she could get \$250,000 in insurance for around 16 bucks per month. She did not know

what she was getting for her \$100 per month, but I bet it was not even close \$250,000.

Why didn't she know how much insurance she was buying? The company had not given her copies of the contract even though they had already started an allotment. Bottom Line: Check out the details and always talk it over with someone else before to buying expensive stuff!

More questions? Call Hey, MoneyMan! at 778-0353.



Sunday Services

You are invited to the following Base Chapel Worship Services this Saturday and Sunday:

- Saturday - 5 p.m. - Catholic Mass**
- Sunday - 8:30 a.m. - Holy Eucharist Episcopal**
- 9:30 a.m. - Catholic Mass
- 11 a.m. - Protestant Worship
- 6:30 p.m. - Contemporary Service
- "The Leading Edge," Hangar 749 at the Base Chapel Center.

Children's Sunday Class - Protestant Sunday School program is at 9:45-10:45 a.m., and Catholic CCD is 10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Open season runs through Dec. 8

From HRO

The open season for electing/changing/dropping coverage under one of the federal Health benefits plans runs now through Dec. 8. NAS Jax will host a representative day on Nov. 25 from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Base Chapel to allow federal employees to address FEHB questions to representatives of the various plans available in our area.

We have confirmation of attendance from Blue Cross Blue Shield, Mail Handlers, Government Employees Health Association and Humana (a new plan for the Jacksonville federal employee) and anticipate other representatives will participate.

Attendance must be approved by your supervisor. If you have any questions, please contact Sheila Blackley at 542-2285.

Jax Air News

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Deadline for all routine copy is close of business the Friday before publication. Deadline for Classified submission is noon Monday. Questions or comments can be directed to the editor. The Jax Air News can be reached at (904) 542-8053 or by fax at (904) 542-1534 or write the Jax Air News, Box 2, NAS Jacksonville, Fla., 32212-5000. All news releases should be sent to this address.

The Jax Air News is published by The Florida Times-Union, a private firm in no way connected with the U. S. Navy under exclusive written agreement with the U. S. Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida. It is published every Thursday by The Florida Times-Union, whose offices are at 1 Riverside Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32202. Estimated readership over 32,000. Distribution by The Florida Times-Union.

Advertisements are solicited by the publisher and inquiries regarding advertisements should be directed to:

Jax Air News

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VS-24 performs for football fans

By Lt. J.g. Jon Fay
VS-24 PAO

On Nov. 1, in Annapolis, Md., a few hundred feet above a barrage of camera flashes, the "Scouts" of VS-24 performed a pre-game flyover for the Navy midshipmen in their 35-17 rout over Tulane University.

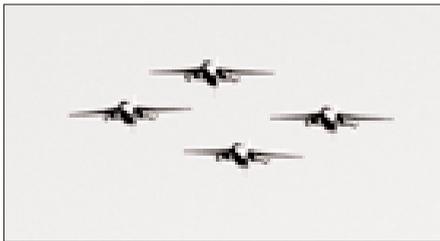
As the Navy football team was preparing to kick the ball at the start of the game, the tight, four-plane diamond formation of S-3B Vikings flew over the newly-renovated Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium in Annapolis.

Following the flyover, the Scout aircrew landed at Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington D.C. and returned to the stadium for the second half of the game. In attendance, celebrating his U.S. Naval Academy 20th reunion, was VS-24 Commanding Officer Cmdr. Brad Robinson.

VS-24 Executive Officer Cmdr. Tom Fasanello and other aircrew involved in the flyover were invited down to the southern end zone between the third and fourth quarter for a truncated version of the squadron's latest cruise video on the jumbo stadium screens and a brief introduction to the crowd of more than 27,000 fans.

The Scouts returned home to NAS Jacksonville in late May after being deployed with Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 8 aboard USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) following an accelerated work-up cycle in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Flying in high tempo combat operations, the Scouts transferred over 900,000 pounds of fuel to strike assets, directly contributing to the expenditure of more than 500 tons of ordnance on Iraqi targets. Currently, VS-24 and CVW-8 are maintaining operational readiness as the Atlantic Fleet Surge Strike Group.



Photos courtesy of VS-24

The "Scouts" of VS-24 perform the pre-game flyover for the Navy midshipmen before their game against Tulane University in Annapolis, Md.

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VS-24 Executive Officer, Cmdr. Tom Fasanello (center) talks with HD.net Game Correspondent Kandace Krueger, as VS-24 Commanding Officer Cmdr. Brad Robinson (left), and members of the aircrew, Lt. Paul Vidal, Lt. J.g. Jon Fay, and Lt. Kenyon Kellogg look on during a sideline interview during the Navy-Tulane game in Annapolis, Md.



NFCU expands membership to DoN civilians

From NFCU

Navy Federal Credit Union expanded its field of membership recently. Navy Federal now serves all Navy and Marine Corps military personnel, Department of the Navy (DoN) civilian personnel, DoN contractors who are assigned to a U.S. government site on a regular basis, and their families.

Navy Federal's membership changes took place following the National Credit Union Administration's (NCUA) recent revision to the federal credit union chartering and field of membership rules. NCUA is the federal credit union regulator, similar to the FDIC for banks.

The amended field of membership rules removed numerous overlaps clauses, which had previously prevented Navy Federal from serving DoN personnel on military bases that were already being served by an existing credit union.

"Our desire is to provide all Navy and Marine Corps personnel with continuous service throughout their career and lifetime, regardless of rank or duty station. It's always a sore point with me that we didn't have the ability to serve all Department of the Navy enlisted and civilian personnel," said Brian McDonnell, president and CEO of Navy Federal.

"NCUA's new membership rules allow us to simplify membership eligibility and focus on our mission. Serving the Department of the Navy is our niche, and there is no better way to serve than truly knowing and understanding your membership."

New members can join at any local Navy Federal Member Service Center (a complete listing of locations can be found online), by calling toll-free 1-800-656-7676, or submitting an online membership application available at www.navyfcu.org.

NAVSUP automated household goods survey now available

From FISC Jacksonville

The Household Goods Division of the Naval Supply Systems Command (NAVSUP), has announced the availability of an automated Web-based survey that allows Navy personnel to comment on and provide ways to improve the household goods moving process.

Within 30 days after a Sailor moves, he or she will receive an e-mail that links to the survey Web site. The survey will allow program managers, moving counselors, and personal property offices to collect moving-related metrics and feedback about the moving process. Normally, the survey takes less than 10 minutes to complete and is available at <http://applications.navsupsup.navy.mil/hhg/>.

"Moving can often be a very stressful and time-consuming process. The new survey is a Fleet and Family Quality of Life initiative designed to improve the personal

property moving experience for Sailors and their families from end to end," said Rear Adm. Justin McCarthy, SC, USN, Commander Naval Supply Systems Command. "We encourage Navy personnel to take the survey and let us know what we are doing right and, more importantly, what we can do better."

NAVSUP's primary mission is to provide U.S. Naval forces with quality supplies and services. With headquarters in Mechanicsburg, Penn., and employing a worldwide work force of more than 23,000 military and civilian personnel, NAVSUP oversees logistics programs in the areas of supply operations, conventional ordnance, contracting, resale, fuel, transportation, and security assistance. In addition, NAVSUP is responsible for quality of life issues for our naval forces, including food service, postal services, Navy Exchanges, and movement of household goods.

FISC Jacksonville employees transfer to COMFISCS San Diego

By Elvira Stephenson
FM Liaison Lead Financial Program Analyst

On Oct. 22, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held at FISC Jacksonville to celebrate the standup of the COMFISCS Liaison Office in Jacksonville. The celebration marked the accomplishment of the first phase of the Naval Supply Systems Command (NAVSUP) transformation efforts for financial management.

As of Sept. 21, three employees transferred from under the leadership of Capt. Ed Naranjo, commanding officer, Fleet and Industrial Supply Center, Jacksonville to Rear Adm. William Kowba, commander, Fleet and Industrial Supply Centers in San Diego. The purpose of the transfer was to align all of the employees working in the Financial Management field under the NAVSUP



Photo by Beverly Taylor-Mack

(From Left) Karen Steineck, Cindy Hamann, Elvira Stephenson, Capt. Ed Naranjo, commanding officer, FISC Jax, cut the ribbon to celebrate the standup of the COMFISCS Liaison Office in Jacksonville.

claimancy into one organization.

During the ribbon cutting ceremony, Naranjo reflected on changes that had been made within the financial management arena. He

thanked his former employees for their quality support and wished them even better times under COMFISCS. The FM Liaison Office staff is known as the "Dream Team."

Torres gets Artisan of the Quarter Award

By Frank Taormina
NAVAIR Depot, Jacksonville Public Affairs Specialist

Santos "Eddie" Torres, sheet metal worker at NAVAIR Depot, Jacksonville, received the Artisan of the Quarter award for the fourth quarter, FY-03. Capt. David Beck, NAVAIR Depot, Jacksonville commanding officer, presented the award at a ceremony Oct. 24 in the Small Surface Repair shop at the depot.

Torres was officially recognized for his "unwavering professionalism and dedica-

tion" in the Industrial Components Repair and Modification Division. He was selected over 300 competitors. The "Artisan of the Quarter" program at the depot is unique in that fellow artisans select the winner. Committee members nominate artisans from their respective areas and, after careful consideration, recommend their unanimous selection to the general foreman. In addition to a plaque commemorating his accomplishment, Torres received a monetary award. Torres has been employed with the government for 10 years.

CHAPEL HAPPENINGS

Helping those in need



Photos by RP2(SW) Chelboni Singleton

(From left) Chaplain (Cmdr.) John Lyle, NAS Jax command chaplain, Capt. Mark Boensel, NAS Jax commanding officer, Capt. Charles King, NAS Jax executive officer and Chaplain (Lt.) Cmdr. Dedra Bell display two religious offering fund checks from Catholic and Protestant congregations totaling \$5,000. The money was donated to the NAS Jax Food Locker.

Chaplain promoted



(From left) Capt. Mark Boensel, NAS Jax commanding officer, Chaplain (Lt.) Troy Todd of the NAS Jax Chapel, Capt. Charles King, NAS Jax executive officer and Chaplain (Cmdr.) John Lyle, command chaplain after the lieutenant's promotion Nov. 4 at the All Saints Chapel.



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Bucek retires tomorrow after 20 years

From FASOTRAGRULANT Det Jax



ADC(AW) Richard Bucek

Fleet Aviation Specialized Operational Training Group (FASOTRAGRULANT), Detachment Jacksonville bids farewell to ADC(AW) Richard Bucek after 20 years of naval service tomorrow. A ceremony is planned for tomorrow at 10 a.m. at the VP-30 auditorium. A reception will follow immediately after the ceremony at the Manatee Room at the officer's club.

Bucek, a native of Pittsburgh, graduated from Montour High School in June 1981, and reported to Recruit Training Center Great Lakes, Ill. in January 1984. Upon graduation, he reported to Aviation Machinists Mate "A" School at NAS North Island, Calif.

Bucek reported to his first operational tour in July 1984 with VS-31, NAS Cecil Field, and deployed on board USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69) to the Mediterranean in that same year. During this tour he was promoted to petty officer third class and was advanced to petty officer second class via the Command Advancement Program.

In May 1988, he attended F/A-18 FRAMP School and proceeded to his next duty station at the Strike Aircraft Test Directorate, NAS Patuxent River, Md. During this assignment he was hand picked to help the undermanned F-14 shop, and was sent TAD for nine months to the Grumman Aircraft plant at Calverton, N.Y. as part of the F-14 Navy Test Team flying chase for the Grumman Company's F-14 A+/D.

In December 1992, he reported to VFA-83 at NAS Cecil Field and was assigned to the Power Plants shop. During this tour, the squadron deployed on the final cruise of USS Saratoga (CV-60) in January 1994.

In January 1996, Bucek was designated an enlisted aviation warfare specialist. Later that year he was chosen to be the Power Plant representative in Quality Assurance. In June 1996, the squadron again deployed with USS Enterprise (CVN-65) to the Mediterranean Sea and Persian Gulf. During the first month of the deployment, he was advanced to petty officer first class via the Command Advancement Program.

In January 1997, Bucek attended Security School at Lackland AFB, Texas and then transferred to the Security Detachment, NAVSTA Guantanamo Bay, Cuba in April 1997. During this assignment, he qualified as a patrol officer, field-training officer, and watch commander. He was also hand picked to become the leading petty officer (LPO) of the Harbor Patrol division.

In October 1999, he attended Instructor School at NSB Kings Bay, Ga., then transferring to FASOTRAGRULANT, Det Jax. During his last tour, he instructed many of the aviation maintenance and management courses and also was the LPO for the training department where he was responsible for control of more than 60 courses of instruction for four divisions.

In September 2001, he was promoted to chief petty officer and joined the Organizational Effectiveness Center Division of FASO. He facilitated the team skills and systems thinking courses. Bucek is married to the former Rhonda Titcomb of Riverhead, N.Y. They have two daughters, Rachel and Renee, and reside in Green Cove Springs.

Thomas receives Meritorious Civilian Service Medal

By Frank Taormina

NAVAIR Depot, Jax Public Affairs Specialist

Danny Thomas, planner and estimator at NAVAIR Depot, Jacksonville, received the Navy Meritorious Civilian Service Medal at a ceremony on board NAS Jacksonville Oct. 24. Capt. K. B. Lynch, commander, Helicopter Antisubmarine Wing, U.S. Atlantic Fleet (COMH-SWINGLANT), presented the award.

Thomas was officially recognized for his outstanding professional performance and achievement while serving as the depot's H-60 aircraft planner and estimator. His performance in coordinating in-service repairs with each of five operational HS squadrons was exemplary and consistently ensured that COMH-SWINGLANT aircraft were flight line ready in support of operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. His on-site evaluation and repair assistance saved several days of downtime and enabled HS-7 to complete a vital phase of their inter-deployment training.

Thomas was also crucial to the planning

and execution of the first shipboard replacement of an H-60 main transmission support beam on HS-3 aircraft on board USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71). The successful completion of this "first" allowed HS-3 to deploy directly from Comprehensive Training Unit Exercise to the Eastern Mediterranean in support of combat operations in Iraq. His personal involvement in the Integrated Maintenance Program ensured the timely and successful completion of 11 IMP Baseline, 16 Planned Maintenance Interval, and five Aircraft Service Period Adjustment inspections.

Thomas has been employed with the government for 34 years. Several of Thomas' friends and co-workers attended the ceremony, as well as Capt. David Beck, commanding officer, NAVAIR Depot, Jacksonville. Beck congratulated Thomas for his "out of the box" thinking, his dedication, and for representing the depot in such a fine manner.

CFC Drive continues, stats good

From CNRSE

The Combined Federal Campaign effort to date is over half way to goal with about three weeks remaining!

As of Nov. 3, contributions from NAS Jacksonville, NavSta Mayport and Subase Kings Bay,

Ga., have resulted in \$793,050 raised — achieving 56.7 percent of the region's goal of \$1,398,687.

We're in the crunch period now as the campaign begins to edge ever closer to the end. The stats are still very good—leadership giving and average gifts are way

above last year's numbers. Amazingly, the overall number of donors is lagging somewhat despite the high dollars contributed. It's critical therefore, that we keep the CFC Campaign visible and continue to push the message. Commands who have

yet to make turn ins need to do so as soon as possible so loaned executives know where to focus their energy in the waning weeks. For those commands that have made turn ins, please do not close out early! Keep pressing towards your goal. The campaign will effectively

end Nov. 26. Mark your calendars and get the word out!

For more information or questions about the CFC at NAS Jax, call Lt. j.g. Felicia Barbour at 542-8191.

The following is the current progress report:

Station	Goal	Contributions	% of Goal
NAS Jax - Overall	\$600,715	\$141,546	23.6
345TH Combat Support Hospital	\$ 1,127	\$ 0	0
Admin	\$ 5,665	\$ 0	0
AIMD	\$ 18,000	\$ 20,457	113.7
Air Ops	\$ 10,761	\$ 0	0
Aviation Support Depot	\$ 3,180	\$ 0	0
Aviation Survival Training Center	\$ 1,490	\$ 0	0
CV-TSC	\$ 1,254	\$ 118	38.8
CBU-14	\$ 304	\$ 0	0
Chapel	\$ 953	\$ 0	0
COMHSWINGLANT	\$ 8,315	\$ 0	0
Command Judge Advocate	\$ 421	\$ 0	0
Commissary	\$ 944	\$ 0	0
COMNAVREG SE	\$ 25,610	\$ 27,859	108.8
COMPATRECOWING 11	\$ 9,977	\$ 3,534	35.4
COMSEACONWINGLANT	\$ 3,361	\$ 2,945	87.6
CBU 410	\$ 1,879	\$ 0	0
Defense Courier Service	\$ 554	\$ 0	0
Defense Distribution Depot	\$ 9,599	\$ 0	0
DRMO	\$ 1,727	\$ 0	0
Dental	\$ 4,220	\$ 0	0
DISA DECC Detachment	\$ 5,751	\$ 0	0
DVECC	\$ 2,009	\$ 0	0
Document Automation & Production	\$ 1,349	\$ 0	0
Drug Screening Lab	\$ 4,777	\$ 0	0
Facilities & Environmental	\$ 1,974	\$ 1,302	66
FFSC	\$ 2,363	\$ 2,483	105.1
FASOTRAGRULANT	\$ 8,830	\$ 6,653	173.7
Fire Department	\$ 3,415	\$ 0	0
FISC	\$ 13,605	\$ 0	0
FACSFAC	\$ 6,390	\$ 6,214	97.2
HSO	\$ 6,636	\$ 1,998	30.1
HS-3	\$ 12,592	\$ 0	0
HS-5	\$ 11,971	\$ 0	0
HS-7	\$ 12,005	\$ 0	0
HS-11	\$ 10,857	\$ 0	0
HS-15	\$ 11,863	\$ 0	0
HS-75	\$ 3,509	\$ 0	0
I & I Staff USMC Company	\$ 482	\$ 0	0
Military Entrance Proc. Station	\$ 1,194	\$ 0	0
Mobile Inshore Underwater Warfare	\$ 480	\$ 0	0
MWR	\$ 8,853	\$ 4,882	55.1
NAMTra	\$ 6,940	\$ 0	0
NAS Jax Anonymous Accounts	None	\$ 0	0
NATEC	\$ 1,041	\$ 0	0

Station	Goal	Contributions	% of Goal
NAVAIR 1.0 Program Mgmt.	\$ 3,551	\$ 3,198.50	90.1
NAVAIR 2.0 Contracts Group	\$ 534	\$ 0	0
NAVAIR 3.0 Logistics Group	\$ 16,148	\$ 7,021	43.5
NAVAIR 4.0 R & E Group	\$ 22,575	\$ 5,835	25.8
NAVAIR 6.0 I O Group	\$137,068	\$14,125.50	10.3
NAVAIR 7.0 C O Group	\$ 18,002	\$ 4,601.50	25.6
NAVAIR 8.0 Shore Mgmt. Group	\$ 2,109	\$ 0	0
NAVAIR 10.0 Comptroller Group	\$ 3,139	\$ 0	0
NAVAIR 11.0 Counsel Group	\$ 874	\$ 0	0
Naval & Marine Corps Reserve	\$ 1,857	\$ 0	0
Naval Air Reserve	\$ 3,685	\$ 1,666	45.2
Naval Brig	\$ 1,587	\$ 355	22.4
Naval Computer & Telecom	\$ 8,797	\$ 0	0
NCIS	\$ 1,174	\$ 0	0
Naval Hospital	\$ 71,800	\$ 0	0
NLSO	\$ 3,040	\$ 0	0
Naval Reserve Readiness Cmd. SE	\$ 3,539	\$ 0	0
NAVLANT MET OC DET	\$ 2,780	\$ 0	0
Navy College Office	\$ 475	\$ 0	0
Navy Exchange	\$ 4,485	\$ 0	0
Personnel Support Detachment	\$ 4,916	\$ 0	0
Public Works Center	\$ 12,904	\$ 3,559	27.6
ROICC	\$ 7,963	\$ 0	0
Safety Office	\$ 642	\$ 0	0
Sea Control Weapons School	\$ 1,771	\$ 0	0
Security	\$ 3,000	\$ 0	0
Southeast Regional Cal. Center	\$ 2,466	\$ 0	0
SPAWAR	\$ 5,142	\$ 4,429	86.1
Supply	\$ 7,858	\$ 6,233	79.3
TPU	\$ 3,243	\$ 2,056	63.4
U.S. Customs Service - Aviation	\$ 1,089	\$ 0	0
U.S. Customs Surv-Branch East	\$ 10,934	\$ 3,456.00	31.6
VP-5	\$ 25,275	\$ 1,558.00	6.2
VP-16	\$ 24,625	\$ 0	0
VP-30	\$ 76,230	\$ 0	0
VP-45	\$ 0	\$ 0	0
VP-62	\$ 8,082	\$ 0	0
VR-58	\$ 6,941	\$ 0	0
VS-22	\$ 13,082	\$ 0	0
VS-24	\$ 13,290	\$ 0	0
VS-30	\$ 13,331	\$ 0	0
VS-31	\$ 13,037	\$ 1,024	7.9
VS-32	\$ 12,967	\$ 0	0
Weapons	\$ 3,675	\$ 0	0

KUDO KORNER

Congratulations to the following Fleet Area Control and Surveillance Facility, Jacksonville personnel who received these awards Nov. 6:

Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal

- AC1 Shannon Johnson
- AC3 Charles Jones

Good Conduct Medal

- AC1 Theresa Day
- ET2 Weylin Wyeth
- AC3 Keith Alexander
- AC3 Gerald Scott

Flag Letter of Commendation

- OS1 Derek Sadzinski
- ET3 Christopher Wells



Educational opportunities available for Sailors

Navy College Office and affiliated colleges offer many education opportunities for Sailors

Florida Community College Jacksonville at NAS Jax

- AS in Industrial Management Technology
- AA degree in liberal studies
- AS in Criminal Studies
- Certificate programs and licensure preparation courses.
- Navy Rating Partnership Program following to an AS in General Military Studies.

Many courses are offered in various modes, such as distance learning via Internet or CD-ROM, telecourses on the Public Television Channel, or the traditional classroom.

FCCJ offers placement testing and CLEP testing; Application fee is \$15.

See Sheri Osment and staff for questions pertaining to registration and class schedules. Office hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Call 771-3979.

Columbia College at NAS Jax

- AA/BA Liberal Arts (Individual Studies in Education, Government, History)
- AS/BS Computer Information Systems
- BS/BA in Business Administration/ Management
- BA in Criminal Justice Administration
- BA in Psychology

Starting 2004, a Master of Science degree in Criminal Justice will be offered

Several staff members can help guide you in your choices.

Office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Call 778-9769.

Embry Riddle Aeronautical University

- AS/BS degrees in Professional Aeronautics
- AS/BS in Technical Management & Operations
- Master of Aeronautical Science
- Safety Certificate Program (Graduate and Undergraduate)
- Aviation Technology Certificate and FAA Type 66 Program.

Office hours are 8 a.m. - 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Call 779-0246.

Southern Illinois University

- BS in Workforce Education and Development
- BS in Health Care Administration
- BS in Electronics Systems Technology

Office hours for SIU Workforce are 8:15 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Call 542-5414.

Hours for BS degrees are 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m., Monday through Friday. Call 778-3130.

Webster University

- MA in Human Resources Management & Development
- MBA (Business Administration)
- MA in Computer Resources and Information

Management

- MA in Procurement and Acquisitions Management
- MAT Program (Teaching)

Office hours are 9:30 a.m. - 10 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Call 779-7124.

Jacksonville University

- MA in Teaching
- Second Career as a Teacher Program (SCAAT)
- Guidance to becoming certified as a teacher in the state of Florida

Dr. Gail Jaji can be reached at 744-3950, Ext 7137 for appointments.

University of North Florida

No on base classes at present time. However, Navy College Office has a representative, Michael Murillo on base on Thursdays. Call 542-2477 to make an appointment.

Excelsior College

A representative is available via email. Navy College Office has information on programs and appointments when representative is on base. Call 542-2477.

A variety of AA, AS, & AAS, BS, BA, BSN and Master programs are available.

Navy College Office has a variety of college brochures and information on furthering your education. Come visit and gather information on PACE programs, Navy

partnership programs and colleges, online Learning, and many colleges in many states offering an array of studies.

We strongly advise anyone who has not been to college before or is uncertain what programs or degree to pursue, call for an appointment with a Navy College Office counselor by calling 542-2475/2477.

**Great American Smokeout
2-Day Navy Fitness Challenge
November 19 & 20, 2003**

<p>10 Mile Swim Bucket Pool November 19 @ 11:00</p>	<p>Barrier Test 5K Run Pavilion Road November 20 @ 11:00</p>
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1. Medal to finish
 2. T-shirt
 3. 1st place medal
 4. 2nd place medal
 5. 3rd place medal
 6. 4th place medal
 7. 5th place medal
 8. 6th place medal
 9. 7th place medal
 10. 8th place medal
 11. 9th place medal
 12. 10th place medal

Contact the Fitness Center at 922-3030 to register

NAVY ELVES AT WORK



Cmdr. David Lavender, professional assistant at DVECC, uses a belt sander to ensure there are no rough edges that could splinter while the children play with the toys.



Members of the club sort through 2,300 handmade toys donated by club members to give to area organizations during last year's toy drive. The toys were given to underprivileged children in area hospitals during the holiday season.

DVECC members work after hours to create special gifts

By Kaylee LaRocque
Staff Writer

Some underprivileged children in area hospitals will have some special gifts again this year during the holidays thanks to a group of volunteers at the Disease Vector Ecology and Control Center (DVECC) at NAS Jax who are spending their off-duty time producing wooden toys. The effort is part of a much larger project sponsored by the Jax Woodworkers Club.

Last year, club members created 2,300 wooden toys of all sizes and shapes to donate to various organizations.

"It's all for the kids. It's such a rewarding project. I've got two children myself and it doesn't matter how simple a toy I bring home, it brightens up their eyes. Hopefully, the toys we are making will make some kids happy," explained EN2 Ewarth Roberts, who helped with the project last year.

The DVECC staff got involved making toys last year, when Dr. James Brown, DVECC entomologist and department head mentioned the project to the staff. Brown has been a member of the Jax Woodworkers Club for many years and has participated in this event for the past 10 years.

Taking on a project like this posed little problems for the staff since DVECC has its own woodworking shop which is used to build crates to secure their equipment when they travel and for other in-house self-help construction projects.

"We have all the equipment here so why not use it to give back to the community during off-duty hours. We have eight staff members who have been spending their



Kent Smith, bio-science technician and woodworking shop custodian at DVECC, shows Cmdr. David Lavender and EN2 Ewarth Roberts how to attach the wheels on to the finished toys.



Photo courtesy of Jax Woodworkers Club
Jim Rowand, a former president of the Jax Woodworkers Club, shows another club member the mass amount of handmade toys donated by club members during last year's wooden toy drive.

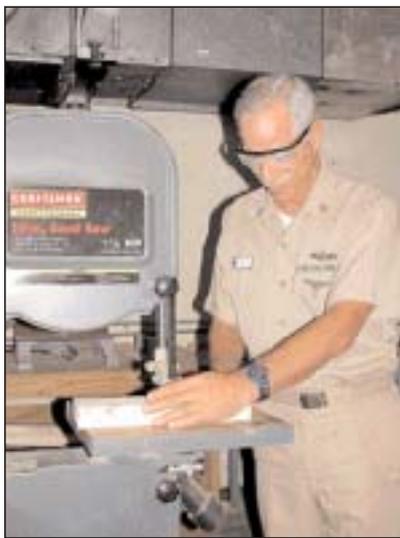
free time cutting out cars, racecars and buses, sanding them and putting them together. There is a lot involved in taking a



EN2 Ewarth Roberts, DVECC's engineman, prepares to drill wheel holes on a toy bus using a router in the workshop.

NAVY ELVES AT WORK

Photos by Kaylee LaRocque



HMCS(SW/AW/FMF) George Noli, senior enlisted leader at DVECC, carefully follows a pattern to cut out a toy car on the band saw.



HM1(FMF) Jimmie Womack, a preventive medicine technician and instructor at DVECC, meticulously sands down the rough edges of a toy during another process of the toy project.

TOYS: DVECC and woodworkers join forces to make children happy

From Page 8

piece of wood and turning it into a toy car. It's pretty time consuming and I have to admit, I'm not the most efficient woodworker, but I'm learning," said Cmdr. David Lavender, professional assistant for DVECC.

"It's a great project. It allows us the opportunity to help kids and give something back to the community, he added.

Last year, DVECC members created about 120 toys and hope to make even more this year. "We use three different forms. After drawing them on a piece of wood, we carefully cut out the pattern. The rough toy is then sanded and we use a router to edge them. Then we drill holes for the wheels, do a final sanding by hand and attach the wheels," explained Kent Smith, bio-science technician and woodworking shop custodian.

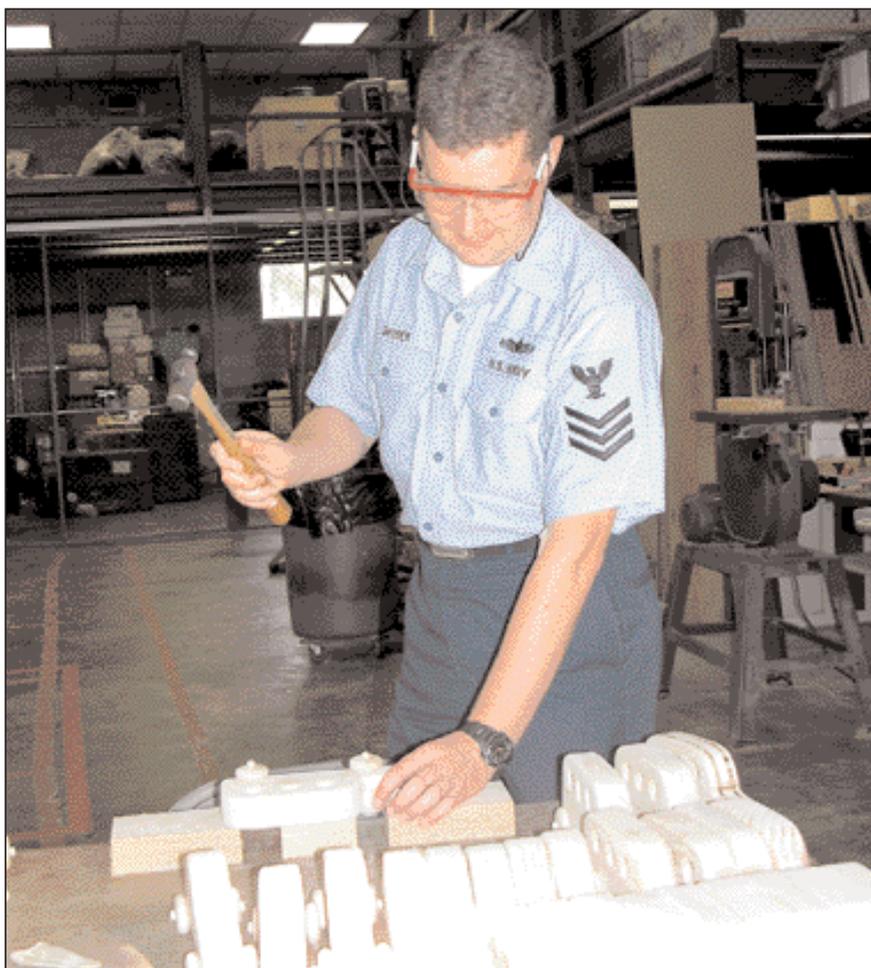
Smith, who is helping oversee the project, ensures everyone is trained and goes through a safety brief before using any of the equipment.

"I have definitely enhanced my woodworking skills since working on this project last year. It's been a lot of fun and I've learned a lot," added Roberts.

According to Margaret Miller, former president of the Jax Woodworkers Club, having the Navy members help out is just another example of the great cooperation the club has in getting this project completed. "We really appreciate all they do," she said.

The club meets the third Saturday of each month. "During our November meeting, everyone will bring their toys and we will sort through them and pass them out to about 16 different representatives of organizations such as the Ronald McDonald House, Lutheran Services, Salvation Army, Shriner's Hospital, Wolfson Children's Hospital, etc. The representatives will give a short presentation on how the toys will be distributed. We do this project every year, it's a way for our club to give something back to our community," continued Miller.

The club is open to anyone interested in woodworking. For more information on the holiday toy project or the Jax Woodworkers Club, call Margaret Miller at 744-1362.



HM1(SW) Brent Snyder, preventive medicine technician with DVECC Operations, hammers the wheels on a toy bus.

La Villa School of the Arts jazzes up NavHosp Jax



Shavaun Hamilton on bass, Tomothy Norris on trombone, and Owen Broder on alto sax share their talents with the crowd.

Photos by HM2 John Veres

From Naval Hospital Jax Public Affairs Office

Naval Hospital Jacksonville was given a taste of North Florida culture on Oct. 24, when eighth graders from La Villa School of the Arts performed for the staff. The eight-man ensemble set up in the galley and played a selection of Jazz tunes.

The students were invited by Joe Broom of Naval Hospital Jacksonville's Patient Administration Department, as part of the Sailor SMARTS (Sailors Motivated About Responsibility Toward Self-Development) program.

The Sailor SMARTS program is a mentoring initiative introduced to Naval Hospital Jacksonville by Lt. Cmdr. Frank Stubbs, head of the Patient Administration Department, and Lt. Sarah Goldman, head of the Occupational Therapy Division. Community and



Lt. Cmdr. Ethan Josiah and Joe Broom of Naval hospital Jax, present Band Director Carol McQueen (center), with a Naval Hospital Jacksonville command plaque and thanked the band for their support of the community and cultural development of the hospital's Sailor SMARTS program.



The La Villa School of the Arts' Jazz Band performs in the Naval Hospital Jacksonville Galley. Entertaining hospital patrons and staff are Jihyun Moon on keyboard, Matthew Spiegel on trumpet, Jacob Edwards on keyboard, Tomthy Norris on trombone, Shavaun Hamilton on bass, Owen Broder on alto sax, Darren Escar on alto sax, and Jeremy Smith, percussion.

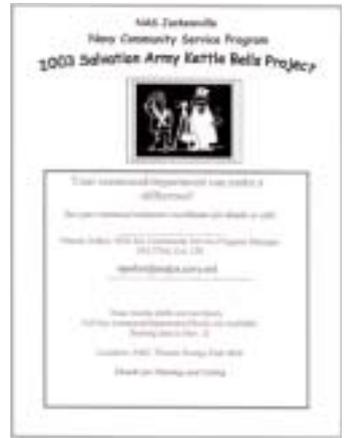
cultural development are just one of five components that serve as a foundation to the program.

Pool gets upgraded



Photo by JO2(SCW) Eric Clay

Ed Chapkowski, employee of Classic Renovations, uses a hand roller to apply a bonding coat to the Aviation Survival Training Command (ASTC) training pool. The pool, which was constructed in 1981, is currently being renovated due to leaks. The project will also include new tiling, light fixtures and a 20-foot extension on the shallow end of the pool. "The extension will allow for safer operations. Our instructors will have more room to assist the students and it will build the student's confidence knowing that they have more area to work in," said ASTC Instructor Al Parks. Due to the renovation, the ASTC training pool is closed until all improvements are complete, which should be mid-January.



Sit, Stay, See



For more than 50 years, the Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind has been providing guide dogs free of charge to blind people seeking increased mobility, independence and the companionship a guide dog provides.



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TAP class helps out-processing Sailors adjust to life after Navy

By JO2 Mike England
Staff Writer

Whether a service member retires after 20 years or gets out after just one tour, eventually everyone gets out of the Navy. That's why the Department of Defense (DoD) established the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to meet the needs of separating service members.

The program helps servicemembers during their period of transition into civilian life by offering job-search assistance and related services. The law creating TAP established a partnership between DoD, Veterans Affairs, Department of Transportation and the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), to give employment and training information to armed forces members within 12 months of separation or 24 months of retirement.

TAP helps service members make the initial transition from military service to the civilian workplace with less difficulty and at less overall cost to the government. An independent national evaluation of the program estimated that service members who had participated in TAP, on average, found their first post-military job three weeks sooner than those who did not participate in TAP.

"We tell them what it's really like in the civilian job market. The majority of them came in right out of high school and have never written a resume or searched for a job," said Gary Macik, a counselor for the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program.



Photos by JO2 Mike England

(From left) HM2 Radford Mitchell, Marine Sgt. Eloy Alvarez, and FC3 Lloyal Thomas stare down AE3 Nicole Kirby at a mock job interview during a TAP class held last week.

TAP consists of comprehensive three- to five-day workshops at most military installations nationwide. Professionally-trained workshop facilitators from the State Employment Services, military family support services, Department of Labor contractors, or VETS staff present the workshops. Subject matter covered includes a half-day pre-separation counseling, half-day Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP), and three to four days of TAP materials.

"We emphasize interviewing skills since that seems to be the student's main weakness," said Rich Brown, TAP instructor.

Workshop attendees learn to conduct job searches, career decision-making, current occupational and labor market conditions, and resume and cover letter preparation.

Participants also are provided with an evaluation of their employability relative to the job market and receive information on the most current veterans' benefits. "I've learned a lot about taking advantage of my VA benefits and writing resumes," said DT3 Melvin Jones, a TAP student.

Service members leaving the military with a service-connected disability are offered the DTAP. This program includes the normal five-day TAP workshop,

plus additional hours of individual instruction to help determine job readiness and address the special needs of disabled veterans.

Although experience shows that veterans generally enjoy a favorable employment rate in the nation's job market, many veterans initially find it difficult to compete successfully in today's labor market. The TAP program addresses many barriers to success and alleviates many employment related difficulties.

For more information on TAP classes at NAS Jacksonville, call the Fleet and Family Service Center at 542-2766.

HELPING HANDS

HabiJax opportunities

HabiJax is always looking for volunteers for various construction projects. For more information, call Bonnie Golden at 798-4529, Ext. 253. The HabiJax Home Store also needs help coordinating donated materials and furniture. Call 722-0737.

Volunteers needed

Volunteers are needed to help children in our local community by donating a few hours per month to supervise visits between children and the parents that they have been separated from due to divorce, negligence, or abuse. If you would like more information on helping, please call Anita Sullivan, volunteer coordinator at Family Nurturing Center of Florida, at 389-4244 or e-mail at anita@fnccflorida.org.

NCCJ Jacksonville's Walk As One

This 3.5-mile walk will be held Saturday to support development and expansion of NCCJ's Youth and Community Leadership programs. Call Darlene Fratellow at 306-6225 for details.

Volunteer opportunity for chefs and cooks

We are looking for 15-20 volunteers with cooking and catering skills to help prepare an elegant meal for the Holiday in The Hamptons Gala charity event sponsored by the Monique Burr Foundation for Children, Inc. on Dec.13. This is a great opportunity for Navy chefs and cooks to show off their skills. Contact Jimmie McKnight at 542-8191, Ext. 8195 for information and to sign up.

Youth Activities
Military Family Appreciation
Carnival
 November 15, 2003
 10:00am - 2:00pm
 Location: Youth Activities
 Free for the whole family
 FREE Rides
 FREE Sno-cones
 For more details call 778-9172

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STEARMAN: Biplane on loan from Naval Museum in Pensacola

From Page 1

The Stearman is a proud addition to the base's collection of historic aircraft on display.

Retired Navy Chief Wayne White, an Air Operations mechanic aboard NAS Jacksonville, restored the plane. White spent a few hours each day in Hangar 116, gradually returning the 1941, fixed-wing, single-engine Boeing A75N1 (PT-17) aircraft to its former glory.

The aircraft, which was donated by Dr. Luther A. Young to the Naval Museum in Pensacola in 1972, is on loan to NAS Jax. The Stearman, a favorite among aircraft enthusiasts, was perhaps the most produced biplane; starting out as a private venture and later produced by Boeing.

The Stearman was selected to be the Army's primary trainer in 1934. The first production orders, however, came from the Navy. Over the next 10 years, more than 8,000 were built by Boeing; the majority for the Army, Air Force and Navy.

The Department of Defense had



Photo by JO2(SCW) Eric Clay
Wayne White secures ceconite fabric to one of the biplane's wings during the restoration process.

adopted a model that was fully interchangeable between the services. There were some significant differences between the Army and Navy versions of the Stearman, however. One difference is that the Army aircraft did not have a wheel lock on the rear wheel. Also, the engines driving the propeller in the Army aircraft were the same engines used in

U.S. Army tanks of the day.

According to Ron Williamson, NAS Jax base historian, the biplane on loan to NAS Jax was originally an Army aircraft. It has now been restored with some modifications to more accurately represent a Navy Stearman.

Williamson outlined the Stearman's history at NAS Jax. "NAS Jax was initially planned

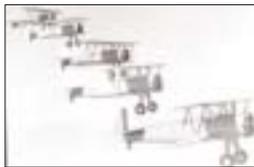


Photo from Aviation Quarterly

This 1942 photograph shows a formation of various Stearman models. Starting with the nearest - A U.S. Army PT-17; U.S. Navy N2S-3; a PT-17 built for the Chinese Air Force; a PT-17 built for the Canadian Air Force and a Model PT-17 built for the Peruvian Air Force. The PT-17 was the particularly popular model with a total of 3,769 built.

as a primary training base," said Williamson. "The aircraft of choice by the Navy in 1940 for pilot training was the Stearman."

The first 25 Stearmans from Boeing were delivered straight from the factory to the station. Ten N2S-3s arrived on Dec. 24, 1940, followed by two more arrivals in groups of six and nine

over ensuing months. The 25 Stearmans constituted 83 percent of the station's aircraft inventory at the time.

On Jan. 2, 1941, the 25 new N2S Stearmans took off to begin training operations at NAS Jax. Classroom training began Jan. 27. By December 1941, the number of Stearmans here would rise to 208.

With the coming of World War II, advances in aircraft technology were charging ahead rapidly. NAS Jax was rapidly growing and by February 1943, the N2S Stearmans were discontinued, giving way to a new era in aviation.

A special building was recently completed by a group of Seabees from Construction Battalion Unit 410 to display the Stearman biplane. The building is climate-controlled so the Stearman is not damaged by weather conditions.

Thanks to the generous donation of this historic aircraft by Young and the hard work of White and the Seabees, a piece of history has been saved for visitors to NAS Jacksonville to enjoy.

CLICK IT: Failure to do so will get you a ticket

From Page 1

Jax gates will be cited for not wearing a seat belt. There will also be random seat belt checkpoints at various locations on the base.

If you arrived at one of these checkpoints not wearing your seat belt, you will be pulled over and given a ticket. Failure to use a seat belt is considered a primary traffic offense onboard this base.

This means a police officer can pull over a driver and give him a ticket simply because he is not wearing a seat belt.

In Florida, failure to use a seat belt is a secondary traffic offense; meaning a police officer off base cannot ticket anyone for a seat belt violation unless the driver was stopped for another violation.

What is Florida's seat belt law? All front seat occupants must be buckled up, regardless of age. Children ages 6-15 must be belted in either the front or back seat of the vehicle. The driver is responsible for passengers under 16 years who are not buckled up.

Passengers 16 years of age or older may be individually fined if they are not buckled up.

Children through age three must be secured in a separate carrier or a vehicle manufacturer's integrated child safety seat. For children aged four through five years, a separate carrier, or integrated child safety seat, or a seat belt may be used. The cost to a violator for not wearing a seat belt in Florida is \$30, plus any other legal assessments (such as court costs).

The cost to a violator for

not following child safety belt law is \$60, plus any other legal assessments, and three points on your driving record.

The "Click It or Ticket" program is not about writing tickets, but about saving lives. Officers don't want to write tickets, but officers don't want to notify a family about the death of a loved one. If writing a ticket will save a life, the officer will write the ticket.

More Americans between the ages of one and 34 died because of vehicular crashes than any other cause. Vehicular crashes account for more deaths per year than homicides, deaths from work-related accidents or aviation deaths.

Yet more than half of all the people who died from crashes might have lived if they had used seat belts.

Research shows that 70 percent of the children will

not be buckled when the driver is unbuckled. A child unrestrained in a 30-mph crash is equivalent to a child falling from a three-story building.

The cost of hospital care for an unbuckled driver is 50 percent higher than

those for a driver wearing a seat belt, and more than 85 percent of the cost is absorbed not by the individuals involved, but by Florida citizens.

The simple act of always buckling your seat belt can prevent all this.

Remember, beginning Monday through the end of the month, we will be giving tickets for not wearing a seat belt. The choice is yours. I hope you will make the right choice.

For information, call 542-1586.

Free tickets to deployed Sailors and their families

By CMDCM Mike VanMiddlesworth
H5 Wing Command Master Chief

The "Sailors Aweigh" program gives free tickets for upcoming Jaguars games to families of deployed and deployable Sailors and includes transportation and a free T-shirt. Children can go with or their parents, as chaperones will be provided, or parents themselves can chaperone. Each chaperone will keep an eye on three to five children, so there will be plenty of supervision.

"Sailor Aweigh" participants will be picked up by a Navy bus at the NAS Jax Commissary parking lot. The bus will depart the parking lot two hours before game time. Once at Alltel Stadium, participants will be escorted to their seating area.

"Sailors Aweigh" T-shirts are provided and must be worn throughout



the game by all. After the game, the bus will take participants back to the base for pickup.

Prior to departure to the game, each "Sailor Aweigh" participant recites a pledge to "abstain from using drugs, alcohol, or tobacco". The seats are part of the honor rows and are in a great environment for the "Sailors Aweigh" participants.

Deployed Sailors' families will have priority, but if your Sailor is on sea

duty, you may be put on a waiting list that will be eligible to fill the balance of the seats that are not filled by the "on deployment" Sailors' families by Wednesday of the week before game day. Your status will be confirmed prior to being placed on the actual "going to game" list.

The ages are from 6-17, if all squadron families to go on a particular day, arrangements may be made depending on availability and lead-time. Hurry, because it's first come first serve, and we only have 40 tickets available per game.

The schedule of "Sailors Aweigh" games:

Dec. 7 - Houston

Dec. 21 - New Orleans

You can apply for any of the games listed, by email to me at vanmiddlesworthmh@chswl.navy.mil, or by phone at 542-5273.

FFSC offers educational and support programs

The NAS Jacksonville Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) Life Skills Education and Support Program is the foremost preventive measure for the avoidance of personal and family problems.

All FFSC workshops and classes are free and available to service members and their families, and civilian personnel aboard the base.

Pre-registration is required. If special accommodations or handicapped

access is required, please notify FFSC upon registration. For further information or to register, call 542-2766, Ext. 127.

The following workshops are available in November:

Nov. 17-20, 7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. - Transition Assistance Workshop (retiring)

Nov. 18, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. - Couples Communication Workshop

Nov. 18, 2-4 p.m. - Market Yourself

(for military spouses)

Nov. 19, 9-11 a.m. - What About The Kids?

Nov. 20, 1:30-3 p.m. - Volunteer Service Council

Nov. 20, 6:30-8:30 p.m. - Ombudsman Assembly Meeting

Nov. 24, noon - 4 p.m. - Divorce Adjustment Workshop

Nov. 25, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. - Stress Management Workshop

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NAS JAX
Freedom Lanes

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Shoe Rental \$1.65
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542-3493 for more info

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Remember holiday season mailing dates

From Naval Supply Systems Command Public Affairs

The Naval Supply Systems Command's Postal Policy Division, in cooperation with the U.S. Postal Service and military postal officials from all of the services, notes that it's not too early to mail 2003 Christmas cards, letters, and packages to and from military addresses overseas.

In fact, everyone is encouraged to beat the last minute rush, and bring holiday mail and packages to the nearest U.S. Post Office or APO/FPO military post office by the suggested dates listed below.

For military mail addressed to APO and FPO addresses, the mailing dates are:

- Parcel post - today**
- Space available - Nov. 28**
- Parcel airlift - Dec. 4**
- Priority mail, first class cards and letters - Dec. 11**

For military mail from APO and FPO addresses, the mailing dates are:

- Space available - Nov. 20**
- Parcel airlift - Dec. 4**
- Priority mail, first class cards and letters - Dec. 11**



Photos by Kaylee LaRocque

Promoting MWR activities

(Above) Hoku Bradley (front left), Liberty Recreation Center assistant manager, talks with some squadron Sailors as they fill out entries to win a year of free bass boat rentals from the Mulberry Cove Marina last Thursday. The grand prize drawing was held yesterday. The winner will be announced in next week's Jax Air News.



(Right) Liberty Recreation Center Coordinator Kari Kraus gives AT3 Cory Mormon, of VP-5 some information about the programs the center has to offer to single Sailors on base.

MWR NOTES

Great American Smokeout two-day Navy Fitness Challenge

The NAS Jax community is invited to take part in this challenging health and fitness event. A quarter-mile swim takes place at the indoor pool Nov. 19 at 11:30 a.m., and then on Nov. 20 the annual Turkey Trot 5K Run starts at 11:30 a.m.

The option to swim, run or compete in both events is offered. Medals will be awarded for first, second and third place for each event or the combined event times will be added. T-shirts will be given to all participants. There will also be a turkey drawing. Rules for the swim will be posted at gym and fitness locations. Contact the fitness center at 542-3518 to register.

Escape on an I.T.T. trip

Have some fun with I.T.T. - take a trip or treat yourself to a show! Stop by our office located adjacent to the NEX, and sign up for a great trip. Our trips are open to all hands, so bring a friend! For more information call the office at 542-3318.

Jaguars tickets for all games are now on sale at I.T.T. Tickets are \$47.90 for lower level seats. You can also sign up to ride the I.T.T. shuttle to all the home games. If you sign up for all the games the price is \$6 per game. A ride to a single game is \$8.

The following are upcoming I.T.T. trips:
Nov. 29 - Orlando Shopping. Don't miss the after the Thanksgiving sales at the Millenia Mall and Premium outlet malls in Orlando for only \$15.

Dec. 6 - Savannah Trip. The day includes a historical trolley ride, a walking tour with your I.T.T. escort, and free time for a little holiday shopping. The cost is \$29.

I.T.T. also has tickets for these upcoming events:

Vince Gill and Amy Grant's Christmas concert on Dec. 1. Great floor seats for \$76.50, or upper level for \$37.50.

Matchbox 20 in concert on Dec. 3. Get your tickets for \$43.50.

Nutcracker Community and National Ballet

Dec. 12-14. Great lower level seats towards the front for \$37.50, or lower level towards the back for \$29.

Liberty happenings

Join us each Wednesday for a karaoke and dance party. The fun starts at 7 p.m. at the Budweiser Brew house with DJ Marc "E" Marc.

Learn what it takes to get your personal pilot's license and take a ride in a Navy Flying Club Piper Warrior this Saturday. Everyone gets stick time in the plane. Cost is \$18 per person. The van leaves at 10 a.m.

Join Liberty for a holiday skiing trip to Magee Valley in North Carolina Dec. 12-14. The cost is \$135 and included two nights lodging, equipment rental, lift ticket, transportation and two meals. The full price must be paid by Nov. 17. Call 542-1335 for more details.

Mulligan's holiday take-out

Make this Thanksgiving a stress free holiday with a Mulligan's turkey or chicken dinner to go. Dinners include 12-lb. turkey, 2-lb. mashed potatoes, 2-lbs. green beans, 1-lb. gravy, 1-lb. cranberry sauce, 2-lbs. stuffing for only \$38.95. Turkey only is \$19. A complete chicken dinner is only \$12.50. A three-day notice is required for all orders. Pick-up day and time scheduled when order is placed. Thanksgiving Day pick-up is between 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Call 542-2936 to place your order.

Swimming activities

The indoor pool is available for family recreation and lap swimming Monday through Friday evenings from 4:30- 8 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from noon - 4 p.m.

Parents can work out with the Aqua Aerobics class from 5 - 6 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday while the kids play.

The Adult Fitness Swim Club is a coached program for novice to advanced swimmers wishing to improve their PRT time, swimming skills, and technique. Workouts are scheduled on Tuesdays

and Thursdays from 4:30-5:30 p.m. at the indoor pool. The sessions are free for active duty and reservist personnel. Retired military, DoD and dependents will be charged \$20 for eight workout sessions.

Veterinary Treatment Facility to hold October clinics

A Saturday clinic will be held Saturday from 8 a.m. - noon. This is a walk-in vaccination clinic, no appointment is necessary.

The NAS Jax VTF is located in Building 8 at the corner of Ranger Street and Enterprise Avenue. The clinic is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. It is closed on legal holidays. Pets are seen by appointment only.

For more information and to make appointments, call 542-3786.

Bowling specials

NAS Freedom Lanes is offering a Tuesday Bowling Special in November. Enjoy games for \$1.75 and shoe rental for only \$1.65. For a better deal you can bowl three games, plus shoe rental for just \$6.90 per person.

Mulberry Cove Marina news

The marina offers free kayak and canoe rentals for active duty Sailors on Thursdays. It's a great way to get acquainted with some of the equipment on hand and have some fun too. For more information on marina events, call 542-3260.

Auto Skills Center

Visit the Auto Skills Center for your professional or hobby car care needs. The center offers an array of services for the novice or professional auto enthusiast. There is an ASE qualified mechanic on hand to assist with questions and tips on servicing your vehicle. The center is open Monday, Thursday and Friday from noon to 8 p.m., Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and all holidays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day.

The Auto Skills Center offers a shop orientation class on the third Thursday and Friday of each

month. Reservations are required for the orientation. Call 542-3227 for information.

Bingo Palace

Get your favorite daubers, come and pick your lucky seat and let the games begin. The night Bingo schedule is Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. Cards go on sale at 5:30 p.m. and warm-ups start at 6:30 p.m. Doors open for lunchtime Bingo at 10 a.m. and games start at 11:30 a.m.

O'Club happenings

An all hands Reef & Beef Buffet Dinner is held the first Friday of each month from 6:30-9 p.m. at the O'Club. The buffet is only \$17 per person. Reservations are encouraged by calling 542-3041.

Youth Activities happenings

Take advantage of the fun events at the Youth Activities Center. Tae Kwon Do classes are available at NAS Jax Youth Gym and Yellow Water Youth Activities.

If you are interested in registering your child stop by either center or give us a call at 778-9772 (NAS Jax) or 777-8247 (Yellow Water).

Free movies offered

Enjoy free movies at the base theater each Friday evening starting at 7 p.m. and every other Saturday at 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. Bring your own popcorn, soda and snacks. Sit back and enjoy some of Hollywood's premier blockbuster hits. There are no alcoholic beverages allowed in the theater and persons under 17 are not permitted without adult supervision.

Tomorrow, 7 p.m. - Terminator 3 (R)

Visit MWR online at www.nasjax.navy.mil and look for the tab marked MWR this is your tab to unlimited fun. For questions or comments e-mail us at mwrmtg@nasjax.navy.mil.

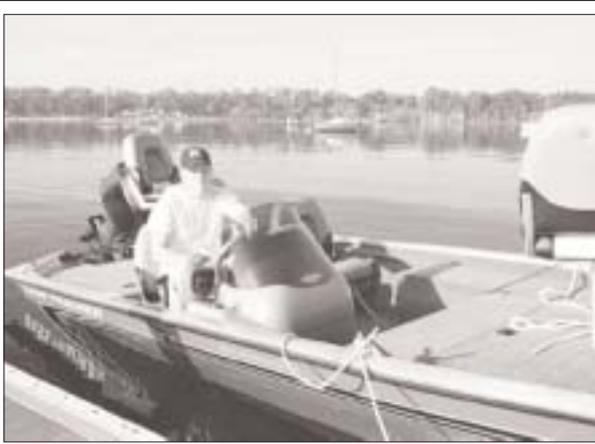


Photo by Phil Collins

Grand-prize winner

ASAN Joseph Hamstra of Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department, takes a spin in the Mulberry Cove Marina's newest bass boat. Hamstra was the grand-prize winner in the daily-drawing events sponsored by the marina. He won free rental of the new bass boat for the next year. The marina has partnered with the Liberty Cove Recreation Center and will continue to visit various locations at NAS Jacksonville for mobile marketing of NAS Jacksonville MWR Department activities, provide daily drawings for valuable prizes, and provide static displays of the marina's various rental boats and outdoor recreation gear.

Searching for Rudolph

Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer is hidden somewhere on base and needs to be found. He has a \$250 cash reward on his head.

We are looking for active duty members, E1 - E5, who are willing to rescue Rudolph and bring him back to the Liberty Cove Recreation Center.

You can get your daily clues at the center, beginning Nov. 28. So come in and get your daily clues and be the



first person or team to return Rudolph and win \$250. For more information, call 542-1335/3491. Geico Direct sponsors this event.

BEVERLY PET SITTING; 2c; 2"; Black Only;

Letters to Santa wanted for publication in Jax Air News

The Jax Air News will publish selected Letters to Santa in the Dec. 18 issue. Based on the amount received, we will print as many letters as our space allows, so Santa will have a better chance to see what the children from NAS Jax are hoping to receive in their Christmas stockings this year.

Letters can be mailed to the Jax Air News, Box 2, NAS Jacksonville, Fla., 32212-5000 or dropped off to the office, Room 202A, Building 1 by Dec. 12. Letters can also be emailed to larcquek@cnrse.navy.mil or faxed to 542-1534.

BENJAMIN E MCCONNELL; 2c; 2"; Black Only;

ZJX COMPUTERS; 2c; 3"; Black Only; PU 10/30 R027408

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA/P.S.C.; 2c; 6.5"; Black Only; PU 11/4 R35917

LOVE'S WIGS; 2c; 5"; Black Only;

ROUND ROBIN & KIDDIE GO ROUND; 2c; 8"; Black Only;

SPORTS & STANDINGS

Racquetball tourney planned

A turkey shoot racquetball tournament will be held Nov. 18-20 at the base gym. The event is open to all gym patrons over the age of 18. The divisions will be: women's amateur and advanced. Sign up at the gym. For more information, call Craig at 542-2930/3239.

Golf league starting

Anyone interested in participating in an upcoming 9-hole intramural golf league should stop by the base gym to pick up forms for rosters. For more information, call Craig at 542-2930/3239.

Navy Southeast Regional Running and Triathlon Team

Represent the United States Navy in 5K, 10K, marathons, and/or triathlons. The Navy will showcase elite active duty men and women in regional races. Uniforms are provided as well as

transportation, entry fees, and lodging costs. Interested runners must compete in sanctioned (USA Track and Field, USA Triathlon Association, or Roadrunners Clubs of America) races and your time must be one of top 10 regional qualifying times. If you have run in sanctioned race and your time meets regional qualifying time, contact your base athletic director.

Southeast Regional qualifying times:

5K -	Men 19:00
	Women 24:00
10K -	Men 34:00
	Women 46:00
Marathon -	Men 3 Hrs. 30 Min.
	Women 4 Hrs.
Triathlon -	Men 2 Hrs. 30 Min.
	Women 3 Hrs.
Triathlon time based on 1.5k swim, 10k run, 40k bike	

For more information about any of the sports articles, call 542-2930/3239.

Open Softball Standings

As of Nov. 6

Team	Wins	Losses
F.O.B.'S	13	3
Beanie Boys	11	4
VP-16	8	7
NAMTRAU	8	8
Onsite Aviation	3	12
Jax Chiefs	3	12

VP-5	12	2
VS-30	11	1
NAMTRAU	10	2
VP-16 Red	10	4
Air Ops	10	5
VS-24	6	7
VP-62	6	7
HITRON 10	5	8
SERCC	2	10
VP-16 White	3	10
AIMD SE	3	12
VS-22	2	12
TPU	1	13

Intramural Softball Standings

As of Nov. 6

Team	Wins	Losses
VP-30	12	0

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

The **Navy Wives Clubs of America, NWCA Jax No. 86** meets the first Wednesday of each month. Meetings are held in Building 612 on Jason Street at NAS Jacksonville at 7:30 p.m. The Thrift Shop is open Tuesdays and Thursdays and every other Saturday from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. For more information, call 772-0242.

The **Navy Wives Club's DID No. 300** meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Oak Crest United Methodist Church Education Building at 5900 Ricker Road. For more information, call 387-4332 or 272-9489.

Clay County Chapter 1414, National Association of Retired Federal Employees, (NARFE) invites all retired and currently employed federal employees to their regular monthly meeting the second Tuesday of each month at 1 p.m. at the Orange Park Library. For more information, call 276-9415.

The **Navy Jacksonville Yacht Club** general membership meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of every month at the clubhouse (Building 1956) adjacent to the Mulberry Cove Marina. The Navy Jax Yacht Club is a members only club open to all active duty, reserve and retired military, and active DoD personnel. For more information, call 778-0805 or email commodore@njyc.org.

Christian Fellowship Night is held behind the Chapel in Building 749 from 6:30 - 9 p.m. every Tuesday night. For more information, call 542-3051.

Association of Aviation Ordnancemen's meeting is held the third Thursday of each month at the Fleet Reserve Center on Collins Road. For more information, call AOC Chris Johnson at 542-2168 or AOC's Erick Parmley at 542-8589.

The **Westside Jacksonville Chapter 1984, National**

Association of Retired Federal Employees extends an open invitation to all currently employed and retired federal employees to our regular meeting held at 1 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Murray Hill United Methodist Church, (Fellowship Hall Building) at 4101 College Street. For more information, call R. Carroll at 786-7083.

The **National Naval Officers Association (NNOA)** holds its monthly meeting on the third Thursday each month at 5:30 p.m. at the Jacksonville Urban League, 903 West Union Street. Interested personnel are encouraged to attend or contact Lt. Herlena Washington at 696-5005 or email WashingtonHO@matcombic.usmc.mil.

The **Jacksonville Genealogical Society** will meet Saturday at 1:30 p.m. at the Webb-Wesconnett Library, 6887 103rd Street. For more information, call Mary Chauncey at 781-9300.

FIRST COAST DERMATOLOGY; 3c; 5"; Black Only; PU 10/15 Z002456

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In Gear

A weekly look at the automotive market

Dorm on wheels

Weird-looking Honda Element can do little bit of everything

By Dan Scanlan
Special

“Dan, your weird-looking car is here.” That telephone call from the front desk was the first indication I had that the new Honda Element was going to be an interesting vehicle to drive.

Honda calls the boxy vehicle built off its compact CR-V sport-utility vehicle platform a light truck. But it also fits into the new crossover classification many manufacturers are using to describe their short, tall, all-wheel-drive four-door hatchbacks that combine elements of minivans and SUVs.

But I hate to say it, our Honda Element EX seems to be something new – a sort-of-be-all, end-all college dorm on wheels that seems strange at first, until you see what it can do and carry.

The Element is based on Honda's Model X concept vehicle, which debuted at the 2001 North American International Auto Show in Detroit. The production vehicle was developed by Honda R&D America in Torrance, Calif., and is being made in Honda's East Liberty Plant in Ohio.

The first thing that strikes you about the Element is its boxiness. The nose is about as square as they get, a blunt gray plastic prow plowing through the wind with square headlights flanking a rectangular grille over a deep boxy air inlet surrounded by two blocky bumpers that house blocked-off air inlets. The hood is slightly curved at the leading edge, while the gray plastic carries around to the flared fenders over five-spoke alloy wheels wearing Goodyear Wrangler HP P215/70R16-inch radials with disc brakes front and rear. More gray composite body panels frame the top and bottom of the flat sides before climbing above the rear wheels and around the bottom part of the split rear tailgate. The tinted rear window wraps around the neatly hidden rear window pillar. All in all, our test vehicle's Satin Silver/Gray design looked space-age weird and wild in a world of streamlined cars. So no surprise that it and I received lots of questions.

They started with “What is it?” at a Southside fast-food drive-through, and continued as I lip-read a passenger in a passing car as she stared and asked “What is it?” Our 8-year-old son's comment the next morning was “sweet,” followed by “It looks like a Hummer.” The mother of one of his friends said it was ugly, although her 11-year-old son said “You're weird. It's cool.” Another friend said “It's funny looking – a cool sort of funny looking,” while a 20-something co-worker took one look and said “Weird. It looks like a toy.” Step inside, and the angular look continues in a vehicle wider than a CR-V.

Twin bucket seats sit high, made out of waterproof material atop a urethane-coated floor covered with carpeted mats. The seats are well padded and comfortable if a bit flat, the driver's seat getting a knob to adjust the height. You are eye-level with minivans, and a head and shoulder above Corvette drivers.

The dash is a piece of modern art, gray over blue over gray bars with a satin silver-rimmed triple-circle gauge (120-mph speedometer in the center, 8,000-rpm tach on the left and gas/temperature on right) package parked over a padded knee-height shelf behind a gray and pewter silver plastic four-spoke steering wheel that tilt adjusts. More silver-rimmed air vents flank the ends of the design, while a blocky silvery gray box in the middle houses two more vents, a high-mounted 270-watt AM-FM-CD stereo, a simple air-conditioning system and a curiously high-mounted four-speed automatic gearshift that easily falls to hand.

Like a minivan, the windshield base sits far away, the squared-off nose easily visible. But while you would expect the base of the cen-



Dan Scanlan/special

Boxiness is one of the 2003 Honda Element's most notable features.

BEHIND
THE WHEEL

2003 Honda Element EX



Photos by Dan Scanlan/special

LEFT: The twin bucket seats sit high, and the Element offers plenty of leg room. RIGHT: The Element is roomy enough to hold bicycles when the rear seats are folded up, plus the floor is a washable plastic.

Specifications

Vehicle type	4-door, 4-passenger 4-wheel-drive compact box on wheels	Height	70.4 in.
Base price	\$21,500 (As driven - \$22,740)	Front headroom	43.3 in.
Engine type	DOHC 16-valve, aluminum alloy 4-cylinder	Front legroom	41 in.
Displacement	2.4-liter	Rear headroom	39.4 in.
Horsepower (net)	160 hp at 5,500 rpm	Rear legroom	39.1 in.
Torque (lb-ft)	161 at 4,500 rpm	Cargo capacity	26 cubic feet/ 77.1 with seats folded
Transmission	4-speed automatic	Towing capacity	up to 1,500 lbs.
Wheelbase	101.4 in.	Curb weight	3,595 pounds
Overall length	166.5 in.	Fuel capacity	15.9 gallons
Overall width	71.5 in.	Mileage rating	20 mpg city/24 mpg highway
		Last word	This is the perfect box on wheels to haul people and stuff, and look funky doing it.

ter column to hold storage space, our EX had a sub-woofer. For more storage, there is another segmented shelf in front of the passenger with a 12-volt outlet and a neat auxiliary audio input to play digital media/MP3 players through the sound system. There is also a decent glove box and map pockets in the doors, as well as three cup holders on the floor. Headroom is so good you could wear a Cat in the Hat cap without touching anything, while a mesh-bottom storage compartment with flip-up door in the headliner allows stuff you put inside to stay secure, yet visible. The plastic floor is said to resist water, dirt and scratches.

The pillarless arrangement of the front and back, rear-hinged doors is ingenious. The doors lock together to provide side-impact protection with a reinforced vertical beam, lower side sills and floor and roof cross members. You can open the back doors only if the fronts are opened first. The good news is with all four open, access to the cavernous rear area and the twin bucket seats via a 55.5-inch opening is superb. The bad news is that someone buckled in up

front has to unbuckle first, since the front seat belts are connected to the front doors.

Once there, the twin seats have superb head and leg room, as well as integrated cup holders. Need more room? Both seats fold flat for naps, or fold up into the side panels to make room. Folded down, there is 26 cubic feet of storage space. Folded up, the result is a very flat floor for bicycles or other large stuff and four steel tie-down loops. The seats are removable, although each is pretty heavy for one person to pull out. Or you can fold all four seats flat, toss on some blankets and sleep in for the night. Flip-out rear side windows and a flip-up rear skylight that can be removed completely add to the ventilation. And for tailgate parties, the rear tailgate bottom opens down, creating room for two to sit, while the upper tailgate opens up and creates a canopy.

On the road, the Element was in its element, with a quiet ride and stiff body shell despite all of the holes cut in it.

The 2.4-liter, 160-horsepower i-VTEC 4-cylinder engine is coupled to a four-speed automatic and

Honda's Real Time 4WD on our EX model. But our 2,800-mile-old test vehicle's 3,595-pound weight was a lot to carry, so we lost stop-light Grand Prix's while netting a comfortably average 0-60-mph time of 10.7 seconds with smooth shifts.

The ride is compliant – comfortable if a bit soft – but that's OK because this isn't a sports car. With a tight turning radius, good visibility out the front (the thick B and C pillars do hamper lane-change visibility a bit) and all-wheel-drive, the Element EX was a comfortable family and commuter vehicle that didn't feel trucky or minivan-ish. The drive train is biased to front-wheel drive, and will shift to all-wheel in slippery conditions. During some torrential rain, it felt sure-footed and secure, with some body roll in turns. The power brakes had a firm, controllable pedal feel and offered solid, straight stops with some nose dive and minimal brake fade even after repeated hard use. We did hear a clicking noise from the tailgate on uneven roads, like the rear hatch's top and bottom were rubbing as the body flexed.

The Element EX had standard alloy wheels, ABS, air-conditioning, cruise control, power mirrors and a 270-watt, seven-speaker AM-FM-CD sound system for a base price of \$20,850. With a destination fee, the manufacturer's suggested retail price is \$21,310.

Bottom line – although I am way over the 20-something demographics that Honda wants its Element owners to be, I like it. The boxy shape is different, and offers a very usable interior with room for lots of stuff or people with a devil-may-care attitude when it comes to rain or dirt. The wide-open doors and rear sunroof are great touches for letting the world inside. But while the all-wheel drive is a boon for anyone who has to negotiate rainy roads or beaches, the little engine just isn't as cool as the Element's looks.

Dan Scanlan test-drives new vehicles on Northeast Florida's roads, averaging about 200 miles of combined highway and city traffic during a weeklong test. The test vehicles are provided by the manufacturer according to their schedule, and represent a broad spectrum of sizes and prices. The prices listed are manufacturer's suggested retail prices.