

THE OUTPOST

U.S. ARMY YUMA PROVING GROUND, YUMA, ARIZONA 85365 | VOLUME 67 NO. 9 MAY 1, 2017

Unique lizard thrives in YPG sand dunes

By Mark Schauer

As a natural laboratory, US Army Yuma Proving Ground has a vested interest in responsible stewardship of the land.

It is the busiest of the Army's six test centers in terms of direct labor hours and boasts the longest overland artillery range in the United States, yet a relatively small portion of the proving ground's vast ranges are subject to the impact of artillery projectiles.

YPG is located in one of the nation's most extreme desert climates, but is home to a huge diversity of wildlife, including Sonoran pronghorns, desert tortoises, wild burros, and bighorn sheep.

Smaller creatures like 15 different species of lizards are also in



The unique Mohave Fringe-toed Lizard thrives in sand dunes, and YPG's are far away from any populated areas and rarely traversed by people or equipment. "It's a fascinating creature," said Daniel Steward, YPG wildlife biologist. "Everybody's ultimate goal is to conserve this species on our own." (Photo by Mark Schauer)

abundance here, and one in particular, the Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard, is of particular interest to wildlife officials.

"The fringe-toed lizard is part of the State of Arizona's wildlife action plan," explained Daniel Steward, YPG wildlife biologist. "It's considered a species of greatest conservation need."

This is in part because other locales in the American West with different species of fringe-toed lizards not found at YPG have become so developed or inundated with invasive plants that the creatures have been put on the endangered or threatened species list. The few remote sand dunes at YPG, on the other hand, are far away from any populated areas

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Civilian Aide to Secretary of the Army has direct line to the top

By Chuck Wullenjohn

The U.S. Department of the Army is no slouch when it comes to red tape and bureaucracy, something that has been a topic of conversation since the Army formed during the Revolutionary War.

But systems have been established

to cut through the red tape. One of them is the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army (CASA) program that involves the selection of qualified civilians to gather information to pass directly to the Secretary of the Army. Every state in the union boasts at least one CASA.

Dr. Randy Groth, who lives in Tucson, has functioned as Arizona's CASA for many years. In January, a second CASA position was established in the state and one more seems likely for later this year. A CASA serves two year terms for up to ten years. Once appointed, the

rank of a CASA is equivalent to that of a three star general.

Though serving without pay, a CASA has many responsibilities. One of the most important is to bridge the gap between the Army and

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the Month of the
Military Child

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Home-based child care offers options to parents

By Mark Schauer

YPG's workforce, Soldier and civilian, depends on quality childcare to enable parents to do their jobs, which the post Child Development Center (CDC) has provided for decades.

Fewer people, however, are aware that the CDC also offers daycare to smaller groups of children in individual homes on post.

"When you have a child who doesn't do well in a group setting of 15 or 16 children, you have the opportunity to take your child to a smaller environment," said Pat Frost, assistant director. "Some parents prefer a smaller group for their child, so they have that opportunity here."

"Sometimes children do better in smaller environments, so it just depends on the parents' preference," added Paula Alarcon, director.

Home-based child care can be a good fit for parents who don't have traditional work schedules or only need daycare for a few hours at midday.

"It accommodates parents who work part-time for a few hours," said Frost. "At the CDC, we have rest time between 11:30 and 2:00 p.m. In a home environment, you're not disrupting anything or having your

child come into a dark room."

Home-based daycare never has more than six children present at a given time, though additional children may come in as others go to school or are picked up by a parent at various points throughout the day. Currently offering homecare on post is Amanda Herring-Bass. A holder of a B.A. in sociology, she has provided home child care in the Army's program for six years: two stints while at Fort Bragg, and now here.

"I love children and I want to be at home with my kids," she said. "I love young people and watching them growing and hitting their little milestones, and trying to help them."

All involved emphasize that the home-based program is of the same quality as the CDC's, only on a smaller scale in a home-based atmosphere. The home is full of age-appropriate books, toys, and learning stations, and the back yard boasts play equipment like swings, slides and a sand box.

"We have play activities just like the CDC," said Herring-Bass. "I follow all of the lesson plans and objectives they do. We learn through play and have activities to help the children learn."

"It costs the same as the CDC,"



YPG's Child Development Center (CDC) also offers home-based daycare. Home-based daycare never has more than six children present at a given time, which some parents prefer to larger group environments.

added Frost. "The meals are the same USDA-approved meals served here. She has more flexibility if a parent is running late because that is her home versus a workplace like the CDC."

Parents who utilize home-based care like the intimate atmosphere.

"It's much more personal to me," said Holly Warner, a music teacher at Desert Mesa Elementary School. "It's a more comfortable

environment that feels like being at home."

Though the program currently has a waiting list, it is possible that other providers may offer home-based daycare at YPG in the future.

"It's a great portable career," said Alarcon. "A provider can start at one location, then move to another when the family has a permanent change of station."



CDC director Paula Alarcon interacts with a youngster in the center's home-based daycare. The home is full of age-appropriate books, toys, and learning stations, and the back yard boasts play equipment like swings, slides and a sand box. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

THE OUTPOST

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Mock village expansion adds challenging training wrinkle

By Mark Schauer

YPG's primary purpose is testing virtually every piece of equipment in the ground combat arsenal, but the proving ground still finds time and space to support sophisticated, critically important training missions for multiple branches of the armed forces.

YPG boasts strikingly realistic mock villages and compounds which, combined with the similarity of the installation's terrain to that of Southwest Asia, makes it an ideal and more-readily available supplement to major training installations such as Fort Irwin's National Training Center or the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center at Twenty Nine Palms, Ca.

In YPG's mock villages, the physical environment troops are likely to face in theater is replicated as faithfully as possible, down to scattered debris like a rusted-out, discarded automobile gas tank that still retains a faint odor of gasoline undetectable to human nostrils but is distinct to a military working dog's heightened sense of smell. Hulking old busses, rock piles, and wooden boxes litter gravel streets over which date palms and tangled mock power lines tower above rudimentary cinder block buildings.

YPG is currently adding another wrinkle of realism to the training environment: an isolated building concealed in rolling, hilly terrain.

"It's a cinder block building like any other in the village,

only disguised to look like it is underground," explained Luis Arroyo, Chief of YPG's Training and Exercise Management Office. "Everything is in fact at or above ground level."

Built by YPG's Support Services Division, the structure is carefully concealed with dirt from the construction site and spray-on polyurethane foam painted tan to blend with the surrounding desert.

"From 50 or 100 meters away, if you don't know it is here, you might walk right by it," Arroyo said.

It is still under construction, but the completed building will serve as a multi-purpose facility for training and testing.

"One of the potential uses for military working dog units is for combat trackers," said Arroyo. "You have somebody who has escaped from the village, or who has been seen surreptitiously coming into and out of the village. We think the person is hiding here: what do you do next?"

If the follow-up action the training units decide on involves storming the building, they and their canine colleagues will need all of their wits to cope with what lies beyond the sturdy metal doors, starting with a rough, cramped, uphill corridor that is impossible to traverse standing upright.

"It's kind of a funhouse effect—you think you are going somewhere, but you're not," said Arroyo. "When you are walking on your hands and



YPG's Support Services Division is constructing an isolated building concealed in rolling, hilly terrain as an addition to the installation's widely renowned K9 Village. Non-canine training units will have access to the site as well, as will testers in need of an additional location for sensor evaluations and other programs. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

knees across uneven terrain, it messes up your balance, and now you have to figure out, where is your weapon? Where is your dog? All those things you don't normally think about when you are walking upright, in the open."

Carefully turn the corner at the top of the corridor and you once again have room to stand upright—in complete darkness.

"Once you get here, there is no outside ambient light," said Arroyo.

Illuminated by helmet-mounted flashlights, as your eyes adjust you'll notice other anomalies if you are paying attention. Are there concealed passages or spider holes nearby?

Non-canine training units have access to the site as well, as do testers in need of an additional location for sensor evaluations and other programs.

"We continue the increase of complex training operations, as long as the proving ground's primary mission, testing weapon systems, is not affected," said Arroyo. "We do not actively market our training capabilities, but as units and their leadership come to train at the proving ground, they talk to other units about our facilities, capabilities, and the unparalleled level of support they receive."

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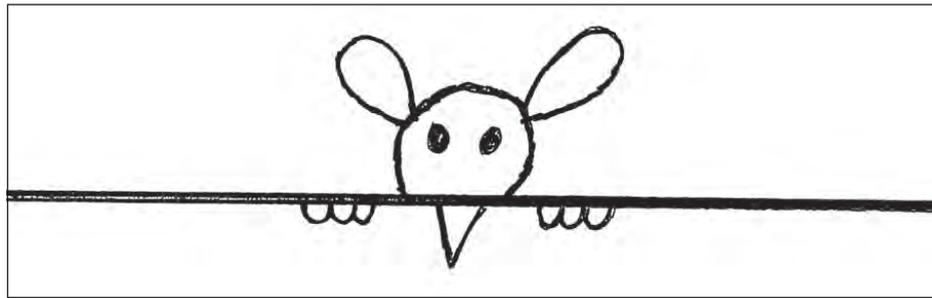
By David J. Horn

NOTE: The following story is not just based on true events...it actually happened. No names will be mentioned in order to protect the guilty.

A long time ago, in an era before computer aided drafting, military vehicles were designed and drawn up using pencil and paper. It was a time where draftsmen could actually get a little "personal" as they prepared by hand engineering drawings on everything from nuts and bolts up to the final vehicle assembly drawings.

I got my start back in those days, working for a company that made parts for the major vehicle manufacturers, including military vehicles. Our engineers would run across interesting anomalies when checking initial part drawings: for instance, one of our draftsman would always draw a little mouse on the drawing somewhere, just to see if we would find and erase it. It was all in fun, just to keep life interesting.

It was common practice in those days that when you supplied your drawings to your customer for the parts you sold them, to save time and money creating their drawings they would often just make a copy of your drawing and simply replace your



company name in the title block with their company name. Thus, if nobody found and erased the hidden mouse before the drawings were forwarded to the customer, the mouse just might magically show up on the customer's drawings of the parts. Again, harmless fun.

During production runs of some parts in our fabrication shop, the machinists were continually misreading the numbers on the drawing, making the parts too short, resulting in everything ending up in the scrap bin. In the effort to reduce the amount of scrap produced, a drafter redrew the part drawing to improve clarity, including adding a new note, which happened to be Note Number 13, which read, "Fabricate part per Specification MIL-TFD-41." Since the drawing notes contained references to several MIL (military) specs, the revised drawing was

quickly approved. The customer then took our revised drawing and added their name to the title, and the new drawing became the official drawing of our customer. The Army then took and copied the drawing from our customer, and the new, revised drawing became the official Army drawing on the part. Lots of parts were made over many production runs, all with excellent quality.

About a year went by, and one day we received a call from our customer. Apparently, someone in the Army

couldn't find Specification MIL-TFD-41 in the reference books, and so they asked our customer what it pertained to. Our customer looked everywhere, but they couldn't find the specification, either, so the call came down to our company to provide an answer. Confronting the old draftsman who created the original drawing resulted in one red face, and the following explanation: "MIL-TFD-41 stands for, 'make it like the [#%@] drawing for once.'"

And so began the emergency effort to revise our drawing, so the customer could revise their drawing, so the Army could revise their drawing, to remove Note Number 13... from that component drawing of the Army's new M1 Tank. While I haven't seen the Army's drawing's on that part for many years, I do know that Note Number 13 is gone. I wonder if the mouse is still there?

Take me out to the ballgame



YPG Commander Col. Randy Murray paid a visit to Yuma High School in late April to throw out the first pitch in the Criminals' match against the Padres of Tempe, Arizona's Marcos de Niza High School. His ceremonial duties complete, Murray stayed on hand to wish the home team luck and discuss YPG science, technology, engineering, and math outreach efforts with school officials. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

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YPG celebrates Earth Day

Spc. David Ngarui helps students from Price Elementary School water a native palo verde seedling as part of the YPG Health Clinic's participation in this year's Earth Day activities. "I'm really passionate about this day," Ngarui said. "I like seeing things green." Next photo, archaeologist Erin Goslin (right) shows a California kingsnake to a student. The snake was one of several brought by Arizona Game and Fish volunteer Clay Sharp for the students to interact with. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



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LIZARD

FROM PAGE 1

and rarely traversed by people or equipment.

“These lizards are specific to wind-blown sands,” said Steward. “The challenging thing is that it is such a habitat specialist that the distribution of the lizards is naturally very, very fragmented. One remote dune system might be 30 miles away from the next.”

Ranging in length from three to four inches, the fringe-toed lizard has a unique fourth toe on each foot. Their scales help provide traction on sandy ground, and a shovel-shaped snout makes them adept diggers.

They primarily eat ants and other desert bugs, and wait for their prey to pass by before striking. Scales over their eyes, nostrils, and ears protect them from sand, and an oscillated tan coloration makes them heavily camouflaged on the desert floor.

There are telemetry tracking collars small enough to fit on the creatures, but wildlife biologists rarely use them so as not to disrupt their camouflage pattern.

“These animals are pretty limited to the dunes, and sand dunes are



With a Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard in sight, Leavitt moves in to lasso the creature for inspection. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

a very unique system for North America and deserts in general,” said Daniel Leavitt, a herpetologist with the Arizona Game and Fish Department. “Some folks acknowledge that there is a great deal we don’t understand about the world we live in, including what animals may have to offer. It’s probably best to not allow these lizards to just disappear.”

Steward recently hosted Leavitt for a study of the Mohave Fringe-toed Lizard population at YPG. The pair

was particularly interested in seeing how the habitats had fared during the region’s relatively-rainy winter. One concern was the possible growth of an aggressive invasive weed called Sahara mustard, which crowds out native flora and sometimes grows more than a yard tall.

“We want to ensure the long-term viability of the fringe-toed lizard population,” said Steward. “For example, if there are any ecological conditions that could harm that ecosystem, such as Sahara mustard

and other invasive species, there may be things we’d have to do with weed control.”

A look around the dunes upon arrival, however, showed nothing but native species like desert creosote, palo verde trees, and ocotillo plants in radiant orange and green bloom.

“The plant life in the dune system is rich,” explained Steward. “The great thing about dunes is that every drop of rain goes into the ground. You don’t think of sand holding moisture, but it really does.”

The business of tracking the creatures takes patience. It was a still, calm day, and the otherwise pristine sands were pocked with the unique tracks of a variety of creatures, from sidewinders to field mice.

The pair circled for long minutes in the growing heat, once catching sight of one lizard fleeing into a burrow hole. Finally, the pair found one sunning himself in the open. Leavitt approached with a small noose attached to a long pole and lassoed the lizard. After a brief visual inspection that showed him to be a healthy male, Leavitt released the creature onto the sand, whereupon he ran away leaving a miniature sand cloud behind. Afterward, the two inspected other sand dunes at



YPG biologist Daniel Steward (right) recently hosted Arizona Game and Fish Department herpetologist Daniel Leavitt (left) for a study of the Mohave Fringe-toed Lizard population at YPG. One concern was that the relatively rainy winter may have produced a bumper crop of an aggressive invasive weed called Sahara mustard. Yet the pair found nothing but native species like desert creosote, palo verde trees, and ocotillo plants in bloom.



Blazingly fast in the sand and no more than four inches long, lassoing a Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard takes swiftness and dexterity.

different spots within YPG with similar results.

“It’s a fascinating creature,” said Steward. “Everybody’s ultimate goal is to prevent the species from being placed on an endangered list, to conserve it on our own. This research

gives us the information we need to be able to assess possible future impacts on this species and allows us to better support YPG’s mission while ensuring conservation.”

“The Army is doing a great job,” added Leavitt.



Mojave Fringe-toed lizards primarily eat ants and other desert bugs, and wait for their prey to pass by before striking. Scales over their eyes, nostrils, and ears protect them from sand.



The oscillated tan coloration that heavily camouflages the Mojave Fringe-toed lizard in sand is only present on the creature’s back. A crescent-shaped black dotted pattern on the throat is common, and some have similar dots on their chest or stomachs.

YPG hosts city and county officials, congressional staffers



From left, Aviation Systems Branch Chief Robyn Tiaden explains the ins and outs of unmanned aircraft testing at YPG to Yuma County Supervisors Lynne Pancrazi and Russell McCloud (foreground) and Yuma Visitors Bureau Executive Director Linda Morgan, who visited in mid-April. Her briefing took place while a second portion of the group was busy after riding a Stryker Fighting Vehicle on a test course. Next photo, the Army’s Office of Congressional and Legislative Liaison organized a trip throughout Arizona highlighting military activities for staffers from a variety of Arizona congressional offices in mid-April. At YPG, the group received a briefing from Col. Randy Murray, commander, and visited several test sites. After departing the proving ground, the group shared dinner with members of the Yuma 50 community military support organization. (Photos by Chuck Wullenjohn)



CASA

FROM PAGE 1

civilian communities by sharing the Army message and assisting with matters affecting the Army. CASAs disseminate information about the Army's objectives, the Secretary of the Army's priorities, and major programs to the public through speeches, personal contacts and other means. He or she provides personal advice and recommendations directly to the Secretary of the Army.

Arizona's newest CASA, Mario Diaz, took his oath January 9th in a Pentagon ceremony to which he brought his wife, two children and mother. He has been busy in the ensuing several months – meeting with local officials, visiting military installations throughout the state and collecting proclamations from city mayors recognizing the Army's upcoming 242nd birthday (June 14th).

"I report directly to the Secretary of the Army, who reports directly to the secretary of defense, who reports directly to the president," said Diaz. "That's a nice, succinct chain of command."

On the date of the Army's birthday in June he plans to participate in a march in downtown Phoenix made up of active and veteran Soldiers that will conclude at city hall where a birthday cake will be sliced and shared.

Though an Arizona resident for the past 28 years and involved in government for ten, Diaz had never had the opportunity to visit U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground. That is, until mid-April, when he devoted most of a day to touring the proving ground. He attended a detailed briefing in which he discussed issues with YPG Commander Col. Randy Murray and Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. James DeBoer. The highlight of his visit was overflying the proving ground on a



Mario Diaz, newly appointed Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army for Northern Arizona, spent most of a day in mid-April at YPG to learn about the mission of the proving ground and its impact on America's national defense. One of the highlights was joining Col. Randy Murray, YPG commander, and Lt. Col. James DeBoer, Yuma Test Center commander, on a detailed overflight. (Photo by Chuck Wullenjohn)

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"This was an eye opening experience," he said, "for I see a great lack of understanding in our state for the important work that takes place at YPG. The proving ground seems a well-kept secret despite the major impact YPG testing has on the effectiveness of our military on the battlefield."

He said he was particularly impressed by the commitment and

dedication he witnessed by the civilian and Soldier workforce, particularly their intellectual capacity and skill.

After departing YPG, he spent one night in downtown Yuma then met the next day with Mayor Doug Nicholls, members of the Yuma County Board of Supervisors and conducted a television interview. He looks forward to returning to Yuma Proving Ground again in late June.

Rob Turner
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Army IG has resources available to assist with issues related to transgender Soldiers

By Dustin Perry, U.S. Army Inspector General Agency

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Defense (DOD) lifted the ban on transgender service members last year, and as the Army adjusts to accommodate this decision, Soldiers and leaders may have questions about the implementation of this policy change.

Army Directive 2016-35, "Army Policy on Military Service of Transgender Soldiers," contains answers to most of those questions, but the Office of the Inspector General for each installation can provide basic information to Soldiers and leaders.

DOD defines "sex" as being assigned at birth based on one's physical characteristics. "Gender" is defined as one's internal sense of being male or female. Therefore, the DOD recognizes a transgender male as someone who was of the female sex at birth but identifies his gender as male regardless of whether sexual reassignment surgery has been conducted or not. The opposite applies to transgender females.

The gender transition process for a Soldier serving on active duty who is eligible for military medical care begins when the Soldier receives a diagnosis from a military medical provider indicating that gender transition is medically necessary.

The transitioning Soldier must request that the brigade-level commander approve the timing of the medical treatment. The Soldier must also notify his or her brigade-level commander of any change to the medical treatment plan, the projected schedule for treatment, or the estimated date for the change in the Soldier's gender marker.

One common phase of the gender transition process in most treatment

plans is known as real-life experience (RLE), which refers to a period during which a transgender Soldier commences living socially in the gender role consistent with his or her preferred gender. The Army generally requires that RLE occur in an off-duty status, and not at a service member's place of duty.

Army policy requires that a transitioning Soldier must meet all Army standards for uniforms and grooming, body composition assessment, physical readiness testing, drug testing, and other military standards as they apply to his or her gender marker in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS), unless the transitioning Soldier has an approved exception to policy.

Once a Soldier has completed all phases of his or her approved gender transition plan, the Soldier's brigade-level commander will submit written approval to the commander of U.S. Army Human Resources Command (HRC). HRC will make the appropriate gender change in the Army personnel information system, which will update the Soldier's gender marker in DEERS. Once this occurs, the Soldier is subject to all applicable standards required by his or her updated gender, to include using preferred gender-appropriate berthing, bathroom, and shower facilities, with certain accommodations.

Army leadership acknowledges that implementation of this policy will present challenges associated with addressing transgender Soldiers' needs while maintaining mission focus and readiness. The assistant secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs has established a Service Central Coordination Cell (SCCC) composed of medical, legal and

military personnel experts to provide advice and assistance to commanders, address their inquiries, and process requests for exceptions to policy in

connection with Soldiers undergoing gender transition. The SCCC can be reached via email at usarmy.pentagon.hqda-dcs-g-1.mbx.sccc@mail.mil.



- 1 Track gratitude and achievement with a journal - include 3 things you were grateful for and 3 things you were able to accomplish each day.
- 2 Check up on your mental health. Take a screen at www.screening.org. It's free, anonymous, and confidential.
- 3 Set up a summer get away, it could be camping with friends or a trip to the tropics. The act of planning a vacation and having something to look forward to can boost your overall happiness for up to 8 weeks!
- 4 Work your strengths. Do something you're good at to build self-confidence, then tackle a tougher task. You've got this!
- 5 Keep it cool for a good night's sleep. The optimal temperature for sleep is between 60° and 67° F.
- 6 "You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step." -Martin Luther King Jr.
- 7 Think of something in your life you want to improve, and figure out what you can do to take a step in the right direction.
- 8 Experiment with a new recipe, write a poem, paint or try a Pinterest project. Creative expression and overall well-being are linked.
- 9 Show some love to someone in your life who you hold dear. Close, quality relationships are key for a happy, healthy life.
- 10 Boost brainpower by treating yourself to a couple pieces of dark chocolate every few days. The flavanols, caffeine, and theobromine in chocolate are thought to work together to improve alertness and mental skills.
- 11 If you are living with a mental illness or in the recovery process, visit www.mentalhealthamerica.net/feelslike. Remember - you're not alone!
- 12 Sometimes, we don't need to add new activities to get more pleasure. We just need to soak up the joy in the ones we've already got. Trying to be optimistic doesn't mean ignoring the uglier sides of life. It just means focusing on the positive as much as possible.
- 13 Feeling anxious? Channel your inner child and do some coloring for about 20 minutes to help you clear your mind. Pick a design that's geometric and a little complicated for the best effect.
- 14 Take time to laugh. Hang out with a funny friend, watch a comedy or check out goofy videos online. Laughter helps reduce anxiety.
- 15 Go off the grid. Leave your smart phone at home for a day and disconnect from constant emails, alerts, and other interruptions. Spend time doing something fun with someone face-to-face.
- 16 Dance around while you do your housework. Not only will you get chores done, but dancing reduces levels of cortisol (the stress hormone), and increases endorphins (the body's "feel-good" chemicals).
- 17 Feeling tired? Go ahead and yawn. Studies suggest that yawning helps cool the brain and improves alertness and mental efficiency.
- 17 Relax in a warm bath once a week. Try adding Epsom salts to soothe aches and pains and help boost magnesium levels, which can be depleted by stress.
- 18 Has something been bothering you? Let it all out...on paper. Writing about upsetting experiences can reduce symptoms of depression.
- 19 Spend some time with a furry friend. Time with animals lowers the stress hormone - cortisol, and boosts oxytocin - which stimulates feelings of happiness. If you don't have a pet, hang out with a friend who does or volunteer at a shelter.
- 20 "What lies before us and what lies behind us are small matters compared to what lies within us. And when you bring what is within out into the world, miracles happen." -Henry David Thoreau
- 21 Be a tourist in your own town. Often times people only explore attractions on trips, but you may be surprised what cool things are in your own backyard.
- 22 Try prepping your meals or picking out your clothes for the work week. You'll save some time in the mornings and have a sense of control about the week ahead.
- 23 Work some omega-3 fatty acids into your diet-they are linked to decreased rates of depression and schizophrenia among their many benefits. Fish oil supplements work, but eating your omega-3s in foods like wild salmon, flaxseeds or walnuts also helps build healthy gut bacteria.
- 24 Practice forgiveness - even if it's just forgiving that person who cut you off during your commute. People who forgive have better mental health and report being more satisfied with their lives.
- 25 "What appear to be calamities are often the sources of fortune." -Oisraeli
- 26 Try to find the silver lining in something kind of cruddy that happened recently.
- 27 Feeling stressed? Smile. It may not be the easiest thing to do, but smiling can help to lower your heart rate and calm you down.
- 28 Send a thank you note - not for a material item, but to let someone know why you appreciate them. Written expressions of gratitude are linked to increased happiness.
- 29 Do something with friends and family - have a cookout, go to a park, or play a game. People are 12 times more likely to feel happy on days that they spend 6-7 hours with friends or family.
- 30 Take 30 minutes to go for a walk in nature - it could be a stroll through a park, or a hike in the woods. Research shows that being in nature can increase energy levels, reduce depression and boost well-being.
- 31 Make sure to enjoy 15 minutes of sunshine, and apply sunscreen. Sunlight synthesizes Vitamin D, which experts believe is a mood elevator.
- 31 "Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new." -Albert Einstein
- 31 Try something outside of your comfort zone to make room for adventure and excitement in your life.

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YPG recognizes the Month of the Military Child



April is the Month of the Military Child, a time to recognize and appreciate military children for their sacrifice in supporting their parents wherever in the world they serve. YPG's Child Development Center (CDC) celebrated with a morning of games and activities, including a pint-sized obstacle course created by YPG's Department of Emergency Services. Above, Lt. Kilipaki Harris watches a youngster on the course. Below, face painting from CDC employee Paige Gresham was another highlight for the children. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



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