

West Heartland WARRIOR

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On the cover...

Maj. Billy Werth, left, hugs his wife Haley shortly after the major returned from a deployment Jan. 5. Werth, who is a KC-135R Stratotanker pilot with the 72nd Air Refueling Squadron, deployed with several other 434th Air Refueling Wing Airmen for over two months in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Odyssey Dawn. For more information, turn to page 7. (U.S. Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner)

Budget decisions mandate smaller, flexible Air Force

By Tech. Sgt. Richard Williams Jr.
Air Force Public Affairs Agency

WASHINGTON -- Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz explained the service's contributions to the new Defense Department strategy during a Pentagon press briefing here Jan. 27.

Schwartz said that as the Air Force approaches future constrained budgets, service officials will trade size for quality in order to ensure a ready force.

"We will be a smaller but superb force that maintains our agility, our flexibility and readiness to engage a full range of contingencies and threats," Schwartz said in the news conference, which followed the Defense Department's major budget decisions briefings on Jan. 26.

With Airmen regularly serving jointly and deploying with their coalition counterparts, the Air Force must ensure its unique contributions to national security are preserved, he added.

"Air Force capabilities are clearly instrumental to the major priorities of the new defense strategic guidance, such as deterring and defeating aggression, power projection in anti-access and area-denial environments, preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, space and cyber operations, and strategic deterrence," Schwartz said.

Future plans call for the Air Force to reduce its total force end strength by approximately 10,000 personnel, the general said. The changes will be tied to reductions in aircraft and other force structure, and are not being made to simply save money, he added.

Confronted by a complex security environment and significant reduction in defense resources, the Air Force determined that the best path forward was to become smaller in order to maintain and protect a high-quality force, Schwartz said.

"To avoid a hollow force, we must and will protect readiness



Schwartz

at any force level and strengthen our integration of the total force team of active, Guard and Reserve Airmen," Schwartz said. "It is our intent, indeed our obligation, to the American people and our Airmen that we will remain the world's finest Air Force in the years and decades to come."

Schwartz said the Air Force supports a new round of base realignment and closures as a way to reduce excess infrastructure, and echoed comments from senior defense officials that the Block 30 version of Global Hawk would be terminated.

"The reality is that the Global Hawk is not less expensive to operate than the U-2," Schwartz said, confirming that the Air Force would continue to use the U-2 rather than the Global Hawk Block 30 as a way to reduce costs. "And in many respects, the Global Hawk Block 30 system is not as capable, from a sensor point of view, as the U-2."

Schwartz also touched on the importance of the nuclear triad, stating "the diversity, the variety and the attributes associated with each leg of the triad actually reinforce each other to a great degree."

See 'Budget' page 6

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AFRC units face changes under overview

By Col. Bob Thompson

Air Force Reserve Public Affairs

WASHINGTON – The Air Force announced the possible retirement of 82 Air Force Reserve aircraft and other changes in 14 states – Alabama, Arkansas, California, Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Texas – in the next few years according to Pentagon officials on Feb. 3.

Called the “Air Force Strategy and Force Structure Overview,” the Air Force plans to rebalance its overall ratio of Regular, Reserve and National Guard forces at about 60 installations in 33 states and retire 227 aircraft to support a new defense strategy and the President’s Budget proposal for fiscal year 2013.

“We’re going to do everything we can to take care of our people as these changes occur,” said Lt. Gen. Charles Stenner Jr., chief of Air Force Reserve at the Pentagon. “We’re putting together programs to retain as many of our reservists as possible.”



One of the biggest changes for the Air Force Reserve is the planned closure of the 911th Airlift Wing, Pittsburgh Air Reserve Station, Penn. If the 911th AW is deactivated, the Pittsburgh Air Reserve Station is expected to close. However, the Pittsburgh Air National Guard Base is planned to remain operational.

Faced with austere budget times, the Air Force is refocusing and reducing the size of its forces to

comply with the President’s new defense strategy and the Budget Control Act’s requirements to cut \$487 billion from the defense budget over the next 10 years.

The Air Force’s share is about \$54 billion – and those cuts may grow.

“The President and the Department of Defense have directed our new Defense Strategy Guidance,” said Stenner. “Now our Air

Force has to set priorities and make some tough choices to rebalance our forces and realign with the new strategy.” To achieve these goals, the Air Force is planning significant organizational changes.

The Air Force Reserve’s portion of the cuts includes reducing its inventory by 61 airlift and aerial-refueling aircraft, as well as, 21 fighter jets.

This will retire the Air Force’s oldest aircraft, make room for newer models, and consolidate similar types of aircraft at common locations as much as possible.

To see the Air Force Reserve changes, visit the AFRC website at <http://www.afrc.af.mil/>, or visit Air Force Link at www.af.mil.

News Briefs

Fitness classes

The Grissom Fitness Center is offering eight group fitness classes for 2012.

The group fitness classes are for servicemembers, retirees and dependents and include: aerobics; buff-and-tuff, circuit training, couch to 5k, spinning, strength-and-condition, senior class, and total body workout.

The classes being offered help meet the fitness center’s mission of providing a safe and friendly workout environment supported by professional services that promote life-long health and awareness.

Classes are offered Monday through Thursday between the times of noon and 5 p.m., and only
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the strength-and-conditioning class is offered on Friday at 4 p.m.

During unit training assembly weekends the fitness center will have a circuit training class offered from 3:30-4:30 p.m., and spinning class from 4:30-5:30 p.m.

For more information contact the Grissom Fitness Center at 688-2000.

African American History

February is African American History Month, and to honor that heritage, Air Force Link, the Air Force’s official Internet web site, will provide a short historical summary of a different man or woman each day; a different person in aviation or Air Force history.

The site will highlight some of the important transition men and women who were early pioneers in the Air Force, as well as others who are still making their mark today. There’s even a TV and movie personality who transcended her role as a fictional pioneer in space to make great strides in recruiting African Americans into the NASA space program.

A total of 29 historical summaries in 29 days including Tuskegee Airmen, men like Benjamin O. Davis Jr., Lee Archer and C.D. “Lucky” Lester, who proved through their valor and bravery in the skies that African Americans.

To view the summaries, visit AF Link at: www.af.mil

Superbowl shuttles

Grissom controllers prepare for air traffic blitz

By Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

Public Affairs staff

As Indianapolis gears up for Super Bowl XLVI, Grissom air traffic controllers are preparing for a full-on blitz of game-bound fans flying through their airspace.

Grissom ATC handles all military, civilian and commercial air traffic between Chicago Center and Indianapolis Center up to 10,000 feet and is an integral part of the National Airspace System.

"All south-bound traffic to Indy will have to go through Grissom, and we'll be the feeder into Indy for the game," explained Terry Albaugh, 434th Operations Support Squadron ATC manager. "It's going to be pretty wild man, pretty wild."

Typical traffic in Grissom's airspace consists of everything from small, single-engine propeller planes to corporate executive jets.

"On a typical day, our controllers normally deal with 300 to 500 aircraft," said Albaugh.

"Super Bowl Sunday through Monday will be the busiest times, and we expect to get 600 to 800 'exec jets' more than normal."

And, it's those executive jets carrying celebrities, politicians and other prominent individuals into the heart of the state that Grissom's controllers will be most concerned with this weekend.

"There will be more 'props' in the mix as well, but they aren't as much concern," said Albaugh. "We're mainly concerned about the jets because of their speed and fuel (capabilities)."

With all the additional air traffic flowing from the northeast of New England Patriots' and New York Giants' fans, Grissom's radar scopes are going to be abuzz with activity.

"It's going to be like a controlled



Tim Boles, operating as an approach assistant in Grissom's radar approach control facility here, looks up an aircraft's flight plan in a flight data system Jan. 20. (U.S. Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner)

beehive," remarked Albaugh. "The bees are going to come back to the hive so far, and then they're all going to line up behind each other."

Perhaps a better way of explaining it would be a set of beehives with one major hive in the center with several smaller hives around.

"Not all the jets will be going into Indianapolis International," explained Albaugh. "(The Federal Aviation Administration has) six satellite airports set up to help deal with the increased jet traffic."

And, to help the NAS deal with increased traffic during and after the big game, Grissom controllers will be heading into overtime.

And, in the world of air traffic management where lives are at stake, the key to success is continuity, so Albaugh said he had to do a bit of juggling to make sure everything fit into place.

"The key is having people who work day shift work during the day and those who work the night shift work the night so everyone is familiar with what's going to happen," he said.

Schedule changes weren't the only thing the Grissom control-

lers have had to do to ensure a safe night for everyone taking to the Hoosier skies. They first started preparations back in October.

"We've trained hard on various scenarios, planning for the worst and hoping for the best," stated Albaugh. "We're planning for ice, snow storms and power outages; we take everything into consideration we possibly can."

And, being that prepared stems from a culture of excellence and cooperation already in place at Grissom, said Albaugh.

"From the start the (434th Air Refueling Wing) was right behind us," he recalled. "They never hesitated at supporting us and that's a big part (of our success)."

With all the hard work the ATC crews have put into making the Super Bowl weekend successful, they said they were excited to be part of Hoosier history.

"It's a once in a lifetime opportunity to be able to say, 'Yeah, we worked the Super Bowl,'" concluded Albaugh. "It will be an adrenaline rush, but in the end we're just another set of eyes to make sure it all flows well."

Color guard represents America's Team

By Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner
Public Affairs staff

Super Bowl XLVI is sure to be packed with Patriots and Giants fans sporting their favorite team's jerseys, but another group of uniformed patriots will be there supporting a different team -- Team America.

Eight servicemembers from units across the Hoosier heartland, along with two members of the Air Force Band of Flight, will take center field at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis to present the Colors as Kelly Clarkson sang the national anthem during pregame ceremonies Feb. 5.

"It's a huge honor because of what it means to the nation as a whole," said U.S. Army Reserve Staff Sgt. Austin Stoner, the joint color guard's commander. "Millions of people will be watching us knowing what we represent; humbling is the best way to describe it."

With more than 111 million people watching last year's Super Bowl, color guard members said nerves can play a factor, but constant practice builds muscle memory and is key to success.

"I was nervous at first, but as we're getting closer to the game I get less nervous with each practice," said Stoner. "But the nervousness is what keeps you thinking straight."

Even without the pressure of the big game, taking a group of Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, Airmen and Coastguardsmen from different units with different training and molding them into a Super-Bowl caliber team was far from easy.

To accomplish this task, the color guard met twice a week for three weeks leading up to game night building unit cohesion and often practicing the same drill movements over and over for hours on end to achieve perfection.

"I think the biggest challenge is working with all the services where everyone has their own requirements and own regulations and trying to mesh that together for one polished product," said U.S. Army



U.S. Army Reserve Sgt. 1st Class David Warder, right, synchronizes his rifle movements with U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Joshua Bishop during a joint color guard training at the U.S. Army Reserve Center in Indianapolis Jan. 25. Warder and Bishop, along with six other servicemembers from around Indiana, will present the Colors at Super Bowl XLVI Feb. 5. (U.S. Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner)

Reserve 1st Lt. Michael Marszalek, the color guard's officer in charge.

This challenge was extremely apparent on the first day of practice as color guard members struggled with their various branch differences. However, that did not deter the team from their goal of perfect timing and synchronization.

"We had to find a combination that worked well," explained Stoner. "Initially everyone was kind of separate, but we bonded together as military for this one event, and the

team is a million times better than it was that first day."

It was that one common goal and sense of camaraderie that Marszalek said pulled the team together.

Now, with the team fully trained as one cohesive unit, they look forward to completing their mission.

"The big thing I'm looking forward to is presenting arms and listening to the national anthem at center field," concluded Stoner. "This is the tops for someone on the color guard."

Color guard members

Color guard team members include the following:

- 1st Lt. Michael Marszalek, U.S. Army Reserve, 310th ESC
- Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Pitts, U.S. Army Reserve, 310th ESC
- Sgt. 1st Class David Warder, U.S. Army Reserve, 310th ESC
- Staff Sgt. Austin Stoner, U.S. Army Reserve, 310th ESC
- Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner, U.S. Air Force Reserve, 434th Air Refueling Wing
- Sgt. Brian Francies, U.S. Marine Corps, Recruiting Sub-Station Northern Indianapolis
- Sgt. Joshua Bishop, U.S. Marine Corps, Inspector Instructor Indianapolis
- Petty Officer 3rd Class Daniel Delgado, U.S. Navy, Naval Operations Support Center Indianapolis
- Seaman Aaron Such, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Coast Guard Station Michigan City

Brecount takes command of 434th AMXS

By Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner
434th ARW Public Affairs

Most young enlisted Airmen probably can't envision commanding their unit one day, but one determined Grissom maintainer made it happen.

Maj. Joel Brecount took command of the 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron during an assumption of command ceremony in Dock 1 here recently.

Brecount relinquished command of the 434th Maintenance Operations Flight before taking over the 434th AMXS command for Maj. Timothy Bartlett.

"I have a great respect for the previous commander, and I worked as his number two for a while, so I can say this is an excellent unit," said Brecount, who previously served as the 434th AMXS deputy commander under Bartlett before taking the 434th MOF command. "My job is to help sustain that excellence."

Col. Paul Weimer, 434th Maintenance Group commander, presided over the assumption of command and remarked why he felt the major will make an excellent commander for his new unit.

"Major Brecount grew up in A-maintenance, in fact he was an enlisted troop here, so he understands your culture," said Weimer to a group of 434th AMXS and 434th MOF Airmen.

Brecount recalled those early years before earning his commission.

"That is where I came from," he said. "I spent four years on active duty as an enlisted aircraft electrician, and then I went to the (Air Force Reserve's) 930th Tactical Fighter Wing here before rolling into the 434th AMXS."

Looking back at his enlisted service in aircraft maintenance, Brecount made note of how not only he, but several other enlisted Airmen are now in leadership positions throughout the 434th Maintenance Group.

"It's unique...Chief (Master Sgt. Chad) Weisend and I were electricians together, and Chief (Master Sgt. Kevin) Cassidy lived across the hall in the dorms from me," he recalled. "I have a lot of history with people I'm coworkers with, and it's amazing to see all of us at the other end of that career cycle."

Weisend is now the 434th AMXS superintendent, and Cassidy is the current 434th Maintenance Squadron superintendent.

Budget, from page 2

Other key programs and investment priorities for the Air Force include the KC-46A tanker, F-35 Lightning II and the future long-range strike bomber, Schwartz said.

"The bottom line is these are important capabilities for the nation and ones that we will make sacrifices in other areas to sustain," the general said.



Maj. Joel Brecount, right, accepts command of the 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron from Col. Paul Weimer, 434th Maintenance Group commander, during a change of command ceremony here Jan. 7.

However, it's not just a shared history that Brecount said he brings to the 434th AMXS.

"I have a knowledge of how things actually work, how much the Airmen have to know about the planes and how difficult it is to learn the technical aspects of the job in midst of all the ancillary training and exercises," he explained. "It takes years to be an expert on these jets, I have that perspective, and hopefully that translates something useful."

Schwartz ended the news conference by touching on the importance of America's servicemembers, and their families, to the success of the armed forces.

"I would just like to remind everyone that the real power of our Air Force, like our sister services, is our people, and not only in the excellence that they strive to provide, but also in the commitment that their fami-

Heartland Warrior

Airmen come home for the holidays -- at last!

By Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner
Public Affairs staff

Oh there's no place like home for the holidays, and that never rang truer than for a group of Grissom Airmen fresh off their jets from a recent deployment.

Two KC-135R Stratotanker crews flew in formation over Grissom before touching down on Hoosier ground Jan. 5 after spending over two months on a deployment to Southwest Asia.

"The two crews deployed during a plus-up for Operation Unified Protector and to help support Operation Enduring Freedom," explained Col. Christopher Amend, 434th Operations Group commander.

The pilots and boom operators not only missed out on their traditional New Year's celebrations, they missed spending the entire holiday season with their families while assigned to the 340th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron.

Despite this, the Airmen said they focused on the mission and were proud to make a difference around the world.

"We flew the last day of Operation New Dawn, so it was cool to be there, hear all the different radio calls and see all that," said 1st Lt. Jessica Hodson, 74th Air Refueling Squadron pilot. "It was the first time I actually felt like I was out doing something to support the cause."

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Tech. Sgt. Christopher Nack, 74th Air Refueling Squadron boom operator, makes his way to setting foot on Grissom for the first time in over two months as he and five other 434th Air Refueling Wing Airmen return from a deployment to Southwest Asia. (U.S. Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. Mark R. W. Orders-Woempner)

Amend said he was also proud of the Airmen he initially deployed while he was in charge of mobilizations for Air Force Reserve Command's Force Generation Center and who he welcomed back as the new 434th OG commander.



"They stepped up, deployed, and accomplished the mission, and we're so glad to have them back home for the new year with their families," he added.

The Airmen also said they were glad to be home so close to the holidays.

"It was rough being gone over the holidays, but that's what we signed up for, hoping it wouldn't ever happen," said Maj. Billy Werth, 72nd Air Refueling Squadron pilot.

But, these Airmen aren't going to let anything get in the way of their holiday cheer.

"Most of us are meeting up with our families and doing something," explained Hodson. "We'll do Thanksgiving slash Christmas slash New Years all at once."

Now that she's home, not only will the lieutenant celebrate the holidays with her family in Nashville, she will also celebrate a very special birthday.

"We left on my birthday, so I was pretty excited about that," she said before going on to talk about spending her birthday evening in England during a planned stop at RAF Mildenhall.

"Everyone was asking how my birthday was, and I just said I had to spend it in England, so it was rough," Hodson joked.

But, in the end, there is no place like home for the holidays. No matter how far away they roamed, these Grissom Airmen were definitely glad to be home sweet home.

Tender tanker adds to GFD capability

By Senior Airman
Damon Kasberg
Public Affairs staff

The Grissom Fire Department recently received a new vehicle that increased its capability to fight fires.

The fire department recently received a new P26 tender tanker. The tanker is able to hold up to 4,000 gallons of water and empty out 1,250 gallons of water per minute.

“It’s all about time,” said Les McConnell, Grissom Fire Department assistant chief of fire prevention, as he explained with more water holding capability, the firefighters can fight the fires longer and without as many delays. This difference can potentially help save lives and property faster and more efficiently he added.

“This vehicle is a mobile fire hydrant,” said Jason Cahill, GFD firefighter. “There isn’t a water system



Grissom's new P26 tender tanker holds up to 4,000 gallons of water and is able to empty out 1,250 gallons of water per minute(U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Damon Kasberg)

out on the flight line for our fire trucks to get water from, and the tanker brings water to us where ever we need it.”

With their newest vehicle in place Grissom firefighters stand ready to handle emergencies.

In the limelight

Medals

Meritorious Service Medal – Master Sgt. Wayne Svantner, 434th Security Forces Squadron; Senior Master Sgt. Ray Boylan, 434th Operations Support Squadron; Senior Master Sgt. Rickie King, 434th SFS; Capt. Tenna Pershing, 434th Air Refueling Wing; and Senior Master Sgt. Bryan Mackey, 434th Maintenance Group.

Air Force Commendation Medal – Tech. Sgt. Brian Achenbach, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron; and Tech. Sgt. Eddie Stapp, 434th AMXS.

Air Force Achievement Medal – Tech. Sgt. Deborah Melton, 74th Air Refueling Squadron.

Promotions

To senior master sergeant – Matthew Zahradka, 434th Maintenance Squadron.

To master sergeant – Heidi Jenkins, 434th Maintenance Group; and Jason Jaszczemski, 434th MXS.

To technical sergeant – Annette Quattrocchi, 434th AMXS; Jessie Rood, 434th OSS; Zuriel Lund, 72nd Air Refueling Squadron; and Matthew Hall, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron.

To staff sergeant – Katie Gibson, 434th SFS; and James Bushman, 434th Logistics Readiness Squadron.

To senior airman – Brandon Prince, 434th Force Support Squadron; and David Decker, 434th MXS.

To airman first class – Nicholas Hushower, 434th AMXS; Scott Hunter, 434th AMXS; Kody Herbst, 434th MXS; and Emerson Bowling, 434th MXS.



Dentists helps honor WWII veterans

By Maj. Kelly Howard
Public Affairs staff

It's often said people are our greatest resource yet when one entire segment is becoming extinct at a rate of 1,000 members a day it's a race to honor them before it's too late.

"They (World War II veterans) were the greatest generation," said Lt. Col. (Dr.) Todd Martin, 434th Aerospace Medicine Squadron dentist, who chooses to recognize the significance of the group through his volunteer effort with Honor Flight Chicago. "I see it as a firm, firm duty and responsibility that these individuals are not only not forgotten but are still continued to be honored."

Honor Flight Chicago, a nonprofit founded in February 2008, provides veterans "with a day of honor, remembrance and celebration from a proud and grateful nation" as they fly a group once a month from Midway International Airport to Washington DC with full fanfare. It's a day they won't soon forget.

"This is very long day for the volunteers and veterans," said Martin. "Volunteers get there about 2 a.m. and veterans get there about 3:30 a.m. We send about 105 veterans on each flight – at no cost to the veteran. We have an escort for every veteran at the airport; imagine 105 wheelchairs being pushed through this procession of people and then boarded one-by-one onto the plane.

"I bond with them;
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Lt. Col. (Dr.) Todd Martin, a dentist with the 434th Aerospace Medicine squadron, joins a boy scout troop to welcome World War II veterans back to Chicago after a trip to Washington D.C. (Courtesy photo)

I've met a Battle of the Midway survivor; Battle of Iwo Jima survivors; amazing men; there was a Bataan Death March survivor – you are just honored to be in his presence," the colonel said. "As great as their morning send off is, they have no idea what awaits them upon return."

The colonel describes a massive homecoming, featuring hundreds of Sailors from Naval Great Lakes, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, ROTC units, Vietnam veterans, an all-service honor guard, USO senior staff, family members, Chicago Police and Fire Department bagpipers, community civic leaders, community members and welcome home signs and gifts.

"Two fire trucks shoot an arc of water over the flight as it enters the gate to salute the plane," he said. "We all fall out and into ranks (after deplaning and greeting each

veteran); usually I will lead the procession as the senior ranking officer and the place is going bonkers; it's as if Elvis has landed.

"The bagpipers lead us through this entire sea of people at what's now 10 o'clock at night," Martin said. "You have Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts up way past their bedtimes; World War II vets in their 80s and 90s who have been up since midnight and there isn't a dry eye in the place."

Honor Flight Chicago has flown nearly 2,108 veterans to Washington DC to see the World War II Memorial since 2008 with 10 flights in 2011. After nearly a year volunteering with the organization, Martin doesn't see any end in sight. The former Naval officer joined the Air Force after a 16-year break in service "purely for duty to country" and he views his volunteer efforts in a

similar light.

"My father was a World War II vet and I sit on the board of Operation Homefront for Illinois," said Martin, who has a private dental practice in the Chicago area. "I do this out of a sense of duty to them; these are people who made enormous sacrifices.

"Right now we're sitting around talking about whether or not a kid is going to get an iPod this year or a Wii even though we have thousands of people in harm's way," he continued. "Ford, General Motors, all the companies, stopped making cars for four to five years – it went to the war effort; it's a sacrifice I don't know if this country could make today to do what they did. We had some pretty good heroes back then."

Martin will be receiving the Air Force Volunteerism Ribbon in part for his active involvement with Honor Flight Chicago.

Fitness Center holds classes for seniors

Staff Sgt. Carl Berry

Public Affairs staff

You can't stop the aging process, but you can slow it down.

To help senior citizens slow down the aging process the Grissom Fitness Center has added two group fitness classes to their weekly schedule for military retirees. One of the group fitness classes is for senior couples and is held Tuesday and Thursday from 9-10 a.m., and the other class is for individuals is held Tuesday and Thursday from 1-2 p.m.

Research shows as people age its important to take part in physical activities that strengthen and grow muscles to prevent muscle mass from being replaced with fat.

"As the body ages, muscles naturally begin to lose their mass, and beginning around age 35 we start to lose our balance," said Juli Phelps, 434th Force Support Squadron exercise physiologist. "Inactivity can increase the rate at which this happens."

"Even though a senior citizens body may not be able to accomplish the physical feats it could when they were younger, there are still many physical activities that senior citizens can perform to stay healthy," said Phelps.

Participants in the classes have seen improvement in overall health to include a better tennis game, the ability to play with grandchildren on the floor, and less aches and pain throughout the day.

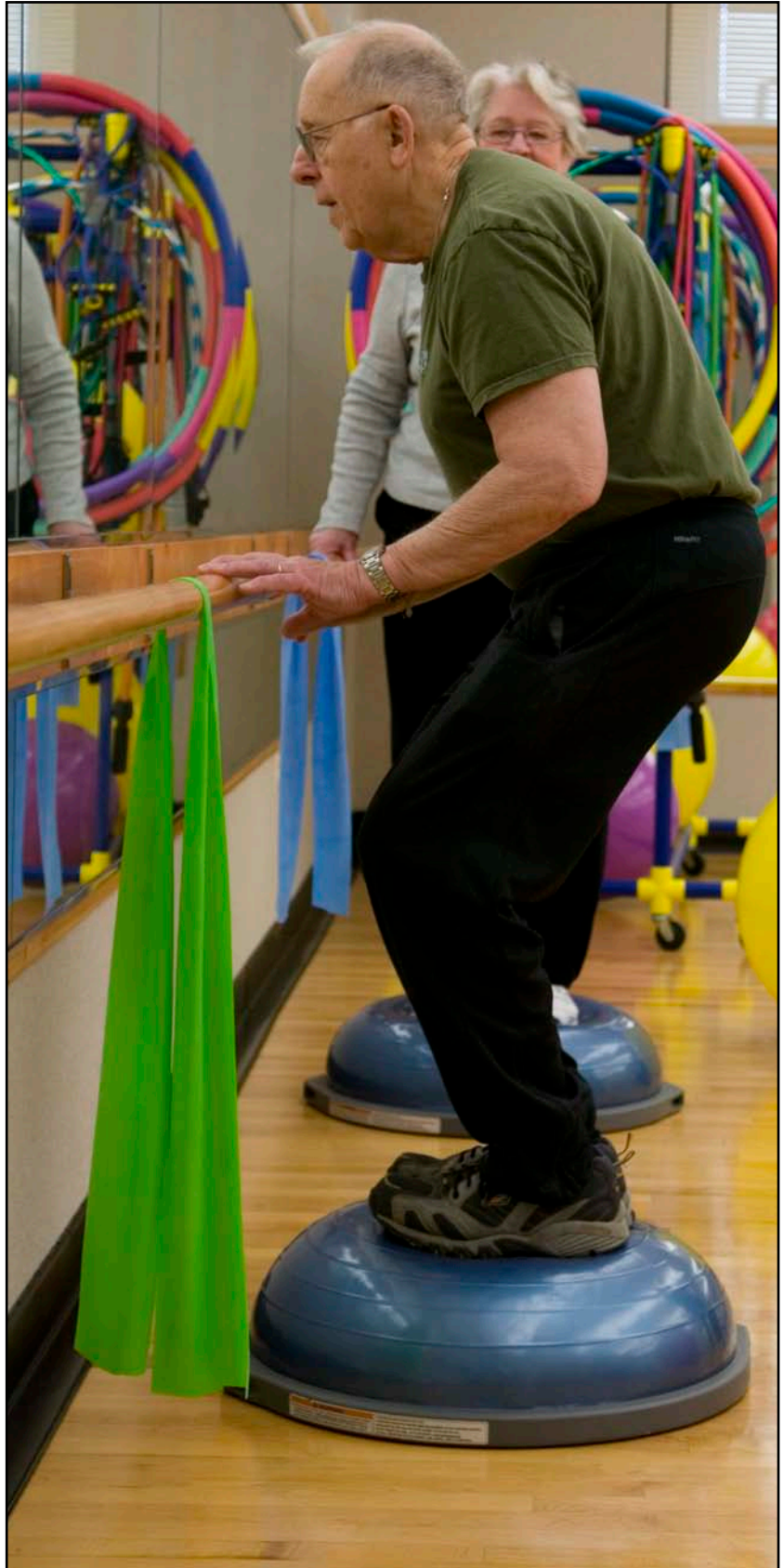
"What's so great about these workouts are they are free," said Sharon Morkal, a couple's class participant. "I used to have a membership at a local gym, but I would never use the equipment there, because I would be in so much pain afterward."

The workouts are designed to engage the core while working major body muscles, and most importantly to be fun.

"I really try and make the workouts fun, for example I will have the group warm up with weighted hula-hoops," said Phelps. "This not only gets their blood circulating, but also works their core muscles and hips."

Eligible seniors interested in joining a class should contact Phelps at 688-2987 to schedule an initial screening appointment.

"I like to first meet with all the participants in the class to find out what their fitness goals are, and to establish a workout plan," said Phelps. "Sometimes after this initial meeting I will schedule them for individual workouts, before placing them into the group class."



Ross and Sharon Morkal enjoy a couples exercise class taught by Juli Phelps, 434th Force Support Squadron exercise physiologist, at the Grissom fitness center. Flexibility and strengthening the core are very important to maintaining physically fit bodies for people of all ages. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Carl Berry)