

News Bytes

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Mississippi lawmakers consider new school funding formula

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Alabama plans to eliminate tolls en route to the beach

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Temporary pier in Gaza on track to be operational in May

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Congress presses Navy Leadership for answers on recruiting challenges

By Diana Stancy
Military Times

A lawmaker from the House Armed Services Committee grilled Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro Wednesday about how the Navy plans to rectify its challenges recruiting new sailors, after the service missed its recruitment goals for the first time ever in fiscal year 2023.

Difficulties attracting new recruits have persisted, and the Navy is expected to miss its accessions goal of 40,600 new sailors by roughly 6,700 this fiscal year. And while the other services hit at least 90 percent of their recruiting targets the first half of fiscal year 2024, the Navy obtained less than 70 percent of its recruiting goals

in that span of time.

“Why do you think the Navy has had so much more trouble hitting its recruiting goals than the Army or the Air Force?” Rep. Jim Banks, a Republican from Indiana, said during a House Armed Services Committee hearing Wednesday. “I don’t like the Navy losing to the Army or the Air Force in anything, especially when it comes to recruitment. Why are we struggling so much more than the other branches?”

Navy continues to struggle in recruiting as other services near goal

Del Toro explained that the Navy has increased its recruitment goals for fiscal year 2024 — up from the 37,700 target for the fiscal year 2023.

[Read more, click here](#)

NAS Sailors lend helping hand to local schools

From Staff Reports

Vegetables and flowers will be popping up in gardens at Northeast High School and Poplar Springs Elementary School thanks to the efforts of Sailors from Naval Technical Training Center Meridian and Naval Air Station Meridian.

Sailors recently partnered with the Leadership Lauderdale program to build wheelchair-accessible raised garden beds at both schools. Leadership Lauderdale is a program operated by the East Mississippi Business Development Corporation that works with community businesses and organizations through volunteerism.

“These garden beds will serve as a learning aid and teach students life skills,” EM1 Teresa Ruiz, NTTC Meridian. “Our efforts will help the schools in multiple ways, as several programs will use the raised beds we built.”

The garden beds will serve as a learning aid and teach students life skills. The gardens will allow the CTE Nutrition and Wellness students to utilize the produce from the garden for cooking and practicing safe food



Submitted photo

NAS Meridian Sailors prepare to build a raised garden box that will be located at Northeast High School and Poplar Springs Elementary.

handling procedures.

“I felt like we helped inspire the students and this was a perfect way to give back to the community,” said HT1 Dustin Zunker.

Other ways the project will help the schools include:

- Enhancing self-contained special educa-

tion classes as the plants they care can reinforce life skills such as cooking, food sanitation, practical math and reading.

- Helping students achieve their social-emotional goals by promoting social interactions and relationship building with their classmates.
- Fostering a community-minded school; students in the regular education track will train with self-contained classes.
- Allowing Art classes to repurpose discarded materials, such as old filing cabinets and fencing into aesthetically pleasing and functional flowerbeds and trellises.
- Allowing Northeast High School Science Club meet their goal for increasing their overall contribution to community service by helping to maintain and promote the garden.

Installation personnel who participated in this program include -- HT1 Dustin Zunker, MMA1 Chris Shaw, AZ1 Dylan Roberts, AZ1 Tinamarie Anthony, LS1 Calvin Wright, YNC Timothy Mitchell, CMDCM Cole Branam Cole, YNCM Amy Madrigal, EM1 Teresa Ruiz, BM1 Brandon Miller, MA1 Calvin Green, RSCS Sulificio Anza, LSC Shane Graf and LS1 David Balog.

MWD Dona Retirement



Photo by MA1 Calvin Green

MA2 Jalen Wilson and MA2 Stephen Todd, members of the Security Forces Kennel Masters Department onboard NAS Meridian, formally retire Military Working Dog Dona, April 23. Dona is 6 1/2-year-old German Shepherd who will be adopted by her handler, MA2 Todd.

Earth Day Cleanup



Photo by Cliff Mayatt

Navy, Marine and civilian volunteers participate in the 2024 Annual Earth Day Celebration clean up and beautification efforts onboard and just outside Naval Air Station Meridian, April 22. The Earth Day clean up and beautification efforts were led by the Public Works Department’s (PWD) Environmental Division. Volunteers removed 1 Ton of debris from the former golf course and picked up 14 bags of trash on Rabbit Rd, between the Main Gate and Commercial Gate (approx. 1.73 miles), supporting the DON Earth Day message of “Communities, Critical Infrastructure, and Climate Action.”

Nine aviators earn 'Wings of Gold' in April pinning ceremony

There was a naval aviator designation ceremony April 26 onboard Naval Air Station Meridian.

Nine aviators received their "Wings of Gold" during the ceremony. The naval aviator designation ceremony is not prescribed specifically by U.S. Navy regulations, but has emerged as an honored product of the rich heritage of naval tradition. It marks the culmination of nearly two years of specialized training, which has prepared these officers for the rigorous demands of aerial combat and carrier operations -- earning each the title of "Naval Aviator" and the right to wear the coveted "Wings of Gold."



LTJG Brandon Augustin



LTJG Grant Birindelli



LTJG Travis Dill



1STLT Mihir Gite



LTJG Alan Lewis



LTJG Samuel Mastin



LTJG Cesare Torregiani



LT Tyler Williams



LTJG Samuel Zimmer

Golden Stick



Laura Carmichael, President of the Mississippi Council of the Navy League, left, presents LTJG Alan Lewis with the Golden Stick award during a winging ceremony in the Chapel onboard NAS Meridian, April 26. The Golden Stick is awarded to the student with the highest composite score during training.

Photo by Adam Prince

The Skyline ~ Naval Air Station Meridian, Miss.

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CDR Epps Retirement



Photo by Adam Prince

CDR Jamie Epps, NAS Meridian executive officer, is piped ashore following his retirement ceremony in the Hangar onboard NAS Meridian, April 26.

MACS Kelley Retirement



Photo by MC2 Molly Tice

MACS Jeremy Kelley salutes the National Ensign during a retirement ceremony in the Navy Reserve Center onboard NAS Meridian, April 19.

May is Motorcycle Safety Month

From Office of SECNAV

May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month! As the weather improves and more motorcycles are on the road, let us take this time to focus our efforts, increase our communications, and emphasize the importance of motorcycle safety. It is imperative that we are vigilant about proper riding techniques, appropriate type and wear of personal protective equipment, and awareness of our riding environment (i.e., weather, traffic, terrain, and surface) to optimize the riding experience.

Motorcycle safety is essential to everyone who drives on the road for two reasons: First, you likely have family, friends, or shipmates who ride motorcycles. Second, you share the road with motorcycles daily on your local roadways, highways, and neighborhoods.

According to the Department of Transportation, per vehicle miles traveled, the fatality rate for motorcycle riders was approximately 28 times that of drivers and passengers in cars. Unfortunately, the Department of the Navy (DON) has realized similar tragic statistics. As of the release of this ALNAV, the DON has lost 18 of

our Sailors and Marines (10 x Navy, 8 x Marines) to motorcycle crashes since October 2023. This number is more than we have lost due to on-duty mishaps and almost twice the number from fatalities of 4-wheel motor vehicle mishaps.

Take an extra moment to look for motorcycle riders. Because of its small size, a motorcycle can be easily hidden in a car's blind spots, so check - then check again - before changing lanes or turning.

Predict a motorcycle's proximity. Because of its small size, a motorcycle may look further away than it is and it may be difficult to judge its speed. When checking traffic to turn at an intersection, or out of a driveway, assume a motorcycle is closer than it appears.

Keep a safe distance. Motorcycle riders often slow down by rolling off the throttle or downshifting, which does not activate the brake light, so allow more following distance (recommend three - four seconds).

For more information, visit United States Department of Transportation at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/> or Motorcycle Safety Foundation at <https://msf-usa.org/>

Local Happenings

MAY

3: Full Moon on 5th from 6-9 p.m. on 5th Street between 22nd and 23rd Ave in downtown Meridian. Call 601-480-6100 or visit <https://www.acesmeridian.org/>

11: Soule' Spring Steam-Up from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Soule Steam Feed Works. The Industrial Heritage Museum @ Historic Soule' Steam Feed Works invites you to the 2nd Annual Soule' Spring Steam-Up. Call 601-693-9905 or visit <https://www.industrialheritagemuseum.com>

18: BBQ Sale starting at noon at the Fleet Reserve Association, HWY 39 Meridian. Call Heather at 601-604-4772.

16-19: U.S. 11 Antique Alley Enjoy the southern route along scenic US Highway 11 from Meridian, Mississippi, to Bristol, Virginia, for more than 500 miles of yard sales and antiques! Treasure hunt along the back roads on May 16 - 19, 2024, for our annual yard sale that includes thousands of vendors and over 30,000 attendees. Call 601-917-4096 or visit <https://www.msantiquealley.com/>

24: Memorial Day Ceremony from 10-11 a.m. at the East Mississippi Veterans Park. Memorial Day Ceremony at the East Mississippi Veterans Park adjacent to Meridian's historical Key Field. Call 601-480-0293.

Area Happenings

MAY

3: Foo Fighters at 11 a.m. at 1751 Gentilly Blvd, New Orleans. Visit <https://www.fairgroundsracecourse.com/>

17: Armed Forces Block Party from 5:30-8:30 p.m. at the Sixth Street Museum District's African American Military History Museum at 305 East Sixth Street, Hattiesburg. Free to the public; call 601-450-1942.

19: Taco Fest 2024 from 1-7 p.m. at the Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark, Sloss Music & Arts Festival, Birmingham. Visit <https://allevents.in/birmingham/birmingham-taco-fest-2024/200026189680622>

Sale... Or

BOATS/CAMPERS/TRAILERS

21 foot - 2021 Jayco Travel Camper. Like new; beige & walnut interior and mattress kept in original plastic. Selling to upgrade to larger size - Price is \$15,000 some accessories included. To view or request pics please contact: Gary 601-575-5062.

2018 Mallard M185 Travel Trailer. Sleeps 4 with 1 queen bed/2 bunks. Easy to tow at 3,575 lbs; only selling because military member is moving overseas. Great living quarters with lake view. Hooked up and ready to live in, including cables, hoses, plus the \$500 tow-

ing kit. Asking \$17,000. Call 360-434-3035.

AUTOMOBILES, ETC.

2018 Subaru Outback 2.5 limited, 12k miles; Subaru safety features and warranties included. Asking \$29k. Call 601-480-5100.

2017 Dodge Challenger, grey with racing stripe. \$24k. Call 601-880-3237.

HOMES/APARTMENTS

For Rent: 4 BD/2.5 BA home 3632 sq ft, just over 6 acres with workshop attached to 2-car carport. Owners will consider a lease of 12-36 months, and rent is negotiable the longer the term. Call (601)

517-1707 or (601) 517-1707.

For Rent: 3BD /2BA home near North Hills. Spacious yard, concrete patio for gatherings, home gym and covered car garage. Rent \$1,100 per month. Call Jeremy at 601-410-8555.

For Rent: 3 BD/1.5 BA home 15 minutes from NAS at 4814 36th Ave. New refrigerator and 2-year old AC & furnace. Call Terrance at 469-318-9769.

For Rent: 3 BD/1.5 BA with another room used as a gym. All kitchen appliances included. Large backyard. Address 145 Skyland Drive, Meridian.

About 25 minutes to Navy Base. \$900 per month, with \$900 deposit. Available Aug. 1. No pets. Call 601-490-0849.

For Rent: 3BD/2BD home near Causeville Road. Furnished in quiet neighborhood. \$900 per month. 954-895-5485, 601-692-4048 or 606-571-0820.

For Rent: Water front home in Dalewood. Spacious two-story home facing the Lake; great for fishing and relaxing. Remodeled kitchen and new appliances. Rent is \$1,800; please call 813-406-9687.

For Sale: 3BD/2BA Home with 2,560 sq. ft.

Sits on 1 & 1/2 lots on dead end with privacy woods on 3 sides. Asking \$180,000. Contact: lucindawnichols@gmail.com, call 601-527-7829 or 601-917-6145.

For Sale By Owner: 3BD/3BA brick home with sunroom, large fenced in yard. Convenient to shopping and base. \$139K. Call 601-513-3395 or 601-227-1870.

MISCELLANEOUS

For Sale: Husqvarna RZ 4623 Zero Turn Mower. 46 inch cut. \$1250. Call 601-616-4242.

For Sale: 3BD/2BA Home with 2,560 sq. ft.

601-934-1866 or 601-679-8112. Has installation access; can take children to school and pick up and available days, nights and weekends.

Event Space for Rent: Deer Creek Banquet Hall. 6000 sq. ft. indoor with 1600 sq. ft. outdoor spaces for rent for gatherings and events. Call Reginald at 251-455-1559.

To submit an item to the "Sale...Or" column, e-mail adam.w.prince.civ@us.navy.mil. Deadline is the Wednesday prior to publication.

IKE Carrier Strike Group arrives in the Eastern Mediterranean

The Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group (IKECSG) arrived in the Eastern Mediterranean while on a pre-announced Department of Defense deployment, April 26.

The Nimitz-class nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Gravelly (DDG 107) entered the Eastern Mediterranean after transiting through the Suez Canal, April 26.

CSGs bring to the region additional aviation and surface assets, providing greater flexibility and maritime capability to the U.S. 6th Fleet.

"The Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier

Strike Group has delivered exceptional naval power in the U.S. 5th Fleet for the last five months," said Rear Adm. Marc Miguez, commander, CSG-2, IKECSG. "Reentry into the U.S. 6th Fleet is only a small gesture of our ability to project combat superiority to any part of the globe."

While operating in the U.S. 5th Fleet, the IKECSG conducted operations in the Red Sea, Bab Al-Mandeb Strait, Gulf of Aden and Arabian Gulf including Operation Prosperity Guardian and self-defensive strikes into Iranian-backed Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

-- From US Navy

[Read more, click here](#)

Keel authenticated for future USNS Hector A. Cafferata Jr.

The keel for the future USNS Hector A. Cafferata Jr. (ESB 8), a Lewis B. Puller-class Expeditionary Sea Base, was laid at GD NASSCO shipyard April 25. The ship will be named for U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Private Hector A. Cafferata Jr., who served with distinction during the Korean War.

The ship will be named for U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Private Hector A. Cafferata Jr., who served with distinction during the Korean War. Surviving the Battle of Chosin Reservoir among those who would be called, "the Chosin Few," Cafferata received the Medal of Honor from President Harry S. Truman

for his life-saving heroism during that battle.

The contemporary keel laying ceremony represents the joining together of a ship's modular components at the land level. As part of the ceremony, the keel is authenticated when the sponsors etch their initials into a ceremonial keel plate. The namesake's daughter, Heather Cafferata, and granddaughter, Jessica Cafferata, attended the keel laying ceremony as the ship sponsors. The ceremony represents the connection between a ship and its sponsors, throughout the ship's life.

-- From Team Ships Public Affairs

[Read more, click here](#)

Federal trial begins for Red Hill water contamination

The U.S. government said Monday it took responsibility for jet fuel that leaked into a Navy water system serving 93,000 people in 2021, but attorneys dispute whether the families who are suing were exposed to enough tainted water to make them sick.

A trial for a mass environmental injury case began in federal court in Honolulu on Monday, more than two years after a U.S. military fuel tank facility under ground poisoned thousands of people when it leaked jet fuel into Pearl Harbor's drinking water.

Instead of a jury, a judge is hear-

ing about a lawsuit against the United States by 17 "bellwether" plaintiffs: a cross-selection of relatives of military members representing more than 7,500 others, including service members, in three federal lawsuits.

According to court documents, the U.S. government has admitted the Nov. 20, 2021, spill at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility caused a nuisance for the plaintiffs, that the United States "breached its duty of care" and that the plaintiffs suffered compensable injuries.

-- By Jennifer Sinco Kelleher

[Read more, click here](#)

Listings in the "Sale...Or" column are free for anyone who works at NAS Meridian. To include your announcement, email adam.w.prince.civ@us.navy.mil



Photo by Cliff Mayatt/PW

Jeff Mangrum, Installation Wildlife Biologist, wrangles a Timber Rattlesnake found onboard NAS Meridian, April 22. If you encounter a snake, or other dangerous animal on the installation please contact Public Works or the CDO.

2023 Consumer Confidence Report

2023 ANNUAL CONSUMER CONFIDENCE REPORT (CCR)
ANNUAL WATER QUALITY

NAVAL AIR STATION, MERIDIAN
NAVFAC SE, DETACHMENT, PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
Water Treatment Facility (MSD# PWS ID # 0380026)
229 Allen Road Meridian, MS 39069 (Lauderdale County)

April 24, 2024

We are pleased to present our 2023 Annual Consumer Confidence Report for Water Quality as required by the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) for the consumers of Naval Air Station (NAS), Meridian. We are proud to announce there are no violations to report and all sample test results are within required specifications. This report is a snapshot of our water quality and provides you with details about where it comes from and what it may contain. We are committed to ensuring the quality of your water is within the safe drinking water limits, as set forth by the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). We are continually striving to improve the water treatment process and to protect our water resources. The MSDH and the Certified Operators of NAS Meridian periodically monitor more than 90 different organic and inorganic contaminants routinely and periodically, per Federal and State statutes, rules, and regulations.

We want to keep you informed and up to date about the water quality and service we provide. For your review, the 2023 Water Quality Data Table below contains the results of our sample testing for contaminants between January 1 to December 31, 2023, unless otherwise noted. The EPA and MSDH have a set schedule for some test samples, others are routine daily or monthly testing. All results are reported using the most recent test samples taken in accordance with MSDH and EPA testing protocols and schedule requirements. For a brief explanation of acronyms and terms used throughout this report, see the reference table on page 4.

In order to ensure that tap water is safe to drink, EPA prescribes regulations for allowable limits for contaminants in water provided by public water systems, as all sources of drinking water, both tap water and bottled water, including all bodies of water and man-made wells contain traces of naturally occurring or manmade contaminants. As water travels it dissolves naturally occurring minerals and may pick up substances or contaminants such as microbes, inorganic and organic compounds, and very rarely, radioactive substances. Most contaminants are detected at extremely low levels and typically are not considered to be harmful, such as fluoride, sodium, and potassium, which adds nutritional value and improves the taste.

Our water is sourced by the Wilcox Aquifer and treated in a "treatment train" (a series of processes applied in a sequence) that includes coagulation, flocculation, sedimentation, filtration, and disinfection. Coagulation removes dirt and other particles suspended in the source water by adding chemicals (coagulants) to form tiny sticky particles called "floc," which attract the dirt particles. Flocculation (the formation of larger flocs from smaller flocs) is achieved using gentle, constant mixing. The heavy particles settle naturally out of the water in a sedimentation basin. The clear water then moves to the filtration process where the water passes through sand, gravel, charcoal or other filters that remove even smaller particles. A small amount of chlorine or other disinfection method is used to kill bacteria and other microorganisms (viruses, cysts, etc.) that may be in the water before water is stored and distributed throughout NAS Meridian and Base Housing. Our source water assessment has been conducted and the results are available at the office. If you would like to learn more about these reports or have any concerns about the quality of your water, please contact: William D. Chisolm or Merrill Harvitt at +(601) 679-2151, 0606-1630, Mos. - Fr.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Deputy Public Works Officer - +(601) 679-2940 or Maintenance Supervisor - +(601) 679-2530. We ask that all our consumers help us preserve and protect our water sources, which are the heart of our community, our way of life, and our children's future.

Sincerely,
Brandon D. Maxwell
BRANDON D. MAXWELL
Deputy Public Works Officer,
Water Plant Owner of Record

To read full 2023 CCR, click here

HEAT PET SAFETY!

SHADE & WATER
Protect your pet's from the sun's rays and keep them hydrated.

NO CARS
Never leave a pet in the car, not even with the window cracked.

HEAT STROKE
Excessive panting, discolored gums, and mobility problems are signs. Seek veterinary attention immediately!

NO ASPHALT
If it's too hot for bare feet, it's too hot for bare paws.

LIMIT EXERCISE
Don't let playful pets over exert themselves in the heat.

Warmer weather brings increased snakes activity

By Jeff Mangrum
NAS Meridian Public Works

As temperatures begin warming in the spring, reptiles become more active and likely to be seen. The snake is one type of reptile that most people fear and misunderstand.

Of the more than 50 species of snakes in Mississippi -- only six species are venomous. Those venomous species include the copperhead, eastern cottonmouth, eastern coral snake, and the pygmy, timber and eastern diamondback rattlesnakes. So, you are much more likely to encounter a non-venomous snake than one that has venom.

What can you do to lessen the chance that you will encounter a snake?

Stay out of high weeds and maintain a mowed lawn with trimmed shrubs and bushes. Snakes prefer areas that are overgrown and that may harbor some of their prey, such as rodents.

Be careful when moving certain items (big rocks, firewood, tarps, debris piles, etc.) or cleaning out your garage. Snakes prefer to be in the shade and may crawl under these items to remain cool during the hot summer months.

Be extra careful when walking, jogging, hiking, or biking during the night or around dawn and dusk, especially in the more remote areas on Station, since many snakes are nocturnal (active at night).

What should you do if you see a snake on Station? Do not approach it. Enjoy watching it from a distance.

The majority of people who are bitten by snakes are struck while trying to harass or kill a snake. The best policy is to avoid confronting a snake and give it wide berth.

If you see a snake in a populated area on Station and need assistance during the workday, you can call Kevin Bailey at 601-604-6873 or Jeff Mangrum at 601-679-3539. On weekends and after hours, call the CDO at 601-695-7055.

My garden masterpiece: I fought the lawn, the lawn won

Every year, when the forsythia is in bloom and the neighborhood greens up with tender blades of new grass, I can't wait to escape the chilly confines of our drafty old house and head outdoors.

COLUMN



Molinari

Admittedly, I romanticize this annual occurrence, envisioning myself dreamily stepping barefoot onto the lawn, wearing a flowing sundress and a straw hat, and carrying a basket for placing freshly picked flowers. Like some kind of suburban Snow White, I picture baby bunnies at my feet, tweeting robins landing on my shoulders, and cheeky squirrels scampering along bud-studded tree limbs nearby.

I prepare for my springtime sojourn by buying myself a spiffy new pair of gardening gloves, along with a surprisingly overpriced array of horticultural items such as grass seed, lime, fertilizer,

loam, planting soil, annuals, perennials, vegetables, shrubs, bulbs, tomato cages, plant stakes, fence stakes, hardware cloth, weed block, ethanol-free fuel, grub killer, and at least four cubic yards of mulch.

The credit card bill won't come for a month, so I remain blissfully in denial of my reckless spending, and resolve to occupy the entire weekend gardening. Besides, after almost three decades of active duty military life, during which we lived for many years in base housing practically devoid of permissible planting spaces, I deserve to indulge my gardening fantasies.

During the first sunny weekend in mid-April, I burst from our front door, donning my new gardening gloves. Standing on our porch surveying the blank canvas of our neglected yard, I detect the aroma of soil, grass, and fragrant flowering trees. I hear birds chirping and bees buzzing. I see tulips, daffodils, and verdant shoots of lilies and irises waving gently in the breeze. My mouth waters, anticipating the icy cold beer I'll drink at the end of the day, after I've transformed our yard into Epcot.

I close my eyes and inhale deeply, allowing the fresh spring air to fill the depths of my overwintered lungs while

envisioning the Monet-esque garden masterpiece I will soon create. "A-CHOO!" I emit involuntarily, knocking myself off balance and temporarily silencing the birds. "Must've inhaled a gnat." I conclude, completely ignorant of the histamine reaction that will soon turn my sinuses into a veritable swamp.

I tromp off the porch and into the yard, ready to begin. But I stop, realizing there are many things to do. Cut grass, weed wack, rake beds, trim shrubs, edge sidewalks, pull weeds, erect barriers, fertilize, treat, mulch, prune, plow, and plant. "Where do I start?" I wonder.

A pungent odor wafts up to my nostrils, and I glance down at my shoe. "First task -- pick up doggy doo." Thirty minutes later, I've filled an entire shopping bag, convinced that our yellow lab has secretly been ordering Uber Eats.

Despite nearly dislocating my shoulder starting the lawn equipment, I mow, trim, blow, and bag the clippings, while wearing safety glasses so scratched, I can't see that my lines aren't straight. While digging weeds in the vegetable garden, my nose begins a drip that will last a month. While planting the azaleas, I develop a limp reminiscent

of Quasimodo. While hacking at a root, my tennis elbow flares. While under the hedges, my knee locks up.

Exhausted and seizing in hip, knee, neck, elbow, back and shoulder pains, I collect my garden tools, checking behind me to see if I've left my vertebrae, meniscus, or uterus in the yard somewhere. I decide I can put one small finishing touch on my garden before knocking off. I spread a bit of mulch around the mailbox, only to have a sudden breeze blow the shredded wood bits into my eye.

Two weeks later, my garden masterpiece still isn't complete. I've been too busy taking allergy meds for incessant post nasal drip. I had to ask my foot doctor for a cortisone shot for my limp. When my eye swelled up, a nurse practitioner at urgent care prescribed antibiotics for an eye infection. And thanks to all the Ben Gay I've slathered over my aching joints, I can't smell the flowers anyway.

I'll get back out into my garden eventually, because if you give a weed an inch, it'll take a yard.

Lisa Smith Molinari's self syndicated columns appear on her blog, www.themeatandpotatoesoflife.com and she recently co-authored *Stories Around the Table: Laughter, Wisdom, and Strength in Military Life* Follow Lisa@MolinariWrites.



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CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

TRIP TO NAVAL AVIATION MUSEUM IN PENSACOLA, FLORIDA

May 18A • 0800-1600

2024 US ON A TRIP TO THE NAVAL AVIATION MUSEUM IN PENSACOLA, FLORIDA

RESERVED FROM 0800-1600

TRIP IS \$10 PER PERSON

AGES OF 13+ TO REGISTER

8:00-10:00AM ONLY

Game Night at Liberty

May 14 • 1800 • Liberty Center

Join us to play Mario Kart Deluxe on the Nintendo Switch!

MARIOKART DELUXE

Spring 5K Fun Run

May 16 • 1700 • Fitness Center

Scan for details!

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