

414th BSB – Büdingen, Hanau

War Lions celebrate return from Iraq

By David Ruderman
104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

Hundreds of Soldiers and family members of 485th Corps Support Battalion congregated on Hanau's Hutier Kaserne May 14 to mark the return of the battalion's last members from Iraq. The Darmstadt-based 596th Maintenance Company arrived in Germany May 10 with the final few 485th CSB Soldiers who brought up the rear guard of the redeploying force.

"We thank you for bringing us back safely. We thank you for the dedication and endurance of these men and women assembled here today. May those who are fallen be at peace with you," said Chaplain (Capt.) Ferdinand Madu during the invocation. "Look upon the fervor of our activities today as thanks to you and everlasting praise. Amen."

"Fall out. Relax. I'm welcoming you back. I don't want to split the families up — I just got you back," said Lt. Col. Paul D. Brown, 485th CSB commander, as he urged spouses, children and friends to join their Soldiers in formation on the Hutier softball field. In addition to the 596th Maintenance Company, Soldiers and family from the 77th Maintenance Company, 71st Ordnance Company, 26th Quartermaster Supply Company, and Company A and Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 485th CSB, took part in the ceremony.

Dressed in civilian clothes, with spouses and children at hand, the Soldiers stood under balmy spring

skies before moving on to a morning of sports events and a barbecue.

"I am proud of all you Soldiers and the families that endured their absence — brave Soldiers marching into the unknown to serve their country, their Army and their buddies. Many of these Soldiers saw the tragic face of war. Standing among you are Soldiers who faced the enemy on a daily basis," said Brown.

They also saw the bright faces of Iraqi children whose schools the Soldiers helped rebuild, the gratitude of the common people they transported for dental services with American medical teams and the smiles of local men who earned dignified livelihoods working for the coalition forces, he said.

Heart of the COSCOM awards were presented to over a dozen Family Readiness Group leaders who helped families on the home front cope with the yearlong deployment. "The support we got from home truly makes us one team to make the world a better place — knowing you were here supporting us with your thoughts and your prayers. We couldn't have done it without you," said Brown.

Minute of silence

Soldiers and family members observed a minute of silence in memory of three battalion Soldiers who lost their lives in Iraq. The battalion also awarded 30 Purple Hearts to Soldiers wounded in the line of duty. While the Germany-based battalion typically comprises a little over 800 Soldiers, those num-



Photo by Dennis Johnson

Lt. Col. Paul D. Brown and his wife, Mary Beth Johansen (right), chat with 26th Quartermaster Supply Company Family Readiness Group leader, Jasmine Irvin, during the welcome home celebration.

bers doubled in Iraq because of active and Reserve forces attached to the battalion.

"It feels great to be back in a civilized area," said Spc. Charlie Long of 71st Ordnance after the ceremony. "The toughest part was moving around as much as we did. The whole war we were jumping from place to place." His unit traveled in support of 127th Field Artillery of the Kansas Army National Guard, he said. "They fired 191 ATACM [Army Tactical Missile System] missiles. They couldn't have done it without our support."

"It wasn't that bad," said Pfc. Tiffany Sellers, of 71st Ordnance. "I was on guard duty with Company A. I went on the roads four times from Taji to Anaconda, and I made three trips into the village with the QRF [Quick Reaction Force]. The only thing that scared me was that there was lots of stuff going on with people standing on roofs and kids pulling at your weapon. I felt sorry for some of them."

The hardest part of the deployment was "not knowing what was going to happen," said Sellers, from Mayo, Fla. "I saw IEDs go off. Mortar

rounds hit the guard tower two towers down from me. Lucky for us they can't shoot. I prayed and my family prayed and I made it back."

"The ride was too long, to and from, but I'm a Soldier regardless. I can't wait to get home to see my family," said Pfc. Casandra Jones, a cook with 596th Maintenance Company, who calls Mangham, La., home.

Officers and Soldiers expressed solidarity with the Soldiers and Marines who continue the mission.

"If they go, be careful, look out. Make it out like we did," said Jones.

In memoriam

The 485th Corps Support Battalion lost three Soldiers during Operation Iraqi Freedom, two of them from stateside units attached to the battalion.

Spc. Roy Russell Buckley, 24, of Portage, Ind., and 685th Transportation Company, Hobart, Ind., fell off a moving M-818 truck and died of his injuries April 22, 2003.

Spc. Darryl T. Dent, 21, of Washington, D.C., and 547th Transportation Company, U.S. Army National Guard, Washington, D.C., died Aug. 26, 2003, when his convoy was attacked with an IED near Ar-Ramadi.

Pfc. Leroy Harris-Kelly, 20, of 596th Maintenance Company, and Azusa, Calif., died April 20, 2004, in a road accident north of Tallil.



It's out of here

Sean Rafferty of the Hanau Community Softball Team belts a three-run homer during two-pitch play on Pioneer Kaserne May 16. Rafferty's team beat a 709th Military Police Battalion squad 11-6 in one of seven games played to help the 502nd Engineer Company raise funds for its participation in this year's Nijmegen march.

Photo by David Ruderman



Bulletin board

At the movies May 25 to June 3

Baumholder, Wagon Wheel

May 25 — Starsky And Hutch (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 May 26-27 — Hidalgo (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 May 28 — Man On Fire (R) 7 p.m.
 May 29 — Disney's Teacher's Pet (PG) 4 p.m. Man On Fire (R) 7 p.m.
 May 30 — Disney's Teacher's Pet (PG) 4 p.m. Secret Window (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 May 31 — Pearl Harbor (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 June 3 — Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights (PG-13) 7 p.m.

Büdingen, Little

May 29 — Confessions Of A Teenage Drama Queen (PG) 3 p.m.

Dexheim, Rhein

May 28 — Secret Window (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 May 29 — Laws Of Attraction (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 May 30 — Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights (PG-13) 3 p.m.

Friedberg, Old Ironsides

May 27 — Hidalgo (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 May 28 — Home On The Range (PG) 7 p.m.
 May 29 — Home On The Range (PG) 2 and 7 p.m.
 May 30 — Agent Cody Banks 2: Destination London (PG) 7 p.m.
 June 3 — Secret Window (PG-13) 7 p.m.

Giessen, Skyline

May 25 — The Ladykillers (R) 7 p.m.
 May 26 — Scooby-Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed (PG) 7 p.m.
 May 28 — Secret Window (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 May 29 — Scooby-Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed (PG) 7 p.m.
 May 30 — You Got Served (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 June 1-2 — Home On The Range (PG) 7 p.m.

Hanau, Evening Star

May 25 — Hidalgo (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 May 26 — Starsky And Hutch (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 May 27 — Agent Cody Banks 2: Destination London (PG) 7 p.m.
 May 28 — Troy (R) 7 p.m. Secret Window



A large wooden horse containing seasoned warriors is not exactly what the citizens of Troy expected when discovering a "gift" outside the gates of their city in the movie "Troy."

(PG-13) 9:30 p.m.
 May 29 — Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights (PG-13) 7 p.m. Troy (R) 9:30 p.m.
 May 30 — Troy (R) 7 p.m.
 May 31 — Secret Window (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 June 1 — Spartan (R) 7 p.m.
 June 2 — Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 June 3 — Spartan (R) 7 p.m.

Rhein Main, Gardens

May 26 — Van Helsing (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 May 28 — Spartan (R) 7 p.m.
 May 29 — Secret Window (PG-13) 5 p.m. Man On Fire (R) 7:30 p.m.
 May 30 — Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 June 2 — Troy (R) 7 p.m.

Wackernheim, McCully

May 26 — Man On Fire (R) 7 p.m.

Wiesbaden, Flyers

May 27 — Van Helsing (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 May 28 — Secret Window (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 May 29 — Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 June 3 — Troy (R) 7 p.m.

Wiesbaden, Taunus

May 25 — Agent Cody Banks 2: Destination London (PG) 7 p.m.
 May 26 — Hidalgo (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 May 27 — Starsky And Hutch (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 May 28 — Van Helsing (PG-13) 7 p.m. Spartan (R) 9:30 p.m.
 May 29 — Agent Cody Banks 2: Destination London (PG) 4 p.m. Secret Window (PG-13) 7 p.m. Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights (PG-13) 9 p.m.
 May 30 — Confessions Of A Teenage Drama Queen (PG) 4 p.m. Van Helsing (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 May 31 — Secret Window (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 June 1 — Van Helsing (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 June 2 — Secret Window (PG-13) 7 p.m.
 June 3 — Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights (PG-13) 7 p.m.



John Turturro (left) stars as a psychotic stranger stalking Johnny Depp, an author he believes stole a story he wrote in the Stephen King thriller, "Secret Window."

Unfortunately, AAFES was unable to provide the second week of the movies (June 4-10) as this issue went to press. For the most current schedule visit the ASG's website (see address below).

Movie plots

Troy (R) — This epic chronicle of the Trojan War begins as the passion of lovers Prince Paris of Troy (Orlando Bloom) and Queen Helen of Sparta (Diane Kruger) ignites a war between the Trojans and the united tribes of Greece. When the two civilizations clash, renowned warrior Achilles (Brad Pitt) emerges as the key to the Greeks' victory or defeat over the Trojan Army, led by Troy's noble champion, Prince Hector (Eric Bana).

Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights (PG-13)

— Set in 1958 Havana, this is the story of a lonely 17-year-old American girl (Romola Garai) who moves to Cuba right before the revolution with her parents. She meets a talented local dancer (Diego Luna) who encourages her to discover her natural dancing abilities. This leads to an exciting climax as Castro's forces take control and Americans are forced to leave Cuba.

Agent Cody Banks 2: Destination London (PG)

— Frankie Muniz returns as a super-cool spy in this sequel. A rogue CIA agent (and Cody's trainer) has stolen a top secret mind-control device, and Cody must go undercover in London to get it back.

Secret Window (PG-13)

— Based on Stephen King's "Two Past Midnight: Secret Window, Secret Garden," this is about a writer (Johnny Depp) going through a painful divorce who is stalked by a psychotic stranger (John Turturro) who claims the writer stole his story. To force the writer to make amends, the stranger will go to any lengths, including murder.

Van Helsing (PG-13)

— Monster hunter Dr. Abraham Van Helsing (Hugh Jackman) is summoned to a mysterious land in Eastern Europe to vanquish evil forces including Count Dracula (Richard Roxburgh), the Wolf Man (Will Kemp) and Frankenstein's Monster (Schuler Hensley). Assisting him is Anna (Kate Beckinsale), the heir of a long-running family committed to hunting down and destroying Dracula.

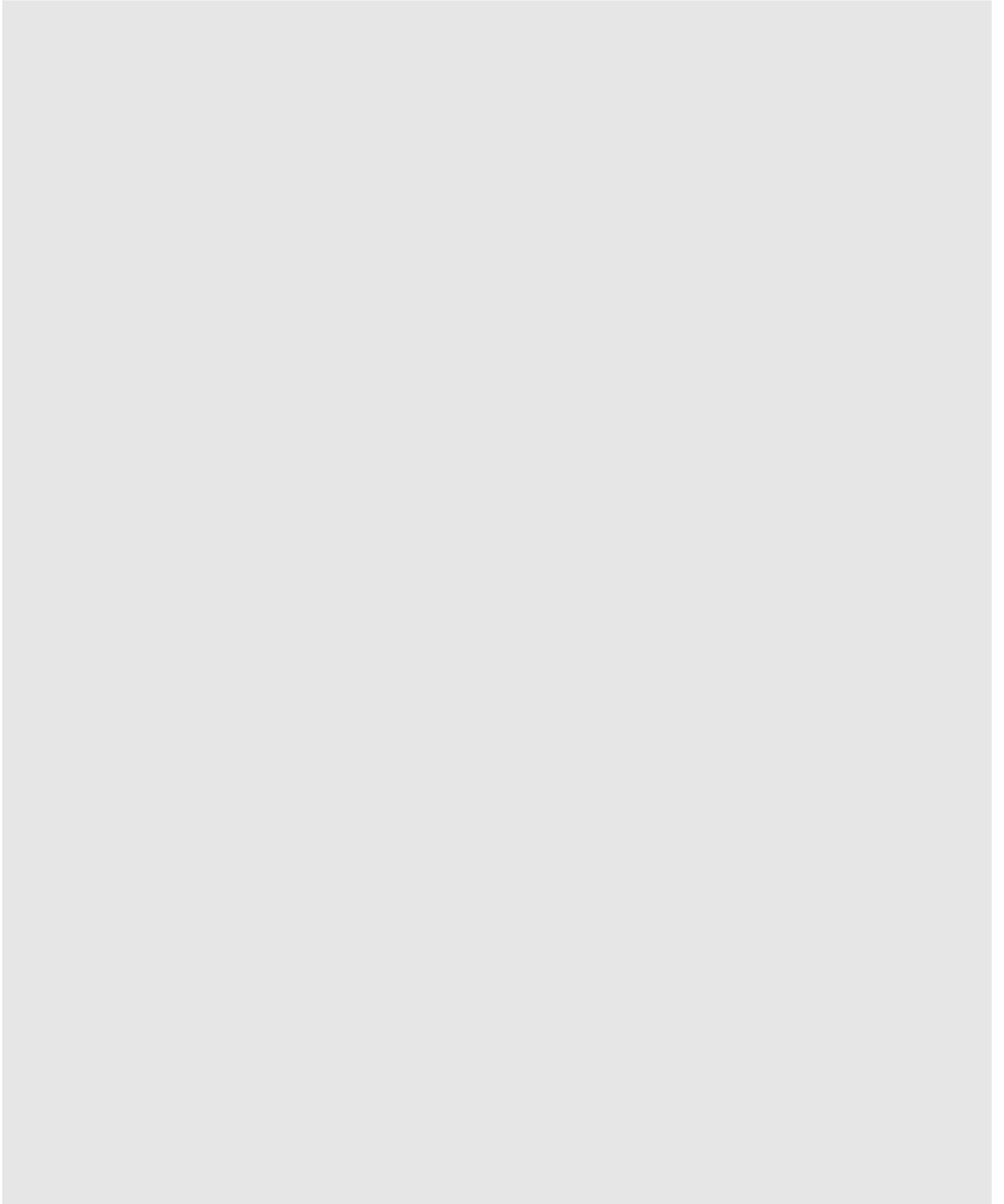
Confessions Of A Teenage Drama Queen (PG)

— This is the story of a teen who's convinced her home city revolves around her until her family packs up and moves to the suburbs. There, she finds herself competing for attention because another girl has already staked her claim as the school's center of attention. The result is a sharp and comic battle for adolescent bragging rights. Stars Lindsay Lohan, Alison Pill and Adam Garcia.

Man On Fire (R)

— Denzel Washington stars as a government operative who reluctantly agrees to take a job to protect a child (Dakota Fanning) whose parents are threatened by a wave of kidnappings. When she is abducted he stops at nothing to save her.

Herald Union classifieds



Puppets help address real world issues

Kids on the Block let fourth-graders discuss concerns

By David Ruderman
104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

Getting children to share their innermost feelings takes talent. Good teachers have it, and so do two-foot tall puppets named Brenda and Raymond, stars of the traveling Kids on the Block show.

"We have these big-mouth puppets, like on Sesame Street," said fourth-grade teacher Daniel L'Esperance, one of five Heidelberg area teachers who brought the program to Dexheim and Wiesbaden area elementary schools May 10-11. Though the presentation is fun and engages its audience, Kids on the Block makes it possible for fourth-graders to discuss delicate social issues that are sometimes swept under the carpet.

"The three topics we're going to take on are the deployment, learning disabilities and divorce," said L'Esperance.

In each of the three segments presented at Aukamm Elementary School May 11, two puppet characters raised the issues and opened the floor to the fourth-graders, fielding questions, moderating discussion and drawing in the school guidance counselor, who is on hand at each performance.

Saying the 'E word'

"The kids will ask, and we're prepared for that," said L'Esperance. "When it comes to the deployment and extension, we talk about responsibility and going there to protect the country. Mostly what kids are worried about is their parent's safety. We stress that they are well trained and that they're looking out for each other."

In the skit Brenda writes to her Aunt Gail, who we learn is deployed to Iraq. "I'm not going to do anything fun until my Aunt Gail comes back from Iraq. It's not right," she tells Raymond.

"You've got to go on with your life," responds her friend.

Brenda explains that she's proud of her aunt, but feels guilty for feeling anything but sadness during her absence. She thinks that if she gives up her everyday pleasures it will



Photo by Karl Weisel

Kids on the Block puppeteers and characters pull out all the stops during the finale of their May 11 performance at Aukamm Elementary School.

somehow help her aunt survive the deployment and come home.

"My dad's got an important job to do while he's deployed," says Raymond, "and you've got a big job to do ... taking care of yourself until your father returns. We've got to keep going on and doing our things."

"How long has your dad been away," asked one fourth-grader when the children were invited to join the discussion.

"A long time, and then he was supposed to come home, but — ooh, the E-word — extended. I was really mad. I try to email him every day. Dad, what's up with this? He told me it's kind of like when I have math homework and I have 10 questions to answer and

I'm at No. 8 and feel burnt out, he makes sure I stay up until I'm finished. We're not quitters," responded the teacher behind the puppet.

"What's your dad's email address?" asked another student.

"I don't know, I just click into the address book and it comes up. I know it's one of those long, complicated dot-army-dot-mil ones."

Another child asked if Brenda has had to travel a lot more since her father deployed.

Yes, her parents decided that her mother should take the family home to America for part of the past year. "They just thought it

would be better to be with grandma for a while. That's a choice that families make," said Brenda.

"What about kids who won't talk to their deployed parents when they call?" asked school counselor Michele Cook.

"You've got to grab the moment," said Raymond. "You have to go to the solution, not the problem. It's a kind of frustrating thing though."

"This is just one way we can reach kids," said puppeteer Brenda Rahe after the fourth-graders returned to their classroom. "They're opening up and asking questions they wouldn't ask otherwise. It's just another way for them to talk about it."

"It's a fun way of being able to talk about things they don't normally talk about," said Aukamm fourth-grade teacher Corinne Voyer, "just the medium itself — they were excited about that. They hadn't seen a puppet show for a while, and they liked that they could ask questions. Anytime they can interact with performers, they just really like that."

The need to talk about the issue is evident in a community where many parents were deployed and many had their tours in Iraq extended.

"You asked how many people had parents deployed, and all the hands went up," said puppet player, Linda Hopkins. "These things they tell the puppets, but they wouldn't tell you."

"We had some parents who did return, who were here for 30 days and were thinking everything was all right. I had more parents coming to me, asking what we can do for the kids," said Cook. "A lot of kids are pretty straightforward. Our kids are upfront. If they're having any issues, they can come and address me. Plus, we're dealing with one housing area. It's like one big family here."

The Kids on the Block performance reverberated with the fourth-graders after the puppets were packed away and the players departed.

"We talked about it and wrote little notes where they talked about what they really liked and more questions for the actors," said Voyer. "Most of these kids have a parent deployed or just back, so they have questions. And the segment on divorce, a lot of them could relate to that."

Focus on Aukamm Elementary School



School bits

End of school nears

May 31 is Memorial Day. There will be no instruction in Department of Defense Dependents Schools. The school year will end June 10. Graduation ceremonies for high school seniors will take place in Hanau June 3, in Baumholder and Giessen June 4, and in Wiesbaden June 5. Registration for the 2004-2005 academic year continues at all 104th Area Support Group schools. Classes resume Aug. 30.



Space available registration

Sponsors with children in Space Available categories 2,

3 and 4 who attended Department of Defense Dependents Schools in the Heidelberg District this year are eligible to re-register for school year 2004-2005. Children may attend the same school or feeder school until the sponsor's DEROS. Children of sponsors who received an exception to feeder plan registration last year may attend the same school. Consult your school, Housing Office and school bus office for details. All new sponsors in these categories may enroll their children at anytime, though enrollment may not be confirmed until the end of the first week of classes in September. (Heidelberg District Superintendent's Office Release)

Hainerberg honors volunteers

Hainerberg Elementary School honored volunteers during a Volunteer Tea May 20 at 3 p.m. in the media center.

Red Cross seeks volunteers

The Kaiserslautern Red Cross seeks volunteers age 13-19 to serve in community clinics, libraries and other locations. Sign up by June 4 for positions open June 14 to Aug. 27. Call mil 480-2171/5464 or civ (06371) 47-2171/5464 for details and an application.

Central Texas registration

Central Texas College offers vocational training classes from June 7 July 30 for college credit toward an associate degree in applied science. Courses include automotive technology, hospitality management, criminal law and emergency medical technician training. Registration runs through June 4. Call Stefani Smith at mil 322-5410, email her at stefani.smith@us.army.mil or call your local education center for details and assistance.

Sports and leisure

Things to do

USO adventures

Rhein Main Area USOs feature the following trips and events in the coming weeks: **Evelin's Wellness Paradise** May 28 and June 21; **Holiday Park** May 29; **Rhein River Cruise** May 30; **Remembering Verdun** May 31; **Legoland** June 5; **Strasbourg** June 5; **Paris Express** June 11-19; **Roses, Wine and Gutenberg (a walking tour of the Rheingau)** June 12; **Trier By Train** June 12; **Opel Zoo** June 13; **Poland Shopping Extravaganza** June 18-20; **Military History Tour (Bastogne, Belgium and the Battle of the Bulge)** June 19; **Warner Brothers Movie-world** June 21, **Phantasialand** June 26 and **Roman Aachen** June 26. Stop by your local USO office in Hanau, Wiesbaden, Rhein Main or at the Frankfurt Flughafen for details and to sign up.

'Baby' in Giessen

Giessen's Keller Theater presents the musical comedy "Baby" June 4, 5, 11, 12, 17, 18 and 19 at 7:30 p.m. The comedy depicts three couples on a university campus dealing with "the painful, rewarding and agonizingly funny consequences of the universal experience of parenting." Call mil 343-6515/6400.

Free Strasbourg trip

Giessen Outdoor Recreation and Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers have teamed up to provide a free trip to Strasbourg, France, June 19 for military spouses and children. Call mil 343-6515.

'Anything Goes'

Hanau's Five Pfennig Theater presents the musical "Anything Goes," about the quirky situations that occur aboard the S.S. American as it sails from New York to England, June 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18 and 19 at 7:30 p.m. Call mil 322-8031/8209.

'Art' at playhouse

Wiesbaden's Amelia Earhart Playhouse presents the hit comedy, "Art," May 28 and 29 at 7:30 p.m. Pick up tickets at the Hainerberg or Wiesbaden Army Airfield USO offices or call the playhouse at civ (0611) 816-2473.

Concert highlights

Frankfurt's Amerika Haus presents **Rick Vito and the Lucky Devils** May 26 at 9 p.m. at Frankfurt's Blues and Beyond (Bergerstrasse 159). Frankfurt's Alte Oper features **Nelly Furtado** June 23. Call civ (069) 1340400 for tickets.

Boxers take gold in K-town

U.S. Forces Europe champs

By Karl Weisel
104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

Local boxers came away with four gold medals and a second place team trophy from the U.S. Forces Europe Boxing Championships held in Kaiserslautern May 9.

Two Friedberg and two Hanau fighters battled their way to the top prizes in their weight classes, while a strong team from Friedberg claimed the second place team trophy.

"I was really proud of my team — especially their display of camaraderie," said Friedberg boxing coach Renardo Reed. "All of my guys were great."

Friedberg's Alfred Monroy claimed the 152-pound novice trophy going uncontested in the finals, while his teammate, Alector Tavares, defeated Kitzingen's David Rawlerson for the 178-pound novice crown.

"In actuality, Tavares weighed 168 pounds," said Reed, describing the grit Tavares displayed in the ring during the boxing championships. "Not only was he out-weighted, but after he was hit pretty hard in the side I talked to him between rounds and he dug deep to pull something out and win the fight." Tavares claimed a 5-0 decision over Rawlerson.

"I was really impressed by the way he is," said Reed, describing the 19-year-old Tavares as a team unifier.

Reed said his fighters didn't expect quite as many boxers to participate with the current deployment of Soldiers to Iraq in full swing.

"I think the fighters I took up



Adam Klakowicz (left) and Raymond Myers strike a pose after winning gold at the U.S. Forces Europe Boxing Championships.

were a little mind boggled. They didn't know what to expect," he said. "All of the fighters were astonished and gained a lot from the experience."

"All of the Friedberg boxers trained pretty hard for this," he added, saying they put in the extra effort and "worked together as a team."

"Overall the competitive experience of all of the teams was good," said Reed. "There was a lot of unity there — a lot of experience gained by everyone involved — the coaches, officials and boxers."

Hanau champions Raymond Myers and Adam Klakowicz couldn't say enough about the training and encouragement of their coach Gerd Wolf.

"If you are interested in boxing, come to the Pioneer Gym and Mr. Wolf will make you a champion," said Myers, USFE champion in the 165-pound open weight class.

Myers, who took a 4-1 decision over Ansbach's Ruben Almonte, was pleased to win the championship before leaving the 104th Area Support Group to his next assign-

ment in Fort Bragg, N.C. "It is definitely a stepping stone — having won the title," he said, adding that when he gets to Fort Bragg he will look into further boxing opportunities and the chance to compete on the Army team.

"The last couple of years I've trained with local nationals, some of whom are boxing professionally like Mirko Wolf. That's helped improve my speed and ring awareness."

Myers, who recently moved up from novice to open, said fighting four two-minute rounds at the USFE championships was a challenge. "As always I drug it out as long as I could. After the third round, I forgot there were four rounds and I thought I was done. In the fourth round he came out and we exchanged a lot of blows. That was the longest two minutes of my life."

Myers added that sparring with his teammate, "Lucky Lefty" Klakowicz, of the 320th Engineer Company, also helped him prepare. "Working with Coach Wolf and Lucky Lefty here really made the

difference. I think I was in great shape."

Klakowicz, who claimed the 141-pound novice crown by earning a technical knockout over Heidelberg's Jose Rivera when the referee stopped the contest 17 seconds into Round Four, said he was nervous before the fight. "I'm a nervous wreck until I get into the ring and then I'm good," said the Philadelphia native.

"I noticed he was left-handed like me and he could take a punch." That took some getting used to with Rivera delivering a few choice shots, said Klakowicz. "In the second round I hit him with a couple of jabs. In between rounds my coach told me that if I kept the pressure on him, he'd go down. I hit him with my three-punch combination and that did the trick."

Both fighters praised the level of boxing know-how throughout the championships. "All the bouts on Sunday were excellent," said Myers. "The last fight was especially intense." In that bout, Ramstein's James Heath beat Kaiserslautern's Benjamin Rivera when the referee stopped the contest 40 seconds into Round Four. "Despite their sizes those guys both came out fighting."

Boxers interested in finding out more about the 284th Base Support Battalion team should call Reed at mil 343-7031 or stop by the Friedberg Fitness Center on Ray Barracks. With only one woman boxer on the team, Reed said they would welcome more women to get involved in the sport.

Boxers in the 414th Base Support Battalion can call or stop by the Pioneer Fitness Center on Pioneer Kaserne for more information about the Hanau team.



Photos by Gene Knudsen

Spring sports action

Wiesbaden's John Slappy takes second in the 800 meters in Heidelberg May 8. Right: Wiesbaden's Matt Alexander defends in a game against Heidelberg May 15. Despite losing 3-0 to the Lions, the Warriors qualified for the European Tournament to be held May 20-22 in Kaiserslautern/Ramstein.



School chess champs

Sportfield Elementary School students rule Gelnhausen Chess Championship

By Karl Weisel

104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

Despite fierce fighting as knights clashed and their colleagues fell stricken, the combat arena was surprisingly silent.

Students of Gelnhausen, Argonner and Sportfield Elementary Schools hunched over black and red squares in taut concentration as their 30-minute chess games ticked away.

Members of the three schools' chess clubs converged on Gelnhausen Elementary School May 12 as six players from each club faced off over chessboards in a round robin format tournament for annual bragging rights, Gelnhausen having taken the crown the past two years.

"I thought I'd at least win two (of three games played)," said Sportfield's Skylar Palmer, age 11. "In one game I only had two pieces left — a king and a rook — and I waited until the timer ran out and won by points."

Palmer, who won all three games and helped the Sportfield club win the team trophy, said he likes chess because, "It's a quiet game so you can think and relax."

His teammate, Joseph Granados, who also swept all three matches, said he was nervous going into the competition. "I didn't know how they would play. I thought they would be quick games. I told myself just to be calm."

"I've been teaching chess in my classroom for the last 10 years," said Tom Gleason, a fourth-grade teacher at Gelnhausen Elementary. Gleason said he introduced chess into the classroom at the instigation of a student while teaching in Sigonella on the Italian island of Sicily. "It was really at the initiative of the kids."

"Chess makes a kid look ahead — to plan, to have to predict what an opponent is going to do," said Gleason. "It's also a good game socially. It teaches a person how to win or lose gracefully. And it's fun."

"All of the reading I've done says that kids who play chess do better in math. I have one kid who studies chess books during his free time," he said.

"I know I'm beginning to be successful when they start beating me," Gleason added.

"I started our chess club first thing, at the beginning of the school year," said Kevin Morris, an English as a second language teacher and webmaster at Sportfield Elementary. "We meet once a week after school for an hour. We also meet at lunch sometimes."

"We have about 30 kids in the club," he said, explaining that he tries to pair up experienced players with beginners during get-togethers to improve everyone's skills. "Some kids really take off and blossom in it. It's like an athletic sport, but it's more athletics for the brain."

"There's a lot of educational research that shows for children who play chess it increases their math and computational thinking skills. It's also good at teaching sportsmanship," said Morris. "Every game ends with a handshake. ... In the States there are some school districts that have chess as part of their academic programming."

"In a way it helps you do your schoolwork because you



Photo by Kevin Morris

Ryan McKenna (center) looks on as fellow Gelnhausen student Jisu Helmer (left) plays Sportfield's Joey Granados. Granados went on to win all three of his games during the championship.

know you can accomplish something," said Lourdes Sierra, age 10. "It exercises your mind and helps your strategy. It's a very educational game."

"Chess makes you get smarter and it makes your brain work," said Kwaku Adjei, age 11. The Sportfield fifth-grader, originally from Ghana who spoke no English upon entering the American school, added, "And it's fun to play."

"Not only do you get away from school, but you get to relax," was how Asia Jackson, age 10, described her appreciation of the game. "I started playing this year."

While the six school champions from each school battled it out in the tournament, their fellow club members enjoyed any number of chess games against players from each other's clubs in another classroom.

"I played six or seven games," said Gregory Risenas, age 10. "I've been playing about two years. You really have to think about what you're doing. It takes time and practice."

"This is my third year playing chess," said Nathan Thomas, age 12, who said he originally learned the game from his father. "Now I beat him occasionally."

"My little one is in the Gelnhausen club," said Mary Crawford, Parent Teacher Association president and a Gelnhausen third-grade teacher. "He's 7 and has been playing for a couple of years. When we went to Turkey on spring break all he wanted was a chessboard."

"He's always done sports, such as T-ball, but I think chess is more disciplined. It's a thinking game," said Crawford. "It's a really good game for brain skills."

So why did last year's champion team bow to Sportfield on the playing field this year?

"There's a little bit of the luck of the draw," said Morris, explaining that players are assigned opponents at random after being given a number.

"His [Morris'] team is a little bit older," added the Gelnhausen coach. "There was quite a bit of difference in chess-playing ability. They really know how to finish a game — you could tell they really worked on the end game."

While Sportfield players got to carry around the large championship trophy, all club members had something to show for their efforts — helpings of pizza and the joy of sharing in something they can enjoy for a lifetime.

Sports shorts

Dexheim Biathlon May 29

Team 221st Sport and Fitness hosts the fourth annual Dexheim Biathlon May 29 at 10 a.m. Registration is at 8 a.m. that day. Cost is \$20 including a commemorative T-shirt. Call mil 334-5746 or 5685 for details.

Free bowling on Thursdays

Every bowling center in the 104th Area Support Group offers free bowling for military spouses and children Thursdays from 3-6 p.m. during Iron Family Bowling.

Over-30 basketball tourney

The fifth annual Over-30 Basketball Tournament will be held June 5-6 in Wiesbaden. Entry is \$125 per team of 12 players (including coaches). Call mil 337-5943 for details.

German-American hoop action

A German-American Friendship Basketball Tournament will be held June 5 at Giessen's Miller Hall Fitness Center. Call mil 343-7201.

3-on-3 basketball tournament

The 284th Base Support Battalion holds a 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament June 12-13 at Giessen's Miller Hall. Team entry fee is \$35 per four-person team. Sign up at Miller Hall or Friedberg's Ray Barracks Fitness Center.

Commander's Cup golf championship

The Commander's Cup golf championship will be held June 26 starting at 9 a.m. at Baumholder's Rolling Hills Golf Course. Entry fee is \$25. Non-members pay a greens fee. Sign up by June 23. Call mil 485-7299.

Cosmos lacrosse league champs

The Frankfurt Cosmos men's lacrosse team won the West German League title by defeating Rheinland 16-2 and Cologne 16-3 May 2. The Cosmos completed a 7-1 season. The Frankfurt Cosmos women defeated a mixed team of Freiburg, Passau, Vienna and Salzburg 22-1 and Munich 10-9 to win the first championship of the women's Southwest German Lacrosse League. The Cosmos play host to the men's and women's semifinals and finals of the German Championships in Frankfurt May 29 and 30 at the Sportclub 1880 (behind the AFN Headquarters). Youth lacrosse players (age 10-16) are invited to join the new Cosmos youth team. Practices are at the Sportclub 1880 in Frankfurt at 6 p.m. Wednesdays and 12:30 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Contact Bob Scheider at bob@frankfurt-cosmos.de or by calling civ (0174) 5851 333.

Giessen castle run

Giessen's Schiffenberg Castle will be the site of a 7.5-kilometer run and 3-kilometer family fun walk May 29 at 11 a.m. Registration is from 9:30-10:45 a.m. The cost is \$15 with a commemorative T-shirt or \$10 without one. Walkers enter free. Call mil 343-7201 for details.



Thunder Thump Softball in Dexheim

The 221st Base Support Battalion Sports and Fitness holds its sixth annual Thunder Thump Softball Tournament for six-man, unit-level teams June 18-20 in Dexheim. Call mil 337-5943 for details.

Youth golf clinic

Baumholder's Rolling Hills Golf Course features a Junior Golf Clinic (for youths age 7-18) every Tuesday from 4-6 p.m. starting June 15. Cost is \$75. Call mil 485-7299.

Prenatal yoga

A yoga exercise routine for pregnant women starts in June at Wiesbaden's Tony Bass Fitness Center. Classes will be held Tuesdays from 4:30-5:30 p.m. and Thursdays from 11 a.m. to noon. Call mil 337-6943.