

Fort Rucker and Our Economic Future Need You

As our country prepares to celebrate its 246th birthday on July 4th, the importance of thanking and celebrating our servicemen, women and families is as important as ever. With an ever-changing global society and challenges from all parts of the world, the strength, resiliency, and fortitude of our nation's soldiers is remarkable. Hundreds of millions of Americans sleep peacefully at night because hundreds of thousands of soldiers stand guard at the wall of freedom. Here in southeast Alabama, that wall is Fort Rucker, Alabama, the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence, and the home of Army Aviation!

Judge Val McGee is the author of a book entitled *The Origins of Fort Rucker*. His book shares the story of how Fort Rucker came to be and the impact Fort Rucker has had on our area. In his epilogue, Judge McGee writes, *“Would (one) conclude that the loss of farms and homesteads of hundreds of citizens was justified by the service performed to the nation and by the benefits gleaned by Wiregrass natives? Would (one) feel a surge of pride as he looks down at the fine new buildings and the dozens of landing fields, large and small, dotting the rolling hills ... and all over the Wiregrass? Would one conclude that this amazing installation, dominating the terrain and the economic activity for miles around was a fitting accomplishment... ? The answer to these rhetorical questions would almost certainly be in the affirmative.”*

It is individuals like Judge McGee that reflect the spirit, service and sacrifice of this base and why it has been stated, *“As long as there is Army Aviation, Fort Rucker will be needed by the United States Army.”*

As the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army, I am honored and humbled to advocate for and tell the story of the U.S. Army and its impact on the Wiregrass region. Fort Rucker is the heartbeat of the Wiregrass economy providing 12-14 percent of total employment and estimated retail sales in excess of \$250 million with an estimated value added impact approaching \$1.7 billion.

As everyone knows, Fort Rucker is the training site for Army helicopter pilots. However, the U.S. Army is developing a new flight platform, the Future Vertical Lift, which will eventually replace current training. Community support will be one factor considered when the U.S. Army chooses their Future Vertical Lift training bases.

The Association of the United States Army (AUSA) is the premier national organization for community support for Army bases. The AUSA Fort Rucker Wiregrass Chapter is conducting a membership drive to add 250 new local businesses to become a member before Oct. 1 when we will be

advocating for Fort Rucker this fall at the Pentagon. These added community business memberships will clearly demonstrate the Wiregrass' support for Fort Rucker and make this chapter the largest in the world when it comes to community partners!

If your business is interested in solidifying the future of Fort Rucker and our strong local economy, please contact the Fort Rucker Wiregrass Chapter of AUSA, Tanya Hatley at (931) 980-9639 of tanyahatley@gmail.com. Annual membership is \$175.

The Wiregrass loves the U.S. Army and the men and women who serve. Fort Rucker is who we are. It has helped catapult our region on to an economic and military international stage. That has to be maintained and strengthened, and I know that each of you are ready to do your part.

General Patton said it best, “*... Every single man in this Army plays a vital role ... Every man has a job to do and he must do it. Every man is a vital link in the great chain.*”

Part of that great chain is a community that stands with them, supports them, and loves them. Join me and others by becoming a member of the AUSA Fort Rucker Wiregrass Chapter. Let's keep that heartbeat strong and active.

Mike Schmitz is the founder and owner of Mike Schmitz Automotive Group and serves as the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army for Alabama.

Contact:

schmitty.casa@gmail.com



FORT RUCKER AND OUR FUTURE NEED YOU



FORT RUCKER ECONOMIC IMPACT

Fort Rucker contributes \$1.7 billion to our local Wiregrass economy each year. Right now, they are in need of our business community's support to ensure their future.

Fort Rucker is the training site for Army helicopter pilots. A new flight platform is being developed, Future Vertical Lift, that will eventually phase out current training. We need to solidify Fort Rucker as the Future Vertical Lift training center to guarantee their future.

FUTURE VERTICAL LIFT

HOW WE CAN HELP

Community support will be one factor considered when the Army chooses their Future Vertical Lift training bases. Association of the United States Army (AUSA) is the premiere national organization for community support for Army bases. The AUSA | Fort Rucker Wiregrass Chapter is trying to get 250 local businesses to become members of their organization before advocating for Fort Rucker this fall at the Pentagon. These added community business memberships will clearly demonstrate the Wiregrass' support for Fort Rucker.

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HOW TO JOIN AUSA

ANNUAL AUSA BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP IS ONLY \$175 | YEAR