

# Keeping the Wheels Rolling, Civilians Play a Key Role

**KUNAR PROVINCE,** Afghanistan - When the most advanced Mine Resistant Ambush Protected, or MRAP, vehicles roll into Forward Operating Base Wright for repairs, it's not the men and women in uniform who fix them up.

It's a group of civilian men and women headed up by AECOM-CACI Field and Installation Readiness Support Team, or AC FIRST, who do the bulk of the repairs to these advanced military vehicles.

"We're a support team for the FOB, and we'll do anything and everything," said Celestino Marrero, a Fayetteville, N.C., native and FOB supervisor for AC FIRST. "We can't repair actual battle damage, but we can do just about everything up to that point."

The maintenance shop run by AC FIRST consists of a vehicle maintenance shop, welders, and even a weapon maintenance shop that fixes everything from crew served weapons to M9 pistol side arms. They are capable of providing service on the vehicles including engine overhauls, drive train work, transmission labor and even some supplemental armor issues. The shop also has field service representatives from most of the major MRAP manufacturers, who specialize in the specific variations of the vehicle that are used in the Kunar province.

"Basically we help with anyone who comes in on a convoy," said Marrero. "We can fix them up, get them field mission capable and back out on the road so they can continue their mission."

The biggest customer for the

shop is the Provincial Reconstruction Team, whose team mechanic Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Bryan Brys, a native of Terre Haute, Ind., is the sole military presence in the maintenance shop.



*Andrew Shepherd, a contractor with AECOM-CACI Field and Installation Readiness Support Team, and native of Vernonia, works on an M9 pistol at Forward Operating Base Wright. Members of AC FIRST provide maintenance for vehicles and weapons to military members on the FOB. Photo by: Tech. Sgt. Christopher Marasky*

"They support me with everything that I need," said Brys, a Machinist's Mate 3rd Class, and the mechanic responsible for all of the PRT's vehicles. "There's a lot of things that if I can't handle it myself they'll help me out."

One particular incident involved a dead starter in one of the team's Cougars, just one of the variations of the MRAP. Replacing the starter would have taken Brys five or six days, but with the assistance of the motor pool, the job was completed in only three hours and the

vehicle returned to duty the same day.

Vehicles aren't the only area in which the maintenance shop assists the FOB and other military members passing through, as the base houses a

and one Marine, who work in the weapons maintenance shop. According to Marrero, they excel at fixing all types of weapon systems.

"These guys have been doing what they do for a long time," said Marrero. "They can tear down a complete weapon, repair it, and put it back together and get it back to serviceable."

Being civilians working alongside the military in a combat zone such as the Kunar province is a rewarding effort, according to Marrero.

"I love it, I've been around the military all my life," he said. "Working with the military out here gives you a good feeling in that you're helping out the soldiers. I helped these soldiers stay safe since I made sure that their vehicles were good."

It's an effort that is greatly appreciated by the team, particularly Brys, who says he'd have a difficult time without his civilian counterparts.

"If we didn't have these guys, it'd take us a great deal of time to get things done, such as getting various parts or doing repairs," he said. "Without them there, if I was doing it by myself, it'd take forever."

"Working with the guys is awesome, I could trust them to do anything I need, but we all work as a team," he said. "They're awesome and they do a great job."

weapon repair shop as well.

"As far as our weapons area, that's our biggest concern," said Marrero. "Some of the weapons can jam up or have other issues, and people's lives depend on those, so that's our biggest priority." The team has a pair of former military members, one Army

## Tomato Cages Needed

The Vernonia Community Garden is in need of your unloved, not in use tomato cages. There are many tomato plants planted for the Vernonia Cares Food Bank and as the summer progresses, they will need support. If you would like to donate new or used cages, please contact Penny Costley (503) 429-0196 or Pat Stacklie (503)429-7563 for pick up. They may be dropped off at the Community Garden site by the old high school tennis court behind the district office as well. Thank you for your SUPPORT!

## New Dairy Princess Crowned

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of Key Club for the Pacific Northwest, 4-H Ambassador and a member of two 4-H clubs since the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, where she has shown both dairy cows and rabbits.

Mikela, and her parents, are active members of Warren Grange where she is on the Rosebud Drill Team and holds local and state offices. Her passions, past and present, include tap dancing from age three at recitals of Oregon Performing Arts School in St. Helens, and taking part in team sports such as softball, volleyball and synchronized swimming.

Columbia County Dairy Women serve milkshakes, sundaes, floats, ice cream and of course, milk, at various events. Proceeds from these events fund scholarships awarded annually to the outgoing County Dairy Princess and to three qualifying graduating seniors from Columbia County.

For questions about Columbia County Dairy Women, the Dairy Princess program or about scholarships, contact Diane Larson (503)312-6130 or Pam Heimuller (503) 369-1634.

## VERNONIA VOLUNTEER FIRE & RESCUE



### GOLF BENEFIT

Sunday, August 5th, 2012  
7:30 AM  
(Jamboree Weekend)

Vernonia Golf Course  
15961 Timber Rd. East  
Vernonia, OR 97064

Please join in supporting "Toy & Joy" to purchase toys for local kids for Christmas

**Format:** Scramble, Shotgun Start (4 person teams)

**Entry Fee:** \$ 95.00 per person or \$350.00 per foursome  
Due by: July 29, 2012 (Before July 1st receives an additional \$10 off per person)

**Entry Fee includes:** Green fees, 1 Cart per team, Gift Bag, Team Photo, Surf & Turf Brunch and Raffle Ticket

Brunch, Raffle & Awards following the tournament.

Individual registrations are welcome

Make checks payable to:

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For more information, please contact Randy Carlton: 503-429-8252, 503-791-8309 or Email: vernoniagolfbenefit@gmail.com

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