

HEALTH MATTERS

Fat Camp for Army Recruits Mulled

Obesity looms as big challenge

(AP) — The Army has been dismissing so many overweight applicants that its top recruiter, trying to keep troop numbers up in wartime, is considering starting a fat farm to transform chubby trainees into svelte soldiers.

Maj. Gen. Thomas Bostick, head of the Army Recruiting Command, said he wants to see a formal diet and fitness regimen running alongside a new school at Fort Jackson that helps aspiring troops earn their GEDs.

Bostick said that obesity looms as "a bigger challenge for us in the years ahead" than any other problem that keeps young people from entering the military, including lack of a GED or high school diploma, misconduct or criminal behavior and other health issues such as eye or ear problems.

According to Defense Department figures, over the past four years 47,447 potential recruits flunked induction physicals at the nation's 35 Military Entrance Processing Stations because they were overweight.

That is a fraction of the 205,902 such exams given in 2005 and 250,764 in 2008, but still amounts to a hefty number and comes at a time when the military is more interested than ever in recruits. The Army and



Pvt. Idalia Halley, 19 (left) of Columbia, S.C. stands with her 'battle buddy' Pvt. Katrina Thompkins, 19 of Greenville, S.C. during rifle training in Fort Jackson, S.C. Both women had issues with their weight but with five weeks of training behind them, they are confident they are ready to pass basic training. (AP Photo)

Marine Corps together paid more than \$600 million over the past year in bonuses and other financial incentives to attract volunteers.

While the services have reported exceeding their recruiting goals in the past year, the Pentagon remains under pressure to find a constant flow of recruits. The Defense Department has announced plans to boost the active duty Army by 65,000 to a total of 547,000 soldiers by next year, and grow the Marines from 175,000 to 202,000 by 2011.

Obesity afflicts recruits for other physically demanding

jobs, including firefighters. Deputy Chief Ed Nied, chair of the safety, health and survival section of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, said fire departments are also making a "major push" to encourage better fitness among young people who want to join.

"We draw from the same exact population that they (the military) draw from," Nied said from his Tucson, Ariz., headquarters. "This comes from a lack of physical education in the high schools."

Bostick said a slim-down camp could be part of the new Army Prep School at Fort Jack-

son, S.C. The school opened in August, and gives recruits who didn't graduate from high school the chance to earn a GED before starting their nine weeks of basic training.

"We are looking at the Army Prep School as a place where we might send some (recruits) that have weight issues," the two-star general said.

Bostick argues that many of the young people who want to join the Army have a hard time understanding a healthy diet and the importance of daily exercise, but could get within the military limits with guidance.

Nation's Healthcare Safety Net Crumbles

Most can't afford COBRA coverage

A new study reports that the cost of continuing employer-provided health coverage is unaffordable for laid-off workers relying upon unemployment insurance for their income.

The study by Families USA, a national consumer advocacy

group, found that the average laid-off Oregon worker would need to spend more than four-fifths of his or her unemployment insurance benefits to maintain family health insurance coverage under the federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985, commonly referred to as COBRA.

Just retaining individual health insurance coverage would swallow, on average, about 29 percent of Oregon unemployment insur-

ance benefits, according to the study.

COBRA allows people who lose health insurance due to reduced hours or lost jobs to purchase continued coverage from employers' group plans for a period of time if those workers are willing and able to pay the full cost of coverage plus a 2 percent administrative fee.

"Because many health care premiums have become exorbitant, COBRA is no longer the

health coverage bridge it was designed to be," said Janet Bauer, policy analyst with the Oregon Center for Public Policy, who examined the report. "COBRA fails to provide the health care security that laid-off workers and their families desperately need."

Bauer also urged the Oregon legislature to fund the Oregon Health Plan to cover unemployed workers who either lack the COBRA option or cannot afford COBRA premiums.

Salmonella Bacteria Taints Peanut Butter

The salmonella bacteria that has sickened nearly 400 people in 42 states has been conclusively linked to peanut butter, Minnesota health officials announced Monday.

State health and agriculture officials said last week they had found salmonella bacteria in a

5-pound package of King Nut peanut butter at a nursing facility in Minnesota. Officials tested the bacteria over the weekend and found a genetic match with the bacterial strain that has led to 30 illnesses in Minnesota and others across the country.

The peanut butter was distributed only through food service providers and was not sold directly to consumers.

King Nut's peanut butter was manufactured by Peanut Corporation of America, a Virginia company. In an e-mail earlier Monday, President Stewart Parnell said

the company was working with federal authorities.

The peanut butter contamination comes almost two years after ConAgra recalled its Peter Pan brand peanut butter, which was eventually linked to at least 625 salmonella cases in 47 states.

HEALTH WATCH

How to Help Your Child Learn Better -- Friday, Jan. 23, from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. or 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Jane Healy, Ph.D., invites parents to attend this free workshop addressing ways parents can help children with learning challenges. To register, call 503-215-2429.

Free Hospice Volunteer Training -- Fridays and Saturdays, Jan. 30, 31 and Feb. 6, 7, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. No previous experience is required. For more information, call Melinda Smith at 503-215-5774.

Helping Babies Communicate Before They Can Talk -- Wednesdays, Feb. 4 through Feb. 25, from 9:15 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. The workshop will teach basic baby sign language, opening a line of communication between parents and infants; \$55 fee. To register, call 503-335-3500.

Raising Our Daughters -- Learn skills to support daughters, understanding their social lives, social pressures, and effective communication skills, with Kathy Masarie, pediatrician and life coach; Feb. 4, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.; \$5. To register, call 503-335-3500.

Don't Make Me Laugh, Sneeze or Cough: Women and Incontinence -- Tuesday, Feb. 17, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., women who suffer from a sudden need to go to the bathroom are invited to attend this free lecture discussing stress incontinence. To register, call 503-574-6595.

Journey through Grief -- Fridays, Jan. 9 thru Feb. 13, the six-session class is for those who are grieving a loss through death, addressing coping skills, resources and more. Classes are free, pre-registration required. Call David Schmitt at 503-215-4622.

Red Cross Continuing Education -- The Oregon Trail Chapter Red Cross, now offers credits to help professionals maintain licensing or certification. For a cumulative list, visit pdinfo.net.

Mammography Screening -- Early detection is a key factor in the prevention of breast cancer. Call 503-251-6137 to schedule your high-tech, soft-touch mammogram.

Managing Chronic Hepatitis C -- Third Wednesday of each month at 5 p.m., the informative session led by a registered nurse to help manage side effects of medications and dosage preparations and administration; doctors referral required. To register, call 503-251-6313.

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome Information -- Thursday, Feb. 5, from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. \$20 fee. To register, call 503-221-0161, extension 2254.

Better Breathers -- An asthma educational support group meets on the 1st Tuesday of the month from 1:15 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. at Adventist Medical Center. For information, call 503-251-6830.

Cardiac-Rehab Exercises -- A medically supervised exercise program for people dealing with heart conditions. For information, call 503-251-6260.

Senior Aerobics -- A low-impact workout geared specifically toward seniors. Call 503-449-0783 for current schedule.

Osteoporosis Screening -- An ultrasound bone density screening with personalized education; fee \$30. To schedule an appointment, call 503-261-6611.

Stroke Alert Screening -- Check your carotid arteries with a painless ultrasound to assess your risk. Fee \$40. To schedule a screening, call 503-251-6137.

Leg Alert Screening -- Check for peripheral arterial disease with this safe, simple screening using ankle and arm blood pressure. The fee is \$40. To schedule an appointment, call 503-251-6137.

Cancer Resource Center -- Providence St. Vincent Medical Center and the American Red Cross have joined forces to create the first in-hospital resource center providing books, printed material, computer access and more for individuals and families dealing with cancer. The center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Chronic Pain Support Group -- meets the first Wednesday at 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and the third Wednesday of each month, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. For more information, call 503-256-4000.

Cholesterol Profiles -- Keep an eye on your cholesterol and other indicators of heart health; educational material provided. For more information, call 503-261-6611.

Tenderfoot Care -- Treat your feet with a soak, nail trim, buffing and massage from a licensed nurse at one of six clinics or at your home. Call 503-251-6303 for more information.

Free Body Basics -- This physician recommended class is appropriate for all ages and health conditions. Plan to attend this one-session class and learn the simple guidelines for safe exercises, including stretching. Call 503-256-4000 to register.

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