

## Garrison coat, outerwear drive a huge success

Story by  
**RACHEL PONDER**  
APG News

The Aberdeen Proving Ground Garrison continued its tradition of giving back to the community by completing its fourth annual coat drive by collecting more than 210 coats and other outerwear from donations on post. The clothing was donated to Army Community Service Dec. 22.

The clothing will first go to needy families on post and then whatever is remaining will go to aid those in the local communities around APG.

Maj. Mathieu Petraitis, commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, U.S. Army Garrison, said that he considers the coat outerwear drive to be very successful.

"I want to thank the Aberdeen Proving Ground community for making the clothing drive a success," Petraitis said. "We stopped counting after two hundred and ten coats."

Petraitis added that this year the drive was expanded to include outerwear.

"More than four hundred outerwear items

were donated including pullovers, shoes, boots, sweaters, gloves, scarves and hats for all sizes and ages," he said. "Even some toys and stuffed animals were given for the children."

"We spread the word about the coat and outerwear drive through e-mails, meetings and flyers," Petraitis said. "We set up drop off boxes at the PX, Recreation Center and Commissary in the Aberdeen Area and the Shoppette in the Edgewood Area. We also did a fair amount of house calls by personally picking up items at offices to make donating as easy as possible."

Petraitis said that he and the company are happy to be able to do whatever they can to give back to the community.

"On behalf of the garrison, I would like to thank all those who donated. Thank you for your generosity. It has been a tough year for people financially, so we realize it is a sacrifice for people to give up their coats and clothes. The success of the coat and outerwear drive is really indicative of how cohesive and generous our installation is as a whole," Petraitis said.

## 'Oh Holy Night'



Photo courtesy of THE ABERDEEN AREA CHAPEL  
Chaplain (Maj.) Young Kim, deputy installation chaplain, delivers the evening message at the Aberdeen Area Chapel during the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service held Dec. 24, 2008. Nearly 300 people attended the event which included singing, music, the lighting of Advent and Christmas candles and ended with the benediction from Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Jeffrey L. Zust, command chaplain, U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command.

## Letter to the Editor: A Christmas blessing

Dear Editor:

I was able to spend part of Christmas day with one of our Soldiers.

My daughter and two friends of mine traveled to Aberdeen Proving Ground on Christmas day at noon time to join a young Soldier for Christmas dinner at the dining facility on post.

He met us in the parking lot and opened the building doors for us as we went inside. This impressed me from the start. I thought, "Someone has taught him manners."

Our Soldier is 18 years old, and this is the first year he was away from home for Christmas.

It was a tad awkward at first since none of us knew what to expect.

I wondered what our Soldier thought about strangers wanting to eat Christmas dinner with him. I decided to tell him that we just wanted to show our thanks for him being a Soldier.

He mentioned that when he was called in to be briefed about having dinner with us, he thought he was in trouble. He smiled.

Our Soldier was gracious and showed us the ropes of the facility. When we found our table, we bowed our heads as I said a prayer of thanksgiving.

Our Soldier explained to us what he wanted to do in the Army.

As we ate, he explained to us that he awoke each morning at 0400 hours [4 a.m. in civilian time]. He was able to sleep in until 0600 hours [6 a.m.] on Christmas Day.

He said the food was good at post and but he liked the hamburgers the best.

We each asked questions about certain aspects of being in the Army.

I watched as pride shone in his eyes while he talked with us.

How young he is! I envisioned him in a foxhole next year, perhaps saying a prayer on Christmas day for his Family. Would he be warm enough? Would it be raining? Would he have to get up at 0400 hours, or would he have been up all night? What would he be thinking as he crouched down

in silence? Would he be hungry? Do they even make MREs with hamburgers?

I thought how lucky I am to be living in a country that I could sit in public and say a blessing – out loud – for our food. And it's because of Soldiers like our "Christmas Soldier" that made that freedom possible.

I decided that I have the choice of how to place my priorities. And I decided that perhaps the best thing I had done this Christmas season was to enrich my life by eating Christmas dinner with a Soldier.

If you truly want a blessing, I invite you to participate in the "Meal with a Soldier" program that will be in full force next year by the Aberdeen Chapter of the Association of the United States Army. I promise you that you will be the benefactor.

I thank all of our Soldiers for their service to this great nation of ours.

And God bless you!

Mary Jane Jernigan  
Aberdeen AUSA  
President

## Christmas food vouchers given to APG Soldiers

Story by  
**RACHEL PONDER**  
APG News

One hundred nineteen Christmas food vouchers worth \$25 each were given to Aberdeen Proving Ground Soldiers to help relieve some of the financial stress of the holiday.

APG Garrison Command Sgt. Maj. Pedro Rodriguez led the effort to ensure Soldiers identified by their chains of command were not burdened financially by the holidays.

Money was donated by Army Community Service, the Aberdeen Chapter of the Association of the United States Army, and a unit on post totalling \$3,075. ACS also gave a toy for each child.

Recipients were able to use the money to buy food products from the commissary.

Recipients were chosen based on need and if they were staying on post during the holiday.

Garrison Headquarters and Headquarters Company 1st Sgt. Larry Tyson, who organized the distribution of the vouchers, said that the advantage about giving food vouchers opposed to food baskets is that the Soldiers can pick their own food.

"They know what they need," Tyson said. "And what their Family likes to eat."

Tyson added that this year, with the slow economy, the help was needed and greatly appreciated by the Soldiers.

He said that the food voucher program is just one way that HHC and organizations like ACS and AUSA show their appreciation for Soldiers and their Families.

"The Soldiers and their Families sacrifice everyday for us, so we wanted to give back to them," Tyson said.

## Employee takes on ride of a lifetime U.S. Army engineer logs 1,588-mile solo bike quest

Story by  
**SARAH J. WEST**  
U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency

U.S. Army Non-Stockpile Chemical Materiel Project's employees continue their work disposing of chemical agent and orchestrating complex assessment and treatment missions. However, last summer they had another mission – each morning for three weeks, they congregated around a worn U.S. map to track Larry Friedman's solo 1,588-mile bicycle trek from southern Florida to Maryland.

At first glance, Friedman, logistics manager for NSCMP, does not incite thoughts of Lance Armstrong or exceptional feats of sportsmanship. He's quiet, sharing his office in the Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Ground with numerous files and a touring bike. The native Marylander started putting his University of Maryland degree in chemical engineering to work in 1993, at the newly formed NSCMP. Fifteen years later, Friedman continues to serve the project with major accomplishments under his belt, such as managing the destruction of the former binary chemical warfare production facility in Arkansas, and significant mobile chemical warfare disposal system development.

A proud father to daughter Rachel and dotting husband to wife Sarah, Friedman was happy with his professional and personal achievements, but said he still felt a need for "something far enough



Photo courtesy of CMA  
Logistics Manager for the U.S. Army Non-Stockpile Chemical Materiel Project, Larry Friedman, took the ride of a lifetime in the summer of 2008, completing a solo 1,588-mile bicycle trek from southern Florida to Maryland.

out of my comfort zone to intrigue me."

He then set out to do "something a little more than ordinary."

Some mid-life crises entail sports cars and hair dye, but at 51, Friedman decided to take a bike ride – a long one.

"I have always loved riding bicycles and am an advocate of the sport," Friedman said. "I love that it happens to be a way to move around and experience the outdoors, the country and the world."

With only a few day trips under his belt, Fried-

man set his sights on traveling from Tamarac, Fla., to Bel Air, Md., over 23 days – a total of 1,588 miles. That's the equivalent of biking from APG to Washington, D.C., every day for 23 days – not a simple task for someone whose daily routine includes hours of sitting at a desk or in meetings.

Besides getting over the fear of what could go wrong, Friedman said finding the time to complete the trek "seemed almost as daunting as the task itself."

"Planning the actual

trip, getting supplies, and even training were small matters by comparison," he added. "With Family and work, it was not such a simple matter as choosing a block of time to indulge my fancy."

Step one was working up the nerve to float the idea by his wife, who was "remarkable in her support," especially since it bought her "the freedom to spend time (and money) in Las Vegas with some friends." Next, with plenty of vacation time saved up, he ran the idea by Larry Gottschalk, project manag-

er for NSCMP, who supported the undertaking.

"The strength of NSCMP's matrix support allows our employees flexibility while maintaining the integrity and response time of the mission," Gottschalk said. "Not to mention, we all wanted to see if Larry could actually pull it off!"

Friedman's engineering skills went into shipping his meticulously chosen bike and gear to his parents' home in Florida. He flew down two weeks later to his starting point and reassembled his bike. On June 16, after months of planning and a modest budget of \$1,800, Friedman "grabbed a peach, a couple of [bottled] waters and pedaled off unceremoniously."

The first day alone he logged 93 miles, included busy, vehicle-biased roads and a ride across the "AIA high rise bridge over the Indian River on the metal grating when the rain, wind and lightning were at their combined worst."

Despite any tribulations, an optimistic Friedman remained thankful for this opportunity and awed by his untapped ability to tackle the physicality and mental test of the journey.

Each day brought new experiences and friendly people inspired by Friedman's gusto. Special encounters along the way included a fruit market owner, who was impressed by Friedman's adventure and offered what he could to help out by inviting him into his orange orchard to "pick as many as you need."

Friedman endured dozens of desolate miles

between milestone points before reaching "civilization." Locals always offered up sound advice such as the Family in the Georgia restaurant booth who relayed how "the woodsmen and hunters were reluctant to set ground camps in the woods on account of the rattlesnake population this year." Friedman remembers that was the moment "that pretty much made it final -- camping would remain on my list of things not to do." He shipped his camping gear home to lighten his load.

"It was always a kick for me to cross into the next state," he said. "I think state lines were psychological landmarks that instilled a sense of progress."

In all, Friedman navigated through six states and the metro confusion that is downtown Washington, D.C., completing 1,588 miles in 23 days, two of which were complete rest days. He arrived home to banners, balloons, crabs and the happy faces of his Family. Then, as unceremoniously as he started, Friedman returned to work the very next day.

As he stood in front of that U.S. map with the pushpin pressed firmly into his final destination back home, Friedman felt satisfied.

"Physically, I now know my body can handle the day after day demands of putting in the miles," he recalled. "Spiritually, it was a rewarding experience to be able to move such great distances under my own power and take in the sights and experiences."