

YPG expands helicopter fleet Skies soon to be busy with new aircraft

By Mark Schauer

Workers at YPG’s busy Laguna Army Airfield might see a new occupant in the skies, for the proving ground has recently added three 2012 model UH-72A Lakota Light Utility Helicopters to its aircraft fleet.

The craft has a variety of features pilots are excited about, from a full-glass cockpit and dual autopilots to sophisticated navigation systems displayed on digital screens, as well as safety redundancies like dual engines, which means the helicopter can still fly and land safely in the unlikely event of an engine failure.

“From a pilot’s perspective, it is a very, very nice aircraft,” said Gerald Fijalka, pilot.

Military aviation traditionalists should take heart, however. The UH-1 Iroquois, better known as the Huey, that has supported testing at YPG for decades is



YPG pilots Gerald Fijalka (left) and Clark Barton prepare to fly one of the proving ground’s three new UH-72A Lakota Light Utility Helicopters on a recent mission. In addition to providing a newer, sleeker means of taking range overflights, the Lakota is particularly well-suited for medical first responder duty.

PHOTO BY MARK SCHAUER

not going anywhere. Aside from being more versatile than the Lakota, the venerable Huey has long had the written

permissions necessary to accommodate proving ground test programs, such as flying with specialized cameras and

sensor packages, while the new platform does not.

“Hueys are rugged and dependable like a pickup

truck,” said Pedro Yi-Perez, pilot. “The Lakota is more like a fancy SUV. I don’t think it will ever replace the Huey, but it is a compliment to the Huey that YPG will get a great deal of benefit out of.”

In addition to providing a newer, sleeker means of taking range over flights, the Lakota is particularly well-suited for medical first responder duty, a possibility that must be planned for in test programs occurring on remote parts of YPG’s vast ranges. The civilian helicopter the Lakota is based on was designed for medical evacuation missions, and one of the three craft YPG has acquired is specifically configured to support this mission. Rescue personnel can safely load stretchers through rear clamshell doors while the rotors are turning thanks to the Lakota’s design, allowing for quick extractions in the event of an

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Yuma native's dream becomes a reality with fulfilling career

By Yolie Canales

As a young boy, Esteban Flores set his mind on becoming an engineer and someday returning to his hometown to put his engineering degree to work. "This is what inspired me when I took off to college to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering," he said. He fulfilled his dream, working today as chief of the Artillery & Mine Branch and currently sharing acting division chief responsibilities of Yuma Test Center's Munitions and Weapons Division.

"YPG was my first choice of employment when I graduated in 1998 but at the time there were no job opportunities at YPG," he said. He took a job in Fallbrook, Calif., as a project leader for the Marine Corps Programs Department. A couple years later, job opportunities opened

at YPG and the rest is history. "I'm in a job I enjoy and am fascinated working with weapon systems and ammunition." He feels this is a 'nice fit' for his interests and desires. He also received the opportunity to pursue a master's degree at Britain's Cranfield University in 2004.

When Flores began working at the Munitions & Weapons Division, he started as a test officer; however, he had dreams of someday becoming chief of a test branch. To attain this goal, he says the individual must prepare him or herself by doing a good job, learning all he or she can in the test world to include the ranges, test projects and more.

As branch chief, Flores provides technical support and supervises the artillery and mine branch that consists of three teams: two artillery and one mine-countermine. Each



Esteban Flores explains how important safety is to the mission of YPG and its workforce during a recent interview.

PHOTO BY YOLIE CANALES

has a team lead, who oversees five to six test officers. "It's a demanding job which keeps me busy and I like that," he said. "I provide technical oversight when it comes to things that are weapon-related, as well as ammunition, instrumentation and data collection issues."

However, first and foremost is the topic of safety. "Safety must always form part of our process and procedures," Flores explained. "If it doesn't, we negatively impact the workforce and, without the workforce, there is no testing." He believes safety is the most important phase of the mission and is almost ingrained as a way of doing business. "My job is to maintain the prominence of our safety activities and inject new ideas," he said.

Flores sees the munitions and weapons mission as necessary, dynamic and stable. "Combat operations overseas are winding down," he said, "and I foresee our workload shifting a bit. We may focus more on production acceptance and surveillance testing, but the work will shift, not end."

For someone sharing the division chief responsibilities, challenges are part of a day's work. To overcome them, it's a matter of time management. "This is done by rearranging my daily schedule to allow time to meet these unexpected

issues that just pop up," said Flores with a smile.

Regarding his management style, Flores tries to adapt to his subordinates and their needs. "I am open to change and always have a Plan B," he said. "Whenever you embark on a new project, I have found, you need to have more than one route."

Flores is proud of those who work beneath him and thanks them for their accomplishments, but urges that they not rest on their laurels. "As a branch, my folks are doing a great job, however, there is always room for improvement," he said. "I ask each employee to look beyond our boundaries to see what else can be done to make the mission better and more efficient. We need to always seek better ways of doing things."

Although it seems Flores is the type of person to whom 'work' is a first priority, he knows when and how to disconnect work from family life. "When I depart at the end of the day, I leave work at work," he said. "I am a family man and enjoy spending as much time with my wife and kids doing fun things." He also enjoys working on cars, carpentry and any other "garage" related task.

THE OUTPOST

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VIEWPOINTS

Summer time is enjoyed mostly by children because it is a long break from school. For this Viewpoint the YPG children were asked: "What fun things are you doing for the summer."



Carter Lyda

I'm going to North Carolina to see my family. I'm just going to hang out, visit my old town, and meet my new nephew. I haven't done anything special so far. I just like to come to the pool and go to summer camp.



Olivia Pakkala

I am going to go swimming and watch movies this summer. My favorite movie is Brave. I will also play with my little baby brother at home.

Jake Webb

So far, I've gone swimming, gone to my cousin's house, gone outside and played, and eaten food. My favorite food is bean and cheese burritos. I also want to come to the swimming pool more and watch television. I just want to have fun!



John Webb

I plan to go swimming and to the gym to skate. I also want to go on a float down on the Colorado River. I also went canoeing in Prescott earlier this summer.



Isaiah Pacella

I don't really know what I'm going to do the rest of the summer. My mom has not made any plans yet, but I have gone to Missoula Children's Play, Vacation Bible School and now I am here at the Youth Services. Here, I hang out with other kids, go to the pool, go to the gym, play tug-of-war and play baseball.

Nathan Heller

I am going to Los Angeles to go see the statues over there and then, I'm going to Universal Studios. I will also be coming to the pool more because I like it.



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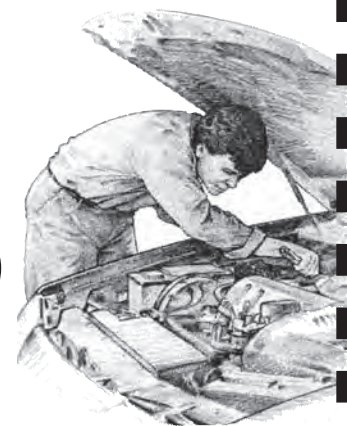
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FLEET

FROM PAGE 1



One of the proving ground's three new UH-72A Lakota aircrafts prepares to lift off from Laguna Army Airfield. "From my perspective, the Lakota is an incredible machine," said pilot Pedro Yi-Perez. "It has a full-glass cockpit and dual autopilots. It is a very advanced and complex aircraft that represents everything a pilot could want." PHOTOS BY MARK SCHAUER

emergency. The Lakotas also have an electric rescue hoist to support search and rescue missions. Pilots can keep both eyes on the ground while flying during search missions thanks to the Lakota's dual autopilots and sophisticated automated navigation system.

To get up to speed on the new airframe, YPG pilots travelled to the Lakota factory in suburban Dallas, Texas for training.

"Most of the training had to do with managing systems," said Yi-Perez. "Flying is flying, like driving a car, but the avionics, electronics, autopilots, and navigation systems were covered by the training."

The certified pilots look forward to flying the Lakota in support of the busy mission for years to come.

"It is a very advanced and complex aircraft that represents everything a pilot would want," said Yi-Perez.

The Lakota was originally designed for medical evacuation missions, and one of the three aircraft YPG has acquired is specifically configured to support this mission. Rescue personnel can safely load stretchers through the rear clamshell doors, seen here, while the rotors are turning, allowing for quick extractions in the event of an emergency.



The UH-72A's full-glass cockpit is one of the many features YPG pilots like Gerald Fijalka (left) is excited about. However, the rugged and venerable UH-1 Huey helicopter will continue to be used in support of test missions at the proving ground.

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Somerton native receives warm welcome



By Yolie Canales

The Yuma County Airport was the setting one recent Thursday for over 150 people who gathered to greet a wounded Soldier coming home after being hospitalized for injuries he received from an explosive blast in Afghanistan. A major concern is the sight in his left eye.

Sgt. Ernesto Ramirez, a resident of Somerton and 2007 Cibola High School graduate, was surprised and happy when he saw the throng at the arrival gate waiting to greet him with open arms. Emotions were running high as his mother, Maria Urias, and father, Ernesto, were first in line to

see **SOMERTON** page 9

Sgt. Ernesto Ramirez (left) is welcomed home by one of YPG's Soldiers, Pfc. Ryan Yarbrough as YPG's Command Sgt. Maj. Keith West lines up to extend his welcome and appreciation for his service. PHOTO BY YOLIE CANALES

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Counter-Improvised Explosive Device

By Chuck Wullenjohn

Military equipment tested at Yuma Proving Ground since combat operations began in Iraq and Afghanistan has resulted in the saving of hundreds, if not thousands, of American lives and the prevention of injuries too numerous to quantify. This testing encompassed a wide variety of mission areas, including armored vehicles, mortars, unmanned aerial systems, artillery, and much more.

Ensuring the effectiveness and reliability of countermeasures to the threat of improvised explosive devices, the greatest cause of American deaths and injuries in combat, became an important proving ground mission area during the last ten years. Hundreds of thousands of employee hours were dedicated to this mission, with an immense number of rapid-fielding tests taking place to counter this fast-evolving threat.

The mission of this testing is all about saving lives, so whenever a specific test required that employees work evenings or on weekends, there

Safety Corner

Hand, wrist and finger safety tips

Our hands, wrists and fingers can encounter a variety of on-the-job hazards. Every year, thousands of people suffer hand injuries when using machinery, tools and corrosive materials. Many of these injuries require long periods of recuperation and often physical therapy is required.

Fortunately, most hand injuries can be avoided by practicing the following safety tips:

- Machine guards help protect against hand, wrist and finger injuries.



Hundreds of thousands of employee hours at the National Counterterrorism Counterinsurgency Integrated Test and Evaluation Center (NACCITEC) were dedicated to thwarting the deadly power of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) such as this car bomb detonated during a test at the Joint Experimentation Range Complex (JERC). IEDs were the greatest cause of American deaths and injuries during operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and NACCITEC's rapid testing of counter-IED technology prevented thousands of additional casualties.

PHOTO BY MARK SCHAUER

was never a question over whether the requirement would be met, for qualified people always stepped forward. This dedication, self-sacrifice and hard work should never be overlooked, for many throughout the armed forces and our nation are walking around today achieving

- Alternate your work activities to avoid long periods of repetitive motion.

- Be careful when working with tools that have handles that can pinch the hand, they can cause injuries that affect nerve, tendons and blood vessels.

- Gloves offer protection from a variety of hazards. It is important to pick out the ones that are right for your job. A proper Job Hazard Analysis is a must.

- Cloth gloves protect from minor hazards that can result in scratches, blisters and rashes.

- Heavy leather gloves are good

for working around machinery with rough edges.

New organization formed

YPG's counter-IED mission began in 2004 and evolved into an organization called the "National Counter-Terrorism/Counter-Insurgency Integrated Test and

their dreams because of what YPG's workforce accomplished.

- Metal mesh gloves protect against cuts from knives, sharp tools and jagged materials.

- Heat-resistant gloves of aluminized fabric or other materials protect against flames and intense heat.

- Corrosive chemicals can be stopped by rubber, vinyl or neoprene gloves.

- Disposable plastic gloves can protect against bacteria and germs.

- Make sure gloves are long enough to keep hazards off all skin areas.

- Make sure gloves aren't too large

Evaluation Center," or, NACCITEC, for short. The organization's workforce grew to over 400 in size and tested in specialized facilities constructed to conduct tests as realistically as possible - overseas villages, enclosed compounds, paved highways, a section of railroad, telephone poles, and much more. NACCITEC's people conducted work each day of the week and nearly around the clock, always knowing their work directly benefited Soldiers in the field.

"Their hard work saved thousands of American lives, and I'm proud of them," said Lt. Col. Chad Harris, Yuma Test Center commander. "NACCITEC was an integral part of getting valuable equipment into the hands of Soldiers to save their lives, from MRAP armored vehicles

and robots to electronic jamming systems and various counter-IED devices. You can almost name a system and find it was tested here."

As combat operations overseas have diminished, the NACCITEC mission has also grown smaller in size. From roughly 360,000 direct

for the hands because they can be clumsy or get caught in machinery; gloves that are too small can tire the hands and wear out sooner.

- Wash non-disposable gloves after each use to keep them free of contamination.

- Follow recommended storage procedures

- Watch for rips and other defects, replace significantly damaged gloves. In summary,

It's important to keep hands, wrists and fingers out of harm's way.

Always follow proper work procedures and wear the appropriate Personal Protection Equipment.

test mission continues at YPG

labor hours attributable to the NACCITEC mission one year ago, the workload has declined to only half that.

“The writing was on the wall and we needed to make moves to assure the long-term viability both of our people and the proving ground,” remarked Harris.

The solution was to realign many of the talented folks within the NACCITEC workforce and place them in areas where their expertise could be put to good use.

“People are our most valuable resource,” said Harris. “We decided to functionally realign our government civilian and contract workforce to places where each individual’s expertise would ensure success for the overall proving ground.”

Full circle

Early in the last decade, when Yuma Proving Ground was first establishing its counter-IED mission, the work was performed as part of the Air Combat Test Directorate, where a pool of in-depth knowledge of sensor testing already existed. As work expanded and it became necessary to assign substantial numbers of people to it, NACCITEC formed as a separate directorate.

With today’s realignment, the NACCITEC mission is being relocated to where it originated. Those members of the former-NACCITEC workforce no longer continuing to perform this mission have been realigned to other areas of Air Combat or within other YPG test commodity areas. In this way, jobs are being preserved and skills are being put to maximum use.

“We’ve come full circle,” said Harris with a smile. “As the mission declined, realigning the work back to Air Combat seemed a natural progression.”

Though the existence of NACCITEC as a separate YPG directorate has entered the history books, its work has not gone away. It now makes up a branch of the Air Combat Directorate called the Electronic Warfare Branch headed by longtime YPG employee Dave Horne. Other changes have also been instituted within the overall directorate.

Harris applauds the professionalism of the YPG team, as members from many organizations worked diligently in making the transition progress as smoothly as possible.

“YTC took on the daunting task

of folding one organization into another,” he said, “with the full cooperation of leadership in both organizations. It’s not easy to give up an entity you’ve run for years. The support from everyone was excellent.”

Harris personally visited work areas while the transition was taking place to meet with groups of employees, both to keep people informed and to dispel rumors.

Especially during a time in which the news media is filled with reports of defense budget cuts, people are, naturally, concerned about jobs and their future. The meetings served to allay these fears to a large extent.

“Sitting down with people to listen and let them know we understand their concerns,

as well as, have those same concerns, was worthwhile,” said Harris.

People throughout YPG and the Department of Defense will fondly remember NACCITEC in future years. The very best remembrance, however, are the many Americans walking around today who owe their lives to the work performed right here in Yuma, Arizona. It’s a legacy that allows the people of NACCITEC to hold their heads high.



In this photo of a 2010 visit to the JERC site, NACCITEC test division branch chief Javier Sardina (left) shows U.S. Senator John McCain ordinary items used by insurgents to detonate IEDs. Today, the NACCITEC mission is being relocated to the organization in which it originated, YPG’s Air Combat Test Division.

PHOTO BY MARK SCHAUER

Baseball celebrity visits YPG

Three-time Major League Baseball All-Star Cecil Fielder visited Yuma Proving Ground late last month and signed autographs and took photos with members of the YPG workforce. Fielder, who was in town conducting the 2012 Cecil Fielder Elite World Series, took time out to visit both YPG and Marine Corps Air Station. Staff Sgt. Armando Amado (right) answers Fielder’s questions regarding the Airborne Test Force Division’s mission.

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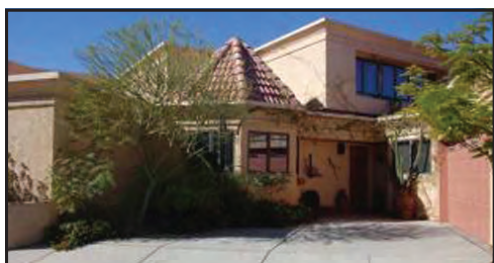
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Contracting excellence results in award

By Yolie Canales

Although Kimberly Ross feels she did not do anything special to win the FY2011 Outstanding Intern of the Year Award, her supervisor and higher headquarters believe otherwise. Ross is a contract specialist for the Mission Installation Contracting Command (MICC) at Yuma Proving Ground, and her higher headquarters is the U.S. Army Contracting Command (ACC) in Huntsville, Ala.

Carol Lowman, ACC executive director, presented 30 individual and eight team awards at the third annual ACC Contracting Awards ceremony to members of MICC for their outstanding dedication and hard work. "These professionals exemplify the best of this command and are the types of individuals others can aspire to become," said Lowman.

"I don't believe I did anything special, but my supervisor, Mike McDaniel, division chief, believed I did," said Ross. McDaniel nominated her for efforts in preparing and executing 43 contract awards with a value of \$19.3 million. He also pointed out her cost savings initiative that resulted in negotiation efforts that saved \$96,000 in a data

center technology upgrade, which was leveraged to support unfunded requirements by the customer. Her efforts proved significant in MICC-YPG executing 1,259 contract actions totaling \$203 million in obligations in FY2011.

"Kimberly truly stands out among her peers as an excellent contracting professional. YPG and our warfighters are fortunate to have her support and dedication," said Ann Sanchez, director of MICC.

"It's flattering that my supervisor would keep notes of all of my work and take the time to submit my name," said Ross, who added that 200 nominations were submitted.

Ross, a graduate of the University of Arizona, earned a bachelor's degree in agriculture and began work at MICC-YPG as an intern in 2009. "As an intern, the program consists of on-the-job and classroom training as well," said Ross.

"Kimberly is a dynamic team player that is dedicated to supporting mission and garrison activities to meet their critical mission requirements," said McDaniel. "No other intern at mission and installation and contracting command has received this prestigious award."

the presence of U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground and Marine Corps Air Station-Yuma over the years, so to do something like this for a local warrior comes almost as second nature.

Among the family and close friends who greeted Ramirez were Soldiers from Yuma Proving Ground, Marines in uniform and civilian attire, members from local veteran's organizations, and many more. One woman rushed into the airport asking, "Has the Soldier arrived?" She had just heard about his arrival on the



Kim Ross (right) contract specialist for YPG's Mission Installation Contracting Command, was presented with the FY2011 Outstanding Intern of the Year award by Carol Lowman, executive director for the U.S. Army Contracting Command. U.S. ARMY PHOTO

Although Ross has completed the internship program, she is not new to the contracting field. Her mother, Sandy, used to be director of contracting at YPG and now works at Defense Procurement Acquisition Policy (DPAP) in the Pentagon.

"Although my degree is not in the contracting field, I have found a

rewarding career that I truly enjoy and love doing. Seeing my mother work in this field for so long inspired me to stay with it and do the best I can," she said. "Both my parents gave me a good background in work ethics, taught me to always do my best and certainly inspired me to give it all."

radio and wanted to greet and thank him for his service.

Ramirez's eye injury resulted from the explosion of an improvised explosive device that had been made using a rifle round attached to an electronic ignition system. The resulting explosion sent flaming shrapnel into his body, including his left eye. He was flown to Germany and then onto Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, where his mother met him. Ramirez remains under doctor's care but was given leave for two weeks to come home to

be with his family.

Before departing the airport, YPG Command Sgt. Maj. Keith West expressed his appreciation to Ramirez for his service, handed him a YPG coin and offered some advice. "Take good care of yourself and follow your doctor's orders," he advised. "Don't do anything that might jeopardize your recuperation and take your time getting better. Thanks for your service and good luck."

SOMERTON

FROM PAGE 5

wrap arms around their son. "I just wanted someone to be here to pick me up," said Ramirez, "but this is more than what I expected and it sure feels good."

His mother said, "All I had to do was send one text message to the right person and this was the result. I am so happy to see so many people here."

People throughout Yuma County have been extremely supportive of

Do not leave children unattended in vehicles

Submitted by Paul J. Kilanski, Family Advocacy Program Specialist

In 1999 alone, at least 27 children died of hyperthermia (heat stroke) from being locked in the passenger compartment of a vehicle. All of these children were under the age of five and all of these deaths occurred during summer months (June-August)

When the outside temperature is 90 degrees Fahrenheit, even with the windows cracked, the air temperature inside a car can reach 125 degrees Fahrenheit in just 20 minutes and

approximately 140 degrees in 40 minutes.

In these conditions, young children can die or suffer permanent disability in a matter of minutes.

In addition to heat stroke, children left unattended in automobiles may also experience other types of injuries as well. For example, there are documented cases in which children left unattended in cars have put the vehicle in motion and hurt themselves and other people. Carjackings and abductions that may occur when a child is left alone in a vehicle are also cause for concern. It is impossible to tell when "just a minute" becomes a moment too long.

Eleven states currently have laws that prohibit children from being left unattended in vehicles, including: Connecticut, Florida,

Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington. In addition, New York has proposed similar legislation. Although Arizona has not enacted a similar law, a person leaving their child unattended in a vehicle can be charged under Arizona statute with child endangerment

As of yet, there have been no studies of the effectiveness of this type of legislation. However, knowledge of the medical vulnerability of young children left unattended in cars provides a strong rationale for protecting them from this hazard. Current law provides this level of protection to animals. At least 15 states and local jurisdictions have passed legislation that makes it illegal for pets to be confined in automobiles

Children should have that same protection.

Heritage Center Curator, YPG Civilian of the Quarter



Bill Heidner (center) is congratulated by Julio Dominguez, YPG technical director, for his outstanding work performance, as Executive Officer Rick Swensen (left) and YPG commander Col. Reed Young look on.

PHOTO BY MARK SCHAUER

By Mark Schauer

Bill Heidner, curator of Yuma Proving Ground's Heritage Center, was named civilian of the quarter by YPG Commander Col. Reed Young in a June 28th ceremony at the museum attended by about 50 YPG personnel.

Heidner, who has worked at YPG for nearly eight years, was recognized for both the excellence of YPG's museum and his indefatigable support of a variety of public outreach efforts, from multiple years hosting the Yuma Elementary School District's Fast Track summer science program to an extensive display of Soldier-produced artwork that was visible at this year's Spirit of Yuma Military Festival.

During the second quarter, he

successfully opened a satellite exhibit space at the Yuma Quartermaster Depot and hosted a rare tour of the remains of the World War II-era training facility Camp Laguna for a large contingent from the Arizona Historical Society. He is also a regular speaker in Yuma County with multimedia presentations on topics related to the proving ground and the Army's extensive history in Yuma.

"Bill does far more than open and close the museum every day," said Ron Rodriguez, Director of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security. "He is an employee who always does what he has to do to get the job done. He brings that type of commitment and initiative to everything he does, and greatly deserves this recognition."

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Grades 6-12

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Deadline for registration is July 24, 2012, registration forms may be obtained at CYSS - Bldg 1001, ACS - Bldg 309, and Education Center - Bldg 501

For more information contact Youth Services at 328-2860
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