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Vicksburg District

THE Water's Edge

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Commander and District Engineer
COL John W. Cross

Public Affairs and Communications Team

Greg C. Raimondo
Chief

Kavanaugh Breazeale
Deputy Chief

Shirley J. Smith
Managing Editor

Bucky Wall
Public Affairs Specialist

Alice Bufkin
Public Affairs Assistant

Robert L. Miller, Jr.
Administrative Assistant

Magazine Layout by
Colleen Cummins

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Contact:

Gregory.C.Raimondo@usace.army.mil
or Phone (601) 631-5053

Shirley.J.Smith@usace.army.mil
or Phone (601) 631-5223
Fax (601) 631-5551

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S.A.M.E. Camp



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Left to right, James Harper, Col Cross, and Lamar Rutland, inspect mats at Mat Casting Field.

Photo by Kavanaugh Breazeale

Commander's Corner

with Colonel John W. Cross



Hello Vicksburg District Team members.

Since my arrival, I have found that the Vicksburg District is a huge, complex organization doing many things and doing them very well. Until arriving, I never fully comprehended the great team that the Vicksburg District really is and how important its missions are to the nation. The Vicksburg District is a team of dedicated professionals who sacrifice to accomplish our vital mission. We bear upon our shoulders a great responsibility to protect vast reaches of homes, businesses, and lands across a three state region. No other federal agency assumes such a responsibility.

It is exciting to be able to assume a command like the Vicksburg District. Everywhere I go in the headquarters and the field, I have found that team members are proud of their Corps history, tremendous esprit de corps, dedicated to the nation and ready to accept the next challenge, large or small. The dedication, enthusiasm and diverse skills and capabilities of the Vicksburg District team are very evident. You are all professionals who know what to do and when to do it. The people are great; the missions are diverse and important, and I am honored to become a part of the outstanding reputation of this district.

I have also been impressed by the dedication and determination of our many partners and stakeholders both private and state and federal. The partnerships formed here at the District have proven to be useful methods of breaking down barriers of communication while encouraging teamwork. On the local level, the Adopt-A-School partnerships have enhanced the knowledge of the

Corps and its missions to students, faculties, and staff members, while helping to build our future workforce.

I would like to thank the rangers at our recreational sites and lakes across the district and I would ask you to do the same. They are dedicated, hard working and are often our most visible connection to the public. Our rangers have been asked to do more and more over the past few years and often do not get the recognition they deserve. When you see our rangers please thank them for all they do!

I look forward to continuing to balance the tremendous task of managing a world-class water resources program. We cannot guarantee that our efforts will always be successful, but we can guarantee that any failure will not be because of lack of effort or dedication. I am humbled to serve with you on this amazing team and I look forward to working with you all. We serve our Country, we are a Family that works as a Team and we provide Value to the Nation!

ESSAYONS



Col. Cross meets with J. Bennett Johnston Waterway partners and stakeholders.

Mat Casting success keeps the river flowing

By Jonathan Boone
Photos by Lamar Rutland

Have you ever driven across the bridge that connects the bluffs of Vicksburg, Mississippi, with the flat lands of the Louisiana Delta and wondered what is under the water of the Mighty Mississippi River? If so, look no further than the Vicksburg District's Delta, Louisiana's Mat Casting Field.

Mississippi Limestone Corporation employees screed the fresh concrete into the forms. The top surfaces are grooved to provide environmental benefits.



Lamar Rutland, second from right, explains the work of the mat casting field to Col Cross, second from left. Also pictured are far left, James Harper, and right, DeAnna Prestwood.

Dirt or soil testing plays a big role in projects design

By Brian Jordan
Photo by Alfred Dulaney



David Little, left, and Hattie Johnson, right, trim an undisturbed soil sample for an undrained triaxial test.

At one time we all played in...or, with dirt. As we became older playing with dirt wasn't fun anymore. But, for some Corps team members, dirt is an integral part of their job. Testing dirt, or soil samples, is the primary purpose of the District's soils lab. They test the physical characteristics of soil as they pertain to geotechnical engineering design.

Within the Corps, it is necessary to make determinations of the soil properties to be used in the design of any project. Before soil testing is requested of a lab, engineers make a clear determination of the information required to provide an effective, quality design.

"Soil has many properties. It is up to designers to let us know what properties they are interested in by making a testing plan. This plan guides our work in the lab and we provide the facts about the soil they are dealing with," stated Brian Jordan, chief of the geotechnical data section of Engineering and Construction Division.

The soils tested come from project sites such as the Mississippi River levee enlargement projects, levee slides, problem seepage areas, and structure sites, to name a few. With the advancement of regionalization within the Corps, the Vicksburg soils lab also performs testing for districts all over the country. Marty Goff, principal geologist for Corps headquarters, states, "The Vicksburg District's in-house materials testing capability allows for quick access to data essential for design, accurate quality assurance and

PROJECT

Articulated concrete mattresses are constructed by contract labor using sand, cement, aggregate, and stainless steel reinforcement wire. The finished product is referred to as a “square” of articulated concrete mattress and measures 25 feet x 4 feet x 3 inches. The 2013 contract, which was completed the end of July, required the men and women working at the Delta Casting Field to construct 99,853 squares of concrete mattress. If you stretched the mattress squares end to end they would extend from the Red Carpet City of the South, Vicksburg, Mississippi, to the Music City of Nashville, Tennessee.

The channel improvement program remains one of the Corps’ top priorities. As the world’s third largest watershed, the Mississippi River offers many challenges from flood risk management to river navigation. The concrete mats assist both of these initiatives by preventing erosion and protecting submerged river banks along the Mississippi River.

The process for casting mat is very specialized work

control. It also provides a valuable training opportunity that enhances technical competency not only for District staff but the entire Mississippi Valley Division.”

The soils lab is validated by the Material Testing Center (MRT) at the Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC). This governing body assures that the Vicksburg soils lab strictly adheres to standards and procedures for all testing and that the lab maintains its equipment properly. The lab is also a member of the American Materials Research Laboratory (AMRL) proficiency program.

Hattie Johnson, an engineering technician, conducts tests for soil type, water content, particle size distributions, strength characteristics, and organic material content. Hattie’s job is one of the key first steps to success in geotechnical design. Along with the proper collection of the soil samples, accurate lab testing is critical.

No matter how talented the design engineer or how advanced the design software is, the design can only be as good as the input data. Johnson, through her experience, can make conclusions about a material’s properties just by looking and touching. “I log in and classify samples and send them to engineers to pick their test assignments, they test them differently for certain projects,” she stated. During soil preparation, lab personnel have the opportunity to record a complete description of the material. The description, which can be modified as tests are conducted, includes the classification of the material, its color, and consistency, along with any other charac-

and is completed at only three casting fields distributed throughout the Lower Mississippi River Valley in the Memphis District, the Vicksburg District, and the New Orleans District. The construction equipment used to cast the mat is not available at the local heavy equipment dealer, so custom fabrication is required. Skilled craftsmen use pieces and parts from various equipment to build the tractors, concrete screeds, and other equipment that help in completing the work. Manual labor remains the glue that holds the whole operation together. Over 150 employees are hired by the prime construction contractor to contribute to the mission.

The completed mattress squares are used by Operations Division employees during the annual mat sinking operations to help stabilize the banks of the Mississippi River. So the next time you look at the Mighty Mississippi River you might have a deeper appreciation for what you see or perhaps what you don’t see. ◀

teristics which might be valuable to design engineers.

Soil entering the soils lab is subjected to a myriad of procedures, but recently the District was fortunate enough to add new tools of discovery to the arsenal of its designers, triaxial and consolidation testing. Triaxial testing allows technicians to apply a confining pressure to a soil sample before strength testing, effectively returning it to its natural condition before it was removed from the ground. Consolidation testing allows engineers to know precisely how much a soil layer will settle under a load. This aids in the estimation of over-build quantities and in calculating the possibility of differential settlement that might cause structures to tilt like the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

The real advantage the Vicksburg soils lab offers designing engineers is the access it provides. Instead of samples being shipped to offsite labs, the soil their project will rest upon is just a short walk from where the project is being designed. Engineers find it invaluable to see, feel, and even take part in the testing of soils involved in their projects. Lanny Barfield, geotechnical branch chief, explains the important role of the soils lab to his branch, “Geotechnical branch already has a strong group of quality geotechnical engineers. Having a fully-functional soils testing lab on campus provides our team members with a great opportunity many other Districts don’t have, and our engineers will continue to take full advantage of this resource,” he stated. ◀

SAME/Army 2013 Engineering and Construction Camp provides unique curriculum for students

By Michael A. Turner, P.E., camp director

Photos by James Cumberland, James Harper, and Matthew Parrish

With the support of a host of dedicated volunteers and only a few minor challenges the eleventh annual SAME/ARMY Engineering and Construction Camp was successfully conducted June 16-22 in Vicksburg, Mississippi. As in the previous ten years, the one week program sponsored by the Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) and supervised by professional engineers from the local SAME Post and other volunteers from engineering organizations in the lower Mississippi Valley was well received and greatly enjoyed by the 38 participating campers. This year's camp included 10 females and 28 males, all rising high school juniors or seniors from Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, Washington, D.C., and Wisconsin.

The SAME/ARMY Engineering & Construction Camp is designed to provide high school students with an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in engineering and construction skills in Vicksburg's wide-ranging engineering community. The campers are exposed to various activities that provide insight into career choices in the fields of engineering and construction. Topics covered in this year's curriculum were surveying, civil engineering, environmental engineering, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, industrial engineering, geotechnical engineering, river engineering, military engineering, computer aided design (CADD), geographic information systems (GIS), and information technology.

The camp kicked off on Sunday afternoon with the campers arriving at their temporary home for the week at the Mississippi Army National Guard 168th Engineer Group Readiness Center. After check-in and introduction to the facilities and their sleeping areas the campers were divided into four teams and introduced to their counselors. Each team has a male and a female counselor who themselves are young engineers. The counselors, known as pilots and first mates, spend the entire week with the campers both day and night. This year's pilots and first

mates came from the Vicksburg District, Memphis District, St. Louis District, Engineer Research Development Center (ERDC) and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development.

Team activities started Sunday afternoon with an orienteering exercise and an icebreaker. Monday began with a leadership and teambuilding exercise at the Vicksburg National Military Park, followed by a concrete mix design exercise at ERDC and a survivor type military challenge exercise at the 168th National Guard Readiness Center. As usual, a highlight for the day was the landing and visit by a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter.

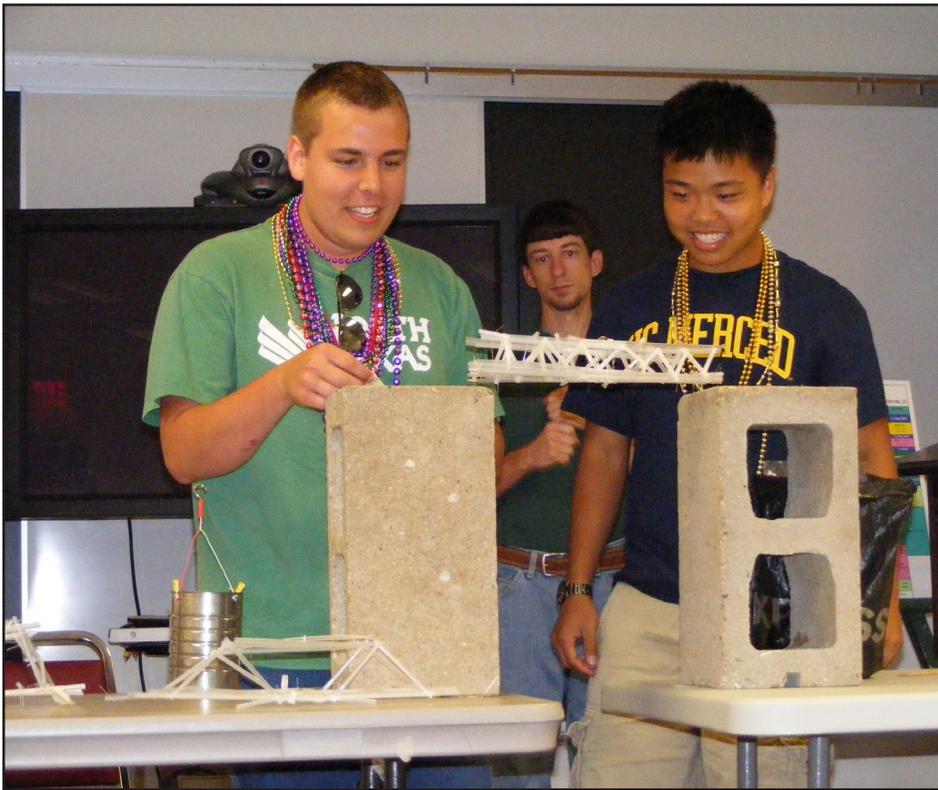
Tuesday activities included computer modeling and design of a catapult system at the Center for Advanced Vehicular Systems (CAVS) extension office in Canton, a guided tour of the Nissan Plant in Canton and a surveying, GIS and AutoCAD competition at sustaining member firm Neel-Schaffer headquarters in downtown Jackson. Tuesday evening was capped off with Mardi Gras themed jambalaya cooking and the straw bridge competition.

Wednesday's schedule included activities at the ERDC Information Technology Laboratory (ITL) and a visit to the Lower Mississippi River Museum that morning followed by a visit to the Entergy Training Center in Clinton for several activities and demonstrations in the afternoon. Wednesday concluded with a night of college themed bowling and pizza.

Thursday's schedule began with the concrete construction activity and batch plant tour at MMC Concrete and APAC followed by lunch, a boat ride and competitive river engineering activities aboard the Motor Vessel Benyaour. The evening included a swim party and hamburger cook-out at the Knights of Columbus pool.

On Friday morning the campers traveled to ERDC where they participated in soil classification activities led by staff from the Geotechnical and Structures Laboratory (GSL) and an environmental exercise led by staff from the Environmental Laboratory (EL). Friday afternoon was

PROJECT



Nathan Morrow of the District, center, observes left to right, Nathan Hard and Noah Tseng, testing their bridge construction.



Chris Lewis of the Information Technology Laboratory at ERDC instructs the campers.

dominated by several activities at the Coastal and Hydraulics Laboratory (CHL) at ERDC. Friday evening concluded with the traditional luau and fun activities including karaoke.

The campers traveled back to ERDC on Saturday morning to witness GSL staff loading until failure, each of the team's concrete cylinders that they had mixed and poured on Monday. A short after action review with the campers yielded their likes and dislikes for the week. This year's group couldn't name a single item or activity that they disliked but overwhelmingly the number one thing they most liked was the food. The cooking team feeds them well and often!

An awards ceremony was held at the Vicksburg District Headquarters Building where MG John W. Peabody, Commander of the Mississippi Valley Division and President of the Mississippi River Commission presented certificates to all the campers. Camp activities concluded with a fried catfish lunch for the campers and their families.

For each competitive activity completed during the week the teams were scored by the instructors for accuracy, timing and for team spirit. Points were compiled at the end of the week and the winning team members were each awarded a Northface backpack. With sometimes intense competition, sweltering heat that some had never experienced and activity packed 16 hour days, the teams worked hard to complete their assigned activities, while still managing to engineer some fun and camaraderie during the week. Remember, it's all about having fun and building the future – one engineer at a time!

The camp charges each camper a token amount that only covers a

(Continued on page 8)

(SAME 2013 Camp, concluded from page 7)

fraction of camp expenses. The funds required to operate the camp each year are provided by generous contributions from SAME sustaining member firms, SAME posts, and individuals. Each year the volunteer staff from the local engineering community works extremely hard to make the camp a success. Along with the volunteers, sustaining member firms and SAME Posts who contributed cash donations, others who made this year's camp a success include the 168th National Guard Engineer Group, 1-185th AVN Battalion MS ANG, the Vicksburg-Warren School District, Entergy Mississippi, Mississippi State University Center for Advanced Vehicular Systems Extension Office, Nissan North America, Neel-Schaffer Engineers, Vicksburg National Military Park, MMC Concrete, APAC of MS, Fordice Construction Company, Engineer Research and Development Center, Mississippi Valley Division, Vicksburg District, Memphis District and St. Louis District. Thanks to all who made this year's camp the best ever! ◀



Chris Pesnell, Maptech, shows camper Brandon Victorian how to use surveying equipment. Brandon, a student at Ouachita Parish High School, is the recipient of this year's Larry Harper Leadership Award.

National Bilingual Team spreads water safety message at Aqua Fest

By Shirley J. Smith

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) National Bilingual Water Safety Team enhanced water safety messages during the Aqua Fest held August 24-25 at Lake Greeson and DeGray Lake for both English and Spanish speaking visitors.

Aqua Fest is coordinated by the National Operations Center for Water Safety managed by Pam Doty, USACE National Water Safety Program manager. For the past several years, Spanish-speaking USACE employees have served on the National Bilingual Water Safety Team providing their knowledge of various Spanish dialects to provide common translations to Corps publications developed by the National Operations Center for Water Safety. This effort has resulted in products that can be used nationally such as coloring books, posters, brochures, customer comment cards, volunteer services applications, and much more.

Aqua Fest, a family oriented event, attracts many visitors, many of whom are Spanish-speaking residents. "We don't want communication to be a barrier with any of our water safety products or water related events. The bilin-

gual team is a great asset in providing tips for our rangers to communicate with our Hispanic visitors," stated Brian Westfall, a natural resources specialist with the Corps' Ouachita Project Management Office.

The Corps' water safety mascot, Bobber the Water Safety Dog, was a main attraction at the Aqua Fest and activities included dry land swimming lessons, roving interpretation, duck pond, water rescue station, and more. Activities kicked off on Saturday, August 24, at 11:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. at Lake Greeson's Dam Site Recreation Area, and Sunday, August 25, at 11:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. at DeGray Lake's Highway 7 Day Use Area at the north beach.

The Corps is the Nation's leading provider of water-based outdoor recreation with over 420 lake and river projects in 43 states and over 370 million visitors per year. In Arkansas, approximately 9-10 million persons visit the Corps' three Arkansas lakes annually, which bring about \$33.89 million in total sales, and support more than 700 jobs within the areas. ◀

USACE chaplain visits Vicksburg District

By Shirley J. Smith

Photos by Kavanaugh Breazeale



CH Wright discusses his "calling".

He stated, "I'm an Army of one; I'm responsible for the religious support to 35,000 civilians and 780 military persons. I know the combat side of engineers but have no idea of what the labs, districts, or divisions do." He said that he also wondered, "How can I be an asset to all of these people?"

Yet, this person, Col. Phillip F. Wright (CH Wright), was selected for a job with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters (HQUSACE).

Does he know his job, is he qualified? Yes. Although CH Wright works at HQUSACE, he serves as chaplain for the eight Corps divisions and the 45 Corps districts. As far as his qualifications, he stated, "This is not a job, it's a calling."

CH Wright enlisted into the Army in 1972 as a machine gunner and left in 1975 with an honorable discharge. He reentered the Army as chaplain in 1987. He stated that the opportunity to go through Ranger School made him a better soldier and officer, and gave him more credibility with leaders and Soldiers.

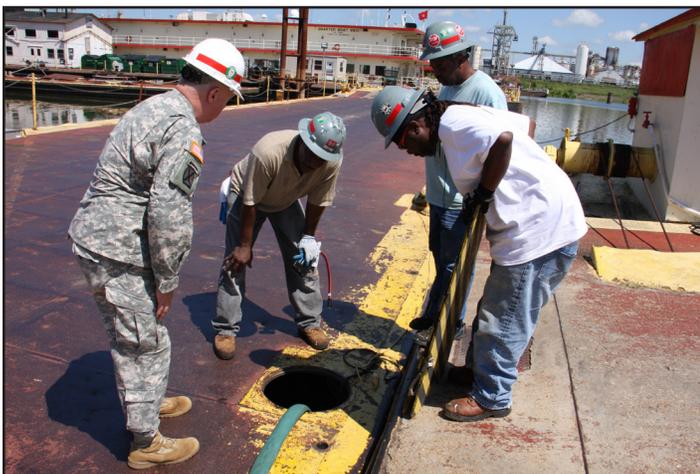
Visiting the Corps divisions and districts is one of the

first assignments for CH Wright. At one point during his visit here he mentioned that he had been on the job for just six weeks and stated that he had a lot of ground to cover. While here at the Vicksburg District he met the Commander, Col. John W. Cross and the Deputy Commander, LTC John T. Tucker, III, and many civilian team members.

He stated that this trip also allowed him the opportunity to learn and see different things. One of the "different" things that he saw was the one-of-a-kind Mat Sinking Unit and learned about its unique work.

CH Wright stated that part of his mission in visiting the various districts is supporting the Commander's 4-Point Campaign Plan: Support to the Warfighter in the form of resilient Soldiers and civilians; Transform Civil Works by modern cost-effective, sustainable solutions; Reduce Disaster Risk; and Prepare for Tomorrow by providing the best engineering solutions to the Nation's challenges.

When referring to his job as chaplain, he stated, "It's not about me; I'm representing the Chief of Engineers and the Corps. I have to be the best chaplain that I can be. In the end people want to know that your faith is real. You don't just talk the talk, you must walk the walk." His next stop was going to be New Orleans where he planned to attend a memorial service for a Corps team member. "I want to let those folks know that we care, we want to try and help to give them some closure to a tragic event that cost a USACE family member his life. ◀



CH Wright, left, watches while Mat Sinking Unit (MSU) team members, left to right, Jimmy Grigsby, Austin Mayfield, and Walter McClure, pump water out to adjust the level of the barge to match the adjacent barge.



Cody Eckhardt, Nathanael Jabour, Andy Metts, and CH Wright standing in foreground of one of the quarter-boats of the MSU.

Vicksburg District celebrates 140 years of service

By Shirley J. Smith
 Photos by Alfred Dulaney

The Vicksburg District celebrated its ninth annual Founder's Day August 15, 2013, in observance of the District's 140th year of service to our Nation.

The day began with a continental breakfast for retirees. The breakfast was immediately followed by the Founder's Day ceremony where District Commander, Col. John W. Cross, made opening remarks by stating, "Welcome to all of you, especially to our retirees. You are all directly responsible for the current, impressive reputation this District has throughout the community and throughout the Corps. Thank you for all you have done in the past. The contributions of our employees continue to be outstanding."

Col Cross' remarks were followed by his presentation of Length of Service Awards to team members with 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, and 45 years of service.

Special awards recipients were Philip Rogers and Dennis D. Ward who received the Commander's Special Emphasis Awards for their support to the War on Terrorism. Ward also received the Commander's Award for Civilian Service for his support of Operation Enduring Freedom and the Non-Article 5 NATO Medal in relation to the ISAF Operation.

Other special award recipients were Robert M. Stewart who received the Commander's Award for Civilian Service for support of the St. Paul's District's 2011 Spring-Summer Flood Recovery operations in the Souris River Basin.

Other special award recipients included Robert C. Winders who received the Commander's Award for Civilian Service for serving as hydraulic engineering national technical expert on behalf of the Modeling, Mapping, and Consequences Production Center; Whitney R. Ladzick, and Karen L. Myers, who received the Achievement Medal for Civilian Service for excellent service to the Modeling, Mapping, and Consequences Production Center.

The ceremony concluded with team members singing the Army song before the cutting of the Founder's Day cake by Col Cross and the team members with 45 years of service, William Carpenter and Lillian Standridge. ◀



Col. Cross with Philip Rogers



Col. Cross with Dennis Ward



Col. Cross with Mike Stewart



Col. Cross with Robert Winders



Col. Cross with Whitney R. Ladzick



Col. Cross with Karen Myers



Lillian Standridge, Col. Cross and William Carpenter cut the cake.

District selects new chief of permit section of regulatory branch

Story and photo by Kavanaugh Breazeale



Jennifer Mallard

Jennifer Mallard has been selected as chief of the permit section in the regulatory branch.

Mallard is responsible for review, analysis, approval, disapproval, evaluation, and inspection of certain Corps projects and all applications for Department of the Army permits covered by general permits, and nationwide permits. She will also have oversight of the compliance program which reviews, analyzes, and evaluates public notices and permit documents issued by local, state and other federal agencies. She will use her thorough knowledge and understanding of regulatory methods, techniques and practices of the principles of biology, botany, soils, chemistry, geology and forestry.

Mallard joined the Corps in 2001 as a

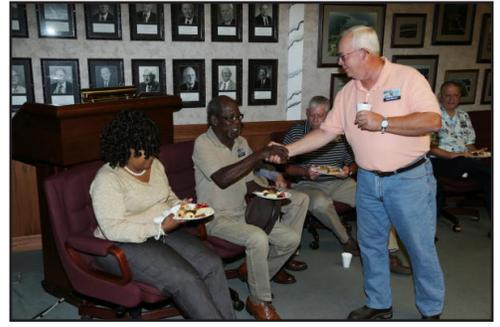
park ranger at Lake Greeson in Murfreesboro, Arkansas. After deploying to Mississippi for Hurricane Katrina emergency operations in 2005, she accepted a position in the regulatory branch where she has served as an environmental specialist and senior environmental specialist for the past eight years.

A native of Caddo Gap, Arkansas, she is a graduate of the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, and Henderson State University where she earned Bachelor's Degrees in environmental soil and water science, and in park and recreation management.

She is the daughter of the late James R. Fryar and Gracie G. Fryar of Caddo Gap, Arkansas. She is married to Matthew Mallard of Enterprise, and they have two sons and are members of First Baptist Church. ◀

RETIRES' BREAKFAST

Photos by Alfred Dulaney



FOUNDERS DAY CEREMONY



COL. CROSS TOURS AND LOW WATER TRIP

Photos by Alfred Dulaney



The Corps mission in Afghanistan

By Pamela Smith

In October 2001, the United States and its coalition partners sent military forces into Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom with the goals of displacing the al-Qaeda terrorist organization, ousting the Taliban government and establishing a new Afghan central government. The Corps reinforced the mission by deploying a six-person Forward Engineer Support Team (FEST) with the XVIII Airborne Corps to provide engineering, construction, planning, contracting, and real estate services.

By fall 2002, it became clear that the newly formed Afghan National Army (ANA) needed adequate facilities to ensure the success of its new fighting force. The Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan asked the Corps to manage the renovation and construction of facilities for the new national army. To manage this program, the Corps' Transatlantic Program Center (TAC) in Winchester, Virginia, established the Afghanistan Area Office at Kabul.

With the expansion of the ANA and growing number of forces at Bagram Airfield (north of Kabul) and Kandahar Airfield (in southern Afghanistan), the military construction (MILCON) workload for the U.S. and coalition forces continually increased with greater demand for housing and operational facilities. This growth in mission and a long-term commitment to Afghanistan prompted the Corps to convert the area office in Kabul to the Afghanistan Engineer District (AED) in March 2004.

Five years after the creation of the AED, the Corps established a second district at Kandahar, the Afghanistan Engineer District South (AED-S), to

meet growing engineering mission requirements. The district headquarters at Kabul was renamed Afghanistan Engineer District North (AED-N) and both districts established area and resident offices throughout Afghanistan. AED was renamed Transatlantic District in 2011.

In preparation for the drawdown and withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan by December 2014, the Corps consolidated the TAD districts into one, the Transatlantic Afghanistan District (TAA), located in Kabul. On July 9, 2013, the TAA was activated under the command of Col. Michael J. Price, who returned to Afghanistan from the St. Paul District, which he had commanded since July 2010. With only one area office at Kandahar, TAA assumed all responsibility for completing the Corps' mission in Afghanistan. The new district's priority focus will be building quality facilities for the Afghan national Security Forces, while continuing the Corps' legacy that began in 2002.

Maj. Gen. Michael Eyre, Transatlantic Division commander, presided over the colors-casing ceremony for the activation of the new district. Speaking to more than 150 people assembled at Camp Phoenix Patriot Square, Eyre said, "When all of the construction is completed for which the Corps is responsible, there will be over 717 project facilities to support the 350,000 Afghan National Army and National Police personnel. This effort will help reinforce their capability to provide security and stability throughout Afghanistan."

Maj. Gen. Eyre reminded his audience of the challenges that still lie ahead for the Corps. He stated that

we still need to complete more than 300 projects valued at more than \$3.5 million during a time of continuing drawdown and retrograde.

Addressing his new team, Col. Price said, "What we do is of huge importance to the security of Afghanistan and for the governance of this nation. There should be no doubt that the Corps remains committed to helping rebuild Afghanistan by providing electricity, clean drinking water, water for farm irrigation and improving transportation. All of these efforts are of strategic importance to Afghanistan and the United States."

Completing the mission and delivering the facilities needed to enable the Afghan Security Forces to secure their nation will require the continued fortitude of Corps volunteers. Over the past 11 years, the Vicksburg District has supported nearly 200 deployments. Today we have six deployed personnel and three volunteers scheduled to deploy by mid-October and eight on the Afghanistan Recruitment Cell's volunteer list anxiously awaiting their opportunity to serve the Corps and this nation.

Corps volunteers in Afghanistan are rebuilding a nation, touching lives and writing a new chapter in history. For information on how you can be a part of this exciting, life-changing mission, contact the Vicksburg District's deployment coordinator, Pamela Smith, in the Office of Emergency Management. To learn more about the deployment process and the benefits and entitlements of deployment, go to <http://www.tam.usace.army.mil/BusinessWithUs/USACEDeploymentCenter/USACECivilian.aspx>. ◀

Co-Op student finds niche in Real Estate

By Shirley J. Smith
Photo by Rob Hoff

If you're graduating with a Master's Degree in geographical information systems (GIS), you just might wonder where this degree will take you, and probably more importantly, where will you work. For Warren Lister, a Co-Op student in the Real Estate Division, he didn't have to wonder about those questions very long. With a degree in GIS, Lister's newfound abilities complemented the mission of the Vicksburg District's Real Estate Division perfectly.

Lister's responsibilities began with obtaining land ownership records, via courthouse research, and negotiating the acquisition of right-of-entry (ROE) permits from private landowners impacted by Corps projects. For your edification a right-of-entry grants a bare authority to conduct a specific action upon private property (which would otherwise constitute a trespass) without acquiring a real property interest in the land.

Lister states that his work is interesting because it allows him to work in the office as well as in the field. The very nature of the Real Estate mission is very unique in the fact that it sometimes allows for an informal one-on-one discussion with landowners that will be personally impacted by a Corps project. Often, during the project design phase, we are focused on the 'big picture', cost/benefit ratio, overall impacts, while forgetting that regardless of how beneficial a project will be overall, construction will most likely impact a private landowner who may not fully understand the importance of the project. Lister is tasked with communicating not only the technical aspects of projects to landowners, but also understanding and communicating the social impact the project may have upon the landowner...empathy is a must in order to negotiate in good faith.

Working as a Co-Op student has afforded Lister more opportunities that he expected. He deployed to assist with the disaster relief effort during the Minot, North Dakota 2011 flood. His first time to work with such an effort, "At



Lister stands at work site of an emergency/temporary levee in Minot, North Dakota.

first I was uncertain because the work, although unique, was different from what I do here at the District. But I soon learned; I learned a lot. I acquired permits allowing the Corps to remove temporary levees that were placed on private properties during the flood fight," he said. "Acquiring the ROEs was a challenge because residents had vacated the flooded properties and there was no readily available contact information. It was extremely difficult, but we eventually got them all signed," he said. Lister said that deploying was a great experience for more reasons than one; he met and worked with great people. With no hotels being available, they lived in tents, which he said reminded him in some ways of a camping trip.

How does he juggle work and school? "It's rather tough because now I'm taking online classes and balancing both requires discipline and strict scheduling, but, I'm ready to

complete my Master's Degree," Lister said. He also said, "My supervisors, Robert Wood and Aaron Matthews, have been very cooperative with any conflicts that I've encountered with work and school. Other co-workers have been very helpful also by providing necessary information that I might need on projects or other work.

"When I began college I had no idea that I would be doing this type work but Real Estate offers an array of work that I enjoy and I've learned a lot through the Co-Op Program," he said.

A native of Jackson and a graduate of Northwest Rankin High School, Lister earned his Bachelor's Degree in business from Mississippi State University, and is currently pursuing a Master's Degree at Mississippi State University.

The Real Estate Division is committed to delivering the mission with quality, dependability, and professionalism. Their services comply with federal, state, and local laws and regulations, where applicable, to safeguard the public's property rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. ◀

Learning to swim well while learning water safety at the YMCA

By Renea Guin

Photos by Luke Benjamin

The YMCA of Hot Springs hosts a summer camp for youth 5-13 years of age; Arkansas Corps lakes personnel partner with the YMCA to teach swimming and water safety to the youth. This educational camp includes a Fun Day at Arc Isle, a public park at Lake Hamilton, and is one of the educational field trips which give the youth an opportunity to swim in Lake Hamilton.

On July 30th, rangers from all three Arkansas Corps lakes and the Lake Ouachita Project Office worked together to present water safety programs to approximately 80 youth.

Other activities for the youth include games, arts and crafts, and learning to swim - the main focus of the program. The swim camp teaches water safety and highlights the dangers of swimming to retrieve items carried away by the wind, such as beach balls and Frisbees. The program also highlights topics such as Learning to Swim, Reach, Throw, Row, Don't Go, and Lifejacket Wear.

The event began with Brian Westfall, natural resource specialist at Ouachita Project Management Office, introducing everyone and stating the importance of the "Let it go!" campaign. This campaign highlights the hazards of swimming out into deep water to retrieve beach balls, swim floats and poorly moored vessels. The immediate reaction is to swim out and get whatever has floated away. In many cases the object is a .99 cent beach ball. Don't drown over .99 cents, Let it Go! He presented a short water safety program to all of the students and stressed that swimming well is vital to save lives on the water. Learning to swim well and wearing a lifejacket is double-layered protection against drowning. Knowing how to swim well increases the survival chance of a boater or swimmer in trouble on the water.

Amy Shultz, natural resource specialist at Lake Ouachita, presented the program on "Reach, Throw, Row, Don't Go!" teaching the students that drowning is a silent event for the drowning victim and a dangerous task when trying to rescue someone. Stressing to them the proper techniques of rescue and letting them practice with hands-on learning

experience will hopefully stay with them for the long term. It's always fun to watch these youth, and as Amy states, "I enjoyed working with Lake Greeson and DeGray Lake personnel in presenting these water safety programs. I look forward to working this event each year! The students were wonderful and everyone seemed to have a great time."



*Brian Westfall teaches how to swim well and **Let it Go**.*

Marty Reynolds, natural resource specialist at Lake Greeson, used a floating orange to demonstrate what happens when you don't wear your lifejacket. The floating orange demonstration shows that you can drown if not wearing your lifejacket properly.

Renea Guin, natural resource specialist at DeGray Lake, demonstrated the proper fit of your lifejacket. "We want to make sure the students understand that they cannot wear their parents' lifejacket and be ok. They have to have a lifejacket that fits," she said. We did a lifejacket relay where the students were divided into two teams. Each student had to run to find the right size lifejacket for him/her, put it on properly, take it off, and then run and tag the next in line; they seemed to really enjoy this event! Brandon Robertson, a volunteer with DeGray Lake, assisted with inspecting that the lifejackets were the proper fit. The students thought that selecting the correct size would be an easy and quick task,

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but when the lifejackets were tangled, as they sometimes are in a boat, it was then that they realized that selecting the right fit and wearing it properly is not necessarily done quickly.

Reynolds stated, "I enjoy this event and am thankful for the opportunity to promote water safety to this diversified group. We all get caught up with our busy schedules, but when you look at those children and realize that what we're teaching them could save their lives makes it's all worthwhile." ◀



Amy Shultz teaches Reach, Throw, Row Don't Go with beach lifesaving equipment.



Renea Guin teaches proper wear of lifejacket.

District reaffirms partnerships with adopted schools

By Shirley J. Smith

Photos by Alfred Dulaney

District personnel recently participated with adoption ceremonies at their two adopted schools, Vicksburg High and Sherman Avenue Elementary through the Adopt A School Program. This is the 15th year for the adoption partnership between the Vicksburg District and Vicksburg High School, while the partnership between Sherman Avenue Elementary and the Vicksburg District is in its fourth year. The District's committee consists of an all volunteer team composed of Vicksburg District employees.

Col. Cross, along with Vicksburg High School's assistant principal, Dr. Tameka Johnson, and Sherman Avenue's principal, Ray Hume, signed adoption certificates certifying the partnerships. The program is executed through volunteers from the Corps and local industries. It supports the schools through various activities including tutoring, mentoring, speaking engagements, assisting with state testing and career development plans.

During the ceremonies, Col. Cross stated, "We are happy to have you for our adopted schools and definitely look forward to serving you with our available resources. Being the organization that we are, we have a strong interest in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields especially, and have the expertise to assist you in those fields and many more."

As one of the nations' leading technical organizations, the Vicksburg District traditionally supports local and surrounding educational institutions through the varied expertise of our diverse workforce. The District's involvement in local and surrounding schools is critical to the success of

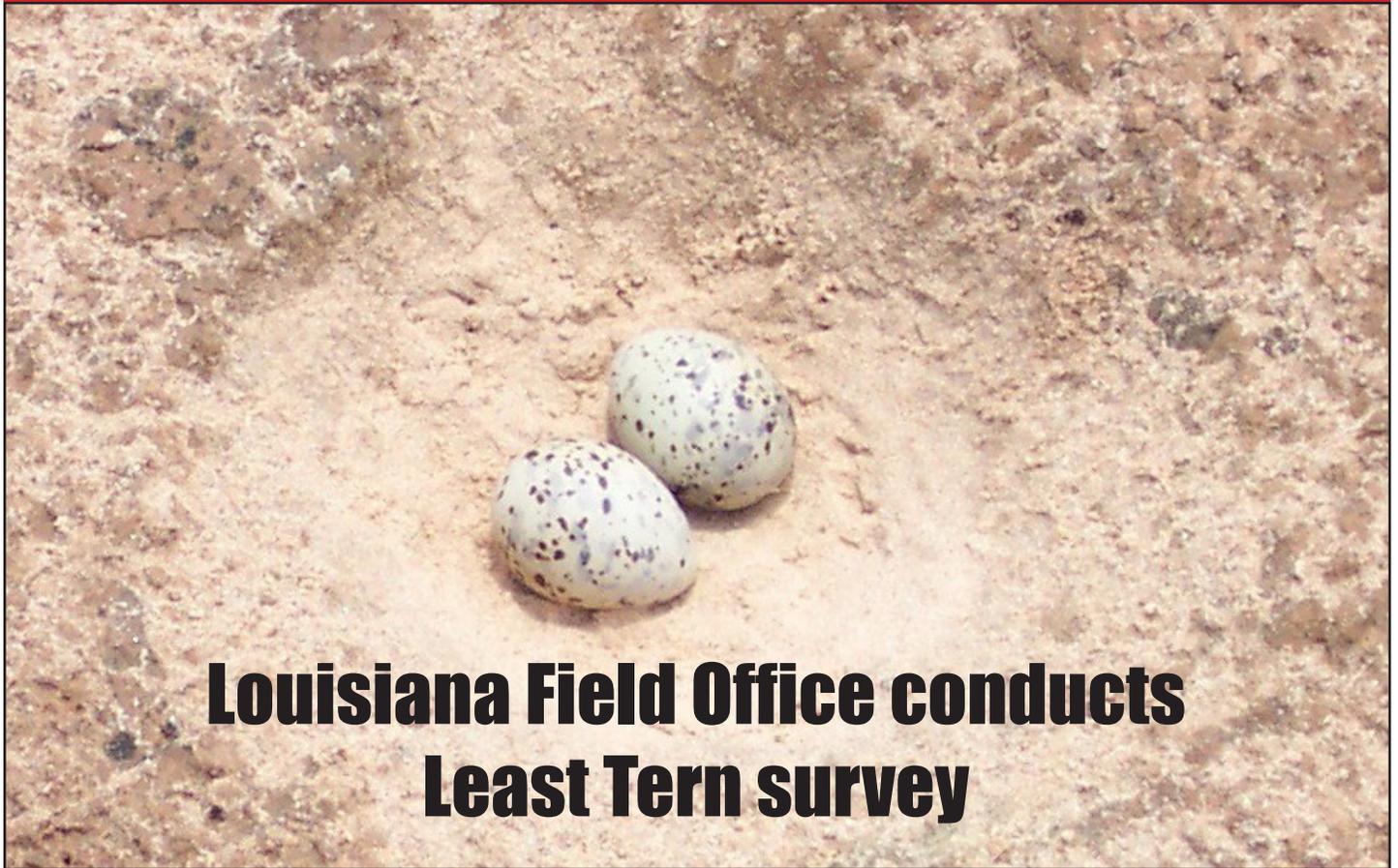
our educational systems and our success in Building Our Future Workforce. Successful educational programs such as the Adopt A School Program help to build the necessary skills of our future leaders, and introduce many students and educators to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the first time. ◀



Ray Hume and Col. Cross at Sherman Avenue Elementary



Dr. Johnson and Col. Cross at VHS



Louisiana Field Office conducts Least Tern survey

Least Tern eggs in “nest” of sand.

Story and photos by Joey Minter

The Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*) is the smallest member of the Tern family, measuring around 10 inches; they are migratory birds that spend winters along coastal areas of Central and South America, and summers along southern coastal areas in North America. There are a small number of these terns that nest along sandy rivers and lake shorelines throughout the United States, these are known as the Interior Least Terns.

Although the Least Tern is not considered a federally threatened species, the interior population of the Least Terns has been on the endangered species list since 1985 due to the loss of its nesting habitat. Some of the causes of the loss of the tern’s nesting habitat include the construction of dams that change and control the flow of water eliminating these nesting colonies as well as recreational activities on the sandbars and islands disturbing their nesting, causing them to abandon the colony.

Because the Interior Least Terns nest on sparsely vegetated sandbars, the Red River makes for excellent habitat.

With the help of a local bird enthusiast and Least Tern expert, Hubert Hervey, the Louisiana Field Office conducts an annual survey on the Least Terns during the nesting months of May to August. Hervey has been assisting with these surveys since they began a year after the construction of the last lock and dam on the river in 1994. Also assisting with this year’s survey was Bayou Bodcau park ranger Bengaman Nyegaard who operated the boat while I recorded the data.

The survey is conducted over approximately 150 river miles from the Arkansas line to central Louisiana through locks and dams 3, 4, and 5. This year seemed to be a difficult year for the terns because of the high waters in the spring that did not drop until late into their breeding season that had most of the upper river sandbars and islands flooded. The water level dropped quickly, causing some islands to become sandbars connected to the banks of the river which exposed the nesting habitat to predation.

The survey was conducted over a four-day period and a

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total of 110 terns were counted with only a few of those nesting and only one or two eggs per nest. The terns will nest by making scrapes on the sandbar that are almost unnoticeable and one has to be very careful not to step on the eggs when walking the sandbar to count the nests which are camouflaged in the sand. One way to determine how close you are getting to a nest is by the behavior of the birds. If you get too close they will begin to fly at you in an attempt to chase you away from their nest. The terns are very active birds: busy catching fish and chasing off larger birds. It is a strange site to watch a Least Tern chase an adult Bald Eagle away from its nesting area in sheer determination to protect its colony.



While floating the river it is easy to see how much the construction of the locks and dams have impacted the terns' habitat. One thing that you notice is the lack of sandbars between the locks and dams because of the controlled water levels. What used to be sandbars have grown up thick with vegetation because of the constant water levels. They look like lush gardens now when before they were mostly barren sand with some grass and debris. Above pool 5 in the Red River there are a multitude of sandbars where most of the terns will be found, only an occasional tern will be located below Lock 5, resting on a marker buoy.

No matter how many times I get to travel this river, this will always be one of my favorite surveys that I look forward to every year with great excitement. A great deal of thanks goes to Hubert Hervey for his time and expertise in assisting with this survey as well as everyone else who assisted. ◀

Top photo: Footprints can be seen around the Least Tern eggs nest as a result of the area being surveyed for the nests.

Bottom photo: On an island sandbar at Goldpoint Revetment, grass blocks the wind from least tern eggs.

The value of volunteers

By Ernest Lentz

Photo by Jamie Richmond

During the past several years there has been a national debate about the decline in volunteerism and the need to entice more people to participate in community/public service. Within Corps parks, the opportunities and benefits are endless. Volunteers assist park staff by cleaning and performing light maintenance on nature trails; they help place fish attractors in strategic locations around the lake. They can also serve as a campground host or help educate visitors about water safety. All of these duties mutually benefit both the volunteer and the Corps.

At Arkabutla Lake, our volunteers play a crucial part in the operation of several recreational areas. The Hernando Point Recreation Area, which encompasses a Class A campground and day use area, would likely be closed if not for the work of several volunteers. The campground comfort stations, camp sites, and day use areas are cleaned daily by volunteers. In the day use area, the volunteers not only clean the comfort stations but also empty trash cans, clean the pavilion, clean the beach and pick up litter. But, why would a person want to volunteer his/her time? What's in it for them?

The benefit to the volunteers includes the satisfaction of completing a task/service that in all likelihood would not have been done without their help. The volunteers also has the satisfaction of giving back to the community, taking pride in a project and being a part of something bigger than themselves. Sometimes the benefit might be a bit more tangible for the volunteers when it comes in the form of a free camp site. When this happens, the volunteers are required to donate a certain number of hours per week in order to receive a free camp site.

For the Corps, the benefits of utilizing volunteers include keeping certain recreational areas open that would otherwise be closed due to

the lack of funding. Volunteers, an extension of the park staff, also enable the staff to complete more maintenance repairs - thus reducing the number of facilities closed to the public. Finally, utilizing volunteers provides a huge savings in manpower operation cost.

On July 30, 2013, Arkabutla Lake honorably recognized several of our volunteers for their services rendered to one of our projects. All of the recognized volunteers completed enough volunteer hours in a one-year time frame to receive The President's Volunteer Service Award Certificate, a service pin, and a signed letter from President Obama.

The following volunteers received the Gold service award: Debra DePriest, Margaret White, Charlotte White, and Jackie Holt. The following volunteer families received the Silver group award: Jim & Sue Hogan and Connie & Gloria Keltner.

The Arkabutla Lake Field Office staff congratulates and thank our volunteers for their service to our park and our country. At this time of reduced budgets, what a cost savings this service provides to the government and the public! ◀



Arkabutla Lake volunteers

Are you afraid of the water?

By Brian Westfall, Ouachita Project Management Office,
National Water Safety Congress executive vice-president



“I was quickly consumed by the current and was amazed at the moving water’s strength. I was carried downstream into deep water, sinking like a rock! My father, fully clothed, raced into the river and rescued me from the engulfing depths.”

How did you learn to swim? I, like many children of the baby boomer era learned to swim in the safe confines of a YMCA pool. I swam under the watchful eyes of dedicated swimming instructors, and remember being very scared of the water in the beginning, but at the same time, drawn to it in an intriguing way.

One of my first memories of the water is when I was about three years old in 1961. I accompanied my family on a summer day trip to the Caddo River in south-central Arkansas. I can vividly remember the overwhelming attraction of the crystal-clear flowing stream. For some reason that I cannot fully explain, I suddenly left the safety of my family as we picnicked on the stream side gravel bar. I made a beeline to the fast flowing rapid. I was quickly consumed by the current and was amazed at the moving water’s strength. I was carried downstream into deep water, sinking like a rock! My father, fully clothed, raced into the river and rescued me from the engulfing depths. Based on that life threatening event, my parents enrolled me in formal swimming lessons at the Hot Springs, Arkansas YMCA. That parental decision saved my life. I’m still scared and most respectful of the water – 51 years later.

Unfortunately, formal swimming lessons were not the case for many children of my generation and this trend continues today. A widely accepted practice used to teach children to swim during that era actually may have contributed to a far-reaching fear of the water, sometimes referred to as aqua phobia. Does this flawed method of swimming instruction sound familiar? Parent, friend or relative attempts to teach children how to swim by simply throwing them in a body of water! I guess that’s how the old adage “sink or swim” was derived. Could this in part be the

reason that children from non swimming families are eight times more likely to drown? Did these actions establish a fear of the water that eroded swimming abilities for generations? Approximately 10,000 baby boomers turn 65 every day and will do so for the next 18 years.

Statistics show that children who take swimming lessons are 88% less likely to drown than children who do not take formal instruction. An anthropologist once wrote, “Learning to swim is the prototypical example of the capacity that makes us distinctively human, the ability to master something evolution never prepared us to do.”

Swimming is an essential life skill. Swimmers are made, not born. The National Swim School Association estimates that only 2% of all Americans can swim a quarter of a mile without stopping. The other 98% can’t swim at all or find it such a struggle that they can manage only a lap or two before running completely out of gas. No one learns to swim well without some instruction. Humans in the water are like fish out of water.

Several years ago a family of 9, crowded in a small Jon boat intended for 3 occupants, capsized in the Fourche Lafave River in north-central Arkansas. The father, the only swimmer, drowned along with the mother and five children ranging in ages 18 months to 10 years old. Although none of them were wearing life jackets, there were two survivors aged 12 and 14 years old. This horrifying story is repeated over and over again; ten persons drown in the U.S. every day.

Are you afraid of the water? I readily admit that I am! Encourage those around you to learn to swim well! ◀

Daisy State Park offers 4-H Club members a Fun Day at the Lake

Story and photos by Marty Reynolds

The Pike County 4-H “Fun Day at the Lake” event was hosted by Daisy State Park on July 17, 2013. More than 25 students with the Pike County Chapter of the 4-H Club participated.

Laughter echoed off the Ouachita Mountains across the cove just south of Daisy State Park on Lake Greeson. Excitement filled the air as the first group of students prepared to board kayaks; for some this was their first kayaking experience. The students were required to traverse an arranged course to demonstrate their skills before taking an extended excursion to a beaver dam on beautiful Lake Greeson. Prior to entering their kayak, each student participated in a thorough safety training session provided by Leesha Miller, an interpreter for Daisy State Park.

The “Owls of Arkansas” station was another stop for 4-H students. They learned about the owls that make their home in Arkansas and were given owl call demonstrations from natural resources specialist Marty Reynolds.

Luke Benjamin, a natural resources specialist with the Ouachita Project Management Office, discussed the feeding habits of owls as he dissected an owl pellet. He explained how studying owl pellets is beneficial to scientific research. The pellets give insight to owls’ eating habits, but are also good population indicators for other species that owls prey upon. Benjamin encouraged students to

closely examine the pellets as he separated and identified bones and tissue from small mammals and birds.

Kolt Petty, Pike County 4-H member, gave an informative presentation on antique fishing lures and fly reels which he collects. Fishing lures have been around about as long as humans have contrived ways to catch fish. The earliest prehistoric lures were made of bone. China was the first civilization to make fishing lines (silk) to which they attached delicate bronze hooks. Kolt often finds antique lures at flea markets and yard sales. Having begun collecting about two years ago, his fly reel dates back to the 1920’s.

Volunteers from Henderson State University (HSU), Garrett Gills and Derek Lynch, demonstrated to the participants how to make their very own fishing pole using just a soda can. That station piqued the interest of many participants; the most popular question was “How can you fish with a can?” Volunteer Garret Gills replied “All you need is a can, some fishing line, a small sinker, a hook, and a bobber, and those items make the ingredients for your very own fishing pole.”



Below is a simple version of how to use a soda can for fishing by the HSU volunteers:

Tie one end of the line on the tab of the coke/soda can.

Tape the knot and the fishing line near the top of the can or about middle ways down the can.

Wrap the line around the can (30-50 wraps) until you reach the last 2 feet of line

Attach the bobber, sinker, and hook (split shot sinkers work best for this application).

To cast:

Unwind your line about 2 feet past the bobber

Hold the top end of the can in one hand and the bobber in on your other hand.

Point the bottom end of the pop can at the place in the water where you want the bobber to fall.

Toss the bobber preferably underhand toward the water.

The rest of the line should unwind and follow.

Project biologist Johnny Cantrell demonstrates to the 4-H members how he uses scent stations to determine the species and densities of furbearers on Corps lands. A “scent station” is created by using a clay and sandy soil pad, sometimes referred to as a “scent cookie” because it resembles a large cookie.

Luke Benjamin presents information program about owls of Arkansas.



Kolt Perry shows the students an antique lure used to catch fish.

A pad is prepared and a scent tablet is placed in the center - and left overnight. Furbearers and other animals often investigate the tablet which has a pungent odor (at best) to the human nose but seems to be irresistible to raccoons, fox, opossums, squirrels, etc. Tracks are left behind by the animals and are identified and recorded by Johnny and other members of the Natural Resource staff.

The expertise and willing attitudes of Corps team members at the Arkansas lakes and the staff at the Daisy State Park rendered a great learning experience as well as fun for the Pike County 4-H Club members. ◀



Heather Jackson, Pike County 4-H, used a soda can to catch this sunfish.

Team building “between the lines”

By Rick Dwyer

Photo by Derick Walker

Many of Yogi Berra’s quotes about baseball are legendary for their practical down-to-earth observations, with perhaps the most famous being, “It ain’t over till it’s over!” However, one of Yogi’s best quotes is about teamwork, “When you’re part of a team, you stand up for your teammates; your loyalty is to them. You protect them through good and bad, because they’d do the same for you.” This is true of the Corps team at the Arkansas lakes, as we have been team building in the field, between the lines.

For the last two years, numerous Corps employees with the Arkansas lakes have played on a softball team in the Hot Springs city softball league. Last year, we were league champions. This year, the team came in third out of fourteen teams, as the league expanded and included some better competition (honest!). To come in third place this year, the team endured 98 to 100 degree heat on two different nights! On September 3, the team played two games in the double elimination tournament. The bats got hot (literally!), as we won 36-2, and 20-5, to go into the winner’s bracket for the next week’s play.

On September 10, we lost the first game at 6:00 p.m., 16-15, throwing us into the lower bracket- some people call it the loser’s bracket, but we prefer lower! The team then won 12-11 at the 7:00 p.m. game, and won 12-2 at the 8:00 p.m. game, qualifying us for the 9:00 game. We lost in the 9:00 p.m. game, coming in third, which knocked us out of contention. At that time, there were mixed feelings about continuing to play after having played 4 games! Nonetheless, we had a great run.

The team consists of numerous Corps employees, including: Derick Walker (left center fielder), Josh Gormley (shortstop) and Joe Bailey (pitcher and left fielder), natural resource specialists at Lake Ouachita Field Office; Jake Huey (third base), park ranger, Lake Ouachita Field Office; Jody Dvorak (second base and right center fielder), park manager, DeGray Lake Field Office, and Rick Dwyer (first base), Ouachita Project Management Office.

Being in the league the last two years has been a great “offsite”, resulting in better teamwork both at the office and away from the office. After having played a season with co-workers, communication was also enhanced among many of them, some even finished the season with nicknames, some of which cannot be repeated here!

In the words of one of the greatest coaches of all time, Vince Lombardi: “Individual commitment to a group effort – that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.” This teamwork between the lines has benefitted teamwork at the Arkansas lakes. To improve communication and camaraderie, ‘PLAY BALL!’ ◀



Corps Employees:

Front row:

*Second from Left: Derick Walker
Far Right: Jody Dvorak*

Standing:

*Second from Left: Rick Dwyer
Fourth from Left: Josh Gormley
Fifth from Left: Joe Bailey*

District Field Offices & Services

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,
Vicksburg District
4155 E. Clay Street
Vicksburg, MS 39183
www.mvk.usace.army.mil
email: cemvk-pa@army.us.mil**

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