

Serving up sardines



Kelly Schroter

Dr. Russ Claus, Patrick Henry Elementary School principal, serves sardines to students for a school project. Once the students had the opportunity to "expand their culinary palettes," the school-wide results were collected and charted. The electronic version of the graph is being used on Smartboards in classrooms so the students can analyze the results.

BEST WARRIOR

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Derecho, the NCO Warrior of the Year, hails from Ladson, S.C., where his parents, Nestor and Polly, live. His father is retired from the Navy. Derecho is accompanied on this tour by his wife, Kelen.

He had advice for others who may go before military boards. "I went in detached, like I wasn't worried if I won or lost," he said. "It may sound bad, saying you don't care if you win or lose, but it helped me focus, and I wasn't as nervous as I had been at other boards. Winning is all about being comfortable and confident."

Confidence also helped Rowe win the Soldier Warrior of the Year.

"I think you really have to prepare for the board," Rowe said. "If you focus on what you think you might need improvement on, you don't have to worry about your weaknesses when the competition begins."

Rowe is from Dania, Fla., and is a graduate of South Broward High School. His parents, Lailes and Randy Rowe, still live there. Rowe's wife, Jennifer, and children Makhya, 5, Lily, 17 months, and Jaiden, 4 months, are with him in Heidelberg.

The competition took place across the European theater, with each of the three of the four major participating units hosting some of the events. The ERMHC Headquarters staff hosted the event and staged the formal board appearances. The Bavaria Medical Department Activity in Vilseck, Germany, ran the Army Physical Fitness Test, written exam and essay contest.

There were day and night orienteering lanes and warrior skills lanes that took place at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center at mid-week, operated by LRMC and the 30th Medical Command, respectively.

The Heidelberg Medical Department Activity NCOs ran the weapons qualification range and the combatives event.

18TH ENGINEERS

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18th in Kirkuk Province.

The 18th will use its engineer expertise in design, survey and project management to enhance the capacity of Mosul city leaders as they plan, fund and initiate projects in the war-torn city.

"We're going up there as the focus turns to Mosul as the last stand for the insurgents," 1st Sgt. Christopher D. Tipton said.

Mosul is the third stop for the unit during this 15-month Iraq deployment. After arriving at Contingency Operating Base Speicher in Tikrit in May to command the two engineer battalions in northern Iraq, the 18th Engineer Brigade moved to Kirkuk Province in October to focus on non-lethal engagements with the provincial government to facilitate the political situation there.

As for the next move, Brigade Commander Col. Matthew H. Russell said his unit is ready. "Our time in Kirkuk has prepared us perfectly for our new mission in Mosul," he said.

Sgt. Larry N. Soto, a senior local area network manager for the brigade headquarters, also is confident the move will go well.

"We'll do better this time because we've done this before," said Soto, adding that he and the rest of his communications section, or S-6, feel the heat when trying to set up the headquarters' computers and phone lines each time the unit moves to a new location.



Capt. Stephen Barker

Sgt. Caleb Cherish, machine gunner and driver in the Personal Security Detachment, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 18th Engineer Brigade, pulls security Jan. 13 on the grounds of Kirkuk's Northern Oil Company during a visit there by the brigade commander to re-enlist a Soldier.

Tipton said the troops were not very excited about moving again when they first got the order, "but then they realized that we're getting closer to going home, and it would make the deployment go by faster."

The unit has five months left in Iraq.

"Don't hesitate to send care packages because we still enjoy receiving mail," Tipton said. "It gives us something to look forward to."

Currently the 18th provides command and control to the 84th Construction Effects Battalion and the 65th

Combat Engineer Battalion — both based out of Hawaii. The 18th has also visited frequently with its 54th Engineer Battalion (Combat) from Bamberg, which has operated in central and southern Iraq under the 555th Engineer Brigade since June.