

## New Command Sgt. Maj. pledges to give 100 percent

By Mark Schauer

Command Sgt. Maj. Jamathon K. Nelson assumed the highest enlisted leadership position at YPG in late March in a change of responsibility ceremony presided over by YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger.

Hailing from the U.S. Army Asymmetric Warfare Group at Fort Meade, Md., Nelson stressed safety and the vital importance of YPG's test mission to the warfighter in remarks following the ceremony. He also pledged to foster the same

camaraderie between the military and civilian workforce that outgoing Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Prosser was widely praised for, as well as continue the expanded community outreach efforts he spearheaded.

"My number one mission is messaging," he said. "I need to let others in the Army know what we do here and why it is important."

In remarks to the audience, Poppenberger emphasized that less

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## New technical director brings years of experience to job

By Mark Schauer

Three months into his tenure as the proving ground's highest ranking civilian, YPG Technical Director Lazaro "Larry" Bracamonte is bullish on the post's prospects.

"I see the future as bright for us," he said. "People are concerned about the budget, but having been here over 30 years, I've seen this before. We

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YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger (center) entrusts the YPG guidon with Command Sgt. Maj. Jamathon Nelson (left) as outgoing Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Prosser (right) looks on. "Only the finest NCOs and Officers are selected for command positions," said Poppenberger. "I know Command Sgt. Maj. Nelson is well-prepared to continue the outstanding work Command Sgt. Maj. Prosser has done here and move us forward as a team." (Photo by Mark Schauer)

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Color Fun Run raises awareness /Page 11





# COMMAND

FROM PAGE 1

than one percent of the Army’s enlisted ranks achieve the rank of Sgt. Maj., describing them as “the best of the best.”

“Only the finest NCOs and Officers are selected for command positions,” said Poppenberger. “I know Command Sgt. Maj. Nelson is well-prepared to continue the outstanding work Command Sgt.

Maj. Prosser has done here and move us forward as a team.”

For his part, in farewell remarks, Prosser thanked YPG’s Soldiers and workforce for their efforts during his tenure. He also expressed special appreciation for local military support groups such as the Yuma 50, describing Yuma as one of the most military-friendly communities he had encountered during his Army career.

“The only advice I would give to anyone coming into this job is to get

your hands dirty right away,” he said. “You’re not going to upset people by asking a lot of questions. Many people haven’t been asked about what they do and how they do it for a long time, and will appreciate you’re showing interest and asking what they need to make things better.”

Poppenberger stressed that YPG’s mission is vital to the success of the Soldiers who defend the nation and deter potential adversaries.

“Our nation has over 187,000 Soldiers deployed in over 140 countries around the world,” said Poppenberger. “They need to know that their equipment works as it is designed. The end state is that YPG validates that our equipment performs to maintain overmatch of our adversaries and enables us to win on the battlefield.”

Nelson said he was enthused about the new position and YPG’s highly skilled personnel.

“I look forward to working with everybody,” he said. “I promise to always give 100 percent.”



Hailing from the U.S. Army Asymmetric Warfare Group at Fort Meade, Md., Nelson stressed safety and the vital importance of YPG’s test mission to the warfighter in remarks following the ceremony. He also pledged to foster the same camaraderie between the military and civilian workforce that outgoing Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Prosser was widely praised for.



After the ceremony, Nelson and his family greeted YPG personnel in a receiving line inside the YPG Heritage Center. Here, Nelson speaks with Garrison Manager Gordon Rogers. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

# THEOUTPOST

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## Shoot'in the Breeze

# Haben sie a great day!

By David J. Horn

One of the great things about living in Yuma, is that it's at the intersection of several different cultures. Cultures that work together to get the job done. When you add all those varieties in life, to a comment someone made a long time ago about "all the world is a stage," you can even have some fun along the way.

So, the other day I happened to be hanging out in the food court at the mall over in El Centro, and while I was enjoying a delicious plate of Mexican food, all of a sudden I hear an excited conversation in Spanish, seemingly directed right at me. I lowered my phone for a moment and looked up to see a girl, maybe 14 years old or so, along with her Mom who was nearby carrying a bunch of small boxes, standing next to my table. The girl was talking at me really fast, where I had absolutely no idea what she was talking about.

"¿Con permiso señor, pero gustaría comprar chocolates? Estamos recaudando fondos para la banda de mi escuela," she said. While she was enthusiastically talking, I noticed she was holding a box filled with German chocolate candy bars. At that point, I guessed she must be selling them to support a school fundraiser or something.

When she got to a pause in her sales pitch, I guess motivated by the

sight of all that German chocolate, I summoned up all the words I could remember from a German 101 lesson I took 40 years ago, and asked, "Wie geht es ihnen? Was ist in der kiste? Schokolade?" There was nothing...but silence. Sensing I was on to something, I asked, "Sprechen sie Deutsch?" The look on her face told me that, at least for now, we were both equally confused. I looked over at her mom, but all I got there was an eye roll and uplifted hands that said, "Hey look, I'm staying out of this."

After a moment where I couldn't tell if she was on to me or not, she asked me, "¿Que es Deutsch?" De-

ciding to go even further out on the limb, and struggling to remember the Spanish word for German guy, I pointed at myself and said, "aleman." At that point, I could see somewhat of a reaction on her face, but unmoved, she again grabbed a few more candy bars from a box her mom was holding, and launched back into her honest, and actually quite professional-sounding Spanish sales pitch.

After about 30 seconds she finished, and then just stood there, with a handful of candy bars and an expression on her face that said it was obviously my turn to say something. Coming to the conclusion that I was quickly

running out of German words to use and that for me, maybe the jig was up, I looked up and said, in slightly-Minnesooootta-accented English, "You certainly earned an 'A' for effort. Soooo, how much are the candy bars?" Without skipping a beat, she casually replied, "They're two dollars apiece." I replied, "I'll take two."

As she was giving me change for my five, and picking up the remaining chocolates to move her sales efforts to the folks over at the next table, I smiled and said, "Danke." She replied back, "¡Muchas gracias!" As they walked away, I added, "Haben sie einen shoenen tag!"

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## Chaplain's Corner

# Some post-Easter reflections

By Maj. Ronald Beltz

Easter season has just passed! A sure sign that Spring is here! Plus, many of our winter guests have packed up and headed North!

Who doesn't love this time of the year? The brightly colored Easter eggs, Easter egg hunts, chocolate Easter bunnies, jelly beans-all the wonderful Easter candy! Lots of families gather to celebrate Easter sharing family traditions that sometimes go back generations.

Maybe you have wondered why Easter Sunday falls on a different Sunday every year. Unlike Christmas which is always on December 25- Easter Sunday is on a different Sunday every year. Here is why:

According to the Bible, Jesus Christ's death and resurrection occurred around the time of the Jewish Passover, which was celebrated on the first full moon following the Spring equinox. So Easter Sunday is usually cel-

ebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon occurring on or after the Spring Equinox.

Complicated and confusing-right? Maybe just stick with the jelly beans and chocolate Easter Bunnies!

Interestingly, Easter Sunday this year happened to fall on April 1- also known as April Fool's Day! The significance of this should not be lost on us in a meaningful and humorous way!!

1 Corinthians 3:18-19 reminds us not to deceive ourselves. If any one of you thinks he or she is wise by the standards of this age, he or she should become a "fool" so that he or she may become wise! For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight! We are to be fools for Christ!

So this Easter, God's April Fool's joke on us was defeating death! For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.



## A View Without a Point

# Up close with YPG's past and future

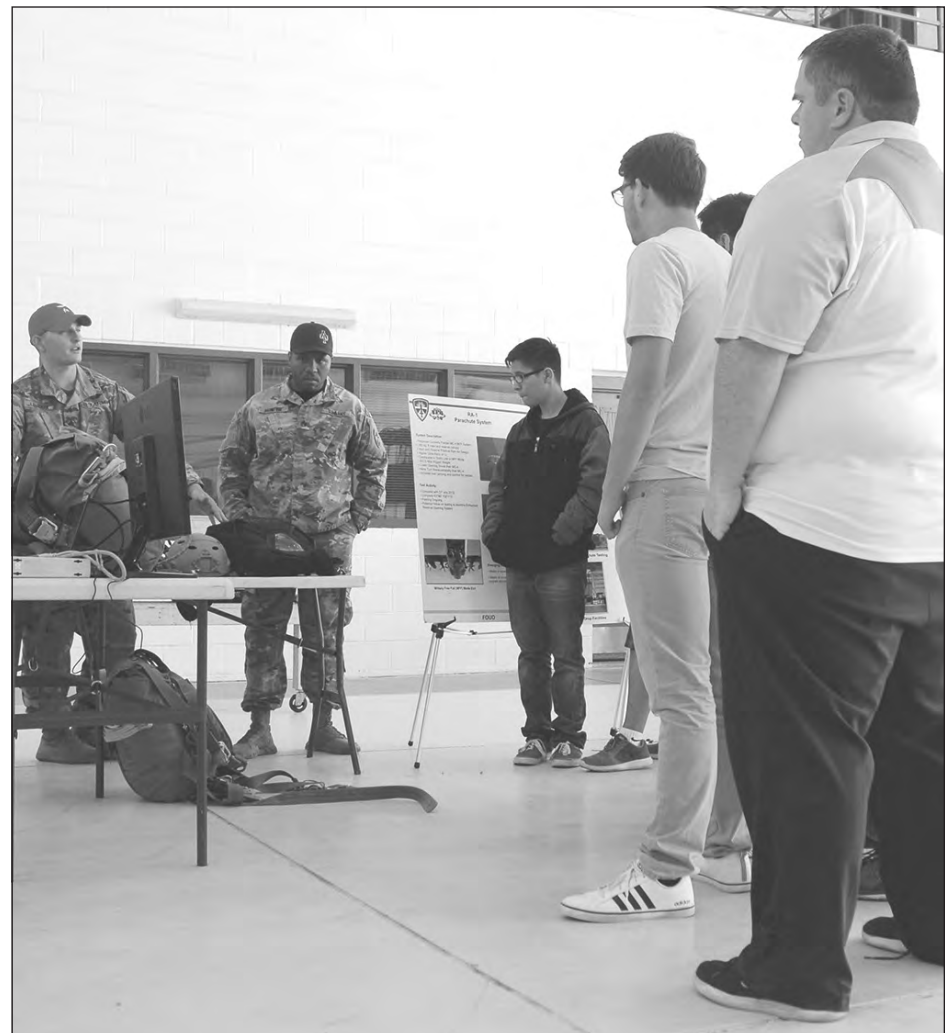
By Teri Womack

When I was asked to be a bus escort for YPG's Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Day, I thought to myself, "Pfft... no problem! I've been escorting the YPG Public Tours for years and I've got my routine down. I got this!"

I found out very quickly that I definitely did not have this.

The YPG public tour bus is typically filled with mostly senior citizens, including many seasoned veterans

that have served in all branches of the military. They are eager tell their stories and share their experiences, which include a wealth of knowledge about all things military. They love browsing through the displays at the Heritage Center, pausing to reflect on a time gone by and an era they can personally relate to. They represent our past and part of our history. At the end of the tour, I usually end by saying something like, "Whew! That was a long day -- I'm beat! (Some-



Staff Sgt. Gregory LaFleur (left) and Staff Sgt. Brandon Hunter (right), show STEM Day participants some of the gear used by Airborne Test Force Soldiers on a daily basis. (Photo by Minna Hernandez)

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times I wipe my brow for dramatic effect). Is anyone else tired or is it just me?" There's always a few responses such as "I sure am! I'm going home to take a nap!"

The STEM Day bus was filled with young high school students full of hope and expectations for the future. Most were still trying to decide which college they want to attend and which career field would suite them best. They have their whole lives ahead of them and they are determined to explore all of the available resources and opportunities out there. At the beginning of the tour, I asked for a show of hands to indicate who had previously visited the proving ground and not one hand was raised. They were definitely eager to learn about our mission, however, and looking forward to the day of hands on experiences.

My dialog for the STEM Day tour needed to be very different from

what I spoke about on the YPG public tours. Unfortunately, that fact didn't dawn on me until the bus was put into gear and the tour began. So, I improvised as we traveled along the routes to the test sites, chatting about our mission and unique capabilities and drawing their attention to certain points of interest. YPG's testing of the Global Positioning System (GPS) in the late 70s definitely made an impact when I told them that the initial equipment was so huge, it barely fit in a helicopter. They all looked down in amazement at their cell phones at the GPS technology that now fits in the palm of their hands.

At the end of the day, out of habit and full disclosure of the truth, I expressed my weariness by saying "Whew! That was a REALLY long, hot day --I'm totally exhausted! (And wiped my brow with real drama this time). Is anyone else worn out or is it just me?"



One thing that caused everyone to stop in their tracks and watch was the sight of an armored M88 recovery vehicle driving over a civilian car. YPG's STEM Day proved to be an exciting, interesting and fun morning that encouraged young people to consider the technical fields in making career choices. (Photo by Chuck Wullenjohn)



Nearly 150 area high school students visited YPG in late March to witness the use of scientific principles and the scientific method in use each day at the proving ground. Highlights included inspecting and riding armored vehicles, witnessing artillery firing, learning about unmanned aircraft and night vision equipment, and much more. (Photo by Chuck Wullenjohn)

There was no response-- not one single word. I could have heard a pen drop, and I think I may have heard a few crickets chirping.

In fact, I think if I asked them if they wanted to do another round-about to the test sites, they would've been willing, but, to be honest, I'm

not so sure I would have been able.

Two different tours. One tour bus filled with storytellers who represent our history. The other filled with youth who represent stories not yet written. They are our past and our future and both are equally important.

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# Army keeps competitive edge with long-range precision fires at YPG

By Joe Lacdan

Potential U.S. adversaries have advanced their long-range capabilities, and the Army needs to move quickly to maintain its military edge, the service's leaders said recently at the Association of the Army's Global Force

Symposium in Huntsville, Alabama.

Long-range precision fires, one of six modernization priorities identified by Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Mark A. Milley, must be continually pushed to increase capabilities in order maintain overmatch over potential

adversaries like North Korea, China, and Russia.

"Merely outgunning the enemy will not get us the relative advantage we're seeking," said Gen. Robert Brown, commanding general of U.S. Army Pacific, during a panel discussion. "We need to get to dominance and deterrence through improved capabilities, increased capacity and revised warfighting doctrine."

Brown added that with long-range precision fires, the establishment of Cross-Functional Teams under the modernization command will help the U.S. maintain the overmatch it currently has.

John Gordon, a senior policy researcher from Washington, said modernized enemy capabilities could place greater stress on U.S. forces.

"(Enemy modernization capabilities are) going to make all forms of air support much more difficult and the ground forces are going to feel the effects of that," said Gordon, a 20-year Army veteran. "It's certainly going to put a greater premium on U.S. Army field artillery."

The XM-1113, a 155-millimeter insensitive munition high explosive rocket-assisted projectile, is currently being tested at the Yuma Proving Ground in Arizona. Completion is scheduled for mid-April for the

projectile that can be fired from the M109 self-propelled howitzer and M777 cannon.

Increased capabilities, Maranian said, will open the door for joint forces to take advantage of the "holes" that robust long-range precision fires will open.

"The Army has got to modernize our surface-to-surface fire capabilities at echelon to guarantee that we have clear overmatch in the close fight, in the deep fight, in the strategic fight," said Maranian, also the Army's commandant of Field Artillery. "If we are unable to do that we will not be able to do for the joint force what it is that surface-to-surface fires do; which is to open those windows of opportunities to allow our joint and Army aviation forces to exploit deep."

Continued research and collaboration among the Long-Range Precision Fires Cross-Functional Team will continue to be a driving force behind the Army's modernization efforts.

"Being able to pull all of those folks together, under the direction of a leader and focus our energies on being able to write requirements and do that experimentation ... has been paramount to our ability to try to (progress) fast," Maranian said. "(It) has become a lost art in our acquisition process."



The XM-1113, a 155-millimeter insensitive munition high explosive rocket-assisted projectile, is currently being tested at YPG. Completion is scheduled for mid-April for the projectile that can be fired from the M109 self-propelled howitzer and M777 cannon. Continued research and collaboration among the Long-Range Precision Fires Cross-Functional Team will continue to be a driving force behind the Army's modernization efforts. (Photo by Minna Hernandez)



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# EXPERIENCE

FROM PAGE 1

will always be testing at YPG.”

This month marks Bracamonte's 31st year at YPG, and he says the proving ground has made enormous gains in professionalism and capabilities since he began. When he was a project engineer for the Munitions and Weapons test branch, the high speed cameras that provide instant, high resolution images of a projectile leaving a tube were almost unimaginable, as were precision guided munitions accurate to within mere meters of a target.

“In my early days, I had a program where my photo budget was in the neighborhood of \$50,000 to \$60,000 per month to buy film and have it processed,” said Bracamonte.

“You might be able to get the film developed in six to eight hours, but usually it was a 24 hour turnaround. Today the imagery is instantaneous, with better clarity. These cameras cost a lot of money, but so did the cameras we were using back in the day.”

A significant portion of his time here was during the direst days of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, where Soldiers and Marines saw threats first from rockets and mortars, then from devastating improvised explosive devices. The Department of Defense rapidly tested technologies to defeat these threats and rapidly fielded armored vehicles to mitigate their destructive power: YPG testers and supporting personnel routinely worked 60 and 70-hour work weeks over the course of years to meet or exceed the critically tight schedules.

“We're a continuously improving organization,” he said. “We strive for excellence.”

A Yuma native, Bracamonte showed interest in mechanics at an early age.

“As a kid, I had a passion for shooting rockets and coming up with contraptions that did things. One of



Three months into his tenure as the proving ground's highest ranking civilian, YPG Technical Director Lazaro "Larry" Bracamonte is bullish on the post's prospects. "I see the future as bright for us," he said. "People are concerned about the budget, but having been here over 30 years, I've seen this before. We will always be testing at YPG."

my friends' dad would buy old cars in various states of disarray, and helping him fix those cars while I was in high school taught me a lot."

After graduating from Yuma High School in 1981, he went to the University of Arizona and majored in mechanical engineering.

"I enjoyed math and science and wanted to continue that after high school," he said. "I looked at the possibility of being a mathematician or a physicist, but I saw engineering as combining both subjects. After my first year in college, I knew that was what I wanted to do."

Degree in hand, he returned home in 1987 and started at YPG testing tank ammunition.

"My plan was to make a little money, stay a year or two, and then move on somewhere else. But when I actually started working here, it was very exciting and challenging. I really, really liked the job, and stayed."

As the years progressed, Bracamonte was promoted numerous times. From team leader to branch chief, then division chief. He

attended a prestigious course of study at Cranfield University at the United Kingdom's Royal Military College of Science, then became the Ground Combat Systems director prior to being elevated to his current position. Just prior to this, he worked a detail as the Associate Director of Test Management at the Army Test and Evaluation Command, YPG's senior command, which he described as an awareness-raising experience.

"The people of ATEC work late hours so we can have a smoother operation at YPG. I've always appreciated them, but having the opportunity to serve with them and see what they do for us gave me a deeper appreciation. It was a good experience."

YPG's mission is growing in a variety of areas, particularly in the long range precision fires, counter-unmanned aircraft and mine-countermeasure missions. Counter Rocket Artillery Mortar (C-RAM) testing is also expanding. The proving ground is currently testing artillery projectiles with dramatically longer ranges than in years past, with aspirations to achieve ranges that will ultimately exceed the boundaries of YPG's land and air space.

"We have opened up a partnership with Marine Corps Air Station Yuma and Barry M. Goldwater Air Force

Range on a non-interference basis that has allowed us to fire long-range projectiles, and we have also used our sister test center White Sands Missile Range to accommodate longer range shots that we cannot accommodate at YPG." The proving ground is also currently exploring nearby areas off the proving ground for use as gun positions.

Through all the evolutions and changes, Bracamonte stresses that safety will always remain YPG's deepest emphasis.

"Safety is a culture at YPG," he said. "Our motto is that everyone goes home at the end of the day, and we live by that. We work in an inherently dangerous environment, whether it is firing a projectile, preparing ammunition, or cleaning up a range: even in the commute to work every day it is important to emphasize safety."

As it has done since 1943, YPG will continue to test virtually every piece of equipment that warfighters count on.

"Everybody at YPG strives to produce the best product we can for our Soldiers," said Bracamonte. "He or she is our ultimate customer, and everyone here knows that doing their work correctly means a Soldier can perform their mission safely and successfully."



YPG Technical Director Larry Bracamonte (left) escorts Senator John McCain (right) on a tour of the installation in this 2010 photo. This month marks Bracamonte's 31st year at YPG, and he says the proving ground has made enormous gains in professionalism and capabilities since he began. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



# Congressional staffers “rock and roll” on YPG ranges

By Chuck Wullenjohn

Like other federal government organizations, the Army is funded by American citizens through public tax dollars, making positive community outreach a necessity. U.S. Army Yuma Proving recently “reached out” to staffers from Arizona congressional offices to provide them with a detailed view of a vitally important national defense mission that doesn’t often get the exposure it deserves.

Nine staffers from Arizona Congressional offices, as well as other officials and members of the Yuma 50 local military support group, visited YPG for about five hours in early April. After a detailed briefing from YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger,

they spent an adventurous, stimulating morning inspecting then riding armored vehicles, witnessing YPG artillery testing, viewing unmanned aircraft and a variety of sensor testing, and much more. Many found it an eye-opening experience.

According to Col. Ross Poppenberger, commander, the staffers were super-receptive to the briefings they received and the activities they saw. One of the main messages he tried to get across is that, due to the Army’s intense interest in developing long range artillery and precision munitions, the proving ground has outgrown its boundaries.

“They understand it and are supportive of helping us to expand to the



After a detailed briefing from YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger, they spent an adventurous, stimulating morning inspecting then riding armored vehicles, witnessing YPG artillery testing, viewing unmanned aircraft and a variety of sensor testing, radar systems, and much more. Here, Aviation Systems and Electronic Test Division Chief Ross Gwynn discusses the counter-unmanned aircraft mission.



Nine staffers from Arizona Congressional offices, as well as other officials and members of the Yuma 50 local military support group, visited YPG for about five hours in early April. Here, engineering technician Ryan Hyatt (left) and Ground Combat Systems Test Director Edwin Patchet (right) show visitors a projectile follower system that photographs munitions leaving the muzzle of a howitzer at between 15,000 and 30,000 frames per second. (Photos by Chuck Wullenjohn)

point where we can achieve a 100 km artillery shot,” he said. “That is far beyond what conventional artillery can do.”

Typically, tours of this type are straightforward in nature, highlighting daily mission activities in a no-nonsense manner. The tour did this, but added critical, detailed information about YPG’s future needs, and made the overall tour memorable by allowing them to experience riding an armored vehicle through the desert and allowing them to pull the lanyards on artillery pieces.

“We need to position YPG for the future,” said Poppenberger, “and that future is a 100 km shot for our main customer.”

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley has laid out carefully defined priorities for the Army, establishing eight cross functional teams to carry them out. Of these teams, long range precision fires, is the number one priority.

“Long range firing is coming and we at YPG must be prepared,” he said. “If not, a base somewhere else will be. We simply must be able to support the technology on the way.”

Travis Schulte, Legislative Liaison for the Arizona Department of Emer-

gency and Military Affairs, attended the tour and took time to share some of his observations. Though Arizona contains some of the largest test ranges in the Department of Defense, he feels the footprint of many is not sufficient for future weapon systems.

“As ballistics improve,” he said, “surface danger zones expand and concerns grow. It impacts activities of the Arizona National Guard, as well as air and ground active military services throughout the state.”

The Yuma 50 local military support organization lobbied for the visit and arranged a welcome dinner when the congressional staffers arrived in town. The feedback received during and after the tour was extremely positive.

“This was not an average tour and YPG pulled out all the stops,” said Julie Engel, Yuma 50 chairperson and director of the Greater Yuma Economic Development Corporation.

A major tour accomplishment, she said, was that it made the point that YPG was being proactive in planning for the future. “To be ready when things happen rather than reacting to it was a message this audience needed to hear, for they can help achieve it. We don’t want to play catch-up.”

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# Color Fun Run kicks off month of sexual assault awareness and prevention activities



April is Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month, and YPG kicked off a month of educational and informative events with YPG's third annual Color Fun Run on April 5. After YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger and Command Sgt. Maj. Jamathon Nelson signed a proclamation decreeing April Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month at YPG, more than 100 members of the YPG family participated in the run. Given that April is also the Month of the Military Child, participants ran through the Child Development Center, where the youngsters got in on the color-spraying fun. (Photos by Teri Womack)

If you were this good,  
you'd have attitude too.



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Sink your teeth into one of our gourmet burgers.

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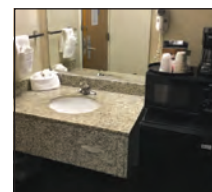
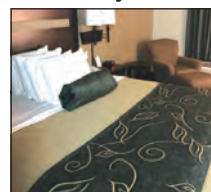


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# HUMP DAY

H O T S E A T S

WIN \$250 REWARDS PLAY!

WEDNESDAYS

APRIL 4TH - 18TH • 1PM - 7PM

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