

YPG Child Development Center boasts new playground

By Ana Henderson

The Child Development Center (CDC) is responsible for the most precious members of the Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) family, the tiny ones who need to be cared for and nurtured.

Each morning, active duty members, civilians and contractors alike pull-up to the CDC on the grounds of YPG at wee hours and drop off their children. Most children spend about 10 hours or more at the CDC.

Now, the staff at the CDC have an upgraded playground to help build the minds and motor-skills of those children.

"I think it's a welcoming new addition to what we already do," said Patricia Frost, assistant director.

"The playground is something that's engaging for the children, it's educational and it reaches all the boundaries of physical and fine motor and all of those areas that are important for children to grow and had a healthy life."

"The playground is something that's engaging for the children, it's educational and it reaches all the boundaries of physical and fine motor and all of those areas that are important for children to grow and had a healthy life"

The playground has top of the line equipment and features to enhance learning, and also meets the Americans with Disabilities Act standards for accessible design.

The new playground includes a separate infant play area to help prevent the toddlers from stumbling over the babies, and soft flooring for when children do fall. The playground slope was reduced and new shade structures were added, and existing shades were replaced. New



YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger, Command Sgt. Maj Jamathon Nelson, and Garrison Manager Gordon Rogers helped celebrate the Month of the Military Child by cutting the ribbon on an upgraded playground at YPG's Child Development Center April 18. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

sidewalks and fencing were installed on the inside perimeter, patches of grass were incorporated, and an irrigation system added.

There are now two preschool play

areas which provide a better line-of-sight for staff to keep eyes on the children.

Theresa Robinson, CDC Director,

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Updated Black Hawk helicopter lands at YPG

By Mark Schauer

An essential part of YPG's test activities occur in the skies far above the proving ground's vast ranges.

From helicopters to unmanned

aircraft, the cutting-edge airframes military aviators depend on are tested and weaponized from the proving ground's six airfields, of which the largest and busiest is Laguna Army

Airfield (LAAF).

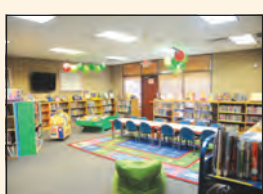
Further, YPG utilizes airframes for a variety of test-related support, from serving as a flying platform for chase photographers to ferrying visitors

and personnel across the proving ground's vast ranges.

For decades the proving ground used the venerable UH-1 "Huey"

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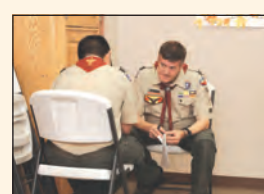
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PLAYGROUND

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sees the excitement first-hand.
“The kids love it, they, can do something different in each area and don’t have to be confined in one space,” she said. “For the infants we have a tummy swing, for the toddlers we have the instruments: they like to bang on the drums and the xylophone, and the pre-school kids like the water feature.”
This ribbon cutting ceremony at the CDC was years in the making. About three years ago staff requested

funding for a new playground. Originally the funds were solely for the preschool side, but a site visit convinced officials from the Army’s Installation Management Command (IMCOM) to rehabilitate the entire playground for all the age groups. About 95-percent of the playground is brand new.
Gordon Rogers, Garrison Manager, explains, “The playground was built, rehabbed and reconstructed as part of an IMCOM-wide project to rehab playgrounds across the enterprise.”
Officials say there are many thanks to go around for this large scale project.



The CDC cares for children at their most tender age – six weeks to about five years old—while their parents, be they active duty military or government civilians and contractors, work to test virtually every piece of equipment used by American Soldiers. CDC children happily performed a song for the crowd at the ribbon cutting ceremony. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



The playground has top of the line equipment and features to enhance learning, it also meets the Americans with Disabilities Act standards for accessible design. New sidewalks and fencing were installed on the inside perimeter, patches of grass were incorporated and an irrigation system added.

“This wouldn’t have been possible without command support and without Mike Kemmerer from the Department of Public Works,” said Mardy Clark, Family Support Director. “He really stepped up to make sure this was a quality program.”
YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger, Command Sgt. Maj. Jamathon Nelson, and Garrison Manager Gordon Rogers, and many other YPG senior leaders gathered for the ribbon cutting ceremony but

none were more excited about the unveiling of the playground than the children.
Every morning they would look out the window and ask the teachers ‘when are we going to play?’” explained Robinson. “Finally when we told them they could go play, they darted out and started running everywhere trying every single piece of equipment we have out here.”
In addition to the ribbon cutting for the playground the CDC recognized Month of the Military Child.

THEOUTPOST

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News may be submitted to:
The Editor, Outpost, Yuma Proving Ground, Yuma, AZ, 85365.
Phone: (928) 328–6149 or DSN 899.
Visit our website at: www.yuma.army.mil
or email to: ana.c.henderson.civ@mail.mil

Commander: Col. Ross Poppenberger
Public Affairs Officer: Mark Schauer
Public Affairs Specialist/Outpost Editor: Ana Henderson
Public Affairs Specialist: Casey Garcia
Technical Editor, Cold Regions Test Center: Clara Zachgo
Visual Information Manager: Riley Williams

Meet the New Child Development Director

Theresa “Teri” Robinson joined the team in February. She transferred from Ramstein Air Base, Germany and comes with more than 20 years of experience. The CDC personnel are thankful to have her on board. “I am happy we have the new playground and the new director, which are both wonderful enhancements for the CDC,” said Patricia Frost, assistant director. “She has a kind, wonderful heart. She is very attentive to staff and she finds ways to boost our moral, and those are the things we really need in order to care for children.”



Out and about

U.S. Senator Martha McSally meets with YPG leaders



Arizona Senator Martha McSally made a trip to Yuma April 17 and met with members of the Yuma 50 military support group. YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger and Command Sgt. Maj. Jamathon Nelson discussed YPG's position at the forefront of long-range precision artillery testing, ongoing efforts to expand Highway 95 to four lanes, and the upcoming acquisition of new range cameras in coming years. (Photo by Lucy Valencia)

Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One trains at YPG's K-9 Village



U.S. Marines with Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division fast-rope from a UH-1Y Venom aircraft in support of a battle drill exercise during Weapons and Tactics Instructor (WTI) training at YPG on April 5. WTI is a seven-week training event hosted by Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One which emphasizes operational integration of the six functions of Marine Corps aviation in support of a Marine Air Ground Task Force. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Auburn D. Johnson)

Congressional staffers from Arizona House and Senate representatives visit YPG



YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger and other senior leaders hosted staffers from the offices of all members of Arizona's congressional delegation April 16 for a whirlwind tour of the proving ground's ranges. The visitors witnessed firsthand the proving ground's impact on national security and the Arizona economy. (Photos by Ana Henderson)

Col. Poppenberger stops by KAWC Radio



YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger visited with radio host Lou Gum and his listeners on KAWC's Arizona Edition Live on 12 April. Poppenberger discussed the importance YPG plays in the future of the U.S. Army and expressed his appreciation for the longstanding support of the Yuma community. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

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HELICOPTER

FROM PAGE 1

as the workhorses of its fleet. When the Army discontinued support for the aging platform, YPG switched over to the UH-60A+ Blackhawk. Now, the fleet is getting an upgrade, having taken delivery of its first of four UH-60L Blackhawks.

"We have to accept it first,"

explained Stuart

Smith, avionics technician. "We do an inventory and enter it into our computer system before we can make work orders to modify it for our mission."

The primary purpose of YPG's helicopters—supporting tests—

means modifications to the standard airframe are necessary to meet the mission. Each modification requires airworthiness evaluations and releases to ensure the aircraft functions safely, a time-consuming process. From specialized equipment racks inside the airframe to camera and sensor mounts on the exterior, YPG airfield personnel make more than 50 different modifications to the typical helicopter used to support the mission.

Though the UH-60L models have been completely rewired and sport a fresh coat of paint, the major differences between it and its UH-60A+ predecessors is a more robust

transmission and better vibration absorbers.

"In the Alpha plus, the engine outperforms the transmission," said Robert Tackett, pilot. "With the upgraded transmission, you're not restricted based on your altitude on how much torque you can pull—you've got another thousand pounds you can put on a cargo hook."

That means the UH-60L can pull 9,000 pounds of cargo.

"You can make use of the full power output the aircraft is capable of," added Patrick Franklin, Flight Service Division Chief. "As far as controls, displays, and functions of all the buttons, they're all the same."

Eventually, all of LAAF's UH-60A+ models will be switched with the upgraded UH-60L models, and airfield personnel are excited to receive them. Tackett, a veteran of four deployments overseas, is intimately familiar with the airframe and its vaunted durability and survivability.

"You can really beat them up and they keep going," he said.

Not that the airframe will experience combat conditions here, however, with capable maintenance personnel and a dry desert climate, Laguna Army Airfield has often been the final working home of venerable military equipment, and the

Blackhawk, first fielded in 1988, is well on its way to becoming the next in a long line of aircraft that includes the Huey and the O2 Skymaster.



Robert Tackett, pilot, conducts a pre-flight inspection on a recently obtained UH-60L Blackhawk helicopter. The UH-60L boasts a larger transmission than its UH-60A+ predecessor, which enables the aircraft to carry an extra 1,000 pounds on its cargo hook. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

Holocaust survivors describe past horrors

By Mark Schauer

Discriminatory laws. Forced labor camps. Execution chambers that killed with deadly gas.

These were the escalating tools of terror the Nazi regime of Adolf Hitler used in a pathological bid to eliminate Jews and others deemed 'inferior' from the face of the Earth.

At the height of Hitler's 12 depraved years in power, more than six million people, representing one-third of the Jewish people in the world and two-thirds of those in Europe, were systematically

murdered in concentration camps that spread across the continent. Particularly heinous was the fact that these atrocities claimed the lives of over 1.5 million innocent children.

A fortunate few made it through, though, survivors Annique Dverin and Pauline Brull spent a day at YPG's Heritage Center several years ago discussing their experiences as children in concentration camps during the Holocaust. They spoke individually in the morning and led a panel discussion about the Holocaust and related topics with audience members in a lengthy afternoon session.

The frank talk about religion, minority status, race, and remembrance had particular resonance being held at YPG, the last active Army installation within the famed Desert Maneuver Area in which 20 Army divisions underwent harsh training during World War II in preparation for combat. Many of the divisions landed at Normandy in June 1944 and fought their way across Nazi-occupied Europe, liberating 10



At the height of Adolf Hitler's 12 depraved years in power in Nazi Germany, more than six million people were systematically murdered in concentration camps that spread across the continent. Particularly heinous was the fact that these atrocities claimed the lives of over 1.5 million innocent children. "Preventing it from happening again is part of telling the story," said Pauline Brull, Holocaust survivor. "I think it is the survival instinct which makes you go on." (Loaned photo)

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YPG Library gets modernized thanks to grants totaling \$70,000

By Ana Henderson

On any given day the YPG library is buzzing with active duty members and their families lounging on the couches or reading books.

"Everybody comes here, whether it's for computer access or they are doing training. I have Soldiers, all the way down to the smallest family member," said Malissa Donato, Supervisory Library Technician at the YPG library.

Now, thanks to two grants those members and their family will have a lot more tools, supplies and amenities to keep them busy and bring out their creative side. Donato is utilizing grant money to create, colorful, designated spaces in the library.

In the nearly complete children's room, Donato added color to the once mostly brown room. She selected shorter shelving which makes books more accessible, the kids can actually reach the books themselves. Donato also purchase children's books that came with matching puppets to make story time livelier.

"We are reading, we are playing with the puppets and the kids love it!" exclaimed Donato.

Donato also moved out the large space consuming shelving in the back of the main library room to make space for two special purpose rooms. One a gaming room which will be equipped with gaming chairs and gaming consoles including PS4,



These new colorful and height-appropriate bookshelves make accessing the books easier for kids. They can actually see the books and pick them out themselves. (Photos by Ana Henderson)

Nintendo Switch, Xbox 1, and new board games. Donato also purchased approximately 150 games for the gaming consoles and a ton of board games (too many to count), and four flat screen televisions.

One Nintendo Switch is already available to use for those who cannot wait for the game room to be completed.

The other side of the room, which is sectioned off with a partition, will be the makerspace. There is a sitting area for those looking for a comfortable place to knit or crochet, a large table making a great workspace for those looking to use the four sewing machines provided by the library. Painting canvas will be available as well as woodworking supplies. Donato says that some of older residents living at the YPG Travel Camp have been

giving sewing lessons to the younger generation.

The creation of the gaming room and maker's room will allow library staff to clear the items from the teen room allowing more space for their arts and crafts and other collaborations. Tables will be equipped with an area to plug in computers.

With the encouragement of the head of the libraries, Donato submitted a proposal for the grant last summer and was awarded the funds in late 2018. The library received a total of \$70,000: \$49,000 for library modernization from the Million Dollar Makeover Grant and \$41,000 from the Makespace Grant. Donato started purchasing items in January and has been slowly seeing the spaces come together. She adds that all the areas are still a work in progress. Obtaining the supplies and getting everything put in place will take time but she hopes to unveil all the upgrades and new features around August in a grand re-opening.

Upcoming library events:
Mother's Day Craft
 (11am—6pm) – May 9
Summer Reading Registration
 Starts May 10



During story time library staff will now have a matching puppet to go along with the storybooks. Donato says, "They get so excited, they want to play with them, see if they can put their hands in them and make them talk. It's just fun and it's cute."

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YPG Stress Ball Office Basketball Championship brings fierce, friendly competition

By Ana Henderson

The serious business of YPG's test mission normally precludes fun and games during duty hours. Yet maintaining morale requires at least some relaxation for the workforce.

More than 180 employees gathered in mid-April on their lunch break to watch the fireworks in

the 2019 edition of the YPG Stress Ball Office Basketball Championship, a fast-paced three minute free-throw competition using miniature balls.

This event started off very small within the Munitions and Weapons (M&W) Division.

"The first tournament started as a stress reliever and team bonding activity with my co-workers Jorge Amaya and Mike Barron in 2014 during the NCAA March Madness,"

"This is what it's all about. The comradery, all of YPG coming together. It just shows what a strong organization looks like and what they do."

recalled Arturo Anaya, mortar branch chief. "The following year we decided to extend the invitation to the entire Munitions and Weapons Division to participate."

At that time, now-Technical Director, Larry Bracamonte was the Ground Combat Systems Director working out of the same building and

witnessed the positive effects this game brought to the staff.

"It gets the workforce together to relieve some stress," he said. "Getting together is a good thing for morale."

Perhaps Arturo's twin brother Carlos

Anaya heard or saw how much the employees were enjoying the friendly competition at M&W, for soon the Air Combat Systems Directorate was in on the fun. From there the competition spread across



Munitions and Weapons Test Officer, Johnathan Bauza-Beltran, who has competed two years in a row and this time made it to the finals, appreciates these types of work events, "This is just one of the many things that our organization hosts in order to make coming to work every day enjoyable. YPG is a very unique place to work-- I have enjoyed working here every single day." (Photos by Ana Henderson)



Brad Cox, team lead with YPG's Combat Automotive Systems Directorate, celebrates his victory. He was the overall winner of the 2019 edition of the YPG Office Basketball Championship, a fast-paced three minute free-throw competition using miniature balls.

YPG, adding up to more than 180 players.

During this year's matchup, everyone was looking for a win and feeling the pressure. M&W Test Officer Johnathan Bauza-Beltran, who has competed two years in a row, made it to the finals this year and felt the pressure of representing his division.

"To be able to conduct a test from start to finish, I had to complete a yearlong certification process," he said with a smile. "For this, nothing could have helped me prepare for the intense pressure you get when you

are about to take each shot."

Featured YPG 'celebrity' matchups included YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger playing against Technical Director Larry Bracamonte.

"Col. Poppenberger is a competitor, so I knew it was going to be tough from the get-go," said Bracamonte.

Poppenberger triumphed as a vocal crowd cheered on.

"It was a tough-fought battle," Poppenberger said. "We had to dig in deep, but the best man won."

Yuma Test Center Commander



Ground Combat Systems Director Eddy Patchet and Air Combat Systems Director Jeff Rogers kept their game clean, with Rogers taking the win. Omar Silva, Chief of Range Operations and Training Division, did a great job of giving a play-by-play of the championship.

Lt. Col. Timothy Matthews and YPG Chief of Staff Minerva Peters were pitted against each other for a second year in a row. Peters gave it her best shot, but the exuberant Matthews prevailed, and celebrated his commanding victory with a few victory push-ups.

"This is phenomenal for the organization," Matthews said. "It's great for team building. I love it!"

Ground Combat Systems Director Eddy Patchet and Air Combat Systems Director Jeff Rogers kept

their game gentlemanly and stoic, with Rogers taking the win.

In the end Carlos Anaya and Bazua-Beltran each won in their respective directorates. Brad Cox, team lead with YPG's Combat Automotive Systems Directorate, was the overall winner!

"This is what it's all about: The comradery, all of YPG coming together," said Poppenberger at the conclusion of the games. "It just shows what a strong organization looks like and what they do."



Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Timothy Matthews thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the competition. "This is phenomenal for the organization-- it's great for team building," he said. Matthews also loves to win, and showed it with a few victory push-ups after defeating YPG Chief of Staff Minerva Peters.

YPG personnel help Price Elementary School students Celebrate Earth Day



Students had a fun filled day learning about Earth and its creatures. The Earth Day presentation included a demonstration from a local falconer who brought a Red-Tailed Hawk, meeting a desert tortoise and learning about petroglyphs. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



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YPG Safety Director leads local Boy Scout troop

By Mark Schauer

For over a century, the Boy Scouts of America have relied on adult volunteers to inculcate young boys in values like trustworthiness, loyalty, thrift, and reverence.

It is an ethos that appeals to Mike Demcko, YPG Safety Director, who serves as scoutmaster for a local Boy Scout troop in his spare time.

“This troop has been around for about three years now,” he said with a smile. “We try to do monthly campouts and quarterly courts of honor to recognize merit badges and advancements.”

In addition to this, the troop routinely conducts flag retirement ceremonies and places flags around the community on Memorial Day and Veterans Day, as well as other service projects, big and small.

“We’ve done community projects with Saddles of Joy and Wreaths

Across America, too.”

A scout since fifth grade, Dallas-native Demcko ultimately achieved the rank of Eagle Scout before graduating from Texas A & M and being commissioned into the Army as an ordnance officer. When his own sons were old enough to get into Scouting, Demcko was working in South Korea and attended a meeting.

“‘OK, we want to form a tiger den, but we don’t have a den leader,’” he recalled the Cubmaster saying. “It was one of those things where they weren’t going to have it unless someone volunteered, so I did it.”

From that moment forward, Demcko has devoted thousands of volunteer hours to Scouting, up to the present day. His sons kept with it until adulthood: though his younger son made Eagle Scout last May, Demcko has stuck with the troop and wants to see it expand before



Mike Demcko, YPG Safety Director, has served as scoutmaster for a local Boy Scout troop in his spare time for the past three years. An Eagle Scout himself, Demcko devoted thousands of volunteer hours to the organization during the childhoods of his two sons. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

hanging up his Scoutmaster hat.

Demcko feels the opportunities Scouting provides young men is vital to their growth and development.

“The leadership skills you develop at a young age as a patrol leader and how to learn from your mistakes and support those in positions above you are invaluable. It is safe to make mistakes because there are adults overseeing the whole thing and providing counseling and mentorship.”

He also feels that Scouting helps young men achieve a community-oriented perspective that has real world benefits for a lifetime.

“They develop a sense of citizenship and outreach, of not being afraid to be a volunteer. They also learn a lot about themselves, what their capabilities are and how to push themselves.”

The attributes that Scouting cultivates last a lifetime, and positively influence all aspects of life and career, as Demcko himself can attest.

“The motto ‘be prepared’ is



Demcko feels that Scouting helps young men achieve a community-oriented perspective that has real world benefits for a lifetime. "They develop a sense of citizenship and outreach, of not being afraid to be a volunteer," he said.



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Chaplain's Corner

Always be present in life

By Maj. Ronald Beltz

A man who lived a long time ago believed that he could read the future in the stars. He called himself an Astrologer and spent his time at night gazing at the sky. He was always busy worrying about the future and villagers often came to him, hoping to know what their future holds.

One evening he was walking along the open road outside the village. His eyes were fixed on the stars. He thought he saw there that the end of the world was at near. He was lost in his thoughts about the future. As he was looking at the stars, he kept walking without looking down. Suddenly, he fell into a ditch full of mud and water.

He was sinking in the muddy water, and madly trying to claw at the slippery sides of the hole in his effort to climb out. He was unable to crawl out and fearing

for his life, he started screaming for help. His cries for help soon brought the villagers running.

As they pulled him out of the mud, one of them said, "You pretend to read the future in the stars, and yet you fail to see what is at your feet! This may teach you to pay more attention to what is right in front of you, and let the future take care of itself."

"What use is it," said another, "To read the stars, when you can't see what's right here on the earth?"

We all want our future to be bright and happy, but the time doesn't stop for anyone. Each tomorrow turns into today, your present is also a part your future. There is always a tomorrow to look forward to and improve, but you can't go back to yesterday. So, maintain the balance of your present life while you work for a better tomorrow. (moralstories.org)

Yuma Proving Ground water main replacement for the potable water system

By Braylen Young

On May 15, 2019 the Directorate of Public Works will begin a major water line project on the Howard Cantonment Area. This \$2.6 million dollar project will replace 6,000 feet of potable water line affecting homes on Schwark, Cutter and Hindle Drives in upper housing. To ensure water outages are kept to a minimum, and the disruption to traffic is adequately managed, the construction will be performed in six phases.

The phases are as follow with the start/end dates and areas affected:

Phase 1: May 20 – June 12, Schwark Drive North – Water tanks to Quick Drive

Phase 2: June 13 – July 8, Schwark Drive South – Quick Drive to Cutter Drive

Phase 3: July 9 – Aug. 2, Cutter Avenue – Schwark Drive east to Cortez Drive

Phase 4: Aug. 5 – 30, Cutter Avenue – Schwark Drive west to Quick Drive

Phase 5: Sep. 3 – 27, Hindle Avenue – Schwark Drive east to Cortez Drive

Phase 6: Sep. 30 – Oct. 21, Hindle Avenue – Schwark Drive west to Quick Drive

The large open area between Quick Drive and Hindle Avenue will be used by the contractor for a laydown area. Currently there are vehicles parked in this area. All vehicles must be removed from the area prior to May 8 or may be towed.

The housing office will send notifications pertaining to the construction phases, resident parking, and access to and from affected housing areas via e-mail to all housing residents. Additionally, signage will be posted as needed. This project is expected to be complete by Nov. 13, 2019.

Locations Affected:
Howard Cantonment Area,
Upper Housing
Schwark, Cutter and Hindle
Drives

SURVIVORS

FROM PAGE 4

concentration camps prior to their final defeat of the Third Reich.

Many members of the YPG workforce who attended throughout the day were keenly aware of the special opportunity the visit represented.

In recollections presented during the afternoon discussion, Brull said many decades passed before survivors like her were able to talk about their trauma.

"For years, survivors were not telling their stories, until their children, who were by then grown up, started demanding from their parents to hear what had happened," she said.

"Why were there no grandparents? Why were there no family photos? People were afraid because it opens up a flood of emotions: But once you're past the first phase, it gets less difficult to talk about."

Nonetheless, even after nearly seven decades the memories were ever-present.

"If I have a fever or have a tough day, it's hard to sleep because thoughts keep running through my mind," said Dverin.

During the lengthy conversation with audience members, all of the panelists agreed that Soldiers afflicted by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder from their own combat experiences could find solace and support talking to Holocaust survivors.

"I think there would be great merit in wounded warriors and Holocaust survivors sitting down together, because in terms of PTSD the wounded warriors could see that there is hope," said Dr. Gail Wallen, director of the military program for the Holocaust Survivors of Southern Arizona. "You can go on."

Further, Holocaust survivors would likewise gain comfort in the dialogue.

"Preventing it from happening again is part of telling the story,"

said Brull. "I think it is the survival instinct which makes you go on."





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