

# Fort Gordon Soldier earns community service award

Bonnie Heater  
Signal staff

Members of the Channel 6 news team made a surprise visit to Fort Gordon Sept. 25 to honor a Fort Gordon Soldier.

Jennie Montgomery, one of the anchors for WJBF, an ABC affiliate station in Augusta, walked into Sgt. 1st Class Rodolfo Fuentes' class in Allen Hall. to present the station's "Giving Your Best" award.

The trophy, which he handed to one of his students to pass around the room, after thanking Montgomery for the award, was engraved with his name and these words: "For giving your best to your fellow man through your compassion for others and your commitment to the community." The award is given out monthly to a deserving citizen in the Central Savannah River Area, according to Montgomery. Many of the Soldiers in the class volunteer with him in offering assistance to citizens in the surrounding communities.

Fuentes began his tour at Fort Gordon about 19 months and has not missed an opportunity to volunteer at least once a week in the local community, according to Linda Means, the former community relations officer for the Fort Gordon Public Affairs Office. Means submitted an electronic nomination package for Fuentes in June. She later retired Sept. 2 after serving more than 35 years with the Department of the Army at Fort Gordon.

"He frequently volunteers from sunup to sundown," Means



Photo by Bonnie Heater

wrote in the award packet. "A prime example of this was Armed Forces Day. He and his fellow Soldier volunteers worked the Signal Corps Regimental Association's 10K Race beginning at 5 a.m. and did not stop until 10:30 p.m. when they manned the VIP tent at Thunder over Augusta [Augusta's Armed Forces Day salute]."

After learning the historic Laney Walker Immaculate Conception School needed repairs, but couldn't afford to hire out to get the work done, Fuentes and his fellow Soldier volunteers helped with painting and sprucing the place up. The act of kindness lifted the morale of students and faculty, Means said. Recently he has put shingles on a local Habitat for Humanity home in the hot sun ensuring a met deadline on a home for the homeless, Means wrote in the award package. "He not only defends his country as a Soldier, but he shows his love and support of Fort Gordon's host community by volunteering on a continuous basis."

Twice monthly, Fuentes and other Soldier volunteers from the post, go to Spirit Creek Middle School in Hephzibah, Ga., to mentor students there. One can often find him playing basketball with the children and participating in field days and award ceremonies there.

The 25P Microwave Systems Operator/Maintainer is a senior instructor/writer for the 25P course, which is taught in Allen Hall.

Jeannie Montgomery, an anchor/reporter from WJBF News Channel 6 in Augusta, surprised Sgt. 1st Class Rodolfo Fuentes while he was teaching Soldiers in the 25P Microwave Systems Operator/Maintainer course with the presentation of the "Giving Your Best" award at Sept. 25 in Allen Hall on post. The award is given by the local ABC affiliate station monthly to a deserving citizen of the Central Savannah River Area.

During the Fourth Annual Instructor Ball held Sept. 5 at Fort Gordon Fuentes was selected as Fort Gordon's Instructor of the Year. His skills as an instructor are well known on post.

"Sgt. 1st Class Fuentes is one of the finest senior noncommissioned officers I've dealt with in over 30 years of serving in the Army," said Ken Golston, the course chief at Allen Hall. "He performs duties as instructor/writer teaching theory, operations and maintenance concepts for microwave communications systems to an annual average of 300 active duty, National Guard members, and Army Reservists with the 25P Common Core courses. At the same time he's taking care of Soldiers during his off duty time performing his duties as a platoon sergeant at his unit. After school hours after everyone has gone home for the day he is still doing what great sergeants do "take care of the Soldiers."

Fuentes' devotion to the Army, his Soldiers and the local community doesn't go unnoticed by his commander. "The 551st Signal Battalion is known as the Patriot Battalion here at Fort Gordon," said Col. Charles Schrader, 551st Signal Battalion commander. "Webster defines a patriot as 'one who loves his or her country and supports its authority and interests.' Sgt. 1st Class Fuentes exemplifies what it means to be a patriot in our battalion. I am proud to call Sgt. 1st Class Fuentes a true patriot in our battalion."

The Touro University International alumnus is married to the former Sykle Oksas.

## Nice weather helps outdoors activities

Charmain Z. Brackett  
Correspondent

October is filled with area outdoor festivals.

On Saturday and Sunday, enjoy Hispanic food and culture at the annual Hispanic Festival at the Augusta Common.

There will be musical entertainment, arts and crafts vendors and dancing in the streets.

Also in downtown Augusta will be the 19th annual Greek Festival today through Sunday at the Holy Trinity Orthodox Church on Telfair Street.

The festival will feature authentic Greek food, live music and dance. Also there will be a Greek market with imported jewelry and gifts. Football lovers won't miss out on their favorite college or pro

games. They will be broadcast on a big screen.

In addition, there will be a children's area with games and balloons.

In Columbia County Saturday, there will be a Columbus Day Festival from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The event will be at the Memorial Garden behind the Columbia County Library. There will be arts and crafts vendors, balloon rides, petting zoo and food by the Italian-American Club of Augusta.

In New Ellenton, S.C., the Atomic City Festival will be held from 6 to 10 p.m. today and 9 a.m. to midnight Saturday.

There will be rides, games, an antique car show, music, a chili cook-off and a fireworks show.

## Violence

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Baker said he wants to stop the cycle of violence and by giving a message that the state declares domestic violence as being wrong and enforcing tough penalties he hopes to send a message to perpetrators.

"I pledge to the community to move forward in my commitment to end domestic violence," he said.

And he challenged others attending the program to make that commitment as well. "Make a difference in the lives of the victims of domestic violence," he said. "Not only help the victims but help the community at large."

There are many event at Fort Gordon during the month to highlight the problem and look at prevention solutions. Other events include LOL :) Parenting With Humor at 1 p.m. Oct. 13, 15 and 22 at the Family Outreach Center.

The program is designed for parents with children between the ages of 6 and 16 to help parents encourage positive behaviors, discourage negative ones and teach alternatives to the bad ones.

For more information, call Tracey Carter at (706) 791-3579.

Also, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Oct. 15, there will be a brown bag lunch at the Family Outreach Center with Augusta's Solicitor General Harold Jones speaking. Limited space is available so reservations are necessary. Call (706) 791-3579.

The month will culminate with a fall festival tied into the weekly playgroups on Oct. 30 at the Family Outreach Center.

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