

# Community update

For up-to-date things happening at Fort Bliss

**Car seat**  
safety made easy  
p.5C

## This week inside...



### Cancer survivor

p. 4C

## upcoming events...

### Stayton Theater Movies

**Percy Jackson and The Olympians: Lightning Thief** (PG) • 7 p.m. • April 15  
**Green Zone** (R) • 7 p.m. • April 16  
**Brooklyn's Finest** (R) • 9:30 p.m. • April 17  
**The Spy Next Door** (PG) • 2 p.m. • April 17  
**Green Zone** (R) • 4:30 p.m. • April 17  
**Brooklyn's Finest** (R) • 7 p.m. • April 17  
**The Tooth Fairy** (PG) • 4 p.m. • April 18  
**Shutter Island** (R) • 7 p.m. • April 18  
**The Losers** (PG-13) • 7 p.m. • April 18  
 (Studio appreciation free advance screening: Tickets available at your local AAFES Foodcourt, USO, Stout Gym, bowling alley or ITR. For more information, call 568-2516 or see Page C19 of *The Monitor*.  
**Dear John** (PG-13) • 7 p.m. • April 22

**Hats off to volunteers:** Fort Bliss will celebrate National Volunteer Week April 18 through 24 with free activities for registered volunteers, volunteers of installation private organizations and Soldiers who participate in Partners in Education. Manic Monday is at the Centennial Banquet and Conference Center, Bldg. 11199 on East Fort Bliss, Monday from 6 to 9 p.m. Receive free tickets to MWR's April 24 comedy show just for coming. Child care is available through the Fort Bliss Army Volunteer Office. Get free massages, reiki, makeovers, food and prizes Wednesday at the Centennial from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Free child care available through the CDC. Special guest will be Julie Negron of Jennypouse.com, the only comic strip about the life of the military spouse. For more information about events, call 568-1132.

**Relay for Life:** Team Bliss is hosting the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life April 30 at 7 p.m. through 7 a.m. May 1 at Stout Field. The event will include music, food, entertainment, camping, walking and inspirational cancer stories in an effort to fight cancer. For more information, visit [www.relayforlife.org/fortblisstx](http://www.relayforlife.org/fortblisstx).

**Desert Strike Lanes closure:** Due to private functions, Desert Strike Lanes will close at 9 p.m. Saturday and May 1. We apologize for any inconvenience.

**Picnic Under the Stars:** The ACS FAP will host Picnic Under the Stars April 24 from 4 to 7 p.m. at Biggs Park. For more information, call 568-4878 or 568-9129.

**Wagon Trails End:** The Old Fort Bliss Museum is hosting the Wagon Trails End from noon to 3 p.m. April 24. There will be "old country" music, artisans working in period shops, crafts and beverages for sale, and educational opportunities for the whole family. For information, call 568-4518.



STEPHEN BAACK / Editor

Army and Air Force Exchange Service Commander Maj. Gen. Keith Thurgood talks to local print and broadcast reporters April 2 at Freedom Crossing about the progress of the facility. Thurgood said the progress of Freedom Crossing, which is about 75 percent complete, is "absolutely phenomenal."

# AAFES commander visits Freedom Crossing

## Thurgood says progress is 'absolutely phenomenal'

STEPHEN BAACK  
Editor

The commander of the Army and Air Force Exchange Service visited Fort Bliss' Freedom Crossing shopping center April 2 to check out the progress of the largest and first-of-its-kind shopping and dining center within the Department of Defense.

AAFES Commander Maj. Gen. Keith Thurgood met with Col. Joseph Simonelli, Jr. and Command Sgt. Maj. William Green, Fort Bliss' garrison commander and garrison command sergeant major, respectively, before talking to reporters about the lifestyle center's progress to date since the ribbon-cutting ceremony last summer.

"The progress between July and right now has been absolutely phenomenal, from the support of the installation – the command group here – the support of our contractors, the garrison commander, the mayor, the chambers of commerce," Thurgood said about the facility that is now about three-fourths complete. "I think it's a story of collaboration that needs to be told."

That collaboration includes AAFES' new practice of adopting outside businesses – or, non-proprietary brands and those business for which AAFES is not the franchisee – such as Starbucks or The Gap, alongside AAFES' staples of Anthony's Pizza and Robin Hood Sandwich Shoppe and Deli.

"At the end of the day, it's all about dividing the right kind of service and goods to these great Soldiers here at

Fort Bliss – and their families," said Thurgood, who added that this collaboration is creating opportunities that otherwise might not have existed.

This public-private venture, he said, may enable outside businesses that are successful here to branch out to other AAFES-owned shopping centers once the public-private practice spreads to other posts and bases.

The commander added that, instead of aiming for a particular ratio of outside-to-proprietary businesses, he said AAFES is instead simply going for "a wide variety of businesses that complement what we have in our main store."

"The more, the merrier," he said.

Thurgood, who said he's "always happy to tell the AAFES story," also praised the hard work of individuals whose very livelihoods depend on AAFES. The story of one Subway employee stood out to him, an AAFES employee to whom Thurgood gave one of his coins.

Dora Duran, a 44-year-old AAFES employee, takes two buses during her hour-and-a-half-long daily commute to one of several Subway restaurants here. Duran's car broke down more than a year ago, and, instead of looking for another job closer to her home, she's decided to stick with AAFES because "I love my job," she said.

"I'm an immigrant and AAFES gave me the opportunity to work in the United States," said Duran, who added that her English wasn't proficient when she started.

She said that opportunity included

growing by rising through the ranks of supervisor and now food concept manager, in which she helps improve profit by examining and helping other stores work on employee training, motivation and work procedures.

"It's a dream," she said. "Maybe for some people it's not too much, but for me it's a dream. My goodness. It's a dream."

Duran said she loves working with customers and with her family of fellow employees, "from the front to the back of the counter," and the opportunity to "grow up," something she said was missing from the civilian-sector food-service jobs she's held.

Duran originally emigrated from Mexico when she was 25 and now takes care of her 66-year-old mother and 99-year-old grandmother. Despite transportation challenges and her at-home responsibilities, she said she prides herself on being punctual, having a good attendance record and taking on any duty her superiors ask her to do.

"It's hard, but when you want something, you do it," said Duran.

"We want to create an AAFES career path for people," Thurgood said during break-off interviews after his press conference. "We want to have jobs that count; not just count jobs."

"This is the kind of thing that, if you're part of, you're making a difference here," he added. "You can tell your kids and your grand kids that you made a difference."