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18th Eng. Bde. constructs deck for Lion's Den

Story by: Pfc. David Huddleston, 18th Eng. Bde. Public Affairs

HEIDELBERG, Germany – Soldiers from the 18th Engineer Brigade provided construction support to the Patrick Henry Village area by constructing an add-on to the Lion's Den. The Lion's Den is an after school facility where students can go to enjoy their free time together.

The 18th Eng. Bde's Technical Headquarters Section took over this project from Child Youth Services to help improve the area by means of designing and constructing a deck behind the Lion's Den.

Employing an automated computer design program, site surveys and other resources the engineers designed and constructed the deck using basic construction tools such as saws and drills.

“Prior to starting the design we first conducted a site survey to see what actually existed in the area,” said technical engineer noncommissioned officers Staff Sgt. Shaun Emmett, from Pittsburg, Pa.

One obstacle they discovered was a concrete masonry unit block wall that local children were using as a graffiti wall. The deck was designed to extend from the back of the Lion's Den to the location where the concrete masonry unit wall would be running alongside of the deck. However, during the survey, they discovered that the wall was not at a 90 degree angle from the building which would cause difficulty in the construction process.

“The biggest problem I had while drafting and designing the deck was working with the European metric system rather than the U.S. standard system for measuring,” said Pfc. Billy Joe Johnson, III from Salem, Ore. “I started designing it in standard board sizes and units but then we had to switch to metric sizes. I had to redraft what I had already done using the metric system, which I was not accustomed to.”

“After the designs were complete, we had to go through the acquisition process,” said Emmett. “This is where we received approval and attained the funds and all the materials that were needed in order to begin the construction.”

Following the approval and gathering of the funds and materials from the Department of Public Works, CYS gave the go ahead for the 18th Eng. Bde's Technical Headquarters Section to begin constructing the deck.

As a 12T, technical engineer, with the 18th Enginners, Emmett's job usually stops at the designing or acquisition phase of construction. Having the unit construct the deck allowed them to compare the end result to the original designs they created, a huge advantage to doing projects like this.

"Some of the greater problems we came across were the result of nothing being really square," said Emmett about the site. "We had to cut the wood at different angles and we made custom forms so that we could cover the entire surface of the working space since there weren't any already made for that size and shape."

The deck is expected to be finished by Dec. 20 and once CYS and DPW finalize it, the 18th Eng. Bde's Technical Headquarters Section will close out the project, and it will be open for use.



Staff Sgt. Daniel Szambelan, a technical engineer sergeant for the 18th Engineer Brigade from Agua Dulce, Calif., measures a piece of deck flooring to be cut Dec. 9 at Patrick Henry Village in Heidelberg, Germany. Szambelan and his team of Soldiers are completing a deck to be used by the Lion's Den, an after school facility where students can go to enjoy their free time together. (Photo by Spc. Aislinn M. Amig, 18th Eng. Bde. Public Affairs)



Pfc. Jose Reyna, a technical engineer for 18th Engineer Brigade from Laredo, Texas, uses a power drill to secure flooring to deck frame Dec. 9 at Patrick Henry Village in Heidelberg, Germany. (Photo by Spc. Aislinn M. Amig, 18th Eng. Bde. Public Affairs)



Pfc. Chad Finholt, a technical engineer for 18th Engineer Brigade from Denton, Texas, uses a power saw to trim a piece of wood to the correct length at Patrick Henry Village in Heidelberg, Germany, Dec. 9. (Photo by Spc. Aislinn M. Amig, 18th Eng. Bde. Public Affairs)



Staff Sgt. Robert Owens, a technical engineer sergeant for 18th Engineer Brigade from Hornbeck, La., uses a power drill to assemble the frame of a deck at Patrick Henry Village in Heidelberg, Germany. Soldiers from 18th Eng. Bde. are working to complete a deck, which will be an add on to the Lion's Den, an after school facility where students can go to enjoy their free time together. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Shaun Emmett, 18th Eng. Bde.)