

U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

contact: paoci@eur.army.mil
phone: 49-6221-57-5815 / DSN 370-5815
fax: 49-6221-57-6376 / DSN 370-6376



RELEASE #2008-06-12-01

June 12, 2008

U.S. ARMY, EUROPE CELEBRATES 233RD ARMY BIRTHDAY WITH SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO ARMY FAMILY

By Dave Melancon

U.S. Army, Europe Public Affairs Office

HEIDELBERG, Germany -- U.S. Army Europe celebrated the Army's 233rd birthday here June 12 with a salute to all members of the Army community and a look toward the future, as well as the traditional remembrance of the service's history and a celebratory cake.



DAVE MELANCON

Capt. Adam Schmidt with the U.S. Army, Europe executive service division reads 'Happy Birthday U.S. Army!' to children from the Patrick Henry Village and Mark Twain Village child development centers during Army birthday celebrations in Heidelberg, Germany, June 12. The celebration in the U.S. Army, Europe headquarters garden on Campbell Barracks included Soldiers, Family members and civilian employees.

This year's tribute in the USAREUR headquarters garden also included members of the Army's civilian workforce and 50 children from Heidelberg's Patrick Henry Village and Mark Twain Village Child Development Centers.

America's Army started off with little material, "even boots were a luxury," Col. Kirk Lawrence, USAREUR deputy chief of staff, told the assembled guests.

"These Soldiers only had their ideals to sustain them. In that time, they were the strength of the nation," he said. "Today, it is you. It is us. We are the strength of the nation. And we are Army strong."

Soldiers, Army civilian employees and Family members epitomize what is best about the United States, Lawrence continued, with thousands of Soldiers and civilians deployed in harm's way around the world and on the home front defending America's way of life and values.

In July the Army will mark the 35th anniversary of the all-volunteer force, Lawrence said.

“That force that protects us today is a national treasure. It works,” he said. “Families deserve substantial credit for it as well.”

To sustain the force, the Army must continue to take care of Soldiers and their Families, and the quality of support they receive from the Army and nation must be equal to their service and sacrifice, the colonel said.

Following the ceremonial cake cutting, Capt. Adam Schmidt, U.S. Army Europe executive service division, read the story “Happy Birthday U.S. Army!” to the assembled children. The 25-page book features pictures covering the Army’s history as seen through the eyes of a child comparing his grandfather’s life with the Army’s past and the similarities between the child’s family and the Army Family.

The book was co-written by Donna M. McGrath and Mary Ellen Pratt with Army Youth Services. Their intent was to impart on youth the breadth of Army history, the importance of the contributions of their military parents, and their own place in the Army Family, said McGrath in an interview with the Army News Service.

“The Army is trying to get the entire Family involved in the Army Birthday,” Schmidt said. Storytelling is the easiest way to communicate ideas to younger children.

“It covers all ages.”

Inviting the children to the annual celebration showed that children are an integral part of the Army, said Pamela Primmer, Child and Youth Services coordinator for U.S. Army Garrison Heidelberg. The children can see that they are not alone in dealing with deployments and other challenges Army Families face.

“In these days of deployment it is important that they see that it is not only just them,” but that their friends and children from other centers are going through the same things, she said.



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