



PHOTOS BY SGT. DOMINIQUE CLARKE | ARMY

Connor Hedge, center, stands with members of the Copperas Cove High School football team Oct. 29 before approaching the 50-yard line at the Bulldawg Stadium. Connor was the game's guest of honor and participated in the pregame coin toss. Copperas Cove High School played the game in Connor's honor, and many of the school's fans wore yellow "ConnorStrong" T-shirts.

## 'ConnorStrong' campaign bolsters support for cancer patient, family

BY CAPT. KEVIN SANDELL  
504TH MILITARY INTELLIGENCE BRIGADE PUBLIC AFFAIRS

COPPERAS COVE — Proudly wearing yellow T-shirts and sporting yellow wristbands emblazoned with the phrase, #ConnorStrong, the city has rallied behind a 5-year-old boy battling cancer for the third time. Although the boy's family is new to Fort Hood and Central Texas, the support shown in their honor has been uplifting and life-changing.

Like many young boys, Connor Hedge loves dinosaurs, robots, computer games, Nerf guns and the color yellow. The difference though, is he was diagnosed with stage 4 neuroblastoma, an aggressive pediatric cancer, nearly three years ago. As the member of a military family, Connor has already moved cross-country more than most boys his age.

The family moved to Fort Hood from Fort Lee, Va., in July. Connor's father, Maj. Robert Hedge, is a logistics officer with the 504th Military Intelligence Brigade, and recently returned from a deployment to Saudi Arabia.

Soon after Connor's arrival to his new school at House Creek Elementary in Copperas Cove, in which nearly 50 percent of the students are military children, his family witnessed firsthand an outpouring of support garnered in his name. The school principal, Larea Gamble, said the faculty, staff and students quickly offered their assistance in any way possible.

"Knowing the challenges the family was facing, we wanted to do what we could to ease the stresses of being new to the school, neighborhood, and community," Gamble said. "It also became our goal to embrace Connor and his family, and tangibly show our support as they were now members of our school family."

Already in this school year's first four months, House Creek Elementary has fostered many ideas to honor Connor's fight against childhood cancer. When his



Connor Hedge stands with the game referee at the 50-yard line of Copperas Cove High School's football field.

family traveled to Disney World in August, Connor was given an assortment of travel gifts by the student body to occupy his time, Gamble said. A month later, the school's fourth-graders performed a dance routine in his honor. Large yellow

ribbons are draped around the columns in front of the school, and Gamble said they serve to remind Connor "he was missed (during his cancer treatments)

PLEASE SEE **CAMPAIGN, 10**

### [ WHAT'S HAPPENING AT FORT HOOD ]

#### Today

**Veterans parade:** The Killeen Veterans Day Parade will be start at 11 a.m. on Nov. 11. An opening ceremony will be held at 10:30 a.m. in front of City Hall to present the Mayor Scott Cospers with a certificate for the city being selected as the regional site for Veterans Day parade. The theme for the parade will be "Honoring Vietnam Veterans." For more information and registration forms go to: [www.avac-centex.com](http://www.avac-centex.com). Vietnam veterans are needed to march in front of the parade. A meeting will be held 4 p.m. on Nov. 6 at VFW Post 9192 to discuss the matter further.

#### Nov. 20

**MOAA:** Military Officers Association of America is meeting Friday at the Courtyard Marriott, 1721 E. Central Texas Expressway

in Killeen. Active-duty and retired officers and warrant officers from all services branches are invited including Reserves and national guard. Chaplain Greg Schanep is the guest speaker. Lunch, \$15 (cash), starts at 11:30 a.m. Nonmembers, make reservations by calling 254-699-3969. Members, RSVP to email.

#### Ongoing

**Bingo:** The Community Events and Bingo Center offers bingo six days a week, reoccurring special events, along with computer handsets, display monitors and several stations to replenish bingo supplies. Over \$3,700 in cash prizes paid out daily. One jackpot starts at \$10,000, another at \$3,000 and another begins with a percent of the first day's play; in addition to pro-

PLEASE SEE **WHAT'S HAPPENING, 10**

## Practice what you preach: Be healthy at home

I was looking at some recent pictures of myself the other day when it hit me.

I was hiding in them.

If I'm not holding a baby, or two, in front of me, I've reduced myself to a floating head in photos these days.

Enough is enough. I no longer want to be a round mom. I want to be a fit mom.

There really isn't any excuse anymore. The twins are going to be 10 months old this month and instead of filling my free time with trolling on social media, I should be using that time to better myself so I can be a better mom.



**TALES FROM HOUSEHOLD 6**  
Vanessa Lynch

When the twins were 4 months old and the doctor gave me the all clear to resume an active lifestyle, I was taking daily walks with the kids. Then, once the heat of summer rolled in, I started to get lazy

and it kind of snowballed from there.

My eyebrows started to get bushier, my roots were getting out of control, my nails were no longer manicured and I was still living in my maternity clothes.

As much as it pains me to admit this, I'm pretty sure I bought a pair of the dreaded "mom jeans" and I just lobbed off eight inches of my hair and went back to my "natural" hue.

Man, that rabbit hole is really hard to climb out of.

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or this much effort to bounce back. I saw myself slowly, but surely, letting myself go and losing myself.

However, in my mind it was totally justifiable because the twins' needs supersede my own.

Excuses used to roll off my tongue so effortlessly: I don't have time to exercise; it's too hot out; they aren't sleeping well; I can't afford a gym membership let alone child care for two. You name it; I had an excuse for it.

Until now.

Usually, group exercise classes are not my thing, but I have finally found something that suits my needs and I don't need a sitter.

Three days a week I meet up with fellow moms at Lion's Club Park, kids and strollers in tow, for a killer workout. My kids get fresh air and I get to work out with my kids and socialize with other moms.

My goal isn't to fit in a two-piece bathing suit; it's to be healthy and strong and to set a good example for my kids. I want to be able to chase them through a park without being winded. I want to be the mom that jumps in the pool first and gets her hair wet.

I want to show my children that having fun isn't reliant on physical perfection and that beauty presents itself in many ways. I knew my body and my priorities were going to change after pregnancy — after all, I did carry and deliver healthy twins — I just didn't expect it to take this long or this much effort to bounce back. I saw myself slowly, but surely, letting myself go and losing myself.

Since healthy eating and exercise habits start at home, I need to practice what I preach and get my act together so I don't raise a couple of couch potatoes.

For now, my twin-terage gets a real kick out of mom huffing and puffing up the hill, but if getting my "me" back keeps them entertained, it's a win-win all around.

**VANESSA LYNCH** is a former metro editor for the Killeen Daily Herald. An Army spouse, she and her husband live in Harker Heights with their two young children.

## Spouses' Club hosts holiday fundraising event

BY JC JONES  
FORT HOOD HERALD

The Fort Hood Spouses' Club will host its 34th annual Holiday Bazaar this weekend at the Killeen Civic and Conference Center, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday.

More than 100 vendors will feature a wide variety of holiday-themed products, including Christmas decorations and arts

PLEASE SEE **HOLIDAY FUNDRAISING, 10**