



Naval Air Station Pensacola Opening New Playgrounds

Taco Bell supports military families by donating \$45,000 on behalf of the Armed Forces Families Foundation

PENSACOLA, FLA. – Naval Air Station Pensacola (Fla.) will open on May 26 two new playgrounds that were built with a \$45,000 donation from the Armed Forces Families Foundation, in conjunction with Taco Bell franchisee Southeast QSR, LLC.

The contribution was funded by Taco Bell and through donations made by diners at restaurants in Pensacola; Mobile, Ala.; and other Southeastern cities, as part of Taco Bell's annual Let Freedom Bells Ring campaign. All proceeds from the fundraiser go to the Armed Forces Families Foundation, a nonprofit organization that gives 100 percent of all donations to projects benefiting service members and their families.

The two new playgrounds at NAS Pensacola are at the main sports complex where service members and their families compete in intramural sports and use the recreation pavilion for command and private picnics. The Barrancas Sports area had to be completely overhauled after sustaining damage from Hurricane Ivan in 2004 but a playground had not been added due to annual budget constraints.

"There has been a long standing need for a playground in this area. Children often come with their parents as they compete in the base sports program and it is always great to have a safe place for them to play," NAS Pensacola MWR Director Kerry Shanaghan said.

"It will also be a destination for families from a purely recreation standpoint. We're thankful to the Armed Forces Families Foundation and Taco Bell for supporting our service members and their families in such a positive way."

The new playgrounds are for children ages 2 to 5 years old, and 5 to 12 years old. Each playground has slides, climbing equipment and other age-appropriate features. Parents can watch their children play from the nearby pavilion.

Representatives for Taco Bell and the Armed Forces Families Foundation will join military leaders in a grand opening for the playgrounds at 3 p.m., on May 26 at the Barrancas Sports Complex.

"We appreciate our diners supporting the Armed Forces Families Foundation as it helps our troops' loved ones," said Thaddeus Foster, chief operations officer and franchisee for Southeast QSR (<http://www.theborder.com>). "We also thank the leadership at NAS Pensacola for supporting these playgrounds as an additional way to keep children healthy and physically fit."

Twenty Taco Bell restaurants in the Pensacola area raised funds for the new Barrancas Recreational Park. The improvements have been funded through the Freedom Bells fundraiser, in which Taco Bell sells paper bell icons for \$1 each. All proceeds go directly back to the participating communities, through the Armed Forces Families Foundation.

All told, the fundraiser has raised more than \$300,000 in two years, with support from diners across the Southeast. The next Let Freedom Bells Ring campaign will be from June 29-July 12. It will include 28 restaurants in the Mobile, Ala./Pensacola, and Fort Walton, Beach, Fla., metropolitan area.

About the Armed Forces Families Foundation

The Armed Forces Families Foundation is a nonprofit organization that improves the lives of service members and their families. It has completed major projects at Fort Irwin, Calif.; Camp Pendleton, Calif.; the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., the Mayport USO Center in Jacksonville, Fla., and Fort Gordon, Ga.

For more information, visit: <http://www.armedforcesfamilies.org/> or <http://www.facebook.com/armedforcesfamilies>.

About Naval Air Station Pensacola

NAS Pensacola was the first Naval Air Station commissioned by the U.S. Navy, in 1914. NAS Pensacola is home to more than 16,000 service members and their families and accounts for 30 percent of the general population of the surrounding area. It also hosts the National Museum of Naval Aviation and is the home base of the Blue Angels, the Navy's Flight Demonstration Squadron. For more information, visit: <http://www.cnmc.navy.mil/Pensacola>.

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