



THE ENTERPRISE Ledger

Serving the Wiregrass since 1898

eprisenow.com

THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2026



PARTLY SUNNY AND WARM 85 • 61

For more weather, see the Dothan Eagle

FORT RUCKER

Center honors legendary Novosel



BRITTANY TRUMBULL, AVCOE PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Looking on while the daughters and son of the late Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michael J. Novosel Sr. unveil the monument in front of the soldier service center named in their father's honor are, from left, Chief Warrant Officer 5 Robert Slider, Command Sgt. Maj. Kirk R. Coley, and Aviation Center of Excellence and Fort Rucker Commanding General Maj. Gen. Clair A. Gill.

MICHELLE MANN
mmann@dothaneagle.com

FORT RUCKER — A legacy of military service and sacrifice was honored as the soldier service center on Fort Rucker was named the “CW4 Michael J. Novosel Soldier Service Center.”

Military and civilian leaders from municipalities surrounding the Home of Army Aviation joined members of Novosel's family for a Memorialization Ceremony held outside Building 5700 named in honor of the Medal of Honor recipient who served in World War II, the Korean War, and two tours in Vietnam.

“It is safe to say that no name carries more weight in the Home of Army Aviation than Michael J. Novosel,” said Aviation Center of Excellence and Fort Rucker Commanding General Maj. Gen. Clair A. Gill. “He was the pilot who would never quit trying to find a way to serve others. There has never been better example of dedicated service in all of Army Aviation's tremendous history.”

Michael J. Novosel Sr.

Born in Pennsylvania in 1922, the son of Croatian immigrants joined the Army Air Corps at the age of 19, 10 months before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. By 1945, he was a captain in the AAC flying B-29 Superfortress bombers.

After World War II ended, he relocated as a civilian with his family to Florida. During the Korean War, Novosel returned to active duty as a U.S. Air Force Reservist, attaining the rank of lieutenant colonel.

As the Vietnam War loomed, Novosel was working as a commercial airline pilot and made the decision, at the age of 41, to give up his rank of lieutenant colonel to become an Army Chief Warrant Officer pilot, flying with the elite Special Forces Aviation Section. He served two tours in Vietnam flying 2,543 missions in the Army's Dust-off medical evacuation helicopters extracting 5,589 wounded personnel, among them his own son, Michael J. Novosel Jr. The following week, his son returned the favor by extracting his father who had been shot down.

Novosel was awarded the U.S. Medal of Honor by then-President Richard Nixon in 1971 and was inducted into the Army Aviation Hall of Fame in 1975.

After serving as a military aviator for 42 years, Novosel retired in 1985, holding the distinction of being the last World War II U.S. military aviator to remain on active flying duty.

He died in 2006.

Fort Novosel

Novosel's son John expressed appreciation to the Army leadership for naming the soldier service center in honor of his father. “Your warm welcome reminds us of just how cherished the name of Mike Novosel is here at Fort Rucker and the Army aviation community at large,” John Novosel said.

When Novosel retired in 1985, a street on post was renamed Novosel Street, his son told the crowd. The post was even named temporarily in honor of his father.

Please see **NOVOSEL**, Page A2

Council hears proposed upgrades to Henderson park playground

FOR THE LEDGER

The Enterprise City Council received an update on proposed upgrades to the playground at Johnny Henderson Family Park, with plans focused on creating a more modern, inclusive, and engaging space for children and families.

Director of Community Services and Recreation Blake Moore shared details about the project, which would fully replace the existing playground equipment and expand the area to approximately 9,520 square feet.

“A playground's lifespan is about 18-20 years, and we've exceeded that at the one at



Moore

Johnny Henderson Family Park,” Moore told Council. “That playground is probably our most used playground in the entire city.”

The proposed design goes beyond minimum accessibility standards under the Americans with Disabilities Act, incorporating accessible pathways, ramps, and inclusive play features, including a structure designed for children who use wheelchairs. The playground will also feature age-appropriate areas, including a toddler

section for children 12 to 24 months and a larger tower structure for older children.

Additional elements in the design include shade structures, a durable turf surface, swings, tunnels, slides, climbing features, and musical chimes. The layout is intended to support physical activity, creativity, and social interaction while ensuring children of all abilities can play together.

“Hearing the things from council and our community members, I think we've done a pretty good job here in the design and trying to go out and meet the needs,” Moore said. “We hear shade a bunch, so we've made sure to shade everything as much as

possible. I think this will help with the longevity of it and the fading of the equipment. I really think this puts us on the map as a special place for children and their families to come and play.”

Construction to begin soon

Construction is anticipated to begin in early fall, pending City Council approval.

The playground area will be fully closed during construction, with completion estimated for late fall. No impacts to other areas of the park are expected during installation.

Please see **PARK**, Page A2

Deadline nears to apply for Enterprise's Small Box Shop, **PAGE A2**



Check out the interactive weather maps at www.eprisenow.com

Best Bets, a community calendar of events, **PAGE A3**