

FORT BRAGG SPOTLIGHT

# Boy Scout to hike 100 miles to fight malaria

by **Eve Meinhardt**  
Paraglide



**Stafford**

Nathaniel Stafford wanted to do something big to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Scouting in America. He knew he wanted to combine his love of hiking with helping others. So, after doing a little research with help from his mother, he learned about Nothing But Nets, a campaign to help save lives by preventing the spread of malaria. The program gives insecticide-treated bed nets to help fight malaria in Africa.

Stafford said once he read about what Nothing But Nets does, his decision of what to raise funds for was easy.

"A child dies every 30 seconds from malaria and it's preventable," said Stafford. "One net only costs \$10 and they are treated to kill mosquitoes on contact. A single net can make a huge difference to a family who needs it and save someone's life."

The 12-year-old Boy Scout will hike 100 miles Feb. 22 to March 2, to raise money and awareness for his adopted cause.

The date is not a random selection, his hike begins on the birthday of Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the Scouting movement.

Stafford said organizing the trek has been a great learning experience because of all the details involved. With help and encouragement from home, Stafford has started a Web site and Facebook fan page; solicited sponsors and donations; planned his route and arranged for places to stay during his nine-day trek through five counties in North Carolina.

"We thought it was important for him to see

the process through from the beginning," said his mom, DeAnna Richard. "The farther he gets into it, the more he sees what goes into planning a nine-day hike and fundraiser. He knows that failing to plan is planning to fail."

Stafford hopes to raise \$10,000 to purchase 1,000 bed nets. One hundred percent of the money donated goes to purchasing the nets, getting the nets to Africa and educating the recipients on how to use them. The expenses for the hike are being covered by Stafford and his family and the generosity of others.

He said that the hiking part is the only thing he is a little nervous about at this point. Stafford said he has been practicing for the average 11.5 miles he will cover each day during his quest.

While he may end his nine days with sore feet and legs, Stafford said the work he is putting into his trek for nets is worth it.

"The money we raise and the nets it will buy is going to save a lot of lives. That's what this is about," he said.

Anyone interested in joining a portion of the hike is invited to do so. Stafford will be hiking trails in Carthage, Cameron, Sanford, Corinth, Fuquay-Varina, Lillington, Anderson Creek and Spring Lake, N.C.

His journey will end in downtown Fayetteville March 2, at 5 p.m. Rally points have been established for anyone wanting to join him on the last part of the hike.

To participate in part or all of the 100-mile trek, please call 426-7283 to coordinate the details.

Boy Scouts of America originally partnered with Nothing But Nets in August 2009.

To learn more about Stafford's quest or to donate to his cause, visit his Web site at [www.trek4nets.org](http://www.trek4nets.org). He also has a Facebook fan page under Trek4Nets.

# Soldier expresses experiences through poetry

by **Tina Ray**  
Paraglide

When Sgt. Julius Toney was stationed in Afghanistan for 15 months, he said he discovered a talent that he did not know he had.

As a member of the 82nd Airborne Division Chorus, Toney would try to write songs in his down time. However, instead of writing songs, he found that he could write poetry.

"I didn't think I had the talent, but I kept working at it," he said.

By the time Toney returned from Afghanistan in 2008, he had written a book. He said he knew he wanted to publish it without delay. Toney turned to the self-publishing

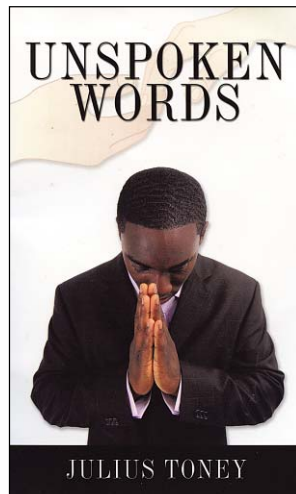
company, AuthorHouse and "Unspoken Words" was issued in June 2009.

In the book, Toney said he focused on character traits such as integrity and honesty.

"There's a lot of being real with people because everybody likes to sugarcoat everything," he said. "You have to learn to let go of things and the best way to let go is to release it."

"Unspoken Words" covers the author's relationships with other people, but it also gives the viewpoint of seeing other people's lives through his eyes.

As one of nine children born to parents in Montgomery, Ala., Toney said he watched his siblings make decisions he preferred



avoid.

"I was able to see a lot of things without having to go through it," Toney said. "I've always wanted to be dependable and reliable. That's how I wanted to live my life."

Toney said his best step to living a dependable life and moving

ahead was joining the Army in 2005. Adding that it helped him grow up and learn discipline.

"With the will to fight God has provided for me, I pray my heart is imbedded inside him," writes Toney in the poem "The Still Will."

The words remind him that he is a child of God, Toney said.

"We forget what makes us tick. We let situations turn us against each other and have us go on paths we shouldn't go," he said.

"Unspoken Words" is available for purchase at Amazon.com.

The book was written straight from the heart and encourages each person not to give up on him or herself, said Toney.

# Academy challenges at-risk youth to earn diploma

by **Tina Ray**  
Paraglide

Tyre Smith dropped out of high school following the summer of his sophomore year. The 16-year-old turned to TarHeel Challenge Academy to help get his life back on track.

TCA is a partnership between North Carolina and the Department of Defense National Guard Bureau. It is a 22-week program that gives high-school dropouts the opportunity to get a General Education Development diploma.

The academy is located in Salem, N.C.

Smith, a Winston-Salem native, visited Fort Bragg in January as part of the Pre-Challenge Camp, which introduces TCA cadets to different aspects of military life.

Command Sgt. Maj. Ron Evans, of the 82nd Airborne Division Headquarters, said he was tasked with enabling training for this year's

Pre-Challenge Camp.

One-hundred forty-five at-risk youth spent two weeks Jan. 12 to 22, on Fort Bragg receiving training and reinforcement in work ethics, values, life coping skills, physical fitness, teamwork, and leadership-building skills, Evans said.

While the cadets were on the installation, they maneuvered the rappel and jump towers, learned land navigation, team assault and leadership reaction skills.

The Pre-Challenge Camp ties into the TCA mission of improving the cadets life-coping skills, said Eddie Toler, TCA director.

Toler worked as a plans and operations officer for the North Carolina National Guard and helped create the TCA program in the 1990s.

The National Guard Youth Challenge program has 34 Challenge programs in 29 states and Puerto Rico, according to its Web site.

While on Fort Bragg, most cadets enjoyed tackling obstacle courses

and working as a team with fellow cadets, he said.

"I learned not to give up and believe in myself, to keep pushing," Smith said. "We had to do it in a squad, as a team and it shows we leave nobody behind and complete the obstacle."

For 17-year-old Shanice Leach, tackling the jump tower was her favorite maneuver, she said. Adding that it gave her the confidence to move forward with her life.

A 10th-grade dropout, Leach previously attended TCA, but quit. She said she plans to graduate this time and to continue her education at a college or university in Fayetteville.

"You know when you need to change, so I came back here to get my life together," Leach said.

TCA, with the help of the installation, seems to point the cadets in the right direction.

"The things Fort Bragg offers is critical to getting these kids off to a good start," Toler said.

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