

UNITED STATES MILITARY ENTRANCE PROCESSING COMMAND

# Messenger

SHARING INFORMATION TO REACH A VISION

VOL. 26, NO. 1



## WELLNESS READINESS

**Taking care of  
service members,  
civilians and their families**



*Are You Ready?*



# Messenger

## U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command

Col. David L. Slotwinski  
Commander

Daniel R. Trew  
Public Affairs Officer

## Messenger

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### Magazine Staff

Christine Parker, Editor

Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich,  
Associate Editor

Laura Peroutka, Graphic Artist and cover design

Send submissions and  
address changes to:

Commander  
U.S. Military Entrance  
Processing Command  
ATTN: MPA (Messenger)  
2834 Green Bay Road  
North Chicago, IL 60064-3094

Contact us:  
(847) 688-3680, extensions 7229, 7222  
FAX (847) 688-2664  
DSN 792-3680, extensions  
7229, 7222  
E-mail:  
Messenger@mepcom.army.mil

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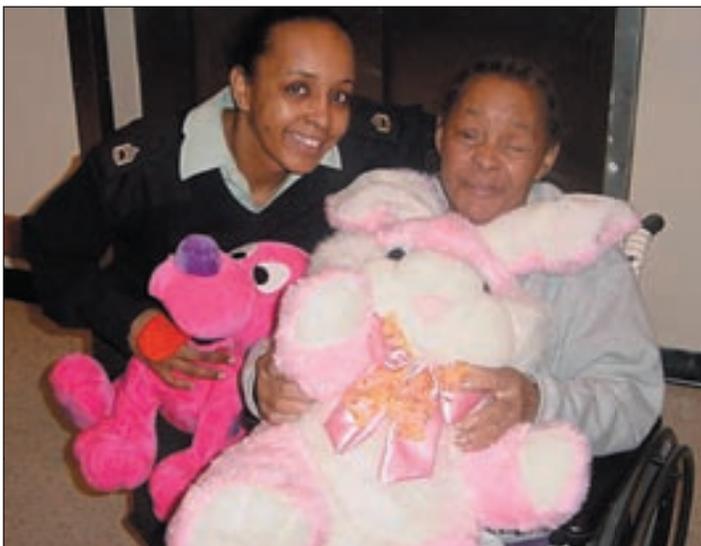
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### **Same magazine ... different look**

The magazine you're holding has more colorful photos and a new design — but it's still filled with the same quality content, engaging features, and in-depth reports on the command's top issues. We'll continue recurring features such as unusual enlistments, Dossier, MEPS View, as well as newer columns like Assignment: MEPS, which explores the world around us. As always, we want your feedback. Keep sending the great photos like you see on these pages, and feel free to sound off about any of your likes or dislikes about the *Messenger* by writing us at Messenger@mepcom.army.mil.

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# Commander's Commentary



## Wellness and Readiness

One of my 12 objectives as the USMEPCOM commander is taking care of people and their families. In order to do this, I realized we needed to build a wellness and readiness program for the entire MEPCOM family, including military, civilians and their families. Although there are slight differences in the support we provide to each group, our command's strength is rooted in the wellness of our people.

I recognized the need for this type of program during my first year's visits to MEPS. The command did not have any type of wellness program and there was a wide range of wellness support levels at our 67 locations.

To begin addressing this need, we held the command's first family symposium last June. In August, the command hired a Wellness and Readiness Division Chief, Vicki Hamlin. At about the same time, Julia Yeary volunteered to be the Headquarters volunteer manager. Since then, both of these women have been integral to getting the program off the ground.

Hamlin and Yeary, together with other Headquarters staff are building an extensive program that includes symposia, readiness support groups, volunteer management, family assistance programs and a readiness leadership development program. Every MEPS has some type of program now and I expect commanders and leaders to continue to refine their programs.

In this regard, I've heard some of you question why we're following the Army's example for the wellness and readiness program, and why we take our issues to the Army Family Action Plan Conference. The answer is that the Army is our executive agent and provides much of our funding. Taking our issues to the AFAP is key to ultimately obtaining the appropriate legislation and resourcing.

In addition to looking to the Army for support, we've looked at all the services' wellness programs as examples. Portions of programs that have worked well for the services include readiness support groups, loan kits, volunteerism and conferences or symposia.

The first – viable readiness support groups – help us in times of need and crises. Also, they help our units gain a greater sense

of family and belonging. They allow us to learn more about the people with whom we work, more about their families, and hopefully make the working environment more enjoyable for everyone.

With this in mind, when I visit MEPS, I mention the importance of knowing everyone in a MEPS family, because what we do today prepares us for tomorrow. It's been two and a half years since 9/11, and there's still a lot of uncertainty in the world. Local crises can be devastating as well. Just this past year San Diego MEPS dealt with fires, and Richmond MEPS had to face Hurricane Isabel.

In order to deal with crises, every MEPS now has a loan kit for personnel in need or in transit. The kits are a great addition to a MEPS and I encourage commanders to make them available to local liaisons and recruiters as well.

In tandem with support groups and loan kits, volunteerism will play a pivotal role in the success of our wellness and readiness program. Volunteers can share a burden that may be too great for just one. More people mean more energy, skills, and creativity. Working together in this capacity increases camaraderie, friendship, and teamwork – things that are critical to a military mission.

In order to assess these efforts and determine our future direction, over the next few months we will hold Sector Symposia and then the Command Symposium. We will use this as an opportunity to build on what we've learned over the past year and then take it to the next level.

In closing, I want to thank everyone who has volunteered their time and energy. You've done everything from starting up RSGs, writing newsletters, holding fund raisers, building local resource lists, and welcoming new personnel to interfacing with the community. We must continue to strive to build a "band of brothers and sisters;" no one should feel like a stranger within our organization.

To all of you who have helped someone this past year – thank you for all you've done – your time is important and greatly appreciated.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Slotwinski".

DAVID L. SLOTWINSKI  
Colonel, U.S. Army  
Commanding

# NTime O



## Mission survival is no reality show

by Command Sgt. Maj. J. Kelly Fain  
USMEPCOM Senior Enlisted Advisor

As I write this, one of my favorite television shows is in the middle of its season — Survivor.

In this latest season, many of the top players from the previous years are matched against one another for the shot at the Ultimate Survivor title. I still cannot figure out how Jon was able to get to the final four in the last season, but if what he did is any indication, you can bet there will be plenty of conniving, backbiting, and shady deals as people make and break alliances to win a million bucks during this latest installment.

Such tactics might work in a reality game show, but when it takes place in the real world of the military, chaos and anarchy rules and nobody comes out a winner. Whether we are in a front line unit in Korea, Germany, or the Middle East, or working in an office environment processing new applicants for the military, our mission accomplishment depends on how well we work together to get the job done.

What can you do to strengthen that team? There are plenty of theories, techniques and ideas, and some people will charge you a lot of money to give you this information. But, the rules are simple. First, trust and follow your leaders. To be a good leader, you have to learn how to be a good follower. If you disagree with a decision, you may have an opportunity to give input, but if the decision is finalized, then it's your job to see it through. If you are the leader, then take care of your people.

If everyone is doing his or her job as a leader, then he or she will ask for that input, and he or she will check to see how those decisions impact everyone else. If you are a supervisor, take care of your subordinates. Encourage them to do their best and correct them when they are wrong.

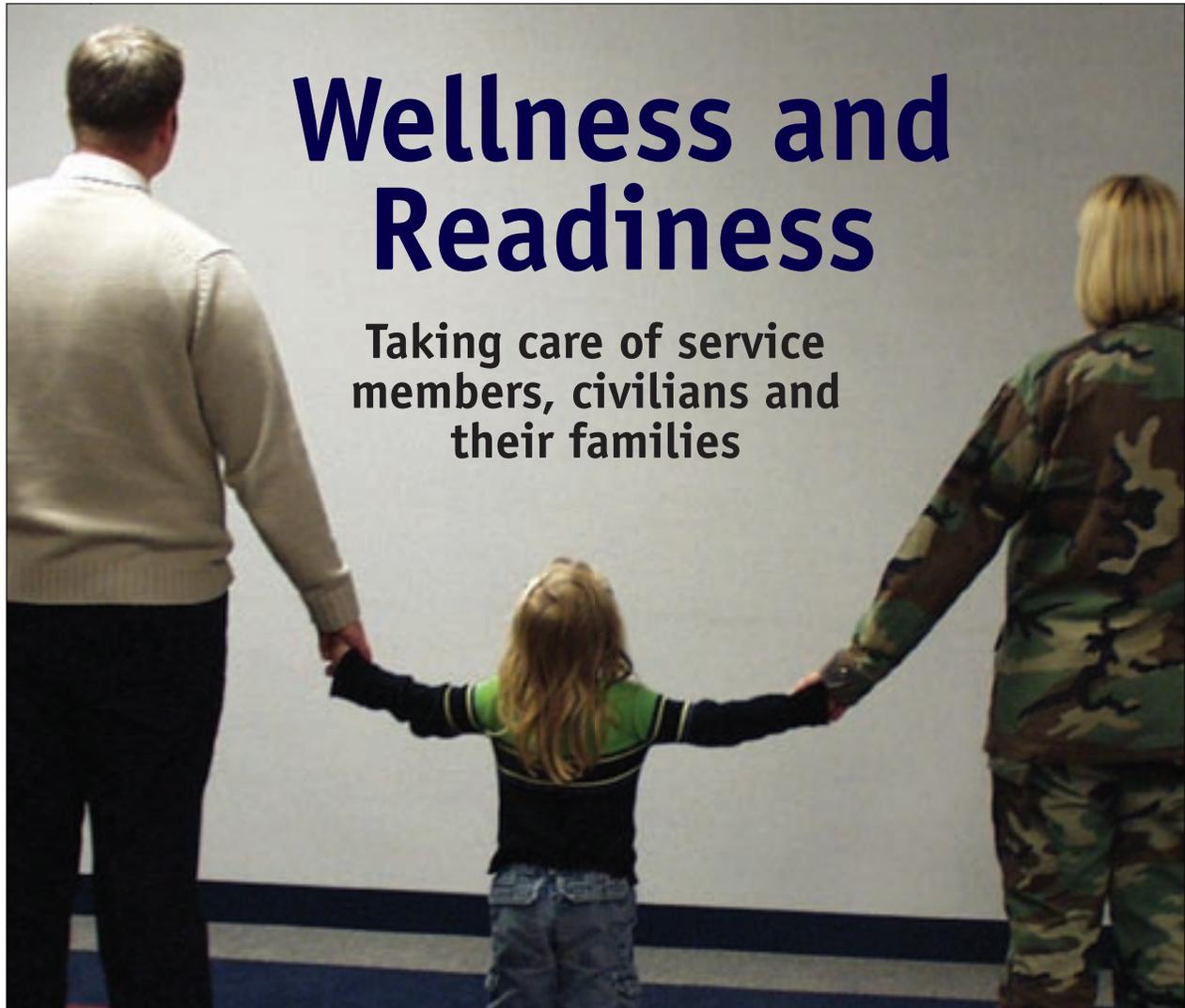
You are not doing this command, yourself, or that person a favor by overlooking poor performance and bad behavior. Support your subordinates — they are your teammates — and help them grow to become tomorrow's leaders.

In the last season of Survivor, the one team was constantly losing people in their tribe because they weren't as good at the challenges, and they seemed to work against one another and for themselves, instead of for a team cause. On the other hand, the other tribe smoked them in the beginning because many of the contestants worked together. But even then, when people in that tribe began talking bad about one another, and making plans behind each other's backs, that discipline broke down. And stuff like that happens even in the real world where there are no cameras recording your every move. Remember — whether you are military or civilian — it's your job to do the right thing, especially when no one is looking.

If each of us had the opportunity to vote someone out of our office or unit because we disagreed with him or her, it might be kind of hard to get the job done. To get the job done, you have to rise above any petty indifferences, and concentrate on being the absolute best at what you have to do.

You won't always be the best at everything you try, and neither will your colleagues. But if everyone works to support one another, and work as a team, everyone will succeed. And when everyone succeeds and works as a team, we accomplish the mission faster, easier, and better than we ever did before. Will you win a million dollars for your efforts? No, but the real prize — getting quality applicants into our military — is more valuable than cash. They are the lifeblood that defends our country.

Your daily job might not make you rich and you'll never become an instant millionaire, but success isn't always measured in currency. It is measured in knowing that you did your best, you took care of your people, and you took care of the mission.



# Wellness and Readiness

Taking care of service members, civilians and their families

by Christine Parker  
*Messenger* Editor

There are some things in life that are better understood when experienced. One is military life. When men and women raise their right hand and enlist in the military, their lives change. In most cases, as a military member, they'll have more than the normal share of work and personal challenges — at times, intense trials. This is why the U.S. Armed Forces has programs in place to care for military members and their families.

Like many areas of the processing mission, USMEPCOM is distinct from other military organizations in two ways — it's joint service and it's spread across the United States at 67 locations. One can compare USMEPCOM to military personnel assigned to recruiting commands in that most recruiting and processing personnel accomplish their mission in a civilian community — while living there too. Although some military members are assigned to MEPS on or near military installations, most are not. This lack of a military "environment" has some inherent challenges.

And, while military personnel are the target group for installation "people programs," they are also available to civilian personnel. And so it should be since most people who work in the

corporate world have some type of organizational "safety net" to help them through difficult work and personal issues.

When considering the issues for this command, you must understand that USMEPCOM broke off from the Army and became a stand-alone command in July 1976. In its less than 30 years, the command regularly stood alone, outside "normal" channels. Because of this, USMEPCOM has taken care of its service members — in its own way — as needs arose. In fact, the command hasn't had any programs specifically designed to care for service members, civilians and their families until now.

In 2003, USMEPCOM created the Wellness and Readiness Program and a division of the same name in the Human Resources Directorate of Headquarters. This division has the vision to "provide the same level of support to all personnel and family members as that enjoyed by those assigned to military installations," and the mission to "provide a command quality of life program for all personnel and family members assigned to USMEPCOM." In less than a year, the program is beginning to take shape.

"There was definitely a need in this command," said Vicki Hamlin, the Wellness and Readiness Division Chief. "People brought their issues to the attention of Colonel Slotwinski," the USMEPCOM commander. "He saw how families were living in

civilian communities without military installation support, and he saw how that was affecting the service member and civilians in this command.”

Having spent 12 years working with service members and families in Germany, Hamlin explained that well-being programs have become a hot topic in the past five to 10 years. “It’s been phenomenal — from an Army perspective, at least — primarily because of deployments,” she said. All the services have programs now.

Creating a Wellness and Readiness Program for USMEPCOM is a challenge since there is no existing joint service program and the nearly 3,000 people who work for the command are spread across the nation in 67 unique communities. Also, each service handles personal and family-related issues in its own way.

Hamlin is drawing from all five services and the Office of Personnel Management to create USMEPCOM’s Wellness and Readiness program. “Whenever we can, we’re creating a joint service version. We’re finding that all the services have similar programs — they just have different acronyms for them.”

“We’re trying to take the best of the military and civilian community agencies and let people know they’re out there. Then they can pick what they need,” Hamlin said. She further explained, “There will never be a cookie-cutter program that will work for every MEPS.”

Currently the Wellness and Readiness program includes five primary areas — Symposia, the Readiness Support Group Program, Volunteer Management, Family Assistance Programs and the Readiness Leadership Development Program.

## Symposia

Last June, USMEPCOM held its first family symposium, even before there was a Wellness and Readiness Division. Representatives from Headquarters and each MEPS and sector attended the symposium that focused on identifying the workforce’s top personal and family concerns.

Now that the Wellness and Readiness Program is in place, the symposia effort will continue and expand. This year sectors will bring in representatives from MEPS to collect their issues. Attendees will share their unique perspectives and each sector symposium will identify its top five issues. In addition to this, Headquarters Company will gather Headquarters personnel to discuss issues and identify its top five as well.

After determining the top 15 issues, a smaller group with members from all levels of the command will meet at Headquarters to determine the top five issues that the command will send to the Department of the Army Family Action Plan Conference. The Army is USMEPCOM’s executive agent and the only service holding this type of quality of life focus group currently. If a major issue is a problem for only one service, that problem will be sent to the service or Department of Defense.

“We were the first command to have a non-Army spouse attend the DA AFAP Conference,” Hamlin said. That person is Julia Yeary, wife of Col. Lon Yeary, USMEPCOM’s inspector general. She shared her perspectives as a 26-year Marine Corps spouse.

“They were nervous, excited, and they weren’t sure how to talk to her, but when it was all said and done, she felt very well-received

## New Wellness and Readiness Division Chief



Vicki Hamlin is the Wellness and Readiness Division chief. She’s worked almost 12 years in a variety of military and family member programs in Germany. This included everything from child development, to include training and as a director, to family support programs, including education, family advocacy and special needs programs. From there she moved into working in business management, which included strategic planning for a military installation, and providing programs to the families there. In doing this, she looked at business practices in the family support arena and assessed whether the installation was meeting current and future service member and family needs. She took on the brand new position as the Wellness and Readiness Division chief in August.

and welcomed,” Hamlin said. “They’d only seen it the Army way, and in some ways I think we’re becoming the ice breaker for joint service issues,” Hamlin continued.

Whenever possible, the issues from symposia will be addressed and then solved at USMEPCOM. “Army statistics indicate that 90 percent of issues should be solved at a local level,” Hamlin explained.

From the 2003 symposium, 10 issues are included on the Wellness and Readiness web page — three are inactive, meaning they’ve been handled elsewhere in DoD, one is resolved, six are active and two are local, meaning they’re being considered at Headquarters. Hamlin continues to track their progress there.

The 2004 symposia will include training on the conference process itself, and the RLDP. The Western Sector Symposium will be held May 3 - 6 in Aurora, Colo., Eastern Sector’s was April 5 - 8, and the second command symposium will be June 1 - 3 in Chicago, Ill. Currently MEPS and sectors are nominating service members, civilians and family members to attend the conferences.

Check out the site: [www.mepcom.army.mil/wrprog](http://www.mepcom.army.mil/wrprog)



The children and grandchildren of Lansing MEPS staff and service counselors attend the station's Readiness Support Group Kickoff Block Party last fall. The MEPS held a bake sale, fish fry and hamburger and bratwurst sales as fund-raisers for purchasing the food, beverages and clown's entertainment for the event. They also handed out school supplies to all age groups. The MEPS staff split shifts to accomplish the operations mission on that processing Saturday. (See Lansing's story on page 11)

## Readiness Support Groups

**R**eadiness Support Groups are made up of any combination of service members, family members, volunteers and civilians who get together to share information and support others in the group. The groups provide a climate of mutual support and a network amongst its members through meetings and well-being activities. The group may meet to share a meal and talk, volunteer around the MEPS or in the community, or take part in a recreational activity.

The sector and MEPS commanders and Headquarters Company Commander are responsible for designating a volunteer coordinator for the RSGs. Commanders will also support the effort by determining an operating budget and providing overall support for the program. Both sectors, some MEPS and Headquarters have already established their RSGs.

All MEPS will have a RSG, although each will be unique. According to Hamlin, some MEPS, often with commanders who have experience with family readiness groups, knew exactly how to set up the group, and got things going right away. Others, who don't have the experience, are on a slightly different learning curve. "They're taking different routes, but in the final product, they're achieving the same goal — they're the eyes and ears for the issues," she said.

Readiness Support Groups will have six major functions. They will collect information about the local area and use it to produce either a welcome packet or provide information to the Standard Information Topic Exchange Service, or SITES.

Readiness Support Groups will reach out to the unit's personnel and families by producing a quarterly newsletter that contains information about the military services, unit, benefits, sponsored activities, and programs and services. Hamlin suggests publishing newsletters quarterly, but some MEPS are doing it more often than that.

Third, RSGs will establish a communication system and update it quarterly. Fourth, RSGs will establish an emergency plan to assist personnel. The plan will include responses to assist families with personal crises, such as a serious illness of a relative, and will include referral procedures and information.

Fifth, RSGs will coordinate quarterly team building activities, and invite all eligible personnel and family members. And last, RSGs will establish a program to recognize spouses.

Volunteers and members of RSGs will be able to use government facilities and vehicles and appropriated funds for RSG activities. Guidelines for this will be included in a soon-to-be-published USMEPCOM Regulation, titled Guide for Wellness and Readiness Program, which is currently being reviewed at Headquarters.

## Volunteer Management

**A**lthough volunteerism is a tradition within the U.S. Armed Forces, it plays a particularly important role within USMEPCOM because the command's personnel live in civilian communities rather than on military installations.

In regard to volunteer management, "The MEPS commander's greatest responsibility is to ensure they've appointed volunteers and give them the support they need," Hamlin said. The effort will be worth their time, according to her, "The volunteer coordinator will be the eyes and ears for the commander — they'll be taking the unit's pulse as far as its issues."

USMEPCOM defines its volunteers as people who provide voluntary service or time in support of Wellness and Readiness programs and do not receive monetary reimbursement for this service or time. Active duty or civilian personnel who perform volunteer work must do so outside their normal working hours. In supervising volunteers, commanders will follow established procedures found in Army Regulation 608-28, Handbook on Volunteers in Army Community Service.

**“Not every MEPS will choose to do the same activity ... Some have decided to focus on things important to their population ”**

The volunteer coordinator is the person who keeps track of volunteer time. “Right now it’s about a 50/50 split between MEPS employees and family members,” Hamlin said, when referring to the make-up of volunteer coordinators. In some cases, MEPS have both.

Recently MEPS have seen the power of volunteerism. In Columbus, MEPS personnel were giving time and energy to the Service to Mankind Club there. At Thanksgiving, the club gave \$500 worth of food baskets to MEPS families. “It was the pay it forward mentality,” Hamlin said.

In Milwaukee, the MEPS is situated across the street from the city’s downtown mall. During the holidays, the volunteer coordinator contacted the mall management and asked to set up a gift-wrapping table with the purpose of fund-raising for the MEPS. Not only did the mall management agree, they provided the wrapping paper, tape, ribbon, and paid for radio and television advertising for the event.

This activity was a great start-up for the RSG there. Hamlin, who visited the gift-wrapping table, said one customer asked the volunteers to wrap a \$10 gift, and paid them \$20 for the wrapping. In all, the MEPS raised about \$600 and planned to use the money for a recreational activity.

“Not every MEPS will choose to do the same activity,” Hamlin said. “Some have decided to focus on things important to their population. I’m not going to say a MEPS has a successful volunteer program if they go out and raise \$10,000 and donate teddy bears

— we don’t want them to do that if that’s not who they are. Each MEPS is unique and is going to have different issues.

“I’m starting to see people come up with some good ideas — and we’re spotlighting them on the web site.

Recognition of volunteers is important as well. “We want to make sure volunteers are recognized with awards and receive training and financial support. Volunteer awards will be presented annually based on credit hours and level of contribution. A chart for civilian and family member volunteer recognition awards will be in USMEPCOM’s upcoming Wellness and Readiness regulation. Guidance for military volunteer awards is in USMEPCOM Regulation 600-23.

## Family Assistance Programs

This program includes the command’s financial readiness program, relocation readiness program, information and referral program, family advocacy program and the Exceptional Family Member Program.

### Financial Readiness

When it comes to financial issues, the Wellness and Readiness program will provide the oversight to ensure personnel and family members receive the help they need to resolve their financial issues. The program will provide the structure for helping personnel and family members with money management, debt problems, investments, or emergency relief services, when necessary.

In most cases, the Wellness and Readiness program will provide the bridge for people to get assistance from the information and referral contractor, or outside agencies such as the American Red Cross, nearest military installation family support center, Military Relief Society and consumer credit agencies.

### Relocation Readiness

Relocation for military members becomes more complicated for personnel assigned to USMEPCOM because the command has 67 locations, most in civilian communities. Two major issues in this area are sponsorship and loan kits. The Wellness and Readiness Program will work to improve sponsorship in the command, although procedures are already established in USMEPCOM Regulation 600-23. The program will focus on maintaining welcome packets and related information on SITES.

New with the Wellness and Readiness Program, each MEPS now has a loan kit to support personnel during relocations or emergencies. The kit will be available to recruiting personnel also.

The loan kit is portable and normally contains a microwave, coffee pot, blender, toaster, utensils, flatware, plates, bowls, cups, an iron and ironing board. Its purpose is to provide basic items to personnel who may be without their household goods for weeks or months.



Columbus MEPS first sergeant Master Chief Petty Officer Wayne Smith coordinated MEPS’ support for many service projects for the Service to Mankind — SERTOMA — Club of Columbus. Because of the special relationship between SERTOMA and the MEPS, the club made up 11 large Thanksgiving baskets and provided them to E-6 and below service members with dependents.



## Information and Referral

In order to provide information and referrals to people in need of such, the Headquarters and each MEPS will build and annually update a listing of civilian and military agencies that can assist people in a variety of situations.

Currently USMEPCOM's contracted information and referral provider is EAP Consultants. Command personnel are also covered under Army One Source (see article on page 15). There's also the Work Life Program that can be accessed through the OPM web site. All three provide information and referrals. They also offer counseling services for mental health, marital, financial and legal issues. (Pages 14-15 list related programs and their web sites as well.) One of the newest Wellness and Readiness initiatives relates to chaplains. The command does not have any authorizations for chaplains yet. However, the Wellness and Readiness Division is working with a retired chaplain to identify and build a network of military chaplains who can help MEPS and sector personnel in need.

## Family Advocacy Program

The Family Advocacy Program focuses on preventing and dealing with domestic violence. Five major areas for this include: ensuring commanders receive a FAP brief upon assumption of command, training in the prevention of domestic violence, participation in committees that review domestic violence cases, reporting procedures for suspected abuse, and procedures for making referrals to the servicing family advocacy program.

"We're very naive if we don't think we have abuse going on in the command," Hamlin said. Because of this reality, she wants to train leaders about dealing with it. "Commanders have a mandatory responder requirement and there are rules for dealing with those situations. Our commanders need to be supportive of the program and, if they don't understand it, they can't support it," she said. Hamlin plans to find opportunities to train the command's leaders about family advocacy.

## Exceptional Family Member Program

This program helps military personnel and their family members who need assistance related to special medical or educational requirements. All military personnel are guaranteed additional community resources including medical professionals and schools in compliance with public law.

Because USMEPCOM is so geographically dispersed and many MEPS are in large cities, the command likely has a higher than normal percentage of service members who are part of the EFMP. Because of this, Hamlin would like to take a closer look at the USMEPCOM families involved in the program to ensure they're receiving sufficient assistance.

Representatives for the EFMP are available at military family centers and military treatment facilities. EFMP-related community resources are listed on SITES as well.

## Readiness Leadership Development Program

The purpose of the RLDP is to enhance personal and family preparedness by providing education and training in a wide variety of knowledge, skills, and behaviors. The Wellness and Readiness Division is currently building core materials and they will eventually be available both on line and through training workshops.

"Every service has something in this area, whether it's for team-building, leadership, or orientation. MEPCOM is unique and personnel need to understand what they need to succeed in the command.

Level 1 of the RLDP defines the program and shows personnel how to prepare for their "journey" at USMEPCOM. It covers basic personal readiness areas like sponsorship.

Level 2 focuses on more specific topics like military life and financial awareness. It answers questions like, What is an LES? How do you read it? How do you manage credit? How do you save money? How do I fit into military life? What are the expectations of me?

According to Hamlin, the third level will be the most interesting. It will cover areas like leadership and communication skills, group dynamics, how to truly utilize volunteers and community resources, and crisis intervention.

After building the core materials, the Wellness and Readiness Division will begin training the trainers. In fact, upcoming symposia will include some of that training. In the future, Hamlin plans to assess what's needed at MEPS and then take issues to the MEPS with a "traveling road show."

"We've checked throughout the world and there is no other joint service training program, so we're creating this from scratch," Hamlin said. We didn't want to take a pre-packaged plan and just make it "purple," for all the services, we wanted to find a version that's going to work for us.

When asked to assess her feeling about the program, Hamlin said, "It's still at the overwhelming stage — but I'm seeing some things happen — so it feels good. Especially when I'm talking to my colleagues in other areas, bouncing ideas off them, and they say, "You're doing what? And, you've done it how fast? For how many locations?" "

Before USMEPCOM began its Wellness and Readiness Program, Hamlin notes that recruiters and liaisons in the MEPS had support systems within their services. "MEPS personnel were saying, 'we're working side-by-side recruiters and liaisons, yet we don't have a support system. We're accomplishing the same mission, and we're working the same hours with the same customers. We just want what they have. We want the program we had when we were assigned to a military installation.' "

And, without building a brick-and-mortar program, that's what the Wellness and Readiness Division is trying to do.

““

**MEPS personnel were saying, 'We're working side-by-side recruiters and liaisons, yet we don't have a support system ... We just want what they have. We want the program we had when we were assigned to a military installation' ”**



## Lansing readiness program soars

Members of the Lansing MEPS Family Readiness Group, named Caring About Resources for Everyone, or CARE, have found many creative ways to beef up their program, including a kick-off block party that included food and fun for staff and family alike (photo, left) and volunteering in the community at a local shelter (photo, above).

Establishing a Readiness Support Group has generated huge wellness dividends at Lansing MEPS.

Since the group's inception last September, the Lansing MEPS staff has been extremely busy trying to sustain the program. In an effort to spice it up and make it more attractive, core volunteers agreed upon the catchy new name CARE, for "Caring About Resources for Everyone".

The Lansing MEPS has the same challenge as other MEPS in that the staff homes are geographical dispersed and this hinders getting together for off-duty activities. The CARE program is open to the staff, service counselors and their families.

The MEPS kicked off its program by hosting a block party for MEPS staff, service counselors, recruiters, and their family members. The MEPS raised money for the party by having a bake sale, fish fry and hamburger and bratwurst sales.

"The block party exceeded all expectations and was a huge success," Lt. Cmdr. Mary Thompson, Lansing MEPS commander, said. Nearly 100 family members and staff enjoyed hot dogs, hamburgers, chips, water and punch. "Raindrop the Clown" provided a little magic, creative balloons, and activities for the children. There were paint and play dough stations set up for the kids and older children hung out, listened to music, and played basketball and soccer.

Twenty-five people visited the volunteer booths and signed up to support one of five areas of CARE — child care/education, medical/dental, group events, fund-raising, and employment/relocation.

During the week before Thanksgiving, Lansing MEPS staff volunteered their time and energy at the local rescue mission. Marjorie Walker spearheaded the event. Also, the Lansing staff donated clothes, toys, and food to the mission.

"Some people might be under the presumption that rescue missions and shelters only provide assistance to the homeless, however we realized that was the furthest from the truth," Thompson said. "In a week of volunteering, interacting, and learning, it was

very clear that the rescue mission provides services to the homeless, unemployed, college students, former military service men and women, and all types of people who are facing hard times. "We all need to broaden our awareness," Thompson continued.

During the week the MEPS staff was volunteering at the mission, Channel 6 News was covering a story there to encourage volunteerism. The news coverage was aired the day before Thanksgiving. The news crew interviewed Capt. Katrina Patillo and Bernadette Hurrell. Linda Bissell, Jackie Jones, Michael Chatman, Marjorie Walker, Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Huggins and Petty Officer 1st Class Andrea Lowe were also captured and featured in the coverage.

"It was a privilege and honor to support the local community. The significance of this contribution of time, dedication to serving the community in which we reside and work resulted in staff member volunteering weekly," Thompson said.

Also during the holidays, the MEPS held a Thanksgiving dinner for staff, service counselors, their families and Red Cross volunteers.

Thompson said her MEPS has unlocked part of the secret to command involvement by eliminating the need to travel all over the city. Their newly designed family readiness resource room is available to staff, service counselors and families. The resource room is equipped with two computers that are available to staff members who are enrolled in school or wish to surf the web. A fully loaded media stand holds numerous brochures of countless activities.

Almost all of Lansing MEPS' social events have been held at the MEPS and volunteer efforts are always coordinated near the MEPS. In an effort to educate the family, the staff hopes to coordinate training that families can attend. The CARE group's objective is to continue to disseminate both the MEPS newsletter as well as the MEPS Readinotes. The volunteers are scheduled to meet every quarter to keep lines of communication flowing.





# Unlocking the truth about housing allowances

*For many in Buffalo, living in a better home was out of reach, until someone started asking questions ...*

By 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Faith Durden  
Buffalo MEPS

No matter how many stripes you have, or what rank is pinned to your collar, you probably wouldn't turn down a couple hundred bucks each month — especially if you collected more dust bunnies than dollar bills in your wallet.

Like a lot of places, some of us at the Buffalo MEPS were feeling the economic pinch living in a high-cost area, dealing with a housing allowance that didn't seem close to reality. That's starting to change now. Thanks to some gumshoe detective work, an E-6 with dependents will see \$198 — a 10 percent increase — in the basic allowance for housing.

I first arrived here from an overseas location where there was decent housing, a nice commissary, and other amenities we take for granted. But we don't have those luxuries at a MEPS not located near a military base. My housing allowance as an E-8 in Buffalo made it hard to support my family, so no doubt those with less stripes struggled even more.

## Why do we pay more than what we get?

Everyone here wanted to know why he or she seemed to pay out more for housing than what they got in. I thought I knew the ins and outs of the system, but was wrong. Many people think the housing allowance is supposed to cover all of a service member's costs. Actually, the law originally stated that it would cover no more than 80 percent. But 20 percent is a lot when you don't make much to begin with.

In 2000, the secretary of defense made a goal to reduce those out-of-pocket expenses to zero by 2005, and that is on track so far. In 2002, out-of-pocket costs were down to 11.3 percent, and by 2003, it was 7.5 percent. Good, but not great. That means, based on average national costs of \$978 a month for a house payment, a married E-5 was paying \$73 more than he or she got in allowance. It's expected to be about 3.5 percent this year, and finally 0 percent by 2005.

## Want to help your service members?

Data collection is critical. The government bases all of our housing allowances on the data collection process. It's critical, but ours was flawed, and so might yours be. There are only small windows of opportunity each year to submit this data.

This is how it should work: the Defense Department gives each local military housing referral office and command leadership at each installation the chance to contribute to the data collection effort. How many of you have a local MHO? We don't. The closest to Buffalo is Fort Drum N.Y., located four hours from here. The Defense Department allows remote offices to submit data on their behalf. That means offices that might not even live where you live are putting together the paperwork that determines your pay. Buffalo has three remote offices that collect and send in this information — two Reserve Officer Training Corps universities, and a Coast Guard Office. You can find out your point of contact by going to [www.bah.runzheimer.com](http://www.bah.runzheimer.com).

Our POCs at the two universities forwarded the information to another cadet command representative, and didn't know what happened with the information from there. My instincts tell me that's not a good sign. The Coast Guard office does have a local petty officer who serves as the POC, but when we reviewed his packet, we found it wasn't accurate.

The Defense Department manual explains that the expertise and knowledge of the referral office — the local petty officer and the universities in our case — is crucial, and the information they provide is critical to the process. The local submitting office and local leadership is supposed to:

- Provide local rental housing referrals, excluding inadequate units such as mobile homes, efficiency apartments, furnished units, income-subsidized complexes, age-restricted facilities, and seasonal units.
- Identify specific geographic areas that contain unacceptable housing. This is very important to the final determination. To determine actual rates, the Defense Department:
- Conducts telephone interview of the listings provided by military housing offices, or the local organizations that are supposed to provide this service.
- Excludes unacceptable housing areas from the survey
- Conducts on-site reviews at selected locations
- Prescribes rates based on data input and the housing standards policy



## Timing is everything

To accomplish their part, the military contracts with Runzheimer International to collect data from about 400 Military Housing Areas. This occurs in the spring and summer when housing markets are most active. Runzheimer uses data from multiple sources to provide a checks and balances approach to determining BAH rates. They consult with real estate professionals, apartment and real estate management companies in each MHA to confirm market rental prices and obtain additional data.

Typically, the data collection follows this timeline:

**March** – Packets are sent to MHO and local personnel

**May** – First submissions due to the Defense Department

**June and July** – Second submissions due

**July and August** – Third submissions due

**September** – The Defense Department begins the rate calculation

**November** – Services begin review of proposed rates

**January** – The new rates go into affect

Based on the above timeline, if you don't agree with the dollars in your January paycheck, you have only a couple months to hopefully make changes for the following year.

The process of submitting Basic Allowance for Housing packets went web-based in 2003, making the process faster and more efficient. You can find additional information on BAH and the packet submission process at [www.bah.runzheimer.com](http://www.bah.runzheimer.com). You can review portions of last year's submissions for your area, look up the POC for your zip code, maps of all military housing areas, Frequently Asked Questions, and links to all BAH-related web sites within DoD. Another good site that gives a primer on housing allowance is [www.dod.mil/militarypay/pay/bah/bah\\_primer.pdf](http://www.dod.mil/militarypay/pay/bah/bah_primer.pdf).

## COLA: More money, more money, more money

Some locations within the continental United States also receive a Cost of Living Allowance to compensate for some excess, non-housing expenses. To qualify, you must live in an area

that exceeds average U.S. costs by 8 percent. If you feel your MEPS is paying above this, inquire about your COLA. More information is available at [www.dtic.mil/perdiem/ccola.html](http://www.dtic.mil/perdiem/ccola.html).

As leaders in remote locations, we must use all of our skills to get information, and do things we aren't used to doing. Our subordinates deserve the best we can give them. We did something good for our service members, and you can, too. Don't take your allowances for granted, take some of our advice, and you may help your MEPS as well.

## Help with TRICARE

In an effort to improve several areas related to family readiness, the Buffalo MEPS also looked at TRICARE medical issues.

The MEPS invited the nearest TRICARE service center representative to give a briefing for all service members and their families in Buffalo, dramatically improving the process for everyone. Establishing a face-to-face contact with someone to assist in resolving TRICARE issues has eliminated nearly all of our customer service concerns.

In addition, we took a look at the provider list to ensure it's current, comprehensive and adequate. As the service center representative told us, we can help the system help us if we communicate with them. One area of great concern in Buffalo was the lack of pediatric and OB/GYN doctors available to see TRICARE patients. We got those specialists added to the provider list by working with local doctors and TRICARE.

You can find more TRICARE information at [www.tricare.osd.mil](http://www.tricare.osd.mil). It's a great starting point to get you the right information to improve service at your MEPS.

—Submitted by 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Faith Durden, Buffalo MEPS

## Lansing readiness program soars (continued)



Lansing MEPS provides a readiness resource room that includes computers, bulletin boards and a comfortable place to meet. The room includes a fully loaded media stand with brochures from local recreational sites as well.

Thompson takes no credit for the program. "It's all my staff," she said. "My staff really pulls together, we split shifts for any events during working hours and still complete the operations mission."

She mentioned that a commander's duty is to ensure he or she is connected with the staff and their families. "We are not on a military installation so we have to work harder to make sure family needs are met," Thompson said. "I truly believe families should always be first. The family is the backbone of any staff member. If things are not going well for a member at home, you better believe it will have an effect on their job performance."

"Team building is everything to the MEPS family. We better know how to respond in a crisis and shame on us for not knowing when family members undergo a life-threatening surgery. The readiness support group is the best avenue to enhance the team and open communication channels."

Currently the Lansing MEPS is planning a Mother's Day Rose sale and gift basket raffle, bake sale and yard sale to raise funds for upcoming events.

The Lansing MEPS CARE program came on line at the right time. "Family wellness has never been better," Thompson said.

# RESOURCES

## General Assistance and Referrals

Employee Assistance Program  
<http://www.eapconsultants.com>

Army One Source  
<http://www.armyonesource.com>

Work Life Program for Civilians  
<http://www.opm.gov/wrkfam/index.asp>

2-1-1  
<http://www.211.org>

## Medical

Exceptional Family Member Connections  
<http://www.efmconnections.org>

TRICARE  
<http://www.tricare.osd.mil>

HOOAH 4 HEALTH  
<http://www.hooah4health.com>

## Childcare and Education

No Child Left Behind  
<http://www.nochildleftbehind.gov>

The Military Student in Transition and Deployment  
<http://www.militarystudent.org>

Military Child Education Coalition  
<http://www.militarychild.org>

General Services Administration  
<http://www.gsa.gov>

CHILDCARE.GOV  
<http://www.childcare.gov>

AFTERSCHOOL.GOV  
<http://www.afterschool.gov>

Child Care Aware  
<http://www.childcareaware.org>

National Association for the Education of Young Children  
<http://www.naeyc.org>

Child Care Experts Nationwide Network  
<http://www.childcare-experts.org>

Zero to Three  
<http://www.zerotothree.org>

## Veteran's Organizations

The American Legion  
<http://www.legion.org>

American Veterans  
<http://www.amvets.org>

## Elder Care

Care Guide  
<http://www.careguide.net>

The National Council on Aging  
<http://www.ncoa.org>

AARP  
<http://www.aarp.org>

## Relief Societies and Organizations

Army Emergency Relief  
<http://www.aerhq.org>

Air Force Aid Society  
<http://www.afas.org>

The American Red Cross  
<http://www.redcross.org>

Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society  
<http://www.nmcrs.org>

## Relief Societies and Organizations

(continued)

Coast Guard  
Mutual Assistance  
<http://www.cgmahq.org>

Armed Forces Relief Trust  
<http://www.afrtrust.org>

## Family Support

National Military  
Family Association  
<http://www.nmfa.org>

USAREC Soldier and  
Family Assistance  
<http://www.usarec.army.mil/hq/HRD/SFA/>

Well-being Family  
Liaison Office  
<http://www.aflo.org>

Military Family  
Resource Center  
<http://www.mfrc-dodqol.org>

Navy LIFElines  
<http://www.lifelines.navy.mil>

Coast Guard Work Life  
<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-w/g-wk/wkw>

Operation Homefront  
<http://www.operationhomefront.org>

Marine Corps  
Community Services  
<http://www.usmc-mccs.org>

Operation Dear Abby  
<http://www.operationdearabby.net>

## Employment and Career

Military Spouses'  
Career Network  
<http://www.mscn.org>

USAJOBS  
<http://www.usajobs.opm.gov>

Military Spouse  
Resource Center  
<http://www.milspouse.org>

Thrift Savings Plan  
<http://www.tsp.gov>

Federal Trade Commission  
<http://www.ftc.gov>

Internal Revenue Service  
<http://www.irs.gov>

## Volunteer Resources

Network For Good  
<http://www.networkforgood.org>

Points of Light Foundation  
<http://www.pointsoflight.org>

Armed Services YMCA  
<http://www.asymca.org>

## EAP Consultants, Inc.

EAP Consultants, Inc. continues to provide USMEPCOM service members and family members with information, referral and face-to-face counseling in a variety of topics, including: legal, financial, marital, relocation, education and child care. Service members and family members can receive up to four counseling sessions for each separate issue.

Visit the EAP Consultants web site at <http://www.eapconsultants.com>. Contact your MEPS first sergeant for the toll-free phone number and login information for the web site.

## Army One Source

In addition to EAP Consultants, all USMEPCOM service members and their family members, regardless of service, can use Army One Source.

Department of Army has contracted with Ceridian Corporation to provide this work/life program at no cost to service members and their family members.

The service provides online information, educational materials, telephonic consultation and face-to-face counseling to assist people with day-to-day life and work issues. Through the program, service members can schedule personal counseling appointments with a professional counselor in their local area. Service members can receive up to six counseling sessions for each separate issue or problem.

Visit the Army One Source web site to request information or educational pamphlets, CDs, and other resources through the mail. The site is <http://www.armyonesource.com>. Contact your MEPS first sergeant for the toll-free phone number and login information for the web site.

# MEPS View: Family issues a primary concern

An assignment to US-AMEPCOM is different from most places, and a hard adjustment for some to make. Life at a MEPS is a far cry from the friendly confines of a military base where there's everything to meet your needs. As the command and individual MEPS focus on family readiness, what are the most pressing issues? Three people from our MEPS sound off on that question.

### 1st Lt. Emily Gries Omaha MEPS

"The key family readiness issues in MEPCOM are lack of military medical facilities, child care availability for early morning and late evening hours, and child care cost rates comparable to those on a military base. In Omaha,



1st Lt. Emily Gries

we are fortunate to have Offutt Air Force Base nearby, which alleviates some of these concerns. Most MEPS locations lack immediate access to military medical facilities. The administrative process for family TRICARE coverage is complicated and is only worsened in a remote environment."



Hugh Kinsey

### Hugh Kinsey Oklahoma City MEPS

"When I think of family readiness and support, I generally think of deployments. Even though personnel assigned to a MEPS are not subject to being deployed, it is still important to communicate our mission to incoming personnel and their families. It is important to ensure that the existing sponsorship program be enhanced by the readiness support program."



Tech Sgt. Steve Braxton

### Tech Sgt. Steve Braxton New Orleans MEPS

"I feel communication with MEPS staff and families, such as home numbers, addresses, and names of family members should be prime target in case of emergencies. Also, constant involvement for information such as e-mails, flyers, family meetings, and briefings must continue periodically. We mustn't lose site that we're all family."



### Richmond reaches out

Richmond MEPS staff visit the Rehab Center at Medical College of Virginia/Virginia Commonwealth University Hospital. They passed out teddy bears and other stuffed animals to the patients there.



(From left) Terri Baker and Derrick Hellams were some of the Richmond MEPS staff members who handed out teddy bears and smiles. Richmond photo on page 3 is Sgt. 1st Class Sharron Holloway.

# Senator Clinton visits New York MEPS

By Maj. Ken Smalls  
New York MEPS

One of New York's most well-known political faces visited the MEPS to shake hands, sign autographs, and talk to new recruits before they shipped to basic training.

Senator Hillary Clinton walked through the MEPS as part of an overall visit with



Senator Hillary Clinton signs a copy of her book for Sgt. Davena Scott (left) during her tour of the New York MEPS.

Navy Cmdr. Layne Boone from New York MEPS shows Sen. Hillary Clinton how the MEPS impacts the New York community.



base leaders at Fort Hamilton, N.Y., where the processing station is located.

After getting briefings from key base leaders, Clinton said she'd use the information in future discussions with colleagues about base closures, an initiative she voted against last year.

After the briefing, the senator made a short walk to the MEPS where military troops popped to attention upon her arrival. Clinton walked around to shake hands, sign a few autographs, and learn about the USMEPCOM mission. Then she joined 1st Lt. Juan Suero, the MEPS operations officer, in the oath room as he formally enlisted 15 recruits — representing the Army, Marines, Navy, and Air Force.

The Senator spoke briefly to the applicants, telling them America was appreciative of their service.

## Dossier

Sgt. Juanita Wilburn Sealey

Test Administrator

Charlotte MEPS



**Years in the military:** 13

**One thing her friends don't know about her:** "I'm afraid of heights."

**Her singlemost important achievement thus far in life:** "Motherhood, because everyone isn't good at it, and I'm a great mother!"

**Three things that can always be found in her refrigerator:** "Yogurt, milk, and apples."

**Last book she read:** "'God Still Don't Like Ugly,'" by Mary Monroe."

**Favorite movie:** "'The Intimation of Life.' This movie really teaches you to love and appreciate who you are and where you're from, no matter what the situation."

**Motto she lives by:** "Everything happens for a reason; even if it's bad."

**One food she can't live without:** "Peanut Butter — smooth, not crunchy."

**Her favorite song by Elvis Presley:** "Burning Love."

**If she could have lunch with any person from history, who would it be and what would she ask:** "I would lunch with Tupac Shakur and ask him how he knew his life would end so violently or so soon."

**Who are the two greatest people she's met:** Josephine Wilburn and Staff Sgt. Cogman because one taught me how to be a woman, and the other taught me how to be a soldier."

**What she would do if she had three hours all to herself:** "Sleep like I did before I had children."

**Her usual order at McDonald's:** "Fish fillet, small fries, and Fruitopia."

**If she won \$20 million, what she would do:** "I would buy a house for each of my children to ensure my house isn't their permanent residence after age 18."

### New York by the numbers

Applicants processed in 2003 — 7,827

So far in 2004 — 2,441

Monetary impact on the community — \$5,150, 881

Applicants processed at Beckley in 2003 — 1,887

So far in 2004 — 597

# Army showers two MEPCOM broods with gifts for going beyond

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich  
 Messenger Associate Editor

Two Fort Jackson MEPS families credit God for their win as Families of the Year at this South Carolina Army post.

Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class Annette Green who works as a medic, and Tricia Turner, a processing clerk, were two of the 52 families the Army recognized in November for their contributions to the community and family activities.

Each year, the Fort Jackson community recognizes top families from each unit on the base. Each winning family receives a plaque, a \$50 gift certificate for the PX, an Army and Air Force Exchange Service coupon book, and a pass for a better parking space on the post.

"You have to understand something," said Green. "I'm a Bible-believing Christian. We won this because of God. It was no one but God. God said, 'Yes.' It's how he moves in our lives and we do things according to his will."

Green and her husband, Christopher, and three children: Christo-  
 pher, 13; Wes-

ley, 9; and Myles, 8, are active in their church and youth choir. Petty Officer Green also teaches Vacation Bible School, and her husband is a Sunday school teacher. She said her gift certificate didn't last for Christmas shopping.

"My youngest son said, 'Mom, shouldn't this go to us?' They bought a game for their Play Station 2. They bought 'The Hulk' of all things," Green said with a hearty laugh.

Turner and her family are also active in their church, and work with the homeless in the community. She and her husband, Renaldo, and three children: Renaldo Jr., 16; LaPorsha, 14; and Mercedes, 12 were planning on feeding 25 homeless during Christmas, and also had plans to drop off donated clothes and toys. "We like to help wherever we can, especially with homeless people," Turner said. "I hate to see people laying out in the cold and starving."

That belief has rubbed off on her children. She said LaPorsha wants to collect money in the community to donate to starving children.

Besides a love for their community, both women's commitment to family is evident at the MEPS, said their supervisors.

"I've gotten the chance to know Mrs. Turner and she's a good person. She's always talking about her family and

“

*My youngest son said, 'Mom shouldn't this (gift certificate) go to us?' They bought a Play Station 2 game ... 'The Hulk,' of all things.* ”

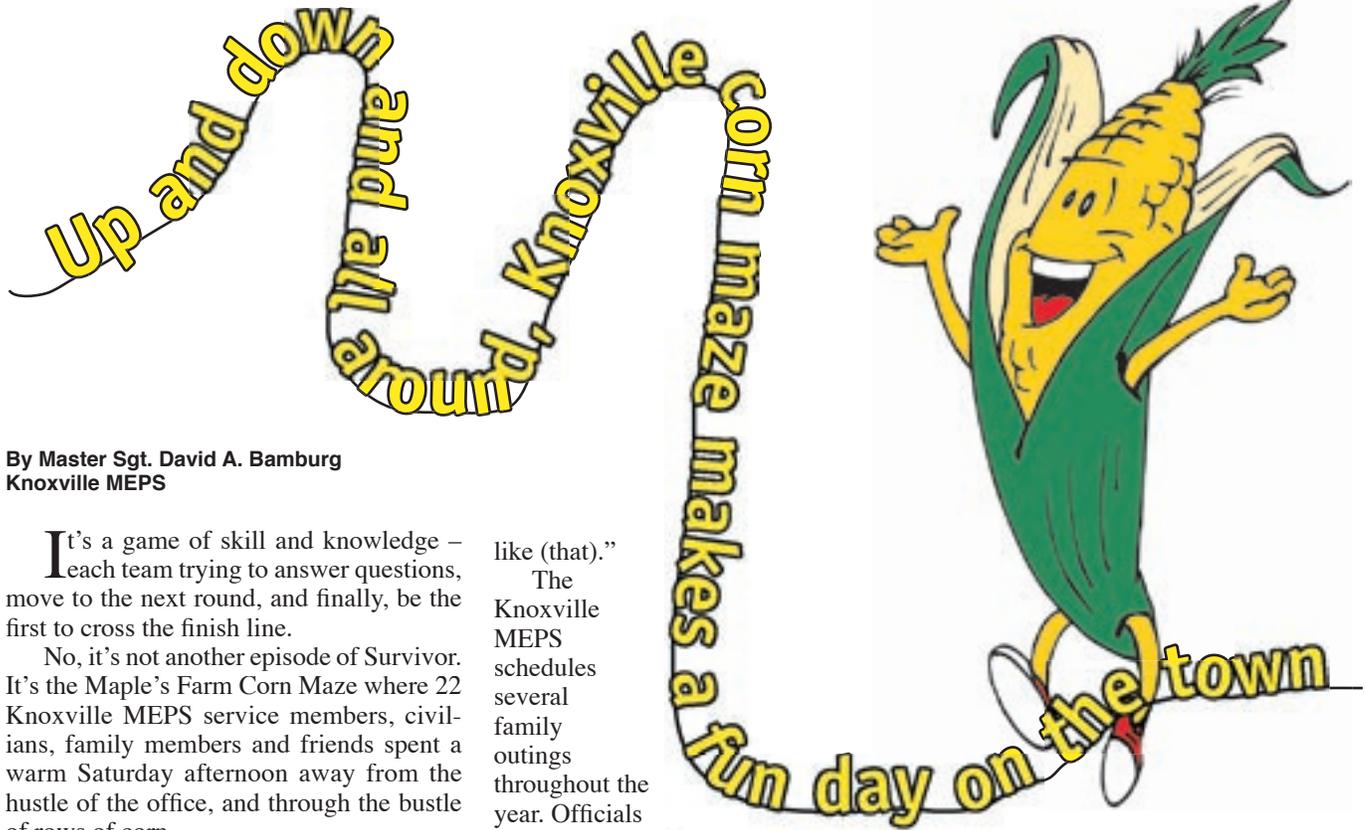
what they're doing every weekend. That's an inspiration to all of us," said Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Wanda Redd.

Those sentiments were echoed by Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Suzanne Green, who nominated Petty Officer Green.

"It's part of our job as NCOs to get to know our people, and we talk on a daily basis," she said. "She's a very quiet person, but those who know her know that God is first, family is next, and then the job."

Both winning families from the Fort Jackson MEPS credit God and time together for making the difference in their lives. Petty Officer Annette Green's family (left photo, left to right) Christopher Jr., Wesley, husband Christopher, and Myles, gather around the checker board. The family stays active in their church and other activities. Tricia Turner's family (right photo, left to right) LaPorsha, husband Renaldo, and Mercedes like to help out at the local homeless shelter.





By Master Sgt. David A. Bamburg  
Knoxville MEPS

It's a game of skill and knowledge – each team trying to answer questions, move to the next round, and finally, be the first to cross the finish line.

No, it's not another episode of Survivor. It's the Maple's Farm Corn Maze where 22 Knoxville MEPS service members, civilians, family members and friends spent a warm Saturday afternoon away from the hustle of the office, and through the bustle of rows of corn.

"This was the first family event to help kick off the new activities planned for the new fiscal year," said Lt. Cmdr. Carol M. Kushmier, the Knoxville MEPS commander. "Next year we have to do this as a land navigation course and team-building exercise."

This is the fifth year Maple's Farm opened their corn maze to the public, hosting small groups like the MEPS, to as many as 2,000.

Each year, the corn maze offers a twisting and turning maze cut into the cornfield. At the start, participants get sheets with 10 trivia questions. They get to pick from several categories, including Bible knowledge, history, and team building. There are 10 numbered poles scattered throughout the cornfield, and you turn based on the questions you answer. Answer correctly, and you step closer to the next numbered pole and finishing the maze. Answer incorrectly, and you're liable to wind up where you started.

Besides the maze, the MEPS group visited the Maple Farm country store, a hayride, and even a stop at the pumpkin patch.

"My whole family enjoyed the corn maze, hayride, and pumpkin patch very much," said Robert Whicker, Knoxville's supply technician. "I take advantage of going to most every function the AVMF sponsors, and I'm thankful we have something

like (that)."

The Knoxville MEPS schedules several family outings throughout the year. Officials said they're now planning a trip to a University of Tennessee basketball game; the Tennessee

Smokies minor league baseball; bowling; and a train ride alongside the Tennessee



The Knoxville MEPS capped off a family day at Maple's Farm Corn Maze with a group photo, proving they left no one behind. The MEPS plans several family outings throughout the year, including college basketball and minor league baseball.

# On Guard

*All across America, men and women who serve as teachers, janitors, foremen, and businessmen wear a different uniform when their country calls. Whether it's the National Guard or the Reserves, these men and women also serve their country in times of war, natural disasters, or for peacekeeping situations.*

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich  
*Messenger* Associate Editor

They serve in Bosnia. They serve in Iraq. They serve in America. They are our brothers, our sisters, our husbands, our wives, our mothers, and our fathers. They are our bosses, our colleagues, and our friends. They work in our MEPS, processing young Americans who also want to serve their country. And no longer can they be chided for only being "Weekend Warriors."

While it's impossible to highlight everyone from our command, here are some who put the day job aside, and did what they had to do.

## **Staff Sgt. Hilda Perez, Air Force National Guard, Springfield MEPS**

The first thought that went through Hilda Perez' mind when she found out she would deploy to Iraq were her two boys, Felix, 11; and Jovani, 9.

"I was worried how they were going to take it," said the processing clerk from the Springfield MEPS, who activated in February 2003.

First she broke the news to her husband, a former Army infantryman who fought in Desert Storm. Then she sat down with the boys.

"We went through a lot of questions, a lot of tears," Perez said.

Perez was already used to military service. She spent 11 years in the Air Force

National Guard before going active duty in 1996. But when she went active, her rank dropped from staff sergeant to airman first class. The rank change proved to be too costly, and Perez got an honorable discharge a year later. After the 2001 terrorist attacks on America, she rejoined her former National Guard unit.

"They were gracious enough to give me my staff sergeant rank back. But I never thought I'd get deployed for a war," she said.

Perez, who works as a flight medic, thought she'd be activated for up to a year. She spent the first month helping with physicals and giving shots to everyone deploying. Then she and her unit deployed to a classified location in the Middle East in March. It was a pleasant surprise, she said, when they found out in April that they'd return home later that month.

Perez remained on active duty until June 2003, and now she is back at the MEPS as a processing clerk.

"The whole deployment really opened my eyes," she said. "We do so much training, and when you train at something for the 50 millionth time, you wonder why. But it all clicked over there."

## **Spec. Melissa Pope, Army National Guard, Oklahoma City MEPS**

When Pope heard another National Guard unit from Durant, Okla., was tagged for the Egyptian duty to monitor the Sinai peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, the Army specialist volunteered for the assignment where she provided medical support.

"Since I have a 3-year-old son, I realized this would be my only chance to do something like this, and my family was very supportive," she said.

It helped that she had around-the-clock e-mail access and the ability to see her son through a video teleconference network.

"I talked with him and was in constant contact," she said. "That helped to reassure me."

Meanwhile, her unit kept in touch with her family as well to make sure they were doing well.

Pope said the Egyptians where she stayed were welcoming to the Americans, but she felt a colder shoulder during a visit to Cairo.

"They weren't as open armed," she said. "But at no time did I feel like I was in any danger."

"Even though we were there to enforce the peace treaty, we felt we were contributing to the mission in Iraq. I felt proud to be a part of that."

Jacob welcomed his mom back home in July but wasn't too happy when he next saw her in a uniform.

"I was still working with my unit, and when he saw me in uniform, he'd think I was going back over to Egypt."

But there are no immediate overseas travel plans in Pope's future. Instead, she's concentrating on her upcoming wedding. Her boyfriend, a full-time staff sergeant in the National Guard, visited her at Fort Carson, Colo., while she was preparing to deploy, and he proposed on the top of Pike's Peak.

## **Dr. (Lt. Col.) Gulabdas Hariyani, Sacramento MEPS**

It's probably a good thing that Dr. Gulabdas Hariyani works at the Sacramento MEPS, processing 50 or more people a day into the military. It made it much easier when he activated last year and had to examine each day more than 500 soldiers with M-16s over their shoulders and their minds on the pending war in Iraq.



*"Since I have a 3-year-old son, I realized this would be my only chance to do something like this, and my family was very supportive."*

— Spec. Melissa Pope, on leaving her family for a tour in Egypt where she helped enforce the peace treaty between that country and Israel

"I think if I was just a civilian doctor examining kids with sore throats, it might have been a little intimidating," he chuckled.

Hariyani, who served two years on active duty from 1984 to 1986, and then immediately joined the Reserves, has been working in some fashion with the military for almost 20 years throughout California.

He participated in his first major activation in 1996 when he was sent to Schweinfurt, Germany, for 140 days to back-fill active-duty units that deployed to Bosnia. This time, he did all of his reserve work at Fort Carson, Colo., from January to April 2003.

"We processed hundreds of people every day," said the chief medical officer. "We had to make sure they got all their shots. Some of them had to get eight or nine shots at one time. Others needed physicals. It was a lot of work."

When one soldier needed an orthopedic consult for his knee, the hospital told him there would be a two-month wait, but his unit was shipping out immediately.

"I went right to the commander, and the commander went to the hospital and said, 'If Hariyani says it has to be done, then it gets done in 24 to 48 hours.' This was war and there was no time to wait. These units couldn't hold the bus for one person. Either the soldier was qualified to go or he wasn't, but we couldn't wait two months to find out the answer."

Although Hariyani returned in April 2003, he just got word that he'll most likely activate again, probably around May, and probably for another stint at Fort Carson.

"That time I'll be doing their post-deployment physicals," he said, "so I'll see some of the same people that I examined before they deployed."

### **Sgt. Melvin L. Larson II, Army National Guard, Spokane MEPS**

The medical technician from the Spokane MEPS was activated in November 2003 and will spend the next year or two in Iraq.

### **Master Sgt. Greg Sielepkowski, Air Force Reserve, HQ USMEPCOM**

One of USMEPCOM's facilities architect is putting those skills to work in northern Iraq. Greg Sielepkowski activated in February 2003 and deployed shortly thereafter to the Middle East.

### **Master Sgt. Armando Orozco, Army Reserve, Sacramento MEPS**

When a soldier falls on the battlefield, a few brief seconds could mean the difference between life and death. But what if there is no medic? Then it could be your job to save your buddy's life. And if you know what you're doing, it's thanks to people like Master Sgt. Armando Orozco, the education services specialist from the Sacramento MEPS.

He mobilized in January 2003 and rotated among several stateside bases, validating the medical training non-medical soldiers receive before they deployed overseas.

"It's a challenge, but it's exciting," he said. "It's a very important role. The people I train may have to tend to the wounded on the battlefield. If I deployed overseas I would just be a first sergeant, but I think my talents are better used here."

It's a job Orozco doesn't have to have. He first served on active duty from 1976 to 1988, and then reached retirement eligibility seven years ago.

"The only reason I got off active duty is because I was accepted into a doctoral program. But I liked the military community. I still do. And plus, while I'm physically and mentally able, it's fine. I'm still serving

my country, and that's the primary reason why I do it."

He only returned to his civilian job in December but there's a chance he'll mobilize again, and find himself in Iraq for 18 months. Even though he said an absence like that has a huge impact on the MEPS, there is a higher calling.

"If I have to do it, I will," he said. "This is a national defense issue. If there is something I can do — over there or on the home front — I will do it. I want my kids to have a safe future."

### **Sgt. James W. Wheeler Jr., Beckley MEPS**

James Wheeler, who works in the Beckley MEPS testing section, doesn't believe all the news on Iraq tells the full story, and he should know, because he was there from January through August 2003.

"The way of life, their living conditions, and everything continues to get better. The majority of the Iraqi people treat the Americans pretty good, actually," he said. "A lot of the news leans (in the negative) direction, but you need to be there. Unless you're there, you can't know the full story."

Wheeler's military story began during an eight-year, active-duty stint from 1983 to 1991. Then after a break, he joined the reserve from 1993 to 1997, and then rejoined again in 2000.

He was already planning on separating again when he got activated as a combat engineer for the war on terrorism. The first order of business before deploying was explaining it to his three children: Clay, age 11; Gabriel, age 10; and Dylan, age 3.

"Dylan didn't really understand, but the other two did," Wheeler said. "I just told them I had to go fight for my country. I was proud, mostly, to do it. My wife wasn't too happy about it. It was a little bit hard, but by the time I got over there, I was able to write a few times, and call a few times."





*"I went right to the commander, and the commander went to the hospital and said, 'If Hariyani says it has to be done, then it gets done in 24 to 48 hours.' This was war and there was no time to wait. These units couldn't hold the bus for one person. Either the soldier was qualified to go or he wasn't."*

— Dr. Gulabdas Hariyani, on how he used his military and MEPS background to accomplish what needed to be done so troops could deploy overseas

# On Guard

He got into the country two weeks before the war started, and spent most of the time pulling security "all over the place."

His wife, Rebecca hated watching the news, especially anytime there was a report about the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force, where he was assigned.

The MEPS staff did its best to help out, though. Wheeler said he's grateful his colleagues kept in touch with his family, and sent him care packages in the desert.

"That definitely made my life easier. It was easier to focus on what I had to do, knowing they were looking out for my family."

## Army Reservist Lorenzo Webber, Fort Jackson MEPS

After working at Fort Polk, La., the last 12 months, giving physicals and shots to deploying troops, with another six months of duty to go, Master Sgt. Lorenzo Webber said he and his crew "are no longer treated like reservists.

"We've been here a long time," said the lead health technician from the Fort Jackson MEPS who first activated in January 2003.

After spending six years on active duty from 1978 to 1984, he returned to the Army Reserve in 1986 because he missed the camaraderie. After a few years he retired, then came back in around 2000.

"I missed the whole thing," he said. "The traveling, the friends, and I didn't have anything to do on the weekends. Course, I used to think the two weeks a year was a long time."

The activation required him to leave his fiancé, and his 4-year-old son, Lavarus, but he has been able to come back home for

visits. Since first arriving at Fort Polk, he estimates that he and other soldiers have helped more than 40,000 soldiers deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Most of them have to come through here," he said. "And they're a little nervous. We try to take their mind off that for a little bit.

"That's one thing that gets to you. You know they're going to Iraq, going into harm's way, and they might not make it back. They're youngsters, and they're confused. We try to help them out."

Now he's preparing himself for the last six months in a place he never would have been if he stayed retired in 2000.

"I guess I was crazy getting back in but I just couldn't stay away," Webber said. "I wouldn't be here now, but I know we're needed. We're doing the required mission and getting the troops to where they need to be."

## Staff Sgt. Dennis Hamm, Richmond MEPS

When truck driver Dennis Hamm saw an Army medevac helicopter back in 2000, he remembered how much he missed his active duty military days from 1983 to 1992, so he joined the District of Columbia Army National Guard. Soon after, he got a job as a medic at the Richmond MEPS.

Now he's at Fort Hood, Texas, handing medical evacuation duties in place of active-duty soldiers who have deployed overseas.

"We were activated a couple days after New Year's (2003)," he said. "The orders stated that we'd be activated for at least 12 months and no more than 24 months, so I don't know how long it will be."

But Hamm doesn't mind the duty. The pay is better than his

civilian job, and he feels like it's helping the war effort.

"The folks who are normally here doing this are overseas, so we're doing it for them. We're helping to take care of the mission at home, so they can take care of business over there."

The hardest part of the duty is being separated from his children, Terrell, 16, and Jazmin, 8.

"My youngest asked a lot of questions. I told them I was going away to take part in serving my country," Hamm said. "I miss them very much. That's the worst part."

## Col. David F. Allen, Army Reserve, Charlotte MEPS

By all accounts, David Allen didn't have to do what he did, and doesn't have to do what he's currently doing.

With 26 years of service — four active and then 22 in the reserves — he could have retired long ago. Even after the terrorist attacks of 2001, he could have kept his regular job as the dean of Southwest Oklahoma State University in Sayre, Okla., and his part-time military job as a battalion commander, in a unit that probably wouldn't have gone anywhere.

"But I figured I was needed back east, so I resigned as the dean, and moved here," said the Charlotte MEPS ASVAB program manager.

He joined another Reserve unit and jumped back into civil affairs, a career he first had in the early 1990s. In May 2002, he pinned eagles on his uniform, and in October 2002, he deployed to Afghanistan.

"It was interesting because we were given so much preparation and training up front, and we got there, and it was nothing like we had trained for, because it's so desolate," he said. "Everything from running water, to food, basic survival ... it was all broken. I grew up as an Air Force brat and saw a lot of things, but never saw anything like this."

Three months later, he returned to the States, this time at

Central Command headquarters where he helped Gen. Tommy Franks plan an after-war strategy for Iraq, which, before Saddam Hussein was captured, came under intense scrutiny.

“We had significant plans for contingencies we expected,” he said. “We expected the oil for food program to be broken, and it was. We expected hundreds of thousands of refugees to pour across the border, it didn’t happen. We expected oil fields burning all over the place, and it didn’t happen. I don’t think we anticipated the short love affair with the Iraqi people, compared to Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, you can tell they really want us, but the Iraqis haven’t been as warm to the coalition forces.”

But Allen still believes in what he and others can do in Iraq. Although he returned to civilian life in September 2003, he’s already been told he’ll soon ship out again — this time as a civil affairs expert working right next to Ambassador Paul Bremer in Iraq.

“I think these things take a long time, and I think the American public struggles with its definition of democracy. We have trouble understanding the different definitions of democracy. But we can make this work. But that success is going to be defined by the people of Iraq.”

#### **Sgt. 1st Class Isaac Kelipio, Army Reserve, HQ USMEPCOM**

If Desert Storm lasted one more week, Isaac Kelipio’s aviation unit would have been in the thick of the fight. As it turned out, he didn’t activate then, but for the latest war in Iraq, Kelipio, now part of a training unit out of Fort Sheridan, Ill., got the call he always anticipated since first joining the Reserve in 1980.

“In the back of your mind, you always know it’s going to happen,” he said.

Instead of finding himself in the Middle East, Kelipio — a logistics management specialist

out of uniform, and a sergeant first class in uniform — found himself in Peoria, Ill.

“It’s our job to train the units before they go to where they need to go,” he said. “Most of these (Reserve and Guard) units already have the technical skills, but need to work on tactical skills, because they go hand in hand.”

Part of his job entailed training the aviation Guard unit from Peoria — the same unit that lost soldiers when a Chinook helicopter crashed.

“I knew them,” he said of the soldiers who didn’t come back home. “That’s always hard knowing they’re going to war, and when something happens, you second guess what you taught them. It would be nice to say you just ignore it, but you can’t.”

He spent nine months in uniform — from January 2003 to the end of September, and then was back on his civilian job a day later. He left at the end of January for a second activation.

#### **Sgt. 1st Class Kerry D. Buckle, Army National Guard, Fargo MEPS**

While Iraq dominates the daily news coverage, many Americans may not realize that men and women in uniform are deployed throughout the world. And before the latest war in Iraq, before Kosovo, the big military news of the day was Bosnia, where American men and women deployed by the thousands to enforce a shaky peace for a brighter future.

Though those forces have downsized, many are still there. Sgt. 1st Class Kerry D. Buckle, a medical technician from the Fargo MEPS is one of them. In uniform, he works in a military aid station at one of Bosnia’s base camps.

He deployed in April 2003, and is expected to return after 12 months on active duty. (Information compiled by Chief Petty Officer LeRoy LaGier, Fargo MEPS)

#### **Chief Warrant Officer John R. Pavlich, Fargo MEPS**

John Pavlich, the Fargo MEPS’ education services specialist, deployed with his unit to Iraq in April 2003. With a military career that spans more than thirty years, Pavlich continues to serve his country as a senior imagery specialist and technician with the 325th Military Intelligence Battalion.

Pavlich is married and has two sons, both of whom serve in the military. Pavlich is scheduled to return in April 2004 (information provided by 2nd Lt. Darin McDole, Fargo MEPS).

#### **Sgt. 1st Class Johnny Brown, Army Reserve, Houston MEPS**

As a chaplain’s assistant, it was Johnny Brown’s job to travel with military chaplains to various military locations to train and encourage those going overseas to fight.

Although the processing clerk from the Houston MEPS isn’t ordained by any specific church, he still considers himself a minister.

“Anyone can be a minister,” he said. “I have a calling from God, and if God calls you, he’ll teach you. I know the word of God.”

“When people are in a war zone, or going to a war zone, they worry. I wanted to give them hope,” said Brown, who did almost six years on active duty from 1977 to 1981, and then rejoined the reserves in 1987.

He mobilized in January 2003, and returned to his civilian job in September. He said many of the qualities the Army looks for in a soldier are the same ones God looks for as well — honesty, integrity, and loyalty.

“I was primarily trying to give people hope in a time of despair and wonderment. Many times people would come back to me and ask questions. That’s how I know I’ve made a difference. I don’t know if it helped in the war, but I tried to help those people, individually.”



*“It was interesting because we were given so much preparation and training up front, and we got there, and it was nothing like we had trained for. I grew up as an Air Force brat and saw a lot of things, but never saw anything like this.”*

— Col. David F. Allen, Charlotte MEPS, describing his arrival in Afghanistan



Mike Fluit before ...

By Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich  
*Messenger* Associate Editor

Mike Fluit watched in the Sioux Falls MEPS day room as terrorists plowed planes into the World Trade Center and knew it

# One weekend a month? He gave up his family and a Citizen

wouldn't be long before he'd be back in uniform.

The six-foot-tall supply technician with the handlebar moustache had 12 years of active-duty Army time before separating

and getting a job as a supply technician at the MEPS. As a single father with two boys, he wanted to give them a more stable family life.

But he missed the uniform, he said, and five months later, went back into the reserve. When he remarried in January

2001, his wife didn't think much of his military commitment.

"When I joined the reserve, I figured one weekend a month, two weeks a year, no big deal," he chuckled.

Fluit returned to his job at the Sioux Falls MEPS in September 2003, after two years on active duty with the 4249th Port Security Detachment.

Instead of Iraq or Afghanistan, his job included traveling to various stateside ports to provide security as troops and supplies were shipped overseas, but that was little consolation to his wife of nine months, who took over the care of his children, Kevin who was 10 at the time, and Shawn, who was 6.

"I love the boys very much, just as if they're my own, but

the whole thing was pretty overwhelming at first. Mike reminded me that we were a military family, but I was scared," Dorothy said. "We were attacked on our own soil on 9-11, and they could do it again. I was constantly worried.

"Coming back from dropping him off (at his Army unit), I was sobbing," she said. "The boys put their arms around me and said, 'Don't worry. We've been through this before. He'll be back.' I felt like I was being selfish, because I was the parent. I was supposed to be the strong one."

She and the children leaned on each other, she said, and quickly formed an even stronger bond.

“Mike reminded me that we were a military family, but I was scared.”

## Knoxville gets down and dirty for the good

by Sgt Jonathan Farrar and  
 Staff Sgt. Mickey Pearson

Every year, the Knoxville community participates in the Keep Knoxville Beautiful project which involves taking ownership of defined areas within the city and doing trash and litter pick-up.

For the second time in as many years, the Knoxville MEPS staff and their families exhibited their volunteerism (Tennessee is the Volunteer state) by participating in the Keep Knoxville Beautiful project. Last year

the Knoxville MEPS participated and garnered the second place award for the entire city. The MEPS had a good turnout for the event and morale appeared high.

With this overwhelming support, the Knoxville MEPS intended to reach out and surpass the fifty bag range of last year with a plan to collect at least 70 bags of trash this year.

The group met at 8 a.m. to begin "Operation Police Call" by bagging garbage along a stretch of drive near the MEPS and

a local store. The treasures most often encountered were cans, bottles, tires, cardboard boxes, buckets, and cigarette butts. The day-long event was a total success, filled with heartwarming camaraderie. The final outcome was 72 bags of trash collected.

A couple weeks later, the city provided a barbeque luncheon to recognize all the participants in this event which four of the participants attended. On behalf of the MEPS, they received a certificate for First Place.

# *Not exactly ...* *comfortable job to become a* **Soldier**

“I became the mom, the dad, the cook, the disciplinarian, the fun one, and everything else,” she said.

There were tense moments. Early on when authorities said there might be strikes against malls and shopping centers, Dorothy said she wanted to go shopping, anyway.

“And while I was at the mall, all the electricity went out,” she said. “Everyone thought it was a bomb. It was very scary. I fell apart. I drove right to the MEPS, and they were very supportive. They helped calm me down, and we joked about it later. It was just a squirrel that had bitten through an electrical wire.”

The MEPS staff kept in touch with Dorothy and the boys throughout Mike’s activation.

“They were great,” she said. “I had heard the military was like a family, but I never experienced it. They were like a savior to me, because when Mike deployed, I didn’t know anybody yet. I had no support system other than the MEPS. It saved me from feeling so alone and scared.”

Fluit would sometimes get the chance to visit his family in Sioux Falls, or they would come to visit him, which made the separation a little easier, they said. But after his first year, he made the decision to do another 12 months of service.

“That was tough,” Dorothy admitted. “But I know why he did it, and I’m just very, very proud of my

husband for what he’s done for our country; I’m proud of everyone in uniform.”

Now the Fluit family is readjusting to life again as a family.

“It’s a tough adjustment, but we’re getting back into our routine. The two years was hard, but I believe God allowed that to strengthen my bond with the boys. It’s all for a reason,” Dorothy said.

Now that Mike is back in civilian clothes, the handlebar moustache is back, too. He’s also replaced the Army beret with



Mike Fluit after ...

a cowboy hat, but he has no regrets.

“I did what I had to do,” he said, “and I’d do it all over again.”

“ I was sobbing. The boys put their arms around me and said, ‘Don’t worry. We’ve been through this before.’ ”

## of the city

Volunteers included Sgt. Jonathan Farrar and Staff Sgt. Mickey Pearson (who spearheaded the event), Tech. Sgt. David Bamberg, Capt. Jon Rucker, Sgt. 1st Class Adolf Jones, Petty Officer 2nd Class Joanne Palumbo and her son Josh Palumbo, Staff Sgt. Jason Wilson, Petty Officer 1st Class Terry Starker, his wife Tracey and their son Jacob, MEPS Commander, Lt. Cmdr. Carol Kushmier, Cheryl Thompson, Sgt. Michael Smith, and his wife, Tiffany.



Knoxville MEPS staff and family gathered 72 bags of trash as part of their city’s Keep Knoxville Beautiful project. The MEPS group of volunteers won first place in the project.

## Rickey E. Cox

### USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year GS-10 and Above

**R**ickey E. (Rick) Cox is the USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year, GS-10 and Above. He is the senior analyst in the Program, Analysis and Evaluation Directorate, USMEPCOM Headquarters.

Mr. Cox reshaped USMEPCOM's information technology modernization and transformation strategy into a powerful instrument of change. While working as a contractor in the Information Management Directorate, Mr. Cox volunteered to lead the IT transformation project. He became the command's expert in that area and kept leading the project after he was hired as PAE's senior analyst and ensured coordination between the command, Department of Defense senior leaders and service recruiting commands. He proposed contracted assistance to conduct a business case analysis and oversaw the contractor's visits to recruiting commands, Defense Manpower Data Center and senior DOD officials to publicize the project and get their input. He helped develop more than 25 transformation briefings to spread the word about the command's transformation efforts.

As transformation project leader, he helped develop the program change proposal and organized a series of workshops. He wrote the statement of work, served as technical representative to the contracting officer and coordinated workshops with various agencies.

He organized and facilitated technical workshops with the command staff and functional and technical leaders on the "Transformation Way Ahead." In his efforts to establish a program management office, Mr. Cox coordinated and set up workshops to develop partnerships with Space and Naval Warfare Command Systems Center and the Army Program Executive Office-Enterprise Information Systems to develop requirements and objectives.

As senior analyst, Mr. Cox provided leadership and project management guidance to develop command metrics which allow leaders to gauge their performance and focus on improving operations. He established a study partnership with the U.S. Military Academy that included the MEPS Location and Optimization Study, which determines the best number and locations for MEPS under different scenarios. Mr. Cox was also a major player in revising the command's strategic plan and ensured the vision, mission, strategies and goals were completed for each directorate. He supervised the upgrade of the Quality Information Center Enterprise Reporter, known as QuICR, data analysis program which is a major part of the command's transformation program.



In the community, Mr. Cox became deeply involved in the school board's strategic planning. He led an 18-month project to establish the first comprehensive strategic plan and balanced scorecard for the district. He designed and conducted a strength, weakness, capabilities and threats survey with district leaders, teachers, student and community leaders and led strategic planning workshops with the groups. He volunteered to fill a vacancy on the school board and was later elected to office.

"Mr. Cox raised the level of analytical thinking command wide," Col. Nettie Crawford, Program Analysis and Evaluation Director, said. "He always volunteers for the tough jobs and then completes those jobs with excellence. As PAE's senior analyst, he is involved with almost every aspect of the command's major processes through analyses of facilities, medical, testing and applicant processing."

## Mary B. Moore

### USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year GS-7 - 9

**M**ary B. Moore is the USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year, GS-7 - 9. Ms. Moore is the budget technician at the Little Rock MEPS.

As the budget technician, Ms. Moore has expanded her duties as a supervisor and a member of the command inspection team. During the 2003 USMEPCOM Inspector General visit, the headquarters element rating increased from "marginal" to "excellent" and the financial management section went from "satisfactory" to "excellent." The IG team chief cited her financial management program as one of the best. Ms. Moore was chosen by the Headquarters field support staff to serve temporary duty at the headquarters to help conduct the command's year-end closeout. She single-handedly managed the MEPS fiscal 2003 budget while training a new assistant budget technician and assuming new responsibility as the supply technician's supervisor.

Ms. Moore allows the headquarters element to be more flexible by serving as the assistant time keeper and assistant mail manager and by being able to fill in as the supply technician and secretary.

She devised and wrote a standard operating procedure for the Bank of America travel card program. Her training and attention to detail in activating and deactivating travel cards has ensured there is no misuse of government travel cards. The MEPS travel card delinquency rate was zero for more than a year because of her efforts.

She researched the requirement for civilian supervisory training, corrected a long-standing IG discrepancy, documented all the steps to fulfill the command requirement and coordinated with USMEP-



COM Headquarters to secure funding. She helped the secretary put together the reception for the 30th Anniversary of the All-Volunteer Force ceremony. Their efforts produced a professional reception enjoyed by more than 100 people who attended the event.

As the assistant mail manager, Ms. Moore has reduced postage costs by nearly \$900 per quarter by using alternate shipping services and using consolidated packaging.

Ms. Moore is an assistant coach for a parochial school volleyball team and fills in for the head coach when he is unable to attend practices and games. She teaches step aerobics three times a week and is an active member of the parent teacher organization as well as serving as a room mother.

"Ms. Moore is the ultimate professional," Maj. Brian England, Little Rock MEPS commander, said. "Her competence and attention to detail are at such a high level that not only do I trust her and rely on her recommendation, but so does the headquarters. I have received acknowledgement of her expertise, knowledge and willingness to help on countless occasions from other in the command."

## Hugh A. Kinsey

### USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year GS-6 and Below

**H**ugh A. Kinsey is the USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year, GS-6 and Below. Mr. Kinsey is the lead human resources assistant at the Oklahoma City MEPS.

Mr. Kinsey was an essential element in the Oklahoma City MEPS processing more than 15,500 applicants. He showed he is flexible and adaptable in an undermanned department. During personnel shortages he assumed duties as the travel specialist. His efforts ensured all applicants arrived at the airport on time and boarded their flights without delay. Upon being promoted to lead human resources assistant, he reorganized and updated files, policies and regulations, and implemented an aggressive training program.

During the heavy shipping season, Mr. Kinsey worked flexible hours to ensure applicants received Red Carpet treatment and also trained three new people assigned to operations and spent many hours training new senior service counselors. His efforts helped the operations section improve from a satisfactory during the 2001 staff assistance visit to an excellent rating in 2003. He was personally selected to attend USMIRS Centralized Relational Data Base and Near Real Time Train the Trainer training and has used his knowledge to train MEPS members and prepare for local implementation.

Mr. Kinsey served as the Amusement Vending Machine Fund Committee president and was responsible for unit functions includ-



ing the Christmas party and organization day, which allowed MEPS members to enjoy activities that boosted unit morale. He also volunteered as the unit Combined Federal Campaign coordinator and, through his efforts, the MEPS achieved 100 percent employee participation for the first time in more than five years. His dedication to the campaign resulted in the MEPS achieving 206 percent of its contribution goal.

A member of the Oklahoma National Guard, Mr. Kinsey was selected as colors sergeant and bugler for the governor's honor guard. He is an active member of his church where he serves as director and arranger for the brass ensemble and a member of the choir. Mr. Kinsey supported community efforts including the Feed the Children food drive, Salvation Army relief efforts for tornado victims, Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon and Combined Federal Campaign Fun Walk.

"Mr. Kinsey is an invaluable asset to the Oklahoma City MEPS," Lt. Cmdr. Robert A. Dews, MEPS commander, said. "He sets very high standards for himself. No one is more committed to the mission, 'Red Carpet treatment' and fellow workers."

## Capt. Eugene A. Moore III

### USMEPCOM Company Grade Officer of the Year

**C**aptain Eugene A. Moore, III is the USMEPCOM Company Grade Officer of the Year. Captain Moore is the operations officer at the Atlanta MEPS.

Moore was originally assigned as the Atlanta MEPS test control officer. After assuming the operations officer duties, he ran both sections for three months. He oversaw processing for 16,000 applicants, 36,000 testing functions, more than 20,000 medical actions, more than 10,000 accessions and administered a \$3.1 million budget. His support to recruiters led to six of seven recruiting services exceeding their annual enlistment goals.

The Eastern Sector commander hand picked him to conduct a complex equal opportunity investigation at another MEPS. Moore's detailed report produced results and helped the MEPS recover. The Raleigh MEPS commander asked him to help prepare for an upcoming Inspector General inspection. Moore identified discrepancies and recommended corrective actions. At the Atlanta MEPS, his command inspection program helped the unit achieve an "excellent" rating on its Inspector General inspection.

Moore rewrote the testing and operations standard operating procedure guides and coordinated with Interservice Recruitment



Council. He developed a command inspection strategy that identified and corrected discrepancies. As a result, the MEPS had an overall "excellent" rating on its Inspector General inspection.

Moore led the No. 1 test producing section in Eastern Sector (second in the command overall). The section administered nearly 25,000 student tests in the 2003 school year and began the 2004 school year with 2,300 tests on national test day. He oversaw testing at 265 schools with no tests lost and 11,000 enlistment tests with 100 percent scoring accuracy. He also implemented an unlimited summer walk-in test initiative that saved recruiters \$100,000 in transportation and lodging costs. He negotiated an end to Sunday night testing with the IRC.

In a year when the MEPS was without a chief medical officer, Moore made sure the \$350,000 fee-basis physician program stayed on track. He restructured the consult process, got in-house orthopedic appointments that reduced the no-show rate to less than 1 percent and saved recruiting services more than \$100,000. Moore instituted a quarterly "mini IRC" with operations officers and NCO-ICs which has been effective in solving problems at the lowest level possible.

In the community, Moore promoted and took part in a middle school career day that provided guidance to inner city youths, volunteered at the Atlanta Community Food Bank, led volunteers who landscaped an assisted-living facility and collected more than \$4,000 in clothing and toys for the court appointed special advocate organization.

"Captain Moore's active leadership style is essential to our mission success," Lt. Col. Evelyn Tirado, Atlanta MEPS commander, said. "He shows his leadership in both military and civilian communities. He is simply a remarkable officer."

## Master Sgt. Timothy Morse

### USMEPCOM Senior NCO of the Year

Master Sgt. Timothy Morse is the USMEPCOM Senior NCO of the Year. Morse is the Testing NCOIC at the Portland, Maine, MEPS.

He led the testing section to back-to-back excellent ratings by the Inspector General. He trains and certifies 11 MEPS test administrators and 14 Office of Personnel Management test administrators. His MEPS and off-site training resulted in 10,945 ASVAB tests administered and scored during fiscal 2003

with no test loss compromises. He showed his management skills by coping with having the test coordinator position vacant for seven months and created a mail merge database which helped the MEPS achieve 104.7 percent of its recruiter lead goal. He wrote a detailed 53-page guide on testing desktop procedures with appendices covering all key areas. He created a new testing room and was instrumental in getting new furniture for the testing section, which will enhance the section's appearance and work flow.



## Runners Up ... Runners Up ...

### Civilian of the Year GS-10 and Above

Western Sector  
**Dr. Phillip Catron**  
San Diego MEPS

Eastern Sector  
**Frank Holmes III**  
Nashville MEPS

### Civilian of the Year GS-7 - 9

Eastern Sector  
**Kasia Wynne**  
Springfield MEPS

### Civilian of the Year GS-6 and Below

USMEPCOM Headquarters  
**Anna Schuenke**  
Operations Directorate

Eastern Sector  
**Linda Wehren**  
Jacksonville MEPS

### Company Grade Officers of the Year

USMEPCOM Headquarters  
**Lt. Terry Douglas**  
Operations Directorate

Western Sector  
**Capt. Stewart Pulley**  
Oklahoma City MEPS

Morse created calendars for and scheduled all MET site tests for all of Maine and part of New Hampshire. He monitored projections for all the sites and cancelled those with no projected testers. His efforts saved money and maintained rapport with OPM because test administrators didn't have to drive to no show test sessions. Morse saved the command money by closing one site where usage was low, which had to be coordinated with OPM and the Interservice Recruitment Committee.

The MEPS commander chose Morse to be the only enlisted Automated Vending Machine Fund Manager in USMEPCOM. Upon appointment he immediately identified missing documentation and corrected deficiencies. He was selected as a member of the command Metrics Development Team and helped establish detailed metrics to measure the effectiveness of all 65 MEPS. Morse devised presentations for training day that involved MEPS members going to a section other than their own to see how tasks were accomplished.

Morse volunteered to orchestrate a retirement ceremony for the first sergeant, including preparing a shadow box, invitations and programs in addition to setting up a memorabilia table and narrating the ceremony. He also managed the change of command reception including food and beverages, and setup and tear down.

Morse has participated in various community events including the annual Portland Boys and Girls Club run. He organized a climb of Mount Kearsarge in New Hampshire.

"Master Sergeant Morse is what you want and hope for in a senior NCO," Maj. Timothy S. Merriot, MEPS commander, said. His leadership, dedication and deep concern for the mission are contagious and have had a profound impact on the MEPS."

## Runners Up

### Senior NCOs of the Year

Eastern Sector  
**Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Huggins**  
Lansing MEPS

USMEPCOM Headquarters  
**Sgt. 1st Class Lloyd McKinney**  
Operations Directorate

Western Sector  
**Sgt. 1st Class Henry Moore Jr.**  
Honolulu MEPS

### Military Members of the Year

Eastern Sector  
**Staff Sgt. Randolph Mann**  
Springfield MEPS

Western Sector  
**Tech. Sgt. Karen McFadden**  
Sioux Falls MEPS

## Staff Sgt. Michelle Richards

### USMEPCOM Military Member of the Year

Staff Sgt. Michelle Richards is the USMEPCOM Military Member of the Year.

As the Phoenix MEPS travel specialist, she directed all operations in the travel section and supervised two people. She also managed and tracked all shippers and shipper records and maintained office files. Richards developed efficient, user-friendly travel schedules for more than 4,600 applicants. She coordinated with airlines to confirm tickets, completed ticket changes



and contacted Military Traffic Management Command when she couldn't get Passenger Standard Routing Order flights. She was instrumental in an organized applicant packet breakdown which, at the Phoenix MEPS, includes copying documents for the recruiting services.

Richards conducted hundreds of travel briefings for applicants, and thanks to her detailed briefings, no applicants encountered transportation problems they couldn't handle. She coordinated with senior recruiting service liaisons to make sure all applicants were processed through operations and departed in ample time to catch their flights. Richards completely revamped and streamlined travel files, including paperwork for tracking hundreds of government travel requests and meal tickets.

She updated and maintained or disposed of more than 10 years worth of records. Her efforts were rewarded when the Inspector General team could not find a single fault in the travel section.

She managed the Bank of America Government charge cards for all five services — accounts totaling more than \$1 million a year — and carefully tracked, calculated and paid all the services' bills on time. Richards also managed to perfection the meal checks for applicants shipping to basic training.

In addition to her regular duties, Richards performs a number of additional duties and is active in unit extracurricular activities. As the unit equal opportunity officer, she coordinated and executed regionally and nationally recognized ethnic observances. The events featured food and a variety of posters and displays. In addition to those events, she conducted quarterly equal opportunity training and briefed staff on topics including sexual harassment, equal opportunity, consideration of others and extremist hate groups. She is also considered the MEPS fitness expert and conducted warm-ups and aerobics for training days.

Richards took part in the American Cancer Society Run/Walk for Life Program and Luke Air Force Base sponsored running events, and served as a peer tutor in Park University.

"Staff Sergeant Richards is the absolute best," Lt. Cmdr. Frederick B. Lawrence, Phoenix MEPS commander, said. "She is the first to raise her hand and volunteer for every activity and the go-to person when it needs to be done right the first time. She has not only set the bar very high, but tried to help others meet it."



By 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Michelle Barbee  
Charlotte MEPS

Serena Edwards and her family got an early Christmas present that wouldn't fit under a tree. She moved into her new home in November that 10 volunteers from the Charlotte MEPS helped build for Habitat for Humanity.

They joined more than 800 volunteers who helped build

eight homes over an eight-day period.

"Volunteering in the community to help build a home was a very rewarding experience, and one that I highly recommend for any organization. We felt good about helping out, and we learned an additional skill," Charlotte MEPS Commander, Maj. Daniel McGuffey said.

The MEPS crew and other volunteers spent one day in

September building the frame and walls of the future home at 817 Cantwell Street, even if they didn't have any prior experience.

"With the military, we can do anything," the first sergeant said. "Just let us know what we have to do, and we'll figure out a way. And we had a great time doing it. It was a great experience seeing the foundation of the house coming together."

The part-time homebuilders included the MEPS commander, Maj. Daniel McGuffey, Lt. David Nikodym, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Michelle Barbee, 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Sarah Smith, Gunnery Sgt. Kenneth Morse, Staff Sgt. Paul New, Sgt. Crystal Smith, Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Donna Patrick, Brenda Barnett, and David Allen.

“

*With the military, we can do anything. Just let us know what we have to do, and we'll figure out a way. It was a great experience seeing the foundation of the house coming together.*

”

# *San Jose gives up the red stuff*

By Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class  
Tom Schmall  
San Jose MEPS

While military men and women fight the war on terror abroad, the San Jose MEPS did its part with a Sept. 10 blood drive for military troops, in honor of the Sept. 11 terrorism victims.

More than 35 people donated 21 units of blood, thanks

to Capt. Janet Hall, the San Jose MEPS operations officer who organized the event through the American Service Blood Program. That blood was shipped to overseas military units. Officials said several people were turned away because they served in areas overseas where people are now restricted from giving blood — just one sign of how difficult it is to collect enough blood, and



A representative from the American Service Blood Program draws a donation from Sgt. Kim Ramirez during the San Jose blood drive to honor the Sept. 11 terrorism victims.

the need for more people to donate.

If the ASBP runs out of stock, they must try to find other facilities such as hospitals and the Red Cross that may have the blood they need. But officials said it usually costs \$250 or

more for one unit. Leukemia patients usually require 30 units of blood and trauma patients can use 40.

The San Jose MEPS is planning another blood drive in March.

# Magnificent

# 7

*With powers greater than mere mortals, one MEPS makes a difference*

By Tech. Sgt.  
Gary J. Kunich  
Messenger  
Associate  
Editor

They called themselves the Magnificent Seven — able to clean a window to a streak-free

shine, weed a garden at warp speed, and paint faster than a subcontractor working by the hour.

The seven volunteers from the Buffalo MEPS — 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Josh Furby, Debra Utecht, Bette Chapman, Sgt. William Ramos, Sgt. John Garcia, and Marvin Saddler — joined 6,000 other federal employee volunteers for the United Way's Day of Caring campaign.

This was the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Day of Caring, which matches up volunteers with projects around the community. The United Way asked the

Buffalo MEPS crew to spend the day at St. Mark's Manor, an assisted-living facility, where they washed windows, weeded gar-

dens, painted walls, and talked with the residents.

"It was very rewarding, and everyone there was friendly and very welcoming," said Chapman, who organized the Buffalo crew

"I was here just two days and they recruited me, but I'm an old first sergeant so it didn't bother me," Saddler added. "It was just the natural thing to want to go out and have fun helping these folks out." (Additional reporting by Bette Chapman).

## MEPS do a little mambo, a little rumba and a spicy salsa, too

Like many of their counterparts around the country, the Portland, Maine, and New Orleans MEPS took time to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month with a little food, a little culture, and a little fun.

In New Orleans, the MEPS crew gathered in the new dining hall for a first-ever Hispanic Heritage potluck luncheon, while Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Mario Fernandez shared cultural experiences from his upbringing. He told the crew how his Honduran mother and Guatemalan father met each other after they both immigrated to New Orleans to start a new life.

The Portland MEPS didn't just learn about a different culture, they got in on the action with the help of Staff Sgt. Laura Zamarron, Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class Billy James, and his wife, Merchi.

After Zamarron touched on some history and accomplishments, everyone feasted on a potluck lunch representing several Hispanic cultures. Then it was time to work off those extra calories. Shawn Munro Edgcombe and Wayne Barker performed several Latin dances, including a rumba, mambo, and a spicy salsa, before giving lessons to the entire MEPS.



### Music Man

It's not every day a service member gets a military coin before they even get in a uniform. But the Harrisburg MEPS Commander, Lt. Col. Joseph Innerst (left), had a good reason to make Navy applicant Frank Spencer an exception. While processing, a MEPS employee noticed Spencer was going in the military as a musician and that he had two bachelor's degrees in music. Spencer broke into an impromptu version of God Bless America, and after drawing a small crowd, Innerst asked if he would sing for the entire MEPS. All processing stopped for the performance, and when Spencer finished, the MEPS erupted in thunderous applause.

They don't deliver their goodies from up above, but from the kindness of their hearts. You can call them

## Airport Angels

By Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Sheldon Smith  
Little Rock MEPS Travel Specialist

Personality conflicts, changed flights, last-minute shippers, no-showing shippers, and any number of situations can make for an unpredictable day at any MEPS. But at Little Rock, there is something applicants and MEPS employees can count on each day — the Airport Angels and their care packages for new recruits.

The volunteer group, which just celebrated its second anniversary, started with a small number of retirees to show appreciation for the U.S. military. There are now 25 volunteers recruited by newspaper ads and word of mouth, and they stay busy stuffing the goodie bags with products donated by HMS Host, the lead airport concessionaire, said T.J. Williams, a spokeswoman for the Little Rock National Airport.

Each morning, the crew calls the MEPS to find out how many people are shipping to boot camp and about what time they'll be at the airport. Then once the group is checked in for their flights, the "angels" give them their goodie bag.

The usual box includes stationary, envelopes, a few stamps, playing cards, bandana, small American flag, chewing gum, bottled water and other knick-knacks to raise morale as shippers spend their last few hours waiting for flights to basic training. The group has handed out more than 1,200 packages since the program began, with a record of 350 boxes during the July rush.

"The biggest reward we've received was the other day when a young man flew back through Little Rock on his way home from basic training," said Dave Dyson, the program's inventory manager. "He told me how much it meant to him that we gave him that care package. That's the best thanks we could ever receive."

# Splat!

## Buffalo commander takes it in the kisser for CFC

By 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Josh Furby  
Buffalo MEPS

Sometimes when you're the boss, you have to take a pie to the face. At least Navy Lt. Cmdr. Christopher Harris from the Buffalo MEPS can rest easy, knowing his pie-splattered mug helped raise more than \$3,634 for the Combined Federal Campaign—more than doubling last year's contributions.

The Buffalo MEPS each year comes up with fundraisers for the annual charity. Last year, the MEPS raised \$1,454, but they set



1st Lt. Josh Furby got the honors to deliver the pie to his boss after donating the most money for the cause.

a target of \$2,000 during the latest campaign.

The first event — a bake sale — pulled in \$125. Then, as an incentive, Harris offered a one-day pass to the section that could raise the most money by October 17.

Operations decided to have a best guess contest. Marine Sgt. Anthony Garza filled an Italian crystal vase with wrapped pieces of chocolate and whoever could guess how many pieces were inside would win the vase and its contents. Each guess cost a buck, and many people couldn't resist the temptation for such a delicious prize. After a valiant effort, the operations section raised \$65.

Not to be outdone, Air Force Staff Sgt. Breck Downey and the Medical section sold tickets for a chance to win a new DVD player and raised \$368.

And just maybe they would have won the one-day pass, had it not been for the Testing Section, which believed one could never have too much pie, and apparently, the thought of smearing someone's face with pie was a chance they couldn't pass up. Votes went for 25 cents a pop, and the three who gave the most were allowed to make the pies and do the smearing.

Harris took first place in the voting with 334 votes, followed by the medical NCOIC, Chief Petty Officer Shannon Jayasinghe with 330, and 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Faith Durden with 321. All told, Testing raised \$402 and earned the pass.

## Dossier

**Tami Hewitt**  
Supply Technician  
Salt Lake City MEPS



**Hometown:** Tooele, Utah

**Years of government service:** 13

**Hobbies:** Scrap booking, wildlife watching and my daughter, Bailey

**What she considers her singlemost important achievement thus far in life:** "My daughter, Bailey."

**Three things that can always be found in her refrigerator:** "Diet Coke, milk and juice."

**Last book she read:** "A Perfect Day," by Richard Paul Evans

**Favorite book:** "'Message from Nam,'" by Danielle Steel, because it gave me more insight on the Vietnam War. It was a story about a journalist and her observations and feelings about the war."

**Motto she lives by:** "Never say never."

**Times per year she changes her hairstyle:** "Two."

**Her favorite pair of shoes and why:** "Moccasins, because they are soft and comfortable."

**One type of food she can't live without:** "Mexican."

**Her favorite song by Elvis Presley:** "Hound Dog."

**The two greatest people she's met and why:** "My father and grandfather. They both were a great inspiration to my life."

**What she would do if she had three hours all to herself:** "Take a long, hot bath and read a book."

**If she was an animal, she would be a:** "Wolf."

**What's her usual order at McDonald's:** "Quarter Pounder with cheese."

**A little bit country or a little bit rock 'n' roll?**

"Country, because it is slower and I can understand all the words."

**If she won \$20 million, what would she do?** "Invest some of it, put some money into a savings account for my daughter and pay off my grandmother's house."

# Army-Navy rivalry gets personal

*She goes green,  
but submariner dad  
doesn't mind*

By Lt. Cmdr. Ann Rennie  
Seattle MEPS

The battle lines have been drawn in the Beard household, and Army-Navy football games will never be the same again.

When Rebecca Beard processed through the Seattle MEPS on her way to becoming an Army officer, she assured the storied rivalry will at least continue in her home. Her father is retired Navy Capt. Garnet Beard, who made a career as a submariner. Her grandfather was also a naval officer during World War II and Korea. But Rebecca decided to follow the boot imprints left by her aunt and uncle — her aunt Ann is a retired colonel, and uncle Glenn is an active colonel and inspector general at Fort Lewis. Her older brother, Sgt. Dan Beard, is in the Army, too, and currently serving with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne in Iraq. According to the Beard family, the military lineage goes all the way back to the Civil War.

There's no telling if there was a family rivalry that far back, but there was one when

Rebecca's aunt and uncle deployed to the Middle East for Desert Storm, and her mother, Alpha, took care of their three children. When the aunt and uncle returned, the youngest was already trained to say, "Go Navy! Beat Army!"

Rebecca herself has some impressive athletic skills. She attended Seattle Pacific University on a basketball scholarship, so joining the military wasn't a way to pay back college loans, but to continue that military heritage.

Beard was first scheduled for basic training before going directly to Officer Candidate School. Her dream is to follow her aunt and uncles' career paths in the military police specialty.



Rebecca Beard — now a full-fledged Army officer — poses with her submariner dad, Capt. Garnet Beard, her uncle, Army Col. Glenn Beard, and other family and friends after enlisting at the Seattle MEPS. Her grandfather was also a Naval officer from World War II and Korea, but Rebecca decided it's maybe better to do more before 5 a.m. than most people do all day, thus ensuring some lively conversations at the next Beard family reunion.

## It followed us home, Mom ... Can we keep it?

The Fort Jackson MEPS processes applicants who end up driving tanks. After a recent training day with local Marines from the 8<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion, several people from the MEPS climbed aboard and got their own chance on an M1 Abrams. We just hope the guys standing in front of the tank got out of the way first.



# A hundred miles of hurtin'

***You think a 26.2-mile marathon is tough? That's chump running to this super athlete And Oh yeah, he's in the Air Force ...***

by Tech. Sgt. Gary J. Kunich  
Messenger Associate Editor

Call Paul Lindauer crazy. Everybody does, and he's OK with that.

"I get called that a lot, actually," he chuckled. "We are kind of weird and crazy. We live on the fringe. Maybe that's some of the attraction."

The Air Force master sergeant from the Boise MEPS doesn't just run ... he runs. He is an ultra-marathoner who completed a 100-mile race in 2002, and is preparing for another one this August in Easton, Wash. He likes to throw in a few smaller runs, too. Last week he

block, he wanted to see if he could run to and from work. That took about an hour, so he decided to run two hours straight, then built up from there. The next step was the 1995 White Rock Marathon in Dallas, Texas, where he finished in 3:50.

"From there on, I was hooked," he said.

He brought his running to the next level after moving in 1999 to Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. A friend he met on a trail run told him about HURT —

***"I had one hallucination in the middle of the night in a dense jungle area. I saw this boy and girl looking at me. I started walking toward them, and they were just leaves and a bush."***

finished a 31-miler in Boise that has a name that can't be repeated in a family publication. Suffice to say, the name of that race has to do with the fact that it's in the wintertime, and you have to get off your fat butt to run it, he said.

The 19-year Air Force medic spends his days as the medical NCOIC at Boise MEPS. When he's not working or spending time with his wife, Ann, or two children, Noelle, 13, and Luke, 9, he's running. Then he runs some more. Then he likes to run. Normal daily jogs are 5 or 10 miles, with usually a personal marathon of three to five hours almost every weekend. Besides his personal runs and the 100-miler, he's completed seven official marathons, and four official runs longer than 26 miles. It keeps the 5'10" Lindauer at a lean 162 pounds with a 32-inch waist.

"I'm like everyone else. I'd like to lose 5 or 10 pounds," he said, "but I eat ice cream and cookies every night."

Lindauer first started running while stationed at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas. After a few runs around the

perhaps the perfect acronym for the aptly-named Hawaii Ultra Running Team. An ultra run is anything over the normal marathon of 26.2 miles, and this group does 30- and 40-milers each weekend.

"At first I couldn't keep up, but they started giving me tips. They were such a good group of people. They taught me how, and they all had such positive attitudes, and I saw how that related to their personal life as well."

His wife supported him from the beginning, even though she had the same reaction as everyone else.

"Oh yeah, he's definitely crazy," she said. "When he told me, it didn't really surprise me, because he loves running so much. I figured he accomplished the marathon goal, and he'd accomplish that one, too. But it's crazy."

By 2002, Lindauer was ready for his



Paul Lindauer maneuvers along some wet rocks on his way to running 100 miles straight. The run took him over some treacherous terrain, and he fell at least 20 times during the ordeal.

first 100-miler — five loops around a 20-mile course over pavement, trails, mountains and wooded areas. The only rule was runners had to finish in 36



# A hundred miles of hurtin'



## Continued from page 35

hours. Lindauer completed the trek in 35 hours and 29 minutes. Out of 62 who started, he was one of 12 who finished. With a 100-miler, there is no sleeping, and if you sit or rest too long, you won't complete it, he said.

"There was a lot of rain, it was hilly, and the conditions were muddy. I fell down about 20 times. I actually think it's easier running more than a marathon. With a marathon, you try to keep up with everyone, and you hit a wall faster. With an ultra, you learn to combine running with fast walking while going up hill. There are a few aid stations, but you only stay for a few minutes at each one. You learn how to hydrate and eat along the way, and you know there is a longer way to go, so you stay focused on that instead of going as fast as you can.

"I had one mild hallucination in the middle of the night (during that run). I was coming down the hill in a dense jungle area about 3 or 4 in the morning, and saw this boy and girl looking at me. I started walking toward them, and they were just leaves and a bush."

His wife cheered him on throughout the race, but unlike her husband, she slept during those 35 hours.

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Muddied, tired, and worn, Paul Lindauer takes the final few steps toward finishing his first 100-mile run in Hawaii. Lindauer said those who run ultra marathons are an eccentric lot, which may explain why his friend and running mentor (left) had his name legally changed to akabill.

“I caught him after he made his first loop and when he made the fourth loop, then I waited for him to finish it,” she said. “The first time I saw him, he surprised the heck out of me. I expected him to look a little worse for wear, but he looked really good. I think it was all the adrenaline.”

Ann likes going on hikes with her husband, but don't ask her to join him in any runs.

“Oh, heavens, no!” she said. “I can only run a block and a half down the street. He can actually run further than he can drive. He hates to drive long distances, but I love to drive, so it balances out.”

Back in the States since May 2003, Lindauer has his sites set on the Cascade Crest 100, Aug. 28 in Washington.

But it isn't all running for Lindhauer. Since joining the Air Force, he's also earned a bachelor's degree in health care management, and a master's in English. Now he's considering earning a teacher's certificate for a new job when he retires in the near future.

“All the running has helped me in life, too,” he said. “It's helped me to set goals, and to accomplish them. I know what I do isn't for everybody, but if you like to run, and you want to get in shape, it's the best exercise there is.”

But even if it is the best exercise, if you still think running 100 miles is a little nuts, and if you want to call Paul Lindhauer crazy, that's no problem. He gets it a lot. And he's OK with that.



Cheryl Beeman (right) admires the sign that makes it official: after years of community service, the community showed its appreciation by naming a soccer field in her honor.

## Soccer mom extraordinaire

### Super volunteer from Pittsburgh MEPS gets a kick of field named in her honor

By Capt. Jason Hearn  
Pittsburgh MEPS

Cheryl Beeman isn't just an automation specialist at the Pittsburgh MEPS, she's a soccer field.

The North Allegheny Soccer League rewarded her years of volunteerism recently when they named a new soccer complex in her honor.

“I was very honored and humbled by my soccer club choosing me. My first reaction was that there was someone else better than me to name the field after.”

The multi-field complex is state of the art, with a self-watering hydration system and a specially grown turf that will stand up to many years of youth soccer.

Beeman began coaching soccer in 1982 after her son joined a local team.

“Since my son was on the team I tried it and really ended up enjoying it,” she said.

Since that time, she has been certified to coach at all levels and has coached several teams to the state regional playoffs. After 21 years of competitive coaching, she moved to an administrative role with the soccer league.

Today she serves as a member of the North Allegheny Soccer Association as a committee board member, registrar and booster club supporter. As a registrar, she ensures the youth are properly signed up within their appropriate age groups and balances the association's accounts. During the off seasons, she mails literature about the league and keeps players and their parents updated on league policies and changes. (Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Nathan Ruska contributed to this story).



## He tried talking him into the Air Force, but ...

Capt. Matt Groleau, the Milwaukee MEPS operations officer (above left) normally handles military enlistment oaths, but this one was a bit more memorable when the Air Force captain enlisted his cousin, Ryan Groleau, into the Marines. After completing boot camp in San Diego, the younger Groleau went on to infantry training at Camp Lejeune.



## Let's see a show of hands ... who wants to join the Army?

Husband Brian Stidham (above left) and his wife, Kristen, both enlisted into the Delayed Entry Program for a hitch in the U.S. Army, earlier this year at the Milwaukee MEPS. Brian shipped to basic training at Fort Jackson, S.C., and Kristen arrived at the same place for basic a couple months later.



## An Army of one ... set of twins

Brothers Grant (left) and William Holmes of Monroe, N.C., aren't just twins, they're privates in the U.S. Army. The two enlisted together at the Charlotte MEPS and plan to enter the Special Forces.

# Knoxville service members join community in Red Ribbon Week

by Petty officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class Terry Starker and Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Nathan Ruska

“Be A Hero, Don’t Do Drugs!” was the phrase of the day at the Farragut Middle School in Knoxville, Tenn., during their Red Ribbon Week 2003.

As part of this recognition, three military members from the Knoxville MEPS; Tech. Sgt. Glenn Brown, Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class Terry Starker and Staff Sgt. Sharon Mikel

volunteered their time passing out red book-markers with the catch phrase, “Be A Hero, Don’t Do Drugs” emblazoned upon them and talking to the students as they entered the building for school.

“I felt it was important to volunteer for this because it is important to catch them at a younger age and warn them about the dangers of drugs” Mikel said.

The three members handed out ribbons side-by-side Karen Whitney of the Farragut PTA and Police Officer James Riddle who leads the D.A.R.E. program at the school. It was a general consensus that those who wear uniforms are heroes in the eyes of the children.

“As heroes, it was a small task to be asked to accomplish and we were honored to be part of it.” Starker said.

## Albany MEPS

### Master Sgt. Wolfgang Schaller

Medical NCOIC  
Years of service: 22  
Last assignment: Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.  
Diversions: Fantasy sports, bowling, and ice fishing  
First impression: Organized

## Amarillo MEPS

### Capt. Thomas Lesnick

Operations Officer  
Years of service: 8  
Last assignment: 101st Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, Ky.  
Civilian education: Bachelor's from Arizona State; Master's from Murray State University  
Military education: Adjutant General Officer Basic Course, Captain's Career Course  
Diversions: Golf and dogs  
First impression: Very impressed with professionals at the Amarillo MEPS

## Boise MEPS

### Maj. Michael Timmerman

Commander  
Years of service: 17  
Last assignment: Malmstrom Air Force Base, Great Falls, Mont.  
Diversions: Anything outdoors  
First impression: Great place to work. Beautiful location. Great people.

### 2nd Lt. Marcus Davis

Test Control Officer  
Years of service: 7  
Last assignment: Camp Hovey, Korea  
Diversions: Family, all sports, reading  
First impression: Extremely organized, a great working environment and outstanding cohesion

### Master Sgt. Paul Lindauer

Medical NCOIC  
Years of service: 19  
Last assignment: Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii  
Diversions: Family activities, running, reading anything and everything  
First impression: Fantastic location and work atmosphere. Very impressed with all branches and civilians.

### Sgt. Wesley Adkins

Medical Technician  
Years of service: 6  
Last assignment: Fort Drum, N.Y.  
Diversions: Family, school, guitar, drawing  
First impression: Great place to continue school and spend some quality time with the family

### 1st Sgt. Bernard Jensen

First Sergeant  
Last assignment: Inspector General NCOIC, U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Meade, Md.  
Diversions: Reading, enjoying being "out West"  
First impression: "Great city, great organization!"

### Dr. Claude Bowman

Last assignment: Education Services Specialist, El Paso MEPS  
Diversions: Family, reading, martial arts and soccer  
First impression: "Wonderful MEPS. Great facility and the people here are wonderful, seem to work well together and have already extended a welcome hand of friendship to myself and my family as well."

## Boston MEPS

### Sgt. Keisha Thompson

Years of service: 6  
Last assignment: Heidelberg, Germany  
First impression: Great place to work

## Buffalo MEPS

### Michael McLachlan

Operations Clerk  
Years of service: 11  
Last assignment: NCOIC, Executive Support/Peterson Air Force Base, Colo.  
Military education: Airman Leadership School, 7-Level School, Workgroup Managers Course  
First impression: Co-workers are helpful and friendly. Atmosphere is great. I really think it will be enjoyable to work here.

### Yolanda Pilgram

Medical Specialist  
Years of service: 6  
Last assignment: Fort Jackson, S.C.  
Diversions: Reading, working out, road trips  
First impression: Very busy place

### Michael Insalaco

Testing Clerk  
Years of service: 20  
Last assignment: First Sergeant, Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D.  
Civilian education: Two Associate's degrees - Social Service Technician and General Studies  
Military education: NCO Preparatory Course, Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, Academic Instructor's School, Mediation Certification, NCO Academy, Senior NCO Academy, First Sergeant's Academy  
Diversions: All sports  
First impression: Excellent

### Sgt. Adela Carrillo

Medical Technician  
Years of service: 6  
Last assignment: Fort Sam Houston, Texas  
Civilian education: Associate's degree  
Diversions: Eating out  
First impression: pretty relaxed with great hours

## Butte MEPS

### Sgt. 1st Class Luis Lujan

Operations NCOIC  
Years of service: 20  
Diversions: Running, walking, cycling, gold, basketball, fishing, music  
First impression: Fantastic, great place to work and make a difference in the future members of the Armed Forces

## Charlotte MEPS

### Petty Officer Benjamin Strong

Medical Technician  
Years of service: 8  
Last assignment: Naval Hospital, Jacksonville, Fla.  
Military education: Naval School of Health Sciences, San Diego, Calif.  
First impression: Nice place to be!

## El Paso MEPS

### Lt. Brian Baker

Operations Officer  
Years of service: 8  
Last assignment: Joint Information Operation Center, San Antonio, Texas  
Military education: U.S. Naval Academy, Surface Warfare Officer School, Airborne Jump School, Damage Control School  
Civilian education: Master of Business Administration, Bachelor of Science in English  
Diversions: Classic car restoration  
First impression: Clean, very helpful, friendly employees

## Fargo MEPS

### Maj. Brian Kalk

Commander  
Years of service: 16  
Last assignment: Transportation Support Group 1, Camp Pendleton, Calif.  
First impression: "When I came to the Fargo MEPS in December 1987, it was small and cold. Now in August 2003, it's small, friendly and important to the community and military service."

### Chief Petty Officer Leroy LaGier

Medical NCOIC  
Years of service: 18  
Last assignment: Recruit Division Command, Great Lakes, Ill.  
First impression: "Quiet."

### Capt. Christopher Blickley

Operations Officer  
Years of service: 5  
Last assignment: 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colo.  
First impression: "Very efficient."

## Honolulu MEPS

### Lt. Cmdr. Theresa Ann Lewis

Commanding Officer  
Years of service: 14  
Last assignment: Commanding Officer, Military Sealift Command Office, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii  
Military education: Distinguished Graduate from Navy War College  
Civilian education: Master of Science in Management  
Diversions: Jazz singing, running, fine dining and wine tasting, water skiing  
First Impression: "The best!"

**1st Sgt. Letha Fay Lawson**

First Sergeant  
Years of service: 21  
Last assignment: Purdue University, Army ROTC West Lafayette, Ind.  
Diversions: Gardening  
First impression: Great pre-arrival sponsorship and super reception at the airport. What better way to start my first sergeant duties than to attend a memorable Change of Command and 30th anniversary of an All-Volunteer Force Ceremony.

**Steven K. Cook**

Education Services Specialist  
Last assignment: Boise MEPS ESS  
Civilian education: Bachelor's in Health Education, Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling, DC Chiropractic  
Diversions: Surfing, sailing, diving  
First impression: A great place to work in the most beautiful island in the world.

**Petty Officer 2nd Class Jason Polarek**

Processing Clerk  
Years of service: 5  
Last assignment: USS Briscoe  
First impression: "Don't want to leave!"

**Houston MEPS****Sgt. Jaime Rodriguez**

Medical  
Years of service: 7

**Petty Officer 2nd Class****Kristina Clements**

Medical  
Years of service: 7  
Last command: Air Station, Cape Cod, Mass.

**LaQuitha Fuller**

Medical

**Carol Todds**

Medical

**Sgt. Robert Garcia**

Control Desk, Operations  
Years of service: 11  
Last command: NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium

**Kansas City MEPS****Sgt. Kelly Rolon**

Administrative NCO  
Years of service: 5  
Last assignment: United States Army Garrison, Camp Zama, Japan  
Civilian education: Associate's degree  
Diversions: Reading, hiking, and spending time with family  
First impression: "What a diverse group of people!"

**Sgt. Lennie Blackwell**

Operations Specialist  
Years of service: 5  
Last assignment: Fort Leavenworth, Kan.  
Diversions: Hunting, spending time with family  
First impression: "WOW! Outstanding!"

**Petty Officer 1st Class Jon Holsapple**

Operations Specialist  
Years of service: 9  
Last assignment: USS Sacramento  
Military education: Navy Leadership Continuum Course  
Diversions: Woodworking  
First impression: "Definitely different than sea duty!"

**Staff Sgt. Elizabeth Wise**

Medical Specialist  
Years of service: 7  
Last assignment: Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo.  
Civilian education: Associate's degree  
Military education: Airman Leadership School  
Diversions: Spending time with family  
First impression: "There's a whole a lot of Army here!"

**Knoxville MEPS****Michael Ray Newcomb**

Health Technician  
Last assignment: Retired Air National Guard master sergeant  
Diversions: Children, bowling, health spa  
First impression: Very professional, knowledgeable

**Linda Jenkins**

Information Technology Specialist  
Years of service: 31  
Last assignment: Nashville MEPS  
Education: Associate's degree in Computer Information Systems  
Diversions: Knitting, crochet, grandkids, walking, canoeing  
First impression: "Home at last"

**Petty Officer 1st Class Brian Buckna**

Lab Technician  
Years of service: 19  
Last assignment: New River, N.C.  
Education: Associate's degree in Forestry  
Diversions: Hunting, fishing, hiking, shooting

**Sgt. Nadalen Hodges**

Operations Specialist  
Years of service: 10+  
Last assignment: Fort Wainwright, Alaska  
Diversions: Fishing

**Petty Officer 2nd Class Robert Crandell**

Medical Specialist  
Last assignment: Camp LeJeune

**Los Angeles MEPS****Sgt. Sherwin Bendebel**

Testing NCO  
Years of service: 6  
Last assignment: Fort Hood, Texas  
Diversions: Any type of sports  
First impression: "Friendly atmosphere!"

**Petty Officer 2nd Class Anthony Davidson**

Processing NCO  
Years of service: 7  
Last assignment: USS Spruance  
Military education: "C" School, Navy Leadership  
Diversions: Computers, spending time with family  
First impression: Lots of work and a friendly environment

**Lt. Christopher Young**

Test Control Officer  
Years of service: 5  
Diversions: Scuba, skiing, motorcycle riding, playing with my new puppy  
First impression: "Uhh, am I in the right place?"

**Louisville MEPS****Sgt. Scott Smith**

Processing Specialist  
Last assignment: Defense Medical Readiness Training Institute, Fort Sam Houston, Texas  
Years of service: 9+  
Diversions: Watching his son race BMX nationally and weightlifting  
First impression: Very impressive, outgoing staff and very knowledgeable

**Senior Chief Petty Officer****Danny Sharrard**

Medical NCOIC  
Years of service: 19  
Last assignment: Camp Pendleton, Calif.  
First impression: "Great!"

**Petty Officer 1st Class Raymond Voss**

Processing Specialist  
Years of service: 17  
Last assignment: Naval Air Station Whidbey Island  
Diversions: Softball and NASCAR  
First impression: Friendly and professional

**Lt.j.g. Kevin Halfacre**

Test Control Officer  
Years of service: 4  
Last assignment: Combat System Officer, USS Klakring  
Diversions: Golf and other sports  
First impression: Friendly

**Capt. Monica Wilson**

Operations Officer  
Years of service: 19  
Last assignment: Plans and Operations, Fort Lewis, Wash.  
Diversions: Reading, family, traveling and quilting

**Milwaukee MEPS****2nd Lt. Dennis Slattery**

Years of service: 11  
Last assignment: Heidelberg, Germany  
Civilian education: Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and Math  
Diversions: Running and family  
First impression: "A finely tuned machine"

**Mike Varney**

Education Services Specialist  
Years of service: 24  
Last assignment: Deputy Commander, HQ Eastern Sector  
Civilian education: Bachelor of Arts in Communications, Master of Arts in Education  
Diversions: Sports and family  
First impression: "An outstanding civilian and military team"

**Richard Browne**

Years of service: 25  
Last assignment: Government Printing Office  
Civilian education: Bachelor of Arts in Secondary Education  
Diversions: Tennis, skiing, plays, and movies.  
First impression: "Professional, diverse, and well-organized"

**Darron Breckenridge**

Years of service: 7  
Last assignment: Fort Bragg  
Diversions: Outdoor activities  
First impression: "An applicant and customer-oriented organization"

**New Orleans MEPS****Sgt. Shannon Tyson**

Years in service: 8  
Last assignment: Fort Hood, Texas  
First impression: Nice resting assignment

**Sylvia Hamm**

Health Technician  
First impression: Nice warm welcome

**New York MEPS****Petty Officer 2nd Class Maya Salazar**

Medical Technician  
Last assignment: U.S. Coast Guard Air Station, Miami  
Diversions: Basketball, volleyball and dancing  
First impression: Great!

**Sgt. Daniel Jackson**

Control Desk  
Last assignment: Larson Barracks, Kitzingen, Germany  
Diversions: Computers, guitar, and sports  
First impression: Pretty good

**Staff Sgt. Thomas Jergensen**

Control Desk  
Last assignment: Indianapolis Recruiting, Indianapolis, Ind.  
Diversions: Basketball, football, baseball  
First impression: "Great, friendly atmosphere and staff is always looking to help."

**Staff Sgt. Schelequia Hazel**

Personnel NCO  
Last assignment: Fort Carson, Colo.  
Diversions: Reading and spending time with her children

**Petty Officer 2nd Class Syvret Warner**

Operations Section  
Last assignment: USS Fitzgerald  
Diversions: Swimming, weightlifting  
First impression: Very professional

**Portland, Maine MEPS****Joseph Utley**

Test Coordinator  
Years of service: 20  
Last assignment: Supervisor of shipbuilding, Bath, Maine  
Diversions: Sports official  
Civilian education: Bachelor's degree, University of Maryland  
First impression: "Team atmosphere; small but efficient."

**Master Sgt. Rhonda Finch**

First Sergeant  
Years of service: 18  
Last assignment: Tinker Air Force Base, Okla.  
Diversions: Quality time with family and friends, reading, walking  
Civilian education: Community College of the Air Force degree in Social Services and Information Management  
First impression: "Well organized, hard working, dedicated staff and excellent training and documentation programs. The staff make MEPS a success, we have an awesome crew at our MEPS."

**Capt. Franklin James Bukoski**

Test Control Officer  
Years of service: 7  
Last assignment: 8th PERSCOM, Yongsan Garrison, Seoul, Korea  
Civilian education: Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology, University of Texas  
Diversions: Reading  
First impression: "Delightful place to be"

**Richmond MEPS****Petty Officer 1st Class Darryl Gilbert**

Assistant Medical NCOIC  
Years of service: 17  
Last position: Instructor duty, Portsmouth, Va.  
Diversions: Golf, softball and chess  
First impression: New environment, lots of hard-working people including military and civilian

**Lt. Bradford Alan Jordan**

Operations Officer  
Last position: Nuclear Power School Instructor  
Education: Bachelor's degree in Chemistry  
Diversions: Golf, reading, going out and staying in  
First impression: Looks like a good place to work, but I have a lot to learn

**Terri A Baker**

Human Resource Assistant  
Years of service: 7  
Last position: Human Resource Assitant (Senior)  
Education: Associate's degrees in Business Management, Administration of Justice  
Diversions: Painting and decorating  
First impression: Friendly co-workers

**Capt. Andrew Webb**

Testing Control Officer  
Years of service: 4  
Last position: Cherry Point, N.C.  
Education: Bachelor's degree in Political Science  
Diversions: Sports and spending time with family  
First impression: Great place to be

**Sgt. Dennis Pickett**

Medical Specialist  
Years of Service: 6  
Diversions: Drawing and cooking  
First impression: High speed

**Sgt. Terry Belt**

Administrative Sergeant  
Years of service: 6 1/2  
Education: Associate's degree in Fashion Merchandising  
First impression: The MEPS does a lot to get in applicants

**Sgt. Robert C. Williams**

Testing Specialist  
Years of service: 8  
Diversions: Basketball, radio control toys and computers  
First impression: Different world

**Larry Trampe**

Military Personnel Clerk  
Years of service: 6  
Last position: Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Fla.  
Diversions: Golf, NASCAR four-wheelers and dirt bikes  
First Impression: Different from my last duty station

**Betty Alexander**

Education Services Specialist  
Years of service: 16  
Last position: Teacher/ Guidance Counselor  
Education: Master of Education  
Diversions: Skating, watching sports, traveling and watching old western movies  
First impression: Oh, what a night!

**Derrick Hellams**

Human Resource Assistant  
Years of service: 8  
Last Position: Military Personnel Clerk  
Diversions: Going to church  
First impression: Exciting, challenging and cold

**Sacramento MEPS****Maria Long**

Human Resources Assistant  
Last assignment: Sacramento MEPS, Testing Administrator  
Military education: Administrative Specialist/ Postal Clerk  
Diversions: Music, reading, T.V., sleeping  
First impression: "Great place to work!"



**Cpl. John Escalante**

Processing Specialist  
 Years of service: 4  
 Last assignment: Virginia Beach, Va.  
 Military education: NCO School, Senior Clerk School  
 Diversions: Weightlifting, fishing  
 First impression: Different environment, immaculate teamwork

**Sgt. Vernell Shaw**

Processing Specialist  
 Years of service: 14  
 Last assignment: Fort Bragg, N.C.  
 Military education: PLDC  
 Diversions: Watching football, movies, workout  
 First impression: "I really like it."

**Sgt. Edward Odum**

Processing Specialist  
 Years of service: 5  
 Last assignment: Fort Polk, La.  
 Military education: Airborne Air Assault

**Stephen Dall**

Supply Technician  
 Years of service: 23  
 Civilian education: Associate's degree in Marketing, Administration of Justice Law Enforcement, and Corrections  
 Diversions: EBay, watching basketball, and NASCAR with grandsons  
 First impression: "Happy to be here."

**San Antonio MEPS****1st Lt. Julie Batson**

Last assignment: Randolph Air Force Base, Texas  
 Diversions: Family  
 First impression: Different

**2nd Lt. Kimberly Thomas**

Last assignment: Randolph Air Force Base, Texas  
 Diversions: Gardening, water skiing, horseback riding, and spending time with family!  
 First impression: Neat, clean, professional atmosphere

**Chief Petty Officer Eugenia O'Bannon**

Last assignment: Naval Reserve Center, Charleston, S.C.  
 Diversions: Family, running, and reading  
 First impression: Very professional

**1st Sgt. Marilyn Wood**

Last assignment: Army & Air Force Exchange Service, Dallas, Texas  
 Diversions: Running, shopping, and reading  
 First impression: Good

**Tech. Sgt. Lisa Williams**

Last assignment: Andrews Air Force Base, Md.  
 Diversions: Spending time with my family  
 First impression: OK

**Sgt. Sylvia Sanchez**

Last assignment: Houston Recruiting Battalion, Houston, Texas  
 Diversions: Reading, exercise, travel, arts, and crafts  
 First impression: Good, professional environment

**Nymfa Lewis**

Last assignment: Kelly Air Force Base, Texas  
 Diversions: Cooking, baking, arts, crafts, flower arrangements, and decorating  
 First impression: Warm atmosphere and friendly people

**Janice Haskell**

Assistant Budget Technician  
 Years of service: 22  
 Last assignment: Fort Sam Houston Department of Public Works  
 Diversions: Reading  
 First impression: Very friendly

**Petty Officer 2nd Class Iris Copeland**

Medical Technician  
 Last assignment: Naval Hospital Corpus Christi, Texas  
 Civilian education: Associate's degree  
 Diversions: Anything that deals with the outdoors  
 First impression: Nice place.

**St. Louis MEPS****Sgt. 1st Class John Knott**

Years of service: 20  
 Last assignment: Instructor, Fort Gordon, Ga.  
 Diversions: Golf, working out, running, Church  
 First impression: Intriguing

**Catherine Obrecht**

Last assignment: St. Luke's Hospital in Chesterfield, Mo.  
 Diversions: Shopping

**Staff Sgt. Wanda Winarski**

Years of service: 15  
 Last assignment: HQ Tanker & Airlift Control Center, Scott Air Force Base  
 Military education: Air Medical Evacuation Flight School, Medical Service Craftsmen  
 Diversions: Sports, reading, crafts, and family time!  
 First impression: I was just glad that I got this job because I requested it!

**1st Lt. Marie Matavao**

Years of service: 3  
 Last assignment: 6th Cavalry Brigade, Camp Humphreys, Korea  
 Military education: Officer Basic Course, Postal Operations and Supervisors Courses  
 First impression: "Nice place compared to Korea — I definitely like it here!"

**Petty Officer 1st Class Marc Smith**

Years of service: 12  
 Last assignment: U.S. Coast Guard Integrated Support Command  
 Diversions: Sports and music  
 First impression: "Very Good!"

**Michael Kirkwood**

Last assignment: Transportation Clerk, Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii  
 First impression: This looks like a nice place to work!

**Petty Officer 2nd Class Jason Johnson**

Years of service: 6  
 Last assignment: USS McClusky  
 Diversions: Sports, car audio, and pretending to be a grill chef  
 First impression: "Friendly, relaxed environment. The days seem to go by pretty fast, which is always a good thing."

**Sgt. Clara Garcia**

Years of service: 13  
 Last assignment: Shape, Belgium  
 Diversions: Spending time with my kids  
 First impression: Didn't know what to expect, friendly

**Petty Officer 2nd Class Dale Couch**

Years of service: 18  
 Last assignment: Gulfport, Miss.  
 First impression: "Relaxed environment and good people to work with."

**San Juan MEPS****Petty Officer 2nd Class Helvis Ortiz**

Health Technician  
 Years in service: 16  
 Last assignment: Branch Medical Clinic El Centro, Calif.  
 Diversions: Swimming and off-road 4x4

**Petty Officer 2nd Class Sonia Rodriguez**

Female Technician  
 Years of service: 9  
 Last assignment: Naval Medical Clinic, Quantico, Va.  
 Diversions: going to the movies  
 First impression: Great place to work

**Petty Officer 2nd Class Carter**

Test Administrator  
 Years in service: 4  
 Last assignment: USS Boxer  
 First impression: Good atmosphere  
 Diversions: Football, basketball, and weightlifting

**Mrs. Cotto**

Test Administrator  
 Years in service: 13  
 Last assignment: Morale, Welfare and Recreation, Sabana Seca  
 First impression: Everyone was friendly. Testing area is very organized. Test Administrators know their job!  
 Diversions: Internet and collecting DVDs

**Sioux Falls MEPS****Sgt. Douglas Lekander**

Processing NCO  
 Years of service: 6  
 Last assignment: Inspector Instructor Staff, Omaha, Neb.  
 Military education: Sergeants Non-resident Course  
 Diversions: Sports, family  
 First impression: "A whole new beast to learn"

**Lt. Chad Lamb**

Testing Control Officer  
 Years of service: 4  
 Last assignment: USS Arleigh Burke  
 Civilian education: Bachelors degree in computer science  
 Diversions: Reading, writing, movies, and sightseeing  
 First impression: "I feel we're heading in the right direction with providing a solid product out to the services"

**Spokane MEPS****Petty Officer 2nd Class Gretchen Robertson**

Processing Specialist  
 Years of service: 3  
 Last assignment: Coast Guard Integrated Support Command, Kodiak, Alaska  
 Diversions: Snowboarding, hiking  
 First impression: "It's very different from typical Coast Guard assignments. I like it."

**Sgt. 1st Class Carol Melton**

Operations NCOIC  
 Years of service: 19  
 Last assignment: Fort Gillam, Ga.  
 Diversions: Mentoring  
 First impression: I was once a recruiter, so now I get to see the other side of MEPS.

**Tech. Sgt. Matthew Wiggins**

Testing NCOIC  
 Years of service: 16  
 Last assignment: 15th MSG/CC, Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii  
 Diversions: Golf and computers  
 First impression: "This is a rewarding experience. I started my career here, and I'd like to end it here."

**Tampa MEPS****Jennifer Sneen**

Military Processing Clerk  
 Years of service: 2  
 Last assignment: Office Assistant at the Civilian Personnel Office at McDill Air Force Base  
 Diversions: Going to the gym, the theater, reading, my family  
 First impression: "I have a very good impression of the MEPS so far. Everyone made me feel like part of the group. I am glad to be a part of the MEPS."

**Rochelle Denman**

Operations Officer  
 Years of service: 18  
 Last assignment: Izmir, Turkey  
 Civilian education: Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice  
 Diversions: Scuba diving, reading, speed walking

**Sgt. Daphne Chambers**

Years of service: 14  
 Last assignment: Fort Huachuca Ariz.  
 Civilian education: Bachelor of Science in Business Management  
 Diversions: Reading, music  
 First impressions: "Friendly!"

**Angelita Suarez**

Budget Technician  
 Years of service: 11  
 Last assignment: First U.S. Army, Senior Army Advisor  
 Diversions: Basketball, swimming, biking, walking, nature  
 First impression: Great size and atmosphere with friendly people

**Daniel Correll**

Educations Services Specialist  
 Years of service: 2  
 Civilian education: Masters in English and in Guidance/Counseling  
 Diversions: Traveling, reading  
 First impression: "This is an extremely well run, busy, MEPS. The technological support here is unsurpassed."

## FOND FAREWELLS

**Amarillo MEPS****Capt. Gerald Galan**

Operations Officer  
 Years of service: 15  
 Departing for: Fort Jackson, S.C., Captain's Career Course  
 Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal, Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal  
 Most remembered for: His firm leadership style

**1st Sgt. Patricia Jones**

First Sergeant  
 Years of service: 21  
 Departing for: Retirement  
 Award: Defense Meritorious Service Medal  
 Most remembered for: Her loyalty and dedication to duty

**1st Lt. Terrence Williams**

Test Control Officer  
 Years of service: 6  
 Departing for: Fort Jackson, S.C., Captain's Career Course  
 Award: Joint Service Achievement Medal  
 Most remembered for: His sense of humor at the MEPS

**Boston MEPS****Sgt. Dawn Medeiros**

Medical Technician  
 Years of service: 11  
 Most remembered for: Her attention to details and professionalism

**Tracey Allen**

Medical Technician  
 Most remembered for: Her charming personality

**Buffalo MEPS****Tech. Sgt. Jimmy Welch**

Operations NCOIC  
 Years of service: 10  
 Departing for: 480th Intelligence Group, Langley Air Force Base, Va.  
 Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
 Most remembered for: Being the "go to" guy; everyday is a good day for pizza; mad skills on a basketball court; and for teaching the MEPS personnel to learn and use each other's first names.

**Staff Sgt. Geneice Walker**

Medical Assistant NCOIC  
 Years of service: 10  
 Departing for: Hawaii  
 Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
 Most remembered for: Her calm demeanor and her number of awards

**Master Sgt. Vernell Ray**

Operations NCOIC  
 Departing for: 51st Communications Squadron, Osan Air Base, Korea  
 Most remembered for: Positive attitude

**Sgt. William Ramos**

Testing NCO  
 Departing for: Korea  
 Years of service: 12  
 Most remembered for: "Hey lil' buddy"

**Fargo MEPS****Capt. Jon Althoff**

Operations Officer  
 Years of service: 15  
 Departing for: Camp Coiner, Korea  
 Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
 Most remembered for: "Go Vikings!"



## Lone Star Santa

It may not snow around El Paso, but Santa still visits the Lone Star town, just sometimes via the local MEPS. Air Force Staff Sgt. Cynthia Cross displays some of the wrapped gifts she and her colleague collected for underprivileged children, after teaming up with a local radio station and the chamber of commerce. After the radio station put out the word for a toy drive for needy children, Cross organized her co-workers at the MEPS. More 30 military and civilian employees from the MEPS, service liaisons, and recruiters collected 80 gifts. Radio station employees then dressed up as Santa and helper elves and delivered them to the children.

### Capt. Dawn Fick

Testing Control Officer  
Years of service: 8  
Departing for: Adjutant General Captain's Career Course, Fort Jackson, S.C.  
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Most remembered for: Her red pen.

### Maj. Todd Fey

Commander  
Years of service: 20  
Departing for: Retirement  
Most remembered for: Skydiving

## Houston MEPS

### Sgt. Michael Foster

Testing  
Departing for: Korea

### Sgt. Alonzo Soto

Control Desk, Operations  
Departing for: Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

## Kansas City MEPS

### Petty Officer 2nd Class Eric Moore

Testing Specialist  
Years of service: 11  
Departing for: USS Ponce  
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Most remembered for: Being a quiet Sailor who always got things done right the first time, never complained, and was liked by all.

### Sharon Klotz

Education Services Specialist  
Years of service: 12  
Departing for: Sacramento Army Recruiting Battalion ESS  
Award: Civilian Commendation Medal  
Most remembered for: being very talkative and an avid tennis player and fan.

### Petty Officer 1st Class Angela Willits

Medical Specialist  
Years of service: 13  
Departing for: Naples Naval Hospital, Naples Italy  
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Most remembered for: Her ability to help others both professionally and personally.

### Michael Willits

Medical Technician  
Years of service: 2  
Most remembered for: "His hard work, dedication to duty and the applicants, and his undying motivation to take on as many additional duties/projects as possible."

## Knoxville MEPS

### Petty Officer 1st Class

#### Raymond Johnson

Years of service: 15  
Departing for: Naval School of Health Sciences  
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Most remembered for: Personality, singing of "Roxanne"

### Petty Officer 3rd Class Angela Smith

Most remembered for: Filling the gap when needed most

### Sgt. Mark Bevans

Next assignment: Fort Huachuca, Ariz.  
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Most remembered for: Motivation

### Joshua Jones

Next assignment: United States Postal Service  
Most remembered for: Laser tag ranger

## Louisville MEPS

### Staff Sgt. Karlene Brown

Processing Specialist  
Years of service: 8  
Departing for: Saudi Arabia  
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Most remembered for: Master Fitness Trainer

## Milwaukee MEPS

### Elizabeth Fantry

Education Services Specialist  
Years of service: 25  
Departing for: retirement  
Most remembered for: Her expertise in her field.

### Capt. Sarah Tracy

Test Control Officer  
Years of service: 6  
Departing for: Reserve Duty, full-time teaching/coaching position  
Most remembered for: Her humor, knowledge, and informed opinions.

**Emma Williams**

Testing Coordinator  
Years of service: 9  
Departing for: Department of Veteran's Administration  
Most remembered for: Being a "let's get it done" civilian.

**Courtney Albritton**

Medical Technician  
Years of service: 1  
Departing for: Medical School  
Most remembered for: Her dedication to data collection and trend analysis

**Petty Officer 1st Class Cynthia Dishaw**

Medical NCOIC  
Years of service: 20  
Departing for: Retirement  
Most remembered for: Her direct approach to doing business.

**Tech. Sgt. Jeff Sterling**

Testing NCOIC  
Years of service: 20  
Departing for: Retirement  
Most remembered for: Being one of the finest NCOs in MEPCOM.

**Master Chief Petty Officer Kevin Thompson**

Station NCOIC  
Years of service: 23  
Departing for: USS Ramage  
Most remembered for: "I am not a First Sergeant, I am a Navy Master Chief!!!"

**New Orleans MEPS****Staff Sgt. Javier Cardenas**

Medical Specialist  
Departing for: Fort Wainwright, Alaska  
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Most remembered for: Always putting everyone before his needs

**Petty Officer 2nd Class David Jones**

Medical Specialist  
Years of service: 20  
Departing for: retirement  
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Most remember for: The subject matter expert in the medical section

**Portland, Ore. MEPS**

**Sgt. 1st Class Lonnie Lewis**  
Medical NCO  
Years of service: 20  
Departing for: retirement  
Most remembered for: Possessed an exceptional knowledge base known wide-spread throughout MEPCOM

**1st Sgt. Vanessa Canty**

Departing for: retirement

**Senior Chief Petty Officer Elizabeth Graham**

Departing for: retirement

**Sgt. Larry Robinson**

Departing for: Korea

**Sgt. April Johnson**

Departing for: civilian life

**Staff Sgt. Nichole Dunton**

Departing for: Randolph Air Force Base

**Vincent Corraera**

Departing for: retirement

**Richmond MEPS****Sgt. Geisha Peele**

Military Personnel Clerk  
Years of service: 9  
Departing for: Schofield Barracks, Hawaii  
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Most remembered for: Being considerate, caring, wise and her sayings "WHATEVER" and "I'm Beautiful"

**Master Sgt. Fortino Garcia**

Medical NCOIC  
Years of service: 18  
Departed for: Moody Air Force Base, Ga.  
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Most remembered for: Outstanding job proficiency, helpfulness and eating birthday cake

**San Juan MEPS****Petty Officer 1st Class Bowlings**

Assistant Testing Control Officer  
Years in service: 17  
Next assignment: Carrier Group Three, Bremerton, Wash.  
Diversions: Jogging, travel, reading  
Most remembered for: Customer service

**Sgt. Alexander**

Control Desk  
Years in service: 14  
Next assignment: Fort Hood, Texas  
Most remembered for: Organizing monthly health food/junk food luncheons — a palate-appealing lunchtime treat

**St. Louis MEPS**

**Sgt John Ilges**  
Medical Health Technician  
Years of service: 11  
Departing for: Korea  
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Most remembered for: "No exceptions to policy ma'am — Just say NO!"

**Sgt. Sharon Clayton**

Travel Clerk  
Years of service: 8  
Departing for: Saudi Arabia  
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Most remembered for: Giving maximum effort in any job or situation - "I try to do what I can do when I can do it as far as I can do it!"

**Sioux Falls MEPS****Sgt. Kirby Pulliam**

Processing NCO  
Years of service: 10  
Next assignment: Drill Instructor School  
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Most remembered for: His love for Harleys, pink 4 wheel drive vehicles, and farm animals

**Spokane MEPS****Tech Sgt. Clifton Warwick**

Testing NCOIC  
Departing for: Retirement  
Years of service: 20  
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Most remembered for: Being the guy who knows everything because he was here for 8 years!

**Petty Officer 2nd Class David Lynch**

Processing Specialist  
Departing for: Human Resources Information Center and Advancement Branch, Topeka, Kansas  
Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Most remembered for: Conspiracy theories!

**Sgt. Todd Liebman**

Travel NCOIC  
Departing for: Fort Lewis, Wash.  
Award: Joint Service Achievement Medal  
Most remembered for: Possessing a hand receipt for EVERYTHING!

**Tampa MEPS****Sgt. Miguel Vazquez**

Testing  
Years of service: 8  
Departing for: Civilian life  
Outgoing award: Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Most remembered for: Being enthusiastic

**HEADQUARTERS USMEPCOM**

**Senior Chief Petty Officer Gerald Nealy, Petty Officer 2nd Class Jason Phipps**, Joint Service Commendation Medal; **Master Sgt. Daniel Richert, Sgt. Verneecia Bonds, Petty Officer 2nd Class Ryan Fogg**, Joint Service Achievement Medal; **Staff Sgt. La'Reshia Poe**, Army Achievement Medal for Iron Person at BNOOC; **Petty Officer 2nd Class Jason Rosenbaum**, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal; **Sgt. 1st Class John Mayton**, Good Conduct Medal (3rd Award), **Sgt. 1st Class Derrick Scott**, Good Conduct Medal (6th Award) and Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Award; **Staff Sgt. Paul McCants**, Good Conduct Medal (5th Award); **Dan Trew**, 40-Year Government Service Certificate; **Tammy McKinley, Cheryl Thrash**, 30-Year Government Service Certificate; **Joyce Banovz, Eileen Laack, Joan Lukaszewski**, 20-Year Government Service Certificate; **Carol Anderson**, Civilian of the 3rd Quarter, 30-Year Government Service Certificate; **Tech. Sgt. Gary Kunich**, letter of commendation (nominated as a Junior Enlisted Candidate for the Rear Admiral Renken Award of Merit), Joint Service Achievement Medal; **Maj. Richard Spainhour, Capt. Marcrease Hicks, 1st Lt. Charlotte Yerdon, Staff Sgt. La'Reshia Poe, Maj. Gerald Claude, 1st Lt. Paul Greenberg, Capt. Milton Clausen Jr., Master Chief Anthony Rodriguez, and Chief Petty Officer Donna Leifheit**, Certificate of Athletic Achievement; **Capt. Connie Massey**, Certificate of Achievement, 2003 Personnel Manager of the Year (MAJCOM level winner); **Master Sgt. Daniel Richert, Capt. Connie Massey, Master Sgt. Michael Arsenault**,

Certificate of Appreciation for the Air Force Anniversary celebration; **Accession Division**, Certificate of Appreciation for Outstanding Support of the USMEPCOM National Operations Officer Workshop; **Theresa Bartley, Michael Merritt, Chief Petty Officer Jose Villaronga, Maj. Terri Ashley, Victor Rivera, Sgt. 1st Class Julio Alvarado, Staff Sgt. Ross Steele, Sgt. Anita Hunter**, Certificate of Appreciation for Hispanic Heritage Month

**BOSTON MEPS**

**Sgt. Thomas Rowlands**, Military Member of the Quarter; **Staff Sgt. Jimika Johnson**, promotion; **Staff Sgt. Dawn Medeiros**, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Selected for the Air Force Enlisted Commissioning Program

**BUFFALO MEPS**

**1st Lt. Joshua Furby**, 92/100 on new Air Force physical training test; **1st Sgt. Faith Durden**, 300 on the Army physical training test; **Staff Sgt. Marisol Lebron**, 275 on Army PT test; **Sgt. Daniel Nayman**, 289 on Army PT test; **Sgt. John Garcia**, 280 on PT test; **Lt. Col. Henry Wymbs**, Meritorious Service Medal

**EL PASO MEPS**

**Staff Sgt. Vicki Lewis**, selected for promotion to technical sergeant; **Staff Sgt. Tonya Williams**, selected for promotion to sergeant first class; **Chief Petty Officer David Lally**, Joint Service Achievement Medal

**FORT JACKSON MEPS**

**Lt. Julia Kobiska**, promoted to captain; **Lt. Sharon Graham**, promoted to lieutenant commander

**HONOLULU MEPS**

**Sgt. Victor Arvizu and Sgt. Ronaldo Galvez**, reenlisted; **Master Sgt. George Nalley**, promoted

**KNOXVILLE MEPS**

**Capt. Jon Rucker**, 2003 Personnel Manager of the Year (Unit level winner)

**MILWAUKEE MEPS**

**Staff Sgt. Tracee Wundrow**, promoted

**NEW ORLEANS MEPS**

**Staff Sgt. Priscilla Bailey, and Tech. Sgt. Steven M. Braxton**, promoted; **Petty officer 2nd Class Jack Chaddrick, and Sgt. Danlenzo Hines**, re-enlisted; **Sandra Paxton**, Civilian of the Year; **Sgt. Natasha Brown**, Military Member of the Year

**NEW YORK MEPS**

**Sgt. Matthew Francis**, Basic NCO Course graduate; **Petty Officer 2nd Class Stephen Heath**, re-enlisted; **Maria Parris**, Civilian Member of the Quarter; **Petty Officer 2nd Class Ronald Moquette**, Military Member of the Quarter

**PORTLAND, MAINE MEPS**

**Diane Simard**, Certificate of Appreciation in conjunction with "Public Service Recognition Week 2003"

## C O N G R A T S

## B I R T H S

**CHARLOTTE MEPS**

**Petty Officer 2nd Class Christopher Brown** and his wife, **Barbara**, a son, **Anthony Michael**, 7 pounds, 6 ounces.

**Sgt. Felix Carr**, and his wife, **Rhonda**, a daughter, **Courtney Alexandria**, 8 pounds.

**FARGO MEPS**

**Kathy Myhre**, a grandson, **Jordyn**, 9 pounds.

**NEW ORLEANS MEPS**

**Capt. Rabi Singh** and his wife, **Carol May**, a daughter, **Lyrice Adriel**, 9 pounds, 1 ounce.

**RICHMOND MEPS**

**Petty Officer 1st Class Jerome Beatty** and his wife on the birth of their daughter, **Justice Sadie Isabelle Beatty**.

**SACRAMENTO MEPS**

**Sgt. Emmanuel Joseph**, and his wife, a daughter, **Fabienne Michelle**, 7 pounds, 1 ounce, 19 inches.

**SAN ANTONIO MEPS**

**Capt. Kandace Daffin** and her husband, **Larry**, twin daughters, **McKenzie and McKayla**.

**SPOKANE MEPS**

**Staff Sgt. George O. Elms II**, and his wife, **Megan**, a son, **Isaac Michael**, 8 pounds, 13 ounces.

**Petty Officer 2nd Class Gretchen Robertson**, and her husband, **Tony**, a son, **Harley Ezra**, 8 pounds, 2 ounces.

**TAMPA MEPS**

**Petty Officer 2nd Class Yolanda Murray**, a son, **Damarius Elijan**, 6 pounds, 10 ounces.

**Lydia Glover**, a daughter, **Raven Alliyah**, 6 pounds, 8 ounces.

**BUFFALO MEPS**

The Federal Women's Program Network awarded "Agency of the Year" to Buffalo MEPS.

**COLUMBUS MEPS**

**Sgt. Dale VanGysel** graduated Summa Cum Laude with a bachelor's degree in management information sciences from Franklin University.

**EL PASO MEPS**

**Sgt. 1st Class Cecilia Ballard**, outstanding achievement certificate for maintaining 3.5 or higher grade point average at Saint Leo University.

**SAN ANTONIO MEPS**

**Sgt. Martha Rawley** was married June 12; and to **Sgt. John Weaver** and **Jasmine** were married Aug. 2.

**SAN DIEGO MEPS**

**Petty Officer 2nd Class Laurie Capen** and **Peter Giaccone** were married Aug. 24.

# ASSIGNMENT: Fargo MEPS



Despite the movie of the same name where a car salesman gets his wife killed in a failed kidnapping to get money from his father-in-law, Fargo, N.D., doesn't really have so many violent crimes, at least according to the Federal Bureau of Investigations, which ranks it the 7<sup>th</sup> safest major metropolitan area in the United States. Besides that, the U.S. Justice Department in 1997 said it had the lowest violent crime rate in the United States, third for the lowest property crime rate, and third for the lowest overall crime rate.

It looks like an assignment to the Fargo MEPS isn't that bad of a gig. And it's not just the feds who make that claim. *Ladies Home Journal* ranked it eight out of the top 10 cities for women based on crime rates, lifestyle, education, and jobs; and *Money* magazine ranks it in the top 20 percent of the places to live in the United States based on costs and the growing economy.

To give you a better idea of how far your money goes in Fargo (and nearby Moorhead, Minn., located 100 yards or so right next door), based on an average, national score of 100 points, groceries cost 5.2 points less and housing is 11.4 points less. You will, however, pay more to heat your home – utilities run 4.6 points more in this area, and for some reason, that gallon of milk is a little pricey. But compare that to San Jose, Calif., where groceries are 13 points higher, utilities are 15 points higher, and housing is 250 points higher, and Fargo looks like a darn good place to live.



Fargo's downtown area is undergoing a revitalization and lights up at night.

If you're one who prefers the creature comforts of indoor activities, Fargo might not be for you, but if outdoors is what you like, it will meet your needs – waterskiing and fishing in the summer; moose, elk, deer, and duck hunting in the fall; and downhill and cross country skiing in the winter.

## Vital stats

**Median housing cost:** \$112,000 for existing homes, and \$202,400 for new construction.

**Median cost to rent:** \$300 to \$600 for a 1-bedroom; and \$350 to \$1,100 for a 2-bedroom.

**Gallon of milk:** A little over \$3, David Martin, public relations director of the Fargo Chamber of Commerce, said.

**Average temperatures:** A high of 80 and low of 57 in the summer; a high of 70 and a low of 46 in the fall; a high of 20 and a low of 2 in the winter; and a high of 35 and a low of 19 in the spring.

**And about that movie:** Thanks to the success of the movie, Fargo, there is now a historic Fargo theater, host of the Fargo Film Festival, which takes place every spring, and highlights the work of independent filmmakers.

**And since Fargo is going Hollywood with the film**

**festival:** The town has a little of Tinsel Town right in the Midwest. Since 1989, they've been collecting the handprints and footprints in cement of more than 100 musicians, athletes, movie stars, and dignitaries, including Neil Diamond, Bob Costas, Garth Brooks, Gary Burghoff, and The Eagles.

**Looking for love?:** You've got a 50-50 chance, give or take a percentage point here or there. Fargo is made up of Cass County and Clay County. Males outnumber females in Cass, 50.1 percent to 49.9 percent; but women have the edge in Clay, 51.6 percent to 48.4 percent. **Average household income:** \$38,147 in Cass; and \$37,889 in Clay.

**They grow 'em smart:** North Dakota's 602 average on the verbal portion on the Scholastic Aptitude Test bests the national average of 507; and their overall average score of 613 on the math portion slams the national average of 519 points.

## In a nutshell

The Fargo MEPS has been at its current location since 1961, after a fire destroyed the building they had been in since 1952. The MEPS has enlistment responsibility for all of North Dakota, and 23 counties in east central Minnesota.

**Staff:** There are 12 civilians and 14 military at the Fargo MEPS (nine in the Army, two in the Marines, two in the Navy, and one in the Air Force).

**Closest military installation:** Grand Forks Air Force Base, N.D., is about 300 miles away. That's a heck of a commute, no matter how fast you drive. The entire MEPS staff lives in the local community.

For more information about the local area, log onto: [www.fmchamber.com](http://www.fmchamber.com)



Fargo residents enjoy the Island Park Craft Show, which takes place in mid-August every year.

# Taking care of the homefront



Yesterday ... today ...  
and always