

UNITED STATES MILITARY ENTRANCE PROCESSING COMMAND

# Messenger

SPRING  
2023

POLICY NCOIC  
NEVER FORGETS

HER  
ROOTS



Meet *Elmer*  
J-4  
Travel *Buddy* p. 7

USMEPCOM  
*Spring*  
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*Junior Enlisted*  
**Council**  
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Greetings, Teammates!

This year began with two anniversaries. In February, we hit the two-year mark for MIRS 1.1. In March, full deployment of MHS GENESIS reached its first anniversary. The transition to and through these systems changed how we accomplish our mission and remain central to continued transformation. The article, “USMIRS Evolution,” is on page 4.

On a similar topic – taking what we’ve learned from those deployments and the success achieved by focused teams, we’re forming a new one. This team will concentrate on integrating and harnessing the full potential of our IT capabilities, improving data collection and reporting, fielding artificial intelligence capabilities, and getting to the important goal of all-digital applicant processing, to include connecting MHS GENESIS and USMIRS. As the majority of the command carries out our day-to-day mission, the new team will facilitate better methods and prepare for the future.

Speaking of the future – and its relation to the past – July 1 will mark USMEPCOM’s 47th year as a command. And, on that same day, our nation will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the All-Volunteer Force.

As we approach these milestones, the U.S. military continues to face the most challenging recruiting environment in 50 years – trials brought on by two decades of war, implications of a global pandemic, record low unemployment and the fact only 23 percent of Americans aged 17 to 24 are eligible to serve, and

less than 10 percent have a propensity to do so. Knowing all of this drives home the need for us to provide the best service to our applicants and recruiters.

Is there good news? Yes ... over the last few months, more people are taking the ASVAB and we’re seeing busier floors – steps in the right direction. Sectors just hosted the Recruiting Commanders Operations Conference to strengthen relationships. We’ve also scheduled Saturday openings for spring and summer (see story on page 27). If opening our doors wider better supports military recruiting, we’ll do it.

As always, we need to take care of ourselves and each other. This issue includes articles on the Leave Transfer Program (page 6), the Junior Enlisted Council (page 20), a spotlight on some of our well-dressed teammates (page 17) and a fun story about the Headquarters Facilities Directorate’s travel buddy, Elmer (page 7).




What we do matters. Thank you for standing at Freedom’s Front Door – an entry point for military service – a social good that benefits the nation and those who serve.

*Megan B. Stallings*  
Megan B. Stallings  
Colonel, USA  
Commanding



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Spring 2023

Cover Photo by Marshall Smith  
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### ON THE COVER:

*Army National Guard Master Sgt. Renee Barton engages with attendees at the 2023 DADSIWG.  
Check out more info on page 22.*





# User - Centered Approach Guides USMIRS Evolution

By Derrik Noack

The development and launch of USMEPCOM Integrated Resource System (USMIRS) 1.1 in 2021 was one of the most critical modernization efforts in USMEPCOM's history. Feb. 10 marks the second anniversary of the system launching, but there are no "terrible twos" here. With updates released biweekly and major innovations due later this year, USMIRS 1.1 is on track to reach high viability before it even turns three.

When it launched, USMIRS 1.1 only contained the essentials. The barebones program was just enough to process an applicant into the military. By design, the initial minimal viable product has grown with user feedback.

"We work with users to really get an understanding of what they want from the system," said Jake Rhodes, J-6, technology development division chief. "We bring them into our design sessions and our IT specialists visit the MEPS for feedback. Obviously, we have policy and procedures that can limit designs. Sometimes we can't give them the world, we can only give them a continent. But the user remains our focus."

So far, the system has greatly increased efficiency in the daily tasks of MEPS personnel. Frank Schwartz, Milwaukee MEPS's lead human resources assistant, worked with the legacy System 80 and USMIRS 1.0 systems during his 37 years at the MEPS. The days of remembering specific codes are long gone and he enjoys the ease of USMIRS 1.1.

◀ Army Staff Sgt. James Nelson, guidance counselor, Milwaukee MEPS, talks an applicant through signing his contract on USMIRS 1.1 (Photo by Derrik Noack)



“Manual processing seems Jurassic to what it is now,” Schwartz said. “There were some people who thought, if it wasn’t broke then why fix it, but it was a pretty smooth transition. Finding and transferring information during processing is so much easier now and we waste a lot less paper.”

Software releases for USMIRS 1.1 are like commercial technology updates, with bug fixes, performance enhancements and overall improved user experience. As of the beginning of February 2023, roughly two years since the launch, the version is “USMIRS V.1.93.0.” The first digit, 1, will stay the same and signifies the major version. The middle digit is what changes every two weeks with the software release. The last digit is the hot fix version. If there is an error or bug needed to be fixed outside of the two-week cycle, the last number will change.

“If it’s a big feature, it might take multiple sprints to finish,” said Rhodes. “Document upload, a big feature for us, took three sprints.”

From start to finish, developing and launching software releases is a seven-step process. It takes a lot of coordination from both internal and external parties, but the design process remains user centered.

“First, we work with the J-3 Product Management branch to obtain the business requirements,” said Rhodes. “We then translate them into technical requirements. From there we work with developers and designers. We then do quality assurance and user acceptance testing, and then we do the deployment planning. We reach out to actual users in the field and run the designs by them and see if they work with their process flow. Then we work with our Quality Assurance branch, who does final testing and validation.”

Significant innovations planned include USMIRS 1.1 and MHS GENESIS integration, as well as applicant photos in the system.

“We know those things will add a lot of value to the users’ lives,” said Rhodes. “We have a big list of priority items that we’re working through over the next year. Obviously, we can only do so much, and develop so fast, while still making sure we are doing our quality assurance.”

USMEPCOM Product Management welcomes feedback following each software release. Users can share their thoughts or ask questions by visiting the product management milSuite site. To submit feedback, use the “ask USMEPCOM Product Management” feature at <https://www.milsuite.mil/book/groups/product-management>. ■





# DONATING LEAVE TO THOSE IN NEED

By Derrik Noack

"One of my relatives worked for the government and her mother was dying," said Michele Sayre, customer service representative, J-1. "It wasn't a matter of if, it was a matter of when. This relative didn't have a lot of leave. She was either not going to be able to spend as much time with her mother toward the end of her life or take a lot of leave without pay. I told her about the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program, but she felt there were people who needed donations more than she did. I pointed out that she was not giving her coworkers a chance to do something amazing for her. She finally agreed to use the program and I was able to give her leave along with others who donated to her. This was extra time she got to spend with her mother, before she passed, without having to worry about how that was going to affect her family financially."

Sayre is one of the coordinators for the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP) at USMEPCOM. Under the VLTP, an employee can donate annual leave to another employee with a medical emergency. She knows the anonymous disposition of the program makes it impossible to measure its effects but knows from her firsthand experience of the good it can do.

"People don't want to ask for help, they think there are others worse off," said Sayre. "We all at some point may need help. It's nice this program is in place to help people."

The VLTP was implemented by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the chief human resources agency for the Federal Government, but each agency is responsible for administering the program for its employees.

Medical emergencies or conditions covered by the VLTP include those of either the employee or an employee's family member. Family members can encompass a wide range of relationships including spouse, parents, children, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, stepparents, stepchildren, foster parents, foster children, guardianship relationships, same sex and opposite sex domestic partners, and spouses or domestic partners of the aforementioned. The emergency must be likely to require the employee to be absent from work without available paid leave for at least 24 work hours.

"Basically, it's a program the command has for any employees who have any sort of medical emergency – whether themselves or an immediate family member," said Teresa Gallagher, human resources assistant, J-1. "They need medical documentation from a healthcare provider stating the situation and projected duration of the emergency. Once we get their application and the medical paperwork, we put them on the list."

Once on the list, any federal employee can donate leave hours to them. Donations can also be submitted to the list, without a specific employee's name, to be dispersed to those most in need. It is not meant to be a substitute for exhausting your own leave, and donated hours can only be applied if more than three days of work (unpaid) will be missed for the emergency.

"You're not going to get extra leave from people if you already have leave," said Sayre. "When you go on the program, it continues to pull your annual and sick leave first before it will process donated leave. On the average people get about 40 hours, but there is no guarantee people are going to donate so you have to consider all the options."

Other options to assist an employee in an emergency include advanced annual or sick leave, leave without pay and flexible work schedules. Those wishing to become a leave recipient or donate leave may do so by submitting the appropriate form to J-1. VLTP forms may be obtained through <https://www.opm.gov/forms/opm-forms/> ■





# Meet Elmer: J-4 Travel Buddy



By Joseph Wax

Business or pleasure, many people have a routine when it's time to travel. Whether choosing specific outfits for each day they're gone, planning an hour-by-hour itinerary for the trip or scoping out great restaurants, some details must be worked out before hitting the road.

For members of USMEPCOM J-4, facilities directorate, that travel planning process now includes an extra step; packing Elmer the J-4 travel buddy. Elmer, a gag gift given to Kevin Quinette, J-4 director, has come a long way from the thrift store bin where he once resided.

"I love giving at least one weird, funny gift to family members," said Lois Bloom, Kevin Quinette's mother. "My husband likes to look for all kinds of treasures in all kinds of places. He was at a Goodwill and while rummaging through





one bin, he came across the figurine of a funny looking man in a leisure suit who is now known as Elmer. He brought it home and put it on our shelf. I laughed hysterically at that guy on the shelf and thought this would be a fun gift for Kevin at Christmas.”

What started out as a quirky figurine on Quinette’s desk, soon started making its way into meetings. And before long, Elmer was hitting the road with Quinette as an unofficial member of J-4.

“I did a trip across the country of five or six different MEPS, so I took pictures with him,” said Quinette.

Other members of J-4 began taking Elmer on their visits to MEPS too and documenting his travels with pictures.

“I thought it was a unique idea for sure,” said Chad Gerrits, a facilities division engineering technician. “He (Quinette) said, ‘take it with you and get a picture in front of some of the notable things that would be in some of these places.’ I thought it was definitely a good camaraderie team-building idea.”

In a little more than a year, Elmer has traveled to dozens of MEPS, sports stadiums and other notable landmarks. This would be a good story if it ended there, but like any great story, there was soon a plot twist.

“So, I was going through the airport coming back,”

said Gerrits. “I totally forgot that it was in the front of my carry-on, and I didn’t have it protected or have it inside of anything.”

According to Gerrits, when Transportation Security Administration members were moving his bag through the x-ray machine, disaster struck.

“I heard a big crack when they put it in,” he said. “I opened it up and sure enough, they had knocked both of his legs off. I felt horrible. I knew it probably wasn’t like super meaningful to (Quinette), but I mean, he told me that his mom gave it to him. And we’re just starting out this tradition where this is going to be like our mini mascot for our section.”



(All photos courtesy of Kevin Quinette and J-4 staff.)



So Gerrits did what most would do in his situation, he started scouring the internet for Elmer, hoping to find a replacement. Thanks to a small sticker on the bottom of Elmer's foot, Gerrits traced his origin to a collection of figurines made in the late 1980's and 1990's by an artist named Marge Crunkleton called the Lincoln County Garden Club. Elmer's real name turned out to be Larry Lavinski.

Some of the Lincoln County Garden Club figures are still available in different places online, so Gerrits was able to get his hands on an unbroken Elmer/Larry. As for Crunkleton, she is currently 91 years old, and by her own admission,

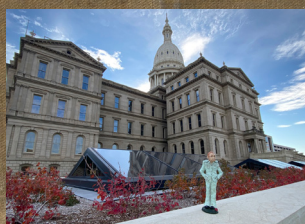
still spry and a bit sassy, in halfway decent health. She believes that Elmer is an even better name for her character than Larry. She created 125 figurines in the collection that she calls, "adorable senior citizens." When asked about her character becoming USMEPCOM J-4's travel buddy, she was quick to respond.

"I am flattered to no end," she said. "I am shocked to see so many people on the same humorous wavelength. He is funny though and is my favorite guy of all the men I have made. Just keep him busy, because he loves to entertain. He insists those ugly suits will come back in style. As I gazed at the pictures of him posing all over this great country of ours, I felt his proud feelings project to me."

Quinette's mom shares the artists' feelings about Elmer.

"I think Elmer is a great mascot," she said. "He was lost for years, but luckily rescued from a bin and given a new mission. He is a funny old American man in a leisure suit, from another decade, who can elicit laughter wherever he goes."

Elmer will continue to make his way around USMEPCOM facilities. Keep an eye out for members of J-4 coming to your area, and you might just get to meet the now infamous J-4 travel buddy. ■





# MEPS OF



▲An applicant judges the monthly joke boards at Fort Lee MEPS. (Courtesy photo)

**Category 1 (Large) : Fort Lee**  
**Commander: Army Maj. Cameron Webb**

## **What is one thing your MEPS does to boost personnel morale?**

Everyone likes a good joke, and everyone likes pizza, so we married the two together. At the beginning of each month, we have a Joke of the Month contest that all sections in the MEPS, including liaisons, participate in. The funniest joke wins Pizza Hut pizza for the whole section. These are clean, mostly dad jokes, being posted on their white boards by 12 o'clock on the day of judging. So that there is no perception of favoritism, a random applicant on the floor is chosen as the judge.

## **What are some tips or advice for incoming commanders?**

Lean heavily on your section supervisors, who are the subject matter experts, and always try to bridge the gap between the sections and the liaisons. If your employees make a mistake, own the mistake, and provide resolution. There are not any processes that are perfect and having a commonsense approach to solving problems are critical in fostering the relationship between sections in the building.

## **What is the biggest lesson you have learned since assuming command at your MEPS?**

The employees will follow your lead. If you own and champion the decisions made above you, your team will follow suit, adapt, overcome, and accomplish the mission.

## **How would you describe your leadership style?**

I always try to empower my team to solve problems at their level. As General Patton said, "Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity."

## **Describe the team at your MEPS in just three words:**

Driven to succeed!



▲Maria Villamizar (center), medical technician, Fort Lee MEPS, stands in recognition for outstanding performance with Army Col. James D. Hoyman (right), Fort Lee garrison commander, and Army Command Sgt. Maj. Tamisha A. Love (left), Fort Lee garrison command sergeant major, as part of a 'MEPS of the Year Celebration'. (Photo by Chad Menegay)



# THE YEAR

**Category 2 (Medium) : Minneapolis**  
**Commander: Army Maj. Elizabeth Ayotte**

## **What is one thing your MEPS does to boost personnel morale?**

We are very food focused here in Minneapolis! We have quite a few potluck activities throughout the year where everyone can showcase their cooking skills and we can all break bread together!

## **What are some tips or advice for incoming commanders?**

Seek advice and input from those that have been with USMEPCOM for many years. Create buy-in with the service liaisons and opportunities to work with them as a team. Put systems in place to ensure recurring tasks are tracked and projected. Do the routine things well.

## **How would you describe your leadership style?**

I have a transformational style of leadership with a focus on creating efficiencies, the future, and on the people who are responsible for making that happen each day. While I strive to maintain high standards, I understand that there will always be unforeseen issues, and nothing seamlessly goes according to plan. I find great satisfaction in seeing my team accomplish tasks and solve problems that contribute to long term goals.

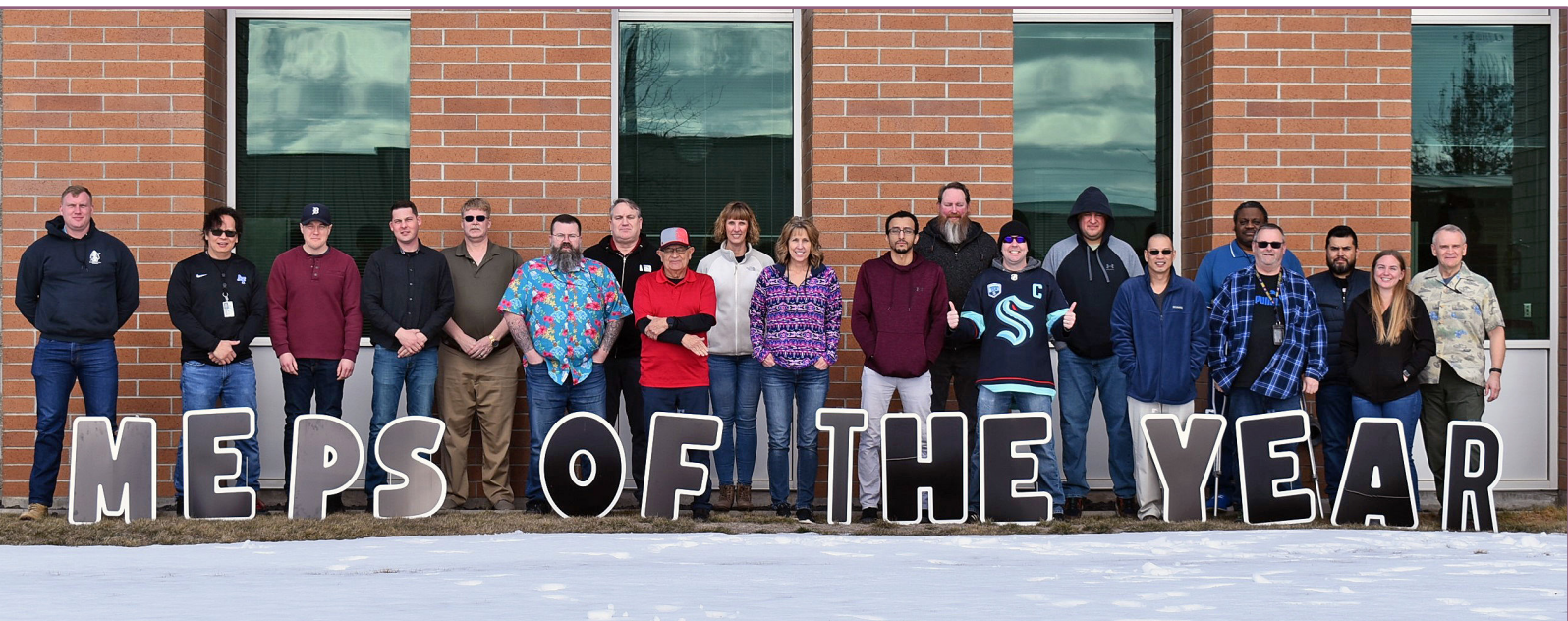
## **Describe the team at your MEPS in just three words:**

Agile. Accomplished. Dedicated.



▲Personnel from Minneapolis MEPS pose for a photo during their C.A.R.E.S. Day outing at a local bowling alley. (Courtesy photo)





▲Spokane MEPS personnel celebrate their achievement during a training day at the MEPS. (Courtesy photo)

**Category 3 (Small) : Spokane**  
**Commander: Navy Lt. Cmdr. James Barfoot**

**What is one thing your MEPS does to boost personnel morale?**

Every quarter, the MEPS does a team building lunch that is hosted by a different section (rotating basis). These lunches allow each section to put their own unique spin on dishes they enjoy making for friends and family, then share them with their co-workers.

These lunches also allow a time to relax and come together, fostering a sense of camaraderie.

**What has been your biggest challenge as commander?**

Rolling out MHS GENESIS fundamentally changed processing of applicants. In many ways, it has been for the better, but it was particularly challenging trying to manage IRC Partner expectations. Placing an emphasis on transparent communications allowed us to improve our relationship with our IRC Partners and move past the MHS GENESIS hurdle.

**What is the biggest lesson you have learned since assuming command at your MEPS?**

Managing relationships was more important here than any other command I've been with. Internally, friction between personalities can grind the mission to a halt and I spend more time making sure the team functions efficiently than ever before. Externally, making sure all involved stakeholders understand how we can help them accomplish their mission (instead of being seen as a roadblock) will let you keep the station running smoothly.

**How would you describe your leadership style?**

Adaptable. Each section has its own unique personality, strengths and weaknesses. To get the most out of each section, my leadership style naturally varies. Some require a more hands on approach and just want to be given a direction. Others want the flexibility to tackle the mission the way they feel it will work best. Recognizing the differences has allowed me to tailor the approach and achieve the best results.

**Describe the team at your MEPS in just three words:**

Results From Teamwork.



# RCOC

## Strengthens Communication, Relationships & Trust Across Services

By Derrik Noack



1.



2.

▲1. Army Col. Kevin Cummings, USMEPCOM command surgeon, leads a discussion on medical topics at the USMEPCOM Recruiting Commanders/Operations Conference. (Photo by Derrik Noack)

2. The Eastern Sector team poses for a photo following a successful day of presentations and discussions at the USMEPCOM Recruiting Commanders/Operations Conference. (Photo by Derrik Noack)

Nearly 30 attendees traveled to San Antonio for the USMEPCOM Recruiting Commanders/Operations Conference (RCOC), March 28-29. The Eastern Sector team spent weeks planning and coordinating the event, and scheduled presentations based on the theme “Communication, Relationships and Trust.”

“This is a constructive way to network, understand policies better and share experiences in a difficult recruiting environment,” said Army Col. Janelle Kutter, commander, Eastern Sector. “There was a perfect number of people in the room to have a great dynamic with open discussions. We were able to open a lot of doors and foster relationships, following our theme of communication, relationships and trust.”

The interservice conference brought officers and commanders from all areas of the United States together. One of the key presentations was on medical topics, with a focus on standardizing processes of new tools and technology USMEPCOM launched over the last few years.

“The world is not the same pre-pandemic,” said Army Col. Kevin Cummings, USMEPCOM command surgeon. “We’re getting through transitional periods and focusing on standardization. We want everyone to be on the same page, regardless of location.”

Each service was able to present their initiatives and updates on the final day of the conference. These presentations led to the most collaborative moments from attendees.

“The most beneficial moments for me were learning from the other services,” said Marine Corps Lt. Col Quinci Martin, operations officer, 4th Marine Corps District. “Seeing their perspectives and models for resolutions will equip me with better knowledge to support my own team. I will take back this information and continue to push it to the lowest grassroots level.” ■



# PORTLAND MEPS TECHNICIAN'S QUICK ACTION DISRUPTS GUNMAN

✈ By Army Maj. Brian Anderson,  
Portland MEPS commander

It was close to 6:30 p.m. on Feb. 16 and the dinner rush was in full effect at a pub in Troutdale, Ore. A man entered the pub armed with a shotgun tucked under his arm. Visibly intoxicated, he quietly approached the bar with the intent of confronting the bartender on duty that night. What he didn't plan on was two incredibly brave and selfless patrons disarming him, thwarting the attack. One of those two brave men was David Foland, administrative support technician, Portland, Ore. MEPS.

As some patrons fled the bar, Foland and another patron confronted the man, grabbing the shotgun, and tackling him to the ground. They continued to hold him down until deputies arrived at the scene.

Foland, a 24-year Army veteran, retired in 2011 while serving as a First Sergeant in the infantry. His confidence in his physical abilities stemmed from his Army experience and practicing as a semi-pro mixed martial arts fighter for 14 years.

"Dave Foland is one of the most selfless and caring people I have ever had the pleasure of working with," said Army Maj. Brian Anderson, commander, Portland MEPS. "He is always eager to help others. Hearing about this brave act was not a huge surprise. Dave is just the kind of guy who knows something had to be done and he would not be a bystander."

On March 7, the Western Sector Command Team, Marine Corps Col. Jesse Sjoberg and Army Command Sgt. Maj. Roger Rendon, took the opportunity to recognize Foland by presenting him with the Western Sector Coin for Excellence, during their annual visit to Portland MEPS.



▲ Dave Foland, administrative support technician, Portland, Ore. MEPS, (center) is presented with the Western Sector Coin for Excellence by Marine Corps Col. Jesse Sjoberg, USMEPCOM Western Sector commander. Foland was recognized for intervening and disarming a possible active shooter in Troutdale, Ore. (Courtesy photo)

"In the Army we are taught to stay alert at all times, have a battle buddy, and look after one another," said Army 1st Sgt. Nicholas Berkey, Portland MEPS senior enlisted advisor. "This dependability is something we all know about Dave. I am so grateful he was there and able to help protect those people from something that could have turned out to be incredibly tragic."

As Foland reflects on that frigid February night, he knows he himself is lucky to not have been harmed for stepping in. Luckily, it all worked out and no shots were fired in the pub.

"The police were very happy with how it went down, but it could have been so much worse," said Foland. "My guardian angel definitely works overtime." ■



# BRINGING FAMILY & VISITORS BACK TO MEPS

By Thomas Fleming,  
Boston MEPS administrative support technician

During our lifetimes, most people experience a variety of life events that are important, and many have the desire to share those moments with our families and friends. Whether it be the birth of a baby, birthdays, high school graduations, college graduations, promotions, etc., we all have events in our lives that we want to share with our loved ones.

One of those events that appears to have taken a back seat due to the recent pandemic, is allowing family members to visit the MEPS to observe their loved ones take the oath of enlistment prior to shipping off to basic training.

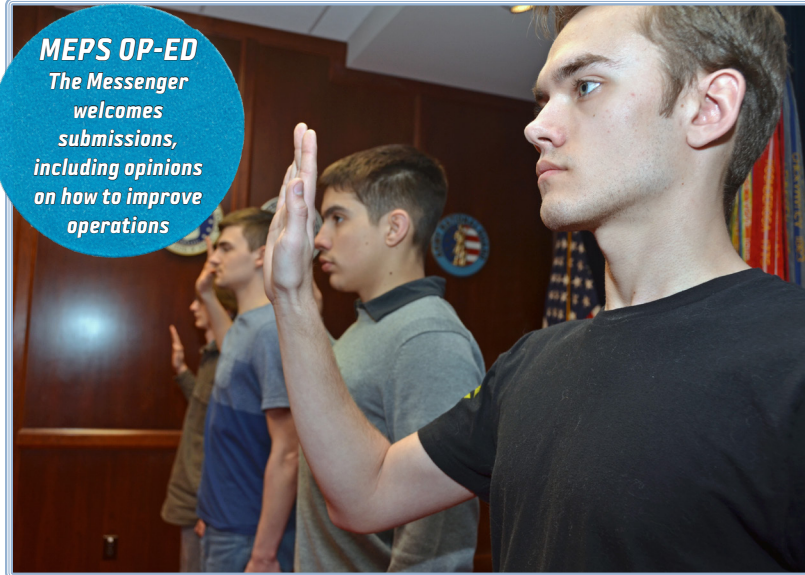
During my 20-year Navy career, I witnessed many ceremonial traditions from change of command to frocking ceremonies, where guests were normal as everybody wanted their family and friends present for these life events. Unfortunately there were many occasions where I wished my family could have been present whether it be one of my frocking ceremonies, a re-enlistment ceremony, when I earned my Submarine Warfare Pin (Dolphins) or when I returned from deployments. These events were special to the families that support their military members, and it was unfortunate for me that my family was too far away to be a part of these special days. Secretly many other members that went without families would have loved to have their families share in on the special occasions with them; it just went without being said.

With the pandemic ending and a safe return to normal put in place, most venues like movie theaters, sports stadiums, restaurants and concerts, amongst others, have been allowing unrestricted access to their venues and facilities. It may be time to consider bringing family back into the MEPS, albeit in a limited capacity and only when oaths would occur. It would be nice for families to be present and able to witness their applicants first significant military event (the Oath of Enlistment) prior to shipping off to basic training.

A possible solution to afford families this opportunity is to create "hybrid" ceremony windows that would reduce through traffic and wait times by affording one or two family members for each shipper (if the shipper chooses) to come in at pre-scheduled times to view the Oath in person and share the occasion with a few photos in the oath room. If family are unable to attend, we at minimum offered the opportunity to the applicant, we have the social media recordings as a backstop, and the MEPS is credited with providing "Red Carpet Treatment" to the applicant and their families.

## MEPS OP-ED

The Messenger  
welcomes  
submissions,  
including opinions  
on how to improve  
operations



▲ Applicants at the Milwaukee MEPS take the Oath of Enlistment. (Photo by Amy Gregorski)

I have been with Boston MEPS since 2005 and for well over 15 years prior to the pandemic, Boston MEPS has had great success with family members showing up to view ceremonies. The USO has provided excellent support in providing snacks, drinks, games, and additional information about USO support to the applicants and their family members after they leave the MEPS. The Red Cross has provided emergency contact procedures and support to the applicants and family members, which helps calm the anxieties of loved ones leaving home and it adds additional layers of "Red Carpet Treatment" to our applicants as they depart for basic training and advanced training.

I continue to receive inquiries by phone, e-mail, Facebook and even in person asking about the possibility of family members being authorized to return to the MEPS to observe ceremonies many of the applicant's families and friends want to show their support lets show them what it means to come through "Freedom's Front Door" again. ■

USMEPCOM HQ is coordinating a visitor policy that will see the return of visitors in some capacity. The policy is being carefully considered to make sure we strike the right balance between allowing family and friends to witness the oath while mitigating impact on operations. All MEPS will be well prepared and informed of trainings and important dates as the policy is completed throughout the year.





By Joseph Wax

## Streamlining and Standardizing MEPS Medical Processing

With hundreds of medical providers of various specialties working at 65 Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS) and two Remote Processing Stations across the country, standardizing the medical qualification process for military applicants is a challenge.

United States Military Entrance Processing Command (USMEPCOM) took that challenge head on with recent updates to the Supplemental Policy Guidance (SMPG) and Supporting Medical Documentation Review Program (SMDRP).

"Standardization of medical qualification decision making is one of USMEPCOM's top priorities because it is a top priority for our recruiting partners," said Army Col. Megan Stallings, USMEPCOM commander. "Our recruiting partners want to know that their applicants will get the same treatment and timely decision no matter where they go, and these two policy updates are one effort to get after that end state."

When Department of Defense Instruction (DODI) 6130.03, Volume 1, Medical Standards for Military Service was updated in November 2022, USMEPCOM began work on interpreting how it would impact medical processing and subsequently updating USMEPCOM's medical standard operating procedures, the SMPG, internal guidance for MEPS medical providers, and the SMDRP, guidance for providers and recruiters to streamline medical processing.

"The SMPG actually goes through every condition in the DODI (DOD instruction 6130.03) and addresses what our providers should be thinking about with that condition," said Army

Col. Kevin Cummings, USMEPCOM command surgeon. "So, that's like the bible for our providers. We updated that in December. And then the second policy is the SMDRP. We developed the SMDRP as a guide for our providers and our recruiters, as they are collecting applicant medical history."

In addition, the updated SMDRP also establishes as new a policy of only allowing MEPS medical providers two records requests per condition disclosed in an applicant's medical prescreen (DOD Form 2807-2). MEPS medical providers look through each prescreen and determine whether records are needed for any of the conditions listed, and whether documentation already exists via the Health Information Exchange (HIE) on Military Health System (MHS) Genesis.

"One of the most frustrating parts of the interaction in the prescreen process between the recruiters and the applicant, and the MEPS, is the back and forth," said Cummings. "In an effort to try to get after that, and to provide some structure for both the MEPS and the recruiters, we lay out in the new SMDRP that you get two records requests per condition. The new policy says that after two times, you just authorize the applicant to come in."

However, just because an applicant is cleared to come into MEPS to begin processing, doesn't mean that they will be qualified to join. The new policy directs the MEPS medical providers to disqualify an applicant if they feel like there is still insufficient data relating to their prior health condition.

"And so, for the SMDRP, that's the biggest change is that policy adjustment," said Cummings. "Make two requests. If

you can't get it in two requests, then you make your decision. We won't hold the applicant up at MEPCOM any longer. We will move them through the process and then the waiver authority can review."

It is not uncommon for an applicant processing through MEPS medical to have some sort of disqualifying health condition. However, the process has always included a waiver review by the applicant's chosen branch of service. For instance, a future Sailor may be ineligible according to DOD instruction, but the Navy's Bureau of Medicine may be willing to grant a waiver for that individual to join the Navy.

"This really is the big key to emphasize," said Cummings. "There may be recruiters out there that will say, after two requests, 'I'm safe, I'm good.' But that's not the case, because your waiver authority may very well say, 'You know what, you really did need to get that information.' And so, the requirement for the information doesn't go away."

As the United States military celebrates the 50th anniversary of the all-volunteer force, recruiting young men and women to serve in the U.S. military is as challenging as ever. That's why USMEPCOM is dedicated to ensuring an equitable and standardized processing roadmap for applicants.

While the SMPG is an internal document to MEPS medical providers, the SMDRP is available to the military service recruiting liaisons online at: [https://www.mepcom.army.mil/Portals/112/Documents/Recruiters%20and%20Service%20Liaisons/Guides-Instructions/SMDRP\\_SOP\\_January%202023.pdf](https://www.mepcom.army.mil/Portals/112/Documents/Recruiters%20and%20Service%20Liaisons/Guides-Instructions/SMDRP_SOP_January%202023.pdf) ■





▲ Jenny Nicholson, test control officer, Portland Ore. MEPS, combines a mix of patterns and colors resembling graphic artwork to make a statement and bring some fun to her MEPS. (Courtesy photo)

# FASHION FORWARD

By Jeri Torre, program specialist, USMEPCOM

As we welcome spring, it's the perfect time to inject some fun, fashion, and camaraderie into our workplace. Spring is a season of change and new beginnings; it's no secret that a little bit of flair can uplift our moods, improve productivity and promote positive relationships with our coworkers. This year, why not use the season as an opportunity to promote fellowship among your colleagues by sharing your love for fresh, fashionable workwear that reflects your individual style?

In the workplace, it's essential to maintain a level of professionalism while still expressing your unique personality. Spring fashion is a great way to do this, as it allows for the inclusion of vibrant colors and playful patterns, while still retaining a polished appearance. For instance, you may consider adding a brightly colored blazer to classic white blouse and trousers or pairing a playful floral dress with a tailored blazer or cardigan.

Try organizing a spring fashion show, where everyone can show off their favorite workwear looks or share your favorite fashion finds through a workplace newsletter or social media platform.

**Encouraging fashion-forward thinking in the workplace not only adds some lighthearted fun to the day-to-day routine but also helps to boost team morale and camaraderie.**

**Spring fashion offers endless possibilities for creative workwear that can help you to express your individual style while maintaining a professional appearance.** So, why not embrace the season of change and new beginnings with some fresh, fashionable workwear that inspires you and your colleagues?





# FASHION FORWARD



[1] Christopher McCune, human resources assistant, poses in his windowpane pants in the halls of Memphis MEPS.

[2] Phyllis Jordan, transportation assistant, Minneapolis MEPS, elevates her black and white ensemble with matching platform sneakers.

[3] Our fashionable friends at Milwaukee MEPS honored their two best dressed applicants of the day by asking them to join the team for a group photo.

[4] L to R: HQ personnel Jeri Torre, program specialist, Denise Lucena-Martinez, IT Specialist, Chris Martin, logistics management specialist, and Jesus Flores, executive assistant, are on top of the trends at USMEPCOM.

[5] Greg Bieri, testing clerk, Lansing MEPS, knows a great blazer is a timeless piece for Spring every year.

[6] L to R: Little Rock MEPS members Jerrold Craven, human resources assistant, Yolanda Perrymond, lead medical technician, Undra Lambert, administrator support technician and Alytrius Bridgers, test control officer, show off their seasonal color palette with poppy reds and cerulean shades.







[1] Dr. Stephen Lazoritz, chief medical officer, Omaha MEPS, rocks a USMEPCOM bowtie and pullover vest set.

[2] Dwayne Herbert, IT Specialist, is the sharpest dressed man at Boston MEPS.

[3] L to R: Denver MEPS personnel James Rowley, processing supervisor, Erica Smith, program support specialist and Shawn Gunhus, mission support specialist, love warm hues to fight the lingering winter in Colorado.

[4] Atlanta MEPS is all about the Spring pastels. L to R: Kristopher O'Neal, human resources assistant, Ashley Gillard, human resources assistant, Dystany Kee, human resources assistant, and Johnny Gibson, administrator support technician, bring calming vibes to the MEPS with their peaceful and soothing color palette.

[5] Who said collared shirts have to be boring? Springfield, Mass. MEPS personnel Bob Johnston, test control officer (left), and Marine Sgt. Eduardo Perezyciano, processing specialist, don fun prints every Friday.

[6] San Antonio MEPS may be in the lone star state, but when it comes to fashionable stars, they have eight.





# First Junior Enlisted Council Launches

By Derrik Noack

Joint-service commands like USMEPCOM are often a rare billet for those in the military, especially those in lower ranks. While the job opportunity has its benefits, like learning more about the other branches, it can also lead one to feel detached from their specific service. That is one of the reasons that led Petty Officer 2nd Class Megan Decker, medical technician, Omaha MEPS, to establish the very first Junior Enlisted Council for the command.

After months of planning and prep work, the USMEPCOM Junior Enlisted Council held its first meeting in February for nearly four dozen junior service members. The forethought of the council began in October 2022, while Decker (one of the USMEPCOM 2022 Military Member of the Year competitors) was at a ceremony dinner with command leadership and other finalists.

“Command Sgt. Maj. Roger Rendon (Western Sector senior enlisted advisor) commented how it was great to see us younger military members communicating and sharing our experiences at our MEPS,” said Decker. We agreed that it’d be great if we had something like that for all USMEPCOM.”

After returning from the competition, Decker got to work using her previous experience with the Navy’s Junior Enlisted Association (JEA) to guide the vision of the USMEPCOM Junior Enlisted Council.

“At my first command I joined the JEA as a brand-new corpsman,” said Decker. “The program is used for junior Sailors to network and mentor

one another, as well as encouraging community and command involvement. To be able to meet new people from different departments and work together was a nice way to learn and grow.”

In the Navy, the JEA is for sailors E-5 and below but the Junior Enlisted Council at USMEPCOM is open to military members E-6 and below.

“We wanted to take the idea of the JEA and build that for USMEPCOM to let junior service members network and share solutions for problems,” said Decker. “A group of us from the Military Member of the Year competition took time to build a refined bylaw system, so this can continue when we leave. We established our mission and vision, then held a vote for cabinet members.”

The group looks at what some may consider drawbacks of serving at a joint command as unique opportunities to shape their career. Video calls

and team collaboration make connecting across 67 stations convenient to build a community that was left untapped until now.

“We may never go to another duty station where we are working alongside all services,” said Decker. “For us, it’s hard because we are all so geographically separated, but we still have a lot to relate to. We’re the worker bees on the deck plates that see some of the things that can be

implemented to make our organization better. We can all come together and take advantage of building those joint service connections on our shared experiences here.”



“We’re the worker bees on the deck plates that see some of the things that can be implemented to make our organization better”





## USMEPCOM JUNIOR ENLISTED COUNCIL CABINET



**PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS**  
**MEGAN DECKER**  
President



**PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS**  
**CARSON WRIGHT**  
Vice President



**PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS**  
**DYLAN BECK**  
Secretary



**STAFF SGT.**  
**BRIAN NEAL**  
Public Affairs Officer



**1ST SGT.**  
**ERNESTO URZUA**  
Mentor

When it comes to talking about one's career, peer to peer discussion can be more comfortable and relatable for junior personnel. That type of watercooler talk may be missed at a mixed command when most of your coworkers are senior leaders and civilians. By logging onto monthly council meetings, one can connect with another member of the same branch to prepare for the next advancement cycle.

"As a service member at USMEPCOM, at times it can feel like you're on an island," said Decker. "There are only five active-duty members at my MEPS and I'm the only junior enlisted. Sometimes it can be hard to still feel like you're a part of something. You may not have the opportunity to have a mentor that can talk you through what you should be doing for your service. The Junior Enlisted Council will give them that forum where cabinet members can help provide constructive counseling."

Decker will end her tour at Omaha MEPS in 2025. She hopes to establish a council that will far exceed her time with USMEPCOM and has high hopes for the near future.

"I'm pretty tenacious so I fully committed to seeing this grow and stick around long after I'm gone," she said. "In upcoming meetings, we are

looking to have guest speakers, highlight training opportunities, share career progression tips and provide presentations on basic life stuff like financial topics. In the future I'd love to plan a retreat at headquarters for us to come together."

After just a few meetings, the council has gained ample support and encouragement from leadership across the command.

"Innovation is the lifeblood of progress, and it is innovation that drives our continued success as a military force, said Army Lt. Col. Dennis Leung, commander, 1st Battalion. "The Junior Enlisted Council creates a woven tapestry of the experiences and ingenuity of our service members – to shared experiences, to support one another, and to develop the ideas to continue our success at USMEPCOM."

Decker said any military member at USMEPCOM interested in joining can reach out to her, or any other cabinet members, to be added to the Junior Enlisted Council Teams channel. Meetings will be held every month and cabinet elections will be held annually. She said leadership wants to know any pertinent issues brought up they can fix, but the council meetings will only have junior enlisted in attendance. ■



# Policy NCOIC Never Forgets Her Roots

By Joseph Wax

From the initial recruitment interview to the oath ceremony at MEPS, USMEPCOM personnel at all levels and service recruiting partners work together to get civilians through “Freedom’s Front Door” and into the U.S. military.

USMEPCOM’s recently promoted Army Master Sgt. Renee Barton, policy non-commissioned officer in charge of J-3, knows better than most how hard everyone is working at each step of the

process to keep the All-Volunteer Force going for 50 years.

Barton has spent time as a recruiter, an Army National Guard guidance counselor at MEPS, a master trainer for Washington Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion, and now USMEPCOM’s J-3 Operations Directorate.

“I joined the Army in 2009,” said Barton. “The ultimate goal was that I was going to do the Army part-time and be a full-time English teacher,” said Barton. “But I fell in love with the Army, and I was like, I should have done this full-time.”

Barton spent time working at the Warrior Training Center in Fort Benning, Georgia before being hired on as a recruiter in Washington in 2013.

“I became a recruiter and got to go to recruiting school, and then I kind of moved all around the state,” she said. “Two years into recruiting, they (Washington National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion) selected me to be a guidance counselor. They said, ‘You’re good at packets. You’re good at regulations, you’d be really good at this job.’”

After three years working as a guidance counselor at Spokane MEPS, Barton returned to her role as a recruiter to earn her expert recruiting badge before she could progress further as a career recruiter.

“The history of the zip codes they gave me supported a mission of two people a year,” she said. “But they gave me a mission of 12, so I was grinding, working hard. It was at my old college, and I ended up making my mission, getting my expert badge and then they moved me to a position



▲ Army Master Sgt. Renee Barton conducts training during the USMEPCOM guidance counselor conference.  
(Courtesy photo)



called master trainer.”

Barton was one of two master trainers for Washington state. She would travel around doing ride-a-longs with recruiters, and provide extra training on building packets, how to prospect for applicants or conduct interviews. At the conclusion of that tour, she was selected to come to USMEPCOM.

Being at USMEPCOM HQ gave Barton the ability to dive deeper into the processing regulations that govern DOD accessions and gain a better understanding of it all.

“Just being in all the different regulations,” said Barton. “All the different things that go into everything and realizing that nine times out of 10, MEPCOM and MEPS aren’t making the decisions, it is actually OSD (Office of the Secretary of Defense). When you’re a recruiter you focus on the Army regulations and the National Guard regulations, but there are all these other regulations. Just getting into that and then it all makes more sense.”

Barton has learned that she has a broader reach at USMEPCOM headquarters than what she was used to recruiting or at the MEPS. With her background in education and training, she has been able to get out in the field and train others to more effectively navigate the accessions process.

“I have a Master’s in education, and I like to teach,” she said. “I like to instruct. And so, I just kind of fell into that role. As policy NCOIC, I work with policy and training, so it afforded me the opportunity.”

Barton has been around for some major changes, to include the rollout of MROAD and

MHS Genesis. Having a background as a career recruiter, she was able to see early on how the new changes would affect recruiters and steer the conversation at USMEPCOM towards helping recruiters navigate the new systems.

“I said, ‘Do you have job aids for the recruiters, because you’re kind of changing their whole way of life,’” said Barton. “And they were like, ‘No, but we have you.’”

Barton has done training with recruiters, recruiting station commanders, brigades and battalions, both via Teams and in person. She has reached out to recruiters via online forums. All to try to help the recruiters navigate the change to MHS Genesis.

“I think right now we’re still super new in the MHS GENESIS program, so we’re still learning how it’s going to affect everything,” she said. “But I do think the overall outcome, like maybe five years from now or so, is that recruiters won’t have to run around trying to find documents. It’s all going to be in there as more clinics and hospitals get online and share that health information.”

In addition to her recent promotion to Master Sergeant, Barton has received numerous awards and special recognition for her commitment to training others. As she prepares for her next command at the Army National Guard headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, she is still busy training, passing on her vast knowledge and experience to help strengthen J-3’s role as the “motor in the middle.”

“I’ve been teaching some of the other personnel that are in policy and training, taking them with me, so that when I’m not here anymore, they can carry this on,” said Barton. ■



▲ Barton with Portland MEPS personnel.  
(Courtesy photo)

*“I have a Master’s in education, and I like to teach.”*



# fueling team and community bonds through service

By Army Capt. Sara Sajer  
Salt Lake City MEPS executive officer

Through their crucial facilitation of military enlistments across all service branches, the Salt Lake City MEPS and Las Vegas RPS employees probably hear the word “service” at least a hundred times a day. At the water cooler, Veterans turned government civilians often wax poetic about their own experiences in service, from Vietnam, Desert Storm and the Global War on Terror. Similarly, “Green suiters” assigned to the MEPS discuss their current service contracts with applicants who are about to begin journeys of their own, imparting advice for successful careers in service. However, on Mar. 3, the Salt Lake City MEPS and Las Vegas RPS teams used their non-processing C.A.R.E.S Day to lean into another form of service: community service.

The Salt Lake City MEPS Command Team, which leads both Salt Lake and the Las Vegas RPS, wanted to give their employees an opportunity to collaborate outside the setting and scope of their normal duties. Army Maj. William Hernandez, commander, Salt Lake City MEPS, and Army 1st Sgt. Natisha Baylor, senior enlisted advisor, Salt Lake City MEPS, directed two volunteer projects with non-profit organizations. Hernandez and Baylor drew inspiration from an expansion of the C.A.R.E.S acronym: **Connect** with coworkers and the greater Salt Lake City and Las Vegas communities. **Appreciate** how fortunate we are. **Reset** our resiliency habits. **Educate** through action. **Strengthen** our team.



▲The Salt Lake City MEPS team poses in front of a distribution truck outside the Utah Food Bank, where they volunteered to repackage bulk shipments into family-sized servings. (Photo by Army Maj. William Hernandez)





▲ Salt Lake City MEPS personnel volunteer at the Utah Food Bank, repackaging chicken patties into family-sized bags for families in need. (Photo by Army Maj. William Hernandez)

“Volunteering out among our fellow citizens, beyond the doors of the MEPS/RPS, aligns with our priority of standing tall in the community,” said Hernandez. “Collectively looking past ourselves and our own needs tends to elevate our sense of purpose.”

Salt Lake City MEPS personnel volunteered with the Utah Food Bank in South Salt Lake City, Utah. Founded in 1904, the massive operation works to feed the 1 in 11 Utahns who are at risk of missing a meal and distributes 56.1 million meals annually. Since about 50% of the donations to the warehouse come from community sponsors in bulk, the food bank relies on volunteers to breakdown the large shipments and repackage them into portions for families.

The Salt Lake team donned hair nets and latex gloves to sort a bulk shipment of 40,000 Tyson chicken patties in just over 90 minutes. The employees worked in teams of three to assemble bags of patties, pushing the pace of their packaging with a bit of competitive spirit. Winner, Winner Chicken Dinner.

Simultaneously, the Las Vegas RPS team volunteered at the Shannon West Homeless Youth Center, adjacent to the iconic, neon lit strip. While Las Vegas is known for its flowing cash and opulence, there is a large population of disadvantaged youth who struggle with homelessness despite this. The Las Vegas employees rolled up their sleeves to prepare, cook, and serve food and beverages to 50 young

adults between the ages of 17 and 23. One employee mixed Gatorade while another browned beef on a griddle and someone else conversed with the patrons as they filled their plates- a true team effort.

Army Sgt. Candy De La Torre ruminated on the experience saying, “Philanthropy is an act of gratitude and humility. It was really rewarding to engage with our local community. I look forward to doing this again.”

Both events physically fueled those in need and both events fueled MEPS team bonding and connecting with the greater communities. Given the successful impacts of the volunteer projects, the Salt Lake City Command Team is researching similar opportunities to pursue once per quarter. ■



# The BEAST Unleashed at Tampa MEPS

✈ By Tampa MEPS personnel: Navy Lt. Cmdr. America Estevez Guerrero, commander, Army Capt. Roxanngely Correa-Torres, operations officer, Army 1st Lt. Abby Borchert, assistant operations officer & Giselle Santiago, IT specialist

Attention in the MEPS, attention in the MEPS, the B.E.A.S.T has been unleashed. What better way to kick start the second quarter than by welcoming our Eastern Sector Commander, Army Col. Janelle Kutter and our senior enlisted advisor, Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Michael Page. During their visit, we were enthusiastic to share how we embody the Beast mentality at Tampa. **Build** the nation's might; **Enthusiasm** and making every interaction with our applicants count; **Accountability** by setting standards for safety, dignity and respect; **Support** and commitment to competence; **Team** and ensuring mission upholds true to our military values.

What else took place this quarter? Pirate costumes and trinkets were donned during our annual Gasparilla pirate invasion. Yo-ho-ho, what did these pirates want? A potluck of course! As tradition has it, food must be had during these high processing months. Our service partners are notably working hard to meet their mission's goals, and Tampa MEPS are all "hands on deck" to support.

Black History Month was also observed during this quarter. Patricia McNeil, Tampa MEPS human resources assistant and Equal Employment Opportunity representative, shared the many contributions of African Americans in everything that is American history and our way of life. We honored the legacies and achievements of generations past, paving the way for civil rights, present-day music, sports, medicine, entrepreneurship, writing/poetry, technological advances and beyond.

During training Day, Army 1st Lt. Abby Borchert, Tampa MEPS assistant operations officer took the lead. Borchert handed out sheets of paper in two different colors. Those



▲ Tampa MEPS personnel were "all hands on deck" for their annual Gasparilla event. Gasparilla is a big pirate themed celebration, local to Tampa, Fla. (Courtesy photo)

The Gasparilla Festival is a large community event held in Tampa, Fla. annually since 1904. The main event is the Parade of Pirates, a friendly invasion by the mythical pirate, Gasparilla.



▲ Eastern Sector leadership poses for a photo with Tampa MEPS personnel outside their MEPS. (Courtesy photo)

with the pink sheet were tasked with writing something positive occurring in their life, while those with the orange sheet would write something currently causing concern or burden. Even with all the time spent with each other, it was evident we truly don't know everything about each other!

Another important take away was how to communicate and identify if our loved ones are in distress. Some of the resources provided were the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline which is now 9-8-8. This line is available to call, text, or chat. Trained counselors are ready to provide support. ■





## WORKING HARD FOR THE MISSION: USMEPCOM, RECRUITING PARTNERS WORKING OVERTIME TO GET THE JOB DONE

▲Applicants at Chicago MEPS prepare to take the Oath of Enlistment. (Photo by Israel Molina)

By Joseph Wax

Starting in April, USMEPCOM will reintroduce Saturday processing days at select MEPS around the country.

In coordination with the different service recruiting partners, 14 MEPS and the Las Vegas remote processing station were chosen for the first Saturday processing day, April 22. Those 14 MEPS are: Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Sacramento, Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Fort Jackson, Miami, Montgomery, New York, Raleigh and Tampa.

For future Saturdays May 6 and June 24, 15 MEPS will again be selected by USMEPCOM leadership in conjunction with input from the recruiting partners.

On Saturday processing days July 8, Aug. 26 and Sept. 9, all 65 MEPS locations and the Las Vegas remote processing station will be available, but a minimum of 5 projected medical exams are required for a MEPS to open during these summer months.

“We understand the difficult recruiting environment our recruiting partners are operating in

and this is one way we can support them,” said Army Col. Megan Stallings, commander, USMEPCOM. “I am always so impressed and proud of the service members and civilians at our MEPS across the country for their hard work to get after our mission and support our partners.”

Saturday processing will follow the normal rules of operations, requiring 48-hour scheduling lead time for projections.

“We know recruiting is tough right now for the services,” said David Davis, chief of operations and readiness division, J-3. “We just want to show that MEPCOM is doing its part to help them get across the finish line. Saturdays provide that increased flexibility for individuals still in school or who work late to have an opportunity outside of normal working hours.”

MEPS staff will be joined on Saturdays by the service liaisons and recruiting personnel, to ensure that all operations are available just like any normal processing day.

If the Saturday processing day falls on the first Saturday of a pay period, USMEPCOM and MEPS personnel’s schedules can be adjusted the following week to accommodate the extra hours. If it falls on the second Saturday however, they will be granted overtime or compensation time based on whether they are exempt or non-exempt employees.

According to Mary Grant, chief of civilian personnel division, J-1, volunteers will be chosen first for Saturday processing shifts. If not enough people volunteer to meet staffing needs, supervisors will select personnel for Saturday processing on a rotating basis. She advises any personnel with questions about their schedules or pay related to Saturday processing days to work with their supervisors and MEPS administration. However, if any additional questions or issues arise, she suggests they should reach out to customer service representatives in J-1. ■





▲Michael Hughes, management analyst, J-3, and Karlie Shrewsbury, management analyst, J-3, discuss topics to be covered during their “30 Minute Thursdays” forum. The forum is held every Thursday and calls for open discussion in the agile recruiting environment. (Photo by Derrik Noack)

# THIRTY MINUTE THURSDAYS

By Derrik Noack

USMEPCOM’s J-3 Policy and Training branch kicked off a new weekly forum, [“30 Minute Thursdays.”](#) on Jan 12. The forum provides an opportunity to share information about fast-paced policy updates and guidance released in support of rapidly changing accessions processing.

Hosted on a dedicated Microsoft Teams channel at noon CDT every Thursday, subject matter experts (SMEs) discuss current initiatives, policy updates, software releases and answer any questions that may arise. The weekly meetings allow for more open discussions in the agile recruiting environment.

“We’ve been doing quarterly chalk talks in two-hour long forums, but they didn’t address the fast-paced environment that’s going on,” said Karlie Shrewsbury, management analyst, J-3. “We wanted something that could get information out a little quicker. We decided to take a little time each week, reach out to the field and just make it a big collaborative session.”

Topics are gathered in a variety of ways for the recurring forum. If there are any pertinent issues, or things people have been struggling with, headquarters personnel provide training on those subjects. MEPS personnel can reach out to their Sector with topic suggestions. The “30 Minute Thursdays” sessions will

also address upcoming changes to help personnel stay ahead of the curve.

“If Accession Policy puts out a change to something, we want to utilize this forum to let personnel know beforehand,” said Michael Hughes, management analyst, J-3. “We don’t want the MEPS to open an email one day and then see the change in an Info Message. What we want to do is give them a heads up.”

This effort is in collaboration with Eastern and Western Sector Operations, along with the directorates. SMEs remain online beyond the scheduled 30 minutes for questions or continued discussion. Attendance is highly encouraged (but not mandatory) and is open for all USMEPCOM employees to participate. The first session had 67 personnel in attendance and grew to 87 its third week.

“Any MEPS personnel are encouraged and invited to attend,” said Hughes. “We’ve seen growth each week and it’s still going up. It’s just a good tool all around for those involved in accession policy.”

Shrewsbury said the meetings could go down to occurring bi-weekly, if there aren’t as many topics to cover, but the program is here to stay. Personnel with impending questions or concerns should still utilize the War Room and their Chain of Command. ■



# MEPS MENTION

Email [derrik.l.noack.civ@army.mil](mailto:derrik.l.noack.civ@army.mil) with MEPS Mention submissions!



**NAME:** Frank Schwartz

**POSITION AT THE MEPS:** Lead HR Technician

**TIME AT MILWAUKEE MEPS:** 37 years

**CONTRIBUTION:** Schwartz served in the Marine Corps from 1978 to 1982 and remains a proud Marine.

He has served at Milwaukee MEPS for nearly four decades, watching a plethora of change from paper to digital and everything in between. He is the "Go to Leader" and always has the answer at Milwaukee MEPS. He always puts his coworkers and applicants well before himself.

**DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER:** This Milwaukee native's tough exterior can be misleading. He is one of the most caring and thoughtful individuals you'll meet. His dedication to the job, mission and applicants has never wavered and is appreciated by everyone he encounters.

**FAVORITE MOVIE:** Forrest Gump

**PERSONAL MANTRA:** Live One Day at a Time



▲ Frank Schwartz, lead Human Resources technician, Milwaukee MEPS, is awarded Civilian of the Quarter in 1997. (Courtesy photo)



▲ Schwartz poses for a photo in the Oath of Enlistment room at Milwaukee MEPS. (Photo by Derrik Noack)



# InstaMEPS



Submit photos highlighting personnel at your MEPS to [derrik.l.noack.civ@army.mil](mailto:derrik.l.noack.civ@army.mil)



1.

2.

3.





4.



5.

1. Applicants from San Antonio MEPS prepare to fill the court of the AT&T Center for a joint enlistment ceremony, kicking off the San Antonio Spurs Military Appreciation Night. (Photo by Domonick Wallace)
2. Portland, Ore. MEPS personnel take the opportunity to pose for a photo with Western Sector leadership during their annual visit to the MEPS. (Courtesy photo)
3. Army 1st Sgt. Michael Phillips, senior enlisted advisor, Raleigh MEPS, presents trainers from Dog Training Elite with a certificate of appreciation. The trainers shared dog therapy training and the importance of companionship during Raleigh MEPS's C.A.R.E.S. Day. (Courtesy photo)
4. Buffalo MEPS personnel don their finest green apparel to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day (Courtesy photo).
5. Thanks to a donation from a local scrap yard, Raleigh MEPS personnel were able to release aggression by smashing a junk car with sledgehammers and bats. Heavy metal music played in the background as they took turns smashing a vehicle during their C.A.R.E.S. Day. (Courtesy photo)

#### Processing Policy Guidance Updates:

- ASVAB Testing While in DEP (ETP) - March 7
- Air Force Height and Weight Standards Change - March 6
- Vaccination Immunization Advisory - March 2
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service Duplicative Error - Feb. 1
- Procedures to Correct and Verify Data- Jan. 17
- MHS GENESIS HRA Roles & Responsibilities- Jan. 13

#### Past Quarter Updates



#### Publication Announcements:

- DPMAP Important Dates - March 9
- Real ID Act Update 6 - Feb. 16
- USAREC Service Prescreen Update 2 - Feb. 16
- Government Purchase Card Guidance for Medical Referrals -Feb. 6
- ConCEP Virtual Walk-through Sessions -Feb. 3
- Supporting Medical Documentation Review Program - Jan. 6



**MAY**

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