

UNITED STATES MILITARY ENTRANCE PROCESSING COMMAND

Messenger

SHARING INFORMATION TO REACH A VISION

VOL. 31, No. 3



Year of the NCO

Messenger

Sharing information to reach a vision

Senior Enlisted Advisors

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talk about leadership in unique environment

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Col. Mariano C. Campos Jr.
USMEPCOM Commander

Daniel R. Trew
USMEPCOM Public Affairs Officer

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Send submissions and changes to:

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

Magazine Staff

Christine Parker, Editor
(847) 688-3680 or DSN 792-3680, Ext. 7222

Skip Wiseman, Associate Editor
(847) 688-3680 or DSN 792-3680, Ext. 7226

Amy Gregorski, Cover Designer

E-mail: Messenger@mepcom.army.mil
Fax: (847) 688-2664

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Guest Commentary

Professional noncommissioned officers have been the hallmark of our military since the earliest days of our nation. Friedrich Von Steuben, a Prussian officer volunteering with the Americans during the Revolutionary War, trained a 100-man company in the profession of arms. They, in turn, trained soldiers in other units to adhere to the standards they had learned from their demanding taskmaster.

Von Steuben put pen to paper in 1779 to publish *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*. In it, he laid out in plain language the basics of being a soldier, how to teach it and why. Parts of his so-called “Blue Book” are still in use today.

Through the years, the role of NCOs in the American military has expanded. Today’s NCOs are better informed, better educated and have more authority than at any time in our history. As always, we NCOs are conscious of the past, grounded in the present and focused on the future.

The can-do spirit of the NCO corps, which reflects the same spirit that made our nation great, is the key to our military’s success in peace and in war. That spirit means, that to an NCO, what’s easy is a given, that which is difficult is no problem and the impossible is merely a challenge.

The importance of a professional NCO corps is perhaps best illustrated by the impression Soviet officers formed while watching a demonstration performed for them by United States military units at the height of the Cold War. The Soviets were convinced that the NCOs carrying out their duties as Air Force crew chiefs and aircraft maintainers were officers wearing enlisted uniforms. After all, Soviet NCOs

could not be trusted to, nor were they competent to carry out such complex tasks. Soviet plane captains at the time were mostly majors in the Soviet air force.

Today, NCOs face the biggest challenges in a generation. Our all volunteer force is being tested by fighting two wars. As deployments follow deployments and dwell time is too short, the Department of Defense is stressing mental fitness along with physical fitness. In addition with tending to their own and their families’ well being, today’s NCOs are further charged with seeing to their troops’ needs now more than ever.

We’ve all heard that noncommissioned officers are the backbone of the military. That is more true more than ever, but I would like to use a different analogy.

NCOs are the offensive linemen on the military team. The quarterbacks, backs and receivers gain all the yards, score the touchdowns and generally get all the glory, while the offensive line toils in anonymity in the trenches. But without the “big uglies,” as sportscaster Keith Jackson called them, quarterbacks can’t pass, receivers can’t catch and there aren’t any holes for the backs to dart through. In short, the ball goes nowhere.

USMEPCOM’s “offensive line” is as good as I’ve ever seen, but not very deep. The small number of NCOs in the command makes their impact on the command even more impressive. With that visibility comes greater responsibility. The command’s NCOs are some of the earliest role models applicants meet as they embark on their military careers.

Think about that for a moment. A young man or woman about to enlist in the service of our country looks to



Command Sgt. Maj. William Lindo

you as an example of what they aspire to be. That is an awesome responsibility.

As these fine young Americans progress in their careers they will encounter other role models. Do you remember your drill instructor? I remember mine. I recently encountered a sergeant first class who told me I was his DI. Even after all these years, I think he was a little afraid of me. Supervisors and small unit leaders will leave lasting impacts as well. Still, the NCOs in the MEPS have a chance to make the first impression.

The Army is observing the year of the NCO. While this special recognition is welcome, I would tell you that every year is the year of the NCO, regardless of branch of service, location or duties. The responsibilities will most likely continue to grow. I challenge our dedicated Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, Airmen and Guardians to not only rise to the occasion, but to seek opportunities to broaden their horizons.

William P. Lindo

William Lindo
Command Sergeant Major, USA
Senior Enlisted Advisor

Although few in numbers, noncommissioned officers are backbone of the command

By Skip Wiseman
Messenger Associate Editor

Although there aren't as many noncommissioned officers in USMEPCOM as there used to be, they still play a key role in the command and will continue to do so in the future, according to Command Sgt. Maj. William Lindo, the command's senior enlisted advisor.

Lindo also pointed out that the Army's observance of the Year of the NCO has an impact across the command, regardless of a person's branch of service.

"When the Army designated the Year of the NCO, we didn't say the Year of the Army NCO. We just said Year of the NCO," he said. "This is our chance to emphasize providing education and initiative and highlight past and present NCOs.

"You cannot do that and highlight one branch of service," Lindo said. "It brings light to the contributions of NCOs across all services."

Overall, Lindo categorizes the command's NCOs as "outstanding" and said they are doing well, pointing out that promotion selection rates for the last few years have generally run above the individual's service selection rate.

"On a day-to-day basis, our NCOs are exceptional," he said. "As I go out there to visit, which is probably the best part of this job, I see those NCOs. In some cases, we're talking about people with less than 10 years experience and they are making on-the-spot decisions that directly affect the readiness of our nation. Those NCOs are making decisions four or five years ahead of their time in service."

And the experience serves them well.

"A large number of our NCOs, when they depart USMEPCOM, depart for key billets," Lindo said. "You find them going to key slots as recruiters, drill instructors or overseas in a platoon structure. It definitely has a positive impact on their careers."

The function of NCOs in the MEPS hasn't changed, he said, but the skills needed to get the job done have since the command is no longer an even split between military members and civilians.

"Our job is still to teach, coach, mentor and educate the civilian personnel, just like we would military personnel," Lindo said. "Our job hasn't changed, but the skill sets required have.

Dealing with civilian employees requires NCOs to make some adjustments in their leadership styles, he said.

"Instead of using the power we all had from becoming NCOs, you're tasked to use a finesse approach when dealing with civilians

and finding different things that might motivate them to accomplish their tasks and jobs."

As senior NCOs supervise fewer military people, younger NCOs often shoulder more responsibility than they would when assigned to their individual services.

"The junior NCOs normally come in and they're like a squad leader in the traditional world," Lindo said. "We're using them more like platoon sergeants because they've been through the basic (leadership) courses for their services. They have certain skills you won't find among the (entry level) civilian employees in the MEPS."

Lindo pointed out the different perspective an NCO brings to the table based on his or her military experience. An NCO realizes an applicant's importance to an individual recruiter and the military as a whole.

"The NCO, having the background in the military and understanding the recruiting process, will understand that an applicant might be 'make or break' for a recruiter trying to make mission," he said.

Lindo also stressed the problem-solving skills the military teaches NCOs, but said it all comes down to people.

"To be quite frank, the majority of our NCOs come equipped with those skills," he said. "In my mind, it's about knowing people. This business is all about people and taking care of individuals.

"Where you run into a problem is if you're used to being that person who expects people to 'do as I say' and not provide a reason behind it or elaborate on why this is important," Lindo said.

There are still plenty of opportunities in the command, especially for human resources specialists, known as 42 Alphas in the Army, in senior enlisted advisor positions, Lindo said.

"There are very few billets in the Army now where a 42 Alpha has the opportunity to be a senior enlisted advisor, a first sergeant," he said. "MEPCOM is one of the key places where there is an opportunity to hold that position. Not only does it give you an opportunity to impact tomorrow's armed forces, but gives you a chance to refine some of the skills you will use after your time in the service. It can be a great opportunity to pick up some transition skills."

Lindo views communication as the biggest challenge for the command's NCOs, especially considering USMEPCOM is in the midst of fielding the Virtual Interactive Processing System. He also stressed teamwork between officers and NCOs as a key element in getting information to internal and external audiences.

"We're in the process of pushing VIPS out to the field," he said. "We're talking about having the system in place by 2015. We need

to promote the future of USMEPCOM along with VIPS initiatives and show how it will impact the entire Department of Defense.

"Lots of good ideas are communicated to the headquarters," Lindo said. "We do a good job of disseminating that information to the sectors and the sectors do a good job of getting it out to the MEPS, at least to the commander and SEA level.

"As I travel throughout the command and ask questions in reference to VIPS, in some cases that information is not being communicated to the lowest level. We definitely need those folks to know about VIPS and have a basic understanding of it; to be just as informed as those at headquarters."

Lindo compares the relationship between the command's officers and senior NCOs to a football team.

"The commander may be the offense, the SEA the defense," he said. "If the offense loses, so does the defense. We have forged a relationship between the officers and enlisted. We set the environment for them to grow as one — to celebrate victory together and, in some unfortunate cases, to share defeat.

"I need the NCOs to help their officers communicate it down," he said. "I need them to ask questions and validate that the information is being received and understood. I need them to put it in their quarterly training schedules and their hip pocket training that the information is being pushed to the lowest levels and there is a basic understanding of the changes."

Those communications skills extend to relationships between the MEPS and the interservice recruiting council because NCOs are usually the ones who discover the problems and are almost always the ones who resolve them.

"The NCOs are the ones who are there during the morning process. The NCOs are there late at night when decisions are being made," Lindo said. "Once the problems are identified, NCOs are the ones who are going to resolve those issues. They play a very key role. They generate communication throughout the IRC."

He cited missing documentation, education verification or signatures as examples.

"Those things seem small, but will put a halt to processing," Lindo said. "There are plenty of things out there in the field that get resolved NCO to NCO. Once a problem is identified, NCOs will get it back to the liaison and the liaison will get it back to the recruiters and have it resolved."

One unique aspect of a joint command is having to learn about the different service

Command Sergeant Major William Lindo USMEPCOM Senior Enlisted Advisor



“ “ This business is all about people and taking care of individuals.

on the importance of NCOs
having problem-solving skills

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cultures and, in USMEPCOM's case, the civil service culture. Lindo used the difference between the Army and Navy as an example.

"The Army first sergeant is unique, compared to the Navy," he said. "There is no first sergeant in the Navy. The culture is totally different. The chief petty officers lead, but they live a separate, distinct life.

"They wear different uniforms," Lindo said. "They eat in different facilities. That is a different culture."

There are also "language differences."

"In the Army, if you talk about being relieved, that's a horrible thing," Lindo said. "In the Navy, relief is just your replacement coming in. We talk about cross-service communications the same as we talk about cross-cultural communications."

With the different services come different training requirements, along with

specialized training needed for some career fields.

"Our senior enlisted advisors have to become very familiar with training requirements," Lindo said. "Know their schools. Know what it takes to get them promoted. Know what they need. Look out for their concerns.

"For instance," he said, "the Army puts a whole lot of emphasis on training, education and development. If you are talking to an Air Force member, you might want to look at what they're doing as far as community involvement."

MEPS senior enlisted advisors also play a key role in balancing the needs of the recruiting services with the MEPS staff.

"It's a very delicate situation," Lindo said. "We have to understand the response we give the first part of the month, when we can probably tell the services 'no' is the



“ I expect them to be there when the door opens in the morning and I expect them to be there to close up on mission nights. That’s when the key decisions are made — first thing in the morning and late at night.

on what he expects from
MEPS senior enlisted advisors

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wrong response at the end of the month when they’re closing out their missions. Being able to understand that and balance that and make sure your folks have some ‘win-wins’ in between.”

Having NCOs in the MEPS is “very important,” Lindo said, and they must be aware that they are serving as role models as applicants begin their military careers.

“If they pulled the NCOs out of the MEPS, it would have a devastating effect on the operation,” he said. “We have great continuity in our civilian ranks, (but) when people go to the MEPS, they’re looking for uniformed personnel. It’s almost paramount to have an NCO presence in the MEPS.

“It’s the same thing as if you’re trying out for the baseball team and they have a basketball coach there,” he said. “You want to have someone there who can relate their experiences, that you can look at as a role model. (Applicants) want to look at someone they can aspire to be five, 10, 15, 20 years from now.”

Recruiters are the first NCOs applicants encounter. The NCOs in the MEPS are the second.

“It’s very important that we have the right people,” Lindo said. “Not only are they talking the talk, they’re walking the walk. It’s very important to have those people there in the MEPS who can receive those applicants and reinforce the first impression they receive from the recruiters.”

Although USMEPCOM has fewer junior enlisted members than a typical unit, it doesn’t make any difference in the long run, Lindo said.

“I don’t think it changes the picture,” he said. “The best way to enforce the standard is to set the standard. When we talk about not having young enlisted people, we have young people who are being introduced to the Department of Defense and civilian personnel.”

NCOs bear the same responsibility to help civilians’ careers advance as they would if they were training junior military members, Lindo said.

“We’ve got to be able to identify those needs or training deficiencies and make sure we’re providing them with what they need, not only at the entry level, but to help people advance up the career ladder and advance to higher positions,” he said.

Lindo said the command’s high civilian turnover rate is often a point of discussion, but he sees it as a mostly positive sign.

“If the environment is good and you have a high turnover rate, that’s a good thing,” he said. “It tells me that you teach, coach and develop those folks for higher positions. We shouldn’t expect our folks to come in and stay at an entry level position. Developing those folks is just about the same as dealing with young military personnel.

“Initially, a lot of NCOs didn’t understand that they had the same responsibilities for those civilian personnel,” Lindo said. “They felt they were relegated to dealing with those four or five military personnel. You have the same responsibility. That’s one of the things we try to hammer home during the new commander and SEA course.”

Lindo’s expectations of senior enlisted advisors are simple — and daunting.

“I expect my SEAs to be the standard,” he said. “I expect them to be there when the door opens in the morning and I expect them to be there to close up on mission nights. That’s when the key decisions are made — first thing in the morning and late at night.”

Lindo expressed his gratitude for the dedication of the command’s military members and civilian employees, and urged them to stay focused because the job will likely be more difficult in the future.

“Because of the economy,” he said, “we’ve had a period where we could build much stronger relationships with our partners. We’ve seen a reduction in our operations, but it won’t be long, when the economy picks up, that we’re going to have to turn it back on again.

“I don’t want folks to be complacent,” Lindo said. “I want them to take the time to catch their breath and, at the same time, start focusing on the future.”

That future is bright, Lindo said, especially for NCOs. He can even see a possibility that more NCOs may be assigned to the MEPS after the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down.

“Maybe not to the point where we’re 50-50 (military and civilian) in the MEPS, but having NCOs in the MEPS gives us a certain flexibility,” he said.

Flexibility, of course is the hallmark of an NCO. Although USMEPCOM’s NCOs are few, they are still the backbone of the organization.

Keeping in touch means making contact person-to-person

Command Sergeant Major James Murray
Western Sector Senior Enlisted Advisor



By Skip Wiseman
Messenger Associate Editor

Keeping in touch is the biggest challenge for Command Sgt. Maj. James Murray, Western Sector senior enlisted advisor. Modern technology allows people to be more connected than ever, but he likes to do it on a more personal level.

“Being able to talk to people, touch on a situation, be visible to them and to their needs, that’s the biggest challenge,” he said.

Murray has a policy that he personally touch base with each MEPS at least twice a year. Just wrapping up his first year on the job, Murray has mostly travelled with Col. Charles Dunston, Western Sector commander.

“We are tied at the hip,” Murray said. “In order to be part of a command, you’ve got to be part of the team.”

Murray says he likes to be the first to engage issues.

“I try to get my hands on it first,” he said. “Once I get my hands on it, I can solve it. I discuss it with the (sector) commander. I will come back to him and suggest (he) give me the opportunity to work this out before he engages. If it’s something drastic, he’s going to engage. Nine times out of 10 he’ll say, ‘Roger, sergeant major. Work it out and then go forward.’”

Now that he has some background, Murray intends to fly solo a little more often.

“This year will be different,” he said. “I’m going to have the opportunity to go out with the (staff assistance visit) team. I’m going to have the opportunity to go out with the (inspector general) team, so I may hit a place more than twice a year.

“Then there are some things I want to do as we move forward with having boards within the battalions,” Murray said. “I’ll sit in on some of the boards with the first sergeants, just to sit in the background. My message is we want (people) to participate.”

He also said people perform best when enlisted leaders show them the way.

“(As a) first sergeant or platoon leader or squad leader, you have to make sure you coach, train, mentor and communicate the standards to people. You give them the tools they need to become successful.”

Sometimes, he said, people become stagnant and motivating them is a leader’s responsibility.

“You show them why,” Murray said. “It’s all about being the best of the best because you want to be the backbone (of the organization). How can you be the backbone if you’re not the best of the best?”

“You’ve got to get them into physical fitness,” he said. “You’ve got to get them into being part of the organization, understanding their purpose as part of the team.”

“ As I tell my first sergeants, when you’re dealing with civilians, take the ‘T’ off of tasking and learn to ask.

describing one of the adjustments military members have to make when assigned to USMEPCOM

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Murray also stresses that a large part of being a leader is being a teacher. He used marksmanship training as an example.

“When they’re down there in a foxhole trying to qualify, you’re right there with them,” he said. “Instead of slapping them on the back of the head when they make mistakes, you get down there and show them. You’re squeezing it wrong. You’re closing your eyes. That’s a teaching mechanism.

“All of the sudden, we’re going out on a convoy. You know they’re scared. You’re scared, too,” he said. “You’ve got to be able to understand what it is. That means

instead of laying in that bed, you’ve got to get up earlier so you can rehearse so you’ll be able to show them. That’s coaching.”

Murray is big on recognition and has established the Western Sector Command Sergeant Major Leadership Award.

“This is my fourth time being a sergeant major,” he said. “Way back, early on, I thought back to when I was NCO of the Quarter or NCO of the Year. (This award) gives them something to strive for. You hold them accountable. This is the playoffs. This is the Super Bowl.”

Murray said he doesn’t “give the award away. They have to earn it.”

Although the number of awards was curtailed by funding issues this year, Murray plans to make it a quarterly honor and will select well-rounded individuals for the award.

Murray said an assignment at a MEPS is “soft duty” so people have no excuse to not get involved in the community. As a matter of fact, he said, it’s a great way to boost a career.

“Your brothers and sisters are out there getting shot at,” he said. “They’re getting ribbons on their chests. You can get close by adding that extra ribbon by volunteering your time.”

Volunteering is also a great stress reliever, Murray said. Volunteering near work is a way to avoid rush hour traffic or spend some quality family time on weekends.

“You’re stressed out in the MEPS because you’re there every week,” he said. “Here’s an opportunity to take your family out. Look in the newspaper. There’s always something going on in your town or the next town over. You kill two birds with one stone.

“You get to take your family out. If you have kids, they like to run instead of being locked up in the house. Sign your family up for the breast cancer walk. You’ve got your family on an outing in the community. Oh, by the way, you’re also volunteering your time.”

On the job, NCOs are performing well, Murray said, but there are some interservice “cultural issues” that need attention.

“I’m Army,” he said, “The bulk of my organization is Army-bred. We have to learn and understand the cultures of the Navy, Marines, Air Force and Coast Guard. We also have to learn the cultures of the Guard and Reserve.

“The whole thing is, you are a leader,” Murray said. “You can lead people, but you’ve got to understand what they need. I understand my (uniform) regulations. The Marines Corps is different. You need to learn those things. The basic guidelines are the same.

“You want to make sure that when things hit the fan, that guy or girl is physically fit, that they can run, carry, pick and turn. You’ve got to make sure they fit in their uniform. And most importantly, you don’t walk over a mistake, because then that becomes their standard. You don’t do that. Standards must be held.”

Although the decrease in military assigned to the command mandated by Program Budget Decision 712 has led to

less flexibility, Murray sees a silver lining in the Wounded Warrior program, whether it temporarily assigns military members to the command or hires people who are unable to continue their military careers.

"Now is the time for us to regroup," he said. "We've got tons of (people who) are wounded. How do you give back to them? Now is the time to take a look at them, which we are doing."

"Quite a few of those guys and girls have the ability to come into our organization to fill a position where they will not be counted against the (manpower authorization)," Murray said. "They can do their rehab back in their hometown or pretty close to it and we've got (more) military people in the organization."

"We go through a screening process," he said. "The warrior transition unit will pick the right guy or girl and we allow that person to work in our MEPS."

Murray is not concerned that seeing people who were injured in combat will affect applicants' decisions to enlist.

"First of all," he said, "everybody knows when they sign on the dotted line, they're signing up for the gun club. They know that."

Nor does he believe the shift to a largely civilian work force has changed the basic responsibilities of NCOs in the MEPS.

"Regardless of how many people you have, you still coach, mentor, train and communicate," he said. "You do the same thing with civilians as you do with the military. I harp on it. I'll continue to harp on it. If we don't do that, everybody's not going to be singing Kumbaya together."

There are advantages to an assignment to a MEPS, even with fewer military people assigned, especially senior NCOs.

"It gives them better communications skills because they're interacting with different people," Murray said. "As I tell my first sergeants, when you're dealing with civilians learn to take the 'T' off of tasking and learn to ask. That doesn't mean you're being submissive. There's a way people want to be treated."

"They're civilians. So what? They're human. You're just leading people."

Murray believes having military people assigned to the MEPS is important and is communicating the command's position to the services.

"You can't operate this system without having military in it," he said. "We put together a point paper for the Navy to give them a better understanding of what

a SEA's duties are. They look at it as a soft target. If it's not a ship or recruiting, it doesn't matter. We hope to clarify that."

"Same thing with the Army," he said. "I sat on one of the boards year before last. I didn't know anything about the MEPS. I had to scale it. I saw it as soft duty. Now, having had the opportunity to see the work at a MEPS, I have a better understanding of what this organization requires of them."

"I hear talk about changing a lot of positions to make them civilian," he said. I believe that would be a disservice to the organization. I believe you really need to keep military in the MEPS."

He used his own enlistment experience at the Armed Forces Examining and Entrance Station as an example.

"I remember standing there in a big, open room with a whole bunch of guys," he said. "That room was huge. We were back-to-back, three or four tiers deep. I was petrified. I didn't know what to do. I didn't have a chance to interact with anyone until after I came out of there."

"I saw a couple guys and asked them a bunch of questions," Murray said.

"What's a 13 Bravo?" "That's a cannon cocker." "What's a cannon cocker?" "That's an artilleryman." "How hard is it?"

most of them aren't hotel inspectors or food service inspectors. They have checklists. That has been a challenge."

Another challenge Murray and Dunston are meeting head on is training, particularly limited training budgets.

"As a commander or first sergeant, you understand that's your bread and butter," Murray said. "You've got to train your people, because they're your pride and joy. This year, we're going to try something different."

"We gave them a heads-up on the direction we want to go," he said. "We're going to allow them to command by not telling them what to do."

Murray said the sector will set priorities, but the MEPS will have ample leeway to tailor their programs to meet their needs.

"For example," he said, "you may decide your HRAs aren't good (at) customer service. You know that, because you're where the boots hit the road. You'll be able to say, 'I need to give my guys and girls more customer service or stress management training.'"

"With that, as I dictated to them already, from January to December, you'll lay out your calendars," he said. "You'll

“ You don't walk over a mistake because then that becomes their standard. You don't do that. Standards must be held.

on the importance of enforcing standards across the board, regardless of branch of service

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"Having a service member to interact with is important," he said. "It calms these kids down. They're afraid of the unknown."

Unknowns are also sometimes part of the job of MEPS' NCO's, especially the senior enlisted advisors. They usually supervise the meals and lodging contracts, which they likely have not encountered before.

"The SEAs have the point on being the contractor representative, making sure the hotels are squared away, making sure the meals are squared away," Murray said. "They find that to be a challenge, because

put in all the mandatory things we need to do. Then you will have the opportunity to see what you need to command."

Overall, Murray thinks the future is bright for NCOs assigned to the command.

"We're getting the message out that this is a great opportunity for guys and girls who are looking for leadership opportunities," he said. "Now, if they think they're going to come in here and retire on active duty, they're wrong. That's not going to happen, at least not on my watch. This is a chance for them to use their skill sets or learn some different skills. Every day in MEPCOM is something different."

Recruiting background helps tell command story to partners in accession triad

By Skip Wiseman
Messenger Associate Editor

Explaining what the command does and communicating with different services are key roles for NCOs in USMEPCOM according to Command Sgt. Maj. Maurice Thorpe, Eastern Sector senior enlisted advisor.

Thorpe, who spent 15 years with U.S. Army Recruiting Command before assuming his current duties, said his experience in recruiting has been a great help. He said he has been able to make USMEPCOM aware of some of the challenges recruiters were facing.

"I've been able to communicate back and forth, bridging the gap between the commands to better help the process when it comes to getting folks to join our services," he said.

He used a problem with new urinalysis procedures as an example. After a change in procedure, some applicants had high levels of protein in their urine. While not uncommon, it can be an indication of more serious health problems, which are disqualifying. As it turned out, a new procedure was more sensitive than the previous one and the problem was resolved.

"The point I'm trying to make here is that when we make a change, we have to make sure we're briefing the recruiting forces so they understand the challenges they are going to come up against," Thorpe said.

Making sure the schedules mesh is another key to success.

"USAREC changed its hours for processing on mission days to eight o'clock," he said. "Our hours were still until 11 p.m. Communications between the two is letting them know what our hours are and how we can better serve them based on their new constraints and new hours."

Moving the Army mission day to the middle of the month while keeping the

Command Sergeant Major Maurice Thorpe Eastern Sector Senior Enlisted Advisor



other services at the end of the month has paid dividends, too, Thorpe said, mostly because it has reduced the congestion on computer networks trying to reserve jobs and transmit other information.

"The guidance counselors were working late hours trying to put all these folks through," he said, but giving two mission days alleviated some of the pressure of getting in contact with headquarters. "It gives them a time frame to be able to focus on work and get the attention needed to service their applicants. It has worked well for the Army."

Having military people assigned to the MEPS is "very important," Thorpe said, because it provides a natural liaison with the recruiting services. He also believes having wounded warriors in the MEPS provides an important example.

"We're inviting these folks into an organization that, on any given day, they may have to make the ultimate sacrifice," he said. "It's important that, at most of the MEPS, the first person the applicant sees when he gets off the bus is the first sergeant. And the last person the applicant sees after he joins is the first sergeant."

"It's a constant reminder that even though our organization is now 80 percent civilian, there is a strong military presence," Thorpe said. "We're inviting them to join our organization, whether it be the Navy, the Marines, the Army or the Air Force. That presence and representation not only comforts them, it comforts their parents."

"They're not joining the military to join a civilian organization," he said.

“They’re joining to work with military members. The military presence is a reminder that they are in a military environment.”

Thorpe said Col. Barrye Price, former Eastern Sector commander, was an enthusiastic supporter of the wounded warrior program and helped bring the program to USMEPCOM.

“The reality is it serves two purposes,” he said. “One is that we take care of our own — folks who have sacrificed for our country. Two, they bring an interesting perspective to what we do.”

“Often times when we bring folks into the organization it becomes a process,” Thorpe said. “Test, physical, enlist, swear in, go home. These wounded warriors, regardless of what their injuries may be, have a great understanding of what we’re asking these folks to do when they raise their right hand and swear to support and defend the Constitution of the United States.”

“(Wounded Warriors) bring that experience,” he said. “Not only the fact that you’re going to join, but ‘I put my life in harm’s way as well. I did get injured, but my country is taking care of me.’”

“One of the greatest challenges we have as a command, and I take it on personally, is explaining to the rest of the force how important our mission is,” he said.

The different roles of NCOs in the different services mean people have to make adjustments when they join the command.

“It takes great talent to come out to the MEPS and run a station,” Thorpe said. “When we have senior enlisted advisors come out to USMEPCOM, they have to have an open mind. Most times, this is their first time working in a joint environment.”

“Once they cross that hurdle, understanding the different cultures of the services, understanding the dynamic they’re working in, then with their level of experience, they will succeed.”

Thorpe pointed out the different roles NCOs have in different services. The Army views its senior enlisted members as “battle buddies,” while the other services may not.

“In this environment,” he said, “we like to believe our senior enlisted advisor is the (chief operating officer) and the commander is the (chief executive officer.) They work as a team.”

“Saying that,” Thorpe said, “The language is different when we talk to the Navy. The language is different when we

“ Leadership is leadership, no matter where you go. This is an environment where you really get to experience leading people, not just military personnel.

on the interaction between
NCOs and civilian employees

talk to the Air Force. The language is different when we talk to civilians.”

The relationship between senior NCOs, NCOs and civilians has to benefit all parties, he said.

“The NCOs bring the leadership and military experience to our organization,” Thorpe said. “Although many have prior service experience, the civilians bring hometown experience. It makes it easier and more comfortable for the applicants to walk through Freedom’s Front Door because we have both those dynamics working. We have leadership from the military and hometown ambiance from the civilians.”

Thorpe sees the interaction between military members and civilians as a benefit and a chance to show true leadership.

“Leadership is leadership, no matter where you go,” he said. “This is an environment where you really get to experience leading people, not just military personnel. This environment will allow you to grow and understand the backgrounds and cultures of different people. I believe because of the ever-changing dynamic, this is a place where we get to demonstrate our true leadership abilities.”

Thorpe said the benefits extend beyond military careers.

“Eventually, all of us are going to retire from the service one day, taking off the (uniform) and the younger generation will come up and serve,” he said. “It helps you understand equal employment opportunity, labor force regulations and the different laws that pertain to leading civilians.”

“It’s easy when you’re a senior NCO and you’re leading a lot of young privates,” he said. “It’s a little bit different when you’re a senior noncommissioned officer and you’re leading folks that maybe at one time were senior officers or senior NCOs in the military.”

“At other times, you have folks who are much more mature than you in age, but

you, as the senior enlisted advisor, have to present the leadership and standards and lead them the same way you would on a military installation.”

Thorpe pointed out personal involvement is also part of leadership. During his tenure, Price established the F.L.A.G. program, standing for Family, Leadership, Ambassadorship and Growth. Col. Todd Garlick retained the program when he assumed command. Personally, Thorpe prefers to refer to the sector’s people as “treasures.”

“Eastern Sector has always promoted taking care of your family and helping everybody employed take care of their families, to provide dynamic and outstanding leadership, to serve as an ambassador, and to continue to grow from within,” he said. “F.L.A.G. is just a way to capture that and remind folks to do so.”

Calling people treasures is a reminder to provide extra care for them.

“Words have meaning,” Thorpe said. “You can call them people, you can call them employees, but when you call them your treasure it holds a different level of awareness. Treasures are things people protect. People will do anything in their defense.”

“We call our applicants our nation’s treasure,” he said. “We call our civilian staff our civilian treasure. It serves as a constant reminder to us, as leaders, to provide that extra care to the folks.”

A new way to organize the MEPS in groups will help take better care of those “treasures,” once it is approved, Thorpe said. The battalion standardization concept will establish an intermediate level of command between the MEPS and sectors.

“It’s kind of hard for me to mentor first sergeants at a ratio of 34-1,” he said. “I really don’t get the opportunity to share the knowledge I have when it comes to taking care of the folks they have working in their stations. With the battalion concept, the ratio will be 6-1. It will give that



“There is nothing we can’t get done with proper communication.

on overcoming being far from the nearest military installation

”

(battalion) senior enlisted advisor a lot more time to get around and make sure the standards are being enforced in the MEPS and provide the training and knowledge needed to mentor the local first sergeant.”

Fargo soldier receives significant honors at ANCOC

Fargo MEPS’ Sgt. 1st Class Chad Pinkston was selected as the Distinguished Honor Graduate by achieving the highest grade point average of those on the Commandant’s List at the Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course.

First Sgt. Bryon E. Phillips, Fargo MEPS senior enlisted advisor, said he wasn’t surprised Pinkston did well.

“He is an outstanding Soldier. He leads by example,” Phillips said. “I knew what kind of person he was. He’s always had that drive and determination. I knew he was going to shoot for the top.”

Phillips also said Pinkston’s performance reflected his attitude in the MEPS where he supervises about five people in the processing section.

“He loves teaching and is always trying to find ways to motivate the civilian and military staff members,” Phillips said.

Pinkston was also selected as the Distinguished Leadership awardee for showing leadership and characteristics of “Be, Know, and Do” found in a professional noncommissioned officer.

Pinkston was also awarded the Benjamin Harrison Medal for obtaining the highest overall

That is important, Thorpe said, because the best way to enforce standards is by “constantly communicating what the standard is.”

Another thing that sometimes causes a problem is being far away from a military installation, but Thorpe said that is usually not difficult to overcome.

“There is nothing we can’t get done with proper communication,” he said.

He cited the example of a soldier in Lansing who was deploying to Iraq. He and his family lived in government leased housing and he was told he had to clear housing and move his family before he deployed.

“That doesn’t pass the common sense test,” Thorpe said. “We called the Corps of Engineers and found out there is an exception that allows (a family) to stay in government leased quarters until the soldier gets back from Iraq.”

A few things have to happen before leaders can solve problems, though.

“First, we have to know there is an issue,” Thorpe said. “That’s one of the things we’re doing — making sure we identify the problems and make sure they are communicated to the commander and first sergeant locally and up to the sector commander and command sergeant major.

“It’s things like (the housing issue) that we just don’t have policies on in the command,” he said. “As they come up, we have to deal with them from a leadership perspective. That’s where the senior enlisted advisor comes in because he or she has the experience to deal with situations like that.”

Eastern Sector wants to establish a “virtual” family readiness group to deal with problems.

“We’re going to start using some of the technology we have to reach out to families and the local communities to help them with their concerns and issues,” Thorpe said.

Overall, despite some bumps in the road, USMEPCOM’s NCOs are performing well, Thorpe said.

“I think that across the command our morale is high,” he said. “Our esprit de corps is high. They are very involved with their families. They are leading and spearheading volunteer work in the communities while providing the leadership the MEPS need.”

class standing in leadership, academics and physical fitness.

Pinkston exhibited superior communication skills while serving as a platoon sergeant in garrison and during the student-led field training exercise.

Pinkston contributed a positive attitude, teamwork and dedication to the group which were essential to class cohesion.

Pinkston displayed outstanding comprehension skills and research ability throughout the course resulting in a 98 percent average, the highest of three ANCOC classes, made up of 87 noncommissioned officers.



Sgt. 1st Class Chad Pinkston, Fargo MEPS processing and operations NCOIC.

Command joins services in taking care of *Wounded Warriors*

By Christine Parker
Messenger Editor

Like never before, the Department of Defense is finding new ways to take care of its wounded warriors, and USMEPCOM is part of the effort.

The Army Wounded Warrior Program, AW2, assists and advocates for severely wounded, ill and injured Soldiers, veterans, and their families, wherever they are located, for as long as it takes. The program provides individualized support to Soldiers who were injured or became ill during their service in overseas contingency operations since 9/11.

Marine For Life, or M4L, promotes assistance with education, employment, benefits and transition. The Navy provides Sailors and their families with medical care and non-medical care and support throughout their recovery, rehabilitation, reintegration and beyond. The Air Force program, AFW2, ensures enhanced assistance to Airmen who have a combat or hostile-related injury or illness requiring long-term care. In the past few years, all the services began stepping up their efforts.

Less than two years ago, both the leadership and human resource professionals in USMEPCOM joined the services, by building its own program involving wounded warriors.

The command's effort began after J-1 personnel learned about the wounded warrior programs. They approached the commander and suggested the command join in and he supported it wholeheartedly.

"Obviously, it's the right thing to do," said Col. Mariano Campos, USMEPCOM commander. "There will be some obstacles, but the benefits far outweigh them," he said.

"The leadership throughout MEPCOM is supportive," said Marshall Tetterton, director of Human Resources/J-1.

In fact, in May, Campos and Col. Barrye Price, former Eastern Sector commander, hosted a visit from the Chief of Staff of the Army Warrior Transition Command, Col. Patrick Sargent. The Army established WTC as a new 1-star command on April 1, under the U.S. Army Medical Command.

During his briefing, Sargent explained that Dr. Robert M. Gates, secretary of defense, made it clear that warrior care is a critical mission.

As of August, more than 5,000 severely wounded, ill and injured Soldiers and veterans were enrolled in AW2. Wounded warriors may apply for a wide array of benefits to help them recover physically, prepare financially and build their skills for a rewarding career. AW2 advocates work to ensure these individuals are connected with Army, government, local and national resources and services in career and education, insurance, finance, retirement and transition, and health care.

A big part of transition includes helping the wounded warrior find appropriate employment. That's where USMEPCOM fits in. With 66 locations, the command can provide employment opportunities across the United States.

In general, there are three categories of wounded warriors who can work in USMEPCOM. The first category includes active duty service members who are undergoing some type of rehabilitation. These individuals are assigned to a unit in their service, and that unit manages their care and accounts for them. While assigned to that unit, the service member works in USMEPCOM. This category of individual has not made a decision about whether they will remain in the service.

During their time at MEPS, "They generally undergo some type of medical screening board that will determine whether they will stay on active duty," Tetterton said. Some of those assigned



Adrian Roberson (right), a human resources assistant, talks to an applicant. Roberson came to work at Tamps MEPS through the Wounded Warrior Program.

Wounded Warriors

to USMEPCOM returned to their service, others transitioned to civilian life. A few individuals in this first category have worked at USMEPCOM. Most worked at the MEPS for a few months.

Initially, USMEPCOM leadership considered the affect wounded warriors with visible injuries could have on an environment with military applicants. They determined that wouldn't be an issue.

"In fact, they think it speaks very highly of the U.S. government and the U.S. military — in that both will employ these individuals and give them an opportunity," Tetterton said.

"They're highly motivated people who want to get on with their lives. And they want to contribute. They want to demonstrate both to themselves and others that they can still be contributing members of the work force.

"They believe in what they're doing. They believe very firmly in supporting our nation and particularly in the mission of qualifying personnel for the armed forces.

During his visit, Sargent commented on the value of the program. "We want to show the American public that we're not going to leave them behind," he said. "We never leave a fallen comrade."

The program offers multiple wins. Working at a MEPS gives wounded warriors an opportunity to contribute during their rehabilitation, and also gives them a glimpse of what they could do if they chose to leave the service and take a position at a MEPS.

The second category includes service members who know they will return to their service, but need to work at a transitional job before doing so.

"They've been in combat, and they need some time to reintegrate with their families," Tetterton said. "So they're looking for a job that gets them contributing to DoD, contributing to their own lives, and gives them time to stabilize their situation."

The command has also allowed family members of seriously wounded Soldiers to work in the MEPS. That was the case of the two Castro brothers who worked at San Jose MEPS while their brother received medical care nearby.

For both the first and second category of positions, MEPS must have an available authorized position. Only officers can fulfill officer positions and likewise for enlisted positions.



Rochelet Lormejuste is a medical technician at Tampa MEPS. The former military member learned about working at MEPS through the Wounded Warriors Program.

The third category are prior service members who are looking for civilian positions. In this case, the individual, the services and USMEPCOM work together to match these individuals with a position.

Other methods to help Wounded Warriors

Several organizations need volunteers both inside and outside the Army.

Contact your local family readiness group or Army community services to see how you can help. Go to <http://www.armyfrg.army.mil> for a complete list of Army FRGs.

Contact a nonprofit organization or veteran service organization serving wounded warriors and their families. To find

a group in your area visit Department of Defense Community Relations at www.ourmilitary.mil.

AW2 can connect companies with AW2 Soldiers, veterans or spouses looking for employment. Employers interested in hiring a wounded warrior can call (800) 237-1336 or email AW2careerprogram@conus.army.mil (employers should educate themselves on hiring people with disabilities and follow the appropriate federal guidelines).

“We’re in contact with the service program managers,” Tetterton said. “We routinely send them the listing of every job we have throughout the command.

“We’re actively pursuing and saying, ‘Here are the opportunities.’ It does a lot for us, too. One, it allows us to contribute to the nation in helping these individuals integrate back into civilian life. And, two, we have civilian shortages throughout the command and we’re always looking for good talent,” Tetterton said.

“So we’re out there publicizing our requirements and, at the same time, we think we’re providing a service to the people who need it.”

Prior service members can find out about MEPS positions through their service’s career program managers. These program



Adrian Roberson (right), processes an applicant at Tampa MEPS.



Rochelet Lormejuste works with an applicant.

managers help the former service members with preparing resumes and application materials, and by helping them get through the — sometimes complicated — application process for a DoD civilian position.

“Liz Lane (chief of J-1’s Civilian Personnel Division) gets personally involved in each and every one of them,” Tetterton said. “She runs interference on any red tape that may occur.”

And, in fact, there are a lot of details. When USMEPCOM sends a list of job openings to service program managers, and a wounded warrior is interested, their service program manager contacts the liaison at CHRA, the Civilian Human Resources Agency. Then all the involved parties — CPACs, Civilian Personnel Advisory Centers, CPOCs, Civilian Personnel Operations Centers, USMEPCOM and the service program managers — begin working together to work out all the details.

Although there are only a few wounded warriors working in USMEPCOM, the program will likely grow over time.

“It’s new, but I think it’s the absolute right thing to do,” Tetterton said. “We’ve opened up our doors. We will gladly put these folks to gainful employment. They’re just the type of people we’re looking for.

“The goal is to bring these resources into an agency and use their skills — like we would any other resource. They are highly motivated individuals who really want to do a good job,” Tetterton said. “We look at them as very solid resources that can contribute to our mission.”

Department of Defense Wounded Warrior Program Sites

Army

www.aw2.army.mil

www.army.mil/warriorcare

Marine Corps

www.m4l.usmc.mil

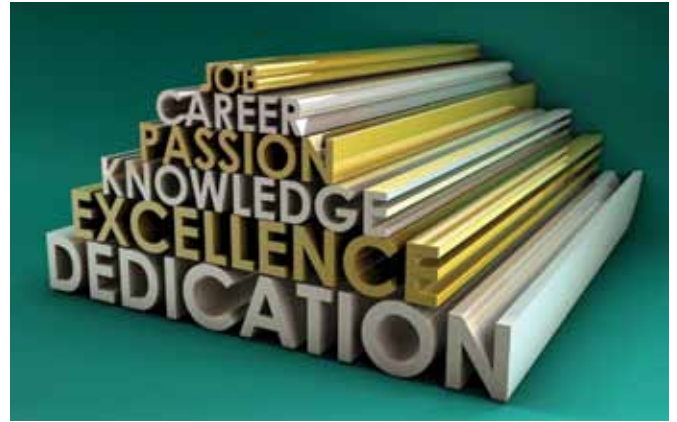
Air Force

www.woundedwarrior.af.mil

Navy

www.navy.mil/navydata/woundedwarrior.html

*Once a year,
from more than 700
military members
and 2,230 civilians,
the command
selects **six...***



Company Grade Officer of the Year

First Lieutenant Andrew J. See is the USMEPCOM Company Grade Officer of the Year. He is the executive officer at the Jacksonville MEPS.

He assumed the dual role of operations officer and executive officer during a critical manning shortfall and served as acting commander on several occasions. He directly supervised 32 civilians and 10 military members and led the staff in processing more than 15,000 applicants during the year. He prepared the MEPS and its staff for an Inspector General inspection which resulted in the MEPS being rated "in compliance" in all areas. He spearheaded efforts to dedicate the ceremony room and designed a video tribute for the occasion. His work processing civilian actions helped mend a broken relationship with the civilian personnel advisory center, clearing up more than 60 requests for personnel actions and resulting in six new employees being hired. His actions led to the successful hiring of an assistant chief medical officer, a key billet that reduced overtime costs by two-thirds. He was the certifying official for Defense Travel Service, Government Purchase Cards and Centrally Billed Accounts actions worth more than \$12 million.

He was pivotal in establishing and maintaining cooperation with other agencies inside and outside the command. He updated the emergency action plan and re-established a link with the Florida

1st Lt. Andrew J. See



Air National Guard's 125th Fighter Wing to conduct off-site rehearsals. He opened lines of communication with the Interservice Recruitment Council to increase cooperation. He helped the MEPS earn recognition through the MEPS of Excellence program for the first time in more than two years. He conducted cross walks for two new operations officers and shared best practices and good ideas with them and others in the command.

For the second straight year, he coordinated a mass swear-in at a Jacksonville Jaguars football

game.

He received a Joint Service Achievement Medal for supporting the Student Testing Program, which achieved 130 percent of its goal. He provided key inputs for architects as they were designing the new MEPS facility. He served two years as the Readiness Support Group treasurer, and coordinated fund-raisers, holiday parties and organization day.

He has begun his final class to complete a master's degree in management and has maintained a 4.0 grade point average. He finished Skillport classes in leadership, Lean Six Sigma courses and took classes through the Defense Acquisition University.

He volunteers with the Cat's Angels Animal Rescue and has helped adopt out six dogs and cats. He rallied MEPS members for a five kilometer race to raise money for youth running clubs and raised money for the local sea turtle watch by running in another 5K. A regular blood donor, he donated four pints of blood in 13 months.

"In fulfilling his responsibilities, Lieutenant See ensures the many tasks involved in day-to-day operations are performed efficiently and effectively," Lt. Cmdr. John. D. Hudson, Jacksonville MEPS commander, said. "He is a mentor, tutor and active community contributor."

Senior Enlisted Military Member of the Year

Sgt. 1st Class Rafael A. Sierra



Sgt. 1st Class Rafael A. Sierra is the USMEPCOM Senior Enlisted Member of the Year. He is the assistant Inspector General medical inspector at USMEPCOM Headquarters.

As a medical inspector general, he conducted 30 medical inspections, providing a positive impact for more than 180,000 military service applicants across the United States. He was selected by the command inspector general to train more than 130 medical officers, supervisors and noncommissioned officers at the annual medical conference. He assisted the medical directorate in reviewing and updating medical regulations, policies, information messages and checklists.

Sierra identified discrepancies in medical processing and procedures which impact all 65 MEPS' ability to support the command's medical qualification mission. He made sure more than \$2.8

million worth of medical equipment was calibrated and maintained throughout the command. His timely, innovative recommendations improved medical processing which, in turn, improved the command's support to recruiting services. Sector and MEPS commanders recognized him as the subject matter expert during many out briefs. He regularly mentored and coached senior NCOs and health technicians.

His leadership as IG Inspection Team Two noncommissioned officer in charge accented the unit safety and risk assessment program which resulted in zero accidents during training and inspections. Because of his outstanding military bearing and appearance, Sierra was requested by name to serve with the joint service color guard.

Sierra is pursuing an associate degree from the University of Phoenix, carrying

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Enlisted Military Member of the Year

Staff Sgt. Christopher M. Wright is the USMEPCOM Enlisted Military Member of the Year. He is the assistant noncommissioned officer in charge of the medical section at the St. Louis MEPS.

He expertly led the medical section's 12-person staff when the NCOIC was absent. Wright ensured accurate workload reporting to provide physicians for more than 6,700 physicals and 7,000 medical inspections. His dedication to excellence played a crucial role in the MEPS processing nearly 15,000 applicants and being named "Best in the West" for the third quarter, and achieve recognition as a MEPS of Excellence. He helped develop and streamline medical consultations and networked with local treatment facilities and private practices. Wright coordinated and processed more than 1,100 medical consultations and procedures valued at \$112,000 with no errors.

His leadership and management skills ensured readiness and complete accountability for medical equipment valued

Staff Sgt. Christopher M. Wright

at more than \$175,000. He refined the morning check-in process, and ensured the medical briefing started on time and saved unnecessary overtime costs. He performed a quality review that eliminated file discrepancies and resulted in efficient morning check-in. He was instrumental in managing the HIV and DAT review system and ensuring all findings were promptly posted to records.

As a trainer, Wright enabled 15 externs from Sanford Brown College to be licensed. He designed an employee rotation schedule that ensured proficiency and allowed 100 percent certification after position reclassifications. His training program enhanced proficiency and processing efficiency resulting in a 12 percent reduction in errors. He volunteered for temporary duty when the San Diego MEPS experienced severe manning shortages



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Civilian of the Year – GS-10 and Above

Jennifer A. Kennedy



Jennifer A. Kennedy is the USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year, GS-10 and Above. She is the education services specialist at the Portland, Maine, MEPS.

Kennedy led the Student Testing Program to 120.8 percent of its goal and more than 115 percent of interservice recruiting goal in her first year as ESS. She added five new schools to the program, which contributed nearly 600 more students to the program. She drove more than 25,000 miles to perform more than 100 school and recruiter station visits throughout Maine and New Hampshire. She set up and manned an Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery booth at eight conferences, advertising the program to thousands of educators. She presented workshops at two events, and created bonds that may prove crucial in the future.

She was invited to set up a booth at a local high school's "Aspirations Day" and introduced the ASVAB program to more than 400 students, parents and staff in an part of the state with low participation rates in the program. Kennedy performed training sessions to introduce or refresh high school teachers, advisors and guidance counselors on the benefits

of and changes to the Career Exploration Program, and conducted training for advisors and counselors who conduct their own post-test interpretations. She trained three people from the MEPS and one from the New Hampshire National Guard on presenting post-test interpretation workshops.

Kennedy served as chairwoman of an IRC subcommittee made up of executive officers, operations officers and other key leaders from area recruiting organizations. Her quarterly meetings reviewed best practices, addressed client concerns, reviewed operational issues and made recommendations to the IRC at large. She was assigned as the primary rater for a National Guard officer assigned to the MEPS and sought to train, mentor and supervise him as he performed his duties as the Student Testing Program officer. She trained a new test coordinator on his duties while still learning her own duties during the busiest time of the testing calendar.

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Civilian of the Year – GS-6 and Below

Lewis Q. Gulley



Lewis Q. Gulley is the USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year, GS-6 and Below. He is a health technician at the Montgomery MEPS.

Gulley helped conduct nearly 7,500 physical examinations and medical inspections and performed more than 1,000 audio tests and weekly calibration checks with 100 percent accuracy. He input more than 3,000 medical transactions into MIRS. His willingness to learn earned him increased responsibilities ahead of more experienced technicians in the section.

He showed his leadership skills with student trainees assigned to the sec-

tion. He trained four health technicians, including teaching them the proper way to conduct height, weight and body fat testing. Gulley's quarterly and monthly medical metrics and assignments reports were always submitted on time and he maintained a perfect accuracy rate for medical data and records reviews. He ensured monthly medical costs balanced and worked closely with liaisons to make sure follow-up appointments were scheduled and completed. He demonstrates ortho-neuro procedures flawlessly, according to the chief medical officer. He is skilled

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Civilian of the Year – GS-7-9

Darwood L. Phillips II

Darwood L. Phillips II is the USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year, GS-7-9. Phillips is the information technology specialist for the Dallas MEPS.

Phillips hit the ground running when he became the Dallas IT specialist, correcting deficiencies and shortfalls caused by the position being vacant for five months. His impact on the mission and morale allowed the MEPS to process more than 23,000 applicants. He maintains 46 MIRS terminals, 63 personal computers, 48 testing work stations and 391 other devices.

He worked with management to plan for implementing e-Security, including mapping out a network plan on where to place new equipment and how to prepare users for new tasks. He set up PowerPoint presentations for leadership to prepare for e-Security implementation and increased their understanding of the scope of the project and the training and resources needed. He submitted IMENS and worked with contractors to meet requirements for e-Security and e-Records including electri-

cal work and cabling to prepare the MEPS for the new programs.

Phillips revitalized the MEPS' information assurance program and made sure employees and liaisons completed requirements. He updated and organized training certificates, system authorization access requests and policy agreements on all employees. More than 60 percent needed corrections or updates. He arranged to have IT added to the inprocessing checklist for new employees, ensuring a smooth transition into the MEPS. Phillips reworked the computer naming schematic and renamed more than 50 computers and other network devices. He reorganized the IP addressing layout and reconfigured more than 100 network devices to conform to the standard.

He secured terminal area security manager permissions and set up a computer to reset common access card personal identification numbers in house, saving employees a 50-minute drive to the nearest support site. He audited all MEPS



computers to ensure they were updated with all information assurance patches and updates, putting the station in full compliance with all requirements.

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in conducting medical history briefings and clearly explains complex instructions on medical tests and procedures. Gulley is dedicated to the MEPS mission in the medical section and other areas and is often the first to volunteer to work in other sections when needed.

Gulley completed a bachelor of science degree while holding a part time job and volunteering with four organizations in addition to his duties in the MEPS, and earned an academic scholarship to pursue a master's degree in rehabilitation

counseling. He received the 2008 Butler County Civic Youth Leadership Award for mentoring 50 young people. Gulley was hand picked for the State of Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services Mentoring Program.

He volunteered for the Central Alabama Veterans Healthcare System where he helped 65 disabled and homeless veterans find community resources, substance and alcohol abuse rehabilitation, and family support. As the youth advisor for the Bethlehem Baptist Church, Gulley taught leadership skills and drug

abuse prevention to young people, and steered them toward academic success. A weekly volunteer with the Montgomery Therapeutic Recreation Center, he helps senior citizens and children with creative daily activities, community resources and community outings.

"Mr. Gulley's strongest asset is his positive attitude," Lt. Col. Eric B. Garretty, Montgomery MEPS commander, said. "He simply does not let a challenge daunt him. His ability to get the job done right the first time is unparalleled and his enthusiasm and can-do attitude are infectious."

USMEPCOM Yearly Awards (continued)

Sgt. 1st Class Rafael A. Sierra



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a 3.5 grade point average. He completed emergency medical technician refresher training to maintain currency in his military occupational specialty and completed the Basic Life Support Instructor Course.

He volunteered at his church's soup kitchen which supports more than 7,000 people in the North Chicago area. Sierra volunteered to serve on the Combined Federal Campaign committee, which helped ensure

100 percent contact and raised more than \$1.5 million in contributions, and he volunteered and took part in the Black History Month celebration.

"Sergeant First Class Sierra's can-do attitude and high standards as an assistant inspector general have made him a great asset to the command," Nancy J. Holcomb, USMEPCOM inspector general, said. "His dedication and hard work was critical in supporting the professional nature of the command's IG activities."

Staff Sgt. Christopher M. Wright



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and was praised by the San Diego commander for his outstanding assistance.

Wright was the St. Louis MEPS Military Member of the Quarter three straight times. He completed 30 Rosetta Stone Spanish course lessons as he seeks bilingual skills for his planned second career as a state police officer. He completed more than 70 continuing education unit hours and maintained his National Registry Emergency Medical Technician certification. After completing a CPR instructor course at nearby

Scott Air Force Base, he volunteered to teach infant and adult CPR classes to all MEPS employees.

In the wider community, he supported the Children's Diabetes Fund and a local program supporting inner city youth. He assisted the St. Louis Metro Homeless Veteran's Outreach, which collected and distributed clothing packs to more than 300 homeless veterans.

"Staff Sergeant Wright is a versatile, team oriented leader with outstanding technical skills," Maj. Steven W. Morris, St. Louis MEPS commander, said.

Jennifer A. Kennedy



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She completed 16 on-line self-improvement courses through the Army e-Learning Program. She is active in the National Education Association, American School Counselor's Association, Maine School Counselor's Association, Maine Counselor's Association, Maine Career Development Association and the Federal Executive Board of Southern Maine.

Kennedy volunteered for career day activities including mock interviews and reviews for 30 students who needed to polish their interviewing skills. She was motivational speaker at a high school's career day, delivering presentations on three topics. She

competed in an indoor team triathlon to boost morale in the community. She is acting operations officer for the Military Cadets of Southern Maine and is one of only a few people in Maine trained as an ambassador for the "Character Counts" program.

"Her leadership and strength of character helped pull the Portland, Maine, MEPS through increased goals for the Student Testing Program," Lt. Col. Eric C. Warner, Portland, Maine, MEPS commander, said. "Her bright, articulate and friendly mannerisms have provided a winning combo for the MEPS. She is the epitome of what you need, want and expect a leader to be."

Darwood L. Phillips II



Continued from Page 19

Phillips completed all time-phased training requirements ahead of schedule and was selected as the Western Sector Support Person of the Quarter. He completed all requirements to qualify as an ITS Level I technician and the 40-hour Information Assurance Security Officer Course.

As a volunteer basketball coach, Phillips mentors high school students on a travelling AAU all-star basketball team that is routinely scouted by universities looking for talented athletes to join their programs. He

supported the local Marine Corps unit in conducting the Toys for Tots drive in the MEPS and assisted with efforts on a "Build A Bear" drive that provided more than 50 teddy bears to an organization supporting victims of domestic violence.

"It is impossible to quantify the mission impact Mr. Phillips has made on the Dallas MEPS in this first year he has been here," Lt. Col. Thomas J. Edwards, Dallas MEPS commander, said. "He has a high level of technical competence and has yet to encounter a problem he couldn't solve."

Two worlds meet in — of all places — New Jersey!

Kazakhstan military officers visit Fort Dix MEPS

by Rebecca O'Donnell
Fort Dix MEPS

There was a new type of uniform passing through Fort Dix MEPS Aug. 13, when a group of Kazakhstan military officers were there as part of a visit with the post.

The officers were from the Border Guard Service. One of the reasons for their visit was to enhance their capabilities by seeing first-hand the process in which applicants process through the different departments of the MEPS.

Their visit was to give them ideas to stimulate ways to contribute to overseas contingency operations, allow them to see how the armed forces manage the overall morale and performance of its service members, and to learn different techniques to enhance their military.

The ability to secure the Caspian region and the role they will play in future controversies over energy and power resources is vital.

Kazakhstan has sent all most 50 military engineers to Iraq to help with the U.S. post-invasion mission.

When Col. S. Nagmet Sadykov, senior consultant, 2nd Directorate of Main Staff, KAZ Border Guard Service, was asked through an interpreter what his thoughts were regarding our process at the MEPS, he said, "I liked the system of sequence that the applicants process through. It seems the process with its elements and



The visitors from Kazakhstan (right) pose for a photo with Fort Dix MEPS staff (left).

events, the applicants are put through it right, efficiently to mobilize. It also looks like the personnel have enough time to do the job effectively."

The Fort Dix MEPS staff escorted the visitors to each area of the building, stopping and explaining throughout the tour, what each area is responsible for and how it impacted applicants. Sadykov was interested in accessions.

Maj. Jerry M. Brooks Jr., Fort Dix MEPS commander, received a vivid surprised look from the leading officer at the end of the tour as he "coined" him and expressed his honor and gratitude for their visit and interests in the MEPS' operations.



Kazakhstan Col. S. Nagmet Sadykov receives a coin from Maj. Jerry Brooks Jr., Fort Dix MEPS commander.

Kazakhstan

Native Kazakhs, a mix of Turkic and Mongol nomadic tribes who migrated into the region in the 13th century, were rarely united as a single nation.

The area was conquered by Russia in the 18th century, and Kazakhstan became a Soviet Republic in 1936.

During the 1950s and 1960s agricultural "Virgin Lands" program, Soviet citizens were encouraged to help cultivate Kazakhstan's northern pastures. This influx of immigrants (mostly Russians, but also other nationalities) skewed the ethnic mixture and enabled non-Kazakhs to outnumber natives. Independence in 1991 caused many of



these newcomers to emigrate. Kazakhstan's economy is larger than those of all the other Central Asian states combined, largely due to the country's vast natural resources and a recent history of political stability.

Current issues include developing a cohesive national identity, expanding the development of the country's vast energy resources and exporting them to world markets,

achieving a sustainable economic growth, diversifying the economy outside the oil, gas, and mining sectors, enhancing Kazakhstan's competitiveness, and strengthening relations with neighboring states and other foreign powers.

—Information from www.cia.gov

Dallas joins in special Sept. 11 send-off

On Sept. 11, the Dallas MEPS staff joined forces with a local real estate investment firm for a special send-off to a group of soldiers at the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport.

"Our American Soldiers do so much. We are boundlessly grateful for what they have volunteered to do. They are the most courageous people I have seen in my life and we are amazed at their strength," Roxana Hammock, Guardian regional manager, said.

"Guardian wanted to take some time this Sept. 11 to thank them and show our appreciation and support for their service."

The well-wishers went to the airport and shook hands, said thank you, and handed out 300 goodie bags to the Soldiers leaving for duty that day.

"This is the least we can do," Hammock said. "We know who they are and we will not forget. They are what makes this country great and we pray every day for their safe return."

"The Dallas MEPS appreciates the opportunity to commemorate the anniversary of 9/11 with the Dallas and Fort Worth communities." Lt. Col. T.J. Edwards, Dallas MEPS commander, said.

"Symbolic of our participation on the anniversary of 9/11, is the fact that our nation remains at war with those who wish America and our allies harm.

"Eight years ago, five al-Qaeda hijackers took control of American Airlines Flight 77 and deliberately killed 64 individuals on that plane, as well as 125 people at the Pentagon. I was at the Pentagon that day, and so it is with pride on this 9/11 anniversary, that the Dallas MEPS can help participate by farewelling these great American warriors deploying into the fight, continuing to defend our freedoms and American way of life."



On the anniversary of 9/11, a joint civilian-military group, including Dallas MEPS staff, offer a special send-off to a group of soldiers at the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport.



Part of the send-off group hold bags of goodies they presented to the soldiers. Later in the afternoon, the real estate firm stopped by the Dallas Veterans Administration hospital and delivered 100 more goodie bags with thank you notes to the veterans there. They spent the afternoon visiting with the veterans and showing appreciation.



Soldiers wait in the airport.

Denver staff adopts local park, grows as team



(Left) Luck Rojanavongse and Lynn Rogers drag mulch through a Denver park. The two were part of the MEPS staff who participated in the local park beautification program. (Right) Shawn Gunhus, 1st Lt. Christian Berringer and Maj. Calvin Thomas load supplies for their work in the park.



By Lt. Cmdr. Jed R. Espiritu
Denver MEPS Operations Officer

The Denver MEPS staff reached out in August to the local community for the first time as an organization to take part in a local park beautification program.

Working through the Denver Parks and Recreation “Adopt-A-Park” program, 20 Denver MEPS military and civilian volunteers traveled to their adopted park — Denver’s “City Park” — and spread mulch around about 60 trees, helping to preserve the park’s beauty through its grand arbors.

“It was exciting to give of ourselves in support of a worthy cause,” said Maj. Calvin C. Thomas, Denver MEPS commander. “I am extremely proud of our staff members who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to the community.”

As part of a newly formed, ongoing agreement with Denver Parks and Recreation, the MEPS will conduct beautification volunteer work for City Park every quarter. In doing so, the Denver MEPS hopes to further grow its staff’s teamwork,

camaraderie and family-like atmosphere, while conducting community outreach and having a lasting impact on the Denver area.

“As an organization, we are fortunate to have the support of the city of Denver,” Thomas said. “This is just an opportunity to give back and make a positive difference.”

To find local opportunities for your MEPS to conduct similar team-building volunteer activities, search for “Adopt-A-Park” or “Adopt-A-Spot” for your area and offer it to your staff, co-workers, or chain of command. Volunteer work should always be strictly voluntary for civilians, and it should be



Denver MEPS staff poses for a photo during its work for a local park beautification program.

made clear that compensation will not be offered for such services.

In providing this opportunity you may be surprised by the spirit of volunteerism it can invoke in your MEPS!

Buffets and tickets and bears ... oh my ...

Dallas MEPS gives 'organization day' new meaning

By Don Ross

This year's organization day was way out of the norm — so much so they named it, "A Bear of a Different Color."

Traditionally, the MEPS uses money from the Amusement Vending Machine Fund to pay for entertainment and food for its 51 personnel and family members. Not this year.

Instead, to start things off, the AVMF team held a scavenger hunt at the Grapevine Mills Mall. Since the merchants didn't open until 10 a.m., participants had to search the mall looking through store windows. Eight teams, consisting of five employees, plus family members competed for bragging rights as the best scavengers.

The hunt consisted of 108 clues to the name of different merchants (2 points each), eight letter scrambles (1 point each), 54 things to find in the store fronts (3 points each), and five bonus questions (10 – 25 points each), for a total of 456 possible points.

After the hunt, the group migrated to the Build-A-Bear store where the AVMF arranged for employees to build one bear each. The bears were earmarked for donation to The Family Place, a local non-profit emergency shelter for domestic violence victims and their children.

Learning about the MEPS' choice to help a local charity, the Build-A-Bear general manager offered a discount which allowed



On their MEPS organization day, Petty Officer 2nd Class Juan Sandoval and Keith Wilhelm hold bears they made for children at a local shelter.

the team to make 55 bears for The Family Place. Staff members placed a small heart inside each bear, representing the MEPS' heart and care for the shelter's children.

After gathering all the bears, the MEPS team headed to a buffet restaurant for lunch. Most participants had built a healthy appetite while hunting through the 180-store mall.

After lunch, Lt. Col. T.J. Edwards, Dallas MEPS commander, presented Avril Knox, program director for The Family Place with the team's donation of stuffed bears.

She expressed her organization's appreciation and described the circumstances of children at the shelter. She said most have no personal belongings beyond the clothes they were wearing when they arrived.

Of the 48 children at the shelter, two were having birthdays on the day of the donation, so the bears turned out to be birthday gifts. The Family Place presented a plaque to Edwards, thanking the Dallas MEPS for its kindness and generosity.

Organization day ended with announcing the results of the scavenger hunt and giving away raffle prizes. Cross talk between teams was plentiful with each claiming it had done the best.

When all was said and done, the top three teams received gift cards for the mall (thanks to AVMF). There was a reverse drawing for two sets of Dallas Cowboy pre-season football tickets that had been donated to the MEPS. The reverse drawing included some excitement, as each name drawn was eliminated until there were only three names left — Capt. Andrew White, Rico Ford



(Men, left to right) Avril Knox, Senior Master Sgt. Shane Ware and Lt. Col. T.J. Edwards pose with staff from The Family Place. The MEPS staff made and donated 55 bears to the local shelter.

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Third generation enlists at New Orleans, Harrisburg

By Capt. Shawn P. Broussard
New Orleans MEPS Executive Officer

New Orleans MEPS applicant Robert J. Jenkins continued a family tradition when he enlisted in the Army as an infantry recruit with an airborne option.

"Robert will be a third generation Army paratrooper," his grandfather, retired Maj. Robert E. Jenkins, Army Special Forces, said.

"We are definitely proud of him. I never pressured him to join the military, but I can see now how I have influenced this decision," the applicant's father, Master Sgt. Robert C. Jenkins, 927th Engineer Company (Sapper), said, smiling.

"I have always wanted to serve this country because both my dad and grandfather are Soldiers and they displayed an intense desire to live Army values. This is how I know being a Soldier is something I'll always do," the youngest Jenkins said.



Retired Maj. Robert E. Jenkins, Pvt. Robert J. Jenkins, and Master Sgt. Robert C. Jenkins.



Harrisburg

Harrisburg MEPS medical NCOIC and proud dad, Chief Petty Officer Frank Bowersox, smiles as he and his family pose in the Harrisburg MEPS' Lance Corporal Jason Frye Ceremony Room. Bowersox's son, Miles, second from left, shipped to Great Lakes Naval Training Base to follow in his father's and grandfather's footsteps as a hospital corpsman.

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and Pamela Casey. It was time to shift gears again moving to a white elephant for the choices of three sealed envelopes only two of which contained the tickets to the game. After the envelopes had been traded multiple times, each person settled into opening the envelope.

The first to open his envelope was White ... Eureka! He had one set of tickets. Casey was up next, but was quickly disappointed because Ford, wasting no time, ripped open his envelope for the remaining set of Dallas Cowboy tickets.

There was still one last surprise. The service liaisons donated 400 items to be given away at organization day. Items included T-Shirts, backpacks, key chains and zippered notebooks.

The MEPS staff would like to thank the liaisons for their generosity, which helped our employees and family members recognize that the service liaison shops appreciate the staff's hard work and service.



(Right) Rico Ford, Pamela Casey and Capt. Andrew White pose for a photo before two of them opened envelopes containing sets of Dallas Cowboy tickets. Ford and White were the winners.

Military Accessions Vital to National Interest

Husband and wife dental team sets up shop in Army

By Maj. Gregory Smith
Sacramento MEPS Commander

In the early morning hours of Aug. 6, Sgt. 1st Class Robin R. Aguilar, an Army Medical Department recruiter from San Jose, Calif., escorted husband and wife dentists Harjind and Amandeep to the Sacramento MEPS, where they were about to begin new careers in the Army Reserve.

Spouses' enlisting together isn't that far out of the ordinary. But for this particular couple, walking into the MEPS that morning was but the latest step in a journey that began in India, led half-way around the world to the United States, and would not have reached this point if it were not for a new military program called Military Accessions Vital to National Interest.

MAVNI is a relatively new Department of Defense program that allows the armed forces to recruit resident aliens with needed high-quality skills and training to fill shortages in specific areas of concentration for present and future military operations.

Health care applicants must be fully qualified to practice within their medical specialty and must have completed all educational and specialty licensing and certification requirements in the medical field in which the individual seeks appointment. The program is scheduled to run through December.

Harjind and Amandeep, who are identified only by their first names for security reasons, both graduated from dental school in their native India in 1996, and practiced dentistry there until 2001. Both desired to expand their professional skills so they could offer more services to their patients.

"In India, dental practice is not what it is here, the level of technology and training, preventive dentistry and many other items brought us to the states so we could learn and grow in our profession," said husband Harjind.

"We wanted to do more than day to day India style dentistry, he said. "In the states we had the ability to train at the best schools to improve our skills and we now have the ability to use much more technology and abilities to better help our patients."

"We ... moved to Canada and then to the United States," Harjind said. "Amandeep attended the University of California at Los Angeles and I attended the University of California at San Francisco from 2005 to 2007. We now both practice in our community."

Then one day a dental office colleague learned of the MAVNI program and shared the information with Harjind and Amandeep.

"After finding out that we did qualify to serve in the military as dentists we were very excited to join," said Harjind. "This is something we both have thought about in the past. Being Army dentists will give us a chance to learn more about our profession. We work in a small practice that we love, but the Army will provide us with experience that we could get no other way. This also give us a chance to 'make a difference' to our soon to be new country."

Harjind and Amandeep have always been interested in joining the military but, before the MAVNI program, were unable to join because of their citizenship status.

After intense screening of their background and medical professional standing the couple have the opportunity to join the



Harjind and Amandeep raise their right hands. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Luley

Army, gain their citizenship and serve their new nation as commissioned officers and Army dentists.

They will enter the Army Reserve as enlisted Soldiers (E-4s) and are eligible to become commissioned officers after completing two drills at a reserve center near their home.

"We were very excited to learn that we could join the Army," Harjind said. "We have always been interested but never thought we would have the opportunity." Aguilar first made contact with them at Fresno, Calif., and explained the details of the MAVNI program. Due to their abilities, background and training the MAVNI process went very smoothly for the two doctors.

"These two doctors are prime examples of what the MAVNI medical professionals program was designed for," Aguilar said. "Today we have two very well educated and motivated young doctors who want to serve their adopted nation in the military and give something back. The MAVNI program was designed for applicants just like this, the best and the brightest who wish to serve their adopted nation in the military."

Harjind and Amandeep are prepared for the challenges ahead of them as they serve their nation and assume responsibilities as Army dentists and officers.

"This is just a great opportunity we could not pass up," Amandeep said. They plan to continue their practice in the local community, buy a home, have children and live a good life. If it works out, staying in the Army Reserve until retirement is something they are considering. For now they are very happy with this opportunity to serve their adopted country.

"To me this is a win-win," she said. "The army dental program will provide me with a growth potential and experience in my profession that is hard to come by. It provides us with additional education in our field and I believe there is a lot of prestige in being an Army officer."

Memphis Center of Influence Event

Banquet celebrates mutual accomplishments

By Capt. Jeromy Spellings
Memphis MEPS Operations Officer

The Memphis MEPS and interservice recruiting commanders joined forces with the West Tennessee Counseling Association to sponsor an awards banquet for local and regional educators.

One hundred fifty-four guests attended the event to celebrate accomplishments of educators and the partnership between educators and the military in promoting education, counseling and career opportunities for young people. Educators enjoyed dinner and entertainment by Navy Band Mid-South and Mark Baker, an R&B and jazz saxophonist. Students from Fairly High School Junior ROTC presented the colors. J.B. Smiley, Memphis MEPS education services specialist and Candice Armstrong, WTCA president, narrated the event.

The keynote speaker was Maj. Gen. Gus L. Hargett Jr., Tennessee adjutant general. He spoke of the importance of the counselor's role in improving society, and cultivating students. He stressed that the military has high standards and that those going into the military represent the highest caliber of students and citizens.

During the awards ceremony, Maj. Travis Jones, Memphis MEPS commander and Col. Mariano Campos, USMEPCOM commander, were assisted by Ray Johnson, test coordinator, and Gloria Miller, budget technician, in presenting certificates of appreciation to counselors who provided outstanding support for the ASVAB Career Exploration Program and recruiting.

Special recognition for outstanding counselors who have provided unwavering support for the program and recruiting included Charlotte Fisher of Brighton High School, who received the USMEPCOM "Counselor's Award of Merit," and Ruth Fischer of Germantown High School, who received a special award from the Tennessee Army National Guard from Hargett and Lt. Col. Eric Goslowsky.

The counseling association presented special awards to outstanding counselors including elementary, middle, secondary and private sector counselors. As the evening concluded, the military organizations and educators committed to more cooperation. As the attendees went their separate ways, discussions among educators and military members showed both new and renewed support for ASVAB testing, career exploration and recruiting.

The banquet provided networking opportunities between educators and military services to help assure support for ASVAB testing and recruiting, along with increased options and opportunities for students through the Career Exploration Program.



Awards banquet guests (first row, right to left) Margaret Schingle, Jo Ann Boyd, Renato Taylor, Kim Jessee, Candice Armstrong, Mary Brignole, Ruth Fischer, Charlotte Fisher, J.B. Smiley, (second row, right to left) Maj. Travis Jones, Vickie Hollis, Dr. Cassandra Turner, Dr. Jo Epstine, Mary Ann Smith, Keela Higgs, Jeannette Lampkins, Deanna Pirtle, Vicky Harris, Carolyn Lester (back row, right to left) Master Chief Petty Officer Thomas Wheeler, Capt. Jeromy Spellings, Ray Johnson, Capt. Travis Hughes, Fredell Harris, Bret Lawson, Lt. Col. Eric Goslowsky, Col. Mariano Campos Jr., Stephanie Gatewood, Carolyn Johnson, Geraldine Wright and Patrick Rule.

Retirement day arrives, after 27 years of tests

by Ruby J. Taylor

Virginia Carroll, Raleigh test score technician, retired Sept. 30, after 36 years of service. Carroll started her USMEPCOM career in June 1982, as a test coordinator. She was promoted to test score technician in 2007.

Many turned out to honor her at the Raleigh MEPS. Maj. Angela Hunter, MEPS commander, officiated. Raleigh MEPS staff, liaisons, Office of Personnel Management test administrators, an OPM area coordinator and Carroll's family joined in celebrating her retirement.

During her tenure as test coordinator, the testing section received several "excellent" ratings from the USMEPCOM Inspector General.

Carroll received the Commander's Award for Civilian Service, for outstanding service to the nation, a retirement certificate signed by Col. Todd Garlick, Eastern Sector commander, and a letter of appreciation signed by President Obama. MEPS staff and service liaisons presented her gifts.

Carroll plans to enjoy her retirement spending time with her husband, children and grandchildren. She also plans to travel and see more of the country.



Maj. Angela Hunter, Raleigh MEPS commander, and Virginia Carroll.



Staff takes field trip to see next stop for Coasties

By Rebecca O'Donnell
Fort Dix MEPS

Any day out of the office is a beautiful day, wouldn't you agree? The Fort Dix MEPS staff took it a step farther when it visited the U.S. Coast Guard Training Center in Cape May, N.J.

The bus trip was long and the air conditioning seemed to work just long enough to get there, a two-hour drive from Fort Dix through the New Jersey pine barrens.

Also known as the pinelands, the pine barrens are a heavily forested area of coastal plain stretching across southern New Jersey. The area got the name because European settlers' original crops didn't take well to its sandy, acidic, nutrient-poor soil.

During the visit, the MEPS staff saw how the Coast Guard recruits, processes and trains its members. This included a briefing on the operations, a tour of the facility and a cafeteria-style lunch.

The highlight was the graduating cadets from basic training with an announcement from the speaker that members of the Fort Dix MEPS staff were present.

"I thought having the privilege to once again see a new batch of men and women graduate and become honorable service members who defend our country day to day was a wonderful experience," Jessica Flowers, MEPS information technology specialist, said. "It really makes me value the position I hold and the organization that I belong to because I realize we are



Fort Dix MEPS staff members tour the Coast Guard Training Center, including this glimpse of their bunks.

here for a bigger picture not just for a paycheck. From being in a uniform myself, to helping others get there is a great honor."

Upcoming Diversity Celebrations

January 18
Martin Luther King's
Birthday

Remember! Celebrate! Act!
A Day On, Not A Day Off!

February
Black History Month

The History of Black
Economic Empowerment

March
Women's History Month

Writing Women Back
into History

New Orleans celebrates Women's Equality Day

The New Orleans MEPS staff celebrated Women's Equality Day Aug. 26.

The theme was, "Women's Right to Vote." In 1971, at the behest of representative Bella Abzug, Congress designated Aug. 26 as Women's Equality Day. The date was selected to commemorate the 1920 passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, granting women the right to vote.

The observance also calls attention to women's continuing efforts toward equality in the workplace.

Judge June Berry Darensburg, 26th Judicial Court, was the guest speaker. She spoke of prominent women who paved the way for today's women. She also shared some of her experiences and choices that led her to become the first African-American woman elected to a judgeship in Jefferson Parish.



Women who work at New Orleans MEPS pose for a photo during their recent Women's Equality Day celebration.

MEPS staff members presented poems by Maya Angelou. In addition, all of the women on the MEPS staff compiled a book of autobiographies detailing some of their significant contributions to not only the MEPS but to society as well.



Maj. Steven Wright presents Judge June Berry Darensburg with a token of appreciation, after she spoke at the New Orleans MEPS Women's Equality Day program.

TRAINING

Staff learns about state's history on training day

By Sgt. Kenneth H. Stevens Jr.

It was that time of the quarter — training day! This time, training day in Portland, Maine, included a twist. The staff spiced up the day by conducting training at Camp Keyes and learned about role Maine has played in all wars from the Revolutionary War to the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Other classes were on security, safety, drug and alcohol abuse, family readiness support group, the amusement vending machine fund, and other topics.

Once training ended, the MEPS staff gathered at the Maine Historical Museum on Camp Keyes. Tour guide Ron Rousseau took them on a journey through Maine's military history with insight and knowledge. His ability to tell a great story at each display case had intrigued the visitors from start to finish.



Maine Historical Museum guide Ron Rousseau tells the MEPS staff about the role the state has played in the nation's wars. The staff visited the museum during a training day.

Indy NCOs host civilian appreciation luncheon

By Staff Sgt. Carla R. Ross

According to Google, there are 384,000 ways to show appreciation for co-workers. First Sgt. Richard Bell, Indianapolis MEPS senior enlisted advisor, charged the MEPS NCOs with responsibility of narrowing it down to one.

The NCOs needed to find a way to show their appreciation for their civilian counterparts who provide continuity and sustain the mission in an environment where military personnel are constantly changing.

The civilians took part in an initiative to make monthly peer recommendations for people whose efforts showed their commitment to red carpet treatment and the accomplishing organizational goals. They chose Patricia Hooper of the medical section, Karen Gill of processing, Alicia West-Colbert from headquarters, and Amanda Kissee of testing, who all received certificates of appreciation.

The NCOs set up a civilian appreciation luncheon in the medical briefing room they transformed into the MEPS Ristorante - an a la carte Italian eatery civilian employees could visit without their credit cards or passports.

The tables were covered with green, white and red table cloths, and the ambiance was friendly, warm and generous. Upon entry, each civilian was greeted with a smile, escorted to his or her seat, and served a soft drink of choice and an Italian salad filled with pepperoni, chopped pepperoncini, olives, red onions, and salami.

As the "civilian treasure" relished the moment and enjoyed one another's company to the sounds of Italian music selection,



Indianapolis MEPS staff members participate in the civilian appreciation luncheon.



(L to R) Harry Sosa and Nathaniel Grandberry share some laughs at the luncheon.



Three of the civilians who received peer-nominated red carpet awards, (L to R) Alicia West-Colbert, Patricia Hooper and Amanda Kissee.

each one's pasta dish was prepared with their choice of chicken, Italian sausage, and or meatballs and a compliment of fresh garlic, mushrooms, onions, seasoned bell peppers, spinach, sun-dried tomatoes, and pepperoncini) topped with a traditional red or Alfredo sauce and fresh Parmesan cheese.

An array of cheesecake and key lime pie put the exclamation point on the effort.

The luncheon would have been impossible without the contribution of all service members. Through their joint effort, heartfelt desire and commitment to ensuring this was a "class act" that showed their appreciation for their civilian counterparts who provide stability to the MEPS and whose time, efforts and talents have well served the Indianapolis MEPS.

These individuals include a wide spectrum of professionals working in the medical, operations and testing sections. Their loyalty, assistance, and dedication to their sections have enriched the lives of military people, their families and applicants.



Staff Sgt. Carla Ross and Cpl. Wendy Schmitt prepare some of the made-to-order pasta dishes.

Why they said 'Thanks!'

"The main reason I wanted to conduct a civilian appreciation day was to show how much our Indianapolis 'civilian treasure' means to us, the military. Without them we wouldn't be able to complete the job of processing and qualifying individuals who want to join the military. We wanted to show them in some way how important they are to us and the MEPS team. Too often we get caught up in the daily mission and we don't say or show our appreciation to them. The day was just a small way to say 'thank you' for the job and support they provide each and every day."

— 1st Sgt. Richard Bell

"It is my belief that our 'civilian treasures' are equal to those with whom we spend time on the battlefield. We get in the trenches and we fight the good fight. Within the MEPS, the action is in processing the volume of applicants and fluctuating operations tempo. Nonetheless, I view us as being comrades and extended family members. There is no greater time than that which is spent preparing, eating and enjoying one another's company. The opportunity to have had a role in this effort was truly a joy and a pleasure."

— Staff Sgt. Carla Ross

Why it mattered ...

"I would like to say a big thank you to you and the rest of the military staff at the MEPS for the civilian appreciation luncheon. It was greatly appreciated! The food and the service were excellent! I personally appreciate you and the rest of the military staff for all that you do as well! Thanks, again."

— Carl Amerson

"Thank you so much to all of our military for the wonderful civilian appreciation day and luncheon. Many times we may feel as though we are underappreciated and this was a wonderful way for our supervisors to show us that is not the case. I really enjoy working with the military and was so touched by their efforts to make us feel special. The personal attention to detail was just touching. It was such an innovative and creative way to show your appreciation to all of us! Again ... to all of our military treasure ... thank you for all that you do."

— Robin Horsley

"The civilian appreciation luncheon was truly a surprise and much appreciated effort by our military personnel. This event was the best thing that has happened to me during my six-year tenure and it will never be forgotten."

— Robert Ralston

"I would like to thank the military personnel for a job well done. I am also glad that the applicants were told what was going to happen for the day. They were so patient and thankful also. It made them see and they were even more excited to join the military feeling even more proud. The food was superb and the service was exceptional. Each and every military service person at the Indianapolis MEPS, not one of you went unnoticed from me. I sincerely thank you from the bottom of my heart."

— Antoinette Thompson

"The show of appreciation by you all was as awesome as it was unexpected. The food, the service, the entire gesture was really appreciated. For me, that one day made my whole weekend to know that what we do (as civilians) matters and is respected. It has been a pleasure to work with, and know so many wonderful military members over my years here at the MEPS, and I'm certain I speak for my counterparts when I say it is we, who are indebted and thankful likewise, for all that you do. We appreciate your service, your sacrifice, your courage and most of all – the safety and security of our nation, that you selflessly provide 24/7, without which, we as civilians could not have the lives and livelihoods that we enjoy. Thanks to all of you for what you did – and for all you do. HOOOAAH!"

— Warren D. Morphis



Phoenix MEPS
Cmdr. Alex Ortiz

Hometown: El Paso, Texas. "It's a border town, so there is a strong Hispanic community. It's a growing community. It's been 15 years since I've been there."

Fond childhood memories: "I played little league baseball. It was a lot of fun. They had a minor league team, the El Paso Diablos, we enjoyed. I remember going across the border quite a bit for dinner and shopping. Of course, you can't do that any more. I remember Friday night football. It's also Colonel Campos' hometown."

What was your favorite toy when you were a kid? "A fishing pole. We used to fish a lot. We fished for catfish. Occasionally we would go up to New Mexico and fish for rainbow trout. I had an old diamondback bike that I loved, too."

Education: Bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering from Texas A&M; master of science degree in education from Kansas State.

Why Navy? "I was working in college for the National Security Agency as an electrical engineer and decided I didn't like that very much. So I went to find something with a

little more adventure. I had a Navy history in my family. My dad was a retired chief petty officer and my mom was also in the Navy as a radioman for four years."

Previous assignment: Head of officer force shaping in the chief of naval personnel in Washington, D.C. "You're in charge of the 'Big Navy' officer strength planning and any policy that affects officer retention, separation or career progression. Anything that has to do with shaping the officer corps."

Favorite assignment: Combat systems officer on USS Springfield (SSN-761). "It was the most professionally rewarding job I've had to date, with deployments and missions. There was also a good command environment."

Future military career plans: "We're working on that right now. I'm going to try to continue past 20, get promoted and be a valuable member of the Navy." (He was promoted to commander after the interview!)

What do you want to be when you grow up? "Once I retire from the Navy, I would like to become a high school teacher, either in math or physics. I've got a master's degree in education, so both my wife and I looked at becoming teachers."

What do you do when you're not a commander? "I like to play golf. I also enjoy poker. Texas hold'em, of course, but really any type. Then I have a three-year-old daughter I try to spend a lot of time with." He says he's trying to teach her to play golf, "but she's kind of like me and doesn't have much patience for it. I am teaching

her to play soccer, though. She likes to kick the ball."

What's your leadership style? "Proactive. I like to be involved, not necessarily to the extent of micromanaging, but I like to be informed on a daily basis, knowing what's going on in the command. I like to be out and about. I like people to talk to me so I can find help solve things before it becomes an issue."

What do you like best about your job? "Swearing in young men and women every day. Just the impact that these young men and women are going to have. When we came into the military, things were a little different. These young men and women know they're going to deploy, they know they're going to do the hard things. They are motivated."

What do you order when you eat out? "A burger and a beer. Maybe onion rings every once a while. If you ask me to eat out, I'd rather do that than a steak or seafood."

What's the best present you ever got? "A set of King Cobra golf clubs I got from my wife when I qualified in submarines."

What's your guilty pleasure? "I'm a beer drinker. I like all different types of beer. Fortunately, now that I'm 40, I can only drink about two before I get full."

What is your least favorite sport? "Volleyball. I've never enjoyed playing it and it's not something that I'd watch even during the Olympics."

Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you. "I consider myself more of an introvert. I think people would be surprised because at work I like to get out, but in a social setting, I

just hang out with the family or a couple of close friends."

Tell me three things on your desk. "A painted ceramic frog my wife and daughter made for me at one of those pottery places, a mahogany submarine, and a book of MEPCOM instructions."

What kind of music do you like? "Predominantly rock. I like the old stuff and I like new stuff."

What is the last book you read? "Not a Good Day to Die" by Sean Naylor "It was about Operation Anaconda (in Afghanistan.) "It talks a lot about the miscommunications between the Army and the Air Force and how they sent those guys in without adequate air support."

What's your ideal vacation? "I like going to all inclusive resorts, so I would say an all inclusive resort in the Caribbean."



Raleigh MEPS
Maj. Angela Hunter

Hometown: Radcliff, Ky. "It's a small Army town. I'm an Army brat. My dad retired from the Army. A lot of Army folks pass through there, because it's right outside of Fort Knox."

Fond childhood memories: "I spent a lot of time with my family. I grew with three

sisters. My dad was retired army and became a preacher. We had movie nights on Friday, game nights on Saturday. We were a very close-knit family. I do that with my kids now."

What was your favorite toy when you were a kid?

"Barbie. I loved Barbie. It let me use my imagination."

Education: Bachelor of arts degree in psychology, University of Louisville.

Why Air Force? "I saw the blue light. Actually, I went into the Army for three years when I was 17. I decided to get out and use my Montgomery GI Bill. The money started to run out, so I went to a recruiter with a friend of mine, just to make sure he was telling her straight. I ended up talking to the recruiter. He found out I was prior service and tried to talk me into enlisting. I wasn't going to join the military again, but I took the Air Force Officers Qualifying Test and did well. They offered me a scholarship." Her fashion sense played a role, too. "I remember seeing the Air Force women wearing earrings with their BDUs when I was in Korea, and that was a big thing for me, too. The Air Force girls can be girls."

Previous assignment: Deputy squadron commander for the 12th Services Squadron, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas.

Favorite assignment: "When I taught AFOTC at North Carolina A&T University. It was a great assignment because I was commandant of cadets and watched kids come through the officer program and got to mentor them. I saw them coming in as freshmen and grow into officers. It was fulfilling. I got to see them grow from babies to fine Air Force officers. I got to mold

them and be part of recruiting the next generation of Air Force officers."

Training the Afghan army:

She was in Afghanistan January-August 2006. "I was a mentor for the Afghan national army. I went there as a (human resources officer), filling an Army position. I had to learn how the Army did their (human resources) and then teach the Afghan army how to do it. I had to fill an Army job because they didn't have anybody to fill the slot. I was part of the embedded training team."

Future military career plans:

"I would like to find a place where I can be a deputy group commander. Hopefully, I'll pin on lieutenant colonel. Or I might do some time at the Pentagon."

What do you want to be when you grow up?

"I wouldn't mind going into real estate — showing houses, getting people to buy houses. I also want to successfully get my two boys off to college — one to Duke University and one to the University of North Carolina. I might end up with a war in my house, but that's where they want to go."

What do you do when you're not a commander?

"I'm very active with my sons and their sports — football, basketball, whatever. They love swimming. In addition, I'm a big shopper. I love clothes and I love shopping. I'm also very active in my church, I like teaching Sunday school, being active on the women's committee. I also love dancing and karaoke."

What's your leadership style?

"I like to have fun. I'm laid back, flexible."

What do you like best about your job? "I like the people. I love the folks I work with. In

addition, I love talking to the kids volunteering to come into the military. I love hearing the stories. I love talking with the parents."

What do you order when you eat out?

"I like food. Period. I like trying new things. If I'm not experimenting, I like a good steak or good salmon."

What's the best present you ever got?

"We went on the Disney cruise after I got back from Afghanistan. That was a lot of fun. I went with my parents and my sons. That and the little mementos my sons give me. Little figurines and stuff they make because they're from the heart."

What's your guilty pleasure?

"Chocolate and everybody knows it. I love it. Chocolate ice cream, chocolate cake, chocolate-covered strawberries. I'm addicted and can't let it go."

What is your least favorite sport?

"Hockey. I'm not a fan of hockey. It seems like there's a fight every time. I don't like the missing teeth and the fights. Besides, when I think of hockey I think of cold, and I don't like cold."

Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you.

"I'm very shy. Even though I'm a commander and have been in the Air Force for a while and it's supposed to go away, I hate speaking in front of people, but I do it because I have to."

Tell me three things on your desk.

"A desk calendar, called 'Women After God's Own Heart.' It gives you verses to get you through the day. My pen set that has my name on it and a globe that I received from my unit at Randolph, and a set of cucumber-melon lotion and hand sanitizers."

What kind of music do you like? "I like all genres from

hip-hop to country. If it's got a good beat, I like it."

Last book you read?

From Good to Great, the one Colonel Price made us read. It was a good book. I love the part about 'either get on the bus or get off the bus.'"

What is your ideal vacation?

"I want to go on a cruise back to the Bahamas or Jamaica and stay at some nice secluded resort. I want to have some friends there and have a good time; stay 7-10 days. I want to be totally pampered — have people do everything thing for me."



St. Louis MEPS
Maj. Steven Morris

Hometown: Huffman, Texas.

"It's a suburb of Houston." He describes it as "rice paddies and I think they have about four red lights now and a Sonic. We're really moving up. It's a little farming community."

Fond childhood memories:

"We'd start out going to Corpus Christi, then go to San Antonio and then go to the Schlitterbahn, one of the biggest water parks. We'd get in the Grand Prix and my brother and I would (have to be) separated in the back and get slapped around. I remember the four of us driving around for a week, staying in the old style

motels.” School field trips were a big deal, too. “My mom would pack my lunch and give me a Pepsi. I always had to buy lunch when I was at school. And we got to wear shorts. You weren’t allowed to wear shorts to school.”

What was your favorite toy when you were a kid? “I remember it like yesterday. Santa Claus brought me the Ewok Village and my brother got the GI Joe Fort. We kept that thing out on the den floor a week too long. It was like Star Wars vs. GI Joe. It was awesome.”

Education: Bachelor of science degree in political science from West Point; master of arts degree in human resource management from Webster University.

Why Army? “I had an Air Force ROTC scholarship to Texas A&M and was going to room with one of my buddies from high school. My congressman called me and gave me an appointment and my brother went there. It was farther way, so I packed up and went. You can’t beat the academies for an education. The sibling rivalry had a lot to do with it, too — whatever you can do, I can do better.”

Previous assignment: Fort Hood, Texas. “I was the deputy (human resources officer) for the 13th Corps Support Command and deployed to Iraq. Then I became detachment commander for Bravo Detachment in the Personnel Services Division and deployed to Iraq for 13 months.”

Favorite assignment: “Detachment commander when I was in Iraq, because you’re in charge of troops in a war zone. After 5-6 months, I also took command of a postal company where the commander had been relieved

where I had command 160 soldiers and had to learn a whole new function in a short time. That’s why you become an officer, to command troops.”

Battle buddy: He speaks highly of his first sergeant in Iraq. “She was an (adjutant general NCO) She was assigned to me about three months before deployment. While I was trying to get some discipline back into the postal company, she ran the detachment for a couple weeks and kept everybody straight. When you re over there, you’ve got to walk the walk before you can talk the talk. She kept everybody on track for the most part. Her husband was a command sergeant major and was deployed, too. She had a daughter and was dealing with that separation. Through all that, we still had the best unit in the battalion.”

From test control officer to commander: He was the TCO at Knoxville in 2001-2002 and also acted as the assistant operations officer, which gave him a running start as a commander. “A lot of people know I was a TCO, but sometimes they forget. I went out with the ESS, so I know about that, I know about MET sites, working with (Office of Personnel Management). I know all about the medical section and the first two hours being the key. I knew about MIRS. I had a good foundational knowledge of what it takes to succeed.”

Future military career plans: “I take it one year at a time. The next successive step would be to go to (Intermediate Level Education) and hopefully make battalion command or better. To keep leading troops.”

What do you want to be when you grow up? “The guy who cuts everybody’s lawn for free on the block, because I’m

retired. Just relax and enjoy life.”

What do you do when you’re not a commander? “Hang out with my daughter. She just turned 6. I’ve got her in soccer, gymnastics and swimming. We go biking whenever we get the chance. We stay busy so my wife can focus on her studies.” She’s pursuing a nursing degree.

What’s your leadership style? “Hands off. I expect everybody to work hard. If they need help, I’m here to help and guide them. I expect them to do it. I’ll help them if they need it. I worked for too many micromanagers.”

What do you like best about St. Louis? “I get to watch the Astros play about nine times a year. I’m not a Cardinals fan, but I get to see my team. The time I have to spend with family.”

What do you order when you eat out? “We usually cook for the whole neighborhood. My wife is Italian and going to restaurants was not part of her upbringing. We do a lot of cooking and have everybody over to our house. It prevents me from getting Kentucky Fried Chicken. Every once in a while you just have a craving for some greasy fried chicken.”

What’s the best present you ever got? “I’d have to go back to that Christmas morning with the Ewok Village all set up. I wasn’t expecting it. I was expecting a bike or something. Santa Claus had it all set up. If you can imagine the Christmas tree lights, glimmering on it. It was great.”

What’s your guilty pleasure? “Hitting up the X-Box 360, linking up with all my old buddies and playing ‘Call of Duty.’ We get all those guys from when I was back in grade

school up through military buddies and BS and play.”

What is your least favorite sport? “Women’s basketball. It’s just not exciting to me. It hurts to say that as a guy raising a daughter. It’s funny because my parents love women’s college basketball.”

Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you. “I’m from Texas. If we sit around and talk, you’ll know everything about me. Talk to me long enough and I’ll tell you everything you want to know. There is one thing though — I was on the dean’s list for my last four semesters at West Point. I didn’t believe it. I was in trouble a lot, so I guess I just never realized it. I was surprised myself.”

Tell me three things on your desk. “A picture of my daughter and me, my cell phone and an empty water bottle.”

What kind of music do you like? “It’s so hard to listen to the radio anymore. I usually listen to talk radio. I’d probably say country. Good old Willie Nelson, old school country.”

What is the last book you read? “Cowboy Andy to my daughter. I was reading a book and I put it down and I can’t even remember it.”

What’s your ideal vacation? “Flying down to Australia with my wife and daughter and exploring Australia for a week or two. I worked with Australians in Iraq. They were really laid back. Everything was always ‘No worries, Mate.’ And ‘Crocodile Dundee’ is my all time favorite movie.”



**Kansas City
MEPS
Master Sgt.
Carol Banks**

Hometown: Nashville, N.C.
“It’s a very small town, 30 miles east of Raleigh.”

Fond childhood memories:
“It was a fun childhood. For family vacations, we used to travel to amusement parks like Kings Dominion and Carwinds near Charlotte, N.C. We went to the beach a lot, too.”

What was your favorite toy when you were a kid? “A basketball. I loved to play. I played most of my life.” She’s a guard.

Education: Pursuing a bachelor’s degree in computer engineering from North Carolina State University.

Why the Marines? “I felt they were different. My brother was in the Army and another brother was in the Navy when I joined. I knew those services and knew I wouldn’t go in the Navy. I considered the Army because my brother was a recruiter at the time, but I thought the Marines could give me a better challenge, so that’s why I went with the Marine Corps. I’m kind of surprised I’m even in the military. I was going to college. That was my only choice. I see being in the military as rebelling against

my parents after I did what they wanted me to do. Since I was their first child to graduate high school with honors, they just wanted me to complete school.” Her parents were OK with her joining the military, but she didn’t tell them until after she enlisted.

Previous assignment: Marine Wing Support Squadron 272, New River Air Station, N.C.

Favorite assignment: Marine Barracks 8th and I in Washington, D.C., where she was protocol chief and ran with some pretty fast company including the commandant’s wife and some guy named Bush. She met President George W. Bush and later worked on his second inauguration and was on the platform when he took the oath of office. And the commandant’s wife? “She used to host a lot of events at her home for the general officers’ spouses. We used to set up for them and be there to make sure everything was set up right. We greeted her guests and escorted them in.” She also enjoyed event planning and dealing with the public, especially the older veterans. Getting to see the Marine Corps Silent Drill Team was another fringe benefit. “It was amazing. I was there three-and-a-half years and every time they were on the parade deck, it was like seeing them the first time. They put in a lot of work. Just seeing them do that gave me pride in the Marine Corps.”

Future military career plans: “I have two years until retirement at 20. I’m waiting to see if I get selected to master gunnery sergeant. If I don’t get selected, I’ll probably retire.”

What do you want to be when you grow up? “I want to go back to D.C. and teach in the inner city schools. When I was at 8th and I, we were

located in the inner city. I saw the influence we were able to have on the inner city schools, so I think I can do a lot of good mentoring the students to want a better lifestyle.”

What do you do when you’re not a commander? “If I’m not here, then I’m running, or working out in the gym. I also read a lot and I shop a lot.”

What’s your leadership style? “I prefer to lead by example. I prefer not to have my people do anything I wouldn’t do. If I’m going to have them do it, I do it myself.”

What do you like best about your job? “Getting to know the people and also seeing the excitement on a parent’s face when their son or daughter or grandson or granddaughter is swearing in. Also, just learning so much about all the different branches of service.”

What do you order when you eat out? “I like pizza – cheese pizza – and I like steak.

What’s the best present you ever got? “A C-230 Mercedes.”

Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you. “I design wedding gowns as a hobby because I’m a seamstress as well. I did my sister’s wedding. I started doing it and became very good at it. I learned watching my mother and grandmother. I just picked up a machine one day and started doing it.”

Tell me three things on your desk. “A radio, my personal cell phone and my Blackberry.”

What kind of music do you like? “I love all kinds of music. I almost went in the music business. A group of friends started an independent

label. We produced hip-hop, R&B, gospel and jazz.”

Last book you read? “‘Lincoln on Leadership’ by Donald T. Phillips. The command sergeant major gave it to us.”

Ideal vacation? “I want to go on an Alaskan cruise. It’s something I always wanted to do. I want to see the icebergs. It’s probably going to be cold, but it’s going to be a beautiful view.”



**Memphis MEPS
Master Chief
Thomas Wheeler**

Hometown: Canton, Texas.
“It’s a small town, 2,000 people, one little school. The whole school is on one campus. Everybody knows everybody.”

Fond childhood memories: “I grew up on a ranch. Learned how to do all that stuff.” The ranch is about 3,500 acres. “My dad raised cattle so I baled hay, fed cows and took care of the usual.”

After all these years? He was a torpedoman for most of his career until the rate merged with gunners mate. “The first 27 years in the Navy I was a torpedoman, the last year I’m a gunners mate.” Despite the rate, he never served on a submarine. “I was a technician.

I built them and loaded them on the submarines. I've been on a submarine, but never been to sea in one."

What was your favorite toy when you were a kid? "A baseball. I've got a twin brother, and that was pretty much what we had to do when we weren't helping my dad."

Twins twice: "I always said (being a twin) was the greatest thing in the world. You've already got somebody to play with. We had a spell when we were in high school that we didn't even like each other. We got close again when I joined the Navy. I always say the best thing about being a twin is you've always got a best friend. My wife is also a twin. She talks with her sister almost daily. My brother and I talk about once a week."

Education: Associate degree in industrial management, technical, military from Florida Community College. He only needs two more classes for his bachelor's degree in human resource management from Park University.

Why Navy? "I guess it was the uniform. I always liked the uniform. It was distinctive. My dad did three years in the Army then joined the Navy and was in for four years when he met my mom. I always heard a lot more sea stories than Army stories."

Previous assignment: Weapons department leading chief on the USS John F. Kennedy.

Favorite assignment: "I guess the Kennedy because it was so different. Because of the weapons I'd been on, I'd always been on sub tenders. The job was pretty mundane day in and day out. The Kennedy was the only

combatant I was on and it was completely different from anything I'd been on before."

What do you want to be when you grow up? "A teacher. I'm going to try to teach middle school. We're moving back to Jacksonville. I want to get my master's and teach middle school math. My mother is just amazed because math was always my hardest subject. I guess you always go back to what was the biggest challenge for you."

What do you do when you're not a senior enlisted advisor? "Go to school. Run. I'm going to run the St. Jude's marathon in December the week before I retire." He's run five marathons. His best time is around 3 hours, 45 minutes.

What's your leadership style? "Hands on. I like to be involved, find out what everybody is doing."

What do you like best about your job? "That I get to work with such a diverse group, the civilians and the different military. It seems there's never a dull moment around here. Talking with applicants and their families, answering questions."

What do you order when you eat out? "Chicken or fish. I like shrimp. The chicken is usually something baked. I tried to eat healthy, but it doesn't always work out that way. You eat a really healthy dinner and then get a big piece of chocolate cake to go with it."

What's the best present you ever got? My X-box, because I didn't think my wife would enjoy playing it, but it's something we can do to chill out together. We play games; we can play at the same time and chill out in the evening.

She's kind of an addict. I wouldn't buy one for myself, because I was afraid she would think I was ignoring her." He also mentioned his three-year-old son. "He's the best toy anybody could ever have."

What's your guilty pleasure? "Rocky road ice cream. (Because it has) chocolate and nuts and marshmallows, and chocolate. I've always been a rocky road fan."

What is your least favorite sport? "Basketball because I'm not any good at it. They could make the ball half the size and the rim twice as big and I'd still miss."

Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you. "I think I'm an introvert, but I guess really not. The Myers-Briggs (personality test) says I'm an extrovert. I'm pretty outgoing, but I have to force it."

Tell me three things on your desk. "A picture of my wife and young son, Capt. (Jerome) Spellings' beret (the operations officer) and a whole bunch of paperwork."

What kind of music do you like? "Country and 80s rock. It's what I grew up on. Nothing makes running easier than a good loud 'hair band' in your iPod."

Last book you read? Organizational Development and Change (for class). "I guess that's not Tom Clancy, but that's what I'm reading right now."

What's your ideal vacation? "Home with the family. Re-energize and recharge the batteries."



Chicago MEPS
1st Sgt. David Davis

Hometown: New Bern, N.C. "It's a rural town on the North Carolina coast, right on the water. It's a fishing town, of about 100,000 people. It's also become a retirement town. A lot of 'halfbacks' have retired there. Those are people who retired to Florida and then moved to North Carolina. They call them 'halfbacks,' because they moved halfway back home. It has all four seasons and you don't have to worry about hurricanes as much."

Fond childhood memories: "My childhood was real good. I was the New Bern all star. I was all state in basketball and football. I had my 20-year reunion this year. My wife was laughing when we went to the reunion because everybody still knows me. My sports activities in high school were memorable for me." He was a free safety and tight end. He played wide receiver as a sophomore and junior, moved to tight end as a senior when the player who had played the position moved away. He was a forward in basketball.

What was your favorite toy when you were a kid? "My grandmother bought me a Tonka train set. It had a little horn on the front of it. It had an engine, a caboose and a couple of cars in between. I remember it like it was yesterday."

Education: He attended North Carolina A&T for a couple of years on a football scholarship. He is currently pursuing a bachelor of science degree in business administration through Grantham University.

Why Army? “My father is a retired 30-year firemen in New Bern. Before I was born, he was in the Army for seven years. He had a yearbook from when he was in the 82nd Airborne Division and I made the decision to join the Army for family reasons. I chose the Army based on my father being in the Army and I wanted to go Airborne.”

Previous assignment: Testing standardization and training NCO, USMEPCOM Headquarters J-3 (Operations).

Filling in at sector: He served as the command sergeant major for Eastern Sector when the position was vacant. “Colonel (Barrye) Price, (then Eastern Sector commander) came to me when I was up at sector one day. He was pondering who was going to fill in for Command Sgt. Major (Darlene) Hagood when she left. He said who better than me to fill in based on being in the headquarters and then with the MEPS. It was a great opportunity to see things from a different perspective and a great opportunity to interact

with all the senior enlisted advisors in the sector.”

Favorite assignment: “I’ve had all good assignments. Being a drill sergeant was the most rewarding; the training and the impact you have on those Soldiers you train. My favorite assignment was being at Fort Bragg for seven years, just being part of the airborne community.”

Future military career plans: “Continue to be a Soldier, continue to lead from the front. If sergeant major is in the future, I should be eligible next year. I’m looking forward to getting back into the fight and continuing to lead Soldiers.”

What do you do when you’re not a senior enlisted advisor? “Golf.” He has about a 17 handicap. “On a good day, I can shoot a 47 or 48 for nine holes. I’ve been golfing for 2½ years. I’ve got the bug bad. It’s a great game. I wish I would’ve picked it up a long time ago.”

Empty nesters: “My wife and I are all alone now. The kids are all in college. If I come home and something’s not where it’s supposed to be, I know who did it — either me or her.”

What’s your leadership style? “I live and I lead by the golden rule. Treat others like you want to be treated. That goes with tough love, too. I want my leaders to be tough on me. I lead by example. I wouldn’t ask anyone to do anything I wouldn’t do.”

What do you like best about your job? “The interaction with the staff. Going around and talking and finding out what makes the individual tick and motivating them. I come in motivated ever day. We have a great staff here. I’ve been to a lot of MEPS and I know the Chicago MEPS has one of the best staffs and I just love dealing with them.”

What do you order when you eat out? “I have this great Mexican place beside me, Salsa Brava. They have a Bistek con Rojas. It’s a skirt steak with melted mozzarella, peppers and red sauce. I have that with guacamole and sour cream.

What’s your guilty pleasure? Funnel cake with vanilla ice cream and strawberry topping.

What is your least favorite sport? “Baseball. We don’t have a baseball team in North Carolina. We don’t consider baseball a sport.”

Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you. “That I’m not as serious as I may look. A lot of people think I’m real serious when they see me in uniform, but I like to laugh and joke.”

Tell me three things on your desk. “An Airborne crystal paperweight and a picture of me holding the battalion colors at a change of command for the Bravo 3rd (Military Police) Battalion at Fort Bragg. I also have a medallion I wore when I used to jump at Fort Bragg — Saint Michael, the patron saint of the paratrooper.”

What kind of music do you like? “I listen to rap, hip-hop. It gives me energy, especially in the morning, it motivates me. A lot of people ask me about the drive down here from Zion. I love it. It lets me listen to music, motivates me and gets me ready.” He has about an hour commute each way.

What’s the last book you read? “Actually they were short stories, I’m taking English 2. I just read Raymond Carver’s ‘Mine’ and ‘Little Things.’”

What’s your ideal vacation? “I haven’t taken a cruise, because I don’t like the water, but I hear it’s a great vacation, so I’m going take a cruise here soon.”

Sector civilian wears two hats; wins award

Dave Noesen is the enlisted testing chief for Eastern Sector, and also an Air Force Reserve master sergeant who was recently named Career Assistance Advisor on the Year for the 932nd Medical Group at Scott Air Force Base, Ill.

Noesen has worked at Eastern Sector since 2007. Beforehand, he worked at

Chicago MEPS as a human resources assistant for two years.

In his letter of recommendation, the commander of the 932nd Airlift Wing, Col. John Flournoy, Jr., stated, Noesen, “has proved to be a creative problem solver and a detail-oriented specialist. I can say without hesitation that he has a high level of integrity and

a well-developed sense of responsibility for any task assigned.”

Further, Flournoy stated, “There are a few people I have encountered who have the character, the skills, and the leadership to be an outstanding personnel career enlisted advisor, Sergeant Noesen is one of those individuals.”



Air Force Reserve Master Sgt. Dave Noesen

MEPS of Excellence

The MEPS of Excellence Program acknowledges military entrance processing stations that obtain a level of excellence based on criteria related to USMEPCOM core processes (medical, testing, applicant processing) and general military readiness.

The two requirements to become a MEPS of Excellence are:

- To be one of the top three MEPS in each category.
- To meet the overall threshold.

The 65 MEPS are divided into three categories, based on historical data. MEPS remain in the designated category the entire fiscal year.

The MOE points system measures up to 10 criteria per quarter. The criteria are:

- Timeliness of military evaluations and awards.
- Total students tested goal.
- Drug and HIV specimen processing.
- Clinical Laboratory Improvement Program.
- Physical fitness readiness.
- Height and weight standards.
- Electronic fingerprint capture station (unclassifiable fingerprints).
- Incidents of serious misconduct by military or civilian employees.
- Test loss compromise.
- Citibank travel card delinquency rates.

Fourth Quarter, Fiscal 2009

Category 1
Baltimore MEPS
Chicago MEPS
Tampa MEPS

Category 2
Little Rock MEPS
Nashville MEPS
Pittsburgh MEPS

Category 3
Amarillo MEPS
Omaha MEPS
Sioux Falls MEPS

APPLAUSE

ALBUQUERQUE MEPS

Maj. Robert C. Morea, selected for promotion to lieutenant colonel

PHOENIX MEPS

1st Sgt. Paul George, selected for promotion to sergeant major, transferred to the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas;
April Wise, promoted to operations supervisor;
Joseph Wayne, promoted to administrative support tech;
Karen Duffy, promoted to administrative assistant;
Shahn Savoy, promoted to information technology supervisor;
Della Watson, Civilian of the 1st Quarter;
Denise Richards, Civilian of the 2nd Quarter

FOND FAREWELLS

PHOENIX MEPS

Capt. Douglas Jackson Jr.
 Executive Officer
 Years of service: 16
 Departing for: Pope Air Force Base

BIRTHS

RALEIGH MEPS

Mr. and Mrs. Ricardo Rivera, a son, Avian Omar Rivera, July 5, 4 pounds, 5 ounces.

FORT LEE MEPS

Terri Long
 Test Administrator
Years of military service: 5+
Last assignment: Fort Campbell, Ky.
Diversions: "Spending time with my family."
First impression: "Very positive atmosphere."

Cindy Lou Robinson

Administrative Support Technician
Years of Army service: 22
Last assignment: Fort Belvoir, Va.
Diversions: Running, photography, dog therapy, sports, church activities
First impression: "Organized, positive."

OMAHA MEPS

Jacob Tieskotter
 Information Technology Specialist
Years of service: Army (4) and Navy (7)
Last assignment: Help Desk Contractor for Army Corps of Engineers (Lockheed Martin)
Diversions: "Spend time with my daughter and girlfriend. Ride my Ducati 999. Read and study different areas of interest such as computer security."
First impression: "Very good. The people who work here are a great group of people, and I am looking forward to working with everyone in the future. Things are quite different from when I went through the MEPS when I entered the military, and I am glad to be working here."

Petty Officer 2nd Class Andrew Newton

Processing Specialist
Years of service: 5+
Last assignment: USS Rodney M. Davis FFG60
Diversions: Skateboard, BMX, snowboarding, cars
First impression: "Nice people."

NEW FACES

PHOENIX MEPS

1st Sgt. James Lewis
 Senior Enlisted Advisor
Years of service: 20
Last assignment: Fort Lewis, Wash.
Civilian education: Master's degree in business administration
Diversions: "Watching sports, spending quality time with family."

Cal Kennedy

Human Resources Assistant
Years of military service: 5 Navy, 7 Army
Last assignment: Fort Irwin, Calif.
Diversions: Enjoys interacting with people, and likes to have fun.
First impression: "Big working family type of team."

Chris Dreese

Human Resource Assistant
Years of government service: 5
Years of military service: 7
Last assignment: Wiesbaden, Germany
First impression: "Organized, fun place to work, friendly."

RALEIGH MEPS

Cpl. James Jones
 Human Resources Assistant
Years of service: 5
Diversions: Sports
First impression: "Friendly"

Paula Eason-Butcher

Health Technician
Years of service: 13
Education: Bachelor's degree in psychology
First impression: "Very friendly organization"



The Koch family took to the road in their custom-painted truck to visit the Fort Dix MEPS ceremony room that is dedicated to their son, Cpl. Steven Koch. On their first visit since the dedication, they brought a flag from his unit (right) to add to the memorial.

Family heals through memorializing son, building relationships

By Rebecca O'Donnell
Fort Dix MEPS

Just imagine the pain that would run through your heart, reaching the depths of your soul, if your loved one, especially a son or daughter that you nurtured and watched grow into an amazing individual, was taken from you doing something heroic.

With any war there are people left to face their loss. As the parent of a young Soldier serving in Iraq, I and other MEPS employees in the same situation are faced with this thought daily and even more so when the Fort Dix MEPS dedicated its ceremony room to Cpl. Steven Koch, met his family and saw their pain. How would you deal with it? What would you do?

Koch was killed in Afghanistan when a car bomb caused a wall to collapse on him. He was a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division and had enlisted in the Army at the Fort Dix MEPS in March 2006.

During the dedication ceremony Maj. Jerry Brooks Jr., Fort Dix MEPS commander, told the family that the ceremony room belongs to the memory of their son and the Koch family, and welcomed them to visit whenever they wanted.

The traffic was thick, but well worth their trip down the New Jersey turnpike as they were driving their newly custom painted Toyota pickup truck with their son's memorial proudly displayed on it.

This is just one way the Koch family deals with their loss. They also took Brooks up on his word. In August, the Koch family returned to the MEPS for the first time since the dedication to remember their fallen soldier, bearing a flag from their son's unit to add to his memorial in the ceremony room.



The parents of Cpl. Steven Koch display the flag they added to his memorial in the Fort Dix MEPS ceremony room.

"I am so happy to be able to come and donate this flag in Steven's memory" Christine Koch, the mother of the fallen soldier, said.

Editor's note: Rebecca O'Donnell's son recently returned from Iraq. He will be home for a year before leaving for an assignment in Afghanistan. She explained that the Koch family calls the MEPS every week or two, and visits the ceremony room, where they leave roses. Also, they had coins made and gave them to MEPS personnel who have supported their grieving.



2009

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