

Messenger

WINTER
2022

Messenger Re-brand
A new
LOOK p. 20



**Undercover
Commander** P.4

Road to
MROAD P.12

VOLUNTEERS
MEPS give back P.10



Greetings Teammates,

It's hard to believe we are here in 2022. I hope everyone spent time with friends and family this past holiday season while reflecting on where we have been and where we are going in the new year.

Two years ago, our nation faced one of our greatest challenges when the pandemic began. There was great uncertainty of almost every aspect of life and how we would continue our mission. At "Freedom's Front Door", we never closed. We never quit. We faced every obstacle with increased focus and enhanced teamwork. Our workforce rose to the challenge by creating innovative ways to work with applicants and recruiting partners. Things were difficult, but we learned a lot and emerged stronger.

In this issue of Messenger magazine, you will find an account of our journey through the pandemic, stories of ESSs adapting to challenges and MEPS prioritizing outreach to strengthen communication and foster relationships. I am profoundly proud of our stories of resiliency, creativity and persistence, the traits of the active-duty and civilian personnel at USMEPCOM.

To that end, as you likely know already, I authorized a C.A.R.E.S. Day for each MEPS as an additional non-processing day to demonstrate our recognition of your hard work, and for your command teams to help YOU become even stronger.

At USMEPCOM, we continue to push forward with our command priorities... one being modernization. In the coming weeks, we will deploy MHS Genesis. The career-spanning electronic health record will stay with service members from when they enter the MEPS all the way through their transition to the VA and beyond. Last year we also fielded MROAD, HAIMS and continued to see updates and improvements to USMIRS 1.1. Please take a moment to read about these modernization efforts in this issue of Messenger magazine.

Everyday, I have great pride leading USMEPCOM and being a part of the accessions process for the greatest fighting force in the world. Once again, thank you for all do at "Freedom's Front Door."

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

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LINKS

USMEPCOM
HOMEPAGE



Messenger
Digital Edition



United States Military Entrance
Processing Command



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UNDERCOVER COMMANDER

MEPS COMMANDER GOES INCOGNITO

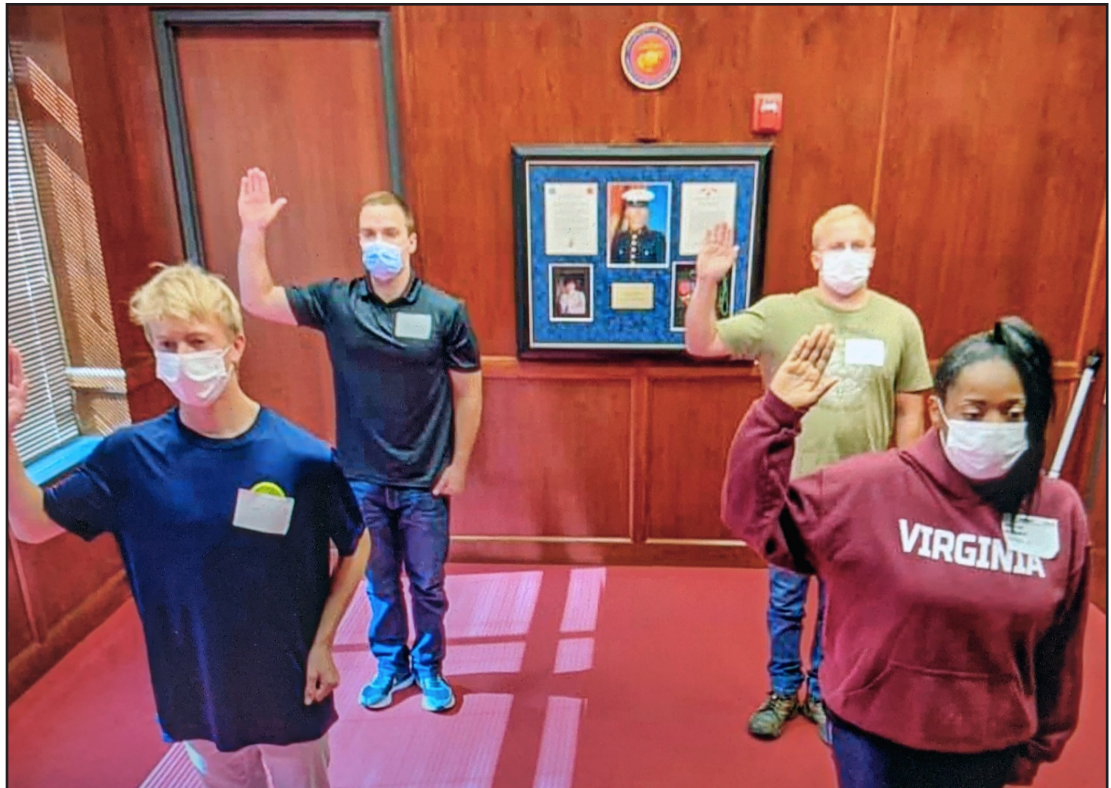
By U.S. Army 1st Lt. Harrison Lund
Milwaukee MEPS
assistant operations officer

Milwaukee MEPS personnel started their day like any other on Sept. 30, 2021.

Applicants poured through the entrance and filled up the seats in the medical, testing and other waiting areas. As applicants circulated through the rooms and stations of each section, the Milwaukee MEPS team remained vigilant of all the individuals to accommodate and process these future service members of our nation.

Little did MEPS personnel know that they would have a VIP applicant. U.S. Army Maj. Sharleen Morgan, Milwaukee MEPS commander, was an undercover boss for the day. Morgan secretly impersonated a MEPS applicant to evaluate the entire process through an applicant's eyes.

Morgan did not take her role lightly. From the beginning, she carried out this secret task with stern determination from the Army recruiting office to the final stage of reciting



▲ "Applicant" Morgan (bottom right) joins three other applicants as they take the oath of enlistment at the Milwaukee MEPS. (Courtesy photo)

the oath in the presence of a commissioned officer and departing the MEPS station.

Morgan, donned with a hoodie and ponytail to throw off MEPS employees, dived in deep to better understand the applicant's perspective on the MEPS. She evaluated the treatment of applicants, questioned applicants about their impressions of MEPS staff and learned how staff members directly

deal with applicants daily. Morgan played her role with perfection from start to finish.

At the end of the day, Morgan was highly impressed with the MEPS staff and how they operated. In one instance, applicant Morgan even showed a flair for drama when she felt faint after a blood draw. Her unforeseen situation in medical was handled with care and professionalism

by the medical team and applicant Morgan was able to continue processing.

For Morgan's outstanding performance in the production of "Everyday Applicant" and commitment to her character throughout processing, Milwaukee MEPS staff awarded her an unofficial Oscar and encouraged her to take her career beyond MEPS and into Hollywood. ■



▲Maj. Sharleen Morgan, Milwaukee MEPS commander, in her applicant disguise. (Courtesy photo)

▲Maj. Morgan poses for a photo with her unofficial Oscar awarded by Milwaukee MEPS staff. (Courtesy photo)

Rave reviews from the Milwaukee MEPS team

"REFRESHING FOR SOMEONE TO BE SO INVOLVED."
-HELEN SMITH, MEDICAL TECHNICIAN

**"IT WAS INTERESTING TO SEE THE COMMANDER'S
TRANSITION IN AND OUT OF CHARACTER."**
-DOMINGO COLON, HUMAN RESOURCE ASSISTANT



**"IT WAS A BREATH OF FRESH AIR TO HAVE A COMMANDER
WHO WANTS TO KNOW WHAT WE GO THROUGH."**
-RUSTY THOMAS, TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANT

USMEPCOM PERSEVERES THROUGH PANDEMIC

Freedom's Front Door Stays Open

By Derrick Noack

Every year, thousands of people enlist in the United States military. Whether it be a call to service, to pay for college, or for job stability, enlistees all support the defense of our nation. When the pandemic struck, shutting down recruitment and processing was just not an option. Our nation relied on force readiness and those going into service depended on beginning their careers.

Starting March 2020, USMEPCOM went on the defense. A task force was set up to ensure operations of the 65 MEPS would operate uninterrupted by COVID-19. The task force analyzed data to develop response measures, determine who has authority to make decisions, measure equipment and PPE levels, enhance cleanings, establish screening procedures and create a milSuite website (<https://www.milsuite.mil/book/groups/covid-19-task-force>).

“USMEPCOM kicked into gear immediately,” said Colleen Murphy, MD, Western Sector medical officer. “A Covid task force was promptly stood up who introduced a multi-tiered response matrix. We immediately adopted recommended practices from the CDC and implemented social distancing, health questionnaires, temperature checks and aggressive hand hygiene. As the science evolved, mask wearing was introduced, and applicants were screened before MEPS entry at the contract lodging facility.”

Recruiting commands were able to follow established guidance, keep applicants and employees safe and meet recruiting goals. From March 1, 2020 to Feb. 28,

2021, USMEPCOM administered 968,000 ASVAB tests, 535,000 medical exams, and sent 208,000 qualified candidates to boot camp. Two remote processing stations were set up in May 2020, to provide increased capacity. Temporary facilities in Riverside, Calif. and Guam processed 1600 applicants, aiding in meeting the Service recruiting partners’ requirements.

“We don’t want to negatively impact recruits, whether it be a delay or them bringing COVID to boot camp,” said Cmdr. Endia Mendez, Western Sector deputy commander. “Because we have direct interaction with them, it’s still important that we follow CDC guidance and be mindful about wearing masks.”

When schools closed in March 2020, employees of the Student Testing Program were creative in both finding ways to reach students and help the team. Intermittent test administrators (ITAs), who would otherwise be out of work at the time, worked as COVID-19 screeners.

“The suspension of the Student Testing Program as a result of COVID-19 in early March hindered the ITAs from being able to administer school test sessions and negatively impacted their livelihood,” said Cathy Carter, Houston MEPS test control officer. “So to ensure that our ITAs remained gainfully employed while the Student Testing Program was suspended I presented them the opportunity to receive hours and work as COVID-19 screeners at the applicant hotel and at the entrance of the MEPS.”

Virtual outreach has been

beneficial for recruiters and Education Services Specialists (ESSs), especially during school closures. USMEPCOM Testing Division adapted to reach students while they were remote learning at home and reduced their student-testing goal by 50%.

“The COVID pandemic presented unprecedented challenges and we had to adapt to the way we derived our testing goal,” said David Davis, Chief, Testing Division. “ASVAB Career Exploration Program (CEP) adapted to a virtual learning environment to support students, teachers, faculty, parents, and recruiters. Headquarters acquired Google Hangout accounts for all



▲ Future Sailor Alfredo Juarez takes the oath of enlistment at the Fort Dix MEPS. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Diana Quinlan)

ESSs to facilitate virtual outreach to CEP stakeholders.”

To help reduce the possibility of spreading the virus, USMEPCOM initiated new allowances for telework and implemented travel restrictions. The Virtual Private Network (VPN) expanded to 10 times its previous capacity, providing a faster network for those working from home. While not everyone could eliminate face-to-face meetings due to job responsibilities, technology has been extremely useful in allowing collaboration while maintaining social distance. Mendez said staff was hesitant at first to switch in-person meetings for online ones, but now everyone is comfortable using video conference platforms.

The Covid task force aimed to provide clear guidance from the

start of the pandemic. With revised recommendations from the CDC and continuing information about the virus, some of that guidance shifted over time. Reassuring staff and providing answers through their milSuite site has kept USMEPCOM steady.

“The uncertainty of the environment has added a lot of stress to MEPS,” said Mendez. “I think our leadership has done a great job of communicating with employees, and routing up questions they don’t have answers to.”

The rollout of vaccines eased some uncertainty of workplace safety environments. More than 75% of vaccine opt-in employees received their COVID vaccine within eight weeks of the first emergency use authorization. All federal

employees had until Nov. 22, 2021 to be vaccinated per executive order.

Service members are also required to be vaccinated. Those deadlines differ by branch of service. Masks are still required while in DoD facilities, regardless of vaccination status.

“As a country, we must develop herd immunity through the safe and superior way – population based Covid-19 vaccines,” said Colleen Murphy, MD, Western Sector medical officer. “It will also be prudent to continue the measures we have learned to prevent transmissible disease. Masking and hand hygiene have been observed to reduce droplet, airborne and surface transmission diseases as well. Let’s take care of ourselves and each other. We must truly act together fighting the pandemic.” ■



▲U.S. Army 1st Lt. Juan Fajardo administers the oath of enlistment to a future New Jersey Air National Guardsman at the Fort Dix MEPS. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Diana Quinlan)

Physical Health Tests

Big changes coming for medical screening at MEPS.
Some tests out.

Duck walk survives to waddle another day.

By Susan VanBoening

At Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS) around the country, medical testing for military enlistment will undergo two major changes beginning in 2022: the elimination of group exams and the reduction of required physical maneuvers.

“USMEPCOM is confident these changes will positively impact both the applicants and the MEPS,” said U.S. Army Col. Megan Stallings, commander of U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command (USMEPCOM). “As a command, we are committed to constantly modernizing all of our efforts and these changes to the medical exam are part of our effort to improve our processes and meet our mission.”

The first significant change is the elimination of group testing. Prior to this change, medical processing consisted of both an individual and a group evaluation. During the individual examination, chief medical officers (CMO) conducted a comprehensive appraisal of individual body systems. In the group portion of the exam same-gender applicants conducted physical maneuvers that specifically assessed muscular and skeletal readiness.

USMEPCOM has been monitoring the efficiency of the group test for quite some time. According to U.S. Army Lt. Col. Kevin Cummings, USMEPCOM command surgeon, conducting screening in groups of people has become unnecessary as advances in physical assessment have allowed for more focused and efficient examination techniques.

“We’ve progressed in our ability to evaluate physical function to the point that people standing around together isn’t necessary,” said Cummings. “If this method of screening was still effective, we would still do it because mission comes first. But it’s not as effective.”

“In the current system, sometimes an applicant can wait 40-50 minutes if they are applicant number one and they have to wait for their whole group of eight to finish,” he said. “In the new process, the individual exams will extend by two to three minutes and once they are done, they can move along.”

The second change will be with physical testing maneuvers. Beginning next year, applicants will complete a neuro-muscular-skeletal exam (NMSE) of just ten exercises, down from 23. Many maneuvers will be absorbed into other tests, but a few maneuvers, including the knee walk and knee fall, are being permanently eliminated. You can breathe easy though, the most recognized test at MEPS will continue to waddle well into the future.

“The duck walk is valuable because it involves coordination, balance, nervous system and muscle activation...many things are covered at one time,” Cummings said. “In the past we would have applicants walk all the way across the room and then walk back. Now on the exam they will duck walk two to three steps.”

In addition to more precise evaluations and increased efficiency, it will likely be a relief to many applicants not to have to share space with strangers while in their underwear.

Many MEPS have volunteered as test sites for the new processes and they will undergo a cold launch in January 2022. The broad rollout for the new medical processing is slated for the following month. ■



◀An applicant is medically screened at Chicago MEPS in fall of 2021 for processing into the Armed Forces. Physical testing will change in 2022 with updated tests and testing procedures. (Photo by Israel Molina)

Volunteerism



Hello,

Community service is one of the best ways for MEPS personnel and military service members to give back to their community. A few MEPS across the country spent time this past fall and holiday season volunteering in their communities.

Volunteerism has positive effects on society and boosts personal development. With busy lives, it can be hard to find time to volunteer. However, the benefits of volunteering can be enormous, including:

- ✓ INCREASED UNIT MORALE
- ✓ REDUCED STRESS AND DEPRESSION
- ✓ INCREASED MENTAL STIMULATION
- ✓ EXPANDED NETWORK OF FRIENDS
- ✓ INCREASED EMPATHY
- ✓ INCREASED SENSE OF PURPOSE

The new year is a great time to consider planning a volunteer event with your MEPS. April is national volunteer month and many organizations will be holding community service events during this period. Remember, volunteering doesn't have to involve a long-term commitment or take a considerable amount of time out of your busy day.

Many people find inspiration in reading stories of others volunteering. We hope these stories of MEPS personnel volunteering and helping others inspires you to make a difference in your community and beyond.

Messenger Staff



Learn how you can be recognized for your volunteer service:



Giving Thanks

Sacramento MEPS holds turkey drive
to feed local community, grows a spirit of giving

By U.S. Army Maj. Pak Lee
Sacramento MEPS commander

 November and December are the seasons of thanks and giving. A west coast MEPS sprang into the holiday spirit by organizing a turkey drive to help those in need in their community.

Sacramento MEPS held their 1st annual community-based turkey drive on Nov. 12, 2021. MEPS leadership and personnel felt inclined to participate in this charitable event to develop internal MEPS team cohesion, community partnership and support for the local residents in need.

In total, Sacramento MEPS collected 20 turkeys donated by staff and personnel. Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services were the grateful recipient of the turkeys to feed local individuals, families and veterans in need in the Sacramento community.

Giving to those who may be less fortunate was a resounding motivation that MEPS personnel felt during the event. MEPS leadership could see the growth in unit cohesion during the event.

"It was great to see all the MEPS sections and staff take such motivated actions in supporting the Sacramento MEPS as one team," said U.S. Army Capt. Jason Deimerly, Sacramento MEPS executive officer. "It was great to see all the hard work by the staff."

Seasoned volunteer William King, Sacramento MEPS processing supervisor, estimated the turkey drive would help feed approximately 1,000 families in the local area.

"My wife and I have contributed (to turkey drives) at least two turkeys every year for the past 14 years," said King. "We have always had a sense of support for our community. This year I wanted the MEPS to participate to show we also support the community we work and live."

U.S. Army Maj. Pak Lee, Sacramento MEPS commander, attributes much of the turkey drives success to event organizers and those who contributed to the drive.

"Thanks to the event coordinator, Mr. King, and thank you to all who participated by donating to our local community," Lee said. "Love you all!" ■



▲From L to R: William King (processing supervisor), Spencer J. Albrecht (human resources assistant), Matthew P. McBride (test control officer) and Wallace A. Oliver (human resources assistant) are pictured in front of Sacramento MEPS during the turkey drive. (Courtesy photo)

◀Thomas A. Hornbrook (Sacramento MEPS lead human resources assistant) drove to Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services and donated additional turkeys on Nov. 12, 2021. (Courtesy photo)

SPRINGFIELD MEPS HELPS SPOOKY SAFARI EVENT

By Susan VanBoening



▲ From L to R: Capt. Nathan Hogan, Lt. Andrew Dobrowolski and Staff Sgt. Mark Ashland cleared brush and vegetation at the Zoo. (Courtesy photo)



▲ From L to R: Brenden Ringman, 1st Sgt. Benjamin Ringman, Staff Sgt. Mark Ashland, Capt. Nathan Hogan, Angel Hogan, Lt. Andrew Dobrowolski and Lt. Cmdr. Abaigeal Hillyard pose for a photo at the Zoo. (Courtesy photo)

The leaves are falling and the weather is cooling. For children, big and small, the end of October is a special time of year to participate in fall programs and festivities. For the Zoo in Forest Park in Springfield, Mass., prepping for their festival was a little easier this year, thanks to the volunteers from Springfield MEPS.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Mark Ashland, Springfield MEPS testing coordinator, and a team of nine MEPS personnel spent a few hours on Oct. 23 assisting the Zoo in Forest Park with much-needed help in preparation for their Spooky Safari event. Ashland said the time they spent cleaning up brush and clearing the area of leaves and sticks at the zoo paid big dividends for them as a unit.

“We got a lot accomplished,” said Ashland. “We cleaned out over half of the zoo that needed to be cleaned out. We were all very surprised how great of a job that we did and it felt really good to give back. You could see it on the faces of the zoo employees that they were very appreciative.”

Volunteerism and community outreach are things that U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Abaigeal Hillyard, Springfield MEPS commander, along with U.S.

Army 1st. Sgt. Benjamin Ringman, Springfield MEPS senior enlisted advisor, and Ashland have been striving to do for a while. Because of COVID constraints and scheduling conflicts, finding the right time and place to volunteer has been a challenge for Springfield MEPS. Ashland said he

explored many options until his SEA threw out an idea.

“The 1st Sgt. suggested trying the zoo and I had never considered it before he mentioned it,” he said. “Gabry Tyson at the zoo was super flexible with us doing volunteer work when it worked with our schedule especially because we didn’t know with COVID if there would be restriction.”

When reflecting on the volunteer experience as a whole, Ashland encourages others to take the leap and find an organization in their community that needs help.

“The hardest part of volunteering is going the first time,” he said. “But then you see new people and you interact. You make friends and connections. Then it means so much to the people that you’re helping and to yourself at the end of the day. I think volunteering is totally worth it.”

The Zoo at Forest Park is a non-profit organization nestled in a 735-acre retreat. Home to nearly 200 animals, the Zoo at Forest Park is also famously known to be the inspiration for many children’s books by Theodore Geisel, the man commonly known as Dr. Seuss. ■



Sioux Falls MEPS Soccer League

By Susan VanBoening

In Sioux Falls, S.D., the youth have one thing in common: they love soccer. When Army 1st. Sgt. Daniel Rivera, Sioux Falls MEPS senior enlisted advisor, was asked to volunteer at a grassroots soccer league for his community's youth, the answer was easy.

This past summer, a community organizer approached Rivera about activities they could host for youth in Sioux Falls. The organizer was specifically looking for Spanish-speaking volunteers for kids in high-need and low-income areas. For Rivera, a Dallas native, the volunteer opportunity was a perfect fit.

"I am one of very few Hispanics around here," said Rivera. "The organizer approached me to see if I speak Spanish. He said this year they are going to start a local soccer league for kids. Since I speak Spanish, and being active duty military, they could use help."

The league kicked off Sept. 17 and ran from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. every Saturday for seven weeks. U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Daniel Rivera, Sioux Falls MEPS senior enlisted advisor, U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Peggy Dodds, Sioux Falls MEPS medical NCOIC, and U.S. Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Caleb Smith, Sioux Falls MEPS corpsman, also committed to volunteering. Every week, volunteers assisted in coaching and interacting with 70-80 participants aged 5-11 years old.

1st Premier Bank of Sioux Falls agreed to cover the cost of shin guards, soccer balls, water bottles and jerseys for the participants. However, shortly after the first league clinic day, needs beyond soccer gear became apparent.

"It became clear what the need was right from the beginning...they needed to be fed," Rivera said. "On average we had about 60 faithful kids that showed up each week. When they arrived we gave them breakfast bars and water... and we did that out of our personal pockets. We took turns who picked up the tab for the food for Saturday."

After the balls were put away and the kids were exhausted at the end of every league clinic day, Rivera and the other volunteers gathered for something more



▲ Volunteers and kids aged 5-11 years participate in a grassroots soccer league in Sioux Falls, S.D. (Courtesy photo)

than just sports. For Rivera, this was the most moving part of the day's events.

"We would bring everyone in the middle of the field and someone would give words of encouragement and guidance how to live life," he said.

After the motivational talk, the volunteers provide lunch to the kids to ensure no one is left hungry.

"We would feed them lunch because we knew they had to be hungry they may not have anything to eat at home," he said of the clinic as it grew in popularity. "All of a sudden, we had an enormous line around 10:30 as parents



▲MEPS personnel serve chicken and dumplings to 214 attendees. (Courtesy photo)

and more people would show up to be able to eat."

As the weather turned cooler and the number of soccer league Saturdays dwindled, volunteers knew turnout would be the biggest on the final weekend. Rivera, his wife Heather, Dodds and Smith anticipated a crowd of 100-150 people on Oct. 30. Other organizers expected the number to balloon to over 200. Rivera knew feeding a couple hundred people would be a gargantuan task. He turned to Dodds and Smith and said they should contribute to the event only if they felt inclined. In turn, he was humbled by the contributions of his fellow MEPS personnel.

"I think they (Dodds and Smith) saw the need within the community and they knew that the kids showed up every weekend for a reason," he said. "So we pooled our

money together. I gave the money to my wife...it ended up being \$300 to buy groceries for Saturday morning."

He struck gold earlier in the week when he asked MEPS personnel for crockpots or roasters that could be loaned out.

"An HRA, Mrs. Debbie Holuska, came up to me and said 'don't ask for more, I have more than enough,'" he said. "She had like six or seven roasters and I took every last one of them."

On the final day of the soccer league, Heather Rivera was up at 3 a.m., prepping and cooking food for the event. By late morning, her cooking was done. The roasters were transported in a caravan to the soccer fields. Dodds and Smith had gone and bought extra bananas, cookies, Halloween candy and water bottles. The volunteers worked the serving line to feed hungry participants and, in total, fed 214 mouths a home-cooked meal of chicken and dumplings.

Rivera said what he saw that day was more remarkable than just teaching soccer skills and providing activities for kids.

"There were people who came out that had been neighbors for 10, 15, 20 years and they didn't even know each other," he said. "All of a sudden, they were having conversations about how to make their community better and safer for their kids. This whole event was not a handout but to teach and show that ordinary people can do extraordinary things from within."

Rivera plans to PCS next summer and says he will continue volunteering in his community at his next duty station. In the meantime, he's incredibly proud and thankful for Dodds, Smith, his wife Heather and the MEPS personnel that contributed to the event's success. What started off just being about soccer ended up being about much more.

"I hope that as we approach the holiday season, we are reminded that we have much to be thankful for." ■



▲Volunteers, participants and their parents line up for a hot lunch the last day of the soccer league. (Courtesy photo)

USMEPCOM awarded JOINT MERITORIOUS SERVICE UNIT AWARD

By Derrick Noack



▲ Command Sgt. Maj. Lorenzo Woodson, USMEPCOM senior enlisted advisor, and Col. Megan Stallings, USMEPCOM commander, pin the JMUA pennant to the command flag while Stephanie Miller, director of military accession policy, virtually reads the award citation. (Photo by Derrick Noack)

The United States Military Entrance Processing Command (USMEPCOM) received its fourth Joint Meritorious Unit Award (JMUA) for exceptionally meritorious service during the period of March 2020 to Feb. 2021.

The United States Military Entrance Processing Command (USMEPCOM) received its fourth Joint Meritorious Unit Award (JMUA) for exceptionally meritorious service during the period of March 2020 to Feb. 2021.

Stephanie Miller, director of military accession policy, virtually presented the award Dec. 14 on behalf of Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin. Miller and lauded

the command for pioneering effective COVID-19 protocols.

“In many ways USMEPCOM was setting the standard for COVID protocols across the greater Department of Defense,” said Stephanie Miller. “We were one of the earliest commands to develop phased, or tiered, protocols. So many of those protocols were later mirrored throughout the rest of the force.”

The command, through its Headquarters, 2 Sector Commands, 12 Battalion Commands, 65 Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS) and 2 Remote Processing Stations provided the Armed Forces with qualified applicants through


uninterrupted operations during the coronavirus pandemic, enabling the recruiting commands to meet annual recruiting goals and the Services to meet end-strength goals.

“This award is the direct result of the hard work and dedication of the entire USMEPCOM team, military and civilian alike, at the headquarters and our stations across the country,” said Col. Megan Stallings, Commander, USMEPCOM. “That this command has been awarded this honor for the fourth time is a testament to the continued excellence with which we accomplish our mission, even during an unprecedented pandemic.”

USMEPCOM enlisted 208,000 applicants into the Armed Forces from March 2020 to Feb. 2021 despite the most trying of circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic. USMEPCOM also continued to develop its new applicant processing system during this time, replacing the greater than 25-year-old Legacy MIRS.


The JMUA is only presented to joint activities or units for superior qualifying achievements during action in combat, operations in a declared national emergency or under extraordinary circumstances that involve national interests. USMEPCOM’s previous JMUA’s awarded for outstanding service were for the periods of April 2016 to May 2019, January 2005 to December 2007 and July 1982 to April 1985. ■

USMEPCOM AWARDS



FY21 2ND QUARTER WINNERS

CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3
PHOENIX COLUMBUS RALEIGH	LANSING NEW ORLEANS MILWAUKEE	BUTTE DES MOINES PORTLAND, ME



FY21 3RD QUARTER WINNERS


CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3
JACKSONVILLE PHOENIX FORT LEE	KNOXVILLE SEATTLE INDIANAPOLIS	BOISE DES MOINES BUTTE



FY21 2ND QUARTER

CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3
NONE	BOSTON NASHVILLE NEW ORLEANS MINNEAPOLIS SALT LAKE CITY PORTLAND, OR	AMARILLO BOISE OMAHA SPOKANE SYRACUSE HONOLULU ANCHORAGE

These MEPS are authorized to display the unit pennant for the quarter. MEPS who achieve a 90 percent score or higher, but do not achieve top three status in their category, qualify to display the pennant.



FY21 3RD QUARTER

CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3
NONE	LOUISVILLE	ALBUQUERQUE

These MEPS are authorized to display the unit pennant for the quarter. MEPS who achieve a 90 percent score or higher, but do not achieve top three status in their category, qualify to display the pennant.



▲ The ASVAB examinees from Yokota High School take the test at Yokota Air Base, Japan. (U.S. Air Force photo by Yasuo Osakabe)

LARGEST ASVAB EVENT IN THE PACIFIC

Collaboration leads to more than 100 students taking test

By Marshall Smith

Personnel from Yokota High School, the 374th Force Support Squadron, Honolulu MEPS and USMEPCOM worked together to administer the ASVAB Career Exploration Program (CEP) test for 116 students Nov. 3, the largest single administration of the ASVAB CEP in the Pacific.

The ASVAB CEP is a comprehensive career planning tool that includes an aptitude test and post-test interpretation; it enables career exploration and post-secondary planning for high school students.

While USMEPCOM administers the ASVAB CEP in the United States, the Services are responsible for DoDEA high school testing overseas. USMEPCOM oversees the testing program and is responsible for regulatory guidance. The New York and Honolulu MEPS are responsible for scoring, identifying discrepancies and supporting the Services with student test material. In FY2021, 613 student ASVAB tests were administered overseas,

343 in Europe through the New York MEPS and 270 in the Pacific through Honolulu MEPS.

“We love seeing so many students overseas participate in the program as it is a great, if not underutilized, opportunity,” said Stephen Richardt, USMEPCOM overseas testing program manager. “This event was really a team effort that spanned almost the entire globe, from Japan to Honolulu, Washington D.C. and USMEPCOM headquarters in North Chicago.”

Colleen McDougall, information specialist at Yokota High School, wanted to offer a large scale test opportunity to provide opportunities for more students and got the ball rolling to make it happen.

“The ASVAB Career Exploration Program has been a great tool for our students, providing them the opportunity to find careers paths that align with their skills and interests, and the post-secondary training or education that they may need,” said McDougall. “We were thrilled that more than 60% of our 10th-12th graders decided to take

the test to help them as they plan for their futures.”

McDougall publicized the event, collected student registrations, coordinated proctors for the exam and ensured proper COVID safety protocols were followed, to include mask wearing and proper social distancing.

Erika Rodriguez, Honolulu MEPS testing coordinator, went above and beyond to support the testing event by mailing 116 additional test materials to supplement the supply already on hand, while William Colley, education and training chief for the 374th Force Support Squadron, ensured adequate space and security to store the increased supply of test materials.

“Overall, taking this test was pretty painless. It’s a great opportunity to have this aptitude test, even though I don’t plan on joining the military,” said senior Isaac Campbell. “It’s a great asset for getting into positions in the future. I would recommend to other students that they take the test.” ■

MARKETING AMID UNCERTAINTY

Enhanced email campaign proves successful for
Education Support Specialists during COVID



By Craig H. Gilman, M. Ed.
Baltimore MEPS
student testing program manager



In March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Student Testing Program (STP) was suspended. Amid a transition to remote learning, schools had closed their doors to non-essential personnel. It was clear there would be little opportunity for ASVAB testing in the foreseeable future. STP Program Manager Dr. April Wise, Eastern Sector ESS, stated in an email to Eastern Sector ESSs, "Never has, 'this is unprecedented times' been more applicable to an audience than to describe the 2020-21 school year." For ESSs, creativity to develop ideas to maintain relationships and relevance within our AOR was suddenly in high demand.

Schools' emphasis was solely on academic instruction. Programs, such as music, athletics and extracurricular activities, were postponed or outright canceled. There was no room for voluntary activities, such as ASVAB testing. Outsider visitors, such as the ESSs, test administrators and proctors who execute the program, were restricted from entering buildings due to COVID safety protocols. So how does one "become creative" and "remain relative" with client schools with little to no opportunity to visit and work with schools? At Baltimore MEPS, value-added emails became part of the solution.

Many schools' STP points of contact (POC) work behind closed doors or remotely away from their offices and phones. While email introductions and reminders are always a staple of any

outreach effort, an aggressive email campaign was implemented for these unprecedented times. The approach was to send "value-added" monthly emails to all school POCs to strengthen the relationship marketing approach used at Baltimore MEPS.

The intent was not simply to send email reminders to schedule the ASVAB when schools became able but to integrate empathetic statements of support and CEP-related educational content that would appeal to a broader audience. School counselors were starved for content to provide for their students and parents who suddenly found themselves attempting to support educating their children under pandemic restrictions. They were encouraged to share the information widely throughout their communities.

This value-added approach produced results. Counselors were grateful for the content they could share with their students and colleagues. Emails were forwarded within each school's community and eventually found their way into the inboxes of colleagues, parents, district and state key influencers.

The District of Columbia Public School District office began inquiring about the program, as did Virginia's Fairfax County School District, the largest in the Baltimore MEPS market and fifth largest in the nation.

However, the most significant dividend came from the state of Maryland. After several consultations with the Baltimore MEPS ESS, the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) Division of Career and College

Readiness announced the addition of the Career Research & Development (CRD) and Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) as new Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs of study. Each will incorporate the ASVAB into their programs.

A year and a half after the start of the pandemic, schools are beginning to open their doors to the Student Testing Program. Baltimore MEPS ESS's marketing tactics by heightening email communications were successful by expanding the ASVAB Career Exploration Program in their local market. Establishing and maintaining a value-added email campaign was a great asset in Baltimore and could be replicated elsewhere. ■

"The intent was not simply to send email reminders to schedule the ASVAB when schools became able but to integrate empathetic statements of support and CEP-related educational content that would appeal to a broader audience."

-Craig H. Gilman

USMEPCOM ushered in a new era for applicant processing and took a major step toward paperless processing when USMIRS 1.1 debuted on Feb. 11, 2021.

However, a launch is only ever just the beginning, especially with new IT systems. The journey since launch has been one of continual work to maintain,

update and improve the cloud-based system.

During an October interview, Matt Lince, current J-6 director and former Rapid Delivery

Team (RDT) director, discussed the system's launch, the successes and setbacks thereafter and the outlook for future improvements.

By Susan VanBoening

USMIRS 1.1

WHAT'S GOING ON?

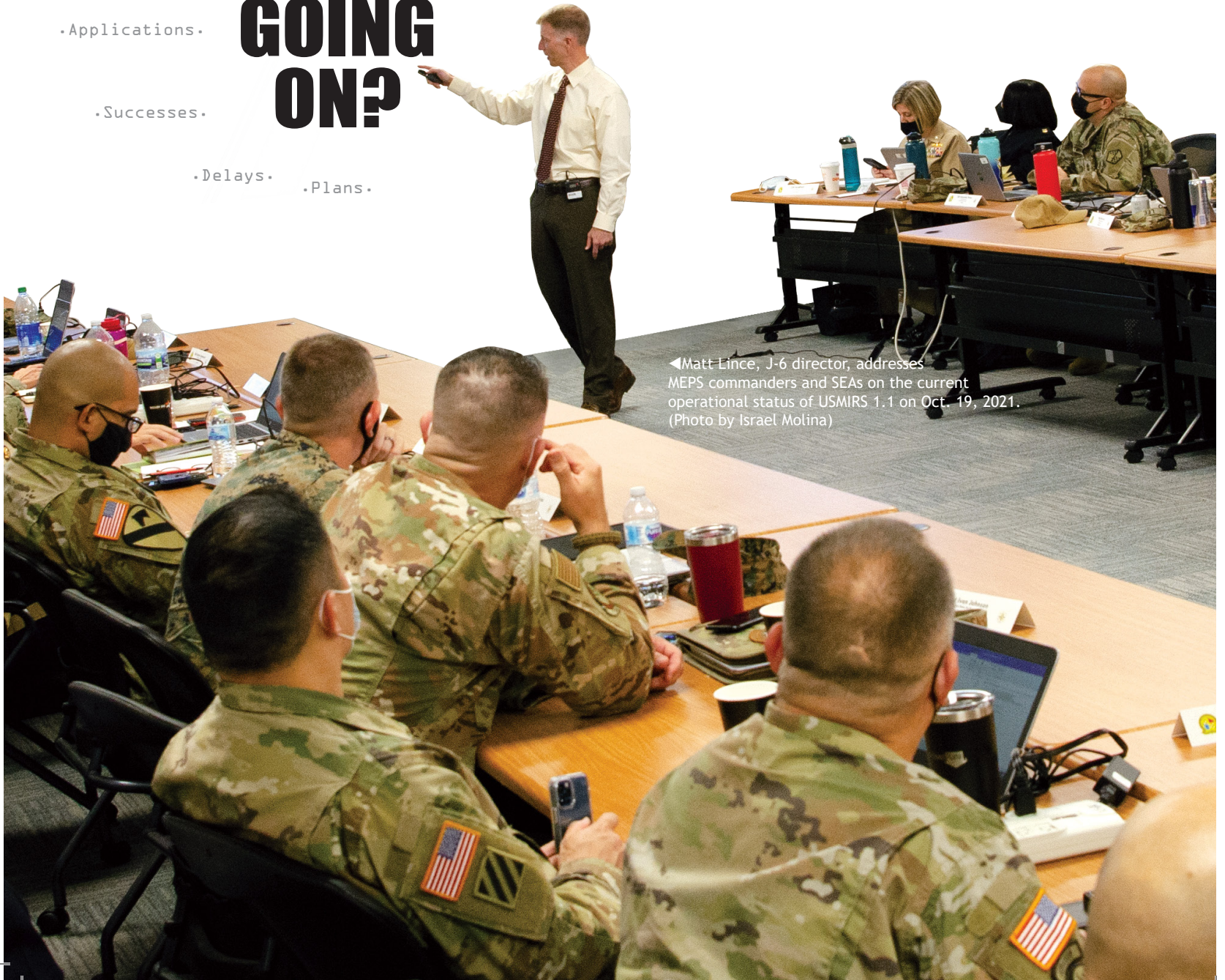
• Updates • • Setbacks •

• Workarounds •

• Applications •

• Successes •

• Delays • • Plans •



◀ Matt Lince, J-6 director, addresses MEPS commanders and SEAs on the current operational status of USMIRS 1.1 on Oct. 19, 2021. (Photo by Israel Molina)

MVP Launch

From the outset, USMIRS 1.1 was planned to launch as a Minimal Viable Product or MVP, meaning that it would include enough functionality to process applicants and everything else would come later. The RDT knew deploying USMIRS 1.1 meant that not everything would be finished before launch.

"The first month after the launch was tough," said Lince. "Even though it worked, there were many things that didn't quite work like they were supposed to ... there were some flaws and imperfections and some little bugs that we hadn't caught."

Early successes included system reliability and the data flow. However there were also challenges. The fingerprinting element of USMIRS 1.1 was developed last minute and the data exchanges with the recruiting services system due to size and complexity.

Sustaining a new product

Having achieved its mission to develop and launch USMIRS 1.1, the RDT dissolved in May and its personnel transitioned back to their home directorates. The USMIRS 1.1 project transitioned to the care of a combination of J-6 and J-3/5/7.

J-6 is the operational and technical part of USMIRS 1.1 and they "own" USMIRS 1.1, while J-3/5/7 is the functional component responsible for the business processes built into the system. Lince believes this organizational flow will pay big dividends for headquarters and future users.

"Now that 1.1 is here, we're all supporting it," he said. "The two teams are really connected at the hip, so you have both side of the house (the technical and the functional) that are working together and working closely to make sure what's happening is done in collaboration for what's right for the user."

Upgrades and updates

Since launch, headquarters has been collecting pain points from the field and working on solutions. To date, the USMIRS 1.1 team has put out numerous workarounds to known issues, but some bigger issues remain unresolved, such as applicant filtering in the system while using a name or social security number and scheduling appointments in different time zones

Lince recognizes how the delays in development of new features and necessary improvements have impacted the end users at the MEPS and apologized for falling short.

"I feel like we've let them (the users) down a little bit," he said. "We weren't able to update the features fast enough and I am sorry. We are working really hard to get better. The way the users embraced the system and they've been helpful ... they deserve a system better to reflect just how much work they've done."

USMEPCOM is working hard to upgrade applications in USMIRS 1.1 for the 2022 summer surge. The next application to debut is biometrics for fingerprint mapping and e-security. The benefits of biometric

fingerprinting and e-security allow for breaks in processing and better tracking of information.

Other priorities include updating USMIRS 1.1 to display special service test results and saying goodbye to packets. Some special service tests results require tedious manual workarounds for MEPS personnel.

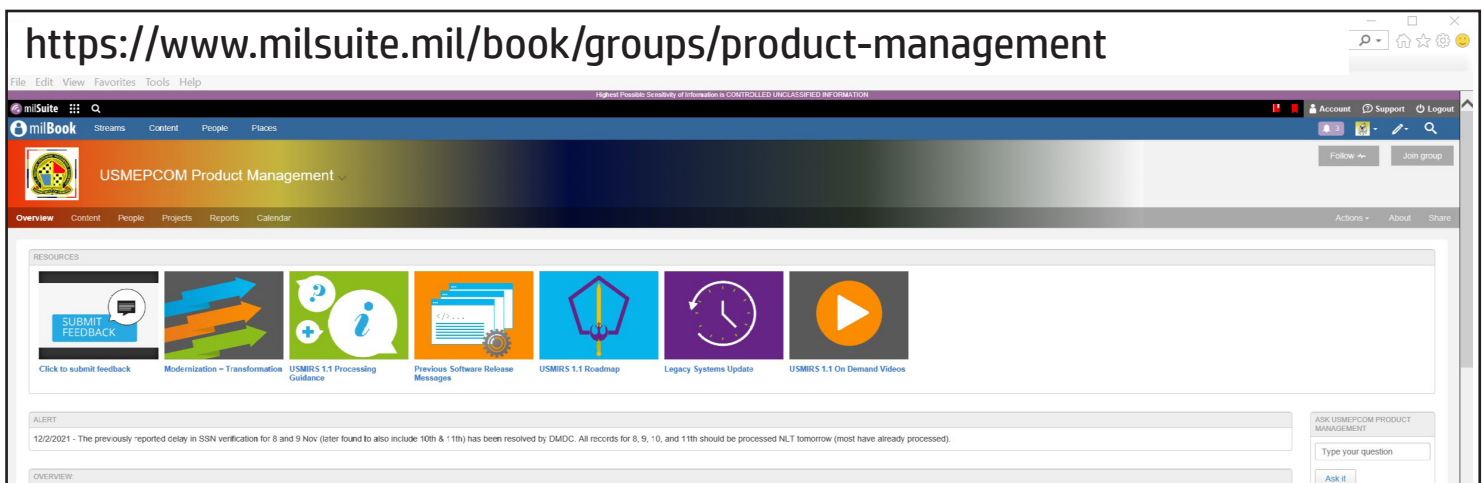
Lince knows the value of feedback on how the USMIRS 1.1 system is operating. He prioritizes strengthening communication with the MEPS about system changes and updates.

"One thing we've been doing is improving the information flowing to our users about what's happening with our system, what's being changed and what's on the road map to come in the future," he said.

The USMIRS 1.1 team has developed a MilSuite site, as a hub for information and collaboration to improve communication and transparency. The site is accessible to anyone with a CAC card. Additionally, end users will soon see an update to the system that displays notes and new information directly in the software when they log in.

Lince knows how important it is to ramp up improvements to USMIRS 1.1. The J-6 director has a clear message for what the MEPS can expect to see in the future.

"By next year the users are going to see many differences, USMIRS 1.1 updates are coming back," he said. "We will be at a much higher velocity." ■



▲ A Milsuite site assists users of USMIRS 1.1 The site is used as an hub for information and collaborations to improve communication and transparency.

MESSENGER

MAGAZINE REBRANDS

NEW YEAR

NEW LOOK

SAME MISSION

By Susan VanBoening

Since 1978, Messenger magazine has been the official publication of the United States Military Entrance Processing Command.

In its 44th volume, the magazine has always served USMEPCOM's geographically dispersed personnel, and its commitment to sharing relevant news, information and stories with 65 MEPS, two RPS, stakeholders and recruiting partners has remained constant through decades of change.

The Messenger looked like a standard church bulletin or organizational newsletters in the magazine's infancy. Its appearance and style stayed consistent until the late 1980s when its layout and design shifted to resemble popular tabloid trends of the time.

At USMEPCOM, no one has more background knowledge of the public affairs office and Messenger magazine than Christine (Chris) Parker, public affairs specialist. Parker began working at USMEPCOM as Messenger magazine editor in October 1990 and transitioned to public affairs specialist in March 2012. With her keen eye, vivid memory and 22 years on the Messenger staff, Parker is the USMEPCOM public affairs living history book.

In the early 1990s, military personnel relied on print materials for their information needs. News sources were limited. Email and the internet were not at your fingertips. Broad information distribution was very effective.

"Back in those days, people didn't have as many news sources as we have today," said Parker. "Also, I think the pace of society was slower and there was more time to read printed materials. People turned to military instillation publications for local news and entertainment. Similarly, the Messenger provided everything from MEPS "hometown news" to broader, Headquarters- level topics."

A lot changed in the last three decades. However, the publication audience stayed the same and Messenger

magazine still prints 3,000 copies quarterly. Parker remembers the scope of content she shared as the editor in her early years.

"The publication specialized in sharing a lot of information in many subjects to support the military community," she said. "People were more accustomed to picking up a publication and flipping

through to gain actual knowledge they needed."

Parker also pushed for artistic growth in her early days. At the time, the United States had just entered the first Gulf War. Supporting MEPS personnel and the

mission was her priority. She knew the perfect angle for one of her first

covers as Messenger editor.

"We got this beautiful photo from the first Gulf War and the magazine was titled 'Saudi Arabia through the eyes of a MEPS soldier,'" she said. "The photo was of a captain from Buffalo MEPS. We made a leap on this one issue. I convinced my boss to use this photo and print it in of color... that was a big deal back then."

For Amy Gregorski, USMEPCOM public affairs visual information specialist, trying new things and adapting to evolving environments has been a significant component of her job at USMEPCOM. Gregorski has been creating the cover for Messenger magazine since 2006. Throughout the years, she's been able to artistically showcase command priorities in her magazine cover products.

"Our culture here has always been change and that's the nature of our business," said Gregorski. "I've always worked to show that there's a consistency of change and where leadership is taking us."

Parker said connecting with MEPS personnel and establishing open lines of communication was critical



Chris Parker
PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

to providing information with the field through public affairs story submissions for the magazine were almost exclusively written and submitted by the MEPS.

In the four decades since the magazine's creation, many things have changed but one priority has stayed the same; supporting and showcasing the hard work of those who maintain Freedom's Front Door. This ethos extends to the entire public affairs office. In 2021, Parker began work to reinvigorate the Public Affairs Representatives Program. Per USMEPCOM Regulation 360-1, Sector, Battalion, and MEPS commanders are required to name primary and alternate PA Reps. To date, the PA Rep program has had overwhelming support and interest from the field, with 100% of MEPS having a PA Rep designated for the program.

Parker knows it takes collaboration and elbow grease to make this program successful. PA Reps will invest some initial time in learning the ropes of the program, but the dividends will pay out to the MEPS. PA Reps will assist with bios or change of command ceremonies. They will be skilled in making work order requests and know protocols for American flag half staffing. They can assist or take the lead with Significant Activity Reports, VIP visit notifications, and media requests. PA Reps will also know how to showcase their programs, initiatives, events and personnel.

"Possibly the most important part of the PA Reps' role is acting as the "eyes and ears" of the MEPS to ensure the Public Affairs Office is aware of the stories about individuals, teams and stations," she said.

Messenger magazine staff looks forward to the reinvigorating of the PA Rep program. For more information about the Public Affairs Rep Program, please contact Chris Parker at christine.a.parker.civ@mail.mil.



Derrik Noack
MESSENGER ASSOCIATE EDITOR



Susan VanBoening
MESSENGER EDITOR

Greeting from USMEPCOM,

My name is Susan VanBoening, editor of Messenger magazine. If you've gotten this far, Derrik and I want thank you for reading our publication. We have exciting changes within the public affairs office and on the Messenger staff. Our team is working diligently on projects and ventures to better serve the field.

First off, I hope you noticed the updated look of Messenger magazine. For four decades, this magazine has been the official publication of USMEPCOM. In our culture, we know to grow, we must change. The new look of the magazine is reflective of a new era and new changes. What hasn't changed is our mission to tell the USMEPCOM story and document the incredible accomplishments of the people within our community.

As we enter this next chapter, one of our main focuses is on you. This magazine cannot serve its purpose if it only tells the Headquarters story. We need you, the reader - service member or civilian, commander or employee - to be a partner in showcasing the hard work you do at your MEPS and in your communities. So what does this mean? Send us your story leads or submit an article of your own on programs, initiatives, events, or people that should be spotlighted or recognized. Reach out to us about your Messenger magazine story idea. We will entertain any story idea. Well...almost any idea.

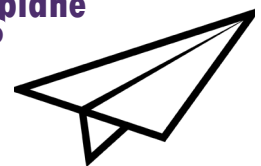
Lastly, if you're in North Chicago, stop in and see us in the public affairs office. We welcome friendly faces and we'll even welcome unfriendly faces too! Share your experiences or thoughts on how we're doing and how we can better serve you.

Happy New Year to you. We look forward to partnering with you in this new era.

Best regards,

Susan & Derrik

**Have you seen this airplane
in the magazine?**



**This airplane signifies stories submitted
from the field by contributing writers.**

Send us your stories, or story ideas, today!

osd.north-chicago.usmepcom.mbx.messenger-magazine@mail.mil

FACT SHEET

HAIMS

HEALTH ARTIFACT AND IMAGE MANAGEMENT SOLUTION



The Health Artifact and Image Management Solution (HAIMS) provides the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs health care providers global visibility and access to artifacts and images generated during the health care delivery process.

HAIMS provides an enterprise-wide data sharing and content management capabilities for all types of artifacts and images (A&I), including radiographs, clinical photographs, electrocardiographs, waveforms, audio files, video files and scanned documents. The system interfaces with local repositories across the enterprise and provides a centralized healthcare data source for sharing globally to DoD and VA entities. HAIMS also exposes and transmits an electronic version of the Service Treatment Record (STR) to the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). For more information, visit us at: www.health.mil/datasharing.

Service Treatment Record (STR)

HAIMS stores a complete, digitized, and electronically formatted STR upon service member separation. HAIMS combines all components (paper and electronic) of the STR into one accessible system and makes them available to the VBA upon request, significantly improving the benefits determination process.



Key Features

- ▶ Repository of all types of health artifacts and images (A&I) and associated metadata for global data sharing and content management
- ▶ Accessible within AHLTA or as a standalone web access product
- ▶ Access to radiographic images and study reports in DoD Radiological Digital Imaging Communications in Medicine (DICOM) Picture Archiving and Communication System (PACS)
- ▶ Allows bulk scanning of documents
- ▶ Web services for external systems to access and publish A&I
- ▶ Connection to DEERS for authoritative patient set and demographics (Coming end of FY18)

Key Benefits

- ▶ Access point for DoD providers to view VA A&I
- ▶ Shares Separation Health Assessment (SHA) results and STRs for the Interagency Disability Evaluation System (IDES) process for benefits adjudication
- ▶ Central access point for clinical and admin personnel to access and exchange data with external repositories
- ▶ In-context access to health data for providers and health officials to inform provision of proper care
- ▶ Continuity of data availability and A&I archival tool during MHS Genesis transition

SDD is a component of the DHA DAD IO (J-6). Learn more at www.health.mil/SDD. To subscribe for SDD product news, please visit <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USMHS DHSS/subscriber/new>.



October 23, 2020

The Road to MROAD

By Derrick Noack

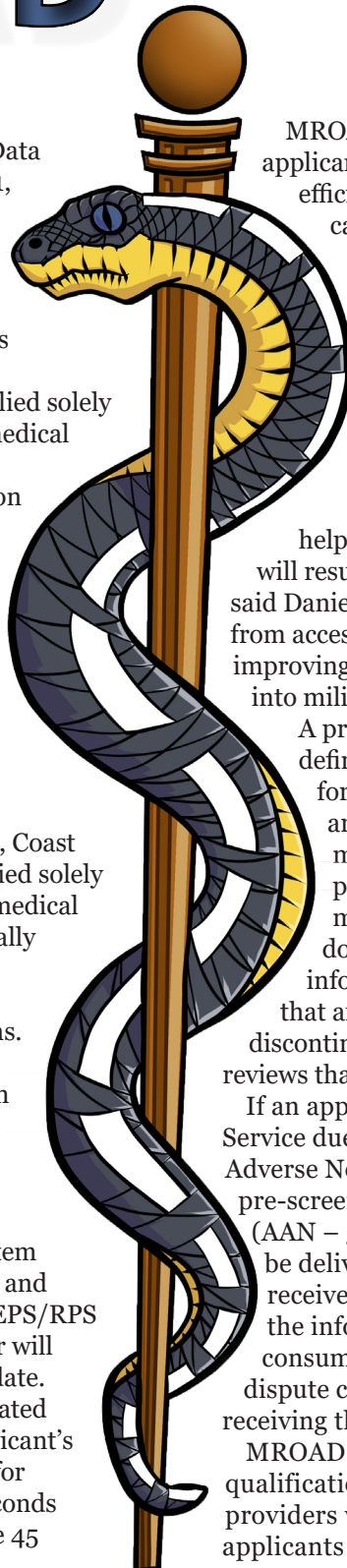
The Medical Review of Authoritative Data (MROAD) Program, launched Dec. 1, 2021, validates an applicant's self-disclosed medical history. Pulling a Prescription Medication Report (PMR) takes less than a minute to complete but greatly adds to the medical readiness of applicants entering military service.

Previously, recruiters and MEPS staff relied solely on an applicant's self-disclosure of their medical history. Now, with an applicant's written authorization, their prescription medication history can be verified through access to medical data systems.

"MROAD provides authoritative prescription data that can be used to compare against applicant submitted medical documentation," said Ryan Danielsen, management analyst, J-3/5/7. "For decades now, the accessions community and by extension the military services who ultimately receive basically trained Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and Space Guardians have relied solely on applicant self-disclosure to document medical histories and assess applicants for potentially disqualifying conditions."

Applicants must first have a PMR generated before any medical examinations. Prescription reports are pulled digitally from two systems. Prescription Medication Reporting System (PMRS) is a third party vendor system designed primarily for civilian applicants and Joint Longitudinal Viewer (JLV) is a Defense Health Agency (DHA)/Veterans Administration (VA) system used primarily for prior service applicants and dependents. Those processing through MEPS/RPS for appointment as a commissioned officer will not undergo MROAD review until a later date.

"The information is automatically generated through each system by inputting the applicant's information," said Danielsen. "Pull times for PMRS reports will average less than 15 seconds and pull times for JLV reports will average 45 seconds to one minute."



MROAD is another step toward modernizing applicant processing. The systems used are time efficient and effective in ensuring military service candidates are ready to serve. Every MEPS/RPS will assign a MROAD point of contact (POC), typically a senior leader. In addition to the POC, a minimum of two personnel at every MEPS/RPS will obtain access to the PMRS and JLV systems. Training for those assigned was conducted during the first two weeks of November 2021 and is also available on Joint Knowledge Online (JKO).

"Pulling prescription histories for applicants helps ensure that our processing efforts at MEPS will result in qualified candidates for military service," said Danielsen. "The program will have lasting effects from accession through to retirement and beyond by improving the medical readiness of applicants entering into military service."

A prescription report with zero medications is defined as "negative" and authorizes an applicant for further processing. If prescription medications are listed, the report will be submitted to a medical provider for review. The medical provider will annotate an "R" (reconciled) for medications that are adequately explained and documented on the submitted forms. Additional information will be requested for medications that are not reconciled. An applicant's processing is discontinued at that point until a provider receives and reviews that information.

If an applicant is determined medically disqualified for Service due to findings from a PMRS report, a Pre-Adverse Notification (PAN – generated during the pre-screen process), and an Adverse Action Notification (AAN – generated after the pre-screen process) must be delivered in person or by mail. If an applicant receives a PAN or an AAN, they can dispute the information in the report by contacting the consumer-reporting agency at (877) 211-4816. The dispute can be done at no cost if done within 60 days of receiving the AAN.

MROAD does not change who determines qualification status for applicants. MEPS medical providers will still be responsible for profiling applicants based on medical readiness. ■

Oath of Enlistment



▲ El Paso MEPS participated in the University of Texas- El Paso (UTEP) Military Night Halftime Show along with the 1st Armored Division of Fort Bliss, Texas, Nov. 6, 2021. During the event, the oath of enlistment ceremony, led by 1st Armored Division, Fort Bliss Commanding General U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Sean Bernabe, was conducted for the 112 delayed entry program (DEP) members from the Army, U.S. Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force. El Paso MEPS command team, U.S. Army Maj. Nikela Kelley, El Paso MEPS commander, and U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Janette Duarte, El Paso MEPS senior enlisted advisor, played a major role in coordinating the event. (Courtesy Photo El Paso MEPS)

By U.S. Army Maj. Nikela Kelley
El Paso MEPS commander

This fall, mass oath of enlistment ceremonies took place across the country. Since Congress approved the oath in September 1789, individuals entering military service have taken the oath to swear allegiance and protect, support and defend the Constitution of the United States.

The ceremony is also significant for MEPS personnel. El Paso MEPS was grateful for the opportunity for families to watch their loved ones take the oath of enlistment live, since the commencement of COVID-19.

"We are happy to be able to showcase the best part of their day at the MEPS," said U.S. Army Maj. Nikela Kelley, El Paso MEPS commander. ■



▲ U.S. Marines, with Recruiting Station Phoenix, and poolees from across the state of Arizona attend a Phoenix Suns game on Nov. 11, 2021 at the Footprint Center, Phoenix, Arizona. The poolees recited their oath of enlistment before the game. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Brennan J. Beauton)



▲ Amarillo MEPS, 9th Battalion, United States Military Entrance Processing Command commander, U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Luke Freeman applauds in honor of applicants of the Army, Navy, and Air Force after administering the oath of enlistment during a ceremonial swearing-in ceremony at the Amarillo Wranglers Military and Veteran Appreciation Night event on Nov. 6, 2021. (Courtesy Photo)

COMING
SOON



TRAINING

HAPPENING NOW

The Medical Modernization Team (MMT) is working diligently with the MEPS to prepare for the next phase of medical modernization.

MHS GENESIS is launching soon...have you done your training?



**DEC 2021-
JAN 2022**

Computer Based Training (CBT)

- On JKO
- Hours vary by role
- Must be completed before JITT



**JAN- MAR
2022**

Just in Time Training (JITT)

- Live and virtual
- 3-4 hour courses
- TDY to set locations



**JAN- MAR
2022**

Assessment

- On JKO
- 3 attempts to get 80%
- Time allotted during JITT
- Passing will grant MHS GENESIS access

For more information on MHS GENESIS training contact :
Sara Crow sara.a.crow.civ@mail.mil



▲Aviation Mentor U.S. Air Force Maj. Lauren Olme, assigned to the 77th Weapons Squadron, Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, conducts the oath of enlistment to members of the delayed entry program (DEP) at the 2021 Super Girl Pro surfing event, Oceanside, Calif., Sept. 19. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Erik Cardenas)



▲U.S. Marine Corps poolees with Recruiting Station Lansing conducted their oath of enlistment ceremony at half-time of the Western Michigan University football game on Nov. 9, 2021. (U.S Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Jesse K. Carter-Powell)

Rex the Safety Rhino's Winter Safety Tips

With the arrival of winter comes the increase of cold temps and hazardous driving conditions. Many preventable incidents occur due to the improper usage of heating, lighting and cooking equipment during holiday festivities. To help decrease the risk of personal, residential and vehicular damage, follow the below preventative measures to ensure a safe winter season.

Conserve energy and prevent ice dam formation by ensuring you properly:

Winterize the home interior

- Add insulation in walls and attics.
- Caulk doors and windows.
- Install weather stripping.
- Install double-pane windows or storm windows.
- Cover sliding doors and windows with plastic sheeting from inside.
- Inspect and flush water heater if needed.

Winterize the home exterior

- Clean out rain gutters from debris and repair roof leaks.
- Drain and clean sprinkler systems and outside pipes and hoses.
- Insulate water lines that run along exterior walls.
- Shut off valves to outside lines.
- Bury or insulate exposed water pipes to prevent them from freezing or bursting.

Prevent slips, trips, and falls

- Connect electric lights and decorations before snow or ice are present.
- Keep steps and stairwells located outside free of ice, snow, and water accumulation by shoveling or removing ice and snow.
- Use sand or other environmentally friendly materials outdoors when the removal of snow or ice is not possible.
- Use adhesive stripping material or antiskid paint.



Home fires occur more in the winter than any other season. To prevent fires ensure that you are aware of the proper usage of:

Electrical equipment

- Electrical issues are the leading cause of home fires, approximately 45,000 are reported each year.
- Use light bulbs that match the recommended wattage.
- Plug only one heat producing appliance directly into a wall outlet.
- Never use an extension cord with a heat-producing appliance.
- Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet from any heat source.

Heating equipment

- Heating equipment is the second leading cause of home fires and third leading cause of home fire deaths.
- Check your CO detector, fire alarm, and fire extinguisher monthly.
- Have a qualified professional clean and inspect your chimney and vents every year.
- Store cooled ashes in a tightly covered metal container and keep it outside at least 10 feet from your home and any nearby buildings.
- Use portable generators only outside and at least 20 feet from the home, away from windows and vents to allow proper ventilation. Portable generators were involved in the majority of carbon monoxide (CO) deaths with 74% occurring in homes.

Decorations

- More than 1/3 of home decoration fires are started by candles, approximately 7,400 are reported each year.
- Keep candles at least 12 inches away from anything that burns or use battery-operated flameless candles.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions for the number of light strands to connect.
- More than 1 in every 5 Christmas tree fires were caused by a heat source being too close to the tree. Keep trees at least 3 feet apart.
- Ensure pets and children are supervised and/or tree and decorations are out of reach.

Seventeen percent of all vehicle crashes occur during the winter. Exercise extreme caution and prevent vehicular accidents by properly conducting:

Preventative maintenance

- Have car regularly tuned and checked on a regular basis.
- Install winter or all-season tires.
- Ensure tires have adequate tread and air pressure. Replace any worn tires and fill low tires with air to the proper pressure recommended for your car (typically 30-35 psi).
- Ensure windshield-wiper fluid is replaced with a wintertime mix and check the antifreeze fluid level.
- Remove snow and ice from the windshield, side, and rear windows, mirrors, headlights and taillights.
- Prepare an emergency safety kit.

Defensive winter driving techniques

- When driving on snow or ice, use 10x more distance to come to a complete stop.
- Maintain extra distance between you and the vehicle in front of you, and slow down.
- Be aware that the bridge and overpass surfaces freeze first and thaw last.
- Do not lock wheels when braking to prevent sliding and loss of control of vehicle.
- If you start sliding, turn the steering wheel in the direction you want the front of the vehicle to go. Do not oversteer. Take your foot off the accelerator. Do not brake until you regain control of the vehicle.

FUTURE WARFIGHTERS ESSAY COMPETITION

Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) Employees are experts in processing applicants and following procedures, but it can be challenging to understand the experience from an applicant's point of view. Even for those who have gone through MEPS as previous recruits themselves, the memories fade as they embark on their military careers.

Obtaining applicant feedback is a key part of making sure we are continuously improving our efforts in enlisting qualified individuals, but it can be challenging. Not all leaders can disguise themselves as an applicant to get honest commentary (see Undercover Commander p. 4).

By **Derrick Noack**

FUTURE WARF

To gain some insight, leadership at Des Moines MEPS organized the Future Warfighter Essay Competition for applicants to turn their experience into impactful words. Future warfighters who have acceded/DEPed could enter by writing a 2-3 page essay on their recruiting and MEPS experience. Prizes for winners included a traditional holiday boxed meal, gift cards, a certificate of achievement and Inter-service Recruitment Committee Partners (IRC) Challenge Coins.

Winners of the Future Warfighters Essay Competition were announced at an award ceremony, Nov. 19. Winners included future airman Logan Bane from Aztec, N.M., future national guardsmen Jacob Oliver from Emmetsburg, Iowa, future soldier Jacob Schramm from Kewanee, Ill., future soldier Joseph Silvaggio from Kewanee, Ill., and future airman Dax Easton Stoster from Waterloo, Iowa.

Army 1st Sgt. Anthony Toolin, Des Moines MEPS senior enlisted advisor, conducted the competition. Toolin said the competition served as a multifaceted tool, benefiting not just his recruiting partners but the essay writers too.

“The competition was designed to instill the importance of competing, continual education and community involvement into the Future Warfighters,” said Toolin. “In nearly every essay, a warfighter made it a point to thank their recruiter and the MEPS for the world-class treatment and professionalism while they were in the process of a life changing event. The essays also provided us all with great information on how we can take that world-class treatment and professionalism to the next level.”



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2.

▲ 1. From L to R: Maj. Aaron Taylor (Des Moines MEPS commander), Logan Bane and 1st Sgt. Anthony Toolin (Des Moines MEPS senior enlisted advisor) pose for a photo at the Future Warfighters Essay Competition awards ceremony, Nov. 19, 2021. 2. From L to R: Maj. Taylor, Jacob Oliver, Sgt. 1st Class Steven Weede (National Guard senior guidance counselor) and 1st Sgt. Toolin pose for a photo. 3. From L to R: Maj. Taylor, Joseph Silvaggio, Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Anderson (guidance counselor), Jacob Schramm and 1st Sgt. Toolin pose for a photo. 4. From L to R: Maj. Taylor, Tech. Sgt. Christopher Doods (Air Force recruiter) and 1st Sgt. Toolin pose for a photo. Tech Sgt. Doods accepted the award on behalf of his recruit Dax Stoster. (Courtesy photos)

IGHTERS



3.

One example that came up in many of the essays was the desire to have family members witness the Oath of Enlistment. With COVID-19 precautions still in place, friends and family are not able to physically be present for the event. A solution they are now working towards is live streaming those ceremonies so loved ones can take part.

Applicants soon to ship were motivated to compete in the competition and recruiting partners were eager to use the contest as a learning tool. The extra time together brought on insightful conversations and tips on how to stay ahead during one's military career.

"1st Sgt. Toolin was able to explain to me the importance of continually competing during my career," said essay winner Joseph Silvaggio. "You get better at what you do, learn new experiences and separate yourself from your peers, proving to your seniors that you are continually working to improve yourself."

Toolin said the competition not only helped recruiters connect better with applicants, but strengthened relationships with everyone involved with the MEPS.



4.

"I encourage all our MEPS to start an essay program and am committed to assisting any MEPS who wants to put on a competition for their organization," said Toolin. "It has been a great way to interact on a more personal level with our Warfighters, IRC partners, recruiters and community partners."

The competition would not have been successful without contributions from various local organizations.

"The overwhelming support from our partners and their commitment supporting our service members was fantastic," said Toolin. "A special thank you to American Legion Post 281, Duval Bullies, Red Cross, USAA and the USO for providing the meals, gift cards, challenge coins, t-shirts and unwavering support to our service members." ■

BOSTON MEPS

LEVELS UP ANNUAL TRAINING

Leadership moves away from slides, steps up and utilizes Army R2 for resiliency training

By U.S. Army Maj. Bridgette M. Navejar
Boston MEPS executive officer



Team members of the Boston MEPS took a few extra steps to get to work Dec. 3. Rather than stopping at the 5th floor of the Barnes Federal Building, the team marched up four additional flights to the auditorium on the 9th floor. Waiting for MEPS personnel was a group of experts tasked with leading annual resiliency training in a new engaging and interactive format.

Bridgette Navejar, 2nd Battalion executive officer, and U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Ryan Hinton, 2nd Battalion senior enlisted advisor, immediately jumped into planning mode when USMEPCOM set the annual training date for early December. Boston MEPS leadership bypassed the standard PowerPoint presentation and opted to utilize resources from the Army's Ready and Resilient (R2) program.

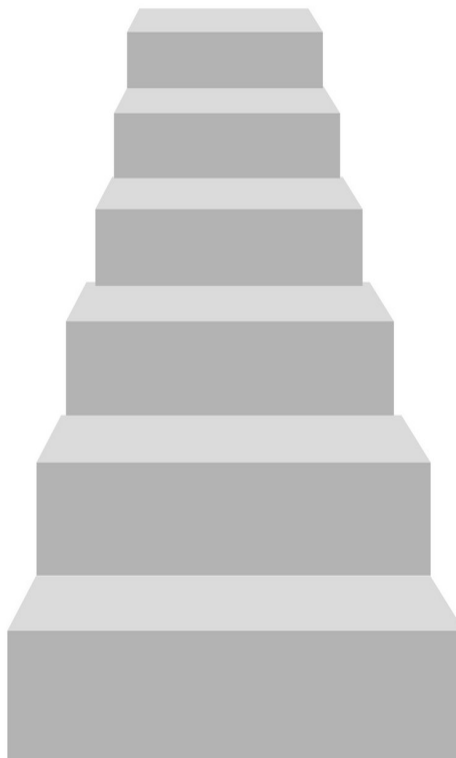
1st Sgt. Hinton had a phenomenal experience with the Fort Campbell R2 center during his previous assignment. Hinton was motivated to bring the unique skills that the R2 program offers to the Boston MEPS.

"It's important for soldiers and civilians to continuously hone

their ability to bounce back from life's challenges," said Hinton, a level one master resiliency trainer.

It's important for Soldiers and civilians to continuously hone their ability to bounce back from life's challenges.

- U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Ryan Hinton



"As leaders, it's our responsibility to provide resources to our team. R2 is a precious skill that can enhance the purpose and conviction of our team." The R2 program is an Army-led initiative managed by the Army Resilience Directorate (ARD), Army G-1. Its mission is to strengthen unit and individual readiness through tailored instructor-led coaching focused on enhancing an organizational culture of trust. The R2 program provides resources to Army team members, whether active duty, civilian, retired or dependents. The ARD supports 33 performance centers across the globe, with the majority located at major Forces Command (FORSCOM) installations. A team of performance experts staffs each performance center, boasting advanced degrees in sports and performance psychology, eager to educate the force on various subjects, including resiliency, mental preparation for performance and team building.

The Fort Drum Performance Center supported the Boston MEPS for the resiliency training and appointed Victoria Blakeslee, performance expert, to lead the Boston resiliency event. MEPS leadership collaborated on a training strategy with Blakeslee during the planning process by conducting bi-weekly telephone calls with Boston MEPS to identify training objectives and shape expectations. Blakeslee provided a comprehensive training plan which emphasized small group team-building exercises and a culminating activity to close out the training. The goal was simple: enhance organizational culture and increase motivation.

"The goal was to create a collaborative process that allowed all members of a team to contribute to a shared vision of who they want to be as a group," said Blakeslee.

On the day of training, Blakeslee kicked off the event with an icebreaker activity where team members were encouraged to find similarities with other team members. After the warm-up activity, the team moved into a large group discussion on the ATC Model. This model builds self-awareness and emotional control through

intentional thinking about activating events, immediate thoughts and consequences stemming from an initial reaction.

The team also discussed "icebergs," resulting from a conflict in values and beliefs. Similar to the Titanic, "icebergs" can sink a great team. Unlike the forfeited ship, these "icebergs" are not frozen but are core values and beliefs which an individual believes to be true and may be reflected in the heat of the moment thoughts. However, these "icebergs" may create a forum for discussion and improve teams when addressed adequately through effective communication.

Next, teams were divided into three small groups: medical, testing and command group, and processing sections. Each team discussed values and beliefs and participated in an exercise where group members discussed how they might activate icebergs within their team. From these exercises, the event's conclusion was a team presentation to the collective group on each team's ideas of the characteristics of a great team.

Lindsay Weber, mission support specialist, admitted that her feelings about the event evolved throughout

the training.

"I wasn't convinced it would be beneficial when we began," said Weber. "But after the event it was a really great time."

Weber was not alone in her feelings of the day's experience. Erica Pollini, medical technician, was pleasantly surprised with a shift away from slides presentations for training.

"Previous resiliency days were effective, but nowhere near as engaging as today," said Pollini. "We were really able to discuss the things we wouldn't normally talk about on a normal Monday thru Friday."

Leaving the event, the Boston MEPS team was jovial, with all in attendance agreeing they learned something from the course. Robert Dellorto, lead medical supervisor, looked to the future from what we learned today.

"I appreciate that I can identify areas where myself and my team can continue to improve," said Dellorto.

As the day's events wrapped up, despite the extra flights of stairs, sounds of laughter and camaraderie echoed up the stairwell as the team departed more resilient than when they started the day. ■

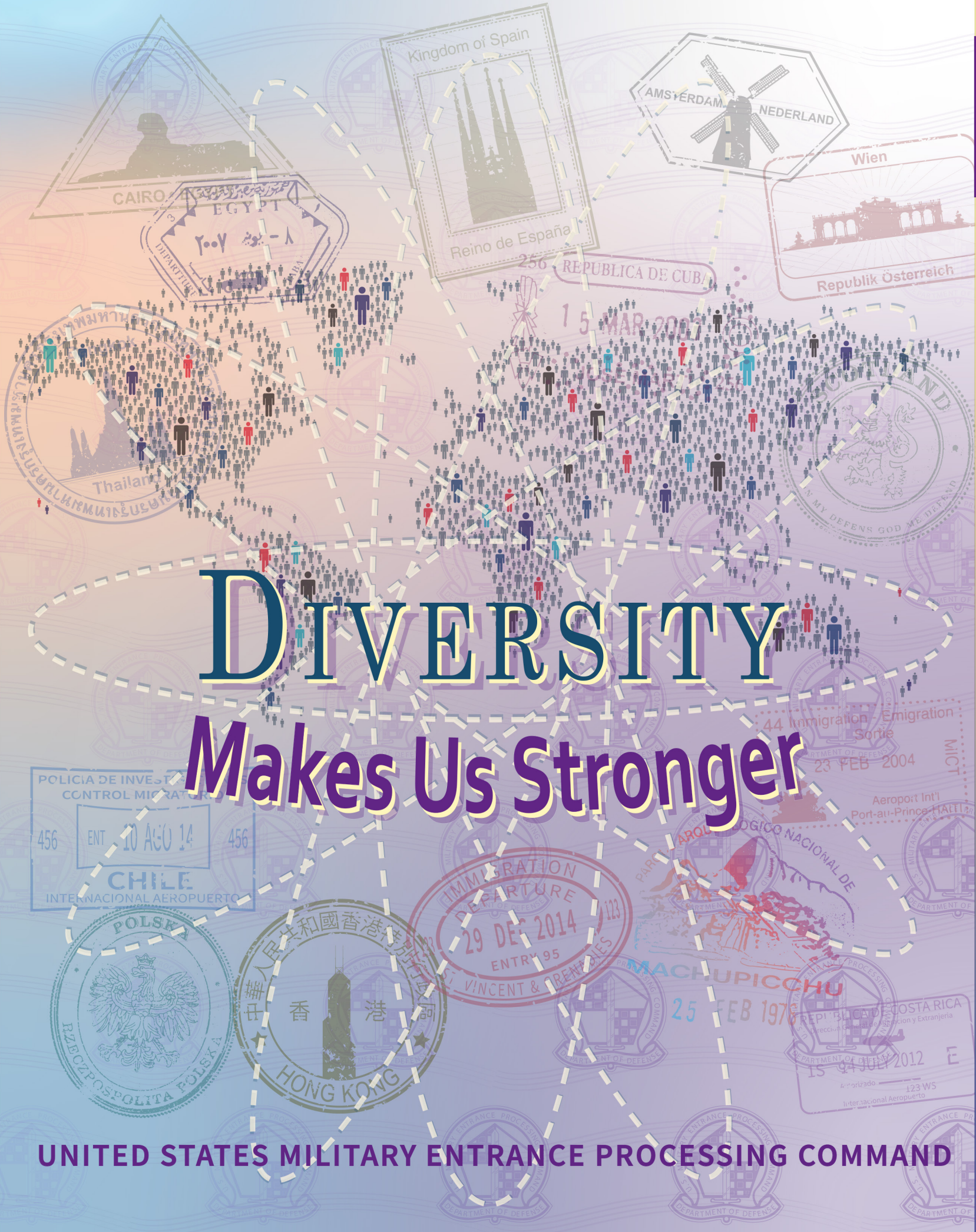


◀Members of the Boston MEPS testing team participate in resiliency training day on Dec. 3, 2021.

Pictured are Sean Maclean (test control officer), Joe Bialek (education service specialist), Frazier Brooks (testing administrator), Bob Hodges (test score technician) and Al Bautista (testing coordinator). (Courtesy photo)



Learn more about Army (R2) Program



DIVERSITY Makes Us Stronger

UNITED STATES MILITARY ENTRANCE PROCESSING COMMAND