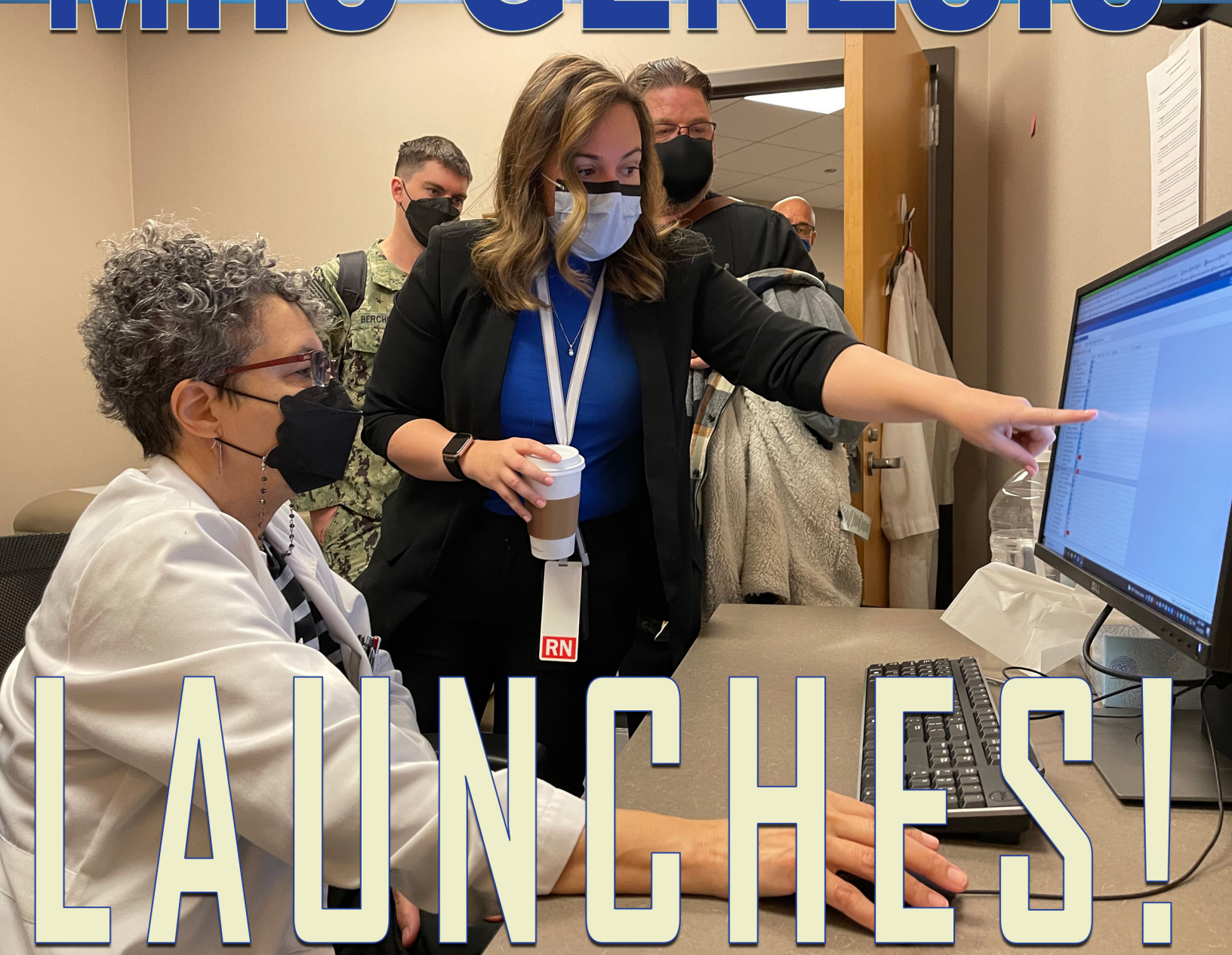


Messenger

SPRING
2022

MHS GENESIS



LAUNCHES!

USMEPCOM ACHIEVES MEDICAL MILESTONE

MEPS
Cares Day p. 4

Cross Country
Chopper Adventure p. 10

Saturday Processing
Days p. 14



Greetings Teammates,

I hope the spring of 2022 is finding everyone well. The longer days and warmer temperatures are a reprieve from the harsh winter months.

Just as we have all turned a corner into warmer weather, MEPCOM has made another leap in modernization efforts last month with the launch of MHS GENESIS. This new Electronic Health Record (EHR) modernizes how we do business and how all military personnel receive healthcare. With the implementation of MHS GENESIS at 'Freedom's Front Door,' our applicants will have one EHR that will stay with them throughout their career, as they transition out of service and beyond. This remarkable event has been a huge accomplishment by all involved.

All change can be difficult. We continue to face modernization changes with increased focus and enhanced teamwork. Our workforce rose to the challenge of implementing MHS GENESIS by creating innovative ways to work with applicants and recruiting partners while collaborating with other MEPS. Your strength through change makes me incredibly proud to be your commander. Your resilience truly shined as we made it to the last stretch in this transition.








In this issue of Messenger magazine, please take a moment to read about the MMT's undertaking in launching MHS GENESIS. You can also find stories on Testing Division's new inventory system and Saturday processing days. There is a great spread of CARES Day photos from numerous MEPS. I was thrilled to see personnel using the day to reset and recharge after being so committed to the mission during the pandemic.

As we move to the middle part of the year, many of us will be in moments of change again. At home, it can be PCSing, new housing and new schools. It can be teammates' changes with retirements and changes of commands at work. Regardless of where the change is taking place, I want to thank you for your resiliency and commitment to overcoming the changing landscape of your MEPS.

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

CONTENTS

THIS ISSUE

- 4 MHS GENESIS**
By Susan VanBoening
- 6 MHS GENESIS FROM SOFT GO-LIVE TO “BIG BANG”**
By Susan VanBoening
- 8 UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS VISITS CHICAGO MEPS**
By Susan VanBoening
- 10 CARES DAY**
By Derrick Noack
- 15 SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS** 
By Florence Wells
SHARP victim advocate
- 16 CROSS COUNTRY CHOPPER ADVENTURE**
By Susan VanBoening
- 19 LAW & ORDERS** 
By U.S. Army Maj. Bridgette M. Navejar
Boston MEPS
- 20 SATURDAY PROCESSING DAY**
By Susan VanBoening
- 21 TESTING DIVISION NEW INVENTORY PROGRAM**
By Derrick Noack
- 22 AGILE LEADERSHIP** 
By Brian Voller
J-1 Human Resources, USMEPCOM
- 24 USMEPCOM INSPECTOR GENERAL’S MISSION**
By Susan VanBoening
- 25 USMEPCOM INTERNAL REVIEW AUDITS** 
By Susan VanBoening
- 26 MEPS OF EXCELLENCE**
- 27 REX SAFETY MESSAGE**
- 28 REFRAMING THE ASVAB** 
By Charles E. Scott, Jr.
Chicago MEPS
- 29 MEPS MENTION: KNOXVILLE MEPS** 
- 30 BLOOD DONATIONS NEEDED**
By Susan VanBoening
- 31 A LASTING LEGACY: HOUSTON MEPS** 
By U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Emmanuel Mamaril
U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Amy Mitchell
Houston MEPS

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LINKS

USMEPCOM
HOMEPAGE



United States Military Entrance
Processing Command



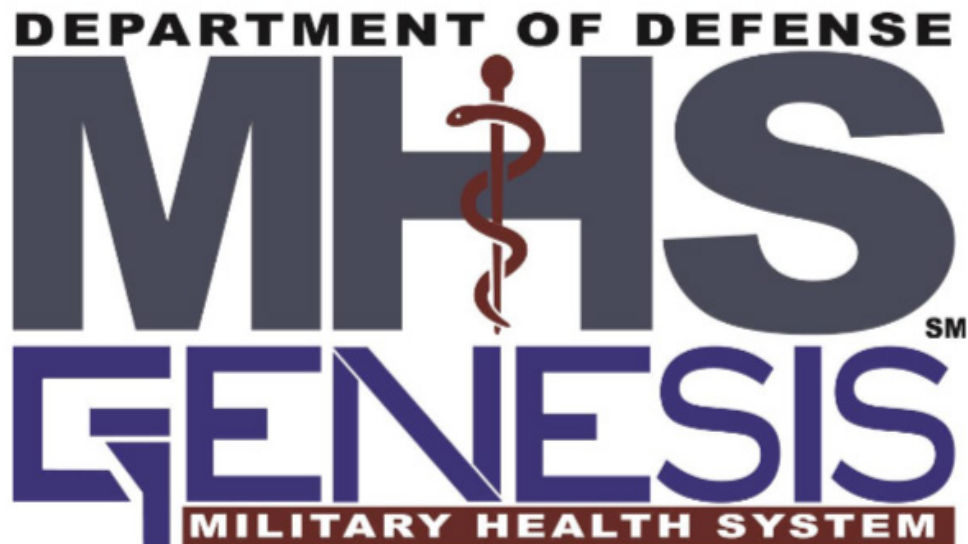
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Cover Photo by Israel Molina
Cover Design by Amy Gregorski

ON THE COVER:

During the Feb. 24 MHS GENESIS soft go-live at Chicago Military Entrance Processing Station, Dr. Alma Latham, Chicago MEPS assistant chief medical officer (seated) listens to Victoria Nolph, lead clinical consultant, working on behalf of the Leidos Partnership for Defense Health to deploy MHS GENESIS. Petty Officer Second Class Nicholas Bercheni, Detroit MEPS (left), and Mr. David Wolf, Lead Med Tech at Lansing MEPS listen as well.



MEDICAL MODERNIZATION CONTINUES WITH NEW ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD

By Susan VanBoening

On March 10, the United States Military Entrance Processing Command launched MHS GENESIS at its remaining 55 stations across the nation. Prior to this “big bang” event, 12 of the command’s 67 processing stations launched MHS GENESIS as part of a soft go-live on Feb. 24.

“The deployment of MHS GENESIS is another leap in medical modernization at USMEPCOM,” said U.S. Army Col. Megan Stallings, USMEPCOM commander. “The new electronic health record will follow applicants from the moment they walk through ‘Freedoms Front Door’, through the time they spend on active duty, to their transition to the VA system. This is revolutionizing our processing and the medical care provided to service members and veterans throughout their lives.”

In line with congressional legislation requiring interoperability with medical records, MHS GENESIS first began its roll-out in 2017, when the initial operating capability sites went live in the Pacific Northwest. The complete roll-out of MHS GENESIS consists of 23 waves, with eight taking place in 2022. This year the system will pass a key milestone: implementing MHS GENESIS in more than half of military hospitals and clinics.

The design of MHS GENESIS will improve patient safety, communication and contribute to better health outcomes. The consolidation of health information into a single platform will increase efficiencies for beneficiaries, military dependents, and health care professionals.

The benefits of incorporating MHS GENESIS for applicants entering the Armed Forces centers on having one EHR from the point of service entry, and will enable a communication flow centered on comprehensive patient medical care.

Deploying new technology is not an easy feat. The adoption of MHS Genesis was at the hands of the Medical Modernization Team. Established in summer 2021, the

MMT took the reins of deploying MHS GENESIS during Wave USMEPCOM. Through extensive training, up-skilling and communications, the MMT knew that with all change, there can be a learning curve.

“While this transition to MHS GENESIS has been in the works for quite some time, we understand there can be difficulty with change,” said Amy Ramirez, MMT director. “We put all hands on deck at the MMT to train and prepare the MEPS personnel for the transition to the next great modernization transformation which is MHS GENESIS.”

A product of the Medical Modernization Staging Team, MMT took on the nine-month sprint to train and prepare MEPS medical personnel who will be using the new electronic system daily. Ramirez says coordination with contractors, MMT staff and especially those who will be working daily with MHS GENESIS – MEPS personnel – has been critical to the launch.

“We partnered with our contractors and dove deep into training and preparing the MEPS,” Ramirez said. “Every day, users have been at the forefront of our minds. We believe our comprehensive training approach was crucial to the successful adoption of the new EHR.”

During the early days of the transition, Col. Stallings is adamant of the pride she takes in the teamwork from both the MMT and the MEPS personnel now using MHS GENESIS.

“I would first like to thank our MEPS personnel who have invested the time and energy to prepare for the implementation of a new system,” she said. “I understand change can be difficult. Thank you for persevering. This new modernization process will not only benefit us in our work flow and quality of processing we provide to our applicants, but it will make a lasting impact on the lives of service members and retirees for decades to come.” ■

Medical Modernization Team

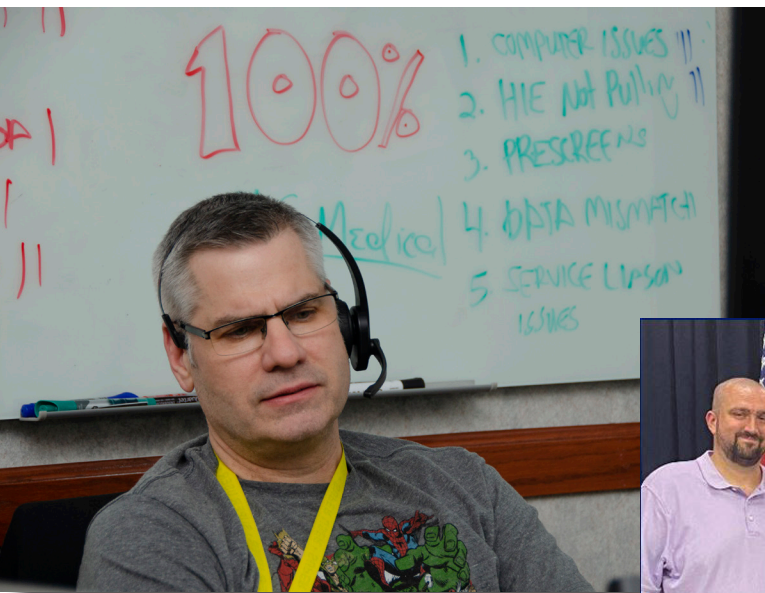
AT A GLANCE

Members of the MMT man the “war room” on March 10, 2022 during the “big bang,” deployment of MHS GENESIS to the 55 MEPS and two RPS. A soft go-live was conducted on April 24 to 12 MEPS.

◀Maple Lee, MMT deputy director. (Photo by Amy Gregorski)



▼Jeff Engel, medical requirements supervisor. (Photo by Amy Gregorski)



▲From L to R: Nick Cerda (IT specialist), Dylan Van Reenen (IT specialist) and Greg Savage (chief- Product Management Division). (Photo by Amy Gregorski)



▲Bottom Row (left to right): Nick Cerda (IT specialist), Dylan Van Reenen (IT specialist), Jeff Engel (medical requirements supervisor), Lenny Ostach (MHS GENESIS SME), Josh Babicz (user role assignment coordinator), Amy Ramirez (MMT director).

Top Row (left to right): Maple Lee (MMT deputy director), Ashley Toomey (admin assistant), Army Capt. Lety Flores (ops officer), Sara Crow (lead training coordinator), Claudia Mora (workflow analyst), Yocelyn Moreno (PMO supervisor communications lead). (Photo by Darrin McDufford)



▲Yocelyn Moreno, program management office supervisor. (Photo by Amy Gregorski)

FROM
SOFT GO-LIVE
TO
"BIG BANG"

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
MHS
GENESISSM
MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM

HOW A NEW EHR LAUNCHED

By Susan VanBoening

Making a significant step toward modernization can seem like an uphill battle for any organization. USMEPCOM is no different.

The deployment of MHS GENESIS was a nine-month-long sprint that culminated in a two-phased implementation. The USMEPCOM soft go-live on Feb. 24 rolled out to 12 MEPS across the United States. The "big bang," followed two weeks later, March 10, to 55 MEPS and two RPS.

The Medical Modernization Team, headquarters, sector, MEPS personnel and their recruiting partners captured lessons learned and earned positive accolades for their comprehensive team effort – a heavy lift – of deploying MHS GENESIS, a new chapter of medical modernization.

Immediately following the soft go-live launch, USMEPCOM received heavy praise from the Defense Healthcare Management Systems program office for the soft go-live roll-out performance. According to DHMS, the Feb. 24 soft deployment across 12 MEPS was the most successful of the eight mass readiness deployments completed across the Department of Defense.

"From an operations perspective of people being prepared and trained, we were ahead of the game," said U. S. Army Col Megan Stallings, USMEPCOM commander. "Across our organization, this was a huge lift by the Medical Modernization Team and other staff at USMEPCOM that supported in both big and small ways."

Consistent with past modernization initiatives, MEPS personnel adapted quickly to new technology while self-

identifying efficiencies to expedite processing. Early staff training of the new electronic health record and the hands-on support also played a critical role in the deployment of MHS GENESIS. LPDH personnel deployed to six of the 12 soft go-live MEPS to provide necessary over-the-shoulder support on the soft go-live day. From a needs assessment based on experience from the soft go-live, leadership decided to triple the planned number of contractors at the MEPS from six to 18 for over-the-shoulder support on the March 10 "big bang."

On soft go-live day, collaboration and communication between the field and MMT brought to light several essential system glitches that LPDH contractors addressed before processing was severely affected. At USMEPCOM, the MMT "war room," a system-wide Microsoft Teams forum, gave real-time solutions for systemic and processing issues, enhancing overall roll-out processes.



On March 10, Tampa MEPS personnel pause for a photo while collaborating on using MHS GENESIS, the new electronic health record for the Department of Defense. Tampa MEPS was part of the "big bang" implementation.

Front L to Back L: Janet River (lead human resource assistant), Patricia McNeil (human resource assistant), U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Caleb Myrttil (Processing NCOIC). Front R to Back R: U.S. Navy Cmdr. Karen Teague (Tampa MEPS commander), Farante Parker (human resource assistant), U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Shannon Wyatt (Tampa MEPS senior enlisted advisor) and U.S. Army Capt. Jeff Houser (Tampa MEPS executive officer). (Courtesy photo)

One concern that quickly became evident during the soft go-live was prescreening of applicants. MHS GENESIS was planned to launch in February and March, well before the summer recruiting surge. However, recruiting partners saw an uptick in applicants in February due to the decrease in the Omnicom variant and relaxing nationwide COVID safety protocols. Along with a spike in applicants comes a natural increase in prescreens. Modifications and extra resources to address prescreens at the initial 12 soft go-live locations allowed USMEPCOM leadership to hone in on how best to manage prescreens before the “big bang.”

Col. Stallings said that after digesting the lessons learned from the soft go-live, USMEPCOM two main focus areas moving forward were evident. From Feb. 24 to March 10, “big bang,” leadership developed a battle plan to tackle prescreens from recruiting services and adjust processes to accomplish prescreens. The plan included MEPS chief medical officers, from large and medium-sized MEPS, traveling to soft go-live MEPS to familiarize themselves with the new EHR while reviewing prescreens and conducting applicant physicals. Additionally, the J3/5/7 Operations Directorate established a prescreen support coordination center to make daily resource allocation decisions to stay on top of prescreen demand.

“We aggressively approached troubleshooting how to best collect the data needed to showcase how GENESIS was performing,” said Stalling. “Part of that included not just getting data, but also ensuring MEPS had the ability to input data into the system.”

USMEPCOM forecasts high prescreen volume to continue in the early weeks and months of full deployment of MHS GENESIS and into the foreseeable future. Post “big bang,” USMEPCOM leadership continues to assess prescreen mitigation measures and determine if more are required. Luckily, exams also dropped off between the soft go-live and March 10.

From the soft go-live to the “big bang,” the successful deployment of MHS GENESIS can be attributed to a multifaceted approach of planning and the MEPS’ ability to adjust.

Teamwork between contractors, the MMT “war room,” and collaborative MEPS personnel allowed them to embrace challenges head-on with ingenuity and calm minds. Even with the changes evident to MEPS personnel across USMEPCOM, some things remained the same; a spirit of tackling new endeavors and starting the latest chapter of medical modernization within the DoD.

“We have a lot to be proud in terms of how MHS GENESIS deployed,” said Stallings. “Our willingness, tenacity and determination of how to get after the system and learn it. We are excited for what the future of MHS GENESIS holds at ‘Freedom’s Front Door.’” ■



On March 10, Tampa MEPS hosted a farewell party to the old medical processing system and ushered in MHS GENESIS. At the celebration, MEPS personnel reminisced about old paper processing and broke bread in celebration for the new era of medical records modernization with the launch of MHS GENESIS.

From L to R: U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Shannon Wyatt (Tampa MEPS senior enlisted advisor), U.S. Navy Cmdr. Karen Teague (Tampa MEPS commander) and Robert Little (human resource assistant).

Back Row: Alan Wilkins (lead human resource assistant).
(Courtesy photo)

Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness visits CHICAGO MEPS

By Susan VanBoening

The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Gilbert R. Cisneros Jr., visited Chicago Military Entrance Processing Station March 16, to meet with U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command leadership and MEPS personnel about the most extensive medical modernization initiative ever done in the Department of Defense. The morning visit also included a tour conducted as “a day in an applicant’s life,” more than three decades after Cisneros’ own enlistment in the U.S. Navy.

Cisneros sat down with U.S. Army Col. Megan Stallings, USMEPCOM commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Lorenzo Woodson, along with other senior MEPS leadership where the conversation focused on the deployment of the new electronic health record MHS GENESIS.

In a soft go-live, the cradle-to-grave EHR was implemented at 12 MEPS across the United States on Feb. 24. The full deployment of MHS GENESIS, known as Wave USMEPCOM, was conducted at the remaining 55 MEPS and RPS on March 10.

Since September 2019, DoD has been rolling out MHS GENESIS.

The phased approach consists of 23 separate waves targeting specific regions, with an average of three hospitals and numerous physical locations for each wave. This approach enables DoD to take full advantage of lessons learned from prior waves to maximize subsequent waves’ efficiencies.

While meeting with Stallings, Cisneros listened intently to the lessons learned from the EHR deployment at the MEPS, current operational status and what OSD could do to support the modernization process. He also supported what the next chapter of modernization will bring to DoD.

“I’m interested in seeing areas where the implementation is going,” he said. “This record will follow the service member through their military career and on to the VA. It is a lot better process and more beneficial throughout their career and beyond.”

Stallings agreed with Cisneros’ sentiments and noted how proud she is of her team’s willingness to train and implement MHS GENESIS, which will change the landscape of military accession processing.

“The benefit of the EHR is huge. Our team took this modernization head on,” Stallings said. “The ability for us to have the screening processes allows us to reduce the amount of existed prior to service attrition. From our perspective, we can see this as the largest benefit that we can provide for applicants going into the all-volunteer force.”



▲U.S. Army Lt. Col. Dennis Cho (left), Chicago MEPS commander, and U.S. Army Col. Megan Stallings (center), USMEPCOM commander, greet Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Gilbert Cisneros (right) at Chicago MEPS on March 16, 2022. (Photo by Israel Molina)



▲U.S. Army Col. Megan Stallings, USMEPCOM commander, provides updates about MHS GENESIS to Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Gilbert Cisneros, at Chicago MEPS on March 16, 2022. Cisneros toured Chicago MEPS to see MHS GENESIS, the DoD’s new electronic health record, functionality in the field and gain feedback from end users. (Photo by Israel Molina)

Cisneros, who swore in as the Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness in August 2021, also met with recruiting liaisons about their transition to MHS GENESIS. Liaisons spoke about the extensive capabilities of the program and their specific needs at MEPS. He asked for honest feedback about the new EHR and commended end-users on their ability to adapt to new technology.

“The same thing you have here with MHS GENESIS is the same program used at medical treatment facilities worldwide,” Cisneros said about the expansive modernization effort that will hold up to 9 million beneficiaries’ medical records by the conclusion of the implementation.

A highlight of the visit to Chicago MEPS was touring the facility as an applicant would experience the MEPS before entering military service. Cisneros met with MEPS personnel in processing, testing and medical sections.

In the processing section, MEPS staff shared their experience transitioning from a paper-based record system to a digital platform. Personnel also commended the medical modernization initiative and how it will impact the applicant’s future in the Armed Forces. Cisneros recalled his time at MEPS in 1989 and what the EHR looks like for the next generation of warfighters.

“When I joined the Navy, I left the MEPS with this big stack of medical files and records,” he said. “And now, with this new system, they will walk out with nothing to carry.”

Things became more hands-on in medical for the former Sailor, where Cisneros toured each phase of the applicant’s physical screening experience. Personnel explained the different exams conducted, including vision and hearing, and even showed the exact location where they would input his data into MHS GENESIS. Cisneros also met with testing coordinators responsible for administering the ASVAB and talked with the education support specialist who leads the ASVAB-CEP program.

Before departing, Cisneros gave accolades for the modernization efforts at USMEPCOM’s 65 MEPS and two RPS. He said he knows the implementation process was not easy.

“MHS GENESIS is something that we are excited about and the benefit to the service members and families will have a greater impact on the lives of all who have served,” Cisneros said.

“I want to say ‘thank you.’ You all have been at the starting point of getting these individuals on these new records and moving forward. I appreciate everyone’s hard work.” ■



▲Dr. Janet Collins (left), Chicago MEPS chief medical officer, shows Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Robert Cisneros the functional capabilities of MHS GENESIS, the DoD new electronic health record. (Photo by Israel Molina)



▲Charles E. Scott Jr. (right), Chicago MEPS education support specialist, speaks with Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Gilbert Cisneros (left) at Chicago MEPS on March 16, 2022. (Photo by Israel Molina)

MEPS

Participate in

CARES DAY

Connect

Appreciate

Reset

Educate

Strengthen

By Derrick Noack

The past two years have been like a triathlon for MEPS personnel. They have sustained uninterrupted operations all while enduring through challenges brought on by the pandemic, transitioning to various new systems and taking leaps toward modernization. In recognition of their fortitude, a non-processing day was created for employees to recharge.

MEPS were given a CARES Day to Connect, Appreciate, Reset, Educate and Strengthen. The process to obtain a non-processing day was not easy, but USMEPCOM Commander, Col. Megan Stallings felt it was important to recognize the struggles endured throughout the past couple of years.

“All teammates at the MEPS have been running strong, with no break, throughout this pandemic,” said Stallings. “You remained steadfast in accomplishing our mission, showing up in person while most of the world stayed home. The resiliency from individuals and your teams astound me.”

Recognizing that challenges and struggles differ across locations, Stallings gave the opportunity for leaders to create their own agenda for the day. Resiliency workshops, team-building exercises and off-site gatherings were some of the most popular options chosen.

“One of the benefits of picking our own agenda for

the day was being able to take a good look at what we needed and what would benefit the organization,” said Army Capt. Kirby Crites, Springfield MEPS executive officer. “The resiliency training we conducted earlier in the day allowed us to put things in perspective and had a lot of active participation using scenarios relating to things we experience at MEPS. Bowling was a great way to celebrate each other’s achievements and build a greater appreciation for what people can bring to the overall team, both in work and play.”

MEPS personnel are normally concentrated into medical, processing and testing sections. CARES Day proved to be beneficial in opening the doors of communication across those sections and strengthening teams overall.

“Sections in MEPS typically function independently,” said U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Brian Gutierrez, Chicago MEPS senior enlisted advisor. “Groups were put together to make a collage of each section and open up communication. As we modernize and the environment changes, we come across problems that make us think outside the box and communicate. Everyone sees things differently. Opening those lines of communication allows everyone to voice their opinion and helps us all.”

Setbacks and adverse events can happen while working through a pandemic. Because our mission can never stop, maintaining resiliency is crucial to our success. MEPS leadership recognizes the



▲ Memphis MEPS staff participate in a team-building exercise of bowling. Memphis MEPS chose this activity to focus on the connect portion of CARES. (Photo by Princeton Blanchard)



▲ Chicago MEPS personnel Nelson Gonzalez (left) and U.S. Army Sgt. Arnaldo Garcia (right) participate in a communication building exercise during CARES Day activities. (Photo by Derrick Noack)



▲ Baltimore MEPS personnel connect during a friendly game of Jenga. (Courtesy photo)

benefits of non-processing days in recharging and building resiliency.

“The staff really do appreciate events that reinforce de-escalation from the heightened tempo in our line of work,” said U.S. Navy Lt.j.g. Marco Pineda, Fort Lee MEPS operations officer. “Whether it is rearranging an office space to better fit the workforce or getting together for extra modernization training, days without applicants can be simply productive yet mentally stabilizing for our staff.”

Feedback from the MEPS has been overwhelmingly positive following their chosen CARES Day activities. Leadership at USMEPCOM hope to make the day an annual event.

“The morale following CARES Day was high,” said Crites. “Staff members liked the opportunity they got to reset and talk to people from other sections. CARES Day came at a great time, and provided the organization an opportunity to connect and appreciate before we got cracking in the new quarter.” ■



▲ Springfield MEPS personnel participate in board games, focusing on the connect portion of CARES. (Courtesy photo)



1.



2.

▲1. Fort Lee MEPS personnel competed in a scavenger hunt during their CARES Day activities. The winning team poses for a photo after the game. (Courtesy photo)

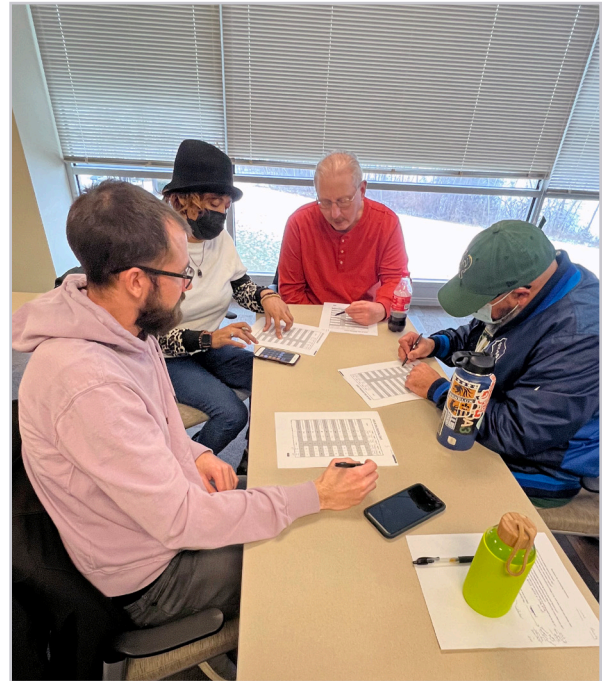
2. U.S. Army Maj. Joy Crowder (left), Shreveport MEPS commander and U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Jennifer Martinez (right), Shreveport MEPS senior enlisted advisor, participate in playing a giant game of Jenga. This activity was focused on the connect and strengthen portion of CARES Day. (Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Austin Clark)



▲Jacksonville MEPS staff participate in a 0.75 mile walk around a local pond. Jacksonville MEPS chose this activity to focus on the connect, reset and strengthen portions of CARES. (Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Brittany Botsford)



1.



2.

▲1. Honolulu MEPS Staff participated in team-building activities of breakfast, bingo, and bowling. The team connected, showed appreciation for one another, reset from daily work tasks, educated through resiliency training and strengthened the relationship of their Ohana. (Courtesy photo)
 2. Milwaukee MEPS staff engage in “Lost at Sea”, where small teams prioritize items for survival from a set list of tools. During this activity the staff focused on the connect and strengthen portions of CARES. (Photo by Tamara Allen)



▲Portland Oregon MEPS personnel prepare to connect during a friendly game of bowling. (Courtesy photo)

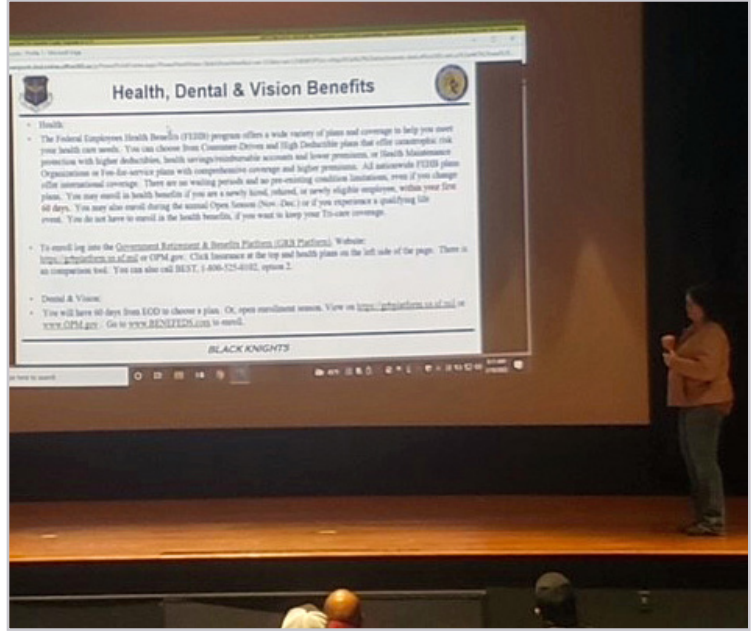


▲Kansas City MEPS personnel get into the CARES Day spirit by donning their very own MEPS bowling jerseys before hitting the lanes. (Courtesy photo)

C A R E S



1. ▲1. Beckley MEPS Staff participated in two stress management workshops facilitated by the Red Cross in the morning, then spent the remainder of the day competing in a MEPS section bowling tournament. (Courtesy photo)
 2. Little Rock MEPS staff participate in a briefing on post service benefits. Little Rock MEPS chose this activity to focus on the various aspects of CARES. (Courtesy photo)



▲Chicago MEPS personnel (from L to R) Thomas Burke, Rolando Villegas, U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Brian Henslee, Jonathan Woods and Randy Hernandez pose for a photo after completing a spaghetti tower activity during CARES Day. Chicago MEPS leadership constructed CARES Day groups to include personnel from all sections to open up communication and strengthen working relationships. (Photo by Derrick Noack)



▲ The teal ribbon is a national symbol of support for victims of sexual assault, and is used by the Army's Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Program. (Illustration by Air Force Staff Sgt. Don Hudson)

 By Florence Wells
SHARP victim advocate, USMEPCOM

Sexual harassment and sexual assault have no place in the Armed Forces. The U.S. Army's Sexual Harassment/

Assault Response and Prevention Program is the Army's

integrated, proactive effort to end sexual harassment and sexual assault within our ranks. The SHARP Program exists so the Army can prevent sexual harassment and sexual assaults before they occur. The program's goal is to eliminate sexual assaults and sexual harassment by creating a climate that respects the dignity of every member of the Army family.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. Officially established in 2001, the month's purpose is to raise awareness and prevent sexual assault, harassment, and abuse. The theme for 2022 is Prevention Starts with You.

Everyone – civilians and active duty alike – is accountable for ensuring the workforce is a safe space, where we work together to instill camaraderie and trust amongst each other.



In September 2021, a new Army directive was implemented, authorizing SHARP Program services to Department of Army civilians. The policy does not include restricted reporting, expedited transfers, or any additional medical entitlements or legal services DACs are not already allowed by law or policy to use. The new policy is another example of the Army's commitment to eliminate harmful behaviors, like sexual assault, from its workforce.

The policy allows DACs to choose unrestricted reporting using multiple routes, including SARCs, victim

advocates or victim representatives. Unrestricted reporting allows victims of sexual assault who desire to receive medical treatment, counseling, SARC and VA assistance and an official investigation of the crime.

Studies and surveys have shown that victims who receive advocacy services are more

likely to receive medical treatment, engage with law enforcement and stay engaged throughout the criminal justice process. This can have a tremendous impact on the ability of communities to prevent additional sexual assaults.

During April, please take a moment to look out for different activities during Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. In support of the Army's 'People First,' initiative, the USMEPCOM SHARP office and our SAPR counterparts at Naval Station Great Lakes are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Army civilians. ■

If you have been the victim of sexual assault or sexual harassment or have questions about the SHARP Program, contact: Florence Wells, SHARP victim advocate 847-769-3296 or William Howard, SARC 224-419-3143

Cross Country Chopper Adventure

By Susan VanBoening

“Rise and Ride,” was the mindset 28 women fostered when they set off for a 48-state motorcycle adventure in memory of Bessie Stringfield, the mid-century legend known as “The Motorcycle Queen.”

For the group of women, including Shannon Midgette, St. Louis MEPS test control officer, the idea to take on the cross-country ride came about in late 2019.



Midgette, a retired airman and member of the Bessie Stringfield memorial committee, was approached by another committee member on ideas to keep the memory alive of Stringfield. “Bessie Bells,” as the group was known, had previously taken motorcycle adventures to as far away as Florida and Wisconsin, but nothing as significant as this endeavor. Midgette knew her feeling about the ride right from the start.

“I immediately bought in,” said Midgette. “I didn’t know how I was going to do it but I bought in.”

Midgette and the other organizers knew the preparation for this ride differed from the eight other annual rides they’ve hosted. The distance would be long and battering on both mind and body, and bikes needed to be able to take significant wear and tear.

The goal also had an ambitious time window; 48 states in eight days. Vetting other riders’ skills and assessing cohesion was necessary for the trip’s success. Interest in participation came from far and wide. Female doctors, attorneys and teachers applied from Florida, California and New York.

“We had about 10 ladies on the planning committee for this ride,” she said. “We had to think about everything that would matter in making this successful. Riding experience, commitment to being safe, motivation and inspiration to complete the ride.”

For the ride to be done as quickly as possible, the group needed to meet in the same start location. After months of planning, Midgette left Illinois on July 1, 2021, and headed to Maine. In the planning phase, her group consisted of six riders. However, there were obstacles even before the start. One member was hit by a car en route to Maine. She survived with minimal injuries, but her bike was unserviceable. Others experienced mechanical issues on their way to the starting point.

Riders trickled in on July 3 and 4 and the event officially kicked off in the early hours of July 5. Broken up into eight groups, with anywhere between four to eight riders per group, departures were staggered 30 minutes apart.

Spacing bikers decreased traffic hazards and increased efficiency when refueling.

By the end of day one, the first group covered 15 states and ended in Ohio. Then they covered 800-1,000 miles a day for the next four days. Strategic planning paid off for the riders. They took the most efficient routes, which didn’t always include interstate highways, and secondary roads, to cross the most land in the shortest time.

There were shared laughs at gas stops and amazement of the sights in transit along the way. Gas receipts were kept and submitted to the Iron Butt Association to prove that the riders were actually in each state. The 75,000-plus-member motorcycle club verifies fuel receipts, which allowed the ladies to be recognized for this cross-country undertaking.

There was little downtime because of the narrow eight-day window to complete the trip from Maine to Washington State. Time spent in hotel rooms was short and sweet, just enough to shower and grab some sleep.

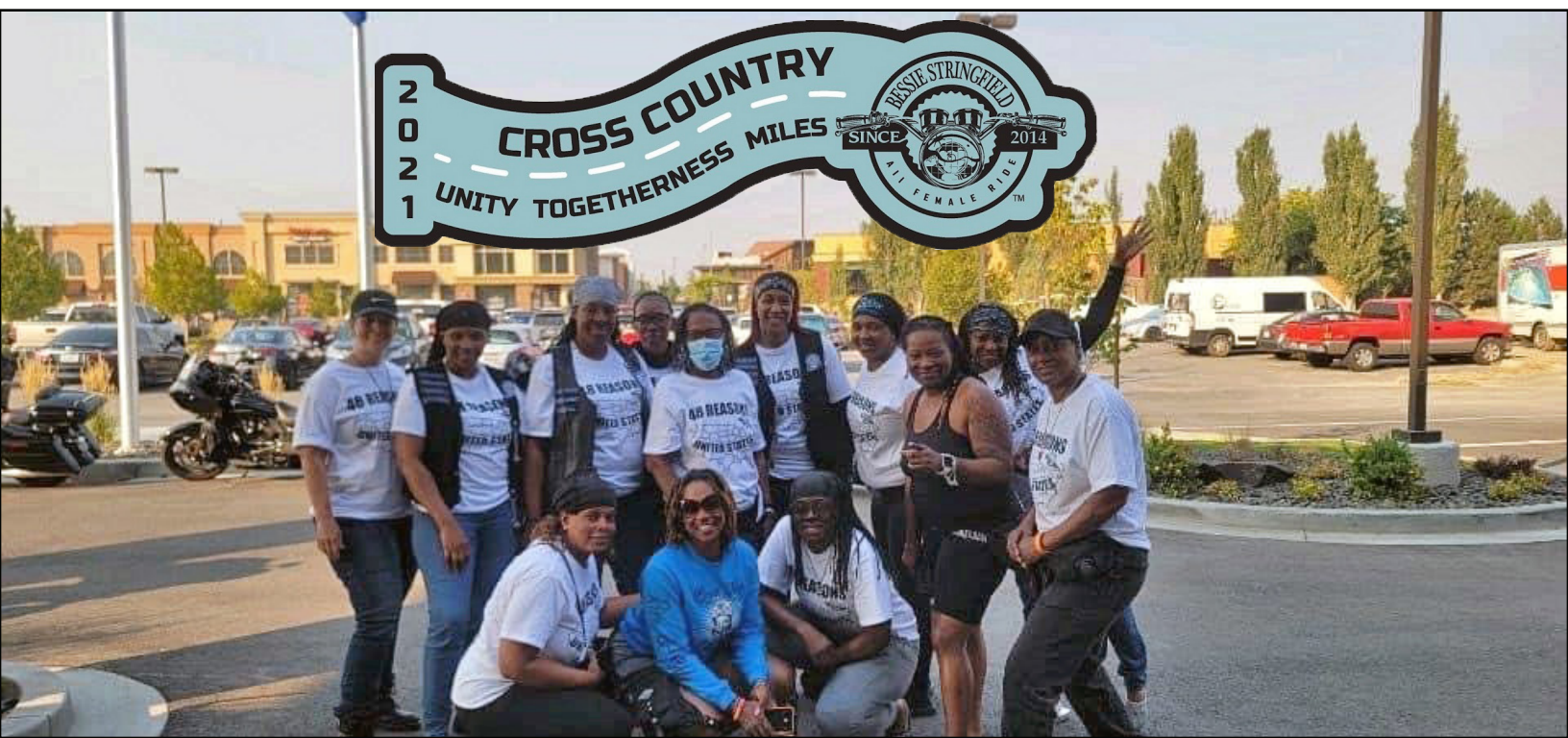
“For the ladies on track to make the trip in eight days, we weren’t in the hotel for more than four hours a night,” she said.

For Midgette, things were smooth sailing until she got to Arizona. The temperature was hovering at 100 degrees, typical for Arizona in July, and while on her 2016 Road God Special Harley, the clutch suddenly went out. In the middle of traffic, squished between cars and 18 wheelers, she was finally able to downshift and get off to the side of the road, eventually making it to a gas station.

Much like Stringfield’s obstacles as a woman traveling alone cross country, Midgette suddenly became her own mechanic. She called friends to seek advice and tried to call local repair shops looking for a clutch to continue the ride. None of the parts were available. However, Midgette didn’t panic; a modern-day motorcycle queen, she knew exactly what to do.

“I waited a little bit,” she said. “I let the bike cool off and checked the fluids to make sure everything was okay. It was just hot and my bike was taking a beating.”

She continued on to Las Vegas the same day and into





California, where temperatures hit 120 degrees. The trip north through California, Oregon, and Washington was a welcome relief. They embraced the cooler temperatures and relished their major accomplishment at the finish line, in honor of the legend, Bessie Stringfield.

“When we rolled in that last night in Washington, we were so excited,” she said. “There were tears, dancing, laughter ... everybody was really tired but we were so excited to make eight days.”

Some riders were behind the leading pack but eventually pulled into the final destination on day nine. The group of women from different states, backgrounds and occupations all shared the same battle anthem no matter what order they fell into at the finish line.

“Whenever we get together we always say ‘I am Bessie’ because we feel her with us and what she did as a black woman,” she said. “We ride in her memory and honor.” ■



Photos provided by Shannon Midgett



Fair use image

Who was Bessie Stringfield?

From 1929 until she died in 1993, Bessie Stringfield rode her motorcycle around the Americas and defied stereotypes. At a time when opportunities for women were limited, Stringfield wowed the nation with her adventures by being the first woman to ride a motorcycle in all the lower 48 states.

Riding her Harley Davidson cross country predated President Eisenhower’s infrastructure plan to create a highway interstate system. Roads were dangerous and unsmooth for any motorcycle rider; being a woman alone made its own set of obstacles. To earn a living, she performed at carnival sideshows and fairs and was known to enter races disguised as a man, often denied prize money after it was revealed she was a woman.

During the early-20th century, the lynching of innocent black people was common and America was in a time of segregation. For Stringfield, lodging wasn’t readily available while on the road. She often stayed with black families she met along the way or slept on her bike at gas stations. Despite the dangers of being on the road, she defied stereotypes of sexualization and race while shattering norms for women’s expectations well into her senior years. Later settling in Florida and having a career as a nurse, Stringfield was well into her 70’s and still seen riding her motorcycle around Miami. Bessie Stringfield passed away peacefully in 1993 at 82.

Her legend has inspired a series of graphic novels aimed at children, spreading the inspiration of her life to a new generation and has been featured in numerous documentaries and historical books. In 2000, the American Motorcycle Association honored her by creating the Bessie Stringfield Award and she was inducted in the Motorcycle Hall of Fame in 2002. ■

LAW & ORDERS



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

▲ U.S. Army Maj. Bridgette Navejar, Boston MEPS executive officer, pictured at University of New Hampshire Franklin Pierce School of Law in summer 2021. (Courtesy photo)

United States Secretary of State, U.S. Army Gen. Colin Powell (Ret.) once commented that “The day the Soldier stops bringing you their problems is the day you stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help them or concluded you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership.”

In my role as a senior human resource manager, I have always found Gen. Powell’s remarks particularly inspiring. I appreciate people bringing their issues to me. I hear various problems, including personnel policy matters, pay, promotion or evaluations concerns, and sometimes people just need to vent to an empathetic ear. It makes me feel I am doing my part to support the warfighter. Having the best skills and knowledge set available through schooling and experience is critical for my job.

Many people worry about their schedules when looking to go to school. I know this feeling and while my schedule has become more predictable since joining USMEPCOM, I am no stranger to an erratic schedule. Despite my military schedule, from 2019 to 2021, I carved out time to pursue a Master’s in Human Resource Management. During this time, my husband and I were also living in Bavaria. An online program allowed me the freedom of location and flexible course schedules. I worked my respective day job and immersed myself in the culture while continuing with school work. My master’s program cohort consisted of students from around the world. Despite never physically interacting, I established valuable connections with my peers and received instrumental mentorship from my professors. I enhanced my human resources skills through a remote program and am proof other service members can excel in similar remote or flexible graduate curriculum.

In June 2021, my husband and I relocated to Boston. I presently serve as Boston MEPS executive officer. While the work is demanding during the day, my schedule does have semi-predictable evenings and weekends. After so many years working in the U.S. Army in human resources, I knew my future included law school. Being a nontraditional student, it was essential to find a law school program that met a high academic rigor and matched my busy lifestyle. This program was the University of New Hampshire Franklin Pierce Hybrid Juris Doctorate, which is the first American Bar Association accredited hybrid law program. The flexible evening program with quarterly intensive immersion sessions allowed me to establish vital relationships with my cohort and receive face-to-face legal training at the Concord, New Hampshire campus.

During my initial year of classroom instruction, the foundation of connections was planted and bloomed in my courses in the online setting. With careful planning, I knew my tour of duty in Boston allowed me two years in the Cradle of Liberty City and I intend to capitalize on this fantastic opportunity. Should the military change my tour of duty, the University of New Hampshire Hybrid Juris Doctorate allows me the flexibility to continue my legal studies while adhering to my military requirements.

Flexible part-time programs are becoming more common and available to ambitious individuals who want to continue lifelong learning. Corporate executives, working professionals, military personnel and relaunchers are examples of individuals who cannot meet traditional law school schedules but desire to pursue a law career. If you are on the fence about pursuing additional education, many accredited schools with flexible part-time programs can make your education goals possible. It has worked well for me and I am confident it will work well for you too. ■



▲ Applicants take the Oath of Enlistment at Chicago MEPS as part of their processing into the Armed Forces. (Courtesy photo)

SATURDAY PROCESSING DAYS SUPPORT RECRUITING PARTNERS

By Susan VanBoening

To further support military recruiting partners meeting current goals, select MEPS opened for processing one Saturday per month, from January through March and in May. On Jan. 22, the command began the first of four Saturday openings at 10 MEPS.

“Saturday processing provides additional flexibility during challenging times,” said Col. Megan Stallings, USMEPCOM commander. “The January 22 opening made a difference for both individual applicants and the services,” she added.

The decision to add processing days was not taken lightly by USMEPCOM leadership and resulted from an intensive analysis of recruiting service processing needs.

Processing dates set for Saturdays in 2022 are Feb. 26, March 26, and May 21. For each Saturday processing, there are a total of 10

MEPS open on each of the Saturdays. Identification of the 10 MEPS is coordinated monthly with the services and the approximate date for a given month will be finalized 35-40 days prior to the following month’s Saturday processing.

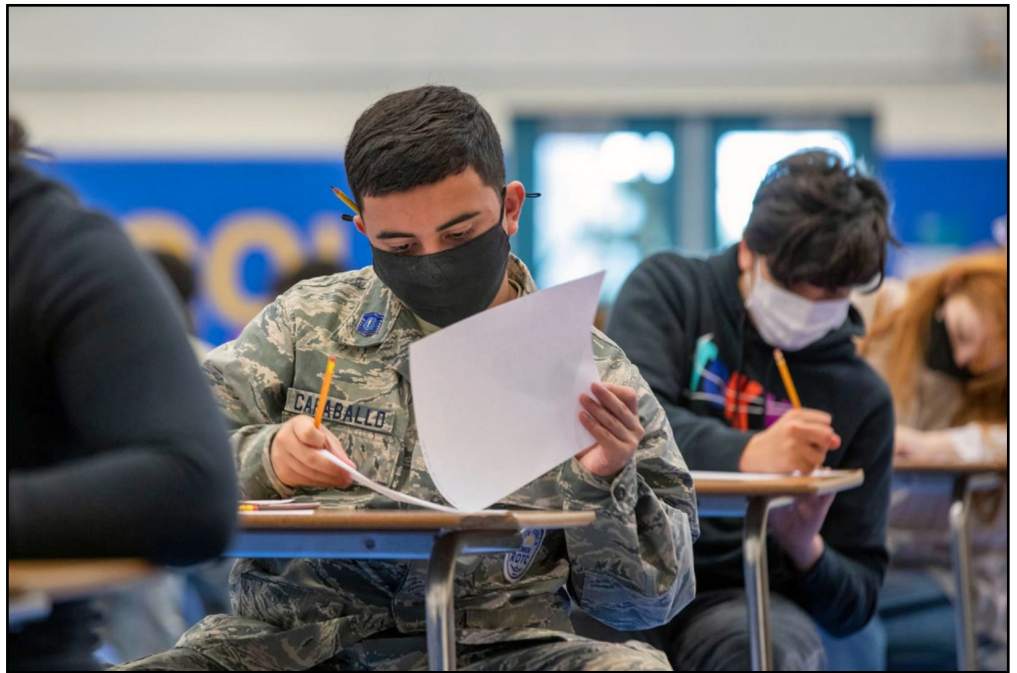
To open for Saturday processing, unlike previous Saturday openings, there will not be a minimum projection requirement. Saturday processing follows the 48-hour scheduling rules requiring submission of applicant projections no later than 11a.m. on the preceding Thursday.

MEPS will also provide night testing on Fridays before the scheduled opening. At the discretion of the MEPS commander, special purpose testing can take place on Saturdays also. At least one walk-in per service is permitted with the expectation that the workload will not exceed medical processing capacity.

Stallings recognizes the additional strain weekend openings can cause. Supporting recruiters in fulfilling their mission while ensuring Saturday processing is used efficiently and not overburdening personnel is a priority to USMEPCOM leadership. To minimize civilian employee stress, the intent is not to have any one MEPS open for more than two of the four Saturdays.

“These additional operational capabilities allow our recruiting partners to maximize access to the testing, medical, and processing at the MEPS to achieve increased contracting and accession goals,” Stallings said. “We know our MEPS personnel work, day in and day out, in support of ‘Freedom’s Front Door,’ and our goal is to provide additional Saturday processing days efficiently and effectively.” ■

TESTING DIVISION TRANSITIONS TO NEW INVENTORY PROGRAM



▲ Sophomore Christian Caraballo fills out the information on a mark sheet before starting the ASVAB test at Yokota Air Base, Japan. (U.S. Air Force photo by Yasuo Osakabe)

By Derrick Noack

The buzz around modernizing medical processes has been the focus of many conversations at USMEPCOM lately. As we reform and transition to new systems, medical is not the only facet moving toward modernization. The J-3/5/7 - Operations Directorate's Testing Division continue their modernization efforts, deploying a new inventory program that went live in January.

With each MEPS needing a different number of accountable test materials based on the demand of that location, accurately tracking and maintaining those materials is crucial to fulfilling the testing mission. Windows Testing Inventory Program, called WinTIP, the legacy software used to track accountable test materials, transitioned to Defense Property Accountability System, or DPAS, which offers many benefits compared to the legacy WinTIP.

WinTIP was an access database supported by one sole IT specialist. MEPS testing personnel were required to input a serial number for every single test booklet and score key they received into the program. Not only was WinTIP a tedious process, it left room for error. Serial numbers could be input incorrectly or even duplicated.

DPAS has given testing personnel the capability to scan materials, with everything having its own barcode, solving those input errors. The new system simplifies inventory reports, allowing headquarters the capability to view each MEPS's local inventory at any time. Previously, Testing Division had no visibility

and each MEPS had to email their reports.

"DPAS allows us to utilize barcode scanners, making the inventory process faster and more efficient," said Nate Harris, Indianapolis MEPS test control officer. "The application also allows for less errors or mistakes to occur when receiving accountable test materials."

DPAS currently has 127 users across all of the MEPS, and training was conducted from June to September. DPAS offers a help desk for users, where previously there was only one point of contact for support with WinTIP.

Jaime Clayton, Enlistment Testing Program Manager and DPAS project lead, took on the transition in November. Clayton says a lot of work and collaboration went into the transition.

"I couldn't have done it without my coworkers at all, it really was a team effort," said Clayton. "This has been a difficult process but we've all supported each other. Along with J-3/5/7, both J-1/ Human Resources Directorate and J-6/ Information Technology Directorate played an integral part in the process. It took a lot of work from a lot of people."

Clayton said the new system does not just benefit J-3/5/7's Testing Division, but also significantly affects and improves the work of test inspectors, sector-testing representatives, MEPS commanders, and the Inspector General's Office. The next step is the transition process is creating a user guide, which Clayton is currently working with MEPS testing personnel to finalize. ■



◀ U.S. Army Col Megan Stallings (front left), USMEPCOM commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Lorenzo Woodson, (front right) are pictured with MEPS personnel from 2nd, 5th and 10th battalion on Nov. 15, 2021. There were four small leadership conferences in late 2021 and early 2022 to accommodate COVID-19 safety protocols. (Photo by Israel Molina)

AGILE LEADERSHIP

MODIFIED LEADERSHIP CONFERENCES YIELD POSITIVE RESULTS



By Brian Voller
J-1, Human Resources, USMEPCOM
workforce development branch chief

Annually, the United States Military Entrance Processing Command executes its leadership conference, an event that brings together headquarters and sector staffs, and Military Entrance Processing Station commanders and senior enlisted advisors, to meet and communicate initiatives, efforts, and projections.

Before 2020, these annual events were conducted at different large-conference locations near USMEPCOM Headquarters, at which 200 civilian and military leaders engaged and communicated for five days. Guest speakers from recruiting commands attended and presented their respective services' priorities and challenges. Additionally, several break-out rooms allow for more personalized conversations with headquarters

staff leaders, providing training opportunities and leadership development discussions.

During the fiscal year 20-21 leadership conference planning process, the entire country was forced into lockdown by the COVID-19 pandemic. Large public gatherings were canceled or rescheduled, including the premiere conference conducted by USMEPCOM. The J1- Workforce Development, Training, and Conferences team, with support of Public Affairs and others, began evaluating alternative solutions to afford leaders throughout USMEPCOM the opportunity to meet and discuss mission-critical transformation efforts as well as other key issues facing the organization and the accessions mission at large.

Initially, the WTC team leveraged technology such as Microsoft Teams to create a virtual conference.

Ultimately, the team developed a schedule and agenda based on conducting small conferences over several months, bringing the command teams from two battalions to the headquarters in North Chicago, Ill., for three days of discussion and training. The decision to move to smaller in-person conferences was made after seeing the virtual conference eliminated the ability for the commanders and SEAs to meet, network and interact. This type of personal interface was one of the most critical priorities for hosting the annual conference.

The smaller group size allowed the COVID protocols to be kept in place while still providing the interaction and networking prioritized by the USMEPCOM commander. It also facilitated a more intimate environment for the commanders and SEAs to engage with the headquarters leadership and get detailed information from the different directors. Video conferencing technologies were also used for guest speakers like U.S. Navy Command Master Chief Petty Officer James Parlier (Ret.). Aboard the USS COLE on Oct. 12, 2000, when bombed in port in Yemen, Parlier spoke on his experiences leading his sailors on board the ship immediately after the attack. The WTC team, which included employees Brian Voller, Anthony Bongco, Sara Crow, and Alyson Mahan, assisted in facilitating video conferences, organizing presenters, and planning leadership dinners to make conferences successful despite multiple scheduling delays due to spiking COVID rates.

As planning began for the FY 21-22 conference, all indications were the large, annual conference would return to normal. Unfortunately, the rate of COVID cases began to rise again during July and August, with multiple new variants identified. Because of this, out of the abundance of caution, Col. Megan Stallings, USMEPCOM commander, decided to shift the large annual conference to a

smaller format. Stallings directed J-1 to schedule three battalions per conference to reduce the impact on the headquarters staff leaders and presenters and conduct just four iterations of the leadership conference over four months.

The most significant feedback from the previous year's conference was that the event relied heavily on lectures and didn't necessarily encourage engagement. To address this issue, the WTC team developed an agenda that utilized a roundtable-discussion format based on responses received from a pre-conference survey provided to the commanders and SEAs before their arrival. This tailored the presenters' discussions and focused on the attendees' questions and priorities specifically requested and made each conference unique to the battalions in attendance. Feedback from the attendees, directors, and presenters indicated a preference for this format over the previous year because of the focus on the MEPS level. It fostered beneficial, open, and collaborative discussion.

The past two years' events have allowed the WTC team to work with multiple technologies to enhance their ability to reach a wider audience and bring in outside presenters during conferences and training events. While the goal is to have as many people on site as possible to emphasize interaction and camaraderie, adopting new technologies and innovative ways of thinking will create more informational and dynamic conferences in the future.

The FY 22-23 leadership conference is currently in the early stages of planning. The plan is that USMEPCOM will revert to a single, large-conference format in fall 2022. This format allows all command teams to attend and continue in-person training, development and have open, collaborative discussions but still provide the personalized interaction from the smaller events. Regardless, our goal is to build and improve the USMEPCOM Team continuously. ■

Inspections * Whistleblower Complaints * Investigations Oh my!

How the Inspector General's Mission at USMEPCOM Differs From the Rest

By Susan VanBoening

Military organizations have a critical tool in their toolbox – the Inspector General – responsible for conducting inspections and determining impropriety or misconduct. Although the Department of Defense IG has the overall responsibility for audits as well; that's not the case in USMEPCOM. Here, the IG conducts inspections, whistleblower complaints and investigations, and IR focuses on headquarters audits.

David Hamby, USMEPCOM command inspector general, says the IG's mission is an extension of the commander's eyes, ears, voice and consciousness. Hamby, in the role since 2016, says his active duty experience in the IG prepared him to lead the department at USMEPCOM, which uses Department of Defense and Army Regulations.

"Given the nature of regulations we follow, USMEPCOM is unique, but it's especially true in our office," said Hamby.

The most significant component of the IG's responsibilities is conducting inspections at the Sector level, 65 MEPS and two remote processing stations. Hamby estimates that roughly 70 percent of IG workload falls within the inspection category.

Inspections at the MEPS examine compliance in seven functional areas specific to USMEPCOM. The areas include; processing, testing, medical, command programs, administration, logistics, and information technology. Inspections are conducted using USMEPCOM regulations, UMI and DoDM 1145.02, the standard for processing, testing and medical. To determine the standard, extensive coordination with each directorate is done before inspections.

Compliance rating, categorized into a tier system, is based on past evaluations. The highest rating, tier one, is a MEPS with a history of being compliant. These MEPS are inspected every three years. A MEPS in tier two has been inspected previously and found non-compliant in one functional area. Tier two MEPS are inspected every two years. The lowest rating, tier three, has two or more functional areas rated not in compliance based on previous inspections. A tier three MEPS is inspected every year and can advance out of tier three after two consecutive successful inspections.

Inspections do not happen by surprise. IG is transparent in the areas they will be examining. Teaching and training events, led by IG staff, are held regularly to prepare MEPS to ensure compliance. The Organizational Inspection Program guide, revised every year and available on SPEAR, is sent to sectors for feedback before being published. These guides allow inspections to be like an open book test, Hamby says.

"The Organization Inspection Program Pull-List Guide helps the MEPS know what particular topic they need to look at to help prep them to be ready for inspections," he said. "Even if they're not going to be inspected every year, the MEPS know what IG is looking at."

Inspection findings are reported to the commander. The commander then approves the report and disseminates results to MEPS commanders, sector commanders and battalion commander. Unlike IR audit reports found on SPEAR, MEPS inspection reports are not available on the internal intranet Sharepoint site for USMEPCOM personnel to see.

The remaining workload for IG falls within the realm of assisting with investigations and whistleblower reports. Investigations are launched in response to watchdog or whistleblower reports or findings of wrongdoings during scheduled inspections. Like inspections, reports are issued after investigations and recommendations of finding are turned over to the commander.

Also, in addition to investigations and whistleblower reports, the IG's Assistance and Investigations Division receives and processes requests for assistance from individuals – USMEPCOM military and civilian personnel, military recruiters and applicants or their family members. Most years, the majority of these requests are related to applicants seeking answers about why they were not qualified for military service. The IG works with the command surgeon to answer these medical qualification-related requests.

"We report to the commander just like IR and we deliver our finding in our work through inspections and investigations," he said. "Our MEPS adhere to a variety of standards and regulations and we are here to ensure they are operating accordingly."

Hamby says much like IR, IG is here to make sure the MEPS house is in order. ■



Internal Review & rethinking the word “Audit”

By Susan VanBoening

Few words in the English language can send a person on high alert. One of those words is “audit.” As scary as it may seem, an audit is a critical function that assures an organization’s integrity and credibility.

At USMEPCOM, the audit program improves the command’s operations by providing an independent, objective analysis of activity within the command. Internal Review and Audit Compliance Chief Taterial McClendon, in that role since September 2020, recommends not fearing the audit program.

“People are nervous when they hear the word ‘audit,’” said McClendon. “There is a negative stigma that comes with it.”

The annual audit program, published every summer, dictates IRAC’s audits for that year. McClendon’s team determines their audits based on the commander’s needs, categorized by priority; high, moderate and low. After audit reports are finalized, findings are published on SPEAR, the command’s internal Sharepoint site.

People often get confused about who conducts audits and their authority when performing them. A typical assumption is IRAC and Inspector General are the same things. McClendon quickly clarified the common misconception. The two are different programs with different purposes. One significant difference is that the audit program focuses on Army Regulation compliance at USMEPCOM in North Chicago, Ill., whereas IG conducts inspections and investigations at the MEPS.

“People get confused all the time with the difference between the two,” she said. “The IRAC for this command (USMEPCOM) focuses on performing internal audits, identifying cost-saving programs and efficiencies, and identifying fraud, waste and abuse.”

McClendon, who came to USMEPCOM in 2019, is a certified fraud examiner with a master’s degree in public administration. Her credentials and experience equip her with the skill and expertise to conduct thorough audits. Compliance and AR are the most common audit IRAC performs at USMEPCOM.

The audit program helps U.S. Army Col. Megan Stallings, USMEPCOM commander, accomplish mission objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and command oversight.

“The IR program here at USMEPCOM is a checks and balances that our house is in order,” said Stallings. “It’s a valuable tool that all commanders should utilize.”

In the end, McClendon wants to remind her fellow employees IR can seem intimidating; however, it’s a valuable asset for any organization.

“We are here to help,” she said. “IR is a self-check for an organization. We’re here to see how you’re doing and congratulate you if you’re doing well. Or if you’re not doing well, we’ll point things out to get you to AR compliance.” ■

USMEPCOM AWARDS



FY21 MEPS OF THE YEAR

CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3
TAMPA	SEATTLE	DES MOINES



Safety's Two Notification Systems

**ALERT! Mass Warning
Notification System
(MWNS)**

**Station Advisory
Reporting Network
(STARNET)**

Whether on or off duty, it is USMEPCOM Safety Team's priority to provide the tools to keep you and your family safe. In order to do so, we have two notification systems that we heavily rely on to provide pertinent information to designated personnel and/or locations.

Why is this important?

The *ALERT! Mass Warning Notification System (MWNS)* informs all or select personnel of immediate or future incidents/events, such as on/off site emergencies, inclement weather, work system outages, etc.

To access ALERT! MWNS, visit: <https://alert.csd.disa.mil/>

The *Station Advisory Reporting Network (STARNET)* informs key personnel the basic who, what, when, where, and why information of recent or impending incidents/events. To access STARNET, visit: <https://starnet.mepcom.army.mil/warning.asp>

Both systems can be used in conjunction with the one another. When used in conjunction, ALERT! MWNS typically is used as immediate notification, followed by STARNET.

As a supervisor, how can you help?

Ensure that each safety accident and occupational illness is reported through your chain of command and to the Safety Officer.

Commanders, Senior Enlistment Advisors, Safety Representatives, Operations Officers, and/or select supervisory personnel should complete the required training to gain activation authority for ALERT! MWNS.

Ensure that employees keep their contact information up to date in ALERT! MWNS.

Run a monthly test of the ALERT! MWNS system to gauge responsiveness.

As an employee, how can you help?

Keep leadership informed of any emergency incidents that occur on/off duty that may impact your personal and/or Command's safety. Doing so will help leadership determine proper decision making regarding incident reporting to the Command.

Keep both personal and employee contact information current in the ALERT! System. It is required to include your work contact information; however, we strongly encourage your personal phone and e-mail is also included into your client profile. Doing so will provide USMEPCOM with the ability to immediately alert you in the event of an emergency.

To learn more, visit the **SPEAR SAFETY** page:

https://spear.mepcom.army.mil/hq/j3/Support_Services_Section/_layouts/15/start.aspx#/SitePages/Home.aspx

Reframing
the...

ASVAB

By Charles E. Scott, Jr.
Chicago MEPS
education support specialist

The Student Testing Program has two components: the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery and the post-ASVAB interpretation called the Career Exploration Program. The STP is much more than a test exclusively for the military; I believe that the STP is a powerful tool to open opportunities and provide choices for students.

Much like all standardized tests schoolchildren take, the ASVAB offers a baseline for skills students possess. In my position, I have broadened the ASVAB's appeal by marketing the CEP process by taking a "choices" approach. Marketing the ASVAB CEP as a tool that provides choices benefits the students, parents and the school. If we as an organization promoted this viewpoint, it could potentially double or triple our testing numbers.

Many students will choose to serve in the military based on their ASVAB scores. Based on their ASVAB score, others may decide to take a different path. Through the promotion of the ASVAB CEP, all students have an opportunity to participate in our world-class career seminar program. Participating in the ASVAB CEP allows students to have choices with new information they did not have before.

My ultimate goal is to advocate for students because every high

school student deserves access to a career path. Parents also want to advocate for their students and view secondary education as the place that prepares them for the world of work and occupations. By partnering with parents and schools, the ASVAB CEP will assist the most vulnerable populations; marginalized and disadvantaged students typically lost in the shuffle. These students are prone to be overlooked and left behind in career pathing, leaving them with few or no choices.

Schools can benefit greatly by partnering with education support specialists and utilizing the ASVAB CEP. A potential benefit is for the school to be deemed college and career-ready from their state board of education. The ASVAB CEP can also be an accountability tool for

the Every Student Succeeds Act. By looping in school districts in the usefulness of the STP in schools, the ASVAB assessment can be a metric of effectiveness, how well English, mathematics, science and technology courses are being taught without the obligatory measurements of the school district.

At each MEPS, the ESS should encourage schools to have a testing strategy for standardized tests like the ASVAB. For example, schools oftentimes test students twice each year to measure their growth year-to-year. The student benefits by viewing the ASVAB CEP as a tool to gauge skill set and opportunities with the student's skills and the skills the student is growing based on their test scores. With the test results from the ASVAB, just like with any other standardized test, students, parents and schools are provided with new information that ultimately allows the student to have more choices. ■



Charles E. Scott, Jr.,
Ed. S, MBA, PMP
Education Services Specialist
Manager, ASVAB CEP
Chicago MEPS

MEPS MENTION

Name: Shawn Waite

Position at the MEPS: Medical Technician

Time at the MEPS: Six years in Knoxville, five years in Jacksonville and three years in Springfield.

Background: Former U.S. Navy hospital corpsman- six years active duty and one year Reserve.

Why is Waite important to Knoxville MEPS and what does he do to add to the mission?

His overwhelming experience and knowledge within USMEPCOM. He is constantly sought out by peers, liaisons and other departments' employees for questions and assistance.

What has he done outside of Knoxville MEPS to make him a special part of the team?

Waite gathers and donates items (e.g. clothes, appliances, hygiene items) for victims of house fires in the local area. He has helped approximately 25 families recover and move forward from natural disasters and traumatic events.

What is Waite known for at Knoxville MEPS? His great personality and professional accolades.

Waite has worn an orange University of Tennessee undershirt to work every day since Halloween Day 2006... 5,600 days and counting! He is a nice and caring person.

What would you like people to know about Waite? He is very dependable,

considerate and always ready to help. He also helps with applicants' fears at Knoxville MEPS. He puts their nerves at ease.



Do you have an employee that stands out at your MEPS and you are interested in showcasing this employee in the Messenger magazine MEPS MENTION? Contact Messenger staff for a submission questionnaire.

Derrick Noack

derrick.l.noack.civ@army.mil

DONATIONS NEEDED

Blood Shortages Impact Everyone

By Susan VanBoening

**To learn more information
please visit:**

Armed Services Blood Program



World Blood Donor Day



Two years ago, the United States was thrust into shutdowns to combat the spread of COVID-19. Since then, as safety protocols have loosened and life shifts back to normal, the Armed Services Blood Program is raising awareness for their need of blood donors.

Currently navigating the worst blood shortage in over a decade, the ASBP provides lifesaving blood products to service members, families, retirees and veterans worldwide. Historically, due to schedule changes, donations decrease in the holiday and winter months. COVID restrictions, safety concerns, and staffing limitations have also caused a decrease in volunteers willing to roll up their sleeves. Civilian organizations like the Red Cross are also experiencing critically low blood supplies.

According to ASBP communications, blood donations are based on the four main components of blood itself: red blood cells, platelets, plasma and white blood cells, and transferable components derived. The entire donation process takes about one hour and 15 minutes; the actual donation of a pint of whole blood unit takes eight to 10 minutes. You must wait for at least eight weeks (56 days) between whole blood donations and donors can donate up to 6 times a year.

The ASBP proudly recognizes World Blood Donor Day. Celebrated every June 14 to raise awareness about the need for safe blood and blood products, World Blood Donor Day was established to raise awareness for the need of blood to that most at risk and to thank blood donors for their voluntary, life-saving gifts. ■

WORLD
JUNE 14
BLOOD DONOR DAY
Safe Blood Saves Lives



A Lasting Legacy

Houston MEPS



▲ Johnny Brown is pictured in Houston MEPS ceremony room. (Courtesy photo)

By U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Emmanuel Mamaril
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Nine months after his passing, Houston MEPS staff are still cherishing the legacy of one of their own. Johnny L. Brown, one of three lead human resources assistants at the Houston MEPS, was a beloved coworker and friend to many. Sadly, Brown passed away July 30, 2021, at age 64.

“Johnny Brown provided service to USMEPCOM for four decades,” said U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Christopher Sczapanik, Houston MEPS commander. “Over three of those decades, he walked the halls of the Houston MEPS in service to his nation.”

Brown proudly served as an active duty and reserve soldier and Department of the Defense civilian through much of his life. In December 1985, Brown became a military personnel clerk at Fort Sill, Okla. He was assigned as a military personnel clerk at Houston MEPS in early 1989 and became a human resources assistant in 2002. In 2007, after being promoted to lead human resources assistant, Brown was the subject matter expert for packet breakdown and served as the travel section’s accountable travel material disinterested witness. He often gave the shipper’s brief to applicants in the ceremony briefing room. With a total of five years

of active duty service and 16 years in the U.S. Army Reserve, Brown retired in 2005, as a chaplain assistant, with the rank of sergeant first class.

Brown was one of the most sought-after employees at the Houston MEPS by staff and recruiting partners alike. His strong work ethic and devotion to duty resulted in receiving an Achievement Medal for Civilian Service, numerous performance on-the-spot and time-off awards, and Houston MEPS Civilian of the Quarter for the 3rd quarter, 2004.

Faith was important to Brown. Janius Townsend-Norwood, Houston MEPS human resources assistant, described him as a “man of God.” An active member of Full Gospel Church of Love in Christ, Brown served faithfully as a board member, elder, usher, participated in worship and outreach services and wrote biblical poems to encourage others.

Warm, kind and enthusiastic are just a few ways his peers described him. For Brown, his compassion and ability to make his coworkers smile built lasting relationships with peers and service liaisons.

“I knew JB for over two decades,” said Benjamin Leviston, Houston MEPS human resources assistant. “When we met, the first thing I heard was his loud, boisterous voice and I knew from there we would get along. I could count on him when work needed to be done and I’m still trying to process losing one of my best friends.”

Brown continues to live on through his three daughters, three grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, four siblings, several nieces, nephews, countless other relatives and his Houston MEPS family.

Brown’s celebration of life service and visitation was held at Chapel of McCoy on Aug. 24, 2021, in Houston. Additionally, the Houston MEPS held a remembrance and dedication ceremony in his honor on Feb. 1, 2022, at the Houston MEPS. ■



APRIL IS THE
MONTH OF THE
MILITARY CHILD

we celebrate the military child!

