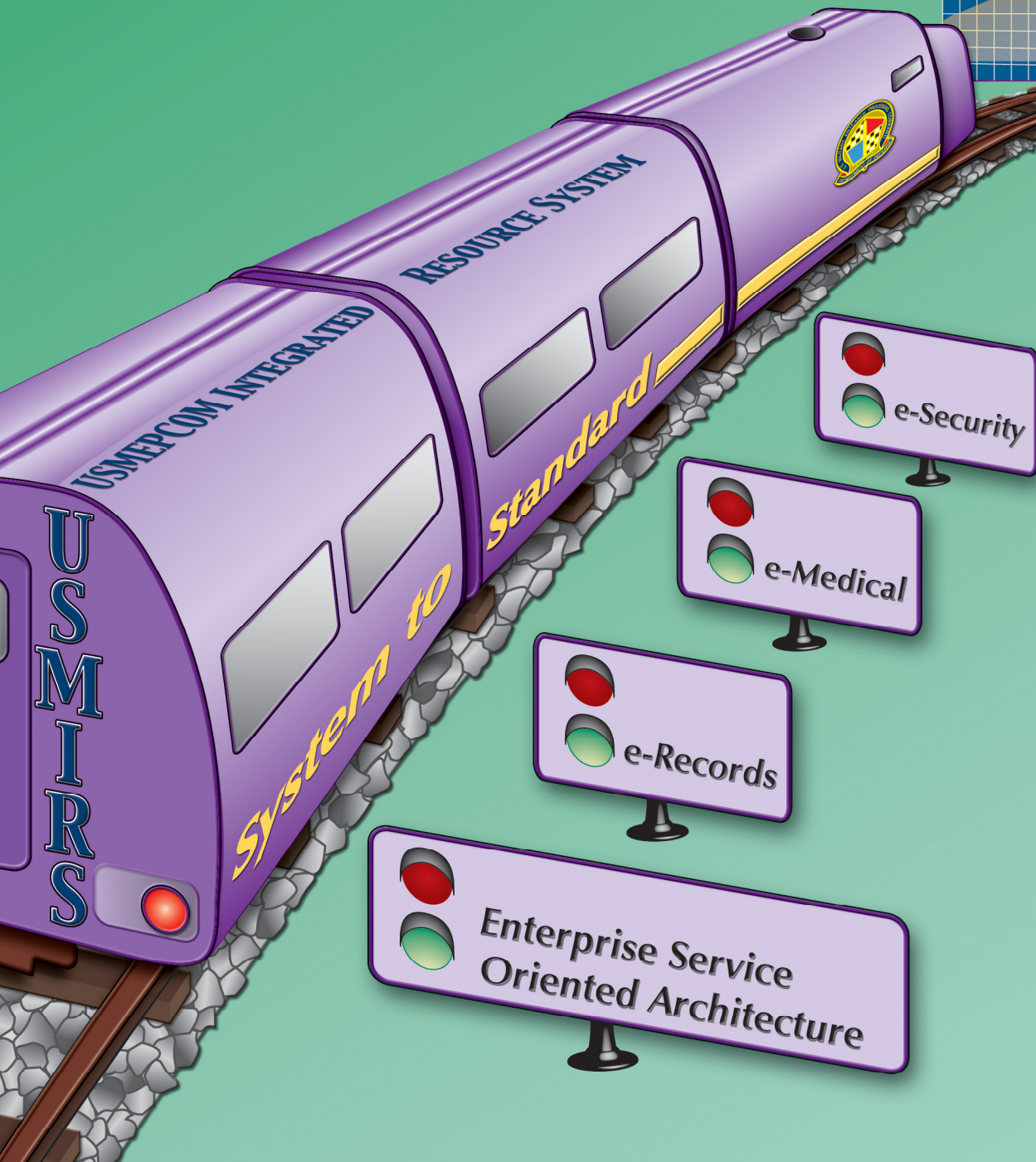
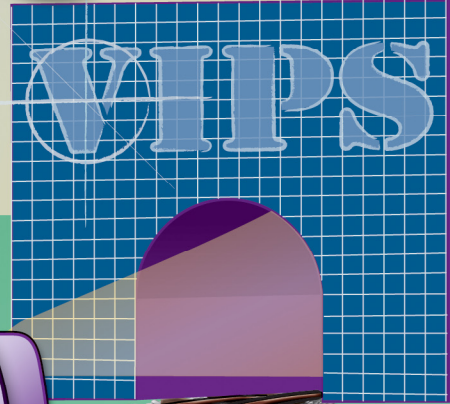


UNITED STATES MILITARY ENTRANCE PROCESSING COMMAND

Messenger

SHARING INFORMATION TO REACH A VISION

VOL. 30, No. 1



Messenger

Sharing information to reach a vision



**Miami
NCO leads
project that
reaches out
to Jamaican
youngsters**

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Standard**
— coming soon to a
MEPS near you
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Processing System will
revolutionize how the
command does business
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U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command

Col. Lon M. Yeary
Commander

Daniel R. Trew
Public Affairs Officer

Messenger

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Send submissions and changes to:

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

Magazine Staff

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

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

Amy Gregorski, Cover Designer

E-Mail: messenger@mepcom.army.mil
Fax: (847) 688-2664

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Commander's Commentary

This will be the last *Messenger* published while I'm in command and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the USMEPCOM family for what they do every day to make us successful.

USMEPCOM's mission is vitally important. Consequently, what you do is vitally important on several levels. First, from a national perspective, your work helps to ensure the rights of all Americans. Our forefathers did an unbelievable job authoring the Constitution. In it they guaranteed each and every American had certain unalienable rights which are guaranteed to all 300 million Americans. The Department of Defense is made up of approximately 3 million people, including Active Duty, National Guard, Reserve and civil servants. That means approximately 1 percent of the people of the United States make their livelihood in the defense of our great country. Each of you, as a part of the USMEPCOM family, is in that 1 percent. You ensure the brave young men and women entering the Armed Forces are capable of making the physical, emotional, and intellectual commitment to our country. You are, in essence, ensuring the future of America.

Secondly, you need to know that what you do is important on a personal level. Last year more than 600,000 men and women crossed the threshold of a MEPS somewhere in the United States. These people did not come to the MEPS looking for a minimum

wage part-time job. They came looking to make something of themselves and it will be a life-altering experience for them. You may help to process hundreds or even thousands of applicants each year, but you must always remember this will probably be the only time they will go through the process of joining the military. The time you take with each applicant may have an impact on their future in the military.

In this issue of the *Messenger* you will read about all the work on the future of USMEPCOM that has been developed during my tenure. The foundation for how we process applicants is changing. This magazine is devoted to explaining System to Standard, or StS, and the Virtual Interactive Processing System, or VIPS. The StS initiatives are near-term improvements which will begin this year. During March and April 2008, USMEPCOM will roll out prototypes for our e-record initiative in Milwaukee MEPS and e-security initiatives in Baltimore MEPS. VIPS is made up of long-term initiatives, which will change our business practices. VIPS is currently expected to be fully implemented by 2014. You will be a witness to the entire business process being re-engineered as these initiatives unfold. I hope you enjoy reading about StS and VIPS, and learning of the innovative ideas being incorporated into the processing of our applicants.



Col. Lon M. Yeary

In closing, it has been a privilege to serve as the commanding officer of the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command. I look forward to watching USMEPCOM's future success under the command of Colonel Mariano Campos, which begins April 10, 2008. Please give him the same great support you have given to me. It has been an honor serving with each and every one of you over the last three and a half years. I wish you continued success as you continue serving Freedom's Front Door.

Lon M. Yeary
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps
Commanding

On the right track



System to Standard about to roll into the station

By Skip Wiseman
Messenger Associate Editor

System to Standard will enable the USMEPCOM Integrated Resource System to perform all the tasks for which it was designed, now that funding and technology have caught up to the vision.

USMIRS, which was installed in 1995, has served the command well, according to Kevin Moore, chief information officer and director of information technology (J-6), but soon it will do all the things envisioned when it went on line.

"Unfortunately, due to funding and technology constraints, there were certain functional requirements that couldn't be met,"

he said. "MIRS could be used to process applicants, and it does that today.

"The current system we have — MIRS — was always supposed to have certain capabilities but we couldn't afford them and the technology wasn't there. Now we are going to bring our system to standard.

"The technology we're putting in place is more complex than the technology we have today, but from a user perspective, it's easier," Moore said. "An example is that the MIRS terminals are dumb terminals. You really can't do much with them. By the time we're done with StS, those MIRS terminals are all going to be replaced by PCs.

"In today's environment, one of the MEPS personnel might have a MIRS terminal on their desk, and when an applicant is there, it's fine," he said. "Then you have to get up and go to a different computer to do e-mail, what have you. In the near future, you're going to have a PC on your desk and you can do MIRS from a Web browser. You have e-mail on that computer, you've got Word on that computer, you've got everything you need to do more than just simply process applicants."

Moore said the PCs will allow the command to "quickly ramp up" in the event of a large mobilization. "We could throw more PCs into a MEPS and have more stations."

Moore compared the services' reaction

to StS to the movie "Field of Dreams" — "If you build it, they will come."

"We built the solution and now they're seeing the power of it and signing up to say, 'Wow, this is great stuff. We want in on this thing.'"

Moore also said the services didn't have to contribute to funding StS.

"We're doing this for MEPCOM," he said. "We're bringing our system to standard."

The initial planning and drive to secure funding for StS started under Col. David Slotwinski, former USMEPCOM commander, and the execution is taking place on the watch of the current commander, Col. Lon Yeary. StS is scheduled to be fully operational by the end of 2008.

StS will implement the final four parts originally envisioned in MIRS: Enterprise Service Oriented Architecture, e-Records, e-Medical and e-Security.

"If you combine those four initiatives," Moore said, "we are massively introducing the supporting capabilities that we always wanted, but never had the wherewithal — we have the funding now. And we didn't have the technology to do it. Now we do.

"We're starting them as pilots first at several MEPS and once we prove this out, that it is a great solution and works great, etc., we will further deploy those solutions throughout the entire command."

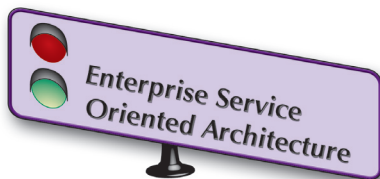
Tests on e-Records and e-Medical will be done at the Baltimore and Milwaukee MEPS. Tests on e-Security are in Baltimore, San Juan, Chicago, Milwaukee, Los Angeles and Honolulu. More e-Security test sites are needed because communications must be established between military entrance test sites and the MEPS.

“The original concept for the six beta sites was to cover what we wanted under the communications aspects of the MET sites,” said Ted Daniels, chief of the accession division in the operations directorate (J-3). “We don’t have connectivity today to the MET sites.”

eSOA will connect the recruiting services to MIRS, allow most data to be captured only once and reduce keystrokes, and allow full data sharing with service update authorities.

e-Records and e-Medical will reduce hard copy storage and handling and reduce the amount of paper in processing.

e-Security will positively identify applicants and allow for electronic applicant tracking, and replace “wet” signatures with biometric signatures.



eSOA was previously known as Data Exchange/Top of System Interface Process, or DE/TOSIP

“The bottom line is, it gives us the capability to exchange data with whoever needs it,” Moore said. “If we want them to have it, we don’t even need to worry about specifically configuring anything for them to get it. Once we grant them permission, they can basically do it all on their own without compromising us or anything else.”

eSOA gives the recruiting services total access, Daniels said, and allows the services to make changes electronically.

“That’s why everybody is signing up to play in the process,” he said. “We want everybody on board because there are a lot of things we can do to help ourselves here. One of the biggest advantages for the services is it allows them to do electronic changes. They don’t have to fill out paperwork anymore or call the counselor at the MEPS.

“Another thing is we don’t need to see a DEP (delayed entry program) discharge order to free up an applicant to process for another service,” Daniels said. “They can

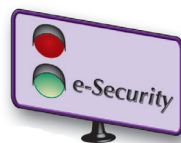


Screen shot of the e-security MEPS enrollment as it will appear when StS is implemented.

just do that electronically. They can manage their own DEP and just let us know when an individual has been DEP discharged.”

Recruiters will also be able to make changes to data fields that don’t affect contracts.

“Why do I have to have him come over and write it on a piece of paper?” Daniels said. “Just let them update it in their system They’re responsible for that.”



“The goal is to enroll an individual at the first point of contact at USMEPCOM,” Moore said. “That can be at a MEPS or a MET site. The first time we see an individual and they get ready to take the ASVAB ... the goal is to capture their biometrics and their facial photo and enroll them in the system so we know the person who took the test, who said this is their social security number, here are their fingerprints and facial biometrics. They can’t change that.

“Then when they show up to continue to process through the MEPS, the first thing we’re going to tell them to do is put their biometrics in and we can determine this is who this person says they are,” Moore said. Biometrics will help track applicants as they process.

“How do we do it now?” Moore asked. “We check some form of ID and we throw a little sticky label on their shirt with a bar code on it.”

Biometrics will ensure positive identification through fingerprints and the facial

photo, which is much more than just an electronic snapshot.

“That photo is actually converted into electrons to the point where we can utilize facial recognition software to make a determination that, yes, that is the same person we saw before,” Moore said. “Then you combine that with the person’s index fingerprints and now we really have a very good idea that this is the same person we saw the first time.

“When they get to certain locations they put their (biometrics) down, their file comes up and we automatically know who they are.”

Even though biometrics will be used to identify applicants, they will continue to wear name tags for a number of reasons. First, they will serve as visual identifiers, indicating that the person is authorized to be in the MEPS. It will also allow the MEPS staff to address people by name, which is more personal. Finally, the name tags will still have bar codes on them and can be used as a backup if the primary equipment isn’t working properly.

“The third piece is enabling an individual to electronically sign a contract through biometrics,” Moore said.

Daniels said the command originally considered digitized signature blocks similar to those used for credit card purchases at retailers, but decided to switch to biometrics when they became available. He said the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, played a large role in the command adopting biometrics.

“When 9/11 occurred we felt like we really needed to hang a lot of things on biometrics to identify people and make sure they’re

DD FORM 4/1 - 4/2

SSN: 444 4444 SFF: DFR P A M D E H * 0 DOA: 2002-12-18

DOB: 1981-06-11 Trans Code: PMS: Days: 0000 DMDC: N

P-HEPS: RID: 4

LAST TRANS: D006F * D006S

Last: TEST RECORD First: TEST Middle: Suffix:

Street: TEST ADDRESS City: CRYSTAL LAKE State: IL Zip: 60014 Code: 0000

STATUS LINE: READ ONLY RECORD OWNED BY ASB

ITEM 4: Place of Enlistment: DOE:

ITEM 8: Years: Weeks: Pay Grade: Annexes:

ITEM 9A: DEP Report by: on for Years Weeks

ITEM 9B: Remarks (If Any): NONE

ITEM 16: State Guard:

ITEM 17: Years: Months: Days:

ITEM 21B: Service Counselor:

ITEM 23B: Enlistment Officer:

ENTER SSN Record: 1/1 Insert

Ver. Rev. 10 14 Oct 07 OCT 2002

User's view of the first phase in processing an e-signature.

the right people to go down range, that the same person goes down range," he said.

The capture devices for biometric fingerprints are about the size of a computer mouse. The camera is self-focusing and automatic. Laptops, biometric capture devices and digital cameras will be available at MET sites, as well as the MEPS. The command has already renegotiated contracts with the Office of Personnel Management to use the devices at the MET sites, Daniels said.

"You can walk into the room and the camera will automatically start capturing your facial image," Daniels said. "As soon as it gets locked in — I think it's about 30-36 inches once you step in from of the camera — it's automatically taking pictures.

All the biometric data will be matched to the applicant's social security number.

"We've matched everything up to socials," Daniels said. "When we validate the social security numbers, we also are tying you to the quality of the personal information that's being provided by doing background checks.

"You can change your social, but you can't change the biometrics," he said. "If you try to change your social, the biometrics will say, 'This individual has been enrolled under a different social in the past.' If it's a bad social, i.e., a keystroke error or it failed to get verified with the Social Security Administration, we have a recovery process.

We'll allow some of the people in the MEPS to review the gold standard documents, like the Social Security card, and go in and straighten it out."

Biometric signatures are just as valid as "wet" signatures, and might even be more precise.

"The same requirements apply," Daniels said. "It can be verified. It's under the signer's sole control, so if I sign or give you a biometric, it's under my control. It's unique to the individual. And then the documents are protected from change after they're signed.

"We encrypt the date and time stamp and we will actually show the biometric on the contract when it's signed and put a photograph on there," he said. "All that is encrypted so you can't change it. The only way to change it is to delete the entire record, start over and go through the signing process again.

"Let's say that after the contract's been signed the applicant takes a look and says, 'That's not right.'" Daniels said. "We would go back in and start the process all over.

"We've already updated the federal registry that we're going

to capture biometrics on the individual to process them for enlistment into military service," Daniels said. "We've updated the privacy act statements to say biometric images will be captured."

The system will also eliminate the writer's cramp enlisting officers might get signing contracts after an enlistment ceremony.

"Today, they sign each one with a wet signature," Daniels said. "Tomorrow, they sign them all with biometrics and they can sign them all at one time because we'll enroll them in the system so the system can always recognize by biometrics who that swearing in officer is."

The enlisting officer's signature block will automatically be included on the form.

"I don't have to run down to the control desk and say Lieutenant Such and Such or Captain Such and Such is sick today, so the new swearing in officer is ... Just go to the ceremony room, put your biometric down and the system will know who you are and draft the contract right," Daniels said.



Two of the biggest changes under e-Records are that it will greatly reduce data entry and that all of the current files will be converted into electronic images. In the future, packets will be sorted electronically



Davis Gray sets up a briefing on StS at the Milwaukee MEPS, one of the beta sites for the system. Tom Buehring and Sgt. 1st Class Demetric Davis, at left, are two of the functional project leads for StS.

and automatically printed in the proper order. The system will be PC based, rather than using MIRS terminals, which means more personal computers in the MEPS.

"We want to turn all the files rooms into images," Kathy Callen, senior management analyst in the operation directorate's (J-3) accession division, said.

The process, called back file conversion, will be done with high-speed scanners and should take 12-18 months. All the documents will be saved as PDF files.

"Each MEPS will get two very, very large high-production scanners to support the back file conversion process and peak processing," Callen said. "Then there will be three others that will go in testing, medical and processing. They can handle almost as much as the high-production ones, except the high-production scanners can handle just flopping down 500 (documents). You can put five reams of paper in there, so it can handle anything you want to produce. Everything is a single pass through, double sided scan."

Daniels said people frequently asked about e-Records creating more work while eliminating jobs, but, "We think it's going to be a wash.

"There is probably going to be a change in the way the MEPS operates under this process," he said. "In other words, you don't have a files room any more, so you don't have resources having to file the applicants'

packets. Those individuals can move over and manage the scanning process."

Callen concurred.

"Somebody still has to manage the electrons," she said. "Everything doesn't go and whiz-bang up by itself. You still need user intervention. We also saw that people who did packet breakdown yesterday can now continue to process applicants."

The same scanners will be used to create electronic copies of original documents such as birth certificates and marriage licenses so they can be included in electronic applicant packets.

"They will scan them in and create an applicant packet," Callen said. "What you see on a shelf right now, all the paper, will be an electronic packet. There were eight more PCs ordered for every MEPS to support expansion of e-Medical, e-Security and e-Records."

The PCs will feature 24-inch monitors and allow the operator to view documents on the screen rather than flipping through paper.

"Today they have to go to the file room and dig out all the copies," Daniels said. "If I have 50 people on deck, I have to go find 50 packets. Tomorrow I don't have to do that. I just enter the social and the record comes up."

The first goal, according to Moore, is to reduce keystrokes.

"Right now, the liaisons will type things into their system and then turn around and have to type it into MIRS," he said. "System to Standard will make it so they don't have to retype anything.

"When an applicant gets to a station, like medical after going through the control desk, the applicant puts their biometrics down and all the data on that applicant pops right up," Moore said.

e-Records will eliminate copying and sorting shipper packets. High-speed printers will make the work flow more quickly.

"Once all the packets are assembled and the documents have been scanned, the MEPS operator can hit a button and the packets are automatically sorted and printed in the right order," Daniels



Photo by Art Heintz

“ “
**In the near future
 you're going to have
 a PC on your desk
 and you can do MIRS
 from a Web browser.**

Kevin Moore
 on System to Standard

” ”

said. "You can just walk over, get them out of the tray, put them in an envelope, write the address on it and off it goes."

That eliminates hours of copying and organizing the packets, Callen said.

Policy changes go hand-in-hand with the initiative, Daniels said.

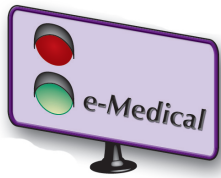
"We're going to seek some policy changes with the reception centers to say, 'Look, this is how you're going to start getting packets from us,'" Daniels said. "By that, I mean we're envisioning the MEPS taking the DEP packets for all the shippers the day prior and scanning those into the system.

"I'll scan those through and add the forms that are generated like the contract, updating the inspect information and a few other service forms that are generated the next day," he said. "I'll just scan those through and lay those down on top of the packet so I don't have the MEPS sorting through 70 pages trying to find a place for that. It's going to become pretty slick and efficient."

Eventually, the information will be transmitted electronically, so even the printing won't be necessary. Daniels said the high speed printers are needed to provide a short-



Eladio Valdez and Dawn Yoshii review documents before placing them in a scanner.



term solution.

Although e-Medical and e-Records go hand in hand, the focus on the medical side of the house is more on being able to manipulate and transfer data, rather than file transfer, according to Col. (Dr.) Johnie Tillman, the command surgeon (J-7).

“In order for the medical part of StS to be foundationally solid, tied into everything else MEPCOM is doing, I have said that we will not go faster than e-Records,” he said. “When e-Records develops its particular piece, then e-Medical will follow. My software requirement specifications are more attuned to data transfer than to image transfer.”

Tillman said his ideal system “would cost a lot more money than we have.

“I didn’t want us to get to the point that we were spending all the money allocated to StS and at the same time lose the ability to have some functionality in place with the first part of the StS release, and that would be e-Records,” he said. “As money becomes available, we can expand the e-Medical piece so we can have the data entry.”

Tillman said the hope is that StS could “very well be a technical demonstration” of the capabilities the command would have when the Virtual Interactive Processing



Kathy Callen, senior management analyst, Ted Daniels, chief of the accession division, and Donald Roth, health technician at the Milwaukee MEPS, review documents during a Management Assistance Training Implementation Team visit.

System is implemented.

Another major change is that the three medical forms have been restructured so they can be fed into the system and the data can be pulled off the forms electronically. Eventually, all the forms will be completed electronically.

DD Form 2807-1, the medical history form; DD Form 2807-2 the prescreening form; and DD Form 2808, the medical ex-

amination form; have all been revamped.

One of the main benefits of the electronic forms, Tillman said, is that the MEPS will be able to retain electronic copies of the forms in case they have to be reviewed later. The records are currently sent to another organization and subsequently destroyed.

If for instance, an applicant is medically discharged or was discharged because of a condition that existed prior to service and

Training visits key in implementing StS

Any new system means people will have to learn to use it, and StS is no different.

The Management Assistance Training Implementation Team has trained the people at the test sites and established a plan to make sure everyone knows what they’re doing when the system goes on line across the command.

A representative from each cluster will learn how to do a training session and implement the program in their clusters.

“We’re looking at trying to get the training course done within a five-day window,” Daniels said. “We have what we call train the trainer. We can’t send people out to every MEPS, so we’re going to have to train some MEPS staff. That will run about two and one-half days. Then

we’ll run two days of actual user hands-on training on how to operate the system. By Friday, we’ll have them in a position where they’ll want to go live. “They will go back to their MEPS and do the training there and implement, say e-Records,” he said. “Once they’ve got it implemented they will call their cluster MEPS and representatives from the MEPS will come in and get trained and observe the process. Then they’ll go back and train their staff and implement the program.”

Trip reports on the MATIT visits already completed are available on the MEPNET. They include all the questions asked during the visits and provide more details. They are under the MOP System to Standard section.

— Skip Wiseman



Kathy Callen and Ted Daniels go over StS materials during a training visit to the Milwaukee MEPS.



Eladio Valdez logs into StS in the “virtual MEPS” where equipment is tested.

later wants to enlist again, the MEPS chief medical officer can review the original documents rather than start from scratch.

“With StS,” Tillman said, “I’ll be able to go back and look at the actual physical we did on that individual the first time around. We don’t have that ability right now.”

USMEPCOM will eventually be able to connect its database to those of the services.

“We should be able to connect the two databases so that when the CMO is looking at an individual who was discharged from the service because of an EPTS condition, he can query over into the EPTS database and, compare it with what we have in our database, and have a better picture of whether or not that individual is truly qualified for military service,” Tillman said. “In the future, we’re going to have two database systems that should be able to connect to one another and give us a better picture of an applicant’s ability to complete service.”

Another key is being able to tie into the Armed Forces Health Longitudinal Technology Application, known as AHLTA and the Department of Veterans Affairs’ Veterans Integrated System Technology Architecture, called VISTA.

“One of the things we hope will happen, and we may be able to see it once StS has gone on line, is that we will be able to take the information we gain at the MEPS

and transfer it over to the services into their medical databases,” Tillman said.

Once the process is fully operational, the command should be able to transfer medical files to the services electronically.

“We’ll probably have an easier way of doing that because AHLTA is now across the services,” Tillman said. “There is one central office that will be managing AHLTA and the health records for all the uniformed services, so all we do is send it there.”

Tillman said parts of the system are already in place.

“Right now, if I go over to the Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes, they can pull up information that was put into the system when I was at Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii.

The VISTA and AHLTA will also be able to transfer data in the future, Tillman said. That effort is important because DoD and the VA have partnered to provide health care.

The command will have a better understanding of precisely where e-Medical is headed after the system is tested.

“The challenge is the StS initiative as it is currently being developed focuses on a scanning solution which allows PDF-type images to be loaded into a database from which we can retrieve this information,” he said. “We want to have the ability to input the data, store the data and retrieve the data. On the e-Medical side, we had more of a

Project leads available to answer questions

People with questions are welcome to contact the functional project lead for each area of System to Standard. They are:

Enterprise Service Oriented Architecture

Thomas Buehring
(847) 688-3680, Ext. 7514
E-mail: thomas.buehring@mepcom.army.mil

e-Records (e-Medical)

Sgt. 1st Class
Demetric Davis
E-mail: demetric.davis@mepcom.army.mil
(847) 688-3680, Ext. 7166

e-Security

Lloyd McKinney
E-mail: lloyd.mckinney@mepcom.army.mil
(847) 688-3680, Ext. 7521

focus on data transfer than completed file transfer.”

Tillman explained the difference between e-Records’ goal of eliminating the files room and e-Medical’s objective.

“When we started looking at what we want to do in e-Medical, it’s not eliminating the files that are there,” he said. “It’s taking the information we get from those files and putting it into a database storage capability where we can retrieve that information.”

I hear VIPS a comin'



Command takes first steps to revolutionize applicant processing

While the train that is System to Standard roars down the tracks, the jet that will be the Virtual Interactive Processing System is still on the drawing board.

VIPS, which is planned to be operational in 2014, will revolutionize the way USMEPCOM does business, according to Kevin Moore, the command's director of information technology (J-6) and chief information officer.

The first step in establishing the requirements for VIPS is business process re-engineering. The command has completed the first phase — examining and documenting how it operates today, which is known as the “as is” process. It is currently exploring how it wants to do things in the future, called the “to be” process.

“We had to double check (how we do business),” Moore said. “We’ve been

doing it for so long, everyone thinks they know it, but we discovered we’ve changed some things over the years. We do things a little differently. There are some places in processing where people will make phone calls to another organization to get something done. That business process hadn’t been captured before. Now we captured it.

“Now that we’ve done that, we are moving into the ‘to be’ process, what the future business is going to look like,” he said. “That’s going to take us until about April.”

The process involves members of the headquarters staff, representatives from the MEPS and other subject matter experts to determine how the MEPS will operate in the future. Recruiters and trainers will also take part, Moore said, “because it is a global accession process.

“Once we’ve completed the BPR, then we’ll move into the specific requirements needed to actually support the re-engineering,” Moore said. “Once we know what the technology is supposed to do, then

the program manager is going to go out and develop a solution that does what we need it to do.”

How much impact will VIPS have? Today, USMEPCOM processes 485,000 applicants who spend a collective 1,018,000 days in the MEPS to yield 243,000 shippers. With VIPS the numbers are projected to drop to 250,000 applicants spending 500,000 days in the MEPS to produce 235,000 shippers.

Today, 95 percent of the enlistment workload is performed in a command facility. With VIPS, it might be possible for an applicant to complete an enlistment test and do medical pre-screening, background checks and waiver pre-screening without ever setting foot in a MEPS or MET site. A validation enlistment test, tailored medical exam, biometric verification, DEP in and job confirmation, and enlistment and shipping would take place at a MEPS.

Moore envisions a time when a young person could be watching a football game, see a recruiting commercial for one of the armed services, go to that service’s Web site, click on a link to USMEPCOM and provide information to get pre-qualified.

“None of this is locked in stone yet,” Moore said, “but this is kind of the vision we see. Once the person hits that send button and they’ve authorized us, we will actually go out and start the background checks and do the checks on what’s going on with them medically.

Right now the program is at the “what if we could do this?” stage.



Partners from all organizations involved in accessions, from recruiting to training, take part in the outbrief after USMEPCOM completed documenting its “as is” processes.
Photos by Skip Wiseman

“How would you do it if you had no restrictions?” Moore asked. “Then you boil that down to ‘There are some restrictions we can’t overcome.’ There are certain statutes that we’re not going to be able to change.

“Then you have to go backwards,” Moore said. “You almost have to stop and say, ‘OK, we can’t do it this way because

Congress won’t lift this statute.’ Those are the things we take into consideration. We’re not looking at solutions yet. We’re simply saying if we could do it however we wanted, how would we do it?”

Moore stressed that StS and VIPS are separate programs.

“We’re not doing StS so we can do VIPS,” he said. “StS is all by itself. It has a specific reason. We need things *now*. We need to positively track people and identify them *now*. We need to exchange data better than ever before — *now*.

“VIPS is going to have some requirements to positively track and identify an individual as well as pass data,” he said. “Those requirements are there, but the technical solution might not be the same, so VIPS doesn’t need StS and vice versa. VIPS is not built on StS.

“VIPS is a bona fide acquisition program that has joint interest,” Moore said. “It has been approved at the highest levels in the Department of Defense.”

The command might be able to leverage some of the leading edge technology in StS for use in VIPS, Moore said, but it’s too early to tell.

After all, the VIPS jet hasn’t even started flight testing. Who knows how fast and far it will fly?

— Skip Wiseman

Command announces VIPS logo contest winner

USMEPCOM announced the winner of the Virtual Interactive Processing System logo contest. Amy Gregorski of Headquarters submitted the winning entry (at right).

The deadline for the contest was Dec. 31. A panel met in January to choose the winning entry. The panel submitted their results to the USMEPCOM commander for his approval.

Military members and civilian



VIRTUAL INTERACTIVE PROCESSING SYSTEM

employees assigned to USMEPCOM were eligible to enter.



A young girl clutches her bag of school supplies. Recruiters donated bags so the items were easier to carry.

From the heart

Miami MEPS NCO gathers, delivers school supplies for Jamaican youngsters

By Skip Wiseman
Messenger Associate Editor

The kids needed school supplies and Master Sgt. Steven Jeffrey wasn't going to see them do without.

Jeffrey, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the medical section at the Miami MEPS, knows all about the grinding poverty in Jamaica. He was born there, lived in the Cedar Valley area of Saint Thomas and moved to Brooklyn when he was 10.

"I can honestly tell you, I walked barefoot most of my life until I came to America." He lived with his grandmother who came here in the 1970s and worked three or four jobs at a time to help her family members move to the United States and live a better life.

Jeffrey's father, 10 brothers and sisters, and a "whole bunch of nieces and nephews" are still in Jamaica, so he visits two or three times a year.

"Every time I go down there, I wonder what I can do to help," he said. "You have kids who can't afford a pen or pencil to go back to school. That bothers me. I have to help these kids."

With the help of Sgt. 1st Class Stanley Marion, the operations NCOIC, Jeffrey placed large barrels in the MEPS and asked for donations.

His co-workers, the liaisons, recruiters and other tenants in the building responded by donating nearly 500 pounds of books and school supplies.

"People donated thousands of books and pencils within two weeks, Jeffrey said. "The donations from the MEPS, the folks next door and the liaison were awesome."

“It was a beautiful thing,” Lt. Cmdr. Richard Pokropski, Miami MEPS commander, said. “People went out and bought supplies. We’re right down here by Jamaica (about 300 miles away), so it’s not too hard for us.”

Jeffrey paid for his own plane ticket and, with Pokropski’s help, managed to get the supplies to those who needed them.

“We did up a letter for the airline and asked them not to charge for the extra weight because it was a charitable donation,” Pokropski said.

Because the whole project had come together in just a few weeks, there were some hurdles to clear.

“I went through a little bit of hassle with customs,” Jeffrey said. “It took three days to clear. Then I only had three days to go through the Department of Finance. They cut the charges so it was a total of about \$20 U.S.”

All that remained was to put up some fliers advertising the event and setting up a distribution point. The response was overwhelming.

“I didn’t think so many kids would turn out because of the short notice,” Jeffrey said. “When I saw the line, I said, ‘Man, I’m in trouble.’ I thought I was going to help one school, but ended up with several schools. I started out giving out three or four books to each kid and had to cut it back.”

In all, the 13-year Army veteran ended

up helping 300 to 350 students, with a big assist from his friends and co-workers back in Miami.

And he’s not done yet.

He’s scrounging around for some used computers so he can take them to Jamaica and set up a computer lab for the students.

“It’s a third-world country,” Jeffrey said. “A computer is a new thing there. Most kids have never even seen a keyboard, let alone a computer. My intention is to do this for as long as I can. Even if I leave Miami, I plan to have a (point of contact) so we can coordinate and keep making this happen.”



A volunteer hands out school supplies to Jamaican students.



Some of the hundreds of students aided by a Miami MEPS project wait patiently to get pens, pencils, books and other school supplies.

“ You have kids who can’t afford a pen or pencil to go back to school. That bothers me. I have to help these kids. ”
Master Sgt. Steven Jeffrey

CLASS is in session for Miami teens

By Capt. Barrcary Lane

Lt. Cmdr. Richard Pokropski, Miami MEPS commander, met with Miami-Dade School Officials in April to discuss new ways to enrich the lives of some of Miami's youth.

Dr. Michelle Ferguson, the career program coordinator for Miami Dade Schools, and Pokropski formed a partnership to develop a six-week student enrichment program. The curriculum would include career exploration, leadership training and intense physical exercise. This interagency ambassadorship program was called Committed Learners Always Striving for Success, or CLASS.

The young ladies from John A. Ferguson and William H. Turner Tech High Schools arrived at Miami-Dade College's outdoor track and field for the first day of physical training. The following Miami MEPS trainers met the women: Pokropski, Capt. Barrcary Lane, Capt. Tarnesha Covington, Master Sgt. Ervin Ramos, Sgt. 1st Class Stanley Marion, Ivania Chavarria, Petty Officer 2nd Class Brady Simpson, Sgt. Edgar Martinez and Petty Officer 2nd Class Andre Mattis.

Ramos said the intent of the physical fitness portion of CLASS was to teach the young women about overcoming obstacles through teamwork and perseverance. Every morning, they faced multiple challenges in



A CLASS member works out in the gym.



Ivania Chavarria, Miami MEPS secretary, (front right) leads a run.

the form of calisthenics, physical exercises, swimming and various team-building competitions.

Leaders such as Martinez and Simpson taught them to never say, "I quit" or "I can't," but instead to say, "I can" and "I will." The MEPS trainers and the CLASS members developed an agreement of, "We will not give up on you, and you will not give up on yourself."

In addition to physical training, CLASS members received one-on-one counseling from career specialists to explore their personal career goals. A tour of the Miami MEPS showed them how applicants are evaluated and processed for military service. Covington, the Miami MEPS operations officer, administered the Student ASVAB and post-test interpretation.

"A lot of the ladies appreciated the career exploration portion of the test," Covington said, "and they realized what careers aligned with their assets and personalities."

After six weeks, they were ready for graduation. The last day of physical training took place at the Ferguson High School gymnasium in South Miami. Colonel Barrye Price, Eastern Sector commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Darlene Hagood, Eastern Sector command sergeant major, attended that morning to show their support for the group. Price and Hagood presented them with one final challenge — a furious "no holds barred" dodgeball match, in which Price used his 6'4" frame to launch rockets while the teenagers ran for cover. It took them three games, but the teens finally won and had plenty of fun in the process.

The CLASS graduation ceremony was a truly touching event. As the students received their graduation certificates and gave their testimonials, they were overcome

with emotions. One graduate, Rona Gourdet from William H. Turner Tech High School, explained how Ivania Chavarria, a MEPS trainer, worked with her every morning and wouldn't let her quit during exercises. Gourdet lost eight pounds through CLASS, and she continues to meet with Chavarria on Sundays for personal work-out sessions. Rona now has her entire family involved in physical fitness.

One by one, the students expressed their gratitude to the personnel of the Miami MEPS.



A CLASS graduate tells how the program helped her.

“Each of these young ladies realize that we are here today to celebrate the fact that they were able to start and finish an extremely difficult six-week challenge,” Pokropski said. “The CLASS program has planted seeds of self-confidence, self-respect and perseverance in each of the graduates.

The personnel of the Miami MEPS felt honored to have been a part of CLASS. We will take full advantage of our new partnership with the Miami-Dade School District to continue to make a difference in the community.

Miami MEPS will continue to spread its creed: Family, Leadership, Ambassadorship and Growth.”



Col. Barry Price, Eastern Sector commander (far left) prepares to launch during a game of dodgeball with CLASS participants.

UNUSUAL ENLISTMENTS

Brothers ship off to boot camp together

Three more members of the Nelson family shipped off to basic training recently. Twin brothers Justin and Anthony, 19, and their brother Marcus, 18, all left the New Orleans MEPS en route to Navy basic training and then nuclear training.

Getting the nuclear rate was not too difficult for the Nelsons as Justin scored a 90 on the ASVAB and Anthony scored a 93.

Their family has a history of military service — the brothers follow in the footsteps of their parents and older brother.

The boys' father, Tracy Nelson, is a sergeant first class in the Army, currently stationed at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base New Orleans and recently returned from a deployment to Iraq.

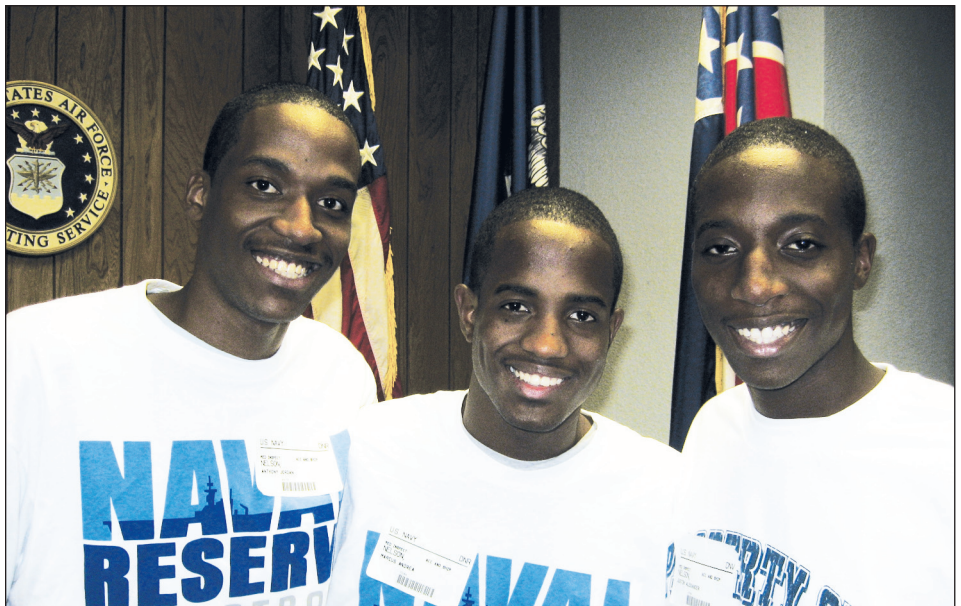
Lynette Nelson, the boys' mother, also served in the active duty Army — and she and her husband met while they were in advanced individual training.

Older brother Christian Hunter, 21, shipped off to Navy basic training in February and is currently an information technology specialist deployed to Bahrain. Younger sister Jessica, 17, is currently in the Navy delayed entry program and will enter the Naval Reserve after she completes high school.

Anthony, who is 15 minutes older, and Justin spent two years at Southeastern Louisiana University before deciding to enlist in the Navy.

Interestingly, the twins have never been separated since birth. After slacking off in college, the twins' father suggested they join the military to gain some direction.

Anthony decided to specialize in nuclear warfare because, if he was going to join the Navy, he wanted “to go all the way.” His



Left to right: Anthony, Marcus and Justin Nelson continued a family tradition of service to the nation by joining the Navy.

goal is to attend “A” school and he feels that the Navy is a good opportunity for him and his brothers to distinguish themselves. Justin said he is going to “bring ‘nucs’ in style” and sought the challenge inherent in specializing in the rate.

Besides his love for his country, Marcus decided to join the Navy because he wanted some life experience before attending college and appreciated the financial and education benefits the Navy offers. Even though he is the youngest brother, Marcus was the first in the family to choose to join the Navy.

Growing up in a military family, the family of five children leaned on each other for support.

The four brothers and one sister are extremely close and consider one another their best friends. The Nelson sons, known for their laughter and good-hearted humor, give their parents credit for raising them in a loving, Christian environment.

Anthony, Justin, and Marcus all enjoy playing sports, especially basketball. Besides sports, Anthony also enjoys video games and keeping abreast of current events; Justin enjoys cooking and playing chess; and Marcus plays the piano and keyboard, sings and raps.

Anthony, Justin, and Marcus eagerly await the Navy challenges in store for them while their parents remain extremely proud of their service-oriented children.

Baltimore celebrates a very early Christmas

Christmas carols in July? This was probably the most-asked question by visitors and applicants who walked into the Baltimore MEPS in July. Even after reading the arching title, “Christmas in July” over the lighted Christmas tree, decorated with bright yellow sun flowers, small American flags, beach sandals and other summery ornaments in the lobby area, many still looked puzzled.

It was the same puzzled look Petty Officer 1st Class Felecia Wilson, MEPS Readiness Support Group coordinator, gave Lt. Col. Robert Larsen, MEPS commander, a year earlier when he explained the concept of Christmas in July to her.

During their first RSG meeting in July 2006, Wilson asked Larsen what he expected of her as RSG leader.

Larsen laid the groundwork for the Christmas in July project. He made the point that most people donated to the less fortunate during Christmas because of the tradition of giving during the holiday season.

“That is great,” he said, “but what happens during the rest of the year? Can you imagine the look on a homeless child’s face if Santa would show up six months early?”

Baltimore changed the MEPS’ atmosphere July 13 to capture the spirit of Christmas in July.

“The event isn’t a time to receive, but a time to give,” said Lynn Davis, a reporter from the Fort Meade newspaper *Soundoff!*, who featured the Baltimore MEPS event in an article in the July 27 newspaper.

Wilson explained the project.

“Our goal was to inspire and encourage

others to make a positive difference by donating toys, clothes, food and other items needed to maintain activities of daily living for a shelter in our local community,” she said.

Festive donation boxes were placed at three building entrances. A wish list was provided and e-mails were forwarded to the Interservice Recruiting Committee asking for their support. The response was tremendous! One good Samaritan bought 16 backpacks and filled each one with school supplies.

MEPS members researched several shelters in the Washington, D.C., and Baltimore Metro area. That led them to Sarah’s House, located less than a mile from the MEPS.

Sarah’s House provides emergency shelter for as many as 66 people and transitional housing for 22 families. As a supportive housing program for homeless families, Sarah’s House is much more than just a safe place to sleep.

According to Angela Murray, resource manager for Sarah’s House, the organization’s goal is to effect positive change in the

families they serve by providing parenting classes and workshops, employment programs, licensed child care, counseling, and transportation.

The programs are all aimed at helping guests achieve independence and strengthen their families.

On August 8, Santa Claus (MEPS

employee Alicia Martin), Larsen, Wilson, Petty Officer 2nd Class Don Miller and family member Richmond Wilson delivered a pickup truck load of “goodies” from the Baltimore MEPS family to the families at Sarah’s House.

“We were given a tour of the day care center at Sarah’s House,” Petty Officer Wilson said. “We were impressed with the hospitality of the staff, but the cleanliness and warmth throughout the facility left us in awe.”

Miller, an expectant father, got some practice, and Larsen a well-needed refresher course on how to hold the babies. Some of the babies got their first pictures with Santa six months early, and Petty Officer Wilson no longer had to imagine the looks on the faces of the kids to see Santa in July. She saw it, and yes, she shed a few tears.

“It was an exhilarating moment for all of us,” she said. “Christmas in July will definitely become an annual event here at Baltimore MEPS. We felt that we made a positive difference and can’t wait to do it again next year. We hope to inspire the rest of the MEPS families to join us is making this a MEPCOM family tradition.”



Petty Officer 2nd Class Don Miller, an expectant father, gets some parenting practice.



Santa visits with youngsters at Sarah’s House.

Congressman drops in on Memphis MEPS

By Capt. Michael Ozols
Memphis MEPS Operations Officer

It's not every day that a United States Congressman drops into your office to see how things are going, but that is exactly what happened when Rep. Steve Cohen dropped by the Memphis MEPS in July.

Cohen represents the Memphis district in the U.S. House of Representatives and was back in Memphis while Congress was in recess for the July 4th holiday. During the recess, he had been out and about in the community visiting various places and meeting and greeting his constituents. He decided to visit the MEPS while he was in the area.

Upon arriving at the MEPS, Cohen was greeted by Maj. Gregory James, the MEPS commander. After a brief introduction, he was ushered into the ceremony room to meet with applicants awaiting shipment to basic training. Cohen first spoke to the applicants, saying he was "proud of their service" and the "commitment that they were about to make in defending our great country."

When Cohen finished speaking to the applicants, James called the room to attention and administered the Oath of Enlistment to them.



Congressman Steve Cohen addresses applicants before an enlistment ceremony.

After the ceremony, James gave Cohen a tour of the facility. During the tour, Cohen met the staff in medical, processing and the liaison offices. He asked questions about how things worked at the MEPS and what their specific jobs were. All the employees were happy to share their experiences with

a congressman.

At the end of the tour, Cohen thanked James for taking time out of his busy schedule to show him around. He said he enjoyed the visit and learned a lot about how the MEPS conducts business processing applicants into the armed forces.

Shreveport MEPS hosts Air Force four star general

It was "Mission Day" and it started just like any other Friday. It was another unforgiving hot muggy August day.

Col. Lon Yeary, USMEPCOM commander, Command Sgt. Maj. William Lindo, USMEPCOM senior enlisted advisor, Maj. Steven Downey, Shreveport MEPS commander, and Capt. Jason Sopko, Shreveport MEPS operations officer, were putting the finishing touches on a VIP briefing for Gen. William R. Looney III, commander of the Air Force's Air Education and Training Command.

Looney is responsible for recruiting, training and educating Air Force people. His command includes the

Air Force Recruiting Service, two numbered air forces, Air University, and more than 9,200 active duty members, Reservists, Air National Guardsmen, civilians and contractors, and 1,750 trainer fighter and mobility aircraft.

The general wanted to see what Shreveport MEPS and USMEPCOM was up to, and Yeary gave the general a great insight on where the command is and where it is going.

The general was impressed with the prospects of Virtual Interactive Processing System processing at the MEPS.

After the briefing Downey gave the general a tour of the building and had each supervisor brief his section. The general's tour was conducted from an



Gen. William R. Looney III, commander of Air Education and Training command, conducts an enlistment ceremony at the Shreveport MEPS.

applicant's point of view.

The first stop was testing where John Kupris, the test control officer, showed him the CAT-ASVAB testing room.

The next stop was medical where Chief Petty Officer William Eby, medical NCOIC, explained the different sections involved with medical processing.

Then it was onto operations

where Jerrol Jones, operations supervisor, demonstrated the new computer-based finger printing machine.

Before leaving, Looney swore in some new armed forces members and visited the liaison shop.

On his way out he thanked the MEPS staff, Yeary and Downey for their hospitality and a very informative meeting.



Albany MEPS
Maj. Tommy Wright

Hometown: Gaffney, S.C. “It’s a small southern town; the kind of town where people are born there, go to school there, get married there and die there. My family still lives there. When you grow up there you kind of think it stinks, but when you’re grown up, you miss it.”

What was your favorite toy? “I was fascinated with Evel Knievel and the Dukes of Hazzard. I’d make my own ramps out of old wood and bricks and jump my bike off it. It about gave my mom a heart attack, but I never broke any bones, just a lot of scrapes and bruises. I grew up in the country. We didn’t have a lot of neighbors so we had to entertain ourselves. We’d play on our grandfather’s farm. I can’t believe some of the things we did, like playing on his farm equipment at a young age.”

Education: Bachelor of arts degree from Wofford College with a double major in history and political science.

Why the Marines? “I had a love affair with the military at a young age. When I went to Wofford I’d already done four years enlisted time in the Marine Corps. I joined the Reserve while I was in college and came back on active duty after I was commissioned. When I was about 15, I knew I wanted to go into the military. I didn’t really understand the

differences between the Army and the Marines, but knew I wanted that rather than the Air Force or the Navy. In high school, I saw some Army Recruiters in our cafeteria when I was about 16. I went to talk to them, and they kind of pushed me away (because of his age). A few weeks later I saw the Marine Corps recruiters. They gave me some literature and invited me to one of their DEP functions. It made feel like I was part of the team and it motivated me. When I was 17 I told my parents I wanted to join the Marine Corps. My mom was very hesitant, as any mother would be, but she eventually said ‘I know you’re going to do it when you’re 18 anyway so I might as well sign it.’”

Previous assignment: Second Transportation Support Battalion, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, Camp LeJeune, N.C. “I served 14 months as a company commander and deployed to Iraq in that billet.”

Favorite assignment: “The most rewarding and challenging was being a company commander deployed to Iraq with a very diverse mission and a large company.”

Future military career plans: “My next stop I’d like to go to Command and Staff College, preferably the Marine Corps, but any service would be great. Then I’d like to get back to an operational unit in the Marine Corps.”

Memories of Iraq: “The thing that sticks out for me the most is that every day I had two convoys going outside the wire. That’s arguably one of the most dangerous missions in Iraq, with the IEDs and all. Just watching these men and women go out fearlessly every day with just the mission in mind, nothing political or anything. All they cared about was going out there and doing what they had to day-to-day and accomplish their mission and worrying about their

buddies to the left and right of them.”

What do you want to be when you grow up? “A policeman. No. I have a four-year-old son. He’s on an ‘I want to be a policeman kick.’ As corny as it might sound, from a very young age I wanted to be a Marine, and I’ve done that. I wanted to be an officer and I accomplished that. I’m looking forward to continuing my career, hopefully past 20 years. I really haven’t thought of doing anything else.”

What do you do when you’re not a commander? “I spend a lot of time with my son. I spend as much time with him as I possibly can. I missed a lot of time with him with the deployment to Iraq and the pre-deployment training. And my wife is pregnant, so I’m just concentrating on my family. I know if I continue my career I’ll probably be deployed again, so I’m just making the most of my time with them.”

What’s the best way to inspire the troops? “Being yourself, being honest, showing integrity. Not trying to act like you’re someone who you’re not. Never ask somebody to do something you wouldn’t do.”

What do you like best about your job? “I have an operations officer and assistant operations officer who do most of the oaths. One day a week I put myself down to do all the oaths. As the commander, I reserve the right to do any oath ceremony I want.”

What do you order when you eat out? “I’m probably the least picky eater on the planet. I don’t have a favorite food. But if I have an opportunity to drink sweet tea or eat anything identified with the South — southern style country food. But that’s few and far between in New York.”

What’s the best present you ever got? “I was about 12 or 13 and my brother and I got a

brand new go-kart. We were rough rambunctious kids. We were super excited. My grandfather was a farmer so we had plenty of space. We broke that thing pretty quick.”

What’s your guilty pleasure? “I’m a closet metal head. I grew up listening to a lot of hard rock and heavy metal type music. I’ve never gotten out of that. I’m a big music fan.”

Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you. “That I’m the son of a preacher.” (His father is a Baptist minister.)

Three things on his desk: “A picture of my family, a collection of unit coins and a bottle of water.”

One thing always on his desk: “I live and die by yellow sticky notes.”

What’s the last book you read? “Flags of our Fathers.”

What’s your ideal vacation? “Either the beach or the mountains. I love each equally. When we were in North Carolina we went to the beach often.”



Omaha MEPS
Maj. Timothy Stiansen

Hometown: He was born in Dallas, calls Telford, Pa., home. “We moved around growing up. I was born in Texas and lived in Maryland for seven years. From 10 on, my family lived in Pennsylvania.”

Fond childhood memories: “I enjoyed spending time exploring woods and the

nearby creeks. The field behind the house was a corn field, so just before harvest I enjoyed running through the field with friends and playing hide and seek, stuff like that. Nebraska is a good fit for me. There's lots of corn."

What was your favorite toy when you were a kid?

"When I was very young — elementary school — Hot Wheels and Matchbox cars. I had the race track you could set up and race the cars down the track. There were ramps the cars would jump over."

Education: West Point, bachelor of science degree in environmental engineering. "It's interesting, because I haven't done anything with that degree. I have an interest in the outdoors. West Point has an emphasis on engineering. I was more math and science focused than I was political science and English. I don't know if I'll ever apply the degree in a real job."

Why the Army? Growing up, I was always playing soldier out in the woods. To me, soldier equated to Army. As I got older, we lived relatively close to West Point, about three hours away. My dad took me up there for football games. I visited other schools, but never applied to any. The deadline for applying at West Point was earlier than others, so when I got accepted, I didn't apply anywhere else. Why Army? I guess West Point. West Point was the focus."

Previous assignment: Brigade human resources officer, 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Fort Wainwright, Alaska. He deployed to Iraq for 15 months out of 3 ½ years with the unit. During his deployment he was brigade human resources officer, responsible for casualty operations procedures, and also responsible for the brigade's awards and evaluations. "We were 4,000 plus, that's a lot people. The day-to-day job was awards and evals and

helping with financial issues. As casualties occurred, that became the priority."

Favorite assignment: "I served in the tactical department at West Point. Working with cadets and being in their lives, and having them in our lives was very rewarding. I was basically a company commander for a cadet company."

Any problem children? "Just like out in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines there were some. Corps of Cadets regulations tell them how to live their lives and sometimes they don't do that. So they end up walking back and forth in their dress uniform in the company area." Overall, he says, the vast majority of cadets didn't cause any problems.

Future military career plans: "I think I would like to work at a human resources command. As an infantry guy, I spent most of my career in infantry units, and I don't have a lot of experience in the HR field, except at the lower level. I think I'd like to see HR at a higher level. I think being a brigade human resources officer, I have some ideas how things should be done."

What do you want to be when you grow up? "My wife and I have often talked about owning or managing a summer camp or retreat facilities. We always thought we'd enjoy doing things like that, everything from the administrative things to running the programs."

What do you do when you're not a commander? "My daughter is in 7th grade, my son is in 5th grade. I'm involved with their sporting events. Since I got to Omaha, I've been playing a little golf. I like to golf with my family, whether my extended family or immediate family. We're trying to save money

and figure it out on our own without taking lessons from anyone. It's not going real well, but it's still fun."

What's the best way to inspire the troops? "I try to get to know the people I'm leading as best I can. I think that inspires them because you're demonstrating that you genuinely care. If you do that, they'll follow you into potentially dangerous situations without a second thought because they know you're committed to them."

What do you like best about your job? "The slogan, Freedom's Front Door. I like that the MEPS represents the first step for our current generation of patriots who want to serve our country in a time of war. You get to meet these young people and their families and share in the excitement of entering the next stage of their lives."

What do you order when you eat out? Pizza. "I'm a kind of supreme or everything on it guy."

What's the best present you ever got? "My wife got me a West Point cadet saber as a special gift after I graduated. She contacted a friend who was a still a cadet and worked behind the scenes to make it happen. It has a special place of honor on the wall in our home."

What's your guilty pleasure? "I'm a pretty big beer fan. I don't feel guilty about it, that's just the way it is. I enjoy trying different beers. I'm more into trying different kinds of beer than consuming a lot."

What's guaranteed to make you change the channel? "There's a show called, 'What Not to Wear' on The Learning Channel that my wife and daughter enjoy. My son and I joke and call it 'What Not to Watch.' I either change the channel if I have the remote control or remove myself from the room."

What would people be surprised to know about

you? "I'm a preacher's kid. Some people think that's kind of contradictory because I'm an infantry officer."

What is one thing that's always on your desk? "I have to say two things. A coffee mug and a water cup. I drink coffee and I drink a lot of water, too."

Three things on his desk right now: "An MP3 player, a golf ball and a Kooshball. "It's a ball made almost out of rubber bands. You toss it around. It's kind of a stress reliever. It's red white and blue."

Last book you read? "The Three Signs of a Miserable Job. It's a business book about why people have job dissatisfaction."

Ideal vacation: "A cabin or a lodge out in a remote wooded area on a nice lake."



**Sacramento
MEPS
Maj. Greg Smith**

Hometown: Willis, Texas. "It's a backwater country town."

What was your favorite toy? "We didn't have a lot. I was milking the cows, feeding the chickens, fixing fences. We were a little behind everyone else. That's why I left."

What was it like growing up on a farm? "It's something that I'd like my children to have a glimpse of. A lot of people don't know where their food comes from. It teaches hard work."

Why the Army? “I don’t swim well and I’m scared of heights. My father was Army. I was in the military police. The Air Force had the security police and it sounded like you were a security guard. In the Marines you were an infantryman first.” (He served six years enlisted time before earning his commission.)

Education: “I came into the military and got my associate degree while I was in the service. I got out and went to school on an ROTC scholarship.” He earned a bachelor of science degree in criminal justice from Sam Houston State and a master of science degree in organizational management from University of Phoenix. “Now I’m trying to figure out how to get a second master’s from somebody.”

Previous assignment: Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. “Now they call it Intermediate Level Education at CGSC.”

What was your favorite assignment? Human resources officer for Task Force Olympia; Mosul, Iraq. “I actually got to do the job I worked all these years training to do. You’ve got 24 hours a day with your folks. A lot stronger bonds are developed.”

Future military career plans: “Stay in until they kick me out. Hopefully make lieutenant colonel.”

What do you want to be when you grow up? “I’m still trying to figure that out. I’m looking at being at being a psychologist, just to completely veer off my educational track and start over. I’m looking at getting a PhD in psychology and working with the VA in posttraumatic stress disorder work.”

What do you do when you’re not a commander? “You’re always a commander, 24/7. I am a father of three, husband and Cub Scout leader. My

oldest son was an Eagle Scout. He’s in college now. The youngest boys are just getting started. I had a lot more energy when I was in my 20s. Dad doesn’t want to sleep in the tent. Let’s get a hotel room.”

What’s the best way to inspire the troops? “Fear and intimidation. (laughs) Lead by example. Try to show you do care about them. Then you go back to the Army and lead by intimidation.”

What do you like best about your job? “I like being a commander, since it’s the third time I’ve done it. It’s a little different being in a MEPS. I like being with the troops. Nice location. You can’t beat California. Mostly it’s just being around the troops. My last command was 600 people. Here it’s 37 folks. It’s just one of those things. My career field is counting beans. I don’t count real good.”

What do you do in your spare time? “Sleep a lot now.” He’s also looking into doctoral programs. “It seems a little too time intensive with being a commander. I help my boys with school. I like cooking and martial arts. I do about half the cooking at home.”

What do you order when you eat out? I normally don’t eat out, but if I do, there’s a nice Mexican/Guatemalen restaurant here in Davis. It’s cheap, that’s where we usually go. I don’t remember what its called, but it’s pork with a green sauce. It’s kind of an Army shirt color green sauce.”

What’s your guilty pleasure? “Unfortunately, I’m still a smoker. I go for my Zyban next month. It seems the best way to stop smoking is Zyban. The best way to start again is mortar fire.”

What’s guaranteed to make you change the channel? “Figure skating. Girlie shows. Soap operas. I watch the history channel, the cooking channel and whatever cartoons my kids are watching. Korean soap operas, I can watch. They

seem to be so much better when you can’t understand what they’re saying and you have to read it.”

What would people be surprised to know about you? “I have all my own hair. I read — I can read.”

Three things on his desk: “A 1970ish coffee cup. I think it came from a mess hall. It matches exactly with my (Class) B’s. I have a green pen, because I use a green pen. And my command philosophy.”

What’s the last book you read? Seven Habits of Highly Effective People from the MEPS library. “It was actually good information. I needed a refresher. Army Times and Money magazine. I mostly look for the tips on how to save money. I look for ways to save money, because I don’t have any money to invest.”

What’s your ideal vacation? “One I leave my house for. We really haven’t taken a vacation for a while. We’ve taken a couple of vacations to Japan and Korea. Maybe go back to Disneyland. Next place I want to go is Korea.” (He spent 6 years in Korea.)



Denver MEPS
Maj. Cort Hunt

Hometown: “Milwaukee. I grew up in Denver, but my parents moved to Milwaukee when I was in college. I call Milwaukee home.”

Fond memories of Denver: Winning back-to-back state championships in hockey with Bear Creek High School. He played center. He went on to play hockey at Norwich University, a military school in Vermont, and also wrestled and played lacrosse. “Lacrosse is brutal. I hurt worse after games than I ever did after a hockey game.”

Education: Bachelor of arts degree in international studies from Norwich and a master of arts degree in human resource management and leadership from Webster University.

Why Army? “Actually I didn’t even want to go to Norwich. I had scholarship offers to Lake County College in Illinois and University of Colorado at Boulder. My parents decided I needed some direction and we had to figure out how to pay for it. I had a Marine scholarship and an Army scholarship. I started with the Marines, discovered it wasn’t my cup of tea and went Army. I thought I’d do three years and here I am 13 years later.”

Previous assignment: Chief of enlisted and officer strength management, I Corps, Fort Lewis, Wash.

Favorite assignment: “When I was the recruiting company commander in Milwaukee. That’s where I did my company command. We were the No. 1 recruiting company in the nation. It just seemed like the stars aligned and we were rolling up numbers.”

Future military career plans: “If I can make lieutenant colonel, I’d like to command a recruiting battalion.”

What do you want to be when you grow up? “I was looking at the MEPCOM J-1 job until that was filled. On a serious note, I would like to go back and get a degree in culinary arts and become a chef.”

What do you do when you’re not a commander? “I am a private at home with my fiancée. She tells me what to

do and I do it. We travel a lot, go the mountains quite a bit and watch endless reality TV.”

What’s the best way to inspire troops? “Consistency. We don’t have that many troops in the MEPS any more, so consistency with the civilian staff is the key.”

What do you like best about your job? “The best thing about the job — it was a hard thing getting over being Army and being used to having your boss right next door — is that they really leave you alone. They empower you to do the right thing on a daily basis. If you do it you’re golden. It’s kind of like being on an island. If you take care of the island, you’re OK.”

What do you order when you eat out? Carpaccio (thinly sliced rare meat). We usually have it at a winery or someplace like that.”

What’s the best present you ever got? “A Super Bowl football autographed by Brett Favre or a Southern Mississippi football helmet autographed by Brett Favre. Either one.”

What’s your guilty pleasure? “Copenhagen.”

What’s guaranteed to make you change the channel?

“America’s Next Top Model.”

What would people be surprised to know about you? “I paint abstracts. The first one I painted, I did the night my daughter was born because I was waiting to go back to the hospital. It just kind of took off from there. I’ve also got about 5,000 tulips in my front yard. I’m big into plants.”

Three things on his desk: “Paperwork, and pictures of my daughter and fiancé.”

One thing always on his desk: “The pictures.”

What was the last book you read? “The Collectors by David Balducci (a spy novel).”

What’s your ideal vacation: “Ireland. It looks cool on all the posters. It’s green. I like green things.”



Beckley MEPS
Maj. Alana Bryant

Hometown: Riverside, Calif. “I’m a Valley Girl. It was great growing up there — an hour from the beach, an hour from the mountains. It had everything.”

What was your favorite toy? “A paint brush. I used to paint life-size cartoon animals on my bedroom walls. Above my bed I had Garfield hugging his teddy bear, Pookie. A bulldog, a goat and a bluebird.” She’s still creating things. “I recently redid my daughter’s room. She’s got a life-size ballerina mural. I even glued ribbons to the ballerina’s shoelaces.”

Education: West Point, a bachelor of science degree in life sciences. “It was the closest thing they had to pre-med.” She is currently working on a master’s degree in personal financial management.

Why Army? “I grew up very poor and they paid for college. The honor code really made me want to go to West Point.”

Previous assignment: Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. Before that she was an instructor at the Adjutant General School at Fort Jackson, S.C., and deployed to Central Command as a personnel manager.

Favorite assignment: “I have honestly enjoyed everywhere I’ve been. It would probably be one of two. I was a member

of the marksmanship team at Fort Benning. I was in the Southern California recruiting battalion. I was two hours from my parents. Other than that two years I’ve never been that close to home.”

A Valley Girl in Beckley. “I have been learning to be a country girl for the last several years because I married a country boy. We have cows and horses. That’s been an educational experience for me.” They have more than 30 head of Texas longhorns and four horses. The cattle live with her husband’s uncle in Virginia and they go there every other weekend to help tend them. The horses are with them in Beckley.

Future military career plans: “I would like to get a battalion command. I would obviously like to get promoted to lieutenant colonel. That’s the next logical step for my career. I’ve enjoyed the two commands I’ve had — company command and the MEPS. It’s leading people.”

What do you want to be when you grow up? “I have it narrowed down to two or three things. I’d like to be a horse trainer or quilt professionally. The alternate is the only one that’s 9-5 — an American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals control officer.”

What do you do when you’re not a commander? “I have a 17-month-old baby. He takes a lot of my time. I quilt and I’m doing homework for my master’s degree. I’m always busy.”

What’s the best way to inspire troops? “Show them you care about them.”

What do you like best about your job? “I get to make a difference in the way people see their jobs. People can do the same thing at one MEPS or another. They can be miserable at one place and happy at another. I like being

in a position to affect the way people feel about coming to work.”

What do you order when you eat out? “I love filet mignon and sweet potatoes.”

What’s the best present you ever got? “When I was in Germany, I had a roommate who deployed for six months. I took care of her 6-month-old lab puppy. She tracked down a copy of my yearbook from West Point that my ex-husband had burned. She found the right year and everything. It just blew me away.”

What’s your guilty pleasure? “I eat at Taco Bell every chance I get.”

What’s guaranteed to make you turn off TV? “I don’t have much time to watch TV. It doesn’t come on until the kids are in bed and the chores are done.”

What would people be surprised to know about you? “I enjoy room makeovers, like repainting and decorating a room.”

Three things on her desk: “A framed photograph of our former shuttle bus driver who passed away, a card from my employees for boss’ day and a framed photo of my baby. Actually I have eight framed photos of my family, my husband, my dogs, everybody.”

Always on desk: Her “indispensable” calendar with all her appointments on it.

Last book she read: “I’m usually too busy to read much other than text books. I read a magazine on backyard chicken keeping. We’re thinking about keeping chickens. I’m a person who researches everything I do, so I wanted to learn about chickens.”

Ideal vacation: “Do I have to bring the kids? There are so many things I love to do. I would either take a weeklong cruise which we’re doing in December (with the kids). Either that or go to a ranch and ride horses and work.”

Memphis hosts educators' awards banquet

By Capt. Michael Ozols
Memphis MEPS Operations Officer

The 2007 Annual Awards Banquet, co-sponsored by the Memphis MEPS, interservice recruitment committee commanders and West Tennessee Counseling Association celebrated accomplishments of educators and the military in promoting education, counseling and career opportunities to make a difference in the lives of young men and women.

One hundred forty-seven guests from Tennessee, Arkansas and Mississippi enjoyed fine dining, entertainment and performances by Navy Band Mid-South, the Fairley High School Junior ROTC Color Guard, rhythm and blues recording artists Julie Carter and Isaac Simpson and disc jockey Ingrid Kimble.

The banquet was held at the Holiday Inn. J.B. Smiley, Memphis MEPS education services specialist, and Mary Brignole, counseling association president, narrated the event. Col. Barrye Price, Eastern Sector commander, was the guest speaker.

During the awards portion of the banquet, Price, Maj. Gregory James, Memphis MEPS commander, and Vicky Harris, test score technician, presented certificates of appreciation to counselors, principals, counselor-educators, private sector ASVAB supporters and school board members who supported the program.



Annual Awards Banquet guests included counselors, principals, superintendents, school board members, city council members, lawyers, college professors, Interservice Recruitment commanders and USMEPCOM personnel (photo, right to left) J.B. Smiley, Carl Johnson, Christine Johnson, Linda Paige, Dr. Richard James, Dr. Glynda Cryer, Kim Jessee, Mary Brignole, Patsy Caldwell, Master Chief Petty Officer Thomas Wheeler, Maj. Gregory James, Geraldine Wright, Vicky Harris, Carolyn Lester, Gloria Miller, Ingrid Kimble, Candace Armstrong, Jennifer Kuehn, Cmdr. Voresa Booker, Col. Barrye Price, Staff. Sgt. Vincent Green, Capt. Charles Chambers, John Lowry, Laquitta Eidson, Dr. Ken Tipton, Issiac Simpson, James Sdoia.

A special USMEPCOM plaque — the Counselors Award of Merit — was presented to Linda Page, counselor at Whitehaven High School. Carl Johnson, a retiring school board member and staunch ASVAB supporter also received a special plaque.

The counseling association presented

special awards to outstanding counselors, including secondary and elementary counselor of the year and counselor-educator of the year.

To close the evening Carter, a Grammy nominee sang "You Are My Hero" acapella.

FOND FAREWELLS

BOISE MEPS

Lt. Col. Michael Timmerman
Commander

Years of service: Four at MEPS, 21 total
Next assignment: Commander of the University of New Hampshire Air Force ROTC unit.

Lon Myhre

Human Resources Assistant
Years of service: 2

Cpl. David Hancock

Processing Specialist
Years of service: 3
Next assignment: Separating from the Marine Corps.

FARGO MEPS

Jan Hogfoss

Human Resources Assistant
Years of service: 21
Next assignment: Human resources at Fargo Veterans Affairs
Most remembered for: Her steadfastness and attention to detail.

Barbara Anderson

Information Technology Specialist
Years of service: 24
Next assignment: Retirement
Most remembered for: Knowing what to do when others don't.

HONOLULU MEPS

First Sergeant Dave Kramer

Senior Enlisted Advisor
Years of Service: 26
Departing for: Retirement, parts unknown. "Wherever I can find a job."
Departing comments: It's been one heck of a ride and I've enjoyed most of it. I'll never forget the people, places and experiences I've been blessed to see and meet.

SAN JUAN MEPS

Maj. Eric Martinez

Commander
Petty Officer 2nd Class Alexis Sanabria
Human Resources Assistant
Juan Cruz
Human Resources Assistant

SHREVEPORT MEPS

Sharon Williams
Assistant Services Technician
Years of service: 25
Departing for: Retirement
Award: Outstanding civilian career service award.
Future plans: Spending quality time with her 93-year-old father and doing more work for her church.
Best remembered for: Her limitless energy and being the resident expert in all supply, equipment and government vehicle matters.

Billy Haggerty

Human Resources Assistant
Years of service: 20 Navy active duty
Departing for: Navy Liaison Office, Shreveport MEPS
Departing comment: "One of the best experiences I ever had. Lucky for me I'm only going down the hall."

AMARILLO MEPS**Michael Ramirez**

Travel specialist

Years of service: 9 (Navy)

Education: Pursuing bachelor's degree in computer information systems

Diversions: Sports, running and golf

First impression: Commander was welcoming and staff very friendly.

Donald Hall

Human resource assistant

Years of service: 13 (Army)

Diversions: Hunting, fishing and taking care of the five kids

First impression: Helpful, friendly staff.

Staff Sgt. Venessa Hernandez

Human Resources Assistant

Years of service: 10 (Air Force)

Last assignment: Tyndall Air Force Base

First impressions: Good people.

BOISE MEPS**Maj. Connie May**

Commander

Years of service: 16

Previous command: Mountain Home, Air Force Base

Cpl. Bruce Jones

Processing Specialist

Years of service: 3

Previous assignment: Okinawa, Japan

HONOLULU MEPS**David "Joe" Stephenson,**

Education Services Specialist

Previous assignment: San Diego Army Recruiting Battalion

Debra Williams

Test Clerk

Previous assignment: Fort Bragg, N.C.

Gloria Marcella

Test Clerk

Previous assignment: Defense Accounting and Finance Service, Ford Island, Hawaii

Wilton Williams

Health Technician

Years of service: 20+ (Retired from the U.S. Navy)

Warren Kahapea

Health Technician

Years of service: 12 as a U.S. Treasury agent and bomb disposal technician with Honolulu Police Department

Diversions: Time with family and friends; martial arts of Aikido & Judo; Elks Club Lodge; coaching baseball, basketball and football with schools.

First impression: Friendly, professional atmosphere. "I felt proud assisting applicants processing into the military."

Interesting fact: "Lost my maternal

grandfather at Pearl Harbor Dec. 7, 1941, so it was my destiny to work at Pearl Harbor."

Petty Officer 2nd Class William Emerick

Test Clerk

Years of service: 10

Last duty station: USS Chosin (Guided Missile Cruiser), Pearl Harbor, Hawaii

Diversions: Flying C-172 Cessna as a private pilot, scuba diving, computers, hiking, jet skiing

First impression: "Overall I found the MEPS to be a pleasant working environment. I feel extremely fortunate to get an available billet here. I really enjoy working with the people."

Peggy Dexter

Medical Technician

Last assignment: Civilian sector

Years of service: 20+ (Retired U.S. Army)

OMAHA MEPS**First Sgt. Rondall Burt**

Senior Enlisted Advisor

Years of service: 19

Last assignment: 158th Infantry Brigade, Patrick Air Force Base, Fla.

Diversions: Golf, family trips, sports fan

First impression: Overall, the MEPS personnel are very friendly and welcoming. The personnel are very skilled in their daily duties and display enthusiasm in their jobs.

SHREVEPORT MEPS**Eric Beard**

Health Technician

Years of service: 4 active Marine Corps, 1 Army Reserve and 1 inactive reserve

Education: One year of college

Diversions: Surfing, golf and running

First impression: Clean, quiet and friendly. An overall personality-filled environment.

Michael Renfro

Health Technician

Years of service: 4 active Air Force and 14 years civil service as a firefighter

Education: 2 ½ years college

Diversions: Basketball, creative writing, family oriented activities

First impression: Very clean and extremely professional.

Typana Bruton

Human Resources Assistant

Years of service: 10 active Army, 2 Army Reserve

Education: Associate's degree in sociology, pursuing a bachelor of science in psychology

Diversions: Spending time with her two sons

First impression: Warm atmosphere.

SAN JUAN MEPS**Maj. Elliot Gomez**

Commander

Lt. Mark Wadsworth

Operations Officer

First Sgt. Ramon Inciriaga

Senior Enlisted Advisor

Petty Officer 2nd Class Oscar Colon

Human Resources Assistant

FOND FAREWELLS**AMARILLO MEPS****Ron Swan**, Cluster 4 and Amarillo MEPS Civilian of the 3rd Quarter**HONOLULU MEPS****Honolulu MEPS**, Federal Executive Board Pacific Employer of Choice; **Honolulu MEPS Operations Team**, Federal Executive Board Pacific Team of Excellence; **Capt. Cynthia Howze**, Federal Executive Board Pacific Supervisor/Manager of the Year; **Sgt. 1st Class Robert Hunter**, Federal Executive Board Pacific Leader, Coach, Mentor of the Year; **Harold Wong**, Federal Executive Board Pacific Professional, Administrative, Technical Employee of the Year; **Lisa Moore**, Federal Executive Board Pacific Exceptional Community Service; **Gary Coopridger**, Federal Executive Board Pacific Clerical and Assistant Employee of the Year; **John "Jack" Stovall**, promoted from test score technician to test control officer; **Marichu Caro**, promoted from health technician to lead health technician; **Sgt. Eunjin Chang**, promoted to staff sergeant (Army National Guard); **Kim Pennington**, MEPS Motivator of the 3rd Quarter; **Natasha Clayton**, MEPS Member of the 3rd Quarter**SAN JUAN MEPS****Dr. Vanessa Berrios**, Civilian of the 3rd Quarter; **Petty Officer 2nd Class Demetrius Hartsfield**, Military Member of the 3rd Quarter**CONGRATS****HONOLULU MEPS****Sergeant 1st Class Yahaira Finks** and **Rondishe Finks**, on their marriage.**MONTGOMERY MEPS****Senior Master Sergeant Jason Peterson**, selected for promotion to chief master sergeant.**BIRTH****HONOLULU MEPS****Alaalafaga Jennings**, and her husband, **Lotoleilei**; a daughter; **Claudia**, 7 pounds, three ounces; June 5.



A group of major recording artists have created a musical "Thank You" for active-duty military members and veterans. The CD, "For the Troops" can be downloaded with a military identification card, at no cost, from the Army and Air Force Exchange Service web site, www.aafes.com. The project combined the music of Billy Joel, Brooks & Dunn, the Goo Goo Dolls, Jewel, Josh Groban, Los Lonely Boys, Melissa Ethridge, the Neville Brothers, Sarah McLachlan, the Lt. Dan Band, Montgomery Gentry, The Fray, and Five For Fighting. Also, to learn about how you can support our troops or how military members and their families can connect to hundreds of support organizations, visit www.AmericaSupportsYou.mil, an official Department of Defense web site.

