

Messenger

UNITED STATES MILITARY ENTRANCE PROCESSING COMMAND

SHARING INFORMATION TO REACH A VISION

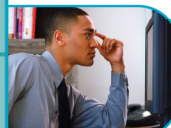
VOL. 30, No. 2

SHARING INFORMATION TO REACH A VISION

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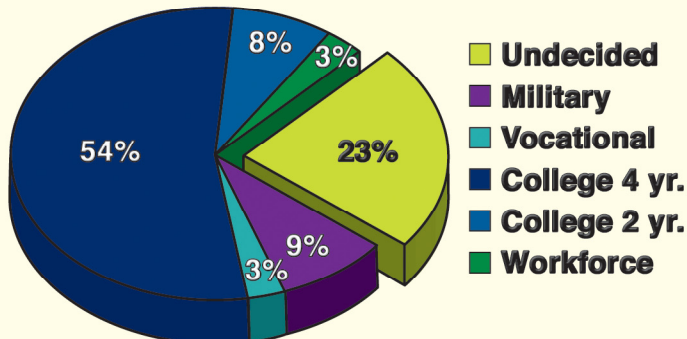
No Child Left Behind performance Testing

School Testing Schedule

4 1/2 Hours

Student Testing Program

Career Intentions



Counselor, Administration, School Board, Parents

Military Interest Only

Messenger

Sharing information to reach a vision

Career Exploration Program:

an overview of its unique functions and challenges **page 6-23**



Promoting the Career Exploration Program

There are challenges in promoting the Career Exploration Program all over the country. Here, Harold 'J.R.' Nungasak Jr., a student at Barrow High School in Alaska, completes the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Interest Inventory. Taking part in the CEP exposes students in rural Alaska to careers beyond those found in their isolated communities.

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U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command

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Commander's Commentary

It is always exciting to begin a new assignment and I am particularly glad to join the USMEPCOM team as it pursues a number of bold initiatives to further improve its superb customer service. I look forward to leading this team into the future, and meeting and working with all of you as I travel throughout the command.

System to Standard will improve our customer service in the near term, but even more promising possibilities arise with the Virtual Interactive Processing System looming in the distance. When it comes on line in a few years, it will allow us to further enhance the quality of service to all our customers.

I see USMEPCOM as having four primary customers:

- We serve the Department of Defense and our nation as a whole. We are truly "Freedom's Front Door," an integral part of our nation's defense because we are the entry point for those who volunteer to man the ramparts in the defense of liberty.

- We pave the road between recruiters and trainers. Recruiters rely on USMEPCOM for timely processing so they can accomplish their mission and the trainers depend on us to send them qualified young men and women who are mentally, physically and morally prepared to withstand the rigors of a military career.

- Those very same young people — the applicants — expect us to treat them with courtesy and respect as we shepherd them through the earliest days of their service to our country. As we qualify them with testing, physical examinations and all the

other processing steps, we must remember that they are about to raise their right hands and swear that they will support and defend the constitution of the United States. We also have a duty to realize that there is a very real possibility they may be putting themselves in harm's way sooner rather than later.

- The command's fourth customer is our people. Our duty to these dedicated professionals can be summed up as "Mission first, people always." We can't accomplish our mission and serve our first three customers without our people. That means leading with a positive, encouraging style while demanding that we do things the right way.

Commanders and other leaders must strike a balance to take care of all four groups. They are all pieces of the same puzzle and the picture is not complete if one piece is missing. Professional leadership is work, but the results are worth the effort because you get to see the "big picture" when everything fits together. That demands excellence because the stakes are enormous. Our very freedom and the way of life enjoyed by all Americans hang in the balance.

Dan Gable, legendary wrestler, Olympic champion and coach of 15 NCAA championship teams, summed it up nicely when he said, "If you're not trying to be No. 1, what are you trying to be?"

In striving to be No. 1, we must realize that our environment is changing rapidly. We must adapt to those changes, accept things we cannot influence and control that which we can control. In short, we must try to emulate Dan Gable



Col. Mariano C. Campos Jr.

— be flexible when we encounter the unexpected, strong enough to overcome adversity and determined to achieve the desired results.

These are the challenges USMEPCOM must meet. I am confident we are ideally positioned to do so. The mix of improving technology and a highly skilled team of experts and leaders cannot — must not — fail.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mariano C. Campos Jr.".

Mariano C. Campos Jr.
Colonel, USAF
Commanding

Campos takes command

By Skip Wiseman
Messenger Associate Editor

USMEPCOM said farewell to Col. Lon Yeary April 10 and welcomed new commander Col. Mariano C. Campos Jr. during a change of command ceremony in the Midway Ceremonial Drill Hall at the Recruit Training Center, Naval Station Great Lakes, Ill.

Mr. Bill Carr, deputy under secretary of defense for military personnel policy, hosted the ceremony. Commanders and senior enlisted advisors from the organization's 65 MEPS composed the parade formation and the Naval Band Great Lakes provided the music.

Yeary and Campos inspected the command before an award ceremony and the change of command.

In his remarks, Carr praised the command for its accomplishments under Yeary's leadership, including the increasing levels of technology applied to entrance processing and the command's implementation of a program budget decision which converted nearly 900 military billets to civilian positions.

"Lon Yeary has led a 2,800-person joint activity that is spread across the nation and out into the Pacific, with a budget of about a quarter of a billion dollars," Carr said. "That is an indicator that it is a complex business enterprise and he has done it with distinction.

"I'm so proud of Lon; I'm so proud of USMEPCOM for the things you did together," Carr told the command. "You are a remarkable group."

Carr said he approached Lt. Gen. Henry P. Osman, then the Deputy Commandant of the Marine Corps for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, after Yeary had been in command for about 18 months and asked



Col. Mariano C. Campos Jr., U.S. Air Force, incoming USMEPCOM commander, accepts the unit colors from Mr. Bill Carr, deputy assistant secretary of defense for military personnel policy, in a ceremony conducted April 10, in the Midway Ceremonial Drill Hall, Recruit Training Command, as outgoing commander Col. Lon M. Yeary, U.S. Marine Corps, looks on. *Photo by Art Heintz*

if his tenure as USMEPCOM commander could be extended.

"We all agreed that Lon was such a remarkable talent that we could have him for two more years," he said. "It has been our pleasure to serve with this brilliant Marine, great man and super officer for four years."

Saying "lightning sometimes strikes twice," Carr said he expects that Campos will lead the command to even greater accomplishments.

"MEPCOM is a sought after command," Carr said. "It was an extraordinary group (of officers) that was nominated. I will simply report to you and you can fill in the blanks, that every one of them could have commanded USMEPCOM, but it was clear to me that we had especially good fortune when the Air Force nominated a brilliant commander in Mariano Campos, who has done such remarkable work over his career in the Air Force.

"He has all my support, he has my encouragement, he has my trust, he has my respect," Carr said. "I think you are going to like him a lot. USMEPCOM, you are in good hands."

Yeary spoke of the command's accomplishments during his time in command and deflected much of the credit to the people working in the MEPS, saying it was them who allowed the command to excel.

"We are standing here, taking time out to pat me on the back," Yeary said, "but there are a bunch of folks out around this country who are doing the business."

"I want to brag on a small piece of what we've done," he said. "In my four years here at USMEPCOM, we've put 900,000 people in the United States military. I would venture to say that anyone on their first enlistment who is serving in Iraq or Afghanistan walked through the doors at one of these folks' MEPS during those four years.



Col. Lon Yeary, outgoing USMEPCOM commander (left) welcomes Col. Mariano C. Campos Jr., incoming USMEPCOM commander, as Mr. Bill Carr (seated) looks on. *Photo by Art Heintz*

"In order to get those 900,000 people, there were 2.4 million MEPS visits," Yeary said. "In the four years I have been here, there have been 4.6 million Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery tests, 1.3 million physicals and 2.1 million hotel rooms. That's a lot of moving parts and these folks out here do it every day."

Campos said he was "awestruck" by the critical role USMEPCOM plays in providing the nation's combat capability and ensuring the quality of military enlistees.

"In my mind, you truly are the guardians of Freedom's Front Door," he said. "We will provide nothing less than our very best efforts to supply future warriors."

"Ladies and gentlemen, I know that USMEPCOM is a team comprised of superb leaders and excellence spread throughout the nation," he said. "Collectively, we will accomplish our mission. I hope you know that I truly feel privileged and humbled that I have been named to lead this prestigious command."

"I promise to give my all," Campos said. "I'd like to end with an often used Air Force quote. 'Let's kick the tires and light the fires' and get to work."

Col. Mariano C. Campos Jr.

Commission: Air Force ROTC Program at the University of Texas at El Paso.

Education

- Bachelor of Business Administration, University of Texas at El Paso
- Master of Arts in Human Behavior (with distinction), National University, Calif.
- Squadron Officers' School, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.
- U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kan.
- Armed Forces Staff College (Phase II), Norfolk, Va.
- Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.

Training

- Undergraduate Navigator Training and Electronic Warfare Officer Training at Mather Air Force Base, Calif.
- B-52H Combat Crew Training at Castle Air Force Base, Calif.
- Instructor Training School, Mather Air Force Base, Calif.
- B-1B Combat Crew Training, Dyess Air Force Base, Texas
- B-1B Central Flight Instructor Course, Dyess Air Force Base, Texas
- Command Instructor Training School refresher training, Mather Air Force Base, Calif.

Assignments

- 20th Bomb Squadron, Carswell Air Force Base, Texas, where he served as a B-52H Electronic Warfare Officer.
- Instructor Navigator, Instructor Electronic Warfare Officer, a Flight Commander, and the Executive Officer with the 453rd Flying Training Squadron, Mather Air Force Base, Calif.
- B-1B Defensive Systems Officer, 46th Bomb Squadron, Grand Forks Air Force Base, N.D.
- B-1B Instructor Defensive Systems Officer and the Wing Executive Officer with the 319th Wing, Grand Forks Air Force Base, N.D.
- Command Flight Examiner for the Standardization and Evaluation Division, Headquarters, Air Training Command; he also served as a Command Flight Examiner for Headquarters, 19th Air Force, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas
- Information Operations Instructor at the Joint Command Control and Information Warfare School, Armed Forces Staff College, Norfolk, Va.
- Special Assistant to the Commander in Chief, U.S. Strategic Command and later as Chief, Command Center Support Branch, Command Center Division, U.S. Strategic Command, Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.
- Commander, 342nd Air Force Recruiting Squadron, Fort Snelling, Minn.
- Deputy Commander, 367th Recruiting Group, Robins Air Force Base, Ga.
- Chief, Plans and Resources Division, Headquarters, Air Force Recruiting Service, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas
- Commander, 372nd Recruiting Group, Hill Air Force Base, Utah

Awards

- Legion of Merit
- Defense Meritorious Service Medal
- Meritorious Service Medal
- Joint Service Commendation Medal
- Air Force Commendation Medal
- Air Force Achievement Medal
- Various other service medals and ribbons

ASVAB testing, matching abilities with futures, helping Americans find their way through the Career Exploration Program

By Skip Wiseman
Messenger Associate Editor

On the surface, it seems simple — offer high schools a free aptitude test, well regarded by educators, schedule a session, administer the test and interpret the results to give high school students an idea of where their interests and abilities meet.

Easy, right? Not so fast, my friend.

Some schools balk at the test because it's offered by the Department of Defense and fear recruiters will put undue pressure on students. Preparing for and administering tests mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act is increasing demands for students' and teachers' time. One parent with an ax to grind with the military can nix testing for an entire student body.

Sometimes schools are difficult to reach such as those in Alaska that aren't accessible by road. The school might be a long way away, like those in Guam served by the Honolulu MEPS. A MEPS might cover an area of nearly 200,000 square miles as Salt Lake City does. The weather can be a major obstacle as it is during winter in the northern Midwest or upstate New York.

Add that the workload is unbalanced, with many schools wanting to test early in the year so they can get the most use from the test results counseling students throughout the rest of the year.

One more thing: One person is responsible for most of the work, no matter how large the area, how many schools, how large the student population.

That would be the MEPS education services specialist, who often gets more "windshield time" than a lot of recruiters. Downtime is rare, because when they're not administering or interpreting tests, they're trying to convince schools that don't test to give the program a try or working on a marketing plan for the next year.

Those are the obstacles an ESS faces promoting and administering the Student Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery and the Career Exploration Program.

"In my opinion, the ESSs are some of the most overworked, underpaid, misunderstood, unappreciated people out there," Ted Hagert, command education services specialist said. "They work under diverse conditions that change every day. They

face multiple demands and the vast majority of them do a great job on it."

Numbers

The number of student tests per year and, thus, the number of recruiter leads are down dramatically since 1990. In 1990, more than one million students took advantage of the Career Exploration Program. That generated more than 750,000 recruiter leads. In 2007, the numbers had dropped to slightly more than 630,000 tests and 530,000 leads. The percentage of schools testing has declined from 62 percent to 56 percent over the last 10 years.

The good news is that the percentage of schools testing under Option 8, where no information is released to recruiters has dropped, too. It is down from 6.37 percent in 1990 to last year's 4.68 percent. Still, slightly more than 9 percent of applicants entering the armed forces last year used scores from the Student ASVAB.

Why the declines? There are a number of reasons, the most prominent being increased mandatory testing under the No Child Left Behind Act, the nation being

at war and its impact on people who have an influence on young men and women considering enlisting and efforts by peace activists and “counter recruiters” who not only object to military recruiting but have an inaccurate perception of the Career Exploration Program.

Functions

The Student Testing Program has two functions. It provides prequalified leads to recruiters and a career exploration service to America’s youth.

“We kind of ride a fence of support to the recruiting services and support to schools,” Hagert said. “Our annual goal places emphasis on the type of testing that allows recruiters access to schools. It’s not mandated that we do that, because we’re also trying to meet that secondary purpose of career exploration.”

Schools have a variety of release options from which to choose, ranging from having student test information released no sooner than seven days after the results are mailed to the school to not providing the data until the end of the school year. There is also an option where the information is released no sooner than seven days after the test is mailed to the school, but recruiters may not solicit students by telephone and one, known as Option 8, where student test information is not provided to recruiters.

“Even though our priority is to test schools that release results to the recruiting service, if the school is opposed to that, Option 8 allows the schools to test where the leads don’t go to the services. We hope that through the partnership with the school, over time they’ll see the value of releasing because some of their students have that interest.”

A study last year showed that 9 percent of students were interested in the military and 24 percent were undecided.

“That’s a significant number of juniors and seniors who don’t have a clue what they’re going to do in the future,” Hagert said. “A call from a recruiter might be something Mom and Dad want them to get, or might be beneficial to the student

as they think through the process.”

Regardless of which release option a school chooses, the students get a score sheet from the test, including their military entrance score.

“If they’re interested in talking to a recruiter, all they have to do is go to the recruiter and say, ‘I’d like to see what this score means to me in the Army,’” Hagert said. “They sign a form and they can get those results released to the services.

“In some locations — I’ll use Portland, Ore., as an example — you know the whole school system tests Option 8,” he

school year, he made contact with them again and asked what they thought of the program. They loved it. They changed their release option so the leads were received by the recruiting services.”

Hagert pointed out that the Student Testing Program is a partnership.

“The ESS doesn’t have a fire and forget relationship with the school,” he said. “You’re with a school throughout the year, maybe multiple years. A school might test Option 8 for years and finally say, ‘I don’t know why we test Option 8 anymore. We have kids who want that.’

It’s a constant relationship with all your schools.”

Despite all the efforts to market the program through myriad channels, good old word of mouth is sometimes the best advertising.

“Customer service is so key,” Jennifer Smith, Western Sector ESS, said, “because the schools talk to each other. One school can sway a whole district. It’s so important that we provide good customer service.”

The plan

The Student ASVAB marketing plan takes into account the history of the program through the previous school year, challenges affecting the program and strategies to overcome them and responsibilities for program success. Hagert, working with Kropp and Smith, establishes an annual goal for recruiter leads for each MEPS. Sector commanders make adjustments based on the climate at each station.

The overall goal is based on the average percentage of enlistees who used scores from the STP to enlist. The goal is meted out to each individual MEPS based on a formula which considers the area population and propensity for testing. The recruiter leads goal is based on recruiting requirements.

“We base our goal on the Department of Defense non-prior service accession goal,” Hagert said. “We get those from each of the services, combine them and then look at the percentage of the accession goal that normally comes from the high school ASVAB Career Exploration Program.



The ASVAB Career Exploration Guide

said. “As a recruiter, you know that every kid participates in the program. It’s just a matter of changing your style of sales approach to making a call off the directory information and asking if the student has considered looking at military careers.”

Option 8, while not the command’s preference, sometimes paves the way for a school to begin testing or start again after leaving the program.

“Our Springfield ESS uses it as a non-committal way to get into or back into a school that wasn’t testing,” Patricia Kropp, Eastern Sector ESS, said. “If you want to use Option 8, great. Toward the end of the



"Last year, 9.3 percent of accessions used their high school test to enlist," he said. "This year its down to 9.1 percent. The portion of people who enlist using the ASVAB from a high school testing program along with the national accession numbers for non-prior service is the foundation for those goals."

The command sets goals for the MEPS based on the student population and the propensity for people to enlist based on the past performance at each MEPS. The formula uses three year averages of population and propensity to enlist to help keep the goals from rising or dropping dramatically from year to year.

"We produce a map that's color coded by size of MEPS that helps the MEPS commander look at how other MEPS like them are goaled," Hagert said. "There is also some historical background in different areas. The sector commanders make adjustments to what the headquarters recommends based on the past performance at each MEPS."

"They may have a new person in the ESS job or a new commander at the MEPS or a very difficult situation in a particular area. Sector makes that adjustment. They

might spread that number out amongst the rest of the MEPS to help accommodate that one area. If you continually goal people, but you don't achieve, generally we look at another place to find those leads we need.

New Orleans was a recent example of adjusting goals because of extraordinary circumstances. The population plunged after Hurricane Katrina and there was no accurate data on the current population, Smith said.

Most adjustments are much less dramatic, Kropp said.

"In the one year that I've been here, we haven't really made any huge adjustments," she said. "We look at the overall population, we look at population trends.

"When you see a large exodus of people moving from a certain area and look at the penetration rate you have for the schools, if their population is staying pretty

much level and the penetration rate is really high, and they're still not making (the goal) because of a switch from everybody testing vs. voluntary testing, we make adjustments.

"It requires us, as sector headquarters ESSs, to look at all the things going on in the area, like state testing, and how that might affect things."

Overcoming misconceptions

Misconceptions about what the Career Exploration Program offers, who should use it and the ultimate purpose for the student testing program are common. Trends toward more standardized testing also have an impact on the program. Sometimes the schools just don't have enough hours in the day. Overall, the command is testing fewer students which, in turn, means it is producing fewer leads for recruiters.

"First of all, due to No Child Left Behind, there are a lot of new testing

requirements in schools," Hagert said. "Schools are challenged all the time to measure the performance of students and demonstrate they're making adequate yearly progress toward school goals.

"The ASVAB takes three hours and the post-test process can take 45 minutes to an hour and a half," he said. "That four and one-half hours of time is sometimes too much for a school to give us because of other testing requirements."

The ASVAB isn't often used to show yearly progress in school, Hagert said, but that could change. "It's possible we could do some future work on that to see if the data we provide could help a school," he said. "We're doing that right now in a pilot study in Yuma, Ariz."

In addition to taking up more time, some schools believe the requirement in the No Child Left Behind Act to release student contact information to all recruiters, be they military, colleges or employers, means there is no reason to schedule the ASVAB. Hagert said some schools say they are already providing the list so there is no need for them to use the ASVAB test.

"They fail to use a program that provides a great career exploration program to all their students, regardless of what career path they're on simply because of the law," he said.

Another common misconception is that the test is only for students interested in the military.

"We hear that all the time," Hagert said. "'It's the Army test.' or 'It's the military test.' The vast majority of students who participate do so planning on attending a four-year college. For the last school year, 54 percent of the students intended to attend a four-year college and only 9 percent of them were looking at a military career.

"Because of the ASVAB's association with the military, some schools only offer it on a voluntary basis to those students interested in the military," Hagert said. "It's kind of a wasted resource for those students who are looking at a four-year or two-year program to see what parts they could use to plan for their future.

"That's where the MEPS ESS gets out to the schools and tries to inform them how the product is really used and how it can benefit all their students," he said.

Kropp said some states are starting to require a career exploration program before students can graduate. That is an opportunity, she explained.

“That’s another way for the ESS to market the program,” she said. “The career exploration piece satisfies that requirement, so they are doing it that way. If you can get past the ‘We don’t have enough time’ concept, they really see the value of it because it allows students to get an idea of career fields that are out there. It’s comprehensive. They can access it outside the classroom.”

“We have the online inventory they can do to look at their career options,” Kropp said. “That’s a great tool. A lot of teachers really appreciate it because it links up with a lot of other resources. Showing them the full comprehensive nature of the program is something that allows them to do that as well.”

Smith said the best way to overcome the misconceptions is often face-to-face.

“The ESSs do a lot of presentations to counselors and principals,” she said. (The educators) have this misconception, but when the counselors see the program, they love it. It’s such an excellent program and they don’t have any idea of all the resources it provides. When they see it, it isn’t anything they thought it was going to be.”

Other obstacles

Institutional resistance, school hierarchy and the country being at war also play roles in a school’s decision to test or not.

“The ESS needs to understand state policy and national law, and they need to look at the various levels of decision-making that goes on at that school,” Hagert said. “You go visit a school and try to show them the product. You might have to show the counselor, the counseling director, the principal, the superintendent, a group of parents and a group of teachers.”

“A sale doesn’t just fall into your lap,” he said. “A school doesn’t decide to participate because you walk in and give a magic speech. It’s a hard decision.”

“That’s impacted right now because we’re at war and the perception that we’re a test for the military just makes that decision that much more difficult for a school,” Hagert said. “You can show them how the product can be used and that contact from a recruiter is going to happen based on No Child Left Behind anyway. If they use the ASVAB program, fewer students are likely to be contacted because a large number of students don’t even qualify for military service.”

Sector’s role

The sector ESSs work more closely with the MEPS than Hagert and generally have a more local focus.

“Headquarters looks at national trends and national training requirements instead of something that’s MEPS specific, unless the sector asks us to help out,” Hagert said.

“The sector has a couple different roles,” he said. “First of all, when a new ESS is assigned, the sector ESS goes out to provide training. They usually hook that ESS up with a peer mentor to do a crosswalk in another MEPS to see how a similar area operates and give them that type of exposure.”

they can’t do it alone. Many people — inside and outside the MEPS — have roles in a successful student testing program.

“It can’t just be something the ESS does,” Hagert said. “It requires total effort.”

“We look at the one way to evaluate the MEPS ESS’s performance during a school year is if the commander sees the ESS in the office, they’re probably not doing their job that effectively,” Hagert said. “The bulk of the time during the school year, the ESS is in the schools. That is particularly true during the fall months, when the heaviest testing takes place.”

“How can the MEPS improve their game?” he asked. “What can you do to help? Well, the entire testing team and the entire MEPS team can help out.”

“How can the MEPS improve their game? What can you do to help? Well, the entire testing team and the entire MEPS team can help out.”

— Ted Hagert

“Anything where there is an issue or problem with a particular MEPS, the sector is the first one to respond to that,” Hagert said.

Smith explained that when she travels to a MEPS, she rarely spends much time in the building.

“We have a little different structure in the sectors,” she said. “We go to the MEPS. I don’t actually spend a lot of time in the MEPS, because if I’m going to visit an ESS, we’re at the schools.”

Kropp said she is in nearly constant contact with MEPS ESSs by phone, e-mail and cell phone.

“There is constant dialogue,” she said. “They give me feedback on issues that come up, policy shifts, any type of situation they have going on. If they’re not getting the support they need from the recruiting services, I look at that, not just bottom line numbers. It is a pretty complex and comprehensive task. I have 34 MEPS to deal with. A lot of them are very proactive in providing information.”

A team effort

Although the ESSs are primarily responsible for the Student Testing Program,

The commander’s primary role is to work directly with the Interservice Recruitment Committee to make sure the MEPS is getting the support it needs in scheduling, proctoring and test interpretation, Hagert said, but there are other areas where the commander needs to be involved.

“The commander has direct contact with the OPM testing services manager, who is the regional representative in their area,” he said. “When there are issues with OPM’s performance, they work through the area coordinator and then their testing services manager. Sector gets involved when the commander goes to the testing services manager.”

“Every MEPS commander should have 30-second blurb ready to go when someone asks him about the ASVAB Career Exploration Program,” he said. “You need to have enough program information as a commander that you can answer basic questions about it immediately and refer it to your ESS for follow-up.”

“You have MEPS where the commanding officer or the test control officer have some training from the ESS and actually go out and participate in marketing visits,” Hagert said. “That’s what’s going on in Denver. You’re trying to extend the ability to market to schools.”

“That requires people to do some research and some study on what the program has to offer so they can adequately market it,” he said. “They can get that tutoring from their ESS, who’s been working the program.”

The MEPS’ testing section plays a huge role in a successful Student Testing Program, Hagert said.

“There are two functions in the testing section — enlistment testing and student testing,” he said. “That team should be working heavily on student testing during the peak student testing program times. When student testing isn’t really exciting and happening, like in the summer, those folks should be participating in the enlistment testing program in the MEPS to make sure the summer surge gets processed.”

The testing section works directly with OPM to facilitate student testing. Section members make sure the Student ASVAB materials, such as the Career Exploration Program guides, get to the schools on time. The test coordinator schedules testing at the schools.

“The best analogy,” Hagert said, “is the test coordinator is the home office. They need to be at or near their phones during the day. When somebody at a school calls to get information on the program or find out details about a scheduled session, the test coordinator needs to be there to answer that.”

The test administrators are often the last line of defense during testing spikes in the fall or when a scheduled session is threatened because someone didn’t show up to conduct it.

“While we partner with OPM to provide testing services across the country, OPM can’t hire for a one- or two-month period. We have testing spikes in October and November, so it’s incumbent on the MEPS to be prepared to respond to those spikes by sending their own test administrators, even cross training some people from operations and have them serve as TAs.

“You might even go so far as to create a team setup where if you have a late response, you take one person from ops and one person from medical and they can

respond,” he said.

There are other ways MEPS members can help out.

“I know the Chicago MEPS has a Career Exploration team they use where a couple different people go out to a school for a pre-test activity and try to encourage kids to sign up for the test,” Hagert said.

Kropp used Knoxville MEPS as an example.

“They’re a very engaged testing department and the commander has local roots in the area,” she said. “He uses that as a resource to get out in the community and promote the program.”

ESS has the lead

The ESS is the lead horse on the Student ASVAB team. If the testing section in general and the test coordinator in particular are the home office, the ESS is the field sales force.

A fully qualified ESS has a master’s degree and at least 24 hours of study in

ASVAB: change the name, change the image?

Calls to change the name of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Career Exploration Program come often and from many quarters.

Ted Hagert, USMEPCOM education services specialist, sees absolutely no benefit to changing the name and, in fact, thinks it would do more harm than good.

The perception is that the ASVAB brand suffers from being associated with the military.

“... you could call it Billy Bob’s Special Purpose Test and if a recruiter calls one student in that classroom, they know it’s the ASVAB.”

“If we disassociate ourselves from the ASVAB name, we also disassociate ourselves from all the great program information on the ASVAB,” he said. “It is a highly touted tool. If you take the name out, you don’t have that recognition. It’s just not an option that makes any sense when the ASVAB test itself is admired by the testing community and is a great program.

“Primarily, people believe that if you change the name of the test, it would change how people perceive it as a military test,” Hagert said. “I always tell people you could call it Billy Bob’s Special Purpose Test and if a recruiter calls one student in that classroom, they know it’s the ASVAB.”

Hagert said the subject comes up almost every time

there is a change of command at one of the recruiting services. Although the pressure rises and falls, Hagert said, Dr. David S.C. Chu, under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness, is steadfast in his opposition to changing the name.

Hagert points out another major flaw in changing the name — the very reason those calling for it the loudest cite: undoing the almost instant connection many people make between the ASVAB and the military.

“It doesn’t make us look like an honest broker,” he said. “It looks like we’re trying to deceive people by changing the name of our program. There would be nothing beneficial for us in doing that.”

—Skip Wiseman

particular educational areas. A counseling degree is not specifically required, but educational program knowledge is.

"At least one course has to come from test and measurements or an adult learning environment," Hagert said. "In our world out there, we currently have about 10 (ESS) with either a PhD or other counseling certification. We probably have a half dozen who are currently certified as career development facilitators.

"I'd say probably a third have either a teaching or counseling background," he said. "We have (former) principals in New Orleans and Los Angeles. Two teachers I worked with at the last school event were Janice Carson in Oregon and Danny Whittington in Jackson (Miss.).

"We have some folks who have backgrounds in various forms of counseling from substance abuse to domestic violence. You name it, we probably have it."

And contrary to what some people may think, the ESS is not a ghost employee who works 10 hours a week. During the school year, they spend three quarters of their time outside the MEPS, visiting schools and meeting educators in addition to interpreting test results for students.

In the summer, they attend educator conferences and conventions where they set up exhibits to promote the STP. In their "spare" time during the summer, they develop the marketing program for the next school year.

At other times, ESSs occupy themselves by meeting with state educators, attending career technical organization events and networking to get the word out about what the ASVAB has to offer.

"They might be having a cup of coffee with someone, but it's a professional relationship trying to establish a partnership to get more testing done," Hagert said.

"It's quite a challenge for them, if you look at the time they spend," he said. "They work out of a car. I would say the normal work day for an ESS during the fall months is probably 10 hours. I don't know hardly any ESSs who work eight hours during that time frame. They get some credit hours for all that overtime, but they never get to use it."

Hagert also pointed out that gallivanting all over the countryside might seem exciting for a while, but in the long run, it gets tiresome.

"You can imagine how exciting that might be for a week, for someone who's

stuck in the office," he said, "but after you've done it for three or four years, it isn't that exciting any more.

"Not only that, but when you're on that barren road, driving through upstate New York, your cell phone doesn't even work, so you can't call somebody to talk about another visit you might have," Hagert said. "Besides, talking on a cell phone when you're driving isn't something we recommend as a safe practice."

When the ESS gets back to the MEPS, it's often a case of "What have you done for me lately?"

"They can go out to a school and spend an entire day working at one school and have no success," Hagert said. "Then when they get back to the MEPS, it's 'What happened today? Did you get them to test?' Getting someone to test doesn't usually take one day. It usually takes a concerted effort by a group of people."

The ESS is also responsible for training recruiters so they know what is expected of them as proctors, and additional training if they do post-test interpretations. Recruiters must have Student ASVAB training before they represent the program at schools.

"Some ESSs go to the recruiting services to do the training on their turf instead of at the MEPS," Hagert said. "That's probably the best way to get training done — take it to them when they have their regular gatherings instead of waiting for them at the MEPS."

Kropp pointed out another advantage to taking the training on the road.

"Show up at the recruiting station with a dozen doughnuts and you've got a captive audience," she said.

Selling the program

A visit to establish or re-establish testing a school can range from a few minutes to several meetings with various levels of the administration — all the way up

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to the school board. It also means working around schedules to test organizations such as the Job Corps and Sea Cadets.

"If it's a school that hasn't tested forever or has a very anti-military posture, that's going to be a short visit," Hagert said. "You go out there and they refuse to see you.

"Other schools have gone back and forth," he said. "The counseling team might ardently support our product, but they're not allowed to do it. Then it's a matter of finding that second tier (of resistance) whether it's the principal or the parents.

"Starting testing in a school that isn't currently, or perhaps never has tested, takes at least three visits to the school."

—Patricia Kropp

"One vocal parent can do a lot to destroy an ASVAB program," Hagert said. "Out of a hundred students, 99 might enjoy the results, but one parent of one student in that classroom could stop testing."

Starting testing in a school that isn't currently, or perhaps never has tested, takes at least three visits to the school, Kropp said.

"You have the initial contact where you present the program," she said. "A lot of times they want you to come back and show the other counselors and the principal. Then there's going out to set everything up. If it's an alternative situation like Job Corps or Sea Cadets, it might take a little bit more because you have to go out based on a very restricted schedule."

Interpreting the test

Once the testing is completed and scored, the Career Exploration Program gives students feedback on where their interests and abilities lie during a post-test

interpretation done either by the ESS or their designated representative. Anybody who does post-test interpretations has to undergo special training to ensure the results are analyzed correctly.

"We're customer driven," Hagert said. "If a customer has a 45-minute block of time for us, we have to do that interpretation in 45 minutes. It's one-on-one with the student, the ESS talking to whatever number of students took the test.

"You find out beforehand how much time you're going to have," he said. That's part of the process the test coordinator goes through when they set up the program."

The interpretation can be done with pencil and paper using the Exploring Careers Guide or via computer.

"You're going to explain their ASVAB scores, administer an interest inventory and show them how they can use the snapshot of their current skills and the results of their interest inventory to explore careers," Hagert said. "That can be done with paper and pencil, answering just a few questions.

"It can also be administered on a computer network, so if you have a class of 40 students who participated and you have a lab with 40 terminals, it goes much faster," he said. The students go over their results, each of them completes the interest inventory on line and they start exploring careers using our web-based tools."

Each student gets a code on his or her answer sheet that allows them to use the program's web site for up to two years after they test. It is a secure site and only the students have access to their information.

"It's not a market- ing site," Hagert said.

"It's not a military site. It's just career exploration for that particular student."

Kropp pointed out that the ESS talks to students about what career fields might interest them and determines if it matches their interests and abilities.

"If they say nursing, what do their interest inventory and their ASVAB scores say about that?" she asked. "They (the ESSs) also know the college programs in the state or area that offer those programs and can talk to the students about them.

"The on-line inventory links out to scholarships and programs at schools in different states and explains the job market, upcoming job market and Department of Labor statistics," Kropp said.

Hagert said much of the information is state specific and some ESS' are responsible for testing schools in more than one state.

"They might need to know state-specific labor market information," he said. "What are the 10 hottest jobs in Utah compared to the 10 hottest jobs in Nevada? There might be a significant difference. The ESS does research on the region — what is the biggest company that hires right out of your high school? Are they looking for people to come directly to work? All that information that connects to the community is really important."

And that's the short version of the Student ASVAB Career Exploration Program.

Piece of cake, right? All you have to do is go out and convince the counselor and the principal to schedule the test and maybe win over the school board and parents and overcome the objections of a few other people with a distinctly anti-military bias. Then you schedule the test, drive (or fly or boat) to who knows where to administer it and try to help young people find where their interests and abilities align.

So, is it worth it? You decide.

"We have teachers and students who come up to us at conferences and conventions and talk about how the ASVAB changed their lives," Hagert said. "That's because some ESS out there provided a high quality program to them and made a difference in their lives. The MEPS ESS rarely gets that feedback directly from a student, but it happens all the time."

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School counselor is epitome of ASVAB supporter, and so much more

by Len Gomberg
Education Services Specialist
Syracuse MEPS

Supportive school counselors are integral to the success of the ASVAB Career Exploration Program, and Ann Hall, a counselor with 20 years experience at Binghamton High School in upstate New York, is the epitome of the supportive school counselor. Asked why she encourages juniors at Binghamton to participate in the program, Ann responds, "The ASVAB gives students comprehensive information about their abilities, interests and skills, it's free to the district, the people who manage the program take care of everything and are easy to work with, and the students are interested in and make use of their results."

Hall's principal, Dr. Albert Penna, agrees and praised Hall for her work with the ASVAB. "Students and faculty of Binghamton High School are deeply indebted to the hard work and effort Mrs. Hall gives to the ASVAB Program, which offers students at BHS a great opportunity for success." Penna is a retired lieutenant colonel in the Army Medical Corps who started his military career as an enlisted soldier.

The ASVAB Career Exploration Program's connection to the military often scares off prospective participants, but Hall has been very successful at convincing students and their parents that ASVAB test results do not have to go to military recruiters and students do not have to join the military because they take the test. More than one fourth of Binghamton's 400-plus juniors participated in the ASVAB Career Exploration Program this school year.

Acting as Binghamton's point of contact for the ASVAB Career Exploration Program is only one of Hall's many professional pursuits beyond providing counseling services to 315 students in grades 9-12. She is the co-chair of the Greater Binghamton College Day, one of the largest college fairs on the East Coast, she is the assistant coordinator for the Binghamton City School

District's Mentoring Program for teachers and administrators, she teaches academically challenged students at the GED Alternative School Program, and she was recently elected to serve for one year as a regional governor for the New York State School Counseling Association. Her region consists of a seven-county area in the Finger Lakes District of the

finding a school counseling position near her hometown of Brooklyn. "Ann is amazing," Alexis said. "She lets me do what I'm comfortable doing but also challenges me to keep learning. She is very patient, and I really appreciate it."

For her part, Hall said she loves to see students be successful and is energized to help them achieve their hopes and dreams. She apprises them of opportunities such as internships and company-sponsored field trips and encourages parents to support their child's hopes and dreams when they're in for conferences.

Hall and her husband Mike have three children: Mike, 28, earned a master of business administration and a master's in computer science from Rochester Institute of Technology and lives in San Diego; Robbie, 25, received a bachelor of music from SUNY Potsdam's Crane School of Music and lives in Binghamton; and Heidi, 22, just graduated from SUNY New Paltz with a bachelor of arts in communication and media and plans to move to Chicago.

(Left) Ann Hall. (Below) Hall provides guidance to a college intern, Alexis Gnall, who plans to continue her education and become a school counselor as well.



state, and as a regional representative she is involved in planning and membership, and acts as an advocate for school counselors.

Beyond her 315 high school students, Hall also provides guidance for student interns like Alexis Gnall, a senior at State University of New York Binghamton who would like to complete New York University's graduate program in Counseling and Guidance before



Denver's Determination

—MEPS adopts team approach to achieve goals

Story and photos by Skip Wiseman
Messenger Associate Editor

People are often encouraged to work smarter, not harder.

When you're trying to revive your Career Exploration Program as the staff is at the Denver MEPS, you have to work smarter and harder.

Last year, the MEPS achieved 92 percent of its recruiter lead goal. As of mid-May, it has attained 96 percent of this year's goal and needs about 250 more students to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery to provide 6,418 recruiter leads, and projects it will make that goal.

Maj. Cort Hunt, Denver MEPS commander, and his staff are putting on a full-court press to make this year's goal. Eight MEPS members have combined to make nearly 400 school visits, the lion's share being done by Hunt and Lidoro Maestas, Denver education services specialist.

"Under the major's guidance and leadership, we have adopted a team approach," Maestas said. "Between Major Hunt, Chuck Davis (the TCO) and I, we've

been out to almost all our high schools. I wouldn't have been able to do it myself."

Maestas said the biggest roadblocks are the Colorado Student Assessment Program and the Proficiency Assessment for Wyoming Students, which cut into the time schools have to conduct standardized testing.

The MEPS has arranged to hold test sessions at Colorado Boys' State and Girls' State this spring. The staff has attended career fairs and conferences and set up sign-up booths in high schools to publicize the program shortly before conducting a session in a school. The MEPS is working with junior ROTC units and the Civil Air Patrol, too.

"The Denver public school Junior ROTC units are phenomenal," Hunt said. "They'll make it as close to mandatory testing as humanly possible, to the point where they'll offer a secondary test in the spring to retest the kids who want to try and get a better score."

"There are 650 Civil Air Patrol cadets," he said. "The concern is how many of them are eligible for testing. If we could even get a hundred, that's a hundred more toward the goal."

An area congressman has told schools in his district that they will host testing sessions if they want their students to be considered for appointments to military academies.

"It might help," Hunt said, "because ... the schools love the exposure that they have an educational system that got one of their kids appointed to the academy."

Hunt has even offered recruiters one "free" walk-on applicant for each school they schedule for testing.

It's not a sure thing even when students or a school decide to schedule a test.

One large area high school started the year talking about mandatory testing for all sophomores-seniors, which would have generated about 800 recruiter leads. The school later decided to test only sophomores on a voluntary basis.

Scheduling even that was difficult. The school's lead counselor agreed to a couple of dates and then postponed testing. A firm date was finally set and the counselor called two days before the session and wanted to reschedule for a day earlier — the next afternoon. The Office of Personnel Management had scheduled proctors, but only had one person available because of the short-notice rescheduling. The MEPS ended up providing three proctors "out of hide" from its staff.

Another school scheduled a test session and projected that 20-25 students would test. Only one student showed up for the session, where he was greeted by an OPM proctor, two recruiter proctors, a MEPS staffer and an inspector general team member.

"There are times, that if you took our projections, we'd be at 160 percent," Hunt said. "There have been other times when it looked like we'd be lucky to break 90. We had a school that projected 150 kids and 47 showed up."

Ted Hagert, USMEPCOM ESS, said the problems the Denver MEPS is encountering are not unique.

"The type of challenges we see in Denver happen at every MEPS at various levels," he said. "You see this sort of thing throughout the country."



First Lt. Anthony Vigil, Denver MEPS training officer, discusses the Career Exploration Program with students at Green Mountain High School.

First Lt. Anthony Vigil, the MEPS training officer, went to Green Mountain High School in Lakewood, Colo., and set up a table in the commons area so he could sign up students when they changed classes. His goal was to sign up 30 students in three hours. He signed up about 60.

Vigil uses a variety of tactics to make the program more attractive to students.

"There are several things we can do to make the ASVAB appealing to students," he said. "When I talk to a counselor I try to ask them if we can schedule the test late on a Friday morning and they might get out of school a little early for the weekend."

He also said he tries to get teachers and counselors to make the CEP part of their curriculum or offering it as an extra credit assignment.

"The trouble is," Vigil said, "kids that age aren't interested in taking another test, especially with all the other tests they've already got at that point in their high school years. It's a matter of making them see the value of it."

"There are other ways of getting them interested and that's what the sign-up booth is for — to get the information out," he said.

Clark Bencomo, head of Green Mountain High's counseling department and its military liaison, has been using the Career Exploration Program for about 15 years. Although the number of students who take part is small, the benefits are big.

"They learn more about what careers they might want to explore," he said. "The interesting thing is that a kid will sometimes find out, 'Wow! I could have a career in electronics.' Or they could have a career in something they never dreamed that they have an aptitude for."

Bencomo is stumped about the best way to attract more students to the test.

"The difficulty is often that the turnout is so low," he said. "We don't have that many kids (who are) interested. We advertise it with an announcement."

I don't know what the best marketing technique would be."

The program helps counselors, too, Bencomo said.

"Anything we can do to help kids determine what they may pursue is helpful to counselors, because that's largely what we do," he said.

Hunt is not a fan of Option 8 testing where no information is released to recruiters, even though his MEPS is struggling to make its goal. He prefers to use Option 6, where no telephone numbers are released.

"Would it make my mission if a big high school did mandatory testing with Option 8? Yes," he said. "It would be kind of a hollow win. I don't feel right that we made the mission by testing Option 8 because the bottom line is that we want the services to get a product out of the process. Option 8 isn't going to give them that."

"That's why we steered clear of Option 8 and sold Option 6 pretty much exclusively since October," Hunt said. "Option 6 puts the onus on the kid to make the first contact with the recruiter. It took a little of the apprehension out of the counselor's mind. It gave my people access."

The MEPS had some success this year trying to synchronize ASVAB testing with CSAP and Hunt thinks they will do even better next year.

"We have a better handle on the calendar by school district," he said,

"where we think there are some openings we can get a little better support from the school, more participants and maybe a little more consistency than we've seen in the last two years."



Staff Sgt. James Olivas, an Army recruiter, talks with a student while proctoring a student testing session.

Deciphering the school calendars to schedule testing will allow the MEPS to give the schools better service while attracting more students to the program. For instance, the CSAP tests only sophomores.

"I think we finally broke the code on that one," Hunt said. "Some school districts let a lot of the seniors go home for the week. While they do have all this mandatory testing going on, we try to take the school calendar and figure out where the soft underbelly is."

"We'll say, you've got CSAP coming up for all the sophomores, why not offer a volunteer test for all the juniors and seniors during that time frame," he said. "We've got the administrators and all the assets to do it. Give me a facility and we'll make it happen. That way you're not taking any more time out of your school year."

Hunt also said another target of opportunity is when juniors are taking the pre-SAT in the fall.

"At one school we hit it right on the head," he said. "Not every junior wants to pay \$20 to take this test, but the school has nothing to do with the other juniors who don't want to take the test, so we offered the other juniors ASVAB testing."

As the school year winds down, it's still not clear if the Denver MEPS will make its goal this year. More than enough students are projected to take the test, but the question is how many will actually show up.

If they don't make it, it won't be for lack of trying.



Donald McCurry, an Office of Personnel Management test administrator, locks up testing materials at a student testing session.

The 90-year journey to the ASVAB

Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery

by Christine Parker
Messenger Editor

Today the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery — the ASVAB — is the most widely used multiple-aptitude test battery in the world. You read that correctly — in the world.

When we reflect on intelligence and aptitude testing in the past 100 or so years, two things are evident: magnificent strides have been made and the U.S. military has played a significant role in that progress.

Before the journey began

The first recognized attempts at assessing intelligence took place in England in the late 1800s. Francis Galton, half-cousin of Charles Darwin, is known for his studies and writing in a broad range of fields. Part of his life's work includes some of the first studies on variations in human abilities.

Just after the turn of the century, French psychologist Alfred Binet began developing techniques to assess the intelligence of grade school children. In 1905 he produced the first intelligence test — the Binet-Simon scale (with Theodore Simon). This test included a series of 30 items related to everyday tasks, e.g., counting coins, naming parts of the body, naming objects in a picture, word definition and digit span (the number of digits a person can recall from a list). The Binet-Simon laid the groundwork for today's intelligence testing.

The next progress was made in the United States. Lewis Terman of Stanford



A soldier (right) administers an Army intelligence test to another soldier at Fort Lee, Va., in November 1917. Photos by Sgt. Marshall

University adapted Binet's test and released a revision, called the Stanford-Binet, in 1916. This is the first time the concept of IQ appeared.

The next need for improvements came from the U.S. military. In the midst of World War I, the Army needed to assess the intelligence of large numbers of recruits. However, administering the Stanford-Binet was time consuming, costly and required highly trained administrators. In 1917, the president of the American Psychological Association,

Robert Yerkes urged the APA to contribute to the war effort by helping find a way to assess military recruits.

The APA formed numerous committees, one of which was charged with developing a group intelligence test that could identify men with low intelligence and those well-prepared for special assignments or higher-level training. Their efforts resulted in the Army Alpha and Beta tests, introduced in 1917. The Army Alpha was a written test for literate recruits. The Alpha had various parts, including anal-



The Army Alpha and Beta tests could be administered to large groups and could be completed in less than an hour.

ogy recognition, missing number fill-ins, and sentence unscrambling. These types of questions are still common in modern IQ tests. The Beta version was used for men who did not speak English or who were illiterate. The Beta had several parts as well, including a maze, number work and picture completions. The Alpha and Beta tests could be administered to large groups and took less than an hour to complete.

By the end of World War I, more than one million people took the Army Alpha and Beta tests. The Army was using the tests for two primary reasons — to better assign new recruits and to allow military leaders to better understand their soldiers' individual abilities. These first tests were just the beginning of the journey for U.S. military intelligence and aptitude testing.

During the next 10 to 20 years, the intelligence testing community began identifying limitations of mass intelligence testing. For example, the test takers' level of cultural knowledge affected their score. Many recent immigrants were not familiar with some of the material on the Alpha and Beta tests; however, their inability to correctly answer American culture-specific questions did not necessarily correlate with their intelligence.

Also, for a variety of reasons, many men who should have been taking the Beta tests were directed to take the Alpha tests,

which they failed. Often both tests were administered in unsatisfactory settings. And, further, the Beta test required the use of a pencil and writing numbers, and many testers had never seen or used a pencil before the test. These and other factors affected test results.

During World War II, each service used its own assessment procedures prior to an individual's induction. Also during this war, the Department of Defense began using the Army General Classification Test and Navy General Classification Test to classify enlisted personnel. These tests included questions on vocabulary, arithmetic and block counting. More than nine million people took these tests during the war.

In 1948, Congress passed the Selective Service Act that mandated DoD to develop a uniform screening test to be used by all of the services. In response, DoD developed the Armed Forces Qualification Test. DoD began administering the AFQT in 1950 and continued doing so until the mid-1970s.

The AFQT consisted of 100 multiple choice questions in: vocabulary, arithmetic, spatial relations and mechanical ability. DoD used the AFQT to measure the "general trainability" of draftees and volunteers for all the armed services.

Beginning in 1958, the first test used within schools was the Airman Qualifying Exam. Shortly thereafter, the Army and Navy introduced their own versions of classification tests into high schools. The service-specific tests were redundant and lacked a common standard. So, in 1966, DoD began the development of a single battery for all the services.

In 1968, DoD first offered the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery — at no cost — to high schools and postsecondary schools. It all began with ASVAB Form 1.

The ASVAB wasn't used for military recruiting until a few years later. The draft ended in 1973, followed by the beginning of the all-volunteer force. By 1976, DoD introduced ASVAB as the official aptitude testing for all the services.

Since ASVAB's beginning, DoD has improved it in these ways:

- 1976: ASVAB 5 introduced in secondary and postsecondary schools
- 1984: ASVAB Career Exploration Program Workbook introduced in schools
- 1991: Interest Inventory introduced for use in the Career Exploration Program
- 1992: ASVAB 18/19 and a new Exploring Careers Guide introduced
- 2002: ASVAB 23/24 and a new Exploring Careers Guide introduced
- 2002: ASVAB Career Exploration Program web site: www.asvabprogram.com
- 2004: Profile of American Youth, a large-scale research project, updated current national norms for the ASVAB
- 2005: 90-item Find Your Interests Inventory introduced for the Career Exploration Program

DoD continues to update and improve the ASVAB CEP. USMEPCOM published the most up-to-date ASVAB Career Exploration Guide in February 2008.

Today the ASVAB CEP is one of the largest career exploration programs in the world. School counselors can use the program to encourage students to increase their level of self-knowledge and understand how that information is linked to military and civilian occupational characteristics.

The U.S. military has played a significant role in intelligence and aptitude assessment — two areas that were only vague concepts less than 100 years ago.



The Student Testing Program in the last frontier: north to the future

A rare summertime glimpse of Denali (that's what Alaskans call Mount McKinley). Unfortunately, schools are not in session during the best time of year to travel.

By Maj. Laura Bozeman
Anchorage MEPS Commander

Each fall, winter and spring, the people who administer the Alaska Student Testing Program, largely the members of Anchorage MEPS' testing section, crisscross frozen expanses of tundra along the Last Frontier's land, air, and sea routes. They regularly exceed their STP goals through sheer determination and grit.

In a state with schools as far as 1,480 miles away from the MEPS, administering a high school Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery session is rarely as easy as hopping into a car to head across town. Getting to those schools located outside the "Anchorage Bowl" makes for some unique experiences. Floatplane, all-terrain vehicle and snow machine (with an occasional 4x4 excursion) are common modes of travel in Alaska for the "Jeremiah Johnson" dressed individuals.

Each year, members of Anchorage MEPS, Local Education Agency Program participants and Office of Personnel Management test administrators travel to remote Alaskan sites using these and other exotic forms of transportation to ensure the state's high school students can take part in the ASVAB Career Exploration Program.

Slightly more than 19,000 high school students attend classes at 250 schools in 56 public school districts throughout the state,

and each school year the STP team tries to reach as many of them as possible. In the Land of the Midnight Sun, where 90 percent of the state's communities aren't connected by highways and three quarters of all schools are inaccessible by land routes from the MEPS, the quest to help students learn how their aptitudes and interests align and what potential school and career options they should consider is challenging, rewarding, and memorable.

Whether practicing defensive driving skills to avoid the jarring dips and bumps known as "frost heaves" and dangerous, potentially deadly caribou or moose strikes, or sleeping on high school gymnasium floors in towns too small to have commercial lodging, administering the STP in Alaska is never routine.

Ideally, every high school student in the United States and its territories should take part in the ASVAB CEP during their junior or senior years. In Alaska, that presents numerous challenges because the program's operations take place in a land of extremes. For example, while The World Almanac ranks the state 48th in the union in terms of population, it places Alaska first for sheer

size, with a total land area of 570,034 square miles — about one-third the size of the lower 48 states.

Honolulu is the only MEPS that covers a larger area, and for both Honolulu and Anchorage, most of the high schools in the MEPS' territories are only accessible by air or by sea. In contrast to the islands of the Pacific Rim, the environment in Alaska varies widely between summer and winter and consists of four different climatic zones: maritime, continental, transitional and Arctic.

From June to August, when schools are not in session, Alaska is a land of scenic vistas where tourists enjoy mild weather, salmon and halibut fishing, and 18 or more hours of sunlight each day. When summer fades and schools are in session, however, the prime testing months are September and October.

Like two of Anchorage MEPS' northern counterparts in Maine and Minnesota, by

On the Student Testing Program ...

"Honolulu is the only MEPS that covers a larger area, and for both Honolulu and Anchorage, most of the high schools in the MEPS' territories are only accessible by air or by sea."

December, most of the state is buried in snow, gets very little daylight and temperatures average well below 0, meaning that testing cannot resume in earnest until late February. Administering the STP becomes a race against time and Mother Nature.

Members of the Anchorage MEPS testing section regularly embark on adventures. Wayne Thibedeau, Anchorage MEPS test coordinator, recalls a memorable trip in which he "traveled through a wicked snow storm for 160 miles through the Chugach Mountains on a twisting, narrow, semi-paved road," arriving at Kenney Lake School, a remote K-12 school 10 miles off the paved highway to find six snow machines (what Alaskans call snow mobiles) parked outside. Thibedeau said he was "awestruck by the beauty of the landscape and quaintness of the school," which has only 42 high school students, and that he felt like he had experienced a time warp and gone back to the 1960's.

Alaska only has 12,200 miles of public roads, about the same mileage as Vermont. Most of Alaska's road network is two-lane highways that connect Anchorage, Fairbanks, Denali, towns in between, and few points further east and north.

Even if rural towns in Alaska have roads, most do not go any farther than the edge of town or may be ice roads (frozen rivers or streams) that are only passable during winter. Most towns are two to four hours apart. Wilderness surrounds the travelers,

and the often desolate, snowy terrain stretches as far as the eye can see in a world where the land meets the sky at an invisible horizon.

Given the distance between Anchorage and many of Alaska's high schools and the limited road network, Anchorage MEPS testing section personnel usually forsake the automobile and travel to outlying regions by bush airplane. With the exception of the Anchorage Bowl and road system, schools are usually tested in pre-planned consolidated groups to save time.

Fortunately, there is extensive flight service. Commuter and air taxi often replace highway travel, making aircraft essential for transporting passengers, cargo and mail to outlying communities. Since the Defense Travel System only interfaces with national and regional carriers, testing section personnel often must call or e-mail rural bush taxi services directly to book flights

and brace themselves for questions such as, "How much do you weigh?"

This might strike people from the "outside" (what Alaskans call Americans who live in the "Lower 48") as intrusive, but on four- or six-seat aircraft, pilots must take into account the weight of passengers and their baggage, then figure in how much cargo (such as mail) they can safely carry.

It is also essential to build extra time into the reservations process because there are frequent communications outages. As the



Unusual methods of travel are part of accomplishing the Student Testing Program goal in Alaska. (Top photo) A floatplane lands at Angoon, Alaska. (Above) A taxi baggage handler in Chevak, Alaska.

Wrangell Mountain Air says on its website, "Our 'bush' phone system in McCarthy can be unreliable at times ... We apologize for any difficulty you have in contacting us. It is just part of living in a remote part of Alaska." Alaskans have learned to laugh at these relatively minor inconveniences.

Another popular but slow transportation mode is the Alaska Marine Highway ferry. The ferry was very important to Alaska's frontier, because it was the fastest way for newcomers and gold seekers to get to Alaska but comparatively few Alaskans use this service today because flying is faster and more convenient. The state-run Alaska Marine Highway is the longest ferry route in the world, covering thousands of nautical miles along the coastline. It is the only water route U.S. Department of Transportation has designated as a national scenic byway. It provides regular service to 33 Alaskan communities.

Due to time constraints, people administering the STP in Alaska rarely travel by ferry, except when conducting testing sessions in Southeastern Alaska's panhandle, part of the state that is mostly unreachable by car and where the ferry operates year round. The only way to get an automobile from Anchorage to Juneau is by ferry or barge. Ferries only cross the Gulf of Alaska directly two to three times a



(Left) Vanni Prichard, director of assessment and accountability, North Slope Borough School District, and J. P. Jones, Anchorage MEPS education services specialist, prepare to head from the Barrow Airport to the school district's headquarters to conduct Local Education Agency Program training.

month in the summer, and the ferry ride from Anchorage to Juneau can take 32 hours.

On a typical panhandle STP run, Anchorage MEPS members fly more than 800 miles from Anchorage through Juneau to Ketchikan, take a floatplane from Ketchikan to Craig, rent a vehicle, and travel to 10 or 12 schools in the Prince of Wales Island area for more than a week and a half, taking ferries to connect to some of the smaller islands. The trips make fiscal sense when schools are grouped close together, but traveling to schools in interior Alaska to administer the ASVAB to two or three students is not cost effective. Fortunately, Anchorage MEPS has a solution to this remote school testing challenge.

Alaska's vastness makes the job of J.P. Jones, education services specialist, difficult. To canvas larger high schools near Anchorage and Fairbanks effectively and schools in the Alaskan hinterlands, Anchorage MEPS relies in part upon a unique initiative, begun in 1987, called the Local Education Agency Program.

The program offers a self-administering, contracted-to-school-districts ASVAB STP service for selected remote school districts, using certified educators as test administrators at the districts' high schools, saving the MEPS thousands of travel dollars. Jones coordinates all the training, monitoring and coordination for the program, which also

involves coordination with MEPS budget and supply, and Department of Defense contracting and state officials. The concept reduces the cost of testing at remote schools and enhances the STP in the whole state. Twelve remote, rural school districts take part each year, contributing to the STP while ensuring students who live in the "bush" have similar opportunities to students who live in Alaska's cities. Anchorage MEPS members conduct the annual training and continually monitor program security.

Jones is responsible for Alaska's LEA Program. It gives school districts in the Alaskan bush (129 schools representing 9 percent of the state's high school students) with an intangible benefit: the chance to take advantage of the ASVAB and its accompanying CEP to test their students.

Jones said the program "is a great cost-effective and time saving tool to provide the ASVAB to smaller, remote schools across Alaska." Thanks to the LEA Program, tiny schools are not by-passed in favor of schools with larger student populations. School districts receive a flat rate payment of \$500 per year to administer the program, and the district staff is recertified every two years. Training is usually conducted in Anchorage, when educators come to the city for conferences. District and school administrators, counselors and teachers learn how to administer the ASVAB and conduct test score interpretation sessions.

The program reduces STP travel costs by more than \$100,000 a year, and saves the recruiting services travel expenses which can exceed \$1,500 per applicant, since recruiters can prescreen applicants and make better decisions about flying them to the Anchorage MEPS.

The North Slope Borough School District is the LEA Program participant with the largest geographic area of operations. Its 89,000 square miles of arctic territory at the top of Alaska is enormous,

On the North Slope Borough ...

"In every village, the ancient traditions of the Iñupiat Eskimos coexist with state-of-the-art technology."

but its population is tiny. The borough has about 6,500 residents, with about 1,600 students. According to the district's web site, visitors to the North Slope Borough will witness spectacular contrasts. In summer, the sun stays above the horizon for 84 days, and in the winter, it disappears for 67 days. Temperatures range between a comfortable 60 degrees and a chilling 40 below. In every village, the ancient traditions of the Iñupiat Eskimos coexist with state-of-the-art technology.

Students in the North Slope Borough School District come from many backgrounds, from Alaska natives whose families still practice subsistence living (hunting, fishing, and planting crops to survive) to children of oil field workers who have come to Alaska from all over the globe. Jobs on "the slope" range from vocational to high tech, with a smattering of medical and educational jobs in the larger villages. In this part of Alaska, the CEP exposes students to jobs they have never even heard of — let alone imagined as professions.

Vanni Prichard, director of assessment and accountability for the district, has been involved with the LEA Program since the mid 1990s. She said she "first used the program as a counselor in one of [the district's] village schools almost 12 years ago.

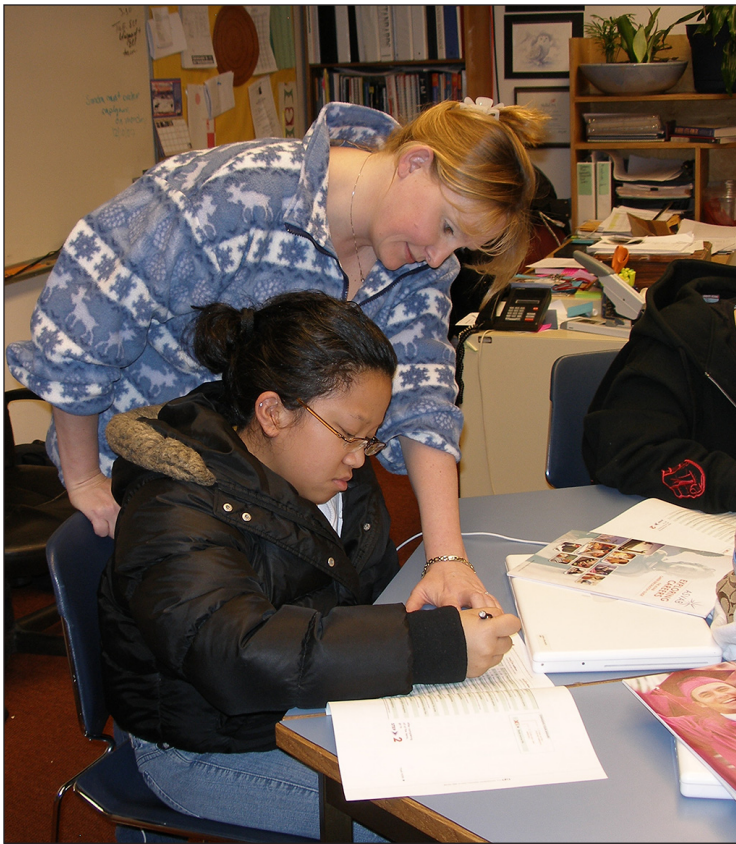
"The strength of the program," Prichard said, "is that it puts excellent career exploration tools in the hands of counselors and educators, while providing a wealth of information to the students, all at no cost to the district. The interest inventory and aptitude battery are easy to administer, and the program is self-explanatory."

Educators are impressed by what the program offers students — the possibility that students will use what they have learned through the CEP to "contribute to their communities in a positive economic and social way," Mike Johnson, Anchorage MEPS test score technician, said.

Shanna Johnson, a Barrow High School teacher, is pleased with the possibilities the ASVAB CEP offers her students. She said



J. P. Jones, Anchorage MEPS education services specialist, explains how to fill out the Find Your Interests worksheet to a student at Hutchinson High School, Fairbanks, Alaska.



Shanna Johnson, Barrow High School teacher, helps Alma Balancio as she and her classmates complete their ASVAB interest inventories.

it helps her students to make career choices, noting that teachers at her school discuss college and future prospects so frequently that students might feel overwhelmed.

"The Career Exploration Program helps to narrow the fields of interest quickly," she said, and often exposes students to new career fields.

"This program provides detailed information to help guide students in making decisions for their 'future,'" she said.

Jones sums up the experience common to most remote Alaskan schools by pointing out the Great Land's "fledgling state" status often limits student opportunities that other states take for granted.

"Urban and rural Alaskan students [often] only know about ... jobs related to their village, mining, fishing, logging, construction, communications, tourism, medical professions, and the military," he said. "Our students are just not exposed to the myriad of other occupations that older built-up states have available for their students."

The LEA Program helps bring these occupations and opportunities to all students of the Great Land. It lets them see beyond the ice-covered borders of their communities

and provides Alaskan students with alternative career choices and visions of the American dream.

As is the case anywhere in the country, some of the students who participate in the ASVAB CEP ultimately decide to enlist in the military. In Alaska, a trip to Anchorage MEPS might offer a young person his or her first-time glimpse at city life and all of its amenities.

Anthony Fuentes, Anchorage MEPS test control officer, recalled an experience when he encountered

an applicant at the MEPS who he had previously met while administering the ASVAB in a particularly remote Alaskan village. The applicant had to take three connecting flights just to reach the MEPS, and he was very excited when he saw a familiar face.

The applicant approached Fuentes and asked him "if he could stop by McDonald's on the way back home so he could bring his friends and family a burger and fries." Many Americans in the Continental U.S. might think this strange, since McDonald's is found in most towns. In Alaska, however, the fast food franchises have yet to make it into the bush, so the smallest conveniences are sometimes considered luxuries or rewards.

Fuentes quipped that he supposes a "reheated burger would be OK, but cold fries?" All kidding aside, he and other members of Anchorage MEPS testing section are quite familiar with the rugged conditions out in the bush. He described one visit to a "remote village where he had the opportunity to walk around, [noting] several houses had moose and caribou hanging on the entryway, with various parts of the carcasses removed. The [locals] simply

opened the door to the 'walk out' freezer and cut off pieces of meat when needed." The McDonald's meals the applicant took home might have been the first taste of fast food for his family and friends.

Alaska is still very much a land of opportunities and vast expanses of wilderness — a place where administering STP requires initiative, wherewithal, and determination. Whether testing in the city or the bush, the journeys are rarely dull.

Jones has experienced "flying into a short beachfront airstrip that is at best challenging to an experienced bush pilot; with a 50 knot side wind, knowing that if [the] plane went down, the nearest person [was] over 100 miles away through the frozen tundra or over the mountains."

Thibedeau reminds new test administrators to "be sensitive to the needs of the school faculty and students who are often wary of outsiders coming into their village."

Johnson always makes sure to pack some good books, for he has been "weathered in for a few days" in the past and not "gotten out" on schedule.

Through it all, a tiny group of Anchorage MEPS members, OPM test administrators, and professionals from the LEA Program make a difference in the lives of Alaska's students every school year.



Alaska is a land of vast spaces that retains frontier qualities. This old-fashioned, "not exact but close enough milepost" outside of Fairbanks stands in front of a high-tech marvel, the Alaska Pipeline.

Lansing sets CEP goal: overcome, adapt, improvise

The beginning of school year 2007-2008 presented many challenges for the Student Testing Program at the Lansing MEPS.

The Michigan governor phased in the Michigan Merit Examination, mandating the use of the ACT. Furthermore, the No Child Left Behind Act required tougher academic standards across the board for students.

This had a direct impact on classroom instruction time. Additionally, the average student to counselor ratio in Michigan is roughly 363-1. Counselors are feeling overwhelmed with the amount of work that needs to be done versus the number of hours in a day. Unfortunately, there isn't enough time to do the job that they love — providing career counseling to young people. As a result, many schools have become less inclined to support the ASVAB Career Exploration Program.

However, the Lansing MEPS staff has come together to face the challenges. Its goal: To overcome, adapt and improvise. Lt. Cmdr. Vicky A. Cummings, MEPS commander, 1st Sgt. Wanda Gipson, senior enlisted advisor, Ronald D. Maloney, test control officer, and the testing staff have expanded their support for the ASVAB



Laurel Hess of Comcast Newsmakers interviews Lansing MEPS Education Services Specialist, Edwin R. Southerland, about the ASVAB Career Exploration Program.

CEP. Edwin R. Southerland, Lansing MEPS education services specialist, has trained others in marketing and post-test interpretation to increase awareness of the program throughout the state. Several individuals have already been out to market the CEP at area high schools and conduct post-test interpretations.

Training for recruiting personnel has also expanded this year to include adding a section on sales fundamentals. Recruiters

have been facing a growing number of objections when they approach school officials so the education specialist has added the Ben Franklin Theory — the feel, felt, found method — and other sales strategies. Even the “MATTRESS” makes an excellent fit for addressing work values in a post-test interpretation session: Money, Advancement, Training, Travel, Recreation, Education, Security and Satisfaction.

With few advertising dollars available for ASVAB CEP promotion, the Lansing team has worked on other ways to promote the program.

While Southerland solicited support for the ASVAB CEP from the Michigan Department of Education and the governor's

office, Gipson made initial contact with the program manager at Comcast Cable.

This relationship building paid big dividends when Governor Jennifer Granholm proclaimed November 2007 as ASVAB Career Exploration Awareness Month in Michigan and Comcast interviewed Southerland on Comcast Newsmakers for a program that ran 15 times over five days in late December.

The Lansing MEPS has clearly exhibited how to overcome, adapt and improvise.

San Juan's view of CEP: extreme

By Arnaldo Acosta
San Juan MEPS

Each school year, MEPS commanders, along with education services specialists and student test coordinators dream about the MEPS Student Testing Program goal decreasing. Suddenly, they all wake up to reality in which the school year has commenced and the numbers are either unchanged or increased.

And so it begins — MEPS' phones will not stop ringing. And everyone in the MEPS realizes that the ESS and the student test coordinator are responsible

for the non-stop ringing of the phones. School officials call back to schedule, cancel, reschedule, re-cancel, re-reschedule, and finally to confirm their cancellations. To make matters even more stressful, there is concern about the mega-test session in a few days.

You pray that the mega-test session is worth the effort because you will lose sleep over how much money and time you spent on a non-justifiable cause.

What about the student test coordinator trying to confirm a test session with the Office of Personnel Management area coordinator? It's usually difficult to hear,

“There is not a test administrator available for that date.”

Then the panic attacks, chest pains, headaches, and the roller coaster motion sickness begin. Test coordinators go through their ups and downs all year long — excited about each option 1 they process, disappointment over every option 7 or 8, and the frustration for each sophomore tested when the session was scheduled for juniors and seniors.

These professionals go through all these things every school year. But time and experience have enlightened

Salt Lake City wins by thinking outside the box

by Kelly Boyer
Test Coordinator, Salt Lake City MEPS

A program is only as successful as the people comprising the team that works the program lets it be. The Student Testing Program at the Salt Lake City MEPS took off for the school year 2007-2008 and is exceeding all expectations.

Starting at the top, Lt. Col. John Notter's total team approach to getting the coveted recruiter leads includes him energizing the entire MEPS staff to help out. The testing team started its efforts before the school year began. Tony Healy, test control officer, was out extolling the virtues of the ASVAB at recruiting stations throughout Utah and Wyoming, while Education Services Specialist Rafe Homan was drumming up support and training the recruiters in the Nevada area. As for myself, the student test coordinator, and the other test administrators, we were back at the MEPS sending out all the testing date reservation forms to the schools and getting our school kits ready — it was a good thing we did!

August started off with only one school, but everything broke loose in September, compounded by the fact that we were down to only one Office of Personnel Management test administrator in the Las Vegas area. We normally have four at the schools and the Las Vegas area has comprised the majority of our market! Instead of turning away requests, we enlisted help from throughout the MEPS to fill in as test administrators. Paul Foster orchestrated all of the necessary training for initial and quarterly certification. By using the MEPS network common drive, when co-workers had spare time, they logged in and become test administrator qualified.

Stellar teamwork prevailed again as the test session requests exceeded the test section staffing. As a result,

members from processing, headquarters, and even the medical section were involved. A prevailing reason for this was the unforeseen success of Homan's effort to secure mandatory testing in the largest school district in the Wasatch Valley. As a result of his three-year effort, starting with securing an endorsement from the Utah state superintendent of education in 2006, he successfully marketed the career exploration aspect of the program and the "free" tool it provides the school counselors and students. As a result, Granite School District made the Student ASVAB mandatory for their juniors. This school district consists of 10 schools in the Salt Lake area with an average junior class size of no less than 500 students. In other words, we had hit the jackpot and instead of winding down, like in Januarys past. This year has been and will be busy taking total care of Granite to include some split sessions and sophomore testing.

Additionally, we have accommodated a significant increase of interpretation training which is the crucial translation aspect of the program that the school guidance counselors can utilize to guide their students regardless of whether or not a military career path is chosen. This initial wave of testing will also serve as a solid foundation of vocational guidance to build upon for future years not only for all participating students but school guidance counselors as well.

In closing, I just want to reiterate the point that the Student Testing Program didn't change overnight, or in just one year, but it was a process that has been in the works and just needed the right team to be willing to give something a chance, thinking "outside the box" and working through the kinks. We have had a busy year no doubt, but we still have lessons we learned as a team and will work to improve upon for the upcoming school year.

opportunity versus challenge

the positive aspect of this program. Here are a few positive thoughts:

- Involve everyone in your MEPS with the program; team efforts bring success.
- Cross-train to qualify people to administer ASVAB tests, and do pretest orientations and post-test result interpretations.
- Do not rely on OPM test administrators all the time; avoid test session cancellations

by scheduling MEPS personnel to administer tests as needed.

- Treat everyone with respect and courtesy.
- Build long-lasting relationships with school officials. Don't just talk about work. Sometimes they also need someone to listen to what is on their minds.
- Let recruiting personnel have significant participation in the program. Our efforts will benefit them eventually, so involve them in the process.

Attend your customers' needs in a timely manner and bring your best to them.

- Remember the purpose of this program is to provide growth opportunities!
- Enjoy every aspect of your job and you will make great memories.
- Always know that you are a Department of Defense community ambassador opening doors to new horizons and watching over the well-being of your society.

National Guard steps in to help accomplish processing mission

By Skip Wiseman
Messenger Associate Editor

When vacant active duty positions in the MEPS threatened to slow processing, the Army National Guard stepped into the breach to keep things moving.

The vacancies were caused by the increased demand for troops to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Program Budget Decision 712, which slashed the number of military people assigned to the command. Fewer military people in the MEPS magnified the impact of a vacant active duty position. The Guard started filling the gaps late in fiscal 2005.

Shortly after Lt. Col. Bill Dones assumed his duties as the command's National Guard liaison, the command group asked him if the Illinois National Guard had anyone available to help out there.

The Guard has a program called Active Duty Special Work, which allows individuals to be serve full time with active duty units.

"I made some phone calls and lo and behold, within three weeks I had Sgt. (Patricia) Arroyo working in the command group," Dones said. Arroyo later worked in both sector headquarters.

"I saw the success it brought to her personally and professionally," Dones said. "It allowed her to learn exactly how a joint service headquarters works. I knew there were other shortfalls that weren't being attended by the other services, mostly the Army, because of PBD 712. I saw it as an opportunity for the Guard to take up a lot of the shortfalls and fill those billets.

"A lot of the MEPS are in National Guard communities," he said. "I knew those shortfalls could be easily attended by Guardsmen. The biggest flexibility is we have those people readily identifiable in the Chicago area, the St. Louis area, the Indianapolis area, wherever.

"We just filled Los Angeles with an officer who just got back from Iraq," Dones said. "We have a guy who lives in San Jose, (Calif.) right by the MEPS who is working there, who has been well received as an officer and has taken a lot of the every day responsibilities that were supposed to be earmarked for the operations officer because he has proven to be a hard charger.

"I want our people to transition into that active duty position not being called Guard," he said. "I want it to be a seamless transition. All they see is an Army individual. It's not that we should be ashamed of being Guard, but I want it to be, 'Hey, there's a soldier.' One team, one fight."

Starting out by placing one person here and another there, the Guard now has 160 billets dedicated to USMEPCOM and has

can get a person funded from now until September, but I can't promise that person I can keep them into fiscal '09 until I know we have enough way ahead so we can submit our budget request accordingly.

"I always like to make the promise to people when we bring them in that we're going to keep them on until the new fiscal year," Dones said. "After that I'm going to work my butt off to see that we have you in place another year."

While the benefits to USMEPCOM are obvious, the value to the National Guard is just as great.

"It benefits the Guard because it gives us an opportunity to work in a full-time, joint force environment, which we don't have as regularly drilling soldiers," Dones said. "The MEPS allows our officers and NCOs to broaden their personal and professional development working in a joint force environment and see how it interacts on the active duty side and the impact you have on an individual.

"It allows us to keep a uniformed presence in the MEPS," he said. "I'm adamant that we have a uniformed presence in the MEPS. That's where all these young men and women are starting out. I think they need to see (uniformed people) there attending to their needs.

Individual participants accept the assignment for a variety of reasons and are covered by the same job protection of any Guardsman called to active duty.

"It could be a student who wants some time off school," Dones said. "It might be somebody who's doing something that may not be as worthwhile or personally fulfilling as it would be to take on this kind of opportunity.

"The most fulfilling thing is that we've been able to take care of the joint command and put good, hard-working people in those positions," he said. "Personally, I think it's one of the best things we've been able to come up with – support the command and take care of the shortfalls. It all comes down to putting people in boots.

"I couldn't be more proud of the people we have in those positions now," Dones said. "We keep hearing about the people we have in place helping get the mission done. It makes my heart feel good that we're not only doing something good for the Guard, but good for the command."

Army National Guard Federal Mission

During peacetime each state National Guard answers to the leadership in the 50 states, three territories and the District of Columbia. During national emergencies, however, the president reserves the right to mobilize the National Guard, putting them in federal duty status. While federalized, the units answer to the combatant commander of the theater in which they are operating and, ultimately, to the president.

Even when not federalized, the Army National Guard has a federal obligation (or mission.) That mission is to maintain properly trained and equipped units, available for prompt mobilization for war, national emergency, or as otherwise needed.

The Army National Guard is a partner with the active Army and the Army Reserve in fulfilling the country's military needs.

budgeted \$8.5 million for the program this year. The Guardsmen are filling positions ranging from operations and executive officers to lab technicians and administrative NCOs. There are currently 94 Guardsmen working in the command, with new requests coming in regularly.

The positions are funded by fiscal year. "That's the biggest glitch," Dones said. "I

— Focus on diversity —

Hiring, retaining and promoting people with disabilities

by Michael L. Allen
Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist and
People with Disabilities Program Manager

Last year USMEPCOM increased its disabled veterans workforce by 16 percent. Armed with more information about hiring, retaining and promoting people with disabilities, the command could surpass last fiscal year's goal.

This increase is based on measurements found in the Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program Plan. Like other agencies, USMEPCOM must submit this plan to the Office of Personnel Management annually. The plan defines the command's hiring, promotion and retention of people with disabilities and is used as a measure to improve accomplishments in this area.

The reports describe agency efforts to promote the maximum employment and job advancement opportunities for disabled veterans as well as certain veterans of the Vietnam era and of the post-Vietnam era who are qualified for such employment and advancement. As part of the submission package, USMEPCOM, must include a signed statement certifying that the agency has an up-to-date DVAAP plan. OPM reviews each submission to determine whether it is in compliance with the applicable law and regulations. Compliance is obtained by attaining and/or exceeding the utilization of disabled veterans as evidenced by comparison of our total employee population vs. Census Data Tables. They then submit an annual report to congress on the employment of veterans in the federal government.

Like other agencies, USMEPCOM is encouraged to hire as many disabled veterans as possible every year. There are many government initiatives that give employment preference to veterans such as:

- The Veterans Employment Opportunities Act ensures veterans are able to compete for government positions that previously may have only been available to existing civil service employees.
- The Veterans Recruitment Appointment and 30 Percent or More Disabled Veterans Programs allow eligible veterans to fill certain position without competition.
- The disabled veterans enrolled in the Veterans Affairs Training Program allows eligible disabled veterans to receive training or work experience at the VA.
- The veterans preference gives special consideration to eligible veterans looking for federal employment. Veterans who are disabled or who served on active duty in the armed forces during certain specified time periods or in military campaigns are entitled to preference over non-veterans both in hiring and in retention during reductions in force.
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment is an employment-oriented program that assists veterans with service-connected disabilities by offering services and assistance to help them prepare for, find, and keep suitable employment. Suitable employment is work that is within the veteran's physical, mental, and emotional capabilities and matches their patterns of skills, abilities and interests.

The VA is committed to enhancing the employment and advancement of people with disabilities. Individuals with a certification letter from the VA or a state vocational rehabilitation office are encouraged to apply for noncompetitive appointments to jobs in the VA.

The Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program provides accommodation solutions to eliminate barriers to employment for people with visual, hearing, cognitive, communication and dexterity disabilities.

Most of the barriers to employment of people with disabilities are physical, programmatic or attitudinal. The current administration has focused on overcoming those barriers by appropriate educational and enforcement efforts. These efforts to assist public and private

Most of the barriers to employment of people with disabilities are physical, programmatic or attitudinal.

employers and individuals are paying off, and more people with disabilities are able to enter the workforce every day. Some of those accomplishments are:

- The Department of Veterans Affairs Employee Education System/VA Learning University has procedures in place to ensure that individuals with disabilities are not excluded, denied services, or segregated from educational events due to the absence of auxiliary aids and services.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs provided early intervention and outreach to 460 wounded or injured service members at eight Military Treatment Facilities since January 2006 under the Secretary's Coming Home to Work Initiative.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs initiated a new faith-based and community initiative that has facilitated outreach to community faith-based and non-profit agencies or organizations that identified 518 successful job placements of disabled veterans since the outreach began in 2006.
- The Department of Defense and the Department of Labor have created the REALifelines Program for disabled veterans, which provides career counseling and advocacy services to assist re-entry into the workforce.
- The Department of Defense provides assistive technology to disabled veterans returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom to assist them both at home and on the job.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to USMEPCOM's accomplishments, including supervisors and human resource professionals who help with the selection, recruitment and retention of disabled veterans.

Editor's note: Michael L. Allen has worked at USMEPCOM for about two years. He previously worked for the Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District Office. Most of his employment background was with the human resources departments of Northrop Grumman Corp., and General Motors Corp.

Say (Hoo) “Ahhh”

Story and photos by Skip Wiseman
Messenger Associate Editor

He could have met the Kansas City Chiefs, gone to the Super Bowl, visited Disney World or any of the other wonderful things the Make-A-Wish Foundation offers youngsters facing life-threatening illnesses.

Ethan Moyer never wavered. He wanted to join the Army – the Special Forces, no less.

Ethan, 9, and his best friend, Jake Smith, 10, processed through the Denver MEPS on the way to making his wish come true.

Ethan was diagnosed with focal segmental glomerulosclerosis in November 2005. The disease causes high blood pressure and high cholesterol, and damages the kidneys. Doctors are hopeful that he is moving toward remission, but it is still life-threatening and could lead to end-stage renal failure some years down the line, according to his mother, Debbie Coleman.

Ethan is on a very strict diet. He can't have pizza or chocolate for instance, which his mother says, "Is tough on a nine-year-old." He also takes two different blood pressure medications, a steroid and a medication to help with his kidney function. He drinks fish liver oil at every meal to help keep his cholesterol in check.

"The first thing out of his mouth was, 'Could they get rid of my diet,'" Coleman said, adding that Ethan has been fascinated with the Army for quite a while.

"The Army interest came about slowly," she said.



Col. (Dr.) Ron Eager gets Ethan Moyer to open wide during his physical examination.



Ethan Moyer and Jake Smith line up with other applicants at the start of the processing day.

“ The Denver MEPS staff ... put Ethan and Jake through as normal a processing day as possible, from the early wake up to ,” hurry up and wait.

“It started out playing some video games, then little plastic Army men. We started to buy Army sets, then we started to get Army clothes. He has Army bedding.

“I don’t know where the fascination came from,” Coleman said. “None of our family members are in the Army. Most kids get fascinated with something and it goes away. This hasn’t.”

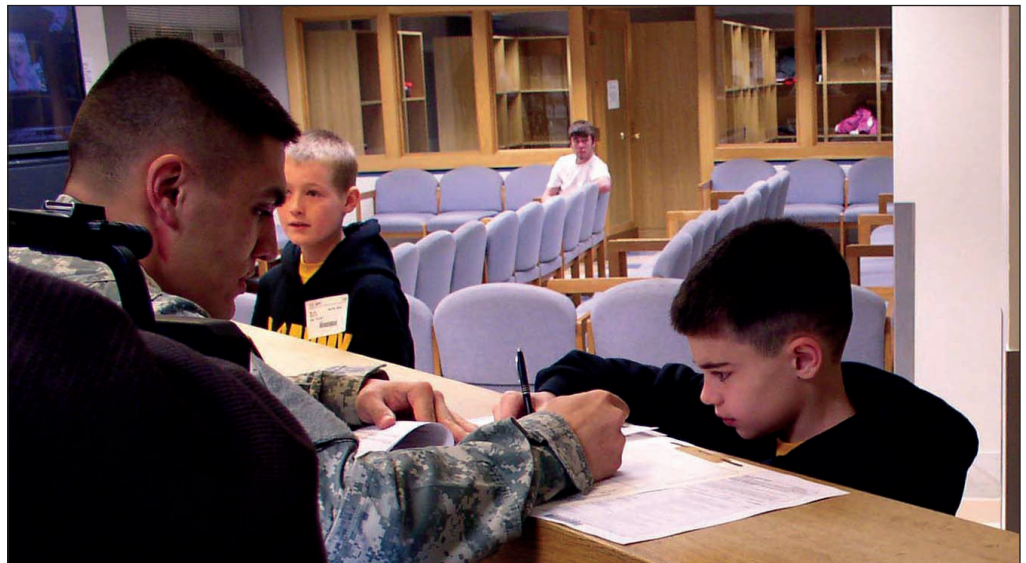
Ethan has visited the National Guard Armory in his Emporia, Kan., hometown and has been inside a tank a couple of times.

“He could probably tell you quite a bit about it, because he pays attention to details,” Coleman said.

The Denver MEPS staff, led by Maj. Cort Hunt, put Ethan and Jake through as normal a processing day as possible, from the early wake up to hurry up and wait.

After breakfast at the applicant hotel and a bus ride to the MEPS with their fellow recruits, Ethan and Jake joined the formation outside the MEPS, got the inbrief from Sgt. Edwin Bonayon and stood in line to wait their turns at the front desk.

They checked into medical, listened to another briefing and took the same physical as any applicant, minus the needles and plastic cups. Then it was back to the Army liaison shop, where Robert Fondren took the boys through the contracting process and signed each of them up for a six-year hitch in the Special Forces, starting with basic and advanced training at Fort Benning, Ga.



Sgt. Edwin Bonayon signs in Ethan Moyer and Jake Smith at the front desk.

After some down time, which Ethan used to shoot a game of pool with his mom, it was time for lunch. The boys picked out their sandwiches, sodas, chips and dessert and sat down to eat. They were soon joined by Keith Carter and Brian Day, both Marine Corps applicants, who entertained them as only a couple young adults who like kids can.

Processing continued after lunch with the usual interview with a human resources assistant, fingerprinting and all the rest. At that point, the pint-sized applicants were getting a little ahead of schedule, so they were dispatched to the applicant lounge to watch some television.

Back on schedule, Ethan and Jake went through the only atypical part of their day – they were issued uniforms. The Army



Ethan Moyer takes his "ASVAB test."

Combat Uniforms, complete with name and U.S. Army tapes, hats and, best of all, boots, came from a shop at Buckley Air National Guard Base that makes specialty uniforms for children.

Spectators packed the ceremony room to watch Jake and Ethan take the same oath of enlistment that thousands of applicants take each year.

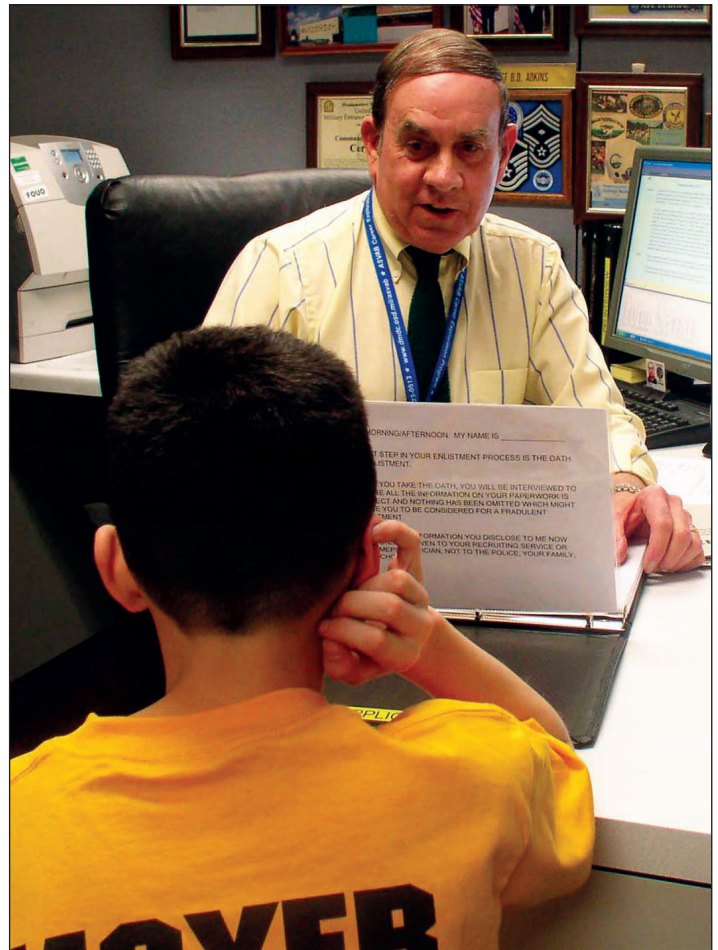
"This is something," Coleman said, "much more than I expected. I think it was quite an experience for him. I didn't realize there would be that many recruits. It was pretty amazing how they line them right up and away you go. I don't know how I'm going to thank everybody. He can forget about everything for a while."

The boys thought they were going back to the hotel after "enlisting," but one more surprise awaited them. A Hummer H3 from U.S. Army Recruiting Command whisked them away to the ESPN Fun Zone for the rest of the afternoon, followed by dinner.

The next morning it was back into uniform and off for a day at Fort Carson, Colo., which was chosen because a friend of the family who is in the Army said it would be a good post to visit. (That's partly why the boys processed through the Denver MEPS.) Showing their aptitude for military service, Ethan and Jake were promoted to corporal at Fort Carson.

Coleman was effusive in her praise for the whole experience in a letter to Col. Lon M. Yeary, who was then the USMEPCOM commander. She cited how Hunt prepared for the event to make sure Ethan got exactly what he wanted.

"He wanted to get to know some things about Ethan and just what he was expecting," she said in the letter. "He took the time to listen and not just scratch the surface. He remained in touch with me over the next month, making sure he would meet Ethan's dream of being a soldier. The time and



Duane Adkins, a Denver MEPS human resources assistant, does the pre-enlistment interview with Ethan Moyer.



Brian Day and Keith Carter join Jake Smith and Ethan Moyer for lunch.



Jake Smith and Ethan Moyer review documents before their pre-enlistment interview.



Ethan Moyer signs his contract while Jake Smith waits his turn.

effort Major Hunt put into this will never be forgotten.”

She was also grateful for the attention Hunt and Senior Chief Petty Officer Wayne Price, the Denver MEPS senior enlisted advisor, gave their guests after they arrived.

“They took the time to show us around the hotel and make sure all our questions were answered,” Coleman wrote. “They got to know Ethan and Jake and made a connection with them. It put

Ethan at ease to know he had two friends he could turn to if all the cameras made him nervous.”

A pro football team, the Super Bowl or Disney World may be just the right thing for a lot of kids. The smile on Ethan’s face when he saw his uniform for the first time clearly said the Army was the right choice for him. The only drawback is that his mom is going to have to figure out how to wash those ACUs with Ethan still in them.



Sgt. Edwin Bonayon prepares Jake Smith and Ethan Moyer for their enlistment ceremony.

“ The smile on Ethan’s face when he saw his uniform for the first time clearly said the Army was the right choice for him. ”

First recruits enlist using biometric technology

By Donna Miles
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – When 20 recruits gathered April 17 at the Baltimore Military Entrance Processing Station to sign their enlistment contracts, none needed a pen.

Instead, they read their contracts on a computer screen, then pressed their index fingers onto an electronic pad next to it, becoming the first service members to enlist using biometric technology.

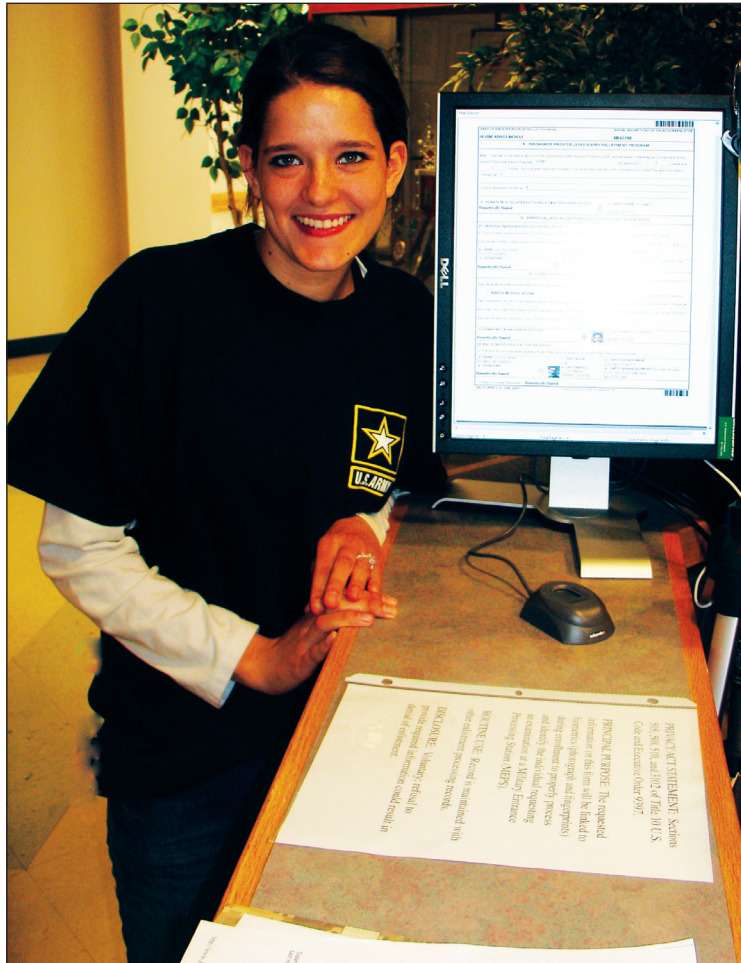
Air Force Maj. Michael D. Thomas, deputy station commander, swore in the recruits on Fort Meade, Md. This marked a big step in the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command's transition to paperless enlistment recordkeeping, said Ted Daniels chief of the command's accessions division.

Nineteen-year-old Krista Hearne of Salisbury, Md., became the first recruit to sign her enlistment contract biometrically before taking her oath of enlistment to join the Army. Eighteen-year-old Chance Muller of Sharpsburg, Md., followed, becoming the first male applicant to use biometrics, in his case, to join the Marine Corps.

After swearing them into the military, Thomas used his own index fingerprint to biometrically sign their contracts. When the process was completed, the new service members received print-outs of their enlistment contracts, which included a facial photo and the fingerprint. No other paper was required for a process that once required multiple signatures and took reams of paper.

"The process starts off without paper and it ends up without paper," said Daniels. "But we do print out one copy, for the individual."

Many of the enlisting troops had seen biometrics technology used on television and thought it "pretty neat" to learn that they were to be the first enlistees to use it, Daniels said. "We told them what we were doing was revolutionary, that this was the first time it



U.S. Army recruit Krista Hearne, 19, of Salisbury, Md., is shown with her electronic contract. Hearne was the first person to enlist in the U.S. military using biometric signatures. Photo by Lt. Col. Robert S. Larsen

was being down within the Department of Defense," he said. "They came through here and said, 'This is pretty neat, man.'"

Biometrics is becoming increasingly widespread in society. Some supermarkets used them at the checkout counter. Even Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla., takes biometric measurements from guests' fingers to ensure the same person uses a ticket from day to day.

Daniels said biometrics will offer MEPCOM broad advantages, improving security, reducing redundancy and dollar costs and saving the command an estimated 70 million sheets of paper a year.

Last year alone, the command administered 510,000 enlistment Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery tests

and 348,000 physical examinations to recruit 266,000 new soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen.

Now using biometric technology, MEPS officials will capture each applicant's biometric print at first contact. That information will be used to verify the applicant's identity and track progress throughout the qualification process: from aptitude testing to medical screening to background check to contract signing to shipping off for boot camp or basic training.

Biometric information captured at enlistment will become part of the service members' permanent personnel records. Ultimately it will follow them throughout their military careers, providing concrete verification of their identity.

Because biometrics are unique to every individual and can't be forged, they add security protections just not

possible with traditional "wet" signatures, Daniels explained.

"What we want to do is make sure whoever is next to you in the foxhole is exactly who they are supposed to be," he said.

Meanwhile, biometrics is expected to provide faster, less redundant personnel processes, he said. As it becomes widespread throughout the department and services, it will help short-cut procedures required for everything from getting a common access card to signing up for Tricare benefits through the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System.

"There will be no need to start from scratch each time," Daniels said.



Chance Muller of Sharpsburg, Md., became the first man to have his biometric information recorded as part of the e-Security system at the Baltimore MEPS. The 18-year-old enlisted in the Marine Corps. *Photo by Alan J. McCombs*

Command continues with biometric implementation

By Skip Wiseman
Messenger Associate Editor

Now that e-Security is up and running at the Baltimore MEPS, the team overseeing the program is turning its attention to the other MEPS that will test the system before it goes command-wide.

A review of the process at Baltimore will yield lessons learned and smooth the transition at the San Juan MEPS, which is scheduled to "go live" in early May.

The test in Baltimore began in earnest April 16 when biometrics were captured from night testers and continued the next day. In all about 65 applicants were processed at the MEPS the next day and all were enrolled biometrically, according to Cathy Callen, senior management analyst in the operations directorate (J-3) accession division.

At this point, the MEPS testing the new procedures will still have to manually verify signatures because most MEPS will continue to use "wet" signatures until the system reaches full operational capability, Callen said, so the goal at this point is for the new method to take about the same amount of time as the old way.

"Our goal is that it's even, time wise," she said. "The time saving is going to be where we don't have to perform manual signature verification any more. The Baltimore MEPS still has to do both, right now, because if an applicant changes to another MEPS, the only thing we've got is manual verification on the hard copy."

The information technology directorate (J-6) sent a team to San Juan in late April to test the equipment and make sure it works properly.

"They're going to run some tests to make sure everything is good," Callen said, "because May 6 we start training (the San Juan staff.) It's a very tight schedule."

"It's exactly what we did in Baltimore," she said. "Tuesday and Wednesday, we're doing training. On Thursday, the MEPS is coming up live for a full processing day."

San Juan and Baltimore will remain the only two test sites until "train the trainer" sessions are held in late May.

"In the June, July, August time frame, our target is to get Chicago, Milwaukee, Honolulu and Los Angeles up and running," Callen said. "They are the other four sites we have targeted, primarily due to their location and the number of applicants they process."

Honolulu was selected because of its "out-island" processing, Callen said.

People involved at the six test sites will serve as "train the trainer experts" and will be involved in the installation at the remaining MEPS when the program goes on line throughout the command.

"We're waiting to make sure we get all the equipment ordered for the sites," she said. "Then we can identify when we are going to go there. From my understanding, the funds will be available next fiscal year to support implementation at the rest of the 59 MEPS."

Callen had high praise for Lt. Col. Robert Larson, Baltimore MEPS commander and his staff.

"Baltimore has an absolutely wonderful staff to work with," she said. "There were no naysayers there whatsoever."

She also said the service liaisons reacted well to the new system.

"There is a bit of a process, especially with the biometric e-Signature on the DD Form 4," Callen said. "It involves the service liaisons, because they have to sign it with their biometrics, too. They've got a whole lot more involvement than they used to when it came to

automation. They took it on very well. The Navy person said it was the best thing they've ever seen."

Representatives from the Air Force Recruiting Service and U.S. Army Recruiting Command were in the MEPS for the first processing.

"They were impressed with this and didn't see any issues, backlogging them or anything so it worked out well," Callen said.

The accession division staff is asking the MEPS involved in the testing to help spread the word about the new system, Callen said.

"We want the MEPS to be involved passing the word to the other MEPS, being proactive to send the good messages," she said. "I know Colonel Larson is already doing that."



Air Force Maj. Michael Thomas uses his fingerprint to biometrically sign the enlistment contract for U.S. Army recruit Krista Hearne. *Photo by Lt. Col. Robert S. Larsen*

After selection at MEPS, clusters and sectors,

Command names **3** Military and **3** Civilians of the Year

Captain Shaun P. Ibe

USMEPCOM Company Grade Officer of the Year



Captain Shaun P. Ibe is the USMEPCOM Company Grade Officer of the Year. He is the operations officer at the Seattle MEPS.

Ibe has earned a reputation with MEPS staff and recruiting services as an intelligent, analytical and decisive officer who is focused on the mission. He can envision long-range big picture goals while keeping focus on day-to-day operations.

He has mastered all functional areas in the MEPS including test control officer,

education services specialist, operations officer and even has served as the acting MEPS commander on several occasions. As the TCO, Ibe achieved optimal performance for himself and his staff and maintained 100 percent test material accountability while simultaneously serving as the acting ESS and learning to become the operations officer. As the acting ESS for seven months without any formal training, he learned all facets of the Student Testing Program. He conducted hundreds of test interpretations and several centers of influence events and career fairs and coordinated with schools to schedule and conduct Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery tests. He provided one-on-one training sessions with several school counselors and administrators to increase knowledge and awareness of the importance of the STP.

Ibe is credited with a number of initiatives to increase accuracy

and efficiency of MEPS programs. He maintained the highest standards in testing, processing and medical at all times, despite high turnovers. Ibe conducted hiring actions for 19 positions, including reviewing the referral lists and scheduling and interviewing applicants. He was instrumental in designing hiring procedures that ensure a fair, equitable and defensible process. The procedures established training for supervisors, improved the interview questions, reference checks and records maintenance, as well as the overall efficiency of the hiring process.

He led the Amusement Vending Machine team and coordinated with the MEPS Readiness Support Group to plan a variety of fundraisers and parties, and organization day. His positive attitude is infectious in getting others to help out. His leadership abilities minimized conflict among diverse staff members with strong personalities and opinions while striving for a common goal of staging a successful event.

Astutely understanding and balancing his personal and professional time, Ibe focuses most of his volunteer efforts on helping MEPS staff members and their families. He tutors and assists staff members who are pursuing higher education. He volunteered personal time to lead beginning outdoor enthusiasts on hikes through Western Washington and completed avalanche awareness training to educate others on the hazards of back country skiing. Along with his volunteer activities, Ibe earned nine semester hours toward his master's degree in human resource management.

"Captain Ibe is a tremendous leader, motivator and coach who significantly increased the effectiveness of this command and has earned my trust and confidence," Lt. Cmdr. Stormi J. Looney, Seattle MEPS commander, said. "He is truly gifted in inspiring people to do their best, and knows how to treat others with dignity and respect without compromising standards of quality or work."

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Master Sergeant Karen P. Figueroa

USMEPCOM Senior Enlisted Military Member of the Year



Master Sergeant Karen P. Figueroa is the USMEPCOM Senior Enlisted Member of the Year. She is the noncommissioned officer in charge of operations at the Jacksonville MEPS.

She supervises 14 people, both military and civilian and oversaw processing for nearly 6,500 shippers and more than 5,800 people entering the Delayed Entry Program. Her team processed 30 percent more people than the previous year with no additional manpower. Figueroa's dedication made

her a pillar of strength during the summer surge, capably leading operations as the Jacksonville MEPS soared to No. 2 in Eastern Sector, processing 12,690 applicants.

Figueroa expertly led, streamlined and inspired the control desk, processing section files room and travel section staff processes. She incorporated a new exception to policy sheet and daily count sheet, and rewrote the files room standard operating procedures, which increased productivity by 20 percent. She leads the Working Level Interservice Recruitment Committee meeting for more than 35 liaisons and MEPS staff, establishing alliances and identifying key topics to improve the MEPS' Red Carpet Treatment.

She addressed manning issues and revamped the military and civilian structure. She developed a Quality Review Program that identified discrepancies and ensured 100 percent compliance with the regulations. She also completed stints as the acting first sergeant

and acting operations officer and volunteered to serve as the alternate information technology specialist.

Figueroa's professional image and attitude encourages people to undertake their own self-improvement efforts. She embraced unit physical fitness training and leads a rigorous fitness program that inspires members of all services to earn outstanding ratings. She received a certificate of outstanding athletic achievement from the Eastern Sector commander and received a coin from the sector command sergeant major after attaining a perfect score on her physical fitness test.

She holds an associate degree in information resource management from the Community College of the Air Force and a bachelor's degree in information systems management. She is pursuing a master's degree in human resource development. Figueroa completed a leadership life skills and stress management course for senior enlisted leaders at Mayport Naval Air Station, Fla.

Figueroa spearheaded the Women's History Month Celebration and planned and coordinated every facet of the MEPS observance of Black History Month and Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month. She helped plan two silent auctions and a chili cookoff in one month, raising \$600 to support MEPS activities. As Amusement Vending Machine Fund manager, her creative ideas help build unit morale. In the wider community, Figueroa is a volunteer at her local library and serves as the statistical manager for the Mayport Naval Air Station basketball team.

"Master Sergeant Figueroa is the epitome of a professional senior NCO," Lt. Cmdr. John R. Leskovich, Jacksonville MEPS commander, said. "She is an exceptionally talented senior NCO who consistently produces marvelous results. Master Sergeant Figueroa truly encompasses what a great leader should have: Unwavering dedication to the mission while instilling pride and purpose in your people."

Staff Sergeant Kristyn A. Caputo

USMEPCOM Enlisted Military Member of the Year



Staff Sergeant Kristyn A. Caputo is the USMEPCOM Enlisted Military Member of the Year. She is the night test administrator at the Portland, Ore., MEPS.

In her role as night test administrator, Caputo oversees the entire operation, including test administration, subordinate care, recruiting liaison, coordinating applicant travel to the contract hotel and end-of-day building security. She processed, administered and proctored nearly 5,000

enlistment and special tests for applicants. She devoted more than 35 hours of her personal time writing the current front desk night testing duty standard operating procedure to clarify duties and procedures for her subordinates when she is absent and wrote the night testing check-in test administration and quality review checklist.

Caputo trains all new testing section staff and helped the new test control officer assume his duties smoothly and efficiently. She volunteered to serve as the information technology assistant. While serving in that capacity, she provided insight in developing the night CAT-ASVAB standard operating procedure to provide smoother processing for applicants. She also provided immediate IT support for more than 100 pieces of equipment when technical difficulties arose. She showed her personal initiative by cross-training as a human resources assistant to help the operations element during low manning or when the operations tempo was high. To prepare

continued on page 34

Staff Sergeant Kristyn A. Caputo (continued)

for her role as the IT assistant, she completed courses in networking and local area network management and took courses to help with license and reset common access card passwords.

As an Air Force sponsor, Caputo helped two Air Force members and their families transition into the unit. She made sure their immediate needs were met and maintained communications with them while they travelled. After their arrival, she helped them search for homes, provided information on the local area and made them aware of recreational activities.

Caputo is only two credits short of completing her associate degree through the Community College of the Air Force. Last year she completed three math classes, a history class, a public speaking class and a writing course, and maintained a 3.5 grade point average. She has tutored several students at the local college, helping them successfully complete various math courses.

She is a strong supporter of the Readiness Support Group and Amusement Vending Machine Fund and helps coordinate programs for new personnel and their families along with programs that aid members when they or their families are sick. She has served as a planner and coordinator for events like the unit holiday party, organization day, training day programs, ethnic observances, promotion ceremonies, changes of command and retirement ceremonies. In the wider community, she volunteers for Meals on Wheels, a non-profit agency that provides meals to more than 500 community members a week.

"To a degree far more typical of a senior rather than junior NCO, Staff Sergeant Caputo is well respected and sought after for her knowledge and insight," Maj. Curt M. Steinagel, Portland, Ore., MEPS commander, said. "She always displays the professionalism and attitude expected of someone well above her grade. Her desire to strive for excellence in all she does and commitment to duty deserve to be recognized."

Dr. Vanessa M. Berrios

USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year — GS-10 and Above



Dr. Vanessa M. Berrios is the USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year, GS-10 and Above. She is the education services specialist at the San Juan MEPS.

Berrios held quarterly education subcommittee meetings to assess the Student Testing Program's progress and downfalls. She implemented new procedures to ensure equal collaboration from each recruiting service during the school year. She held recruiter orientation and training to

emphasize program requirements and assess recruiting personnel's performance, cast aside doubts and improve efficiency.

Berrios implemented strategies to satisfy schools' needs, exceeding customer expectations and overcoming community challenges that threatened the student testing program's validity. She briefed college directors and counselors, and held a center of influence event at the Guayama Commerce Bank to expand testing opportunities. She reopened the door to the Puerto Rico Department of Education by inviting the director of the counseling and education division to be the distinguished guest at a center of influence event hosted by the Marine Corps. He now wants to take part in the upcoming Marine Corps Educators' Tour and has invited Berrios to speak at the department of education's counselor education program.

In her efforts to expand the Career Exploration Program, Berrios arranged to provide services to students in the Job Corps, Challenge and Horizon programs. She also met with United States Virgin Islands counseling and education directors and got permission to administer the Student ASVAB to the entire St. Thomas school population – more than 1,000 students. She got permission from counseling and education directors to conduct center of influence

events in St. Croix and St. Thomas to reach out to families, students and school staff members.

Berrios conducted several workshops at different institutions on themes including successful education, renewing your world and body image. At schools testing for the first time and those that had been inactive, Berrios offered pre- and post-test interpretations to motivate counselors to take part in the program.

Berrios enrolled in 21 college credit hours to pursue additional certifications. She taught quarterly on-line and in classroom graduate level courses at Inter American University, where she also supervised two doctoral internships and served on six doctoral dissertation committees. She conducted an intensive workshop for a community organization emphasizing family values, establishing life goals, and promoting personal, professional and spiritual growth. She was an orientation speaker at the University of Puerto Rico Cayey Campus for 300 incoming students.

"Dr. Berrios' efforts have continued to strengthen the San Juan MEPS Student Testing Program," Maj. Elliott Q. Gomez, San Juan MEPS commander, said. "She is a stellar performer with a remarkable ability to anticipate obstacles and address them proactively. Because of her, the San Juan MEPS exceeded its recruiter leads goal last year and is well on its way to equal production this year."

Mikeal S. Southworth (continued)

a driver collecting and distributing church-donated items for the needy and volunteered on several projects for the homeless with United Way of King County.

"Except for the chief medical officer, Mr. Southworth is unquestionably the most valuable and reliable civilian employee in the MEPS," Lt. Cmdr. Stormi J. Looney, Seattle MEPS commander, said. "He is the only seasoned civilian employee remaining in medical after a year of more than 80 percent turnover. We are extremely lucky to have Mr. Southworth as a member of the Seattle MEPS family."



Paul A. Tanguay

USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year - GS-7-9

Paul A. Tanguay is the USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year, GS-7-9. He is the test control officer for the Knoxville MEPS.

Tanguay is described as articulate and having an innate ability to identify problems and recommend effective, common-sense solutions. Because of his vast knowledge of all areas of

processing and operations, people in the Knoxville MEPS and his peers throughout the command seek his advice and assistance.

Using different methods of team building, exercises and meetings, Tanguay has created a cohesive, effective team, which was demonstrated by his team's performance under his leadership. Tanguay's goal to get more than 9,600 recruiter leads was attained quickly, despite several unforeseen weather problems which forced several large schools to cancel the Student ASVAB test. Additionally, the Office of Personnel Management was unable to supply its normal level of support, so Tanguay had to closely manage his staff to ensure it could cover the schools OPM could not. As a result, the testing section supported testing at 45 percent of the schools. Tanguay cross-trained people from other sections to further support the program. He was able to achieve the recruiter leads goal, despite USMEPCOM raising the Knoxville MEPS goal

by more than 1,000 from the previous year.

His knowledge and attention to detail earned praise during the Inspector General inspection in both testing and the Automated Vending Machine Fund. His areas received "excellent" ratings with zero discrepancies in the last two inspections. As AVMF manager, he is involved in all areas, and the AVMF works smoothly and can support a robust schedule of activities.

During the year, Tanguay took several college classes to enhance his abilities to read and speak French and is pursuing a Supervisory Management Certificate through the University of Tennessee. He set a goal to run seven hundred miles in the year and was approaching his target late in the year.

Tanguay took 40 hours annual leave to make a trip to Louisiana and Mississippi to help rebuild homes destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. He volunteered to help Habitat for Humanity on six occasions and was featured in the local Habitat for Humanity newsletter. He also took part in the local "River Rescue," which is cleaning up the Tennessee River, serving as a section captain, leading 25 people. He volunteered his time and money to support World War II veterans on a trip to visit Washington, D.C.'s war memorials.

"Mr. Tanguay consistently over achieves in every assigned task," Lt. Cmdr. Breckenridge S. Morgan, Knoxville MEPS commander, said. "He has the stamina to tackle the most arduous tasks and the judgement to obtain extraordinary results. He is highly reliable in any situation."



Mikeal S. Southworth

USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year — GS-6 and Below

Mikeal S. Southworth is the USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year, GS-6 and Below. He is the lead health technician at the Seattle MEPS.

Southworth initiated relationships with outside medical providers, nearly doubling the Seattle MEPS' consultant pool for 15

commonly requested consults. The additional flexibility in scheduling appointments has shortened processing time, reduced costs, increased customer satisfaction and increased the ability to meet the needs of the recruiting services.

He played a key role in helping the Seattle MEPS work through a 4-month personnel shortage, when all but one of the health technician positions was vacant. Southworth helped his section continue operating at full capacity, processing 1,527 full physicals and 1,263 medical inspections despite the severe manpower shortage. Despite the increased workload, Southworth provided red carpet treatment to applicants and the recruiting services. He also stepped up to assume duties as the acting medical NCOIC when the position was vacant.

He adapted quickly during a 2-week power outage, maintained efficient processing and enabled the section, which was only 50 percent manned, to process 192 medical examinations with only auxiliary power. He reviewed all Assessment of Recruit Motivation and Strength worksheets and validated MIRS entries resulting in more than 99 percent data accuracy.

Southworth trained and integrated five new health technicians during the year and conducts monthly refresher training on all section duties and equipment. He was selected to train 25 Army recruiting members on taping standards and calculating body fat percentages, helping recruiters better screen applicants before projecting them for processing. He was the only civilian technician selected by the chief medical officer to complete ear wash certification and subsequently performed 15 ear washes saving, the command more than \$1,000 while increasing the MEPS' same day processing rate.

Southworth is pursuing a degree in medical information technology and also completed 20 hours of web-based training on the Supervisor's Development Course through the Army Distance Learning Program. He is an active member of the local Veterans of Foreign War chapter and his church. He leads weekly Bible studies, attended religious conferences and helps with a visitation program to help other parish members. He volunteers 10 hours a week as

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Montenegrin delegation visits Portland

by 1st Lt. Christopher Gleeson
Portland, Maine, MEPS Operations Officer

On February 5, a high-ranking group of Army delegates from Montenegro visited the Portland, Maine, MEPS to familiarize themselves with how the U.S. armed forces recruit, train and integrate people into an all-volunteer force.

This relationship started in June 2006 when the Republic of Montenegro declared its independence from its union with Serbia. Montenegro became the 142nd member of the United Nations.

The National Guard Bureau has a partnership program that provides guidance on transformation and serves as a catalyst for stability in emerging democratic countries. The Maine National Guard offers advice to the Montenegrin military as it transitions from a conscripted to an all-volunteer force.

The delegates from Montenegro received the first of their briefings from the Maine National Guard's recruiting and retention battalion commander. They observed unit level training during a drill weekend and visited a recruiting station as well.

The Maine Army National Guard delegation escorted the Montenegrins to the Portland MEPS. Upon their arrival at the MEPS, they were escorted to the conference room for their official greeting and orientation. Maj. Eric Warner, Portland MEPS commander, presented a brief with the help of an interpreter. Warner presented a modified briefing, because of the extra time required for translation.

The brief went extremely well and the Montenegrins asked many questions. The atmosphere indicated that a great bridge was created between everyone in the room.

The MEPS Readiness Support Group provided snacks and refreshments for the group. Col. Marinovic took a particular liking to the dark chocolates on the table and was talking to the other delegates about them.



(Third from right) Col. Marinovic talks to applicants at Portland, Maine MEPS. (Center, facing) MEPS Commander, Maj. Eric Warner and (far right) Operations Officer, 1st Lt. Christopher Gleeson looks on.

After the brief, the delegates took a tour of the MEPS. They appeared impressed by the MEPS facility and continuously praised MEPS staff on the quality and smooth functioning of military processing.

While he was in the medical section, Marinovic stopped to talk to one of the applicants through his translator. He asked why a citizen who is not forced to go into the military would want to join. The applicant responded, "Because it makes me proud to serve my country and makes my parents very proud of me." The colonel's face lit up with a smile and he shook the young applicant's hand and wished him luck.

The Montenegrins personally thanked all section heads and the senior leadership. As a show of thanks, Marinovic presented Warner with a gift as well as four lapel pins that bore the new crest of Montenegro.

The use of the name Montenegro began in the 15th century when the Crnojevic dynasty began to rule the Serbian principality of Zeta; over subsequent centuries Montenegro was able to maintain its independence from the Ottoman Empire. From the 16th to 19th centuries, Montenegro became a theocracy ruled by a series of bishop princes; in 1852, it was transformed into a secular principality. After World War I, Montenegro was absorbed by the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, which became the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929; at the conclusion of World War II, it became a constituent republic of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. When the latter dissolved in 1992, Montenegro federated with Serbia, first as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and, after 2003, in a looser union of Serbia and Montenegro. In May 2006, Montenegro invoked its right under the Constitutional Charter of Serbia and Montenegro to hold a referendum on independence from the state union. The vote for severing ties with Serbia exceeded 55 percent — the threshold set by the European Union — allowing Montenegro to formally declare its independence on June 3, 2006.

Montenegro



Information from the Central Intelligence Agency – The World Factbook

Chicago honors 'one of its own' for African-American History Month

— Medical doctor who began working in military processing 43 years ago

by Lt. Tony Simmons
Chicago MEPS Executive Officer

In honoring African American History Month, Chicago MEPS celebrated "one of its own," Dr. Carroll E. Smith. Currently Chicago MEPS assistant chief medical officer, Smith has served at the MEPS for more than 43 years.

On Feb. 28, MEPS staff, liaisons, friends and family gathered at the MEPS to say, "thank you" to a great American who's name, in the words of Windy Robinson, "... may never appear in any history book ... but will forever be remembered by the many people whose lives he touched." Commissioner of Health for the City of Chicago, Dr. Terry Mason was the guest speaker.

Smith was born July 21, 1932, in Newport News, Va. In 1950, he graduated valedictorian of his high school class, and attended Grinnell College, Iowa, on a full scholarship. He was one of only four African-American students on the entire campus.

Smith received his Doctor of Medicine degree in 1958 from Northwestern School of Medicine. He completed his internship at Evanston Hospital for one year and then joined the U.S. Army in 1960.

During his tour in the Army, he served as the squadron surgeon of the 9th Armored Cavalry Regiment based in Augsburg, Germany. A subsequent tour included the 11th Field Hospital where he was dispatched to a humanitarian mission to Skopje, Yugoslavia, to render medical aid to earthquake victims.

Upon leaving active duty in 1964, he returned to Chicago and began a successful private practice. Smith began working at the Chicago Armed Forces Examining Station as a fee-basis physician



Dr. Carroll E. Smith

in 1964. In 1987, after twenty-three years as a fee basis physician, Smith accepted a position as the assistant chief medical officer at Chicago MEPS.

Smith is married to the former Lorraine Joyner of Memphis, Tenn., and has been married for 52 wonderful years. They have two daughters, Meegan Smith and Glynn Allison.

Help for vets is just a phone call away ...

WASHINGTON – To ensure veterans with emotional crises have round-the-clock access to trained professionals, the Department of Veterans Affairs has begun operation of a national suicide prevention hot line for veterans.

"Veterans need to know these VA professionals are literally a phone call away," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "All service members who experience the stresses of combat can have wounds on their minds as well as their bodies. Veterans should see mental health services as another benefit they have earned, which the men and women of VA are honored to provide."

The toll-free hot line number is 1-800-273-TALK (8255). VA's hot line will be staffed by mental health

professionals in Canandaigua, N.Y. They will take toll-free calls from across the country and work closely with local VA mental health providers to help callers.

To operate the national hot line, VA is partnering with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services.

"The hot line will put veterans in touch – any time of the day or night, any day of the week, from anywhere in the country – with trained, caring professionals who can help," added Nicholson. "This is another example of the VA's commitment to provide world-class health care for our nation's veterans, especially combat veterans newly returned from Iraq and Afghanistan."

The suicide hot line is among several enhancements to mental health care that Nicholson has announced this year. In mid July, the Department's top mental health professionals convened in the Washington, D.C., area to review the services provided to veterans of the Global War on Terror.

VA is the largest provider of mental health care in the nation. This year, the Department will spend about \$3 billion for mental health. More than 9,000 mental health professionals, backed up by primary care physicians and other health professionals in every VA medical center and outpatient clinic, provide mental health care to about one million veterans each year.

Indianapolis

Son-in-law joins the family 'business'

By Don Ross
Indianapolis MEPS

The military is known for being like a family but the Indiana Army National Guard has taken things a step further.

Maj. Gen. R. Martin Umbarger, Adjutant General of Indiana, emphasized this just before he enlisted his son-in-law, Brian E. Mahan and five others into the Indiana Guard. Umbarger presented a coin to each enlistee after the ceremony.

Lt. Cmdr. William E. Sass, Indianapolis MEPS executive officer, escorted Umbarger on a tour of the MEPS after the ceremony. Umbarger met all the Indiana National Guard soldiers and civilians who help accomplish the qualifying process for potential recruits.

Before he left the MEPS, Umbarger thanked and congratulated his son-in-law one last time.



Rear Adm. Gerald R. Beaman performs an enlistment ceremony in the Indianapolis MEPS.

Admiral visits home state, MEPS during Navy Week

Rear Adm. Gerald R. Beaman visited the Indianapolis MEPS during his visit to the city for Navy Week 2007.

After meeting with Lt. Cmdr. Sheila Noles, MEPS commander, and Lt. Cmdr. William Sass, MEPS executive officer, Beaman conducted two enlistment ceremonies. The first was for three Indiana Army National Guard enlistees and the second was for two joining the Army and one joining the Navy. Also, Beaman met briefly with the Navy liaisons and complimented them on their performance.

Beaman is the deputy chief of staff operations, Allied Joint Force Command Naples. He is a native of Hammond, Ind.

(Left) Indiana Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. R. Martin Umbarger congratulates applicants on the day he enlisted his son-in-law at Indianapolis MEPS.



Portland, Maine

Like mother, like daughter

Amber Pearson and Michelle Silvermane are a mom-daughter team who enlisted in the Maine Army National Guard as medical specialists and then headed to basic training.

Both cited similar motivations to join: educational assistance, a desire to serve and family tradition. Recently Michelle's husband re-enlisted after a long break in service, Michelle's son is in an engineering unit in the Maine Army National Guard and Amber's husband is a welder in the Guard as well.

Mother and daughter believe there's safety in numbers, but both questioned how the drill sergeants would respond. They joked about their mental preparation for the well-known phrase, "I'm not your mommy and she's not here!"

Although Pearson is both the junior member of the family and senior in military rank to her mother, Michelle was quick to point out that "Mom and Dad still outrank everyone!"



Portland, Maine, MEPS Commander Maj. Eric Warner congratulates Amber Pearson on the day Amber and her mother, Michelle Silvermane, enlisted in the Maine Army National Guard.

San Diego



Duty Calls

Army Maj. Judy Mitchell shared the spotlight with her daughter Erin Long, as she swore her in her at San Diego MEPS. Erin joined the Air Force to be an air traffic controller. She headed to Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, for basic training and will proceed to Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., for specialized training.

Fort Lee



A mother-daughter team enlisted in the Army at Fort Lee MEPS. After the ceremony, Privates Foley and Manning were headed for basic training and then Airborne School before returning to Fort Lee for rigger school.

Jacksonville



By Master Sgt. Karen Figueroa
Jacksonville MEPS

The decision to enlist is a monumental one, an event that should be remembered fondly and for a lifetime.

On Nov. 18, the Jacksonville MEPS along with the Army Public Affairs team and Jacksonville Jaguars did just that for more than 100 applicants. In an effort to honor veterans, the Jaguars hosted a mass induction ceremony during halftime show at the Jaguars vs. San Diego Chargers game.

The applicants enjoyed free food and watched an intense and eventful first half. The applicants were accompanied by recruiters, MEPS staff, liaisons and their families as they anxiously awaited their moment on the field.

As the halftime show began attendees couldn't help but feel patriotic as the applicants began to fill the field. Led by Jacksonville MEPS staff members, the applicants paraded smartly onto the field. Many fans paused and there was a brief moment of silence as they wondered who these young men and women were.

The applicants represented all five active services and the Army National Guard. The intent of the ceremony became obvious as the applicants raised their right hands to begin a new chapter in their lives. The flags waved, the hats came off, and the sighs and smiles of pride captured the moment for all present that day.

The enlisting officer, Brig. Gen. Richard L. McCabe commanding general at White



(Photo, top of page) More than 100 applicants take part in an enlistment ceremony during a Jacksonville Jaguars-San Diego Chargers game. (Photo above) Brig. Gen. Richard L. McCabe at the ceremony.

Sands Missile Range, N.M., enlisted the applicants in front of more than 60,000 fans.

The atmosphere was filled with emotion as the oath of enlistment echoed over the public address system. After the ceremony, the applicants received a standing ovation.

San Antonio

General enlists one of his own

By Capt. Alice Garcia
San Antonio MEPS

Maj. Gen. Keith M. Huber, commanding general of U.S. Army South, conducted a special swear-in ceremony for the newest member of his security detail, Brandy Witmer.

Witmer is prior service and decided to enlist again after experiencing the civilian world and missing the Army. Huber explained the importance of a fully trained and experienced security detail as he is often a target when he visits his units in South America. Witmer shipped out the same day to begin her assignment at USARSO.

(Third from right) Maj. Gen. Keith M. Huber poses for a photo with (left to right) Sgt. Maj. Room (Huber's staff), Lt. Col. Brown (San Antonio Recruiting Battalion Commander), Mr. Martinez (Witmer's Recruiter), Brandy Witmer, Cmdr. Tracey Carullo, and Command Sgt. Maj. Rhodie (San Antonio Recruiting Battalion).



Twins, once ...

By Capt. Alice Garcia
San Antonio MEPS

Two days before their 21st birthday, twins Samuel and Nathan Watts from Mansfield, Pa., enlisted in the Marines. They graduated from Mansfield High School in 2006 and moved to Texas in June 2007 to take care of their late grandfather's house in San Antonio. They worked at a theater in Seguin until they decided to join the Marine Corps infantry together under the Buddy Program. Samuel said he "wants to join the best service possible — the Marines" while Nathan wanted to join because he liked "the idea of being on the front lines fighting for our country." Their recruiter, Sgt. Chris Stokes, was at the MEPS to see them swear in as well.



Nathan Watts, Marine Corps recruiter Sgt. Chris Stokes, Samuel Watts. *Photo by Mike Patterson*

Twins, twice ...

By Capt. Alice Garcia
San Antonio MEPS

Nineteen year old twins Steven and Matthew Garcia have spent their whole lives together and decided to enlist into the Marines under the Buddy Program so they could "stick together."

They are both graduates of Madison High School in San Antonio, Texas, and decided that they wanted to join the Marines. Steven joined because it was "something new and the best way to travel." Matthew said that the Marines gave him the "opportunity to get a good education in avionics" and also that he was very proud of his twin.

The boys' mother, Sandra Garcia Solano, said she was extremely proud of her sons and explained that they were the first generation



Twins Steven and Matthew Garcia after taking the Oath of Enlistment together. *Photo by Capt. Alice Garcia*

in their family to join the service, which makes it even more special to them. The twins left to attend basic training together in San Diego.

Tampa

College senior puts his goals on hold to join Army in honor of his brother

by W. James Hardy
Tampa MEPS

Matthew Nolan Reif, a senior in college, recently put his aspirations on hold and joined the Army. He said he joined to honor his brother, Pfc. Johnathon Rossi, who was killed in Iraq July 1, and to continue his family's tradition of military service.

Reif said it's his turn now, and he will pick up the torch from his brother protect and defend the constitution of the United States.

He qualified for an intensive linguistic language training course, and he believes that this will be the best fit for him to aid in the fight for democracy.

Reif spoke of honor, loyalty, dignity and respect. He said he wants to be part of that, and everyone should be able to live in a free democracy and enjoy the freedom that we have in our country.

Reif's parents were on hand for his enlistment, just as they were on hand to witness Johnathan's enlistment two years ago. Before leaving the building, Reif's parents said they would be back in a few months when their son, Jason, also enlists in the Army.



Lewis Reif (left) and Kathleen Rossi pose for a photo with their son, Pfc. Matthew Reif on his enlistment day. Reif joined the Army to honor his brother who died in Iraq last July.

New Orleans

by Capt. Olivia Zimmerman
New Orleans MEPS Assistant Operations Officer

The New Orleans MEPS saw a special enlistment ceremony when Sgt. 1st Class Donovan Whitfield of the Mississippi Army National Guard brought in his 17-year-old son, Donovan Whitfield, to enlist in the Mississippi Army National Guard. The senior Whitfield, a former survey draftsman and now a recruiter, was his son's recruiter.

Both father and son, natives of Gulfport, Miss., enlisted in the National Guard at the age of 17. However, the Whitfields will not drill in the same unit because the son chose to become an aviation mechanic.

The younger Whitfield enlisted in the National Guard because of a sense of patriotism and family tradition. In addition to his father's service, his grandfather is a World War II veteran. In his free time, the younger Whitfield enjoys playing football and paint ball while Sgt. 1st Class Whitfield enjoys golf and spending time with his other sons, ages 22 months and 3 years.



New Orleans MEPS Operations Officer, Capt. Shawn Broussard congratulates Donovan Whitfield on the day of his enlistment in the Mississippi Army National Guard. Sgt. 1st Class Donovan Whitfield (right), his father, was his son's recruiter. Both Donovans enlisted in the National Guard at the age of 17.

San Antonio



Sgt. Maj. Carlton W. Kent (left) and Master Sgt. Tom Brown pose for a photo during Kent's visit to San Antonio MEPS. Kent and Brown go way back—Kent was Brown's drill instructor in 1984. *Photo by Staff Sgt. Luis Arguelles*

Marine Corps Sergeant Major stops by MEPS during visit to Brooke Army Medical Center

By Capt. Alice Garcia
San Antonio MEPS

Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Carlton W. Kent stopped by the San Antonio MEPS to renew an old acquaintance.

He dropped in for an informal visit with the Marine Corps service liaison, Master Sgt. Tom Brown, and his staff.

Kent and Brown go back quite some years. The sergeant major was Brown's drill instructor at basic training in 1984 and he has kept up with Brown and several other of his former basic trainees during their careers.

Kent was in San Antonio visiting burn victims from Operation Iraqi Freedom at Brooke Army Medical Center.

He visited San Antonio seven years ago when Brown was a gunnery sergeant in charge of a recruiting station and he was the sergeant major of the Western Recruiting Region.

Kent shared stories of Brown's experiences during basic training and reminisced about how his unit was the best basic training unit that year.

Springfield

MEPS hosts motivational speaker for more than 100

Story and photo by Master Sgt. Anne Ward, 439th Airlift Wing History Office

WESTOVER Air Reserve Base, Mass.—More than 100 Westover personnel received a rare treat when motivational speaker Dick Hoyt, hosted by the Springfield MEPS, spoke to help promote education on integrating the physically challenged into everyday life by embracing the Team Hoyt motto, "Yes You Can."

The guest speaker, retired Lt. Col. Dick Hoyt, a Massachusetts native with three children, retired after 37 years of military service. Now age 66, the retired colonel is only one-half of Team Hoyt. The other half of the team, 45-year-old son Rick Hoyt, was resting at home. He suffers from cerebral palsy since birth and is a non-speaking, spastic quadriplegic. Though paralyzed and wheelchair bound, it hasn't slowed Rick down one bit, his father claims.

Dick himself admits that he has a hard time keeping up with his son, who is his sole inspiration.

Together, they participated in and endured more than 945 athletic events in the past 27 years, including 25 Boston Marathons, eight Ironman Triathlons as well as a grueling International speaking schedule every year.

One point Dick stresses in his presentation is that winning is not the goal—participating, finishing and enjoying yourself are the goals. "Rick says he doesn't feel disabled while competing, he feels like everyone else," Dick explained. "He never stops smiling and waving his hands and he never wants to quit no matter how far behind we get or what kind of difficulties we face, he just wants to finish."

Rick hasn't let his disability stop him from doing what he wants in living life to the fullest be it academics, life skills or sports. Encouraged by his family, Rick graduated from Boston University with a degree in



(Left to right) Dick Hoyt, Springfield MEPS Commander, Lt. Cmdr. Renee Squier and Brig. Gen. Wallace Farris.

Special Education, lives on his own in his own apartment, and, uses that same tenacity in competitive sports. His dad is the ever present physical motion, whether running and pushing Rick's wheel chair; peddling a custom designed bicycle with Rick secured on the front; or swimming and towing a rubber raft with Rick comfortably inside

—Retired officer and his son live their motto, 'Yes, You Can.'

—The pair has been featured on Oprah and HBO Real Sports

experiencing the spray of the water while passing swimmers half Dick's age. Rick, on the other hand, is the unwavering spirit, inspiration and momentum that continually propel Dick forward again and again.

Last summer, Team Hoyt was featured on the Oprah Show and an HBO Real Sports segment hosted by Bryant Gumble, which won an Emmy Award for Best Sports Long Feature.

The award-winning 22-minute video, shown here during the "Yes You Can" visit, speaks volumes leaving few dry eyes afterwards. Dick who, after choking back tears, said he is forever blessed for having Rick in his life and thanks his son for making him a better, happier, healthier person than he ever could have been without him.

For more information on the inspirational story of Team Hoyt or to follow their schedule see www.teamhoyt.com.

Boston assembles color guard

By 1st. Sgt. Michael Trevino
Boston MEPS Senior Enlisted Advisor

All great things take time to create, but forming and training a color guard and executing a performance in one and a half days is a challenge.

At 10 a.m., Nov. 7, Augusto St. Silva, called the Boston MEPS and requested a joint service color guard for the inauguration of Dr. J. Keith Motley, the eighth chancellor of the University of Massachusetts-Boston.

The request came from the school president, Jack M. Wilson, who wanted to honor military personnel. Through coordination with each of the staff sections in the MEPS, we realized we had no inherent color guard experience. Each section was detailed to find someone to represent their service in a color guard.

Coordinating with the tenants of the Barnes Federal Building, Coast Guard station, Marine Corp Liaison Office and Hanscom Air Force Base, volunteers to form a joint color guard were assembled. The unit rehearsed a couple of hours with the people who were available at lunch time and again the morning of the event.

The trick to it all is remembering and referring back to regulations on how to conduct a reverse march with an eight-member color guard, walk, present and order arms with a saber, placing each service flag in order and why it goes there.

The uniform inspection was conducted the evening before the event and team members mustered Friday morning at the MEPS. The color guard loaded the vehicle in uniform because a dress rehearsal was to be conducted at 8 a.m. The team drove over to the college campus. As they arrived at the campus and located the Catherine Forbes Clark Athletic Center, they found

out where we were going to start from the Alumni Lounge Campus Center.

When they got to the center and they learned that the Boston Fire Department and the Dorchester Police Department were to be a part of the color guard.

There is nothing like trying to conduct drill and ceremonies with people you have never met and who have limited marching experience. The police and firemen were true professionals.

After a very brief introduction, the group started with some walk, crawl and

origins are as varied as those of the flags. So the final line up was the color guard, Air Force assisting the Tuskegee Airmen, and then the flags of many nations. I remember turning around at one point looking back and smiling, knowing that I was leading all of these people into the auditorium in honor of Chancellor Motley. St. Silva yelled out, first sergeant they are all yours. Calling the color guard to attention, and then forward, march was an incredible feeling. The coordinated efforts and the willingness of the participants was challenging, but well worth

the outcome. As in all events, rehearsals are paramount in having a successful event and the rehearsals that were completed the morning of the event paid great dividends to the success of the ceremony.

The color guard was made up of Stephen Doran and Stephen Charbonnier, Boston Police Department Area C11 Dorchester; David Blaide, Juan Henriquez, Danny Ryan, and James Martinez, Boston Fire Department Engine 48; Sgt. Kevin Bryant, Portsmouth Marine Recruiting Station; Spc. James Deangelis, Massachusetts Army National Guard; Petty Officer 2nd Class Anthony Gross, Navy

Reserve Detachment New England; Staff Sgt. Kyle D'Amato, Boston Army Recruiting Company; Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Douglas Herbert and Army Staff Sgt. Eric Sansoucie, Boston MEPS; Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Stephen Luedecke, Naval Engineering Support Unit; and 1st Lt. Daniel Currie, Hanscom Air Force Base. Army 1st Sgt. Michael Trevino of the Boston MEPS was the NCOIC and Cmdr. Kristin Strong, Boston MEPS commander, was the OIC.

Tuskegee Airmen taking part were William Bennett, Jack Bryant, James McLaurin, Harvey Sanford, Willis Saunders and Enoch Woodhouse.



A joint service color guard organized by the Boston MEPS leads the procession at the University of Massachusetts-Boston.

run training. Lining everyone up was an awe-inspiring sight.

The reaction from the students was very promising during two rehearsals. At one time, they even applauded. The team did a complete dry run from the field house to the auditorium to work the bugs out. The students looked on as I called cadence.

Then it was back to the campus lounge make last minute checks. As team members checked one another over, they saw the students pulling out country flags. They called it the flags of many nations.

The flags of various nations displayed at the ceremony represented a tradition that began with a gift of the class of 1987. They are carried by students from families whose

Jackson



(Left) Aretha Lawson watches as students try their hand at basketball.



(Above) Wearing red t-shirts, (L to R) Maj. Jennifer Hicks-McGowan, Jackson MEPS commander, and Capt. Amber Zeigler, Jackson MEPS operations officer, pose with Northwest Rankin Elementary School students.

Staff reaches out to kids with disabilities at TOPSoccer

Rain, sleet nor snow could keep several members of the Jackson MEPS from volunteering to take part in the annual TopSoccer event, which lets disabled children from area public schools play soccer in Ridgeland, Miss.

The event is a part of the Special Olympics network that is dedicated to helping special needs children excel while simultaneously having fun playing soccer. The MEPS volunteers were Maj. Jennifer Hicks-McGowan, commander, Master Sgt. Bryan Plummer, senior enlisted advisor, Aretha Lawson, lead human resources assistant, and, Capt. Amber Zeigler, assistant operations officer.

"I found this event to be one of the most memorable events in my life" Hicks-McGowan said.

"The kids were simply amazing," Lawson said.

The volunteers, helped set up the event stations, which included: Simon says, score on the goalie, basketball, kick the soccer

ball, roll the big soccer ball, face painting and bowling with soccer balls.

Plummer was caught in the act coaching the Simon says game with children from Hinds County Upper Madison Elementary School with Lawson as his assistant. Hicks-McGowan and Zeigler worked with children from Northwest Elementary School.

The children's disabilities ranged from very serious physical and mental disabilities such as blindness, deafness and being unable to walk to children who suffered from developmental disorders such as autism.

Although the rain put a damper on some of the events, Zeigler didn't let the fun end there. She drew upon her skills as a former summer camp counselor and taught the children a few songs and dances.

"These children have inspired me to continue to strive do my best in everything," she said

The Jackson MEPS has a strong commitment to community involvement and activities that support young people.

San Antonio

Volunteers prepare dinner for families of wounded soldiers

By Capt. Alice Garcia
San Antonio MEPS

Volunteers from the San Antonio MEPS, their families and friends, and Sgt. 1st Class Carlo Jackson, from the Army liaison office, joined forces to cook and serve dinner for families of wounded soldiers staying at the Fisher House at Fort Sam Houston.

First Sgt. Manuel Garcia, with help from Marvin C. Carr, a MEPS human resources assistant, arranged for the commissary to get donations from their vendors for the ingredients for the spaghetti and meatball dinner.

Melissa Bragg, a MEPS health technician, was in charge of assigning duties to the volunteers and organizing the kitchen. Cmdr. Tracey Carullo, MEPS commander, and her



(left to right) Lolita Breton, Goldie Washington and Cdr. Tracy Carullo take a break from cooking. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Floyd Guidry

son, Ethan, prepared a special sherbet drink that quickly became everyone's favorite.

As the dinner was served to the families and their soldiers, a local Girl Scout troop bearing cookies came to sing to the families. The night closed after the Steele High School Honor Band performed holiday songs in the patio area.

Syracuse dedicates ceremony room

The Syracuse MEPS dedicated its ceremony room Feb. 29 in memory of Jason D. Hasenauer.

A native of Hilton, N.Y., Hasenauer died in December 2005 while serving on active duty in the U.S. Army fighting the Global War on Terrorism. He was deployed in Afghanistan with the 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C., when he was killed during a patrol.

Hasenauer processed through the Syracuse MEPS, formerly located in the James M. Hanley Federal Building. His cousin, Capt. Steven Edsall, then the operations officer for the MEPS, administered the oath of enlistment to Jason.

Maj. Brian K. Jenkins, Syracuse MEPS commander, made introductory remarks to members of the family, MEPS personnel, media representatives and visiting dignitaries, who included Maj. Gen. Thomas Bostick, commanding general of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command and Col. Barrye L. Price, USMEPCOM Eastern Sector commander.

Price spoke of Jason's service and character and observed that the thousands of future service members who take their oaths of enlistment at the Syracuse MEPS will be exposed to Jason D. Hasenauer.

Daniel T. Hasenauer, Jason's father, spoke about Jason and how proud he was to serve his country. He spoke about the passion Jason had for his work whether it was as a firefighter or a soldier, and how he always wanted to help others. Edsall and Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Multunas, Jason's recruiter, unveiled the framed plaque that will forever honor Jason's memory.

The Hasenauers, a very patriotic and proud military family, are continuing this tradition. Daniel R. Hasenauer, Jason's brother, became the first recruit to take the oath of enlistment in the newly dedicated ceremony room.

Edsall administered the oath to Daniel. After taking his oath,



Jeremy Hasenauer (left) and Daniel R. Hasenauer stand in front of a memorial picture display in the Syracuse MEPS Ceremony Room. The MEPS dedicated the room to Jeremy and Daniel's brother, Jason D. Hasenauer, a member of the 82nd Airborne Division, who was killed on a patrol in Afghanistan.

Daniel remarked, "I always feel Jason is with me, and I felt him with me today." Daniel is now serving in the New York Army National Guard.

Jason's next youngest brother Jeremy is a high school senior and joined the Air Force under the Delayed Entry Program April 8 and intends to become a firefighter. He took his oath the same day Daniel shipped off to basic training.

The Syracuse MEPS opened the doors to its new facility on Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in June 2007. The ceremony room is where young men and women from all walks of life throughout Central New York take the oath of enlistment.

What started out as an idea during the construction of the new facility in 2006 turned out to be a very special and successful event.

"Dedicating this ceremony room honors not only Jason D. Hasenauer, but all of his fallen comrades who have made the ultimate sacrifice while serving their country," Jenkins said.



Miami

Latin Pop Star Jose Javier Freire visits

Miami MEPS honored Hispanic Heritage Month with a celebration that included music, dancers from Nicaragua and a very special visit from Latin pop star, Jose Javier Freire.

Freire is a percussionist in the group, Bacilos, whose album *Caraluna* won the 2002 Grammy Award for Best Latin Pop Album. Miami MEPS Commander, Lt. Cmdr. Richard Pokropski met Freire during a community service presentation on Brazilian martial arts for children.

Freire performed for the MEPS during their Hispanic Heritage celebration and then posed for photos afterwards.

Helen Santiago poses with Jose Javier Freire and his Grammy Award during Freire's visit to Miami MEPS.



Anchorage MEPS
Maj. Laura Bozeman

Hometown: Colorado Springs, Colo.

Fond childhood memories:

"My family used to take the Manitou incline (a scenic railway) each Labor Day weekend and then hike down from the summit. When I was 14, my dad and I went to the retirement appreciation day at Fort Carson. They fired TOW missiles and I got to climb on a helicopter and said 'That's for me.'"

Favorite toy: "A Steiff teddy bear called Butterscotch. My grandmother got us each a teddy bear for our first birthday. I still have him at home. Butterscotch was my favorite candy and he's kind of that color."

Education: Bachelor of arts degree in English and French from Texas Christian University; Master of Arts in English from University of Minnesota.

Why Army? "Family tradition to an extent. My dad is a retired infantry lieutenant colonel. They offered me the best opportunity. I had a four year scholarship to a private school. And I wanted to travel. I was two years old when my dad retired, so I heard the family stories, but didn't get to experience the travel."

Previous assignment: Head of the personnel action branch, G-1/AG Seoul, South Korea

Favorite assignment:

Germany. "I met and married my husband there. There was a lot of time to travel and explore. They were still adjusting to the end of the Cold War. We took full advantage of it."

Parlez vous? "Your comprehension isn't an issue, but sometimes you have to search for a word. I got to go to D-Day as an interpreter for the anniversary celebration in 1994." While she was there, she needed to get someone to move a crane, but didn't know the word and it wasn't in her pocket dictionary. So she pointed and said that thing, then asked for the word. The workers told her. When she looked the word up in her full dictionary that evening, it said it was a reference to women who worked in the world's oldest profession. "I was really mad, but then a French captain showed me another dictionary and it did mean crane, but it also meant the other thing, too, in the popular lexicon."

Future military career plans:

"I volunteered to deploy. I don't know if that's going to happen. After that, I'd like to be a professor of military science or go back and teach English at West Point. I think being at an ROTC unit would be fun."

What do you want to be when you grow up? "I want to teach English at the junior college level in the Western United States."

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

"I read quite a bit, as a good English major. I've been learning to do Alaskan things. I joined Becoming an Outdoorswoman, called the BOW program. It teaches outdoor skills, rifle safety and fishing. I've learned to cross country ski and snowshoe. I made a pair of mittens out of deerskin with a bear fur ruff. People pay a lot of money to come here and do things and I get to live here for three years."

Best way to inspire the troops: Be approachable and lead by example.

What do you like best about your job? "I like interacting with our youth. I've done accessions three times now. I was reception company commander at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., and taught at West Point."

What do you order when you eat out? "Seafood. I don't eat meat any more. (She has a family history of coronary disease and high cholesterol.) I'm normally the one to be brave and try some thing different. When we were in Korea I ordered octopus. I didn't realize they'd be tiny tentacles still writhing on the plate, but I ate them."

What's the best present you ever got: "A trip to France. When I graduated from high school, my parents offered my a trip to France or a used car. I went to France and then walked for the next two years. I spent two weeks travelling around the country and two weeks with a family on the Swiss border. I felt like Heidi."

What's your guilty pleasure? "Chocolate. I know it has healthy antioxidants, but it's also very fattening."

What's guaranteed to make you change the channel?

"Reality TV. I didn't even care for it when it first became a trend. It's become pervasive."

What would people be surprised to know about you? "Most Army people don't realize that I used to be really into the alternative music scene. I wasn't exactly goth, but I had two distinct sets of friends when I was in college. My friends in the honors program, who were artsy, and people in ROTC who were real straight-laced."

One thing always on her desk: "A picture of my dad and me when he was still in the army. I was probably two years old and I'm grabbing at his infantry badge."

Three things on her desk right now: "My 8th PERSCOM clock/calculator, a bribe gift from the GSA because we're in a leased building and they want us to complete our survey and a post-it note holder from participating in the overseas CFC campaign."

What are you reading? "I'm reading The Devils Club by Georgette Heyer. She's an American novelist who wrote in the style of Jane Austin. I had read everything by Jane Austin and I like the genre."

What's your ideal vacation? "Someplace completely different, where you get exposed to a different culture, different customs and learn about the history of the area. We've been to Africa and Australia. Someday we want to go to Antarctica."



Butte MEPS
Maj. Brian McCluskie

Hometown: Plymouth, Pa. "It's a small old mining town. Mostly Irish and Polish population. There are a lot of bars and churches."

Fond childhood memories. "All my fun playing football for the mini football team." He was a running back and played the same position in high school. "We had schools from California coming out to play us in northeastern Pennsylvania."

Favorite childhood toy: “My Star Wars Millennium Falcon. It was a cool toy. It was top of the line electronics back then.”

Education: Bachelor of arts degrees in criminal justice and psychology from King’s College, Pa., and a master of arts degree in criminal justice from Washington State University.

Why Army? “Originally I was interested in the Marine Corps, but got poached at a MEPS. The Army picked me up and offered me a better college incentive. I came in the Army enlisted before I became an officer.”

Previous assignment: Chief of personnel management 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, Kan.

Favorite assignment: “When I was a captain I was the operations officer in the Spokane MEPS. That was definitely the best. It gave me a lot of freedom to interact with the other services because I’d never had that before and it gave me a chance to continue my education.” Nancy Holcomb, now the USMEPCOM inspector general was his commander. “She really took care of her people.”

Future military plans: Get promoted one more time and then retire. “I’m probably going to stay to 23-24 years and then get out.”

What do you want to be when you grow up? “That’s still undecided. I want to enter government service, go into politics or own my own business. A lot of it depends on my wife’s career.”

What office would you run for? “I’d like to be a state governor. If that’s not an option, then a state representative. I’ll skip all the middle parts of being mayor and stuff.”

What do you do when you’re not a commander? “I’m either out playing with my children, at the gym with

them or taking them to the swimming pool. In the winter, I’m out hunting with the MEPS staff. I alternate days off so I can go hunting.”

What do you hunt? “Deer and elk.” He bagged an elk this year. “My wife didn’t want a big one because she doesn’t like the tough meat, so I shot a calf. We got a good chunk of meat out of it. Our freezer is still full.”

What’s the best way to inspire the troops? “Give them clearly defined goals with rewards, either monetary or time off. On days that are projected to be slower, we might have potlucks or some other get-together.”

What do you like about your job? “The independence. I like, for the first time in a while, being away from my headquarters and having the freedom to lead my troops. I like the community, too. The lifestyle takes a little getting used to it, but once you do, it’s good.”

What do you order when you eat out? “Pizza and hot wings. I usually just get mushroom and onion pizza.”

What’s the best present you ever got? “At my last job, they gave me all the normal going away gifts. Then they gave me a nice collapsible fishing pole and case.”

What’s your guilty pleasure? “I love my microbrews. They have one about two blocks away from the MEPS and one right next door in the casino.”

What’s guaranteed to make you turn off the TV? “I hate anything where all they’re doing is arguing, like the Springer show. Even if it’s a news broadcast and all they’re showing is people arguing, I turn it off.”

Three things on his desk right now: “TDY orders, the Butte telephone book and my car keys.”

What are you reading? The Evolution Cruncher. “It’s a controversial book about the

creationist view on scientific theories. They aren’t saying religion is right, they’re just showing the science is wrong. They use science to disprove science.”

What’s your ideal vacation? “The Gaylord Palms Resort in Orlando, Fla. It’s a huge complex. It’s like being outdoors, but you’re indoors with the atrium. It’s like an enclosed city. Everything you need is right there.”



Miami MEPS
Lt. Cmdr Rich Pokropski

Hometown: Philadelphia. “Not the prettiest place and kind of rough.”

Fond childhood memories? “Playing football in the neighborhood with the local youth group football team.”

Favorite childhood toy: “Transformers. I think it was because of the marketing with the cartoon, and the noises in the commercials. They just caught my eye.”

Education: Bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering from the Coast Guard Academy and a master’s degree in electrical engineering from the University of Rhode Island “I about lost my mind doing that.”

How he picked his major: “Philly is not exactly a college prep town. I didn’t understand the concept of a major. Toward the end of my freshman year, one of the seniors told me

I had to pick a major. So I picked up the catalog. I had a friend describe a major for me. I flipped to the catalog. The first one was political science. It had a picture of George Washington and some books. I didn’t like that. I didn’t like the picture with history either. When I got to electrical engineering, it had a picture of a jet and a helicopter. I liked the picture. That’s why I chose it. Maybe not the best way to pick a major, but it worked out.”

Why Coast Guard? Because they offered me college. I applied to some universities in the Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., area but I couldn’t really afford it. My dad came across a pamphlet for the Coast Guard Academy. It was free of charge that’s why I went there. Coming out of the neighborhood I just wanted to go to school. I think I was first person in my family to graduate high school let alone college. My parents preached school school school. They told me I needed to go to college.”

What are you most proud of? “My brother Brian. He’s six years younger than me. My parents moved to the District of Columbia when he was in high school and the neighborhood didn’t get any better down there. He finished high school and was hanging around the neighborhood with the wrong crowd, not doing anything with his life. I offered to have him come to Miami and I would pay for school, let him stay with me, all that, but that he had to study. He went to community college for two years then when to University of Florida, graduated with a bachelor’s degree in chemistry and just got accepted into the pharmacy school. I’m real proud of that. He got out of the neighborhood and is going to be a professional. He came here depressed, but every month I saw him get a little

Miami MEPS Lt. Cmdr Rich Pokropski (continued)

happier, smile a little bit more. He's still kind of pessimistic, but he's got a lot better outlook on life now."

Previous assignment: Coast Guard Electronic Systems Support Unit in Miami.

Favorite assignment: "On board the Coast Guard cutter Kukui out of Hawaii. It was a new ship. We had to sail the old ship from Hawaii through Panama, up through the Caribbean to decommission it in Baltimore. Then we built the new ship from the ground up, got everybody trained up, sailed up to the Great Lakes. We were in Cleveland when the Florida Marlins were playing in the World Series there. Back out to the Atlantic Ocean, back to Panama. We hit Acapulco when an El Niño hit and helped repair an orphanage after the mud slides. It was called the Marsh Home. It was about 30 minutes north of Acapulco in a beautiful old abandoned church on the beach. We painted, had some electrical work done and gave them TVs from the ship. They had all just lost their families. It was great to be able to help them out. Then we sailed back to Hawaii. Overall it was about a year long trip."

Future military plans? "I'd like to see if I can get into Command and Staff College and then get back into the fleet. I want to be at a sector coordinating drug interdiction, search and rescue, and immigration."

What do you want to be when you grow up? I've already got the (Legal Scholastic Aptitude Test) books. I'm going to study for a law degree, probably at night. I'd like to practice in patent law or intellectual property. I was involved in immigration issues at a previous assignment and got to work closely with Coast Guard and private

lawyers. I got a huge taste of the law. I could do patent law. You have to have an engineering background to do intellectual property. Most lawyers don't have that. I've talked to some people about it and they think it's a good idea."

What do you do when you're not a commander? "I do capoeira. It's a Brazilian martial art. It's very acrobatic. I also do gymnastics, so it all goes together. Break dancing evolved from capoeira. Some of the moves you see in break dancing come directly from it."

What's the best way to inspire the troops? "Sacrifice and sincerity. Show you're sacrificing for them and that you're sincere for them. What comes from the heart goes to the heart."

What do you like best about your job? "Because it's a joint job, I get to learn more. I get to expand my perspective and see how leaders from other services handle situations and see situations I wouldn't see in the Coast Guard."

What do you order when you eat out? He usually orders in – pizza. "If I go out to eat, it's pretty much the first thing I run into. I do like Tony Romo's. I like ribs."

What's the best present you ever got? "A Transformer. I got that recently from my brother. They just started remaking the ones from back in the day. He got it for my birthday. My wife just shook her head. She didn't understand at all."

What's your guilty pleasure? "I like to go to Toys R Us. When I go K-Mart or someplace I go to the toy section. They still carry GI Joe and Transformers and all the old toys I remember as a kid."

What's guaranteed to make you turn off the TV? "Cooking. When I see cooking it just bores the tears out of me."

What would people be surprised to know about you? "I do gymnastics. I can do backflips and flip kicks. People freak out when they see that."

One thing always on his desk: "My clock from the academy."

Three things on his desk right now: A pen a stapler and the operating schedule for USMEPCOM. "My desk is pretty clean. I file stuff right away. I'm kind of a neat freak."

What's the last book you read? The Assassin's Gate. "It was an account of how we got into Iraq. Right now I'm reading a Michael Crichton book, Next. It's about where genetics are going in our society. It's pretty good."

What's your ideal vacation: "I haven't had a vacation in a long time. I would go back to Hawaii. I have family out there. I'd sleep on my aunt's couch. I'd go looking for beaches. There are beautiful beaches, white sand, water for miles and nobody there. I'd go out and catch some waves, boogie board. Great stuff."



**Fort Lee MEPS
Senior Chief Petty
Officer Kevin D.
Anderson**

Hometown: Bagley, Wis. "It's a small river town and it's dying. It doesn't have any four way stops, no stop lights. It has three bars, two churches and no gas station."

Fond childhood memories: "Fishing and sledding and things like that. I grew up on a dairy farm. We had cows and pigs, no chickens. We were milking up to 60 head of cows one time. It was a pain in the butt, really."

What was your favorite toy when you were a kid? "Matchbox cars. My brother and I used to run them all over the house. We had Matchbox car tracks set up all over the place. We played demolition derby with them, too. We were good at tearing things up."

Why the Navy? "Several reasons. My grandfather was in the Navy in World War II. I didn't want to pull sand out of my shorts. The chance I could be a technician and see the world more than the other services. That and I like the water."

Previous assignment: Senior enlisted engineer on the USS Russell out of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. "I supervised operations of the engineering department, propulsion, electrical and all the auxiliaries that went with it and the people and the programs associated with the department."

Favorite assignment: USS Spruance out of Mayport, Fla. "I liked the challenge. I was divisional leading chief petty officer and the challenge of operating an older ship. It was about 25 or 26 years old at the time."

What is like being a sailor at Fort Lee? "It's different. I get saluted all the time because people around here don't know what an anchor on the collar means. I even had some Marines salute and said 'You guys should know better.' The Navy exchanges are a lot nicer than post exchanges."

Future military plans: "There are two possibilities, go back to sea or retire. It depends on what happens with the E-9 board."

What do you want to be when you grow up? "I'm still working on that one. I have no clue."

What do you do when you're not a senior enlisted advisor? "Go home, spend time with the family, go fishing when the weather's OK"

Other hobbies: "I play softball. I'm not great but good enough to be on the team. We have a team along with the liaisons and play in the post league."

What's the best way to inspire the troops? "That varies—it depends on the situation and what's going on. There's no one set way to do it. I've used several different tactics depending on the situation. I don't think there is any one best way, but communication is key. I think that's the main thing."

What do you like best about your job? "Seeing the new folks come into the military. Seeing their faces. It just sends a tingle up my back hearing that oath of enlistment."

What do you order when you eat out? "That depends on where I'm eating. Steak and shrimp."

What's the best present you ever got? A bass boat from his wife for his birthday.

What's your guilty pleasure? "There are too many. Chocolate. I'm always snacking on chocolate. I smoke too, that's bad. I should feel guilty about that."

What is guaranteed to make you turn off the TV? "Reality shows. I can't stand them."

One thing always on his desk? His wife's picture.

Three things on your desk right now? "Lunch, a bunch of paper and my coffee."

What's the last book you read? A Stephen Coontz technothriller.

What's your ideal vacation? "Someplace I can go camping fishing and hiking all at once."



Amarillo MEPS
First Sergeant
Sarah Ashe

Hometown: Nice, Calif. "We moved around a lot but that's where I went high school. I consider Oregon home. We lived pretty much all over the west coast."

Fond childhood memories? "I really loved Portland, Ore. That's where I did most of my grammar school years. I loved the weather, all the green trees, the skiing on Mount Hood."

What was your favorite toy when you were a kid? "I grew up with two brothers. I pretty much just ran up and down the hills of California and streets of Portland with them. We played outside all day long and came home when the sun went down. I was a tomboy until I hit the high school years. Then I discovered I needed to be a girl, too."

Education: Associate degree in technology. Pursuing bachelor's degree in business administration at Capella University.

Why Army? "I wanted to go Marines, but I didn't like the Marine recruiter. He seemed to not like women in the military, so I picked the next hardest thing. I joined the military for the challenge and excitement."

Previous assignment: Senior Personnel Services Sergeant, 501st Combat Brigade, Waegwan, South Korea

Favorite assignment: "I was in Egypt before that with the Multi-National Force and Observers. I worked in postal. It was in the Sinai Desert. I liked all the travelling. We got to go to Cairo and the Masada and swim in the Dead Sea. I got to see all the Egyptian ruins. I lived in Tel Aviv for two months on the economy unloading mail off of planes."

Future military career plans: Thinking about retiring.

What do you want to be when you grow up? "That's hard for me to say. I just want to get out, get a job and live a good life. I'm looking at the Corpus Christi area. I'm looking for something that will complement my business degree. Officer manager, something like that."

Drop and give me 20: "I was a drill sergeant, which I loved but I would never do it again. The hours were excruciatingly long, but I loved the training and working with soldiers."

What do you do when you're not a senior enlisted advisor? "I'm an avid bowler." She averages about 165. "I bowl on a couple of leagues a week. We have four or five teams from the MEPS. I also train, I did the Marine Corps Marathon. Right now, I'm training for the Oklahoma City Marathon. It's in honor of the Oklahoma City bombing victims."

What's the best way to inspire the troops? "Setting the example. Living up to what you say and expect."

What do you like about your job? "Talking to the new recruits coming in. I like finding out why they're coming in, pump up the military and make them understand we appreciate it."

What do you order when you eat out? "Steak. And I love Italian food. Steak is my favorite and I'm right in the middle of cow country, so it's great, but I'm trying to eat healthier now."

What's your guilty pleasure? "Chocolate. Chocolate chip cookies straight out of the oven. That's the only way to eat them. Before I started to eat healthier, that was pretty much every night – two or three of them. Now I just drool thinking about them."

What is guaranteed to make you turn off the TV? "Pretty much anything ugly. The stuff where they're just arguing and complaining. Jerry Springer or judge shows where there's a lot of ugly drama."

One thing always on her desk: "Pictures of my kid."

Three things on her desk right now: Pictures, a nice big American bald eagle and paperwork in a bunch of little piles.

What are you reading? "I'm reading a series of books by Terry Goodkind, The Sword of the Truth series. It is back of the days of science fiction, the world of magic. It's a fantasy series, but they put it in the science fiction section."

What's your ideal vacation? Laying on the beach somewhere relaxing and soaking up the sun.



Beckley MEPS
Senior Master Sgt.
Mark Stamps

Hometown: Richmond, Ind. "Richmond is a small city, probably 35,000-40,000 population. It's farmer country."

**Beckley MEPS
Senior Master Sgt.
Mark Stamps
(continued)**

What was your favorite toy when you were a kid? “A toy John Deere tractor. I also drove the big ones.”

Education: Associate degree in information management from the Community College of the Air Force. He will graduate in October with bachelor of science degree in information technology from the University of Phoenix.

Why the Air Force? “The way of life. My uncle was a retired Air Force colonel. I had some uncles that were in the Army. Nobody pushed the Air Force, I just thought it was the way to go. I had more opportunities that way. The food’s better, too.”

Previous assignment: Executive assistant to the Aeronautical Systems Center command chief master sergeant. “He called me for an interview and that was all she wrote. I had several jobs at Wright Patterson (Air Force Base, Ohio), but that was the best. People talk to you like they’re talking to the command chief, so it’s kind of nice.”

Favorite assignment: “It had to have been when I was the administrative assistant to the Air Combat Command commander, Gen. John Michael Loh. That was probably the most rewarding. We went to the Pentagon about three times a week. I got to go to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and flew over Golan Heights in a helicopter. We stopped at the Azores and played golf. Not too many people are a staff sergeant and have a four star as your immediate supervisor.”

Future military career plans: “I’m sitting right at 24 years. I test for chief master sergeant in September and find out in November. If I make it I’ll go be a chief master sergeant. My ambition is to be a command chief. If I don’t make it I will retire and start my information technology career.”

What do you want to be when you grow up? “I would like to ultimately end up in a business somewhere working computer or server issues or web design. Not anything too cosmic, but after so many years in the military, you tell yourself you want to settle down and relax a little bit, but we know that’s never going happen.”

What do you do when you’re not senior enlisted advisor?

“I’m always a SEA on or off duty. I’m continually working. My hobbies include golf and fishing. I’ve been playing the guitar since I was 5. I’ve been in a band. Nowadays I’m taking care of my six-month-old daughter.”

What’s the best way to inspire the troops? “Put yourself in their shoes. Lead by example. Do the right thing. Communications are paramount in anything. If you don’t communicate well and listen well, this job would be difficult.”

What do you like best about your job? “I like the whole people aspect and managing issues and dealing with problems. Keeping the morale up, making sure everybody is taken care of, that life is good, that they want to come to work. It’s good to see the applicants come through our door and get what they want. And remind them that they are very important to the future of the military.”

What do you order when you eat out? “I am a steak and potato kind of guy. The bigger the better. I love my food. If you ask the commander and secretary here, I probably eat

more than anybody else at the MEPS and I’m the smallest one here.”

What’s the best present you ever got? “My very first guitar as a young kid. My dad bought me a Les Paul guitar.”

What’s your guilty pleasure? “Barbecued ribs. Not much guilt there because I can eat whatever I want.”

What would people be surprised to know about you? “That when I was in seventh grade, getting off the school bus, I was hit by a car. I was unconscious for about 45 days or so, but didn’t miss a beat. It didn’t break any bones, just a concussion and a little scrape on the knee.”

What’s one thing always on your desk? “A picture of my wife and daughters.”

Three things on your desk right now? “A coffee cup, folder for the Chicago trip and a remote for my stereo.”

What are you reading? “A take off on the show called The Unit. It’s about a guy who went through all the Special Forces training in the Army and tells about the selection process and what they went through.”

What’s your ideal vacation? “Somewhere warm with a cold drink is an ideal vacation for me. No cell phone.”

New relief for federal student loan borrowers

**Capt. Dan Papajcik
Trial Counsel and Administrative Law Attorney**

Many federal employees will benefit from new student aid legislation.

Employees who make 120 monthly payments (10 years), on and after October 2007, under the federal direct lending program while employed full-time in a public sector job will have their remaining balances on qualifying loans forgiven by the government.

This benefit was enacted in The College Cost Reduction and Access Act and was signed into law Sept. 27. Public service is broadly defined to include full-time federal civilian employees and military service members, among other service jobs.

It is important to note that this benefit is available to borrowers who make 120 monthly payments after October, and does not include any payments made before October 2007. The Department of Education is developing the implementing rules, but the benefit will provide significant relief for employees who stay in federal service and make payments for 10 years. Additionally, borrowers must not be in default on their loans to qualify for this benefit.

Additional benefits under the CCRAA include:

- Special combat pay is considered excluded income for calculating a student’s estimated financial assistance; therefore students will be eligible for more aid.

- New income-based repayment options will cap monthly payments on federal student loans at 15 percent of the borrower’s discretionary income (defined as adjusted gross income minus 150 percent of the poverty guideline for a borrower’s family size) for some borrowers and reduces their monthly payments. Borrowers may remain in income-based repayment more than 10 years. Generally, the provisions in this section become effective July 1, 2009.

These federal student loan benefits are aimed directly at creating incentives to retain employees who are currently in public service and to recruit more applicants with significant student loan burdens. For additional information on federal student loans, please visit the Department of Education’s web site at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/osfap/directloan/index.html>.

MEPS of Excellence

Fiscal Year 2008

In order to be named MEPS of Excellence, MEPS must meet or exceed the criteria in 12 areas representing the core processes of medical, testing and processing, and general military readiness.

The 12 criteria are:

- Timeliness of military evaluations, awards
- Recruiter leads goals
- Medical same day processing
- Drug/HIV specimen processing
- Clinical lab improvement program
- Practitioner credentialing timeliness
- Bank of America travel card delinquency
- Physical fitness readiness
- Height and weight standards
- Unclassifiable fingerprints
- Incidents of serious misconduct
- Test loss compromise

1st Quarter

Eastern Sector

- Albany
- Atlanta
- Cleveland
- Jackson
- Lansing
- Louisville
- Portland, Maine
- San Juan
- Syracuse

Western Sector

- Boise
- Butte
- Fargo
- Omaha

2nd Quarter

Eastern Sector

- Detroit
- Jackson
- Knoxville

Western Sector

- Little Rock
- New Orleans
- Spokane

USMEPCOM Military and Civilians of the Year Runners Up

USMEPCOM Headquarters
Company Grade Officer of the Year
Captain Nicolas P. Bellenbaum
J-6, Information Technology Directorate

Eastern Sector Company Grade Officer of the Year
Captain Richard S. Laca
Atlanta MEPS

Western Sector Senior NCO of the Year
Sergeant 1st Class Toy A. Hodge
New Orleans MEPS

Eastern Sector Military Member of the Year
Petty Officer 1st Class Felecia A. Wilson
Baltimore MEPS

USMEPCOM Headquarters
Civilian of the Year, GS-10 and Above
Theresa Morris
J-3, Operations Directorate

Western Sector Civilian of the Year, GS-10 and Above
Dr. Garey L. Watkins
St. Louis MEPS

USMEPCOM Headquarters Civilian of the Year, GS-7-9
Al Fuerte
J-3, Operations Directorate

Western Sector Civilian of the Year, GS-7-9
Harold S.C. Wong
Honolulu MEPS

USMEPCOM Headquarters
Civilian of the Year, GS-6 and Below
Linda C. Anderson
Inspector General

Eastern Sector Civilian of the Year, GS-6 and Below
Myra Ellis
Tampa MEPS

Little Rock

The Little Rock MEPS recognized Dr. Wilbur Waldron during a recent mission day.

Waldron turned 93 in July and has been associated with the Little Rock MEPS for more than 20 years as a fee basis physician and acting chief medical officer.

Little Rock CMO, Dr. Roy C. Matthews, presented Waldron with a USMEPCOM plaque, a message of appreciation and a hand carved staff symbolic of the staff of Aesculapius, who was the god of healing in Greek mythology.

Waldron continues to be one of the MEPS' active fee basis physicians.



Dr. Wilbur Waldron holds the hand-carved staff he received.

Shreveport

Shreveport MEPS personnel recently bid farewell to Geraldine Allen Howard when she retired, after working at the MEPS for 25 of her 40-plus-year civil service career.



Geraldine Allen Howard

Known as Gerri among her colleagues, she had a lengthy and distinguished list of accomplishments that included being named civilian of the quarter 24 times, 30 certificates of achievement, 10 letters of commendation, three special act awards, three on-the-spot cash awards and 24 superior performance awards.

Howard began her federal civil service in 1966 at the Overton Brooks Veterans Hospital in Shreveport, La. She began working in food services and received a promotion to clerk typist and then to a ward secretary

San Diego

Nurse sets sail for San Diego harbor

by Master Chief Petty Officer Brian Baesen
San Diego MEPS Senior Enlisted Advisor

Diane Walters retired on her 60th birthday, after working more than 18 years at the San Diego MEPS.

After retiring from the Army as a nurse, she became an integral part of the San Diego MEPS medical team and a good friend to many.

Upon her retirement, she received a federal service retirement pin and certificate, a certificate of achievement, a U.S. flag, the Commander's Medal for Civilian Service and—of course—a birthday cake. It appeared to be an emotional time for many as she spoke about her experiences at the MEPS over the years.

Walters plans to enjoy some of her retirement in her fishing boat at the San Diego harbor. We wish her fair winds and following seas!



Capt. Adam Wilcoxon, San Diego MEPS operations officer, congratulates Diane Walters upon her retirement on her 60th birthday. After retiring from the Army as a nurse, Walters worked at San Diego MEPS for more than 18 years.

position. In 1976 she transferred to the Federal Housing Administration in Dallas. After five years in housing, she moved back to Shreveport. In 1983 she began working at the Shreveport MEPS as a data transcriber and received a promotion to system support supervisor. Her last position at the MEPS was as an information technology specialist.

Howard has used her savvy to adapt superbly from the days of System 80 to the present technology. She's been described as a wonderful employee and role model with a "Red Carpet" personality. Howard retired Jan. 3 and is spending her retirement with her husband, Primous R. Howard, five children and six grandchildren. The Shreveport MEPS personnel wish her "all the happiness and success one can endure."

Amarillo

Four take on Marine Corps marathon

There is no better way to view the sights in Washington, D.C., than to take a 26.2 mile run along the famed Marine Corps marathon route. That is exactly what the key leaders from the Amarillo MEPS did last year.

Leading by example is nothing new to the Amarillo MEPS team. Lt. Cmdr. Tawanna Hopson, commander, 1st Sgt. Sarah Ashe, senior enlisted advisor, Capt. Nicole Lauenstein, operations officer, and Petty Officer 1st Class Ramiro Pena, assistant test control officer, led the way in D.C. by successfully completing the marathon in respectable times.

The idea was conceived by Pena and Ashe months before the event. Ashe orchestrated an effective 19-week training schedule which enabled the team to adequately prepare.

On any given weekend you could find the team running the flat roads of Amarillo, enduring 14, 15 or 16 miles of cow pastures and crop fields that provided for a pleasant scent and beautiful scenery.

A precursor to the marathon included the team competing in the Amarillo Mayor's Half Marathon, 13.1 miles which the team completed in great time.

Pena was the only veteran distance runner. He has completed many marathons and was a valuable asset to the team, giving advice and assisting with training. The other three runners had never run a marathon and had mixed feelings whether they could complete the distance. They put their doubts to rest at the finish line in D. C.

The team was proudly sponsored by a provider of maritime equipment for Department of Defense and the Texas Chapter of America Supports You. The team was formally recognized by Jack Barnes, president of America Supports You at its monthly meeting.

This accomplishment set an example for others to follow and shows the team spirit and strong work ethic in the Amarillo MEPS.



(Left to right) Amarillo Marine Corps Marathon team, 1st Sgt. Sarah Ashe, Capt. Nicole Lauenstein, Petty Officer 1st Class Ramiro Pena and Lt. Cmdr. Tawanna Hopson.

Boise



Sgt. Kara Wortley greets her niece at the finish line.

Sergeant puts running first

By Capt. Roderick S. Gray
Boise MEPS

Sgt. Kara M. Wortley has been hooked on running since before she joined the military, but recently she ran 35-40 miles per week to prepare to run the City of Trees Marathon throughout downtown Boise, Idaho.

To prepare for the marathon, in addition to running, she ate a lot of pasta and did strength training to improve support for her knees.

"Training was more time-consuming than anything else," Wortley said. "You have to make it a priority every day in order to do it right."

The training nearly eliminated her social life, but it was worth it. She finished the race in 4 hours, 5 minutes, good for third place in the 27-30 age group. As far as motivation for running, Wortley states "It's the only thing I've found that puts me in a meditative state and gives me time to think and work out stress I've let build up," Wortley said.

She plans to run the Idaho Great Potato Marathon in 2008.

"So much for that social life," Wortley said.

AMARILLO MEPS**Michael Ramirez**

Travel Specialist
 Years of service: 9 ½ (Navy)
 Education: Pursuing a bachelor's degree in computer information systems
 Diversions: Sports, running, golf
 First impression: Commander was welcoming and staff very friendly.

Donald Hall

Human Resources Assistant
 Years of service: 13 (Army)
 Diversions: Hunting, fishing and taking care of five kids
 First impression: Helpful, friendly staff.

Staff Sgt. Venessa Hernandez

Human Resources Assistant
 Years of service: 10
 Last assignment: Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.
 First impression: Good people.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Ray Bravo

Test NCO
 Years of service: 11
 Last assignment: USS Monterey
 Diversions: Traveling and sports
 First impression: Amarillo is small and "country."
 Goal: To get a law degree.

FORT LEE MEPS**Nerissa McCarthy**

Health Technician
 Years of military service: 8
 Last assignment: 267th Quartermaster Company
 Education: Associate degree
 Diversions: Outdoor sports, relaxing at home
 First impression: Nice, friendly atmosphere. Co-workers work as a team.

JoAnne Yarborough

Testing Clerk
 Years of service: 10
 Last assignment: Defense Supply Center Richmond
 Diversion: Reading
 First impression: Great building, great group of people.

HOUSTON MEPS**Anjanette Combs**

Previous assignment: Fort Bragg, N.C.
 First impression: Very impressed on welcome from staff.

Charles Cuevas

Previous assignment: Navy Recruiting District, Houston.
 First impression: I felt like a part of the team and MEPS family from the moment I was hired.

Diana Nelson

Previous assignment: Lackland Air Force Base, Texas
 First impression: Great and very friendly people.

Paul H. Davis

Previous assignment: Veterans Affairs Hospital, Houston
 First impression: Very good, everyone seems very nice and caring.

OMAHA MEPS**Michael D. Blake**

Test Clerk
 Years of service: 8
 Last assignment: Defense Finance and Accounting Service, Omaha, Neb.
 Diversions: Reading and watching sports
 First impression: Felt welcomed and part of a team before I arrived at MEPS.

Amy Stelljes

Human Resources Assistant
 Years of service: 7
 Last assignment: Defense Finance and Accounting Service, Omaha, Neb.
 Diversions: Spending time with my granddaughter
 First impression: A fun place to work.

Spc. Michael Alexander Schutte

Medical Technician
 Years of service: 5
 Last assignment: Nebraska Medical Detachment - Health and Dental
 Diversions: Automotive restoration, bicycling
 First impression: Nice people, good positive attitude.

Patricia Koch

Human Resources Assistant
 Years of service: 7
 Last assignment: Defense Finance and Accounting Service, Omaha, Neb.
 Diversions: Reading, crafts, outdoors
 First impression: Good.

Chief Petty Officer Thomas D. Boggs

Medical NCO
 Years of service: 17
 Last assignment: Marine Aircraft Group 26/Marine Medium Tilt Rotor Squadron 204/Marine Helicopter Squadron 22
 First impression: I hate rain.

PHOENIX MEPS**Eddie Pren**

Human Resources Assistant
 Years of service: 6 (Air Force)
 Last assignment: Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D.
 Diversions: Playing softball and watching all sports
 First impression: Friendly co-workers and good supervision.

Armando Dominguez

Testing Clerk
 Years of service: 12
 Last assignment: Construction worker
 Diversions: Photography
 First impression: Lots of nice people.

Lt. Cmdr. Alejandro "Alex" Ortiz

Commander
 Years of service: 17
 Last assignment: Head officer, Strength, Plans, And Policy, Washington, D.C.
 Diversions: Golf and 21-month-old daughter
 First impression: Very impressive military and civilian organization.

Kimberly Grezeszak

Human Resources Assistant
 Years of service: 6
 Last assignment: Los Angeles MEPS
 Diversions: My grandson, reading, traveling.

Traci Minium

Human Resources Assistant
 Years of service: 8
 Last assignment: Transportation Security Administration
 Diversions: Bingo and hiking
 First impression: Great, friendly, organized.

Jeff Thuesen

Budget Technician
 Years of service: 20; retired from the Marine Corps Sept. 1
 Last assignment: USMEPCOM Inspector General
 Diversions: Three kids, sports
 First impression: Friendly group of professionals.

Michael Hodgson

Medical Supervisor
 Years of service: 26; retired Navy
 Last assignment: Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, 29 Palms, Calif./Iraq

Daniel Valadez

Medical Technician
 Years of service: 14
 Last assignment: U.S. Naval Ship Comfort
 Diversions: Spending time with my family
 First impression: Confusing.

SAN JUAN MEPS**First Sgt. Ramon Inciriaga**

Senior Enlisted Advisor

Lt. Mark Wadsworth

Operations Officer



Indianapolis salutes two exceptional performers

by Don Ross

Indianapolis MEPS selected **Craig Parker** as both the MEPS' Employee of the 4th Quarter and Employee of the Year, 2007.

Parker was also the recipient of the University of Oklahoma's 2007 "Hugh MacNiven" award. He received this award in recognition of his 144-page research paper being selected as the most outstanding one written by a student in the master of public administration program. Parker's paper is being used as a guide with both the Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts.

Nelson Jones recently received a master's degree in business administration from the University of the Incarnate Word. Also recently, Jones assumed the reins as the Indianapolis MEPS supply technician. Previously, Jones was the commander's secretary in the command group.



HQ USMEPCOM

Sgt. 1st Class Rafael Sierra and his wife, **Danielle**, a daughter, **Jossalyn Autumn**, Feb. 19; 8 pounds, 1 ounce, 19 inches.

Kathy Murphy and **Scott Skindingsrude**, a son, **Aiden Wolfgang**, March 17; 8 pounds, 2 ounces.

AMARILLO MEPS

Capt. Deidre Musgrave, and her husband, **Tony**, a daughter, **Harley Madison**, Aug. 22; 7 pounds, 3 ounces.

Charles Skipper and his wife, **Margaret**, a daughter, **Abigail Deborah**, March 2; 7 pounds, 12 ounces, 19 inches.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Ray Bravo, and his wife, **Rebecca**, a daughter, **Jelisse Rebecca**, March 13; 7 pounds, 10 ounces, 19 and a half inches.

HOUSTON MEPS

Petty Officer 2nd Class Felecia Liggins, a daughter, Oct. 6; 6 pounds, 1 ounce.

NEW YORK MEPS

Sgt. 1st Class Erin Davis, a son, **Gianni Lucas Santiago**, Jan. 29; 5 pounds, 6 ounces, 19 and a half inches.

CONGRATS

INDIANAPOLIS MEPS

... to **Capt. Brandy Culp**, Indianapolis MEPS operations officer, and **1st Lt. Ben Eastep**, who married Oct. 11.

FOND FAREWELLS

ATLANTA MEPS

Anna Stone
Human Resources Assistant

Nycole Parker
Health Technician

HOUSTON MEPS

Petty Officer 1st Class Scottie Richard
Departing for: Naval Detachment, Corpus Christi, Texas

1st Sgt. Susan Paschal
Departing for: Retirement after 26 years of service

Kathleen Harrell
Departing for: Retirement after 20 years of service

Petty Officer 1st Class Tyson Taplin
Departing for: USS McCampbell

Sgt. Patricia Olivares
Departing for: Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, San Diego

OMAHA MEPS

Ernelinda Olson
Human Resources Assistant
Most remembered for: Infectious smile, great personality and exceptional customer service.



APPLAUSE

HOUSTON MEPS

Staff Sgt. Jamice Thompson, master's degree in business administration; **Shawn T. Tyson**, bachelor of science degree in information management; **1st Sgt. Kent Traylor**, bachelor of science degree in human resource management and completed the Army First Sergeants Course; **Jesse Martinez**, Civilian of the Quarter and Civilian of the Year; **Petty**

Officer 2nd Class Tito Roman-Ortiz, Military Member of the 1st Quarter; **Joseph Thomas**, **Johnny Brown**, **Bridget Lindsey**, promoted

OMAHA MEPS

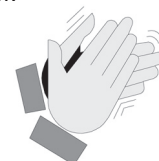
Mary Beth Ehlers, promoted from human resources assistant to transportation assistant; **Elizabeth A. Greenwalt**, promoted from medical health technician to lead health technician

PHOENIX MEPS

Steve Cochran, Civilian of the 1st Quarter.

SAN JUAN MEPS

Dr. Vanessa Berrios, Civilian of the Quarter; **Petty Officer 2nd Class Demetrius Hartsfield**, Military Member of the Quarter.





**Is it my imagination
or are the applicants
getting younger?**

See story on page 26