

UNITED STATES MILITARY ENTRANCE PROCESSING COMMAND

Messenger

WINTER
2023

CAPTURING AND SHARING THE OATH



One system
to **Rule**
them All p. 8



MMT
Stands
Down p. 10

Son
of Air Force Chief
Takes **Flight** p. 16



Happy New Year!

I hope personnel across the command were able to take some time with friends and family to recharge over the holiday season and are ready to tackle the challenges and opportunities that 2023 will bring.

The challenging recruiting environment continues into the new year with little relief in sight. Our partners are still in a daily fight to make mission, and we must do what we can to support them. We all have the same mission: to seek, process, and assess qualified applicants into our Armed Forces. To that end, I identified the reduction in prescreen kickback rates and an increase in same-day contracts as important lines of effort for 2023. There are many pieces to each of these lines of effort that deserve attention from us and our partners; but the bottom line effort remains the same – to assess qualified applicants into the Armed Forces a timely manner.

Moving into 2023, there are no fundamental changes to our business on the scale of MHS GENESIS or USMIRS 1.1 forthcoming. However, that does not mean we will stand still. One, we need to focus on continuing to stabilize our business process flow ICW MHSG and MIRS 1.1. So many changes over a short time means we are still normalizing. Two, we will stand up a new team focused on various modernization

and system integration initiatives. We must capitalize on the opportunities presented with modernization; we must move forward and continue to improve our own foxhole. Additionally, we welcomed Dr. Katherine Helland, the new director of Accession Policy (page 9). Many of the successful efforts of the last quarter covered in this issue will continue into the new year, like the revitalization of our command-wide mentorship program (page 7) and J-6's investment in improved communication and collaboration with the field (page 25).

Also in this issue, you will find recognition of our great people, like stories and photos of community work across the MEPS (pages 12, 20 and 26) and our military and civilians of the year (pages 14, 28). USMEPCOM can only accomplish its mission because of our people. I can never thank you enough or express how valuable you are to this command and our national defense.

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

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Cover Design by Amy Gregorski

ON THE COVER:
Coast Guard Lt. j.g. Addisen Rutkoske (Chicago MEPS) synchs a Mevo wireless camera by following a standard operating procedure. Check out more info on page 13.

Con

USMEPCOM and Recruiting Partners

By Derrik Noack



▲ A delayed entry program member uses a rowing machine during a Tier 2 physical fitness test at Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas. (Photo by Air Force Airman Isabell A. Nutt)

When an applicant qualifies for military service at a MEPS, they sign their contract, take the Oath of Enlistment, and go home not as an applicant but as a future service member enrolled in their Service's Delayed Entry Program (DEP). If an applicant is medically disqualified at a MEPS, they go home without entering the DEP even if they are likely to receive a waiver for their disqualifying medical condition.

On Aug. 3, USMEPCOM and Army Recruiting Command implemented a program to allow applicants with frequently

waivered medically disqualifying conditions to conditionally enroll in the DEP, known as Conditional DEP or ConDEP. While the applicant awaits adjudication of their medical waiver, the future service member can start investing in their future careers as members of the DEP. The Navy and Air Force began using the program Oct. 3 with the Marine Corps following Oct. 11.

"The goal of ConDEP is to allow applicants to process in a one-time visit, saving time for the applicants, MEPS personnel and recruiters, building a sense of

DEP

Streamline Waiver Process

belonging for applicants awaiting medical waivers and increasing retention,” said U.S. Army Col. Megan Stallings, USMEPCOM commander. “What this is not, is a lowering of standards to enter the military. The waiver still must be approved officially by the Service waiver authority.”

As of Nov. 28, 1,132 applicants have been granted Conditional DEP status.

ConDEP has proven to be successful in reducing delays between the medical exam and enlistment for an applicant affected by certain disqualifying conditions.

“The Army has listed at least 53 clinical diagnoses that qualify for a ‘conditional enlistment’ on the basis of being our more frequently waived conditions,” said Lt. Col Kathleen Ryan, U.S. Army Recruiting Command command surgeon. “To date, we have a proven 85% approval rate for all of our ConDep applicants, and the majority have been approved within a week. For these applicants, and for the Army, it’s a quick win.”

Each participating Service developed a list of disqualifying medical conditions that they waive most of the time. Some of the conditions included by all Services include vitamin D deficiency and some skin conditions like eczema.

Although the program was initiated to streamline the administrative process for recruiting partners, applicants gain both time and a sense of stability from ConDEP. A waiver

is still needed before an applicant can ship to basic training, but with ConDEP, they sign their initial contract and begin to partake in DEP activities.

Once in their Service’s DEP, an applicant participates in training through a local recruiting office before leaving for basic training. DEP members typically participate in training once or twice a month, where they can become familiar with military expectations and practice physical training.

“Joining the military can be a difficult step for people to take. Their apprehension tends to go away and their pride starts to build when they contract and do the oath of enlistment,” said ConDEP project lead Ryan Danielsen, management analyst, J-3/5/7. “Getting an applicant through the MEPS their first visit is going to help keep them interested in the service and save them from having to return for another medical appointment.” ■



▲Alexia Fields, center, a delayed entry program member, curls a bar alongside Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Brylon N. Shockley, left, a canvassing recruiter, Recruiting Station Nashville, during a physical training session at Dyersburg High School. (Photo by Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Valerie Nash)

Delayed Entry Program:

Where training the future force begins

By Air Force Senior Airman Gage Daniel



▲Members, Delayed Entry Program, view the cockpit of a C-130H Hercules at Dobbins Air Reserve Base. (Photo by Air Force Senior Airman Gage Daniel)

Members of the Air Force Delayed Entry Program visited Dobbins Air Reserve Base on May 7, 2022 to tour a C-130H Hercules cargo aircraft, perform drill movements, and review the Airman's creed and core principles of the Air Force.

"Seeing the C-130H Hercules today was a great experience," said Rylan Sietsema, DEP member. "I've ridden on passenger planes several times, but in there you can see the wiring, the pipes, and all of the inner-workings. It was awesome."

The DEP is a program designed for those joining the military to receive a range of training and preparation for basic training before attending. Marching, physical training, and base visits are some of the things members participate in during their time in the program, which can range from weeks, to months, or even years depending on individual factors.

"The DEP provides a good foundation prior to going to basic,"

said Tech. Sgt. Corlita Leiding, 94th Airlift Wing Development and Training flight chief. "They'll know exactly what to expect and be prepared physically, mentally, and emotionally for the demands and stressors of basic training."

Joining the DEP and participating allows members the opportunity to experience the military on a more in-depth level and provides new forms of support and motivation.

"It took me five years to get in the military, so I'm really excited to finally be in the DEP program," said Alexendra Hawkins, DEP member. "I'm familiar with the military through my time at military college, ROTC, and a [family member] who is in the Marines, but joining DEP has given me even more motivation. The instructors motivate us a lot, they push us to get things done."

Aside from learning about military life, allowing DEP members on base fosters camaraderie and esprit de corps, said Leiding.

"I want the members to gain a

balanced and positive perspective of joining, and to gain a sense of belonging to something bigger so they really know what they signed up for on all sides," said Leiding. "I don't want there to be any surprises in basic or at their home unit so I take them through everything to expect from training, whether it's briefings, PT, or anything else. I'm transparent so they know everything and so that nothing is a mystery, and then they'll be better members of their unit. I want to prepare them for success."

Each year, roughly 30,000 individuals join the Air Force, falling into one of more than 130 enlisted career opportunities, and DEP, after enlisting, is where they begin their journey into the military.

"Joining the Air Force DEP, has provided me with a sense of security," said Sietsema. "I've been in school for two years but in joining the military, just being out here today, I feel like I'm truly transitioning from adolescents into the adult world. This is a big step forward." ■

Mentorship Program Designed to Benefit Employees at any Career Stage

By Derrik Noack

With nearly 70 locations across North America, USMEPCOM is a large and diverse place to work. As we see familiar faces in our sections and smaller departments daily, it's easy to forget the vast amount of knowledge and wisdom spread across the greater community. To tap into that knowledge, help knock out personal goals and avoid burnout at work, USMEPCOM established the Mentorship Program.

Originally initiated by the U.S. Army in 2005, USMEPCOM adapted its own version of the Mentorship Program three years ago. The Army developed it to give Soldiers an outlet for advice and guidance outside of their chain of command. With that same goal, Workforce Development began its own program in 2019 – with an emphasis on growth and development.

“The unique thing about the program is it doesn't stop here at headquarters; it goes out to all the MEPS locations,” said Miranda Cook, USMEPCOM Mentorship Program lead, Workforce Development. “It's not only a great way to make networking connections, but to grow and develop.”

The program is not meant to be a replacement for personal counseling or management but is a development tool and knowledge sharing opportunity. Anyone interested can partake and engage as either a mentor or mentee.

“Everyone is an ideal candidate because all of us have something that we are looking to work on,” said Cook. “We should all strive to be life-long learners. Mentors also learn from the person they are working with; they too have ‘Aha’ moments.”

Mentors and mentees set their own monthly meetings, with an initial time requirement of one year. The overall time participating in the program is 18 hours. Each pairing can choose to extend their participation in the program after the year. Kim Johnson, administrative officer, J-4, and De 'Juana Murray, administrative service technician, New Orleans MEPS, began their mentor/mentee relationship two years ago.

“From the moment I met Kim, she provided a safe place for me to be myself,” said Murray. “She gave me the ability to see the power I possess by helping unlock a part of me I felt I lost. This mentorship has helped me find myself and a lifelong friend. Oftentimes we need someone to hear and see us, but we must take the first step.”

Like Johnson and Murray, pairs are matched after filling out a brief questionnaire. The pairs meet every two months with Cook to ensure the match is benefiting both parties.

“The application hits on skill sets, character traits and what one is looking to gain from the program,” said Cook. “We take the culmination of the information provided and pair them based off where they are meeting the markers. We don't want them staying in a pairing relationship that isn't beneficial. Any time that the pairing is not working, we will provide them with a different option.”

Cook says she hopes to see the program grow, but cares more about quality over quantity. This year, the program will offer guest presenters each month for a variety of trainings and presentations.

For more information on the USMEPCOM Mentorship Program, email Cook at miranda.d.cook2.civ@army.mil ■



▲ (L) Kim Johnson, administrative officer, J-4, and (R) De 'Juana Murray, administrative service technician, New Orleans MEPS, share a moment together at USMEPCOM HQ. Johnson and Murray first met virtually after being paired in the USMEPCOM Mentorship Program two years ago. (Photo by Israel Molina)



ONE SYSTEM TO RULE THEM ALL

Starnet, IT tickets, HIV notification systems replaced by ServiceNOW

By Darrin McDufford

As part of its continual modernization efforts, USMEPCOM J-6 Information Technology Directorate launched its new Information Technology Service Management (ITSM) tool, which consolidates multiple services to improve efficiency.

ServiceNow, a contracted ITSM tool, will be used to absorb the workflows previously done through separate legacy systems used for IT help tickets, incident reporting (StarNet), HIV notification tracking and system access requests.

"The goal of the change is first and foremost for the J-6 to provide a more effective and efficient service to our customers," said Tyron Merrell, J-6 IT governance branch chief. "It's being designed to help us to be more responsive, less reactive and more proactive and provide a certain amount of self-sufficiency for the customer as well."

Most USMEPCOM employees will use this new system to request IT support or access to different systems. The tool helps automate and compress the ticketing process. Merrell added, the user has one place to go now for incident management, request fulfillment, HIV notification and Starnet.

One example is system access requests, which used to use the

DD Form 2875. The new system removes the need to circulate paper copies or emails to gather necessary signatures. The entire process is now moved to one system which automatically sends the request to each approval authority in the correct order.

"A critical benefit of ServiceNow is the way it incorporates paper processes into the system via a workflow," said Brian Wire, J-6 operations manager for enduring operations. "This not only provides a huge benefit to the command, but provides streamlined functionality, transparency, and accountability all in one system. The effectiveness of this process and other similar processes will allow the workforce to move items through the various

directorates quicker and more efficiently."

For IT help tickets, the new system provides a more robust capability to track the status of the ticket. It also includes a database of information about frequently encountered problems and allows for more self-service.

"The knowledge management piece has been added to ServiceNow so when a user gets a new CAC/I.D. card, and they need to load their certificates and their head explodes because they don't recall where it is saved..." said Michelle Priddis, J-6 information technology specialist. "You can go here and get the certificates and not have to call the service desk."

The fundamental benefit from having a single system to execute business processes is that it decreases complexity, reduces administrative overhead from maintaining multiple systems and provides a "single pane of glass" to manage business processes within the system, said Merrell.

All USMEPCOM personnel are expected to establish a ServiceNow account by visiting the following site:
<https://usmepcom.servicenowservices.mil/sp> ■

"The goal of the change is first and foremost for the J-6 to provide a more effective and efficient service to our customers"



→ USMEPCOM WELCOMES NEW DIRECTOR OF MILITARY ACCESSION POLICY Dr. Katie Helland

Hometown: Ames, IA

Family: I have been together with my partner in life, Bill for over 20 years and we have two boys – Henry (7) and Max (5) as well as a dog, Ernie. I try my best to keep up with the energy of two young kids and a hyper dog.

Previous roles: For the past 15 years, I worked in roles supporting the Joint Advertising, Market Research and Studies Program (JAMRS; Defense Personnel Analytics Center). Years ago, I started as a contractor working on JAMRS research projects. In 2010, I became the JAMRS Chief of Market Research and then Director in 2014. JAMRS is a program that supports recruiting by meeting the shared outreach, data and research needs of OSD and the Services to create efficiencies for the Department. Needless to say, I fully understand and appreciate how challenging the recruiting and processing environment is right now.

What are you looking forward to in this new role: Working with the collective AP and USMEPCOM teams. I have had the opportunity to collaborate with both AP and USMEPCOM personnel in my previous roles and have been so impressed with not only the caliber of work being done but the collegial nature of the teams.

I am also looking forward to advancing policy and processes in support of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF). This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the AVF and while we face an incredibly challenging recruiting market, there are many successes of the AVF worth celebrating. The AP and USMEPCOM missions have sustained numerous AVF successes, and it is inspiring to be a part of that legacy and help the future success of the AVF.

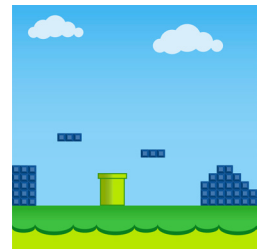
Personal mantra/leadership style:

Personal mantra – “show me the data.” As a researcher at heart, I strive to make data-driven decisions and will usually gravitate to metrics or research when discussing topics. That doesn’t mean I value data over people from a leadership standpoint, and I like to think my style is collaborative in nature. I like to get input and hear everyone’s ideas. I want to be a champion for your ideas and knock down any barriers standing in the way of your ideas being realized. But yes, I can “nerd out” with the best of them when it comes to data.

What MEPS are you most excited to visit and why:

I look forward to visiting many MEPS, but the two at the top of my list right now are those in locations near and dear to my heart - Des Moines, IA and Knoxville, TN. I grew up in Iowa and always enjoy going back there (not so much in the winter though). I went to graduate school in Knoxville, TN and ended up living there for about a decade. Such a beautiful area and I miss the sea of orange. **Go Vols!**

How do you spend your days off: Most of my time is spent doing kid activities – going to basketball or baseball games and practices. We also play a lot of board and video games as a family.



What's something people would be surprised to learn about you: Building off my previous answer, I am pretty good at Mario Kart and Mario Party (if you consider winning against a 5- and 7-year-old good).

Anything else to add: I am so excited to be a part of the USMEPCOM team. You are awesome and I look forward to supporting all that you do!



The sun has set on the Medical Modernization Team... It's been the highlight of my career to have had the privilege and honor of leading this team and working to support our MEPS and our modernization mission.

The launch of MHS GENESIS, a system never built with the USMEPCOM mission in mind, was the result of hard work, dedication and sustained coordination, both here within the MMT and across the field. The long hours to ensure this system deployed on time and took firm root in our business processes - coordinating with DHA contractors, holding weekly synch meetings with field personnel, manning the War Room, developing training modules, providing updates up and down the chain and so much more – have all been worth it because of what this accomplishment means for the future of USMEPCOM.

Spring boarding off the successful development and deployment of USMIRS 1.1, the electronic health record has brought us even further on our journey toward paperless processing. Not only that, but it has opened the door to capabilities we couldn't have imagined, like the remote prescreening being done by the prescreen coordination cell. I don't know exactly where the path ahead leads, but I know our recent efforts have set the course toward greater centralization, virtualization and standardization of applicant processing.

Most importantly, MHS GENESIS is the key to better care for our service members by creating a single medical record that follows them throughout their career and beyond. Everything we do at USMEPCOM, the launch of MHS GENESIS included, is to support our all-volunteer force, to make sure the young men and women who raise their right hand for this country are taken care of.

Something else the MMT accomplished was once-again proving the effectiveness of small, agile teams at accomplishing specified missions. Like the RDT before us, we were charged to be singularly focused on one thing: launching MHS GENESIS. We succeeded and have stood down, but the enduring effort towards all-digital applicant processing persists.

Lastly, I must offer my heartfelt and sincere appreciation to those who supported this journey. Col. Brady and Col. Stallings and the leadership at Accession Policy who saw the value in this team and had the vision of how to accomplish it. ES/WS and MEPS leadership, all personnel who use MHS GENESIS, who put immeasurable time and effort into learning (and teaching) the new system. I know this effort was a huge disruption to your day-to-day workflows, and I appreciate your willingness to adapt and overcome. MEPCOM HQ directorates who supported MMT in so many ways; from loaning out key personnel, to attending training, and supporting the transition MMT functions into their teams.

And to my MMT family as we ride off into that beautiful sunset: This effort took knowledge and experience, but what truly pushed this project over the finish line in less than 9 months was true GRIT. Each of you had the passion and perseverance to see this project through no matter how many hours it took, how much effort it required and no matter how many obstacles we had to overcome. Without each one of you possessing exceptional knowledge, professionalism, and GRIT this system would not have launched on time. From the bottom of my heart, THANK YOU!

-Amy Ramirez, MMT director



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1. The MMT celebrates their launch at a July 2021 Town Hall at USMEPCOM HQ. (Photo by Israel Molina)

2. Yocelyn Moreno, MMT program management office supervisor, Amy Ramirez, MMT director, and Jeff Engel, MMT medical operations supervisor, film a MMT video for the field in March 2022. (Photo by Amy Gregorski)

3. MMT members pose for a photo with Stephanie Miller, then director of military accession policy (now DASD for Military Personnel Policy), in July 2022. (Courtesy photo)

4. MMT members pose for a photo before participating in an escape room during their Christmas luncheon, December 2022. (Courtesy photo)

MMT DISASSEMBLES

By Derrik Noack

In June 2021, the Medical Modernization Team (MMT) assembled at USMEPCOM. Twelve personnel temporarily left their home directorates to carry out the important undertaking of deploying MHS GENESIS. With their mission now complete, the MMT officially stood down Jan. 3.

"We had to launch this system to be more efficient in the future," said Jeff Engel, MMT medical operations supervisor. "A medical physical alone had at least nine pages printed for every single applicant. When updates were added, old copies were shredded. The shred box at every MEPS would be filled at the end of each day. But the biggest takeaway we got from MHS GENESIS was the added security; only certain people can see certain things in the system based on their role."

To provide continued MHS GENESIS support to MEPS, the core areas were carefully divided and absorbed by different directorates at USMEPCOM. Those eight areas include training, policy/guidance, system requirements/build, medical expertise, equipment, latency testing, contracting budget and user roles assignment.

"The main benefit for different directorates absorbing pieces of MHS GENESIS is to have in place continued support provided to the MEPS," said Maple Lee, MMT deputy director. "Directorates with the appropriate roles, responsibilities and skillsets will absorb the new responsibilities to best provide support to the MEPS."

After identifying core areas, MMT constructed a plan to disseminate the vast amount of information successfully to their new homes. The phased approach was broken down into three stages to give the new action officers time to learn the new systems. This strategy led to a seamless transition, leaving the MEPS to continue operations undisturbed.

"The majority of what we are transferring over is going to the J-/3/5/7 Medical and Operations directorate," said Amy Ramirez, MMT director. "Another large portion is going to J-6 and then a small portion is going to our J-1 Training Division. Our transition began internally in June. Our team began writing policies and SOPs, so it was very clear to that action officer or division assuming it to know exactly what to do."

After developing the written policies, the first stage involved a detailed overview of background, specific tasks being assumed and why each step or action in the process is necessary. Stage two included demonstrations, where MMT members sat "hip-to-hip" or "click-by-click" (via Microsoft Teams) with those learning the tasks, walking them through the system. The final stage consisted of three weeks of independent practice. New action officers would navigate and learn the system for themselves, with a safety net of MMT on standby.

"We took a crawl, walk, run approach to teaching these tasks," said Yocelyn Moreno, MMT program management office supervisor. "We used our own experiences with MHS GENESIS in our lessons, showing what worked best for us. The intent was to hand it off being thorough and patient."

The MMT members remain proud of their work throughout the past 18 months. They all agreed they are sad to distribute the work to other personnel but look forward to the capabilities growing even further.

"We are very proud as a team of what we were able to accomplish," said Army Capt. Leticia Flores, MMT operations officer. "We had a lot to do in a short time frame, and there was a sense that we didn't want to fail. We grew as a family and the standdown is bittersweet. I'm excited to see what the future brings for MHS GENESIS." ■

Tampa MEPS Treasures Greatest Asset: Their People

✈ By Navy Lt. Cmdr. America Estevez Guerrero, Tampa MEPS commander & Giselle Santiago, Tampa MEPS IT specialist

In what seems to be the blink of an eye, 2022 has come to an end. Tampa MEPS staff have demonstrated their dedication, positiveness, resiliency, integrity, and “big picture” mind-set all year long. This 2023 first quarter was dedicated to them in appreciation of who they are. This year, the following quote by John C. Maxwell from his book *Developing Leaders Around You* was exemplified: “The asset that truly appreciates within an organization is people.”

Readiness Support Group (RSG) members led a series of events from October to December to recognize the outstanding work ethic presented by MEPS staff. In true Tampa MEPS fashion, a costume contest took place during Halloween. Applicants voted for Operations staff as they dressed up in Egyptian costumes, driving Cleopatra around the MEPS as their queen. The Halloween season culminated with a wonderful Trunk or Treat event where Tampa MEPS kids enjoyed snacks, games, face painting, and dancing.

The next event was a delicious Chili Cook-Off. Randi Forgey, administrative support assistant, was voted the winner. Soon after the Fall events, the Holiday season kicked off with the Tampa MEPS Holiday Extravaganza in which the RSG was able to gift every single staff member with a present. Activities that continued the Holiday spirit were a polar plunge dunk tank, holiday feast and a secret santa gift exchange. Other events during the first quarter included the annual Salute to Service Game at the Buccaneer stadium. Not only did the Tampa Bay Bucs win, the Tampa MEPS staff and liaisons worked as a team to ensure 180 applicants successfully completed their Oath of Enlistment on the field.

While team building events are necessary for unit cohesiveness, continued leadership re-enforcement is equally important. Tampa MEPS had the pleasure of welcoming the Staff Assisted Visit (SAV) team. This visit was beneficial to our team as it assisted in the clarification of new developments in USMEPCOM. Thank you to the SAV team for all the lessons and suggestions, ensuring we can continue to grow and serve with excellency. ■



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1. Tampa MEPS Operations staff pose for a photo in their winning Egyptian themed costumes.
 2. Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Joseph Giunta, Tampa MEPS test clerk, awards Randi Forgey, Tampa MEPS administrative support assistant, a trophy for claiming best chili during a cookoff.
 3. Tampa MEPS Readiness Support Group surprises each Tampa MEPS staff member with a holiday present.
 4. Tampa MEPS coordinates a mass Oath of Enlistment for applicants during a football game at Raymond James Stadium.
- (All photos courtesy of Tampa MEPS)



Policy Memo 7-2: Oath of Enlistment Recording and Posting was signed November 16. It requires MEPS to post video of the Oath of Enlistment to social media.

By capturing and sharing video of this momentous occasion, we are building our red-carpet service for applicants. Sharing the Oath with family and friends helps develop a positive impression of the journey to military service for the applicants themselves as well as important influencers.



To support this effort, each MEPS was provided with a camera, tripod, micro-SD cards and tablet. The last of the equipment was sent out in December and will allow the MEPS to record and post or livestream. An SOP was sent out via email and is available on the public affairs Social Media SPEAR page. With the new recording set-up, MEPS gain robust production capabilities with zoom and panning functions as well as the ability to overlay text.



- Preferred method is to record and post later, but livestreaming is authorized.

- Applicants 18 and over only require verbal consent; those under 18 require signed parental consent. Recruiting partners (Service Liaisons/Guidance Counselors) are to upload the signed consent form into the applicant's USMIRS profile via custom upload.

- Those who do not consent or do not have parental consent should be allowed to stand off-camera or provided a separate Oath.

- For questions or concerns with social media, contact the public affairs office.

- More information on all elements of social media and Oath recording is available on the public affairs Social Media SPEAR page.

J-3 OPERATIONS NOTE FROM THE CHIEF OF STAFF

In June 2020, the Headquarters reorganized as part of our overall transformation efforts. This restructuring consolidated elements of the J-7 Medical Plans and Policy Directorate, the J-5 Program Analysis and Evaluation Division, and the J-1 AT/FP and Safety functions into the J-3 Operations Directorate, enabling the command to better integrate technical and policy support for the deployment and sustainment of several modernization initiatives. Additionally, combining all major business lines of effort for applicant processing (testing, medical, processing) in one directorate streamlined coordination and communication for all matters related to applicant processing both internally and with our recruiting, recruit training, and external agency partners.

At the time we made a conscious decision to retain the J-5 and J-7 elements in the combined directorate's organizational code, thus J-3 Operations Directorate became J-3/5/7 Operations Directorate. This move was designed to ensure that both within and outside USMEPCOM, individuals and organizations recognized the functions transferred to the J-3 did not just disappear, rather they relocated to a different staff component of the headquarters

As it has now been more than two years since the reorganization took effect, we recently reconsidered the need to continue with the J-3/5/7 designation. After much deliberation, we believe the time is right to revert to the original J-3 organizational code for our operations directorate.

Thus, the Operations Directorate will simplify its organizational code to J-3, vice J-3/5/7 effective 1 January 2023. The change recognizes that all staff elements, regardless of their origin in the pre-June 2020 headquarters structure, are integral and equal parts of the directorate's overall mission. There are no seams between the medical plans and policy, program analysis and evaluation, testing, nor any other function of the J-3; all elements work collaboratively and across functions. This name change is meant to recognize the mission and function of the J-3 as a single, cohesive entity.

As always, thank you for your incredible efforts to support the USMEPCOM mission of evaluating applicants against established DoD standards while simultaneously executing an impressive array of modernization efforts. Without your determination and persistence USMEPCOM would not be the successful, high performing organization that it is, and I'm incredibly proud to be part of this amazing team.

MILITARY MEMBERS OF THE YEAR COMPETE IN SAN DIEGO

By Derrik Noack

The 2022 USMEPCOM Military Members of the Year (MMOY) competition brought the final 10 contenders to San Diego for a week of mental and physical challenges. After competing through the levels of command, five military personnel from each Sector faced off to claim MMOY for their rank.

This year's winners are Company Grade Officer Coast Guard Lt. j.g. Addisen Rutkoske (Chicago MEPS), Battalion SEA Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Mark Welling (Montgomery MEPS), MEPS SEA Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Ioana Wolfinger (New Orleans MEPS), Senior NCO Navy Chief Petty Officer Eugene Nixdorf (San Antonio MEPS) and Junior NCO Petty Officer 2nd Class Antionette Ward (Atlanta MEPS).

"The service members here reflect the values of Freedom's Front Door beyond expectations, and they deserve all the recognition and praise," said Army Col. Megan Stallings, USMEPCOM commander, during the awards presentation. "This past year has not been easy, but you have upheld all of our command values and been indispensable members of our USMEPCOM team. Your integrity, teamwork, professionalism and respect have enriched your work environments and strengthened our all-volunteer force."

The competition may have

been fierce, but contenders supported each other and built a genuine camaraderie during their time in San Diego. When not participating in events like fitness tests and formal boards, competitors were able to share experiences and lessons with each other.

"I enjoyed getting to know the other competitors," said Navy Senior Chief Ioana Wolfinger, Senior Enlisted Advisor of the Year. "We all got along very well. I learned different leadership styles and tips that I will take with me."

Aside from lasting friendships, the reassurance and self-pride gained throughout the course of events is a major takeaway for most competitors.

"I learned how to be more confident in myself and my work," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Antionette Ward, Junior Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year. "I typically let the thoughts in my head get the best of me, but I just reminded myself I'm here for a reason." ■



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1. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Mark Welling (Montgomery MEPS) gives an oral presentation on the USS Midway in San Diego.

2. Navy Chief Petty Officer Eugene Nixdorf (San Antonio MEPS) is inspected prior to a formal board during the USMEPCOM Military Members of the Year competition.

3. Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Ioana Wolfinger (New Orleans MEPS) performs a physical fitness test in San Diego during the Military Members of the Year competition.

4. Navy Chief Petty Officer Eugene Nixdorf (San Antonio MEPS) gives a presentation aboard the USS Midway in San Diego.

5. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Michael Page, Eastern Sector Senior Enlisted Advisor (far left) poses with the five Military Members of the Year (MMOY) finalists from Eastern Sector. (From L to R) Navy Senior Chief Brandon Majors (Ft. Jackson MEPS), Coast Guard Lt. j.g. Addisen Rutkoske (Chicago MEPS), Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Mark Welling (Montgomery MEPS), Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Antionette Ward (Atlanta MEPS) and Navy Chief Petty Officer Richard Calderone (Louisville MEPS) visited San Diego for this year's competition.

(Photos by Marine Corps Master Sgt. Edgar Jimenez)



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Page Two: Son of Air Force Chief Prepares to Take Flight

By Derrik Noack

Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Michael Page, Eastern Sector senior enlisted advisor, was able to witness his son take the oath, sign his contract and join the United States Air Force at Milwaukee MEPS Oct. 24.

"I think any father is proud when their child chooses to follow in their footsteps," said Chief Master Sgt. Page. "Jordan has always been a part of my staff at every duty location. He always knew the staff and participated in various events. Having him swear in was like the series finale of Bring Your Child to Work Day."

Jordan Page, 18, swore to support and defend the Constitution of the United States ten years after an experience 25,000 feet in the air made enlisting into the Air Force his life's mission. Space-A flights offer free or low-cost transport on military flights, mission and space available permitting. Military families and veterans can take advantage of the travel option, but for most passengers it isn't a life-changing event. For Jordan, eldest son of Chief Master Sgt. Page, one trip would alter the trajectory of his life.

"We were the only family on a Space-A flight from Italy to California in 2012," said Chief Master Sgt. Page. "The flight was actually a training exercise where they had to practice refueling aircraft. They invited Jordan down to the boom to watch the refueling from the window. After that experience, there was nothing he wanted to do more than that particular job."

Jordan will leave for basic training in July and go on to serve as an In-Flight Refueling Specialist, or boom operator. His goal is to become a pilot, but he wanted to serve as part of the enlisted flight crew first.

"I would like to build connections

and get a feel for what it is like to be part of a flight crew, so I won't have any surprises when I do commission and eventually become a pilot," said Jordan. "I've always been fascinated with planes and have always wanted to be a pilot. What better way to do what I love while also serving my country?"

Chief Master Sgt. Page enlisted in the Air Force from Ohio 26 years ago. He had no history of military service in his family but wanted an opportunity to leave his hometown and go overseas. His first tour included serving as an aircraft structural maintainer in Aviano, Italy. He also served in Republic of Korea and Greece. Like his father, Jordan enlisted from the Midwest with aspirations of being a globe-trotter.

"I do want to see the world, like my dad," said Jordan. "My family has always been taken care of by the military, wherever we went. I'm very fortunate to have met so many new people and explored different cultures all because of the military. I want to give back to the military for all it has provided me."

When Jordan leaves for bootcamp next summer, he will go in with more knowledge than his father did more than two decades ago. His graduation will also be the first time Chief Master Sgt. Page has returned to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas since his own training. He just has a few pieces of advice for his son before he goes.

"I've told him don't let anyone know that your dad is a chief," joked Chief Master Sgt. Page. "Bootcamp has changed so much since I've gone through. The only other advice I've given him is to follow the rules. Do your best and

help others out when you can."

For Jordan, his determination overrides any nerves or anxious emotions as he awaits to put on the uniform for the very first time.

"I'm actually pretty excited," said Jordan. "I'm a little nervous because it will all be very new to me. I just know that it's going to help me be where I want to be in my life."

Army Col. Janelle Kutter, commander, Eastern Sector, who administered Jordan's oath, has faith that he will bring a bounty of skills with him as he enters the Armed Forces.

"Jordan is incredibly bright, driven, disciplined and kind," said Kutter. "These attributes will make him a valuable teammate and future leader. The Air Force is fortunate to have him on their team." ■





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1. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Michael Page, Eastern Sector senior enlisted advisor, and his son Jordan attend the 60th Air Mobility Wing Annual Awards ceremony in 2015. The 60th Air Mobility Wing, located at Travis Air Force Base, Calif. won its 22nd Air Force Outstanding Unit Award that year.

2. Jordan Page (left) shares a congratulatory handshake with Army Col. Janelle Kutter, commander, Eastern Sector (center) after signing his U.S. Air Force Contract. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Michael Page, Eastern Sector senior enlisted advisor, and Jordan's father (right) watched as his son completed his one-day processing at Milwaukee MEPS, one of the 34 MEPS he serves as SEA.

3. Army Col. Janelle Kutter, commander, Eastern Sector, prepares to read the oath of enlistment to Jordan page, son of Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Michael Page, Eastern Sector senior enlisted advisor, at Milwaukee MEPS. Milwaukee MEPS is one of 34 MEPS that Kutter and Page serve at USMEPCOM.

4. Jordan Page (left) and father, Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Michael Page, Eastern Sector senior enlisted advisor (right), pose for a photo following Jordan's oath of enlistment at Milwaukee MEPS. Jordan joins the Air Force Delayed Entry Program as he prepares to leave for basic training July 2023. (All photos courtesy of Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Michael Page)

MEPS MENTION

Email derrik.l.noack.civ@army.mil with MEPS Mention submissions!



NAME: Karen Ellsworth

POSITION AT THE MEPS: Lead Medical Technician

TIME AT DALLAS MEPS: 34 years

CONTRIBUTION: Karen Ellsworth has never shied away from helping in other areas of Dallas MEPS, assisting in Operations and Testing on multiple occasions. As an expert in all aspects of MEPS processing, Karen is recognized by command

leadership for her extraordinary commitment and displaying that “Texas Strong All Day Long” attitude. She does everything with grace, compassion, honesty and humility.

GIVING BACK: Chicago native Karen Ellsworth moved to Mississippi to study biology and nursing at Alcorn State University. Following graduation, she moved to Dallas and became an indispensable member of the community. She is a church committee member and serves in the Women’s Empowerment Group. Her charity contributions include aiding in disaster reliefs, volunteering at homeless shelters and participating in multiple community service events.

PASTIME: Karen loves to laugh and have fun. She enjoys spending time with her family and traveling to the Caribbean.



FRG: Questions & Answers

Why USMEPCOM families need it!

By Darrin McDufford

The U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command is unique in many ways, including its diversity of personnel and geographical locations.

A mix of about 80 percent civilian personnel and 20 percent military members from five of the six services work at more than 65 locations across the country at small, medium and large units.

Because of this diversity, USMEPCOM employees have a variety of wellness needs, and there's a program to help meet them – the Family Readiness Group (FRG) Program.

FRG: What is it?

The Department of Defense runs programs focused on caring for military members, civilians and their families. After many years of not having a specific program focused on wellness, USMEPCOM built a program from the ground up, and in 2023, the command's Wellness and Readiness Program will celebrate its 20-year anniversary.

Today Mischelle Magmanlac runs the Wellness and Readiness Branch that is part of the Services Division in the Human Resources Directorate at USMEPCOM headquarters. She runs a comprehensive program, which includes the FRG Program.

The FRG Program works to connect USMEPCOM service members, civilians and families to the chain of command, connect staff with community resources, and in doing this, supports Sector and MEPS commanders in enhancing their unit's readiness and resiliency.

How organizations benefit?

These groups meet to discuss how to better support the unit's staff members and improve their resiliency and effectiveness in navigating life's challenges. Group activities enhance camaraderie, relieve stress and can reduce individual's feelings of anxiety and

Why FRGs are needed?

A MEPS FRG is a group that works to take care of service members, civilians and families and ensure no one is left behind. The program has a holistic approach; its goal is to ensure everyone is provided the services that they need.

People are any organization's most powerful resource and leaders must take care of them. An FRG is a great avenue for MEPS commanders to receive feedback from their staff to determine their needs, and then tailor support and resource provision.

Based on the FRG members' feedback, the commander may invite a speaker to cover a specific topic, like marriage/relationship issues, alcohol/substance abuse or financial issues. These are the three main concerns across the military.



▲ Maj. Heather A. Vander Wyst, commander, Columbus MEPS, participates in the Wellness and Readiness Program's "What Would You Do" spin-the-wheel, explaining how would she respond to a situation to Mischelle Magmanlac, Wellness & Readiness program specialist at USMEPCOM. (Photo by Israel Molina)

isolation. The group also ensures its members are aware of the support system and the resources available inside and outside the command.

Every MEPS is different. Some units have a small family member population or there might be more civilians than military members, so their needs vary and the FRG activities need to be adjusted accordingly.

Some MEPS are not located on military installations, so the support available is limited. In coordination with the MEPS commander, the FRG and the Wellness and Readiness Branch work to find ways to provide the necessary support/resources to address the staff's needs and limitations of the unit's location. The experience can be totally different for each individual as they have different needs.

How can commanders help?

With the help of an FRG, the commander can address issues before they become a problem. Caring and support does not stop in MEPS or at the office, and it extends to the service members and Department of Army civilians' homes and families.

MEPS commanders can help build the infrastructure of a strong foundation and maintain a robust FRG. The FRG starts at the top with the commander. Commanders should work closely with FRG volunteers, and trust and empower them, an essential key to strengthening the groups. ■



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1. Carol Williams, transportation assistant, Raleigh MEPS, and Air Force Maj. Jason Myl, commander, Raleigh MEPS, complete their 5K at Lassiter Mills Park in North Carolina.
 2. Fort Lee MEPS personnel complete a group run at Petersburg National Battlefield Park.
 3. On a very brisk 34-degree morning, Fort Jackson MEPS teammates run a safe route on post to complete their 3.1 miles.
 4. Beckley MEPS staff meet up at their local sports complex to complete their 5K race.
 5. Team members from each section of Baltimore MEPS, along with IRC partners, participate in the "Dirty Dozen" 5K.
 6. Larry Edmond, human resources assistant, Charlotte MEPS, utilizes a beautiful sunrise in Charlotte to run his 5K.
- (All photos courtesy of 12th Battalion)

DIRTY DOZEN VIRTUAL 5K

12th Battalion Lace-Up their Sneakers for a race across the Northeast



By Army Maj. Patrick Zebrowski,
Beckley MEPS Commander



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To create a team building event across their six locations, 12th Battalion initiated a “Dirty Dozen” Virtual 5k. Army Lt. Col. Christine Moore, commander, 12th Battalion, and Army 1st Sgt. Mia Gillens, senior enlisted advisor, 12th Battalion, designed the voluntary 5K walk, run or race to increase esprit de corps and provide an opportunity to sharpen physical and mental fitness amongst team members.

Understanding that the mission proves difficult in getting everyone together in the same place and time, the 5K was made for maximum participation. Between Oct. 8 and Oct. 23, the 5k could be completed anytime and anywhere. MEPS personnel were also encouraged to invite family, friends, and all service liaisons to join.

From the mountains of West Virginia, through downtown cities, to parks surrounding Civil War battlefields, 12th Battalion personnel took part in the virtual 5K. Participants chose how they completed the 3.1 miles in the 5K including hiking, running, walking, and swimming. Navy Lt. Nikola Popovic, operations officer, Beckley MEPS, swam 220 laps in 2.5 hours before processing and swearing in 23 applicants later in the day.

“It was a phenomenal way to kick off a busy Friday, which set the tone for the rest of the day,” said Popovic. “The tone of excellence Beckley MEPS lives by... never give up and get it done!”

In total there were more than 75 participants across the six MEPS in the battalion. The fastest overall time went to Navy Command Senior Chief Petty Officer Brandon Majors, senior enlisted advisor, Fort Jackson MEPS, who completed the 5K run in just over 23 minutes. The fastest Department of the Army Civilian was Larry Edmond, human resources assistant, Charlotte MEPS, who completed his 5K in 26 minutes. The best couple’s time went to Tricia Turner, files room supervisor, Fort Jackson MEPS, and her husband who jointly completed their run in 31 minutes.

Overall, the command teams enjoyed spending time with teammates outside of their usual workspace. The camaraderie was alive throughout the battalion, with personnel supporting each other and cheering them on during the execution of the 5K. After positive feedback from staff, leadership hopes to make a similar event available at least each quarter for professional development. ■

Future Soldier Preparatory Course to Expand based on Initial Success

By Hunter Rhoades,
U.S. Army Center for Initial Military Training

Based on the initial success of the Future Soldier Preparatory Course pilot at Fort Jackson, S.C., the Army will expand the course in January 2023 to help increase the quality of individuals entering basic training and provide additional opportunities to serve in our all-volunteer force.

The pilot program stood up in August 2022 to help America's youth overcome academic and physical fitness barriers to service and meet or exceed the Army's accession standards.

A total of 3,206 students have attended the course as of the end of 2022, of which 2,965 students have already graduated and are continuing to basic combat training.

In the academic track of the course, 95% of students increased at least one test category within their first two attempts, increasing their test score by an average of 17 points. In the fitness track, 87% of students graduated within their first three weeks of the course, with an average weekly body fat loss of 1%.

"The initial results of the Future Soldier Preparatory Course have been very encouraging and demonstrate the Army's unparalleled ability to unlock a person's true potential," said Gen. Gary Brito, the Commanding General for U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command. "These programs are providing recruits an opportunity to serve and are preparing them not just for the rigors of basic training, but for a life through Army service."

Based on the initial success of the pilot, the Army will add two additional companies at Fort Jackson for recruits who score between 21-30 on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test. Fort Jackson will also still host all recruits who attend the fitness track of the Future Soldier Preparatory Course. These recruits will have up to 90 days to meet the Army's desired accession standards.

Additionally, recruits who score between 31-49 on the ASVAB will now be able to volunteer to attend the academic track of the course at Fort Benning, Ga. These volunteers will attend the course for up to 30 days and have one opportunity to score into a higher test category.

"The model developed at Fort Jackson has been overwhelmingly successful at preparing and building quality recruits by tapping into their unrealized potential," said Maj. Gen. Curtis Buzzard, Fort Benning Commanding General. "We are excited to bring the Future Soldier Preparatory Course to Fort Benning and increase the opportunity to serve in our Army without sacrificing the quality needed across the force."

Recruits in this new academic track who improve at least one test category will renegotiate their contract and receive the incentives offered in their new test category. If they qualify for a priority or shortage Military Occupational Specialty, they will be offered the opportunity to select the new MOS based on the needs of the Army.

Recruits in this new academic track who do not improve at least one test category will ship to basic training based on their original contract.

A Training and Doctrine Command proof of concept earlier this year showed 87% of volunteers with an ASVAB score between 31-49 increased at least one test category after a single test, increasing their test scores by an average of 15 points. These results informed the decision to give volunteers attending this new academic track at Fort Benning one opportunity to raise their ASVAB scores.

The Army will carefully monitor the Future Soldier Preparatory Course expansion and determine if it should be implemented at other Army Training Centers in the future.

"We will continue to assess and scale the Future Soldier Preparatory Course to ensure we are successfully preparing and building quality recruits who have the desire and ability to meet our standards and serve honorably in our all-volunteer force," said Brito. "The Army will not sacrifice quality for quantity. We are confident given the right instruction and support, these recruits will be able to perform successfully and meet or exceed the standards expected of every Soldier." ■



Students in the academic track of the U.S. Army Future Soldier Preparatory Course attend classes at Fort Jackson, S.C. on Dec. 14, 2022. The Future Soldier Preparatory Course provides focused academic and fitness instruction to help future Soldiers overcome barriers to serve in our all-volunteer Army. (Photo by Hunter Rhoades)

Rex's Winter Driving Safety Tips

Driving safely begins before you even get on the road. In winter, pay special attention to your vehicle's battery, wipers, coolant, tires, and other systems that can take a beating when the temperature drops. While driving, avoid risky behaviors by not driving distracted such as texting and driving, obey posted speed limits, wear a seatbelt and always drive sober.

DEFENSIVE DRIVING TECHNIQUES

Drive slowly. Always adjust your speed down to account for lower traction when driving on snow or ice. Apply the gas slowly to regain traction and avoid skids.

Keep your distance. Maintain extra distance between you and the vehicle in front of you (five to six seconds apart), and slow down.

Take caution when breaking. Remember bridge and overpass surfaces freeze first and thaw last. If you start sliding, turn the steering wheel in the direction you want the front of the vehicle to go. Take your foot off the accelerator. Do not brake until you regain control of the vehicle.

Don't power up hills. Applying extra gas on snow-covered roads will just make your wheels spin. Try to get a little inertia going before you reach the hill and let that inertia carry you to the top and do not stop while going up a hill. As you reach the crest of the hill, reduce your speed, and proceed downhill slowly.

VEHICLE PREPERATION

Battery Inspection: Batteries are notoriously susceptible to extreme temperatures. You should inspect the battery for physical deformities, leaking fluid, and corrosion.

Tires Inspection: Make sure the tires on your car are checked for rapid wear, sidewall damage, and that they have adequate tread depth and air pressure.

Coolant Fluid/Antifreeze: Coolant fluid is not only necessary for engine heat regulation, but it also prevents water from freezing and causing engine damage. Be sure to check the coolant fluid/antifreeze is filled with manufacturer's specific fluid.

Winter Emergency Safety Kit: Carry items in your vehicle to handle common winter driving-related tasks and supplies you might need in an emergency.



NAVY OFFICER AWARDED FOR LIFE SAVING ACTION

By Derrik Noack

U.S. Navy Cmdr. Michael Keppen, former Eastern Sector deputy commander, received a Joint Service Commendation Medal (JSCM) during an awards ceremony at headquarters, Oct. 12. The JSCM is presented by the United States Armed Forces to individuals who have performed an exceedingly heroic act, exceptional achievement or commendable service.

Keppen's heroic actions on Memorial Day led to the life-saving rescue of two individuals. While dining at a restaurant on the dock of Fox River in Illinois, Keppen's training kicked in as he saw an older man and his grandson struggling in the river's strong undercurrents. After the young boy fell off a boat, his grandfather jumped in to save him and they both strained to keep above the water.

Without hesitation, Keppen ran from the restaurant and dove into the river fully clothed to save the boy and his 81-year-old grandfather. Neither individual was wearing a life preserver, so Keppen grabbed the small boy, swam him back to safety and lifted him onto the dock. He then dove back in the river, rescued the older man, and swam him back to safety. Once in the

*'It happened
so quickly
and it was just
fate that I
was there.'*

harbor, the older man was too heavy to lift to the elevated dock. Keppen submerged himself in the water and the older man climbed over him to grab onto the dock.

"I'm glad to have been at the right place at the right time," said Keppen. "I had no idea how strong the currents were until I dove in. It happened so quickly and it was just fate that I was there. For me, it's less about the award and more being able to provide that family comfort and safety on Memorial Day."

Undoubtedly, his bravery, heroic and immediate action and skill singlehandedly saved two lives that day. Keppen's distinctive accomplishments, perseverance, and steadfast devotion to duty reflected credit upon him, and were in keeping with the highest traditions of USMEPCOM, the United States Navy and the Department of Defense. ■



▲ Navy Cmdr. Michael Keppen, former Eastern Sector deputy commander, receives a Joint Service Commendation Medal from U.S. Army Col. Megan Stallings, USMEPCOM commander, during an awards ceremony at headquarters, Oct. 12 for his heroic efforts to save two people from drowning. Upon seeing a child and older man struggling in the Fox River, Keppen dove into the water and swam them both to safety. (Photo by Israel Molina)

Where ITS at!

Immersion training: Info Tech Specialists Dive Deep into Training

By Darrin McDufford

Information Technology Specialist (ITS) Immersion Training is a two-week training course held at USMEPCOM offering in-depth training on various operations of software and hardware computer support.

The course enables the ITS to engage with the complexity of the software allowing better support to the end-user—the USMEPCOM employee.

“The MEPS ITSs are a critical part of providing IT service and are highly engaged...”

“This is a continuation of the push by J-6 to build better partnerships and empower all MEPS ITSs, so they have the skills and tools to provide robust local IT support for their MEPS,” said Matt Lince, chief information officer, J-6 Information Technology Directorate. “The MEPS ITSs are a critical part of providing IT service and are highly engaged in all aspects of the ongoing modernization initiatives at USMEPCOM.”

Direct computer support can be a solo business. The Jackson MEPS ITS finds himself on the frontline of support for nearly 60 personnel.

“ITSs are the MEPS customer support. We install software and hardware. We get involved with all the different programs and helping the staff out with computers that they use to process applicants,” said Darrell McQuirk, Information Technology Specialist, Jackson MEPS. “From operations, medical testing, printers, computers, telephones and other devices too, to complete the daily mission.”

McQuirk said this ITS immersion training allowed him to delve into the nuts and bolts of the software and customer support.



▲ Chris Spearman, Information Technology Specialist at USMEPCOM, guides MEPS ITS personnel through immersion training by opening computers and replacing components. (Photo by Darrin McDufford)



▲ Information Technology Specialist (ITS) from MEPS locations receive training to develop the tools they require to support very busy personnel providing critical services to MEPS applicants. (Photo by Darrin McDufford)

“The different programs that we have and how they’re managed and how the hardware works and is integrated together,” said McQuirk. “I’d say it’s meeting my expectations and even more the people’s expectations face-to-face.”

Being able to ask the questions he’s previously had directly during the training has been outstanding.

“It’s been one of the best trainings that I’ve had, just as far as being able to talk about all kinds of different issues that have come up. I am very informed. They have gone a little bit beyond what we did at the ITS conference,” said McQuirk.

Cydney Mchenry, Dallas MEPS ITS, echoed the comprehensiveness of the training.

“I thought back to the ITS conference that I attended earlier this year and based off that I had an expectation to get a lot of information. Some of the information I knew that I would know that’s IT related but for me, I wanted to build on the MEPS IT knowledge and the MEPCOM processes and how things are done in MEPCOM,” she said.

According to Lince, this course was inspired during a larger ITS conference held in August 2022, where headquarters J-6 staff saw ITSs with a desire to go deeper in developing skills and relationships with J-6 personnel.

Learning and cooperation is a fundamental component of information technology support and this deep dive into the tools and processes strengthen the infrastructure of customer support.

“I’ve been learning about a lot of different management tools that I didn’t know we had access to that would better help tracking, training, security, make sure that our systems are in compliance,” said Mchenry. “A lot of useful tools will be my biggest takeaway. Along with building the rapport and building relationships with people that I talk to on the phone all the time.” ■

Western Sector Fitness Challenge

By Derrik Noack

In just two years, a friendly competition that began at one MEPS quickly expanded to 31. During the most recent expanded iteration, 209 active participants took part in the 11-week “WS Fall Fitness Challenge.”

“We started this challenge two years ago in the fall at Boise MEPS,” said Army 1st Sgt. Michael Romero, Boise MEPS senior enlisted advisor. “We held the challenge again the next fall with even more participants. So, that following spring, we fine-tuned the rules based off what did and didn’t work for us and offered it to our Battalion. That worked really well so we approached Western Sector this year and they agreed to join us and have all our MEPS participate.”

The rules were simple. MEPS must have a mix of military and civilian personnel on their team. If someone quit, they would get a score of zero points each week for the rest of the competition, affecting their teams overall score.

“I think that rule helped keep people going,” said Navy Lt. Justine Casciani, Boise MEPS operations officer. “We tried to encourage overall fitness and habit building. Anybody who wanted to start any kind of fitness journey could step in, whether that’s weight loss, cardio-based or strength-based. Our point system wasn’t based on intensity. It was based on time, effort, and commitment.”

Competitors got varying points per mile depending on whether it was on an elliptical machine, rower, or bike, or simply running, hiking, and walking. Every 10 minutes of anaerobic exercise (weightlifting, yoga, Zumba, CrossFit, etc.) received 1.25 points. There was also a possibility to gain extra points every day to push your MEPS team to the top.

“In encouraging healthy habit building, there were bonus points you could get each day,” said Romero. “If within that day you consumed no alcohol, had less than 40 grams added sugar and no deep-fried foods, and you did 30 minutes of professional growth, you earned an extra three points.”

A highlight of the WS Fall Fitness Challenge was not just how many participants there were, but how many group activities the MEPSs took part in. From marathons, group runs and joint gym sessions, teams pushed each other to reach top positions on each week’s leader board.

“I did not expect so much participation,” said Romero. “A lot of

MEPSs were doing group activities. I enjoyed seeing all their pictures posted and how it brought people together.”

Maintaining one’s fitness while in the military is essential to remain competitive. Physical health is obviously an important factor in anyone’s life, but Romero said the competition started initially for further reasons.

“The mental health benefits of it are extremely important,” he said. “Just to have those endorphins kicking off, you’re waking up your body and feeling good about yourself. Whether it’s because you feel accomplished, or your blood is flowing and now you have energy for the day... its undeniable how important fitness is, not just to your physical health, but your mental health.”

Casciani said she not only helped organize the challenge but did her best to partake and rake in the most points for her team. By setting an example, she encouraged others to join, leading to a boost in morale at her MEPS.

“As an officer, I think it’s important I participate and show that it’s ok for people to take part,” she said. “I know sometimes if you don’t have buy in from the top that you don’t feel like you can participate. I think it’s important to show personnel if they want to take a break and walk on the treadmill for a few minutes, they can.”

Many people in the country use the new year as a motivation to improve their physical fitness. Setting a New Year’s resolution can be ambitious, but the goal should be to not aim too high. Remember to set goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely.

“When starting a resolution, don’t over commit yourself to something you may not be able to accomplish,” said Romero. “That will leave you feeling like you let yourself down. Ensure your goals are accomplishable. It’s easy to go to the gym when you feel like it. It’s the days you don’t feel like it that matter the most.”

For those interested in the challenge, they don’t have to wait for next Fall to come around. Plans for a 2023 WS Spring Fitness Challenge are already in the works.

“We plan on doing it again in the Spring,” said Romero. “Anyone in Western Sector wanting to participate should ask their SEA or email me. Also, if anyone has ideas on how we can do it better, please reach out and let me know!” ■



▲Army 1st Sgt. Natisha Baylor, Salt Lake City MEPS senior enlisted advisor, uses a chest press machine in the USMEPCOM HQ gym. Baylor utilized the gym while in North Chicago for the NCSEA Course to gain points in the Western Sector Fitness Challenge. (Courtesy photo)



▲Boise MEPS personnel pose for a photo during a group workout. Boise MEPS was one of many MEPS who participated in group exercises during the Western Sector Fitness Challenge. (Courtesy photo)



▲Army 1st Sgt. Nicholas Berkey, Portland MEPS senior enlisted advisor (L), and Army Maj. Brian Anderson, Portland MEPS commander (R), pose for a photo after completing the 2022 Portland Marathon. Berkey and Anderson competed against more than 200 other personnel in the Western Sector Fitness Challenge. (Courtesy photo)

Final Standings

TOP TEAMS

1. Boise
2. San Jose
3. Los Angeles
4. Portland
5. HQ
6. Des Moines
7. El Paso
8. Butte
9. Sioux Falls
10. Amarillo

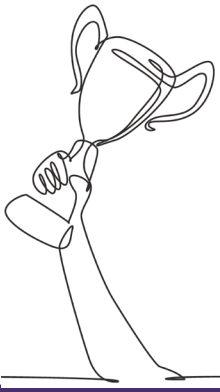
TOP CONTESTANTS

1. Army Maj. Zahra Moutabakkir-Bond (San Jose)
2. Marine Corps Col. Jesse Sjoberg (HQ)
3. Dennis Franklin (San Jose)
4. Army 1st Sgt. Ernie Urzua (San Jose)
5. Jonathan LaForce (Dallas)



"It's extremely important for leadership to be active and participate in events such as this one, because impactful leaders lead by example. Our employees and service members are always watching and taking on our good and bad habits."

-Army Maj. Zahra Moutabakkir-Bond, commander, San Jose MEPS



2022 USMEPCOM & MEPS Outstanding Employees of the Year

HQ USMEPCOM:

GS-10 & above: Jennifer Barragan (J-3/5/7)

GS-07 through GS-09: Dylan Van Reenen (MMT)

GS-06 & below: Ila David (CAG)

MEPS:

GS-10 & above: Andrea Wooley (Dallas)

GS-07 through GS-09: Edward Daniels (Oklahoma City)

GS-06 & below: Emily Wright (Columbus)

USMEPCOM AWARDS



FY22 4TH QUARTER MEPS OF EXCELLENCE

CATEGORY 1

Montgomery
Denver
Phoenix

CATEGORY 2

Boston
Harrisburg
Louisville

CATEGORY 3

Albuquerque
Amarillo
Anchorage
Boise
Butte
Omaha
Spokane

FY23 USMEPCOM OPERATING SCHEDULE

VERSION #3 (DATED 8 DECEMBER 2022)

CALENDAR EFFECTIVE 1 OCTOBER 2022

 Federal Holiday/
Non-processing Day

 Quarterly Training/
Non-processing Day

 Resilience Training/
Non-processing Day

 Air Force/Coast
Guard Mission Day

 Army Active/Reserve
Mission Day

 Army National Guard
Mission Day

 Marine Corps/Navy
Mission Day

 Saturday
Processing

JANUARY 2023
FEBRUARY 2023
MARCH 2023

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4				1	2	3	4
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
29	30	31					26	27	28					26	27	28	29	30	31	

APRIL 2023
MAY 2023
JUNE 2023

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1		1	2	3	4	5	6					1	2	3
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29	30	
30																				

JULY 2023
AUGUST 2023
SEPTEMBER 2023

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1			1	2	3	4	5						1	2
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	15	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30
30	31													Total processing days						241

Processing Policy Guidance Updates:

- Supplemental Medical Policy Guidance (for changes to DODI 6130.03) - Dec. 12
- Army Service Prescreen Pilot - Dec. 6
- ConDEP pilot program - Nov. 29
- Non-MEPS processing - Nov. 22
- Non-English Speaking Applicants - Nov. 9
- MHS GENESIS User Access Process Update - Oct. 5
- Reinstatement of Non-MEPS Shipping Program - Sept. 29

**Past
Quarter
Updates**

Publication Announcements:

- Policy Memo 7-2 Oath of Enlistment Recording and Posting - Nov. 16
- Policy Memo 13-1 Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy for Civilian Employees - Nov. 16
- UMR 380-3 Security Antiterrorism - Oct. 18
- Other:
- Updated Operations Schedule - Dec. 9
- Safety Audit Schedule - Dec. 1
- Lifecycle Replacement of Select AFVTs - Oct. 31
- Annual Audit Plan - Oct. 13

InstaMEPS



Submit photos highlighting personnel at your MEPS to derrik.l.noack.civ@army.mil



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10.

1. Army Sgt. Karla Melendrez, human resources NCO, New York MEPS, spearheaded efforts in decorating her entire MEPS for a holiday party. Her Candyland theme and dedication to the holiday party helped raise morale for the command. (Photo by Army Capt. Andrale Jeanlouis, operations officer, New York MEPS)
2. U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Thomas Ruyle, commander, Fargo MEPS, hosted fall festivities on his farm for Fargo MEPS personnel. Activities included tractor rides and pumpkin painting. (Courtesy photo)
3. Beckley MEPS personnel clean up trash on a local highway as participants of the West Virginia Adopt-A-Highway program. (Courtesy photo)
4. (L to R) Kansas City MEPS personnel Marine Corps Master Sgt. Mike Garcia, Marine Corps Sgt. William Ridley and Army Lt. Col. Jodi Krippel pose for a photo with Park Hill South High School coaches Benny Palmer and Joel Page. Kansas City MEPS personnel helped provide Thanksgiving meals for students and their families in need. (Courtesy photo)
5. Kansas City MEPS personnel came together to donate more than 350 pounds of food which provided three local families with Thanksgiving Dinner and a morning after breakfast. (Courtesy photo)
6. Sioux Falls MEPS personnel pose for a photo while volunteering at The Banquet; a volunteer-based ministry. Personnel prepared and served 250 people in need in the Sioux Falls downtown area. (Courtesy photo)
7. U.S. Army Lt. Col. Benjamin Walker, commander, 9th Battalion and Dallas MEPS, (front left) poses for a photo with the All-Army Women's Basketball Team at Dallas MEPS. The team visited the MEPS, reminisced about their own MEPS experiences and posed for photos with personnel. (Courtesy photo)
8. Beckley MEPS FBP Dr. Joseph Dickenson supprises Beckley MEPS personnel with a visit to their holiday party in a Santa suit. (Courtesy photo)
9. Tina Siordia, USMEPCOM Commander Admin Assistant (right), poses for a photo with retired U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Wilma Vaught at the Military Women's Memorial 25th anniversary celebration in Arlington National Cemetery. Vaught is the Women's Memorial founding president and served as USMEPCOM commander from 1982 to 1985. (Courtesy photo)
10. Boise MEPS personnel construct wreaths to place on the graves of family members and friends of MEPS employees on Veterans Day. (Courtesy photo)

INSPIRING CHANGE

BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH



FEBRUARY

