

JBSA LEGACY

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JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO

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PHOTO BY JOHNNY SALDIVAR

Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson (right) visits with Airmen after the Air Force's Basic Military Training graduation June 29 at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland.

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candidates experience
new course** *Page 11*

Surviving the storms of life

By Senior Master Sgt.
Eric V. Reynolds

The storms of life appear in many forms. Some are small and arise as unexpected showers to rain on your parade, while others last so long they leave you exhausted — mentally, physically, emotionally or even spiritually.

Small storms can make their metaphoric appearance in the form of a bad day at work, annoying car troubles, locking yourself out of your house, or the many everyday challenges of parenting young children. Sometimes, these small storms linger overhead longer than anticipated and test your resolve and patience.

Worse yet and unbeknownst to you, your car becomes home to a group of mice that make a nest in your glove compartment, perish, and leave their malodorous essence behind no matter how much you clean, scrub, sanitize and deodorize.

Compound those challenges with the necessity to work a very demanding job, and those small storms can make it seem like the sun will never shine again.

Larger storms, however, have a far deeper and long-lasting impact. They linger over you for weeks, months, or even years and can be so overwhelming that you feel you may not survive the onslaught: a wife's post-partum depression; a hurricane destroying your home and your possessions; a suffocating cancer diagnosis, or even a cataclysmic event like the death of a child.

Depending on the circumstances, dealing with any one of those storms — large or small — can seem like a monumental hurdle. Dealing with all of them one after another is enough to scare you right off the track.

This is my story of how I've jumped, many times blindly crashing, through each and every heartbreaking hurdle

(including the mice) and found a way to get back on track.

I thought I was resilient. I'd gone through countless training sessions about the importance of resilience. I thought I could handle anything. I had already overcome other obstacles in my life, including an emotionally-challenging childhood, attending 10 schools prior to graduating high school, a chronic auto-immune disease with serious digestive side effects that was misdiagnosed for three years, marital hardships, deployments and constant relocations that come with military service.

I didn't have much confidence as a young man, but in 2001, the Air Force, my newfound faith, and the love of a good woman changed my life.

I thrived, and after 15 years in the Air Force I still had that same beautiful wife by my side and a rapidly growing family. I was six months into my dream job as the Commandant of an Airman Leadership School. I was widely respected as a leader in my church and served as the children's ministries pastor. I thought I had all four pillars of Comprehensive Airman Fitness covered.

None of those things, past or present — NONE — prepared me for what was about to happen.

In June 2016, my son Marshall, was born via emergency cesarean section. Just a few hours after he came into the world, he passed away. I occasionally flash back to that day, picturing myself mentally locked in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, helplessly watching his tiny legs convulse from seizures, desperately wishing he could reflexively grasp my finger the way my other children had, and dreading the decision I was ultimately forced to make.

After the death of my son, I hid from myself. Right or wrong, I blamed myself for what had happened and

struggled with depression. I started to question the paths I had previously chosen and began to ignore my God-given gifts and passions.

Despite my demeanor, my leadership team took care of and looked out for me. They asked all the right questions and I knew they cared. I was returned to my former career field and asked to help stand up a new squadron as part of a massive wing reorganization. I was excited about the opportunities, but at this juncture I still hadn't fully dealt with my pain. And sadly, there was so much more coming.

Shortly after starting the new job, we evacuated to avoid the brunt of Hurricane Matthew. A couple months later, we found out that my wife was pregnant again, leading to seven months of sheer terror for both of us, because we still hadn't gotten a good answer on what went wrong and caused Marshall's death.

Three months before the baby was due, I found a mass on my left cheek. After having it removed, I was told I had a form of Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma — a cancer.

Around the same time, I received an assignment that would have moved us closer than we had ever been to family and it was a tremendous career opportunity. We were thrilled! But our excitement was short-lived. The assignment was canceled due to the cancer and the treatment I would need. I tried to smile and carry on, but inside I was a wreck, and I doubt I hid it very well.

Thankfully and by the grace of God, my wife gave birth to a beautiful baby girl without complications. Just two days later, she was rapidly released from the hospital because Hurricane Irma was bearing down on Florida and they had to shut down. Here we were again — forced to evacuate our home due to a Category 3 storm.

We made the best of the

situation, just happy to have our little girl after everything we went through with my son, but returned to a flooded house, rank with the smell of mold, and thousands of dollars in personal property damage which was not covered by insurance. We were told our home wouldn't be repaired for at least 12 weeks.

Now a family of seven, we gratefully took up residence in a two-bedroom temporary lodging facility until we found a new home. We tried to keep perspective on our situation by recognizing that one of our lodging neighbors was a recruiter with his large family from Puerto Rico.

I got a second opinion on the cancer, and ended up hopeful, yet frustrated. They walked back the diagnosis of lymphoma, calling it "suspicious" and suggested it was an "evolving" lymphoma. It certainly wasn't normal and they didn't know what to call it.

The updated diagnosis didn't bring the assignment back that got canceled, however. Every day I walked a fine line, hoping to contain the anger, hide the depression, and push back the fear that was growing. Then I found another mass in my neck.

As the tsunami of despair built around me and my pillars crumbled, I slipped into the mentality that I was a victim of bad circumstances. I let myself believe I couldn't be who I wanted to be because of the things that were happening outside of my control. I just wanted to feel better, so I began to self-medicate with lots of sugar, sex, video games, and Amazon Prime's free two-day shipping.

Instead of simply passing over, the storms became more numerous and impactful on my life. Each new storm took on an outsized effect as it joined in with the greater tempest.

The anxiety and stress of all

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STORMS continues on 16

Army CIC warns of 'virtual kidnapping' scam

From U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command Public Affairs

The U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command's Computer Crime Investigative Unit, or CCIU, is warning the military community to be on the lookout for the "Virtual Kidnapping" hoax.

The scam occurs when an unsuspecting person receives a call and the caller immediately says, "I've kidnapped your kid. Send money or the kid dies," or some similar version of the call.

Although this is not a new scam, it recently happened to a member of the Army family. It was quickly confirmed to be a scam because the victim called their child's school and confirmed that the child was safe in class.

"Often, victims of the virtual kidnapping fraud are chosen randomly. The person who answers the telephone is the victim, and no one has been

kidnapped," CID officials said. "Sometimes criminals target a block of telephone numbers in known affluent area codes. They dial sequential numbers until the call is answered by someone they can shock into believing that their child has been kidnapped. The caller's approach is forceful, well scripted and can be very convincing."

Recipients of the call report hearing screaming in the background and desperate pleas for help, a crying child and other equally frightening sounds. The caller is loud, abrasive, abrupt and demanding.

When the "kidnapper" uses the child's name, it will cause the victim to panic and become more compliant. But keep in mind that the caller might have found the child's name on social media or the parent might have inadvertently told the caller the child's name during the course of the call.

If you receive a phone call from someone demanding ransom for an

alleged kidnap victim, consider the following:

- ▶ In most cases, the best course of action is to hang up the phone.
- ▶ If you engage the caller, don't confirm or acknowledge your loved one's name.
- ▶ Try to slow the interaction. Request to speak with your family member directly by saying "how do I know my loved one is OK?"
- ▶ Ask questions only the alleged kidnap victim would know such as the name of a pet. Avoid sharing information about yourself or your family.
- ▶ Attempt to contact the "kidnapped" victim via phone, text, or social media, and request they call back from their own cell phone.
- ▶ To buy time, repeat the caller's requests and tell them you are writing down the demand or tell the caller you need time to get things moving.
- ▶ If you suspect a real kidnapping is taking place, immediately contact the nearest FBI office, CID office, or local

law enforcement agency.

To avoid becoming a victim, look for these possible indicators:

- ▶ The call does not originate from the "kidnapped" person's phone.
- ▶ The caller goes to great lengths to keep you on the line so you can't make calls or verify their claims.
- ▶ Ransom money must be paid by wire, PayPal, Moneygram or similar service.
- ▶ Ransom amount quickly decreases if the parent resists.

Remember that the fraudster relies on shock, speed and fear. Criminals know they have a small window of opportunity to extract a ransom before the victim realizes the scam or authorities become involved, officials warned.

For more information about computer security, other computer-related scams and to review previous cyber-crime alert notices and cyber-crime prevention flyers, visit the Army CID website at <http://www.cid.army.mil/cciu-advisories.html>.

Summer safety: tips to prevent food poisoning

Most food poisoning symptoms are minor and will get better without treatment

From Health.mil

Summertime is filled with special occasions focused on family, friends and food. While cookouts and picnics are fun, food preparation and storage is a serious consideration in the summer months.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, report that each year, nearly 48 million people get sick from a foodborne illness. Although proper preparation and prevention help reduce the chances of getting sick from food, it's also important to be familiar with your TRICARE treatment options.

Symptoms of foodborne illness, also called food poisoning, occurs when

contaminated food is eaten and causes an adverse reaction.

This reaction may differ among various illness strains, but most include stomach cramping, vomiting and diarrhea.

Pregnant women, young children, older adults and individuals with conditions causing a weakened immune system are at an increased risk for food poisoning.

Most food poisoning symptoms are minor and will get better without treatment. If symptoms continue or worsen, see your doctor or seek urgent care.

People can also contact the Military Health System Nurse Advice Line (MHS NAL) 24/7 with urgent care questions. In the U.S., call 1-800-TRICARE (1-800-874-2273) and select option 1. On the MHS NAL website, people can also chat with a nurse or find country-specific phone numbers.



COURTESY PHOTO

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that each year nearly 48 million people get sick from a foodborne illness.

According to the CDC, following four simple steps at home — clean, separate, cook and chill — can help protect you and your loved ones from food

poisoning.

- ▶ **Clean:** Wash your hands and clean kitchen surfaces often when cooking. Use soap and warm water when washing

hands and make sure to wash continuously for at least 20 seconds. Wash your cookware and utensils thoroughly.

- ▶ **Separate:** Keep foods apart and don't cross-contaminate. Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs separate from all other foods in the refrigerator and when grocery shopping. Use separate cutting boards and plates for these foods before they're cooked.

- ▶ **Cook thoroughly:** Consider your food safely cooked when the internal temperature gets high enough to kill germs. You can check the temperature of your food by using a food thermometer. Use this chart for comparing food temperatures.
- ▶ **Chill:** Refrigerate perishable food within two hours or within one hour if the outdoor temperature is above 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in the microwave. Don't leave food at room temperature where bacteria can easily grow.

Drug misuse: Don't put yourself at risk

By Karina Luis
AIR FORCE SURGEON GENERAL PUBLIC AFFAIRS

When military members have a prescription for an opioid pain medication, they need to closely follow their doctor's orders, for the good of their health and their careers.

An active prescription for an opioid medication can excuse military members for a positive opioid result on a Drug Demand Reduction test. However, if you use an opioid beyond the expected length of the prescription without talking to your doctor, a positive test may lead to serious consequences.

Military members should take opioid painkillers as prescribed by their provider. This means taking the prescribed dosage, for the stated amount of time and for the proper indications.

"If you take the medication as prescribed, you should be OK on your

drug demand reduction test," said Col. Melissa Howard, pharmacy consultant to the Air Force Surgeon General. "When in doubt, contact your health care provider to validate your course of action."

Accidental or intentional drug misuse of any kind can have negative consequences on your health and military career.

Taking medication after a prescription expires may not justify a positive test. The Air Force considers this drug misuse or abuse. Possible punishments include loss of pay and reduction in rank.

Maj. Jin Kim, pharmacy policy fellow, Air Force Medical Operations Agency, has counsel for those who continue to experience pain after a prescription expires.

"Check with your provider if pain recurs," Kim said. "Do not resume using leftover prescription painkillers without consulting your doctor."

Holding on to and using excess or expired medication can impede an Airman's ability to complete their mission, and can be dangerously habit-forming.

Proper drug disposal decreases the chance of accidental and intentional drug misuse and reduces the amount of medication in the environment.

AF seeks service nominations

By Richard Salomon
AIR FORCE'S PERSONNEL CENTER
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Air Force officials are accepting submissions for the 2018 National Public Service Award.

The American Society for Public Administration and the National Academy of Public Administration established the award to honor individuals whose outstanding contributions and accomplishments serve as models of public service in and out of the work environment.

This award is open to both military and Defense Department civilian employees. A committee from ASPA and NAPA will review nominations and select up to five award recipients who have spent a significant portion of their career as public service practitioners at the federal, state, local or international levels of government, or in nonprofit organizations that provided direct public service.

NPSA winners are those who have, on a sustained basis, done some or all of the following:

- » Made a profound difference to improve service to the public
 - » Been willing to take risks to achieve change
 - » Fostered a more democratic society
 - » Served as champions of social equity
 - » Changed the way a governmental organization operates so that it better achieves its goals
 - » Achieved substantial savings in government operations
 - » Developed a cadre of other government leaders
 - » Contributed to the communities in which they live
- For a full description of the award and to review information on previous winners, visit the American Society for Public Administration website at <https://www.aspanet.org/>.
- Organizations and base-level personnel must contact their major commands, combatant commands, field operating agencies, direct reporting units or major command equivalent agency for applicable suspense dates and additional information regarding nomination procedures.

Service dog rescues vet from despair of PTSD

By Debbie Aragon

AIR FORCE INSTALLATION AND
MISSION SUPPORT CENTER
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

After battling night terrors and the pain and anxiety of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder for decades, an Air Force veteran found his lifeline at the end of a dog leash.

Ryan Kaono, a support agreement manager in the Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, vividly remembers a few years ago when he would regularly find himself in the depths of fear and despair; reliving troubling images from deployments as a security forces military working dog handler and later as a logistics specialist.

Kaono's wife, Alessa, said she felt helpless, with no idea how to help him.

"You see a look in their eyes that they're suffering but you don't know what you can do to help them. It's a terrible feeling watching someone suffer through PTSD," she said.

Those memories seemed so hopeless at times that Kaono attempted to end his life.

After taking numerous prescription drugs in 2010 in a bid to permanently end his pain, Kaono finally reached out for help and started receiving the support and understanding he needed.

"I had previously attempted (suicide) but this time I actually sought treatment," Kaono said.

After being hospitalized for his suicide attempt, the veteran began a treatment program at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs hospital in Los Angeles.

"When I was first diagnosed, group therapy didn't work for me," the Hawaii-native said, "so I actually left the group and started volunteering at a (German Shepherd) rescue in California."

Dogs had always played a part in Kaono's life from when, as a toddler, his family's old English sheepdog, Winston,

picked him up by the diaper to deliver a wandering Ryan back to his front yard.

"I realized (while volunteering at the rescue) that the interaction with the dogs really made me feel better," he said.

Not content to just help himself, Kaono worked with the VA hospital to help other veterans interact with the rescue dogs and promoted animal therapy.

"The VA does equestrian therapy where they'll take veterans to horse ranches and they get to ride horses ... same premise, animal therapy works wonders," he said.

It wasn't long before Kaono, with a wealth of dog training knowledge from his time as a MWD handler, had veterans asking for help to train dogs so they could have their own service animals.

This support was especially important to Kaono since the average wait time for a VA-trained service dog can exceed two to five years.

"By then, we've already lost between 9,000 to 20,000 people due to suicide in a five-year period," he said.

That's based on a 2013 Department of Veterans Affairs study that showed roughly 22 veterans were dying by suicide every day from 1999-2010.

"That's just way too many," he said.

During this time, while helping to train dogs for other veterans, Kaono decided to add his name to the list for a VA-issued service dog.

After a two-year wait, he was notified they were ready to pair him with a dog. During the interview process, however, he was denied an animal because he already had a couple of dogs as pets and service dogs can't be added to a home unless it is pet-free.

"I was disheartened," he said, but he continued to help train animals for other veterans.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, there is no



ARMANDO PEREZ

Ryan Kaono, a support agreement manager with the Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center, takes his service dog, Romeo, for a walk. Romeo helps Kaono quickly recover from bouts of anxiety and night terrors related to enemy attacks while he was deployed to Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

mandated certification for a service dog and it allows people to train their own animals. So three years ago, when Kaono moved to San Antonio, his wife encouraged him to work on training his own service dog.

"I thought I'd just take one of the dogs we had at our house and train it to be a service dog," Kaono said, until Alessa pointed out a Chihuahua probably wasn't the best choice for his particular needs.

He then decided to work with San Antonio's Quillan Animal Rescue to find a potential service dog. The rescue suggested a Doberman at first but Kaono wasn't interested in such a large animal. One of the workers then recommended a mixed-breed animal named Romeo that was in need of rehabilitation after being hit by a car. The only drawback was Romeo had already been promised to another family in California after his recovery.

"I said yes because that would give me the opportunity to work with a dog again," Kaono said.

That was February 2016 and by May, he and Romeo were inseparable, Kaono said.

By June, Romeo had recovered and he was sent to California. Kaono said he was

heartbroken.

"I secluded myself. I didn't want to go to work. I took sick leave ... I just didn't want to be around anybody and make connections with people like I did with him and have them shattered," he said.

"Romeo was kind of a fluke," he added, because the California family decided they couldn't keep him so Romeo returned to San Antonio.

When Romeo arrived back in Texas, Kaono had a trainer from Service Dog Express assess him. The local organization works with veterans to train service animals. Romeo passed the evaluation and was accepted as a service dog in training.

Kaono and the trainer then used techniques from Assistance Dogs International, considered the industry standard for dog training, to ready Romeo. Two months later, Romeo took the organization's public access test, the minimum requirement for service dog training, and "blew the test away," Kaono said.

He's been going to work with the AFIMSC employee every day since passing his assessment on Aug. 1, 2016.

For Kaono, Romeo is much more than a four-legged

companion. He's a lifesaver who is trained in various disability mitigating tasks to help the veteran cope with PTSD.

These include deep pressure therapy where Romeo climbs into Kaono's lap when he can sense anxiousness, agitation or frustration. He then applies direct pressure to the veteran's body, considered a grounding technique, to bring focus to him instead of what's causing the anxiety or agitation.

"Before him, I would have to sit there through it until it essentially went away," Kaono said. "Now within two minutes I'm back to normal. I'm back to being productive again."

Romeo also applies blocking techniques when the duo are in a group or crowded space to create a buffer between Kaono and those around him.

"People are cognizant of him being there so they give me the space to actually feel comfortable," Kaono said.

The service dog also fosters personal interaction, Kaono added.

"I don't make solid relationships with people," he explained. "I would prefer to be and work alone. Having Romeo actually forces me to interact with people on a regular basis. He causes people to talk about things that aren't necessarily work related. He's a calming factor, not just for me."

Romeo has completely changed Kaono's life to allow him to better "live" with PTSD, Alessa said.

"I'm sure many people say this about their dog or service dog but Romeo's truly a godsend," she said. "He has changed and impacted our lives in so many ways."

"He's gotten Ryan out more when it comes to crowds," Alessa said, and Romeo is Kaono's "sidekick and stress reliever at work."

When the duo get home, Alessa added, Romeo "is just like any other dog ... he loves to play and loves treats, especially ice cream."

FORT SAM HOUSTON

Army readiness exercise provides rural Salvadorans with medical, dental care

What's up with so many kids waiting in line to get teeth pulled?

By David Vergun
ARMY NEWS SERVICE

They came from a 5-year-old boy who had four rotted teeth pulled. He was now biting down on some gauze to stanch the flow of blood.

The dentist, Maj. Andy Lind, said that 10 more of his teeth would likely need removal soon if the boy didn't change his eating and dental hygiene habits.

It was only 9 a.m., and in just two hours, Lind and another U.S. Army dentist had extracted 50 teeth from children and adults in the Salvadoran town of Olocuilta.

What's up with so many kids waiting in line to get teeth pulled? Lind had identified a likely culprit: a child's plastic bag filled with an assortment of candy. All that candy gets washed down with bottles of cola or orange soda, he said.

And while Lind said surgery treats are amply available, toothpaste, dental floss and toothbrushes are in short supply.

The two dentists were part of a medical readiness exercise team of 40 that included Peruvian and Salvadoran doctors and nurses. Of the 40, 32 were U.S. Army medical personnel from Combined Joint Task Force Hope participating in the Beyond the Horizon exercise. The larger scope of the

humanitarian exercise included construction of clinics and schools.

The dental MEDRETE in Olocuilta, one of five that will be conducted during the exercise, started June 25 and concluded June 29.

Dr. Gustavo Angel, a non-governmental organization volunteer with Operation Blessing out of San Salvador, the capital, said many people can't afford to see a dentist. And when those people do eventually get in the chair, they're usually in a lot of pain and need teeth pulled.

Unfortunately, anesthetics are expensive and in short supply, so a primary tool is a pair of pliers to extract the teeth — without numbing them. Once the teeth are pulled, they often need to bite down on pieces of cloth to stop the bleeding, since gauze is also in short supply, he said.

This is the second time in Angel's life that the 30-year-old has interacted with U.S. military personnel. Three years ago, the Navy hospital ship USS Comfort, docked in Acajutla, El Salvador, and set up a MEDRETE.

Angel said he was especially impressed with how well the current MEDRETE is organized. He added that the locals are grateful for the help from the U.S. and they consider it a blessing.

Capt. Jewell Hemmings, a Reserve public health nurse with the 801st Combat Support Hospital, out of Fort Sheridan, Illinois, said this is her second MEDRETE, the first was with Joint Task Force Bravo in



DAVID VERGUN

A Salvadoran girl receives dental care during a medical readiness training exercise June 24 at Centro Escolar Canton La Esperanza de Olocuilta, El Salvador.

Honduras in 2014.

She said dengue fever, malaria, chikungunya, zika virus, hepatitis A and typhoid are all prevalent in this part of El Salvador.

The emphasis here should be on prevention rather than cure, she said, since the American doctors won't always be around to respond, it's better to prevent the occurrence of disease.

For example, she said she educates people about getting standing water removed from tires and buckets which can harbor mosquitoes that carry zika and chikungunya.

Hemmings said she can totally relate to Salvadorans because she herself grew up poor in Jamaica. She joined the U.S. Army in 1991 and is proud to serve, especially as part of a humanitarian effort.

1st Lt. Claudia Aparcana, a Reserve medical surgical nurse with the 328th CSH out of Fort

Douglas, Utah, said she too was poor, growing up in rural Peru. Her civilian job is a trauma nurse, so she said she is used to seeing patients who are in dire straits.

Staff Sgt. Leslie Felder, also from the 328th CSH, was in charge of organizing the entire MEDRETE, a huge responsibility for a non-commissioned officer.

She took charge on June 24, a day before the MEDRETE began, designated areas of the makeshift hospital for triage, dental, pediatrics, gynecology, pharmacy, optometry and other specialties.

A number of the U.S. personnel like Aparcana speak Spanish, Felder said, which is really a help. But for those who don't, volunteer students from El Salvador's Universidad Gerardo Barrios and Universidad Technology are ever-present to translate.

About 600 patients were seen June 25, the first day of patient care.

Victor Contreras, 28, and Oscar Cortez, 19, both from Universidad Gerardo Barrios, said that it can be tricky translating medical terms from Spanish to English, as it's a very technical skill. Nonetheless, they said they're happy to be a part of a humanitarian effort and they hope their effort will benefit many people.

Felder, whose civilian job is a lactation consultant, said about 600 patients were seen June 25, the first day where patients came in. She said she expects about 800 on the second day of the exercise, and believes the numbers will continue to increase daily as word spreads through the community.

Not all who visit the clinic are ill or need teeth pulled.

Reina Chavez, 43, has had great difficulty in reading. The strain on her eyes, she said, resulted in burning and itching.

At the MEDRETE clinic, she was seen by an optometrist and received her first-ever pair of eyeglasses, which corrected her vision problem and allowed her to see correctly.

"It was a blessing of God from the Americans," she said, through Cortez, her translator. She began to cry because she was so happy.

IMCOM welcomes new SES leaders

By Nate Allen
U.S. ARMY INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT
COMMAND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

U.S. Army Installation Management Command has two new Senior Executive Service leaders within its headquarters staff at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston.

J. Randall Robinson and Delia Adams will fill new positions within the IMCOM headquarters staff, which will help drive enterprise strategies and operations that enable the command to support Army readiness initiatives and priorities into the future.

Robinson will serve as the executive deputy to the commanding general, while Adams will serve as the command's senior contracting executive.

Robinson has previously held positions within the installation management community at the installation level such as Garrison Plans and Operations Officer and Deputy Garrison Commander provided opportunity to understand how IMCOM directly contributes to mission readiness. From there, Robinson served as an IMCOM Region Director and later as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy and Environment.

At a recent ceremony at the Fort Sam Houston Theater to welcome the two new SES leaders, Lt. Gen. Kenneth Dahl, IMCOM commanding general, said Robinson's experience with the tactical, operational and strategic workings of installation management will help the executive deputy improve how IMCOM serves the Army.

"We're asking the Executive Deputy to strengthen and build those necessary relationships at the strategic level — at Headquarters Department of the Army," Dahl said. "It's also strengthening relationships laterally with the other service providers at the installation level. The third piece is strengthening relationships with the commands we support — the warfighters."

As IMCOM's senior civilian, part of Robinson's job is helping the command's more than 50,000 civilian employees grow professionally to better serve at Army installations all over the world. Robinson said his passion for professional development and service to the Army is stressed at his Monday morning staff meetings.

"I say, there are five days left in the week to improve the lives of Soldiers and their family members, and I ask them to



SCOTT F. MALCOM

Lt. Gen. Kenneth Dahl (center), commanding general, U.S. Army Installation Management Command, welcomes IMCOM's two new Senior Executive Service leaders, Delia Adams (left), and J. Randall Robinson (right), at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston.

look in the mirror and say, today I'm going to do my best," Robinson said.

As IMCOM's senior contracting executive, Adams is responsible for an annual \$4.5 billion portfolio of appropriated and non-appropriated contracts and procurements.

Dahl said the first two job announcements for IMCOM's senior contracting executive yielded unfavorable results.

"I started asking the other senior people in this business why no one wanted to come to San Antonio and they said that talent doesn't exist, you're looking for a unicorn!"

Adams' resume displays the procurement and acquisition experience needed for the position, from execution to policy level positions.

Adams began her contracting career with the Air Force as a vice presidential intern. She later transitioned to advising procurement and contracting policy through private industry for the state government of Pohnpei in Micronesia.

Adams went on to gain greater insight of the Army's needs as Contracting Officer for U.S. Army Europe, where she would deploy to the Balkans as an emergency essential civilian.

Adams' assignment as a senior procurement analyst gave her experience with acquisition policy at the Office of the Secretary of Defense level. Most recently, Adams served as the Director of Service Area Office West for the Veterans Health Administration.

Adams says she looks forward to working with IMCOM and its mission partners in developing the Command's contract acquisition strategy, but she will have to add a new hobby to her resume.

"I'm going to have to start collecting unicorns now; I like that analogy," Adams said.

NAMRU-SA hosts visit from Alamo STEM educators

By Flisa Stevenson

NAMRU-SA PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Scientists at the Naval Medical Research Unit-San Antonio at the Brooke Army Medical Center campus at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston hosted 10 high school chemistry and health professions educators for a laboratory tour and “meet the scientists” career path discussion June 27.

Navy Capt. Thomas C. Herzig, NAMRU-SA commanding officer and research physiologist, said STEM — or science, technology, math, engineering and math — careers are in high demand right now, but educators may not know that Navy Medicine has a diversity of career paths in STEM fields, including research and development.

Educators received a briefing on the science mission and research at NAMRU-SA and

then toured the laboratory facilities.

Dr. John Simecek, Director of NAMRU-SA's Craniofacial and Restorative Medicine Directorate, led the tour, introducing educators to several principal investigators and their research projects to treat combat causality care traumatic injuries and ensure world-wide dental readiness.

Dr. Dorian Olivera, a principal investigator in the Environmental Surveillance Department showed teachers the amalgam separator, a filtration technology tested and evaluate by NAMRU-SA researchers to efficiently, conveniently, and inexpensively capture dental amalgam waste.

Dr. Yoon Hwang, principal investigator in the Maxillofacial Injury and Disease Department talked about the development of a universal antivenom to treat patients who are snake bitten.

Dr. Tony Yuan, researcher in

the Biomaterials and Epidemiology Department discussed the novel wound healing dressing he and his team are developing for craniofacial injuries.

Dr. Luis Martinez, also a researcher in the Biomaterials and Epidemiology Department talked about the research his team is conducting to develop a method for rapid detection of multidrug resistant microorganisms and the design and prototype development of a portable ozone sterilizer. During the tour educators said they had no idea this work was happening in San Antonio.

After the lab tour, educators participated in a discussion with a diverse group of NAMRU-SA scientists to learn about their career path leading to research at NAMRU-SA.

Educators were surprised and pleased to hear about the broad range of preparation and experiences along the research

career path bringing scientists to Navy Medicine.

Herzig facilitated the career path discussion, involving Lt. Cmdr. Nicholas Hamlin, research dentist and head of NAMRU-SA's Environmental Surveillance Department; Dr. Nancy Millenbaugh, research chemist and principal investigator in the Maxillofacial Injury and Disease Department; and Dr. Madeline Paredes, immunologist and researcher in NAMRU-SA's Expeditionary and Trauma Medicine Department. Martinez also participated in the discussion.

“Students pursuing a passion in STEM could discover a career path in Navy Medicine through military or civilian service that offers them the opportunity to do what they love, make a contribution, and have a work-life balance,” Herzig said.

Herzig said this was an

“Students pursuing a passion in STEM could discover a career path in Navy Medicine through military or civilian service that offers them the opportunity to do what they love, make a contribution, and have a work-life balance.”

Navy Capt. Thomas C. Herzig, NAMRU-SA commanding officer and research physiologist

opportunity for the visiting educators to have a close look at a Navy research lab here in the San Antonio community, to learn about the research conducted at NAMRU-SA, and to meet a diversity of scientists was a unique and informative personal experience they can share with their students.

VRC hosts hosts ‘Social Media Safety and Cyberbullying Awareness’ workshop

By David DeKunder

502ND AIR BASE WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Parents can learn the risks and dangers their children are exposed to on social media, including online bullying, and what to do about it at the “Social Media Safety and Cyberbullying Awareness” workshop at the Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston Vogel Resiliency Center, building 367, from 4 to 6 p.m. July 16.

The free workshop is open to JBSA servicemembers, spouses, retirees and Department of Defense civilians and is being conducted by the JBSA-Fort Sam Houston Family Life Program and the Army Suicide Prevention program.

Donnell Dawson, JBSA Family Life lead program

educator and workshop instructor, said the workshop will cover the risks and benefits for children who use social media and the social media apps commonly used by children.

“There’s benefits (of social media), especially as a military child; you are going to have connections,” Dawson said. “You got to reach out to your friends, start new communities. But with that, there are also risks. So we talk about the pros and cons with it.

“We talk about what the apps look like, what they are and the uses,” she added. “There’s also a lot of hidden uses of specific apps. There’s ghost apps out there where users will hide photos, videos and text messaging. We talk a lot about that.”

The workshop will also educate parents on how to

identify warning signs of children who are being bullied online and how to notice behaviors, including anxiety, depression and isolation, which are associated with bullying and could lead to suicide.

“We talk about what bullying looks like and what bullying through social media can look like,” Dawson said. “When we were kids growing up without our hand-held cell phones and Internet, bullying usually stopped at the schools, stopped the moment you left the playground and then you had a secure location at home. With social media, our children are actually relieving a lot of those experiences over and over.”

She said the workshop will have a step process for talking about cyberbullying, including how to identify it, how to communicate effectively to their children about it, what

parents can do about it if it is occurring, who to contact at the children’s school and providing skills to their children in helping them cope with and overcome bullying.

“We can’t always shelter them from the bullying, but we can give them many tools to cope more successfully,” Dawson said.

Dawson said the topic of bullying is a new addition to the social media safety course, which has been taught for several years. She said the subject of bullying has been added because it is an issue of concern in both the local community and nationwide and to provide more outreach and resources to JBSA families about bullying.

According to the Cyberbullying Research Center, 34 percent of middle and high school students across the U.S.

surveyed in 2016 reported experiencing cyberbullying in their lifetime.

In 2017, Texas enacted a law, known as “David’s Law,” that is aimed at preventing and taking measures to prevent cyberbullying. The law is named after David Molak, a 16-year-old high school student from San Antonio who committed suicide in 2016 after being bullied online.

Dawson said she will encourage parents at the workshop to speak freely on issues and concerns they have relating to social media and cyberbullying.

“We want it to be discussion based,” she said. “We want them to be able to bring their experiences and learn from one another and learn from us.”

To register for the “Social Media Safety and Cyberbullying Awareness” workshop, call 210-221-0349 or stop by the VRC, located at 2490 Stanley Road at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston in building 367, and request to be directed to the Family Life Program.

Exercise strengthens partnership with El Salvador

By David Vergun

ARMY NEWS SERVICE

Some 1,800 Soldiers from Combined Joint Task Force Hope are providing humanitarian assistance as part of their training during the Beyond the Horizon exercise in La Paz, El Salvador.

The U.S. Army South-led mission began May 12 and runs through Aug. 4, and includes Soldiers from all components, Air Force and Marine service members, Salvadoran soldiers and personnel from non-governmental organizations.

The scope of training includes the construction of two schools, as well as extensions to two existing schools and a clinic in the La Paz Department, a rural area in the southeastern part of the nation that is underdeveloped and in need of services, said Maj. Al Cavazos, CJTF Hope Information Operations Cell officer-in-charge. The task force is also providing medical and dental treatment at various locations as well.

“The purpose of Beyond the Horizon is to conduct civic assistance and medical and engineering support to show U.S. support and commitment to El Salvador,” he said. “These projects will be completed working hand-in-hand with the Salvadoran military and non-governmental agencies to provide medical and engineering support to local populations. It is



DAVID VERGUN

Soldiers from the 4th Engineer Battalion, Fort Carson, Colorado, remove rubble to make way for a sidewalk to a school they are building in rural El Salvador June 23.

valuable for everyone.”

Most of the Soldiers are from National Guard units out of Nevada, Texas, West Virginia, Florida, Puerto Rico, Minnesota and Texas, Cavazos said. Those Soldiers rotate out every two to three weeks.

Since construction of the facilities takes longer than two or three weeks, the Salvadoran soldiers who are partnering with U.S. Soldiers provide

continuity in the construction work and planning, he said.

Fortunately, most of the rotating units include Soldiers with Spanish-speaking ability, he said. This greatly facilitates communications and coordination. Cavazos himself is fluent in Spanish and is heavily involved in translating activities.

What do the El Salvadorans think of the U.S. presence here?

“The military and civilians have shown gratitude and appreciation for what we’re doing here,” he said.

Cavazos said that over his 26-year Army Infantry career, which included deployment to Iraq, he has learned to read body language. In some of the places he has been, he said, it has been apparent to him that American presence was not welcome.

However, he doesn’t believe this is the case in El Salvador. Instead, he said the people he is working with now seem to appreciate that American Soldiers are making improvements in their lives and the lives of their children.

Throughout the day, local residents in stores and shops were seen chatting with the U.S. Soldiers, and for those who couldn’t bridge the language gap, smiles were exchanged.

Beyond the Horizon is an annual U.S. Army South exercise. Next year, the exercise will be held in Guatemala.

LACKLAND

New course builds more resilient candidate

By Airman 1st Class
Dillon Parker
502ND AIR BASE WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The 350th Battlefield Airmen Training Squadron has implemented a nine-week preparatory course for all Battlefield Airmen candidates. Battlefield Airmen hopefuls graduating from Basic Military Training will have to complete the course before transitioning into the initial entry course.

"The prep course was added to reduce attrition rates and create a faster, stronger and more resilient candidate," said Chief Master Sgt. Joshua Smith, 350th BATS superintendent. "To accomplish that, we focus on the holistic approach of mind, body and warrior spirit."

"When we started this course, the goal was to increase graduation rates by 10 percent," Smith said. "We've really exceeded expectations and after a year of the course, rates have gone up by about 21 percent. The course has been a great addition to our training process here and by addressing foundational pillars of holistic health, we not only improve performance in the training environment, but also set up the candidate for success throughout their careers and lives outside the military."

Smith added that in order to reach these goals, it is imperative that candidates focus on keeping themselves injury free.

"We've traditionally had a lot of students get injured and their risk of getting reinjured was too high," Smith said. "We work really hard on injury prevention in this course because often, injuries are career postponing or worse."



ISMAEL ORTEGA

Battlefield Airmen Preparatory Course candidates participate in a ruck run April 19 at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland.

In order to prevent injuries, the course utilizes multiple resources and methods, Smith added.

"The candidates receive a screening from our physical therapists and athletic trainers," he said. "We test them on their gait and have a digital system to spot potential injury risks on a student's body. There's nothing we can do to prevent every injury but we're gathering a lot of research on what kinds of situations increase the risk."

Along with an emphasis on injury prevention, the course also stresses a scientific approach utilizing advanced metrics to improve performance and long-term

practices. According to Smith, over the nine weeks, a massive amount of data is gathered and analyzed.

"There's at least one sensor attached to each candidate at all times," Smith said. "We monitor about 300 data points daily per student and put it all into a central database to find out trends, as well as strengths and weaknesses for each student. It really helps us to find out what works and what doesn't."

All of this data is vital for the course instructors to plan and implement future training.

"Running, rucking, and swimming are a huge part of being a Battlefield Airman and those are the categories we

primarily focus on," said Tech. Sgt. Eric Megala, a 350th BATS instructor. "Rather than just pushing them as hard as we can, we have to take all the data we've gathered about human performance and apply it to the training."

In addition to the physical aspect, students enrolled in the course receive training for the daily tasks needed for success, he added.

"We give them nutrition guidelines, day-to-day communication skills and general life skills you need to be successful as a Battlefield Airman," Megala said.

To go along with this life skill training, the course also provides candidates with

"Running, rucking, and swimming are a huge part of being a Battlefield Airman and those are the categories we primarily focus on."

Tech. Sgt. Eric Megala, 350th Battlefield Airmen Training Squadron instructor

mentorship from experienced instructors who have been through the Battlefield Airman training process and exemplify the traits needed to become a successful warfighter.

"Everything we wish we would have known, we pass to them," Megala said. "Prior to the prep course, there was no transition period and people didn't really know what they were getting themselves into. We also teach them how important what they are doing is. We try to give them something to reach back to in the tough moments when they want to quit and give them that extra motivation to push through it."

At the end of the course's first year and six classes later, Smith said that the instructors are confident that the effort put into the course has had the desired effect.

SERE training starts at JBSA-Lackland

By Staff Sgt. Chip Pons
AIR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
COMMAND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Walking into the Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape specialist training building, motivational quotes speaking to accountability, persistence and commitment can be seen on every wall, serving as an encouraging reminder of the choice candidates have made in an attempt to become SERE specialists.

Animal pelts and antlers adorn the wall and an alligator named Thor, a gift from former students, sits protectively outside the main classroom. Everywhere you look around the building, a deep sense of pride is obvious and more importantly, felt by all who enter those doors.

Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, famously known as “The Gateway to the Air Force,” is also the gateway to the SERE career field through the SERE Specialist Training Orientation Course, a 15-day course held on JBSA-Lackland's Medina Training Annex. This is where potential SERE specialists begin a rigorous year-long training and are first immersed in the physically and mentally demanding career field.

Candidates are critiqued on physical training, backpacking, basic public speaking, outdoor living and survival skills as well as their ability to improvise, to assess their potential success as a future SERE specialist. Most importantly, these candidates are assessed on their ability to effectively pass on and translate their knowledge to others, the cornerstone of the SERE career field.

“Our job is really about the empowerment of others,” said Adam DeRycke, SST-OC instructor and training manager. “Our sole focus as a SERE specialist is to take someone and give them the



STAFF SGT. CHIP PONS

Airman Basic Cole Kramm, a Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape Specialist Training Orientation Course candidate, completes a push-up during a mock physical fitness assessment at the SERE specialist schoolhouse March 22 at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland.

skills to take care of themselves and empower them to survive the most austere or dangerous conditions we know as individuals — captivity, isolation and survival. The goal at SST-OC is to give candidates a very rudimentary set of skills and assess them on their ability to perform certain tasks that will be expected of them throughout training.”

Noting that being a SERE specialist is a great career but a well-kept secret of the Air Force, DeRycke said most people do not understand their purpose as SERE specialists.

“They know we exist, but not exactly what we do,” DeRycke said. “And I think that we need to work harder and try to break that down and to be in the forefront of people's minds instead of an afterthought.”

Finding interested individuals is an easy task, but finding those whose personal

beliefs align with SERE priorities has proven to be a challenge. Out of the roughly 400 students who go through the schoolhouse annually, about 60 percent will not complete training. The majority of those candidates who don't complete training will self-eliminate from the program.

“Accountability and responsibility are difficult things and big pills to swallow,” DeRycke explained. “These are things that some people shy away from. This is not the job for those kinds of people because we are put out in the middle of nowhere with six to eight people and we're responsible for their lives.”

The accountability and responsibility DeRycke refers to extends beyond the schoolhouse, as future recruits are drawn to the image of excellence and pride that active

duty SERE specialist's exhibit.

“Growing up in Washington, I was constantly surrounded by SERE specialists,” said Airman Basic Cole Kramm, a SST-OC candidate in his final days of training and Spokane, Washington, native. “I was drawn to their character and their upstanding image of integrity and after talking to them about what they did for the Air Force, I knew it was something I would enjoy being a part of.”

Kramm said seeing SERE specialists give 100 percent in everything they do was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity he wanted to be a part of.

“I have always been a guy that can't quit, so the mental and physical demands on my body are nothing compared to the satisfaction of knowing that someday the skills that I have taught someone else could help them on the most challenging

“Accountability and responsibility are difficult things and big pills to swallow. These are things that some people shy away from. This is not the job for those kinds of people because we are put out in the middle of nowhere with six to eight people and we're responsible for their lives.”

Adam DeRycke, SERE Specialist Training Orientation Course instructor and training manager

day of their life,” he said. “Even if you never see the fruits of your labor, just knowing that you've given all that you have to give is beyond worthwhile.”

With SST-OC serving as the introduction to the SERE career field, instructors recognize the important role they play in molding future specialists.

“JBSA is viewed as the heartbeat of the Air Force because we've touched the lives of every enlisted Airman from day one of their career; we're doing the same thing here,” said Staff Sgt. Ryian Dawson, SST-OC instructor.

“This is the place where candidates first learn what it is to be a specialist and what kind of mentality is needed to be successful,” he added. “Our actions and the way that we handle ourselves is going to directly correlate to what they feel is acceptable throughout the rest of their careers. So to be able to mold, shape, and guide them from the beginning is extremely rewarding.”



JOHNNY SALDIVAR

Visitors are given a demonstration of one of the underwater treadmills during a tour of the new Sports Medicine Rehabilitation Facility at the Lt. Col. Daniel E Holland Military Working Dog Hospital June 28. The new facility provides flooring and lighting more suited to protect post-operative patients and minimize their stress. It includes a quiet room, large exercise area and an aquatic therapy room.

MWD care improves with opening of facility

By Karla Gonzalez
REGIONAL HEALTH COMMAND-CENTRAL
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Recovering four-legged warriors are getting enhanced rehabilitation therapy thanks to the new Sports Medicine Rehabilitation Facility at the Lt. Col.

Daniel E Holland Military Working Dog Hospital at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland.

Officials cut the ribbon to the new facility, as well as new hospital recovery kennels, during a ceremony at the hospital June 28.

“Members of the Army Veterinary

Services take great pride in our ability to deliver world class veterinary care to the Department of Defense working dog population,” said Brig. Gen. Erik Torring III, U.S. Army Veterinary Corps chief and U.S. Army Medical Command deputy chief of staff for operations, G-3/5/7. “These renovated and upgraded

facilities are another step in re-enforcing our unwavering commitment to their care and the critical force protection capability they provide.”

The new rehabilitation facility provides flooring and lighting more suited to protect post-operative patients

MWD FACILITY continues on 15

MWD FACILITY

From page 14

and minimize their stress. The canine patients have a new, quiet room where manual therapy is completed.

A larger exercise area allows for the placement of equipment in various configurations to tailor exercise programs and challenge levels specific to each patient. The new facility also includes an aquatic therapy room with a jetted pool and two underwater treadmills.

The design upgrades to the Holland Military Working Dog Hospital provide improved access to MWD patients directly from the hospital to the expanded kennels. The kennel expansion has an additional 22 runs. These runs allow veterinary staff to have better oversight of hospitalized rehabilitation and surgical patients.

"All of these improvements are a significant step in improving care for these working animals and getting them back to duty as quickly as possible," Torring said. "Doing so enhances readiness ... and allows these working dogs to get back to what they do every day — and that is save lives."

While the facility and equipment on hand is vital for the treatment and rehabilitation of the animals, Torring shared the most important part of the facility is "the people who tirelessly work every day to make this facility so special. They contribute to readiness every day for the DOD and I'm proud of each one of them for their contributions to Army veterinary services.

By The Numbers:

The Lt. Col. Daniel E Holland Military Working Dog Hospital has a staff of:

- » 15 — Veterinarians on staff
- » 27 — Animal Care Specialists and Licensed Veterinary Specialists
- » 6 — Administrative support personnel
- » 1 — Laboratory Specialist

The Lt. Col. Daniel E Holland Military Working Dog Hospital provides annually:

- » 12,500 — Wellness and medical visits
- » 2,400 — Rehabilitation visits
- » 2,500 — Operative procedures
- » 1,500 — Dental procedures
- » 1,500 — Diagnostic imaging procedures
- » 800 — Consultation service requests from military and civilian practitioners worldwide with approximately
- » 80 — Animals referred for specialty, medical, surgical or rehabilitative care.



JOHNNY SALDIVAR

Maj. Andrea Henderson (right) briefs visitors to the new Sports Medicine Rehabilitation Facility at the Lt. Col. Daniel E Holland Military Working Dog Hospital on the amenities and advantages to new space following the facility's ribbon-cutting ceremony.

STORMS

From page 2

these events kicked my digestive disorder into overdrive. In the midst of these storms, I sought help privately through the base Mental Health clinic, attended various support groups in the local community, and even asked if I could go to an in-patient clinic to help resolve my anxiety and resulting behavioral issues. I desperately wanted someone to fix me so I could get back to being the man I used to be.

I found myself waiting for two things: a biopsy of the new mass with hopefully clearer results on my “evolving” lymphoma, and results from a medical malpractice investigation into the cause of my son’s death. I thought if only they could rule out the cancer and I had someone else to blame, then I could go back to work and be normal again.

My catalyst to recovery was a simple question asked by one of

my doctors at the base Mental Health clinic. I was asked, “What if the results you’re waiting for don’t come back the way you want?”

Pretty heady stuff to ponder. Then I realized they didn’t matter. I wouldn’t expect myself to be any different. If I had waited and gotten bad results, they may have influenced me negatively and kept me in a depressive cycle.

But, proactively reflecting on who I was rather than what I was facing led to a revelation. When I focused on who I was — my foundations, my support, and my goals — the storms didn’t matter at all. They didn’t change a single thing of substance. The storm may rage, but my foundation is firm. My visibility might decrease, but my support system — my family, friends, and mentors — will keep me moving in the right direction. The path may change, but the goal remains constant.

The only thing holding me back was me. In reality, I had

not changed, I was just exhausted because I allowed my attention to be whipped around like a littered candy wrapper in a West Texas dust devil.

I discovered that while each storm affected my path and forced me to recalibrate, they didn’t require me to abandon my passions, goals, or overall sense of who I was. I began to focus on who I was and where I wanted to go, rather than how the storms should be affecting me. Once the storms were no longer the primary focus of my attention, they got smaller, less significant, and much easier to overcome.

My family, friends and leadership team were all very supportive, extending what seemed like an inexhaustible supply of grace. They told me to take my time and focus on my family and getting well, that I had been through enough and deserved a break, and not to hurry back to work.

So I took my time, did less, and was ultimately miserable. But, I rediscovered who I was

meant to be in the midst of that misery. I was still the 104-pound high-school freshman dragging three football dummies across the field because no one else stayed to clean up after practice. I did the dirty work, but I also was the dreamer. I needed to be challenged. I needed big goals. I needed to use my talents to translate impossible visions into reality. So, I started dreaming big again, and got started doing the dirty work that would help me realize those goals.

Today, I stand on an unshakeable foundation, conjoined in support of, and with, others; focused on a set of radical-yet healthy goals; and committed to being the best husband, father, son, and Airman possible.

I may struggle constantly with the idea that I’m not good enough, strong enough, or smart enough, but what I don’t doubt is the love of my God and family, my ability to get better, and my understanding that persistent hustle gets you closer to your goals than waiting for

others to recognize how wonderfully talented we might be and how badly the world has treated us.

I encourage you to take some time and look at your life. What is going to keep you going, or pull you out of the storms when they come? For me, my spiritual pillar kept me alive and my family tightly bound together during our extended season of extreme weather. I’m still rebuilding my other pillars and grateful for the opportunity to share this story.

If you are in the middle of a tempest today, get real about your situation and get help as soon as you can. You are not alone, and we very much need you — even if you can’t see it right now. One team, one fight!

P.S. I sought mental health assistance and I kept my security clearance. But even if I had lost it, it would have been worth it to get the help I needed. I love the Air Force, but I love my wife and kids more. They deserve the best me I can give them.

RANDOLPH

SECAF talks innovation across JBSA, Austin

Wilson had the opportunity to engage with new Airmen and their families

By Senior Airman Stormy Archer
502ND AIR BASE WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson visited AFWERX-Austin, Pilot Training Next and Joint Base San Antonio June 27-29 to see firsthand the focus Airmen in the area are placing on improving readiness, cost-effective modernization and developing exceptional leaders.

Her first stop was AFWERX-Austin, the Air Force's newest public innovation and collaboration hub focused on bridging external communities and the



PHOTOS BY JOHNNY SALDIVAR

Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson was the presiding official for the Air Force's Basic Military Training graduation June 29 at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland.

Air Force to create mutually-beneficial partnerships.

"We recognize that the bureaucracy doesn't always allow innovation to happen, and that's one of the reasons for creating things like AFWERX," Wilson said. "To take some of the innovative capacities of the people who work in high-tech companies who can help the Air Force connect with a community that has a university partner, where we're very likely to find entrepreneurial talent and ideas, a supportive local government, a business and innovation culture, and try to connect and embed as part of a team."

Wilson also toured the Pilot Training Next facility at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport in Austin.

Pilot Training Next is a program to explore and

potentially prototype a training environment that integrates various technologies to produce pilots in an accelerated, cost efficient, learning-focused manner. The training uses immersive technology to see how Airmen can learn more effectively.

"Technology has changed quite a bit, but the syllabus for pilot training had not significantly changed in about 20 years," Wilson said. "The Air Force is partnering with industry and educators to build a training environment that integrates today's latest technology to improve pilot training."

The next stop for Wilson was a visit to Joint Base San Antonio.

At JBSA-Randolph, Wilson met with members of the 12th Flying Training Wing to

discuss the pilot instructor training, introduction to fighter fundamentals, weapons systems officer training and remotely piloted aircraft pilot and basic sensor operator training missions.

While at JBSA-Lackland, Wilson had the opportunity to engage with new Airmen and their families, and also serve as the reviewing official during the Basic Military Training (BMT) graduation parade. There she welcomed 628 new Airmen into the Air Force.

"To our newest Airmen, every one of you comes here with a story," Wilson said. "You bring with you your history and your family's history to our nation's defense, and you are now part of our story as Airmen in the greatest Air Force in the world."



Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson observes 2nd Lt. Emilia Kaiser, Pilot Training Next student, train with a virtual reality system at PTN, located at the Armed Forces Reserve Center June 27 at the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport in Austin.

New squadron specializes in Battlefield Airmen recruiting

By Danielle Knight
AIR FORCE RECRUITING SERVICE
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The first squadron focused solely on recruiting Battlefield Airmen and combat support career fields stood up June 29 in a ceremony at the Medina Annex on Joint Base San Antonio — Lackland.

The reactivation of the 330th Recruiting Squadron, Air Force Recruiting Service's 28th squadron, marks the first time in Air Force history that a unit will be dedicated to recruiting men and women for hard-to-fill positions within special operations and combat support roles.

The reactivation began with members of the Battlefield Airmen Training Group and the 330th RCS freefalling into the ceremony with the squadron guidon and the American Flag. Col. Ron Stenger, BATG commander and a special tactics officer, passed the guidon to Col. Robert Trayers, AFRS vice commander, and former commander of the 330th RCS

when it was deactivated back in 2009.

Following the jump, members of the 330th RCS participated in memorial pushups at the Lt. Col. William Schroeder Memorial.

"Memorial pushups are a tradition in our community to recognize and honor our fallen comrades," said Master Sgt. Benjamin Hannigan, a liaison to AFRS from the 24th Special Operations Wing. "They are usually done after strenuous physical activity, because our fallen comrades did more than their physical body could. Our physical sacrifice of remembrance could never match up to their sacrifice."

Shortly after the memorial pushups, the official party moved into the Lt. Col. Schroeder Auditorium for the assumption of command ceremony. Trayers provided remarks about the squadron's heritage.

"It's great to be able to reactivate this squadron with a great team and new leaders," Trayers said. "You now have the important responsibility of



TECH. SGT. AVE YOUNG

Members of the 330th Recruiting Squadron perform memorial pushups at the Lt. Col. William Schroeder memorial June 29 at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland.

recruiting the folks you want at the tip of the spear of our nation."

The reason for activating the 330th RCS was to overcome the challenges of recruiting and training Battlefield Airmen, said Trayers.

Since the standup of the BATG in 2016 to the beginning of the current prep course, this activation completes the span between recruiting and training in the of the revolutionary new Special Operations recruiting model.

"What you see before you is an Air Force Chief of Staff directed fix to a 21-year problem," said Maj. Heath Kerns, 330th RCS commander after receiving the guidon from Trayers. "Our squadron is exclusively focused on scouting, developing and guiding future Battlefield Airmen and combat support warriors to their combat calling."

Kerns comes to AFRS with more than a decade of experience as a special tactics officer. The 330th RCS is designed to recruit and access the next generation of Special Operations Airmen and combat support forces, which include combat controllers, pararescuemen, special operations weathermen, tactical air control party, survival evasion resistance and escape (SERE), and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD).

According to Kerns, this recruiting squadron is necessary because you cannot mass produce special operators.

"The old model of taking someone off the street to recruit for the Battlefield Airmen pipeline showed a 90 percent attrition rate," he said. "Out of 100 people, only 10 would make it. This was not only a challenge for the recruiting force to have such low numbers on a high level of candidates, but also a large monetary cost for the Air Force itself."

Previously, a trainee would be assessed and trained by traditional recruiters, attend Basic Military Training, then begin the indoctrination course. Now, recruiters of the 330th RCS train and access potential candidates alongside contract developers, who are retired service members with experience in special operations and combat support roles.

Master Sgt. Richard Geren, a 330th RCS flight chief for the Texas area, spoke on the importance of selecting the right candidates for Battlefield Airmen and combat support missions.

"First, we make sure they are qualified for the Air Force," Geren said. "Once we know they are qualified, we see if they are a good fit to become a Battlefield Airman."

According to Geren, a good fit includes the right mindset, attitude and understanding of the demands of the Battlefield Airmen career fields.

"I want to sit down with every person to explain the ins and outs of every single job we are recruiting for," he said. "I also want to share stories and examples of what a pararescuer or combat controller's worst day might be. It's not all Hollywood and cool gear. It's about hard work, determination and teamwork."

Similarly, recruiters took a unique approach to understanding the career fields they seek candidates for by immersing themselves in to Battlefield Airmen training. Kerns commended the squadron for attending the weeklong indoctrination before activating the squadron and then closed the ceremony by speaking directly to the 330th RCS members.

"We will become an audacious display of innovation and collaboration," he said. "We will succeed in bringing the highest quality of warriors the Air Force and the world has ever seen. You embody these qualities; they are forged through a pursuit of personal excellence and enduring great challenge so that you can inspire young men and women to follow you to their combat calling."

Col. Robert W. Trayers, Headquarters Air Force Recruiting Service vice commander, passes the 330th Recruiting Squadron guidon to Maj. Heath J. Kerns during the activation and assumption of command ceremony June 29 at Joint Base San Antonio-Medina Annex.



ISMAEL ORTEGA